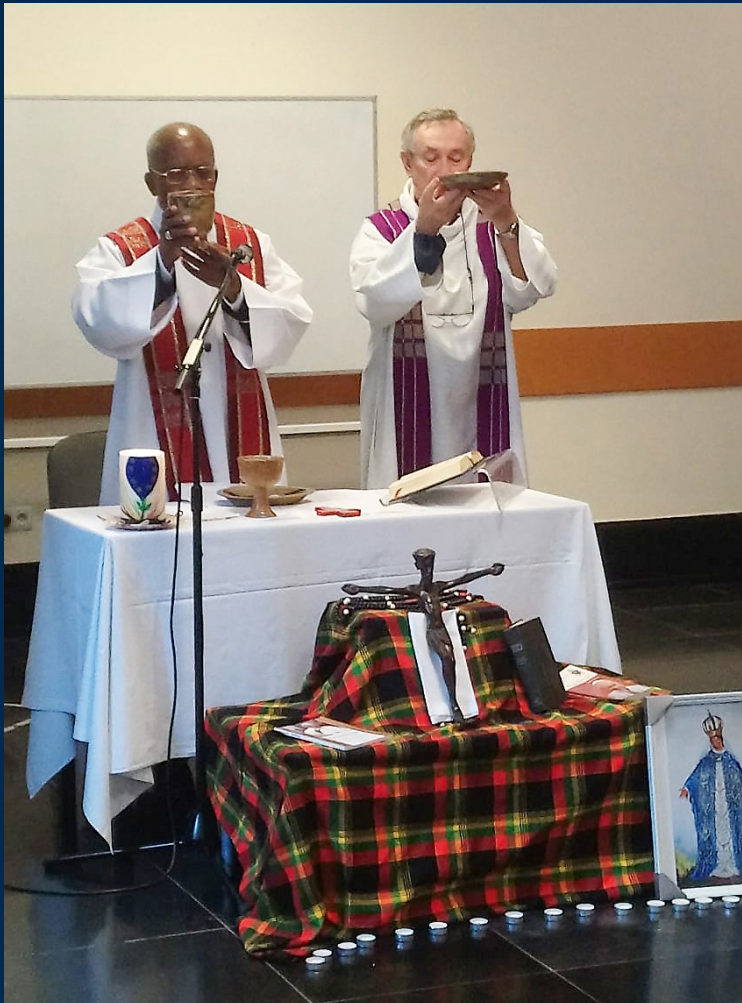
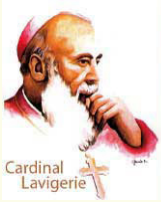


MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA (WHITE FATHERS)



May 2022



Mary
Queen Of Africa
Pray for Us.
Missionaries Of Africa



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Editor's Word

We will again be praying the **Novena to St. Anthony** from **6th to 13th June** and intentions sent in to us will be kept before the altar and statue of St. Anthony during each Mass.



Fr. Michael Heap MAfr

It is sometimes forgotten that St. Anthony originally felt his vocation was to preach Jesus Christ in North Africa. However, after his ship was blown off course and he suffered from ill-health, he adapted to the situation and started a ministry in Padua.

In this month's magazine, we hear about the 2022 Chapter of our Society where we will re-examine our response to God's call and try to adapt the way we proclaim Jesus Christ according to present day circumstances. Fr. Cullen was ordained at a time when almost all Missionaries of Africa were white. He worked as a missionary and as a trainer of missionaries. Now, his life of Mission in Africa completed, younger African confreres are taking his place. But not just African confreres, non-Africans like Fr. Rajesh from India are answering the Call. How are we to see future Missionaries? Br. Patrick challenges us to re-assess our way of looking at the vocation of Brothers.

But it is not only the Society of Missionaries of Africa which is changing rapidly. The Africa of today is in many ways very different from the Africa of 30 years ago or even 10 years ago. The enormous number of young people, the urbanisation, the breakdown of traditional society, the violence, the technological possibilities, to name just a few changes, would make previous generations open their eyes with amazement, sometimes with horror, often with compassion.

Jesus is still sending out witnesses of hope for the future in Africa. Our God is a living God and our responses must be alive to today's reality. Please pray for the representatives gathering in Rome for our Chapter from May to June this year, that the Holy Spirit will fire them up for the service of people of Africa.

The times they are ‘a changin’

by Fr. Michael Heap MAfr

Bob Dylan sang these words back in the 1960’s. They were true then and they are true now. Thanks be to God!

In accordance with our Constitutions, the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) formally review the state of our Society every 6 years during a meeting known as the General Chapter. It is a time for looking critically at what we, as a Society, have done over the last 6 years, and how this compares with our avowed vocation to serve the people of Africa by proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ as it has been confided to the Church. However, in the light of events, ideas and initiatives, which seemed right 6 years or more ago, might no longer seem appropriate or conducive to the Mission and so need to be reappraised. So, years ago, our French-speaking Society adopted English as its second language because we had begun to work in more English-speaking countries.



Delegates of the European Province meeting in Brussels deciding on subjects to be submitted to the Chapter

Again, at first, African candidates were welcomed into our Society be-

cause the structures of a local church in many places could not support a local clergy, then later young Africans were discouraged from coming to the White Fathers and instead were encouraged to join the diocesan clergy to build up the Church in the various parts of Africa. But, by the 1980's, it was agreed that a solid local clergy existed in most places and so African vocations were again actively welcomed. Before Independence our white habit differentiated us from white colonial officials or



The oldest and youngest present counting votes for who is to go as a delegate at the Chapter in Rome

businessmen. Later it was felt that we should dress in a way which helped us identify with the local, now independent, people of Africa, and wearing local shirts with crosses became popular. Later still, Afri-

can confreres were happy to begin wearing the habit again, as a sign of their specific vocation which was not identical with the local clergy. The first missionaries tended to be jacks-of-all-trades. They brought medicines, and useful innovations of all kinds in addition to, or as part of, the Good News. As time went by, the Church became involved in Education, both academic and practical, with schools, clinics and workshops often attached to a mission. Then, with Independence in many countries, the State took over many of these works. Formerly the missionaries had been the most educated people around, however, in many (if not most) places now, there are highly educated and competent local lay people, so the role of the missionary continues to change. Perhaps the biggest, change has been the “drying up” of missionary vocations in traditionally missionary countries



African confreres in the European Province translating at the meeting, English and French

and the flourishing of missionary vocations in Africa and elsewhere in “mission countries”. For the Missionaries of Africa this has meant a gradual return of missionaries to Europe and the Americas to retire, and it has meant that the formation of missionaries now takes place in Africa rather than Europe or North America. In the past “European” missionaries could be relied upon to fund the Mission. This is becoming less and less the case. The churches in Africa have had to become more self-reliant. But they have also become, as is normal, more self-aware. The Good News is meant to be universal. It is not Europeans preaching and

Africans listening. It is meant to be liberating. Every man, woman and child is loved by God as they are, and realising this, they in turn are commissioned to share this Tremendous News. We share it as Europeans, as Africans, as Asians. We are Missionaries of Africa, but where is “Africa”? Many Africans now live and work outside Africa. Thus it was decided that, to be faithful to our vocation, we must reach out to wherever Africans may be, in the “African World”. In May 2022 we begin our next Chapter in Rome. Over a year ago, all members of our Society received a list of questions and topics to reflect upon, concerning how we can be



The five representatives chosen from Europe and the European Provincial (centre front)

more faithful to God’s call. Each community met to discuss it, then sent the results to the Provincial Delegate presiding over a meeting of Sector delegates. From here delegates were sent to a Provincial meeting. There are 6 Provinces in Africa (Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, Central and Ghana/Nigeria), plus 2 Provinces outside Africa (Europe and the Americas), and 2 sectors (Ethiopia/Jerusalem and India/Philippines).



The European Provincial concelebrating Mass with the Papal Nuncio to Belgium praying for the success of the Chapter

Then comes the Generalate in Rome (housing Administration and confreres doing Higher Studies). All these send representatives to the Chapter. Last, but not least, although they are also included in the Provinces, the Brothers form a separate/ additional group sending 2 representatives to the Chapter. These 12 groups and entities sent their musings and recommendations to Rome where a team of 4 sorted them in December 2021 and presented them as a basis for a working document to the Superior General and his 4 Assistants. For 3 months the General and his team worked on this, and will present it in their turn to the Delegates at the Chapter in May and June 2022. During the following 5 weeks a new Superior General and his 4 assistants will be chosen, then

the working document will be discussed and worked with, to provide guidelines, proposals and directives for the next 6 years.

We don't know in advance what will happen. We trust and pray that, frail and human as we are, the Holy Spirit will guide us. What is perhaps remarkable about this Chapter is that there will be more than twice as many African participants (26) as "European" (12) and Asian (1). When I came first to the White Fathers in 1971, we were told over and over, that we were to work towards "doing ourselves out of a job", that the local and missionary Church in Africa should become truly African. Amen! Amen! to that. The dream of our Founder is slowly coming to fruition.

My first year in Mingana

by Fr. Rajesh Kalapala MAfr.

I had heard a lot about Mingana, in DR Congo during my studies. Even though I had actually been in Congo for my stage I had never been to



Mingana, having learned the local language elsewhere. When, after my studies in Ivory Coast, I was appointed to there the reactions from some people were encouraging, but others described it as being

In a Communauté Ecclésiale Vivante de Base

lost in the bush with little

or no contact with the outside world. I was not too discouraged, however because I really believe that God is with those who find themselves in difficult places and that He guides us through the difficulties. Had I not chosen to be a Missionary of Africa? So I came and I am living the reality in Mingana and despite all the stories, we do in fact have a limited mobile connection. So, as I promised in the last article, I would like to share with you what I have experienced here in Mingana over one year as a young missionary;

Mingana as I perceive it. The local Wazimba people called the river which flows behind our house, Mingana (Meéngààna) meaning “many slopes”. Our parish of St Thérèse of the Child Jesus is bounded by four other parishes and was founded in 1940 by Mgr Urbain Morlion. We have 38 outstations or, as we call them, Communautés Ecclésiiales Vivantes de Base (Basic, Living, Ecclesial Communities). Mingana is literally surrounded by dense forest so,



Rain. Good for crops, bad for roads



With a “mwongozi” (community leader)

since the roads are very bad, motorcycles remain the usual means of transport here. The soil is very fertile and suitable for agriculture, and the people can survive quite well with a sub-

sistence economy based on agriculture (rice, maize, cassava, groundnuts and sweet potato), fishing, hunting and rearing small livestock (goats, pigs, sheep, chickens and ducks). When visiting the outstations I have seen that there are health centres established in most large villages, but they are not very effective. The standard of treatment is quite low and so the death rates are high. Children die of malaria because we have insufficient medicine. I find it very sad seeing people die of different sicknesses. The nearest city is about 250 km away and takes more than 8 hours to reach. But, when it rains, there is no question of going to the city for any reason at all. The Missionaries of Africa have been working in Mingana parish since its foundation, but even after 80 years, Primary Evangelisation is still very much part of the work. When visiting the Christian communities on Sundays, I see that there is a huge challenge before us, as regards teaching the Faith. Even though there is a leader (mwongozi) in each community, trained to pass on Catholic teaching in their respective villages, it seems this is not being done, and



Choir during Mass

some parishioners are mixing up the Catholic faith with that of Protestant churches. We Missionaries of Africa are well known throughout the parish and are always well received at the out-

stations. During these visits, I am touched by the generosity of people. However, it is very difficult to visit all the outstations because roads



First communions

are so bad when it rains. Since we have rain throughout year, making the road very slippery, most of the outstations have not been visited in more than a year. When we do get to cele-

brate Mass there, the people are happy and give up rooms to be able to accommodate us and the best food is always prepared for us. Most of these outstations' churches were built by Missionaries of Africa, whilst others are still under construction.

As a newly arrived missionary there are things which I find strange or even shocking. For example, funerals are very important and people travel many miles to present their condolences in person. They bring chickens, goats, food, etc. according to their closeness to the deceased. However, I was shocked by the music and dancing. The mwongozi (leader) usually leads these funerals even if there is a priest present. At the first such funeral I attended, all the people were dancing and laughing, except for a few of the old mothers who were crying. This brought home to me the diversity of cultures. I had always seen funerals as times of pain and sadness. Here it seemed like a time to relax, meet and dance.

Marriages in Mingana are another surprise for me. Young people do not seem very interested in marriage in the church.

Some live with two wives and see it as normal. Their culture has perhaps been influenced by the Arabs who came



Dancing and singing in church

to the area to trade. For some, including minors, the most important thing in life is marriage, so, they abandon school to find a wife or a husband. Unfortunately, the marriages don't always last. Some women have to leave their husbands' homes and return to live with their parents because of unpaid dowries or infidelity on the part of their husbands. Usually these men and women don't receive Holy Communion, so we have numerous Christians, but few who receive Holy Communion. In our Christian communities people know each other, love each other and help each other. They know who amongst them are suffering, who are



Few come for Communion

poor and sick. So the collection of the first Sunday of the month is always given to the poor. With this we buy soap, salt and palm oil to distribute to these poor people. At

the end of the month, I visit them with these gifts, to chat and pray with them. In fact in general, most people in Mingana are poor, but some have nothing to eat at all and not even a room to sleep in. Some elderly have been abandoned by their own children, whilst others are suffering from treatable diseases. Sometimes I give money for medicine to some who are very sick because, in my opinion, outside the Christian community there is little solidarity among neighbours. Another challenge is that sacramental life has not really penetrated into the lives of the people who are still very attached to their cultures and traditions. For example, they find the funerals and marriages more important than the Mass. Catholic charismatics animate almost all funerals but rarely come to Mass,



Mass in the Parish church

sometimes they stay outside the church or somewhere else rehearsing. Only a few Church groups actually show their commitment to the Church. For example, the Mamas Catholiques and the group of wajane (widows) who clean the church. But I do not see a similar commitment from young people. People have their own way of seeing things. I understand that in the past confreres were generous with money and gifts. So now, on several occasions, young people have asked me what I was going to give them if they came to the Youth Ministry? For them, these are “projects”, and so they should be paid for their participation. For them, everything that exists in the parish belongs to them. If I refuse, they insult me saying I have come with their money and I don't give them what belongs to them. It is not easy to be a missionary here, but



Rajesh, lots to experience, lots to learn.

we are doing our best. But please, don't misunderstand me, in general the Wazimba are a welcoming people. They warmly welcome strangers into their homes. For them, welcoming a stranger into their home is a blessing. So, when welcoming a stranger into their home, they do everything to make him or her feel comfortable. They show their generosity and joy to a visitor by giving gifts, often a chicken or eggs.

I give thanks to God for all these experiences that I have had here in Mingana over this last year. I am learning a lot. I ask you readers to pray for the mission in Mingana, for the people and for me, for patience, determination, prudence, love, charity and above all a humble and prayerful heart to be able to bear witness to the Good News.

Poisoning in DRC. Myth or Reality?

by Michael Okunola, Nigerian Missionaries of Africa student in DR Congo

Traditionally in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), as well as in most of sub-Saharan Africa, life is considered a central and most valued element. Life pushes us to search for harmony and balance, and, of course, death is the opposite of life. In the DRC, life is celebrated, the people consider life as the most precious good that a human being can have, and that real and profound happiness consists in living as a well-known and respected person until old age. For this reason, the people of DRC, like in many African societies, celebrate all the important stages of life, such as birth, puberty, marriage, and death. When Africans pray, they do so to protect life, to increase life, and to remove from it whatever threatens it (famine, disease, evil spirits, curses and accidents). In sub-Saharan African cultures, people believe that life on earth is a passage leading to death; a “good death” is one which occurs in old age, after one has lived a good moral life, lived through the most important stages of human life, made a tangible impact in the society, and left behind a long list of descendants. So death is considered to be a rite of passage into a new life only for those who die at an acceptable old age, having lived a meaningful life. This means that death for anyone except



People can be harmed physically with poison. Societies can be poisoned by fear. Fear can be fanned by lies and distrust.

the very old is considered unnatural and premature. When such a death occurs, many Africans try to search for the cause of death, and usually dark forces such as witchcraft or evil spirits are blamed. Sometimes it is believed that the

gods or the ancestors have punished the dead person for his or her mis-

conduct. Today, in the context of modern Congolese society, death and sickness are still viewed as unnatural; they are still considered as forces that hinder life and happiness. However, today, in this particular African context, a shift is coming about. Instead of blaming sicknesses and early deaths on dark forces, other human beings are being blamed, particularly as poisoners. In the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in the western part, notably in Kinshasa (the capital city), when residents succumb to serious illnesses, the first thought that comes to mind is poisoning, and because of this, the deaths of a large number of people in these regions is attributed to poisoning. As a first resort, when they contract tuberculosis, typhoid fever, malaria, or any of the different types of cancer, local people consult traditional healers because they are convinced that they have been poisoned. But is poisoning a reality or just a myth nurtured by popular belief and fear. It is certain



Antidotes to poison are sold on the market. The only real antidote to hatred is love and trust in God.

that in eastern Congo, such as in war-torn Kivu provinces, conflicts have displaced hundreds of thousands of people, and this has contributed to the widespread belief that “enemies” are hell bent on eliminating others (which is true), and the weapon of choice is poison (which is possible). In the West, in the capital Kinshasa, a lot of unexplained and sudden deaths have been happening recently at all levels of society. In families, amongst politicians, academics or co-workers, unexplained deaths are on the rise and people naturally believe that this is due to poisoning. Almost everyone I know personally here in Kinshasa (locals, as well as people from other parts of the country) believes they have seen or experienced the malefic effects of poisoning. Perhaps a member of their family has been killed through poisoning. Perhaps a person is still suffering only because they haven’t yet found the antidote to the poison. Always poison!

Worse still, this belief has crept into the religious context, even the Catholic Church has not being exempt. There are cases of priests and religious sisters who claimed they have been poisoned (by their fellow priests, other religious sisters, or by Christian laypeople). Often this happens when the person is in a power tussle or holds a position of high responsibility. We have heard of Bishops being targets of successive poison attacks. Naturally, this sows a terrible suspicion in people. They are suspicious when offered something to drink or eat and to stay safe some will not even eat outside their homes or religious communities. Without any doubt, the Congolese people and particularly the people of Kinshasa, among whom I live, have always been known for their generosity and hospitality. But there is a risk that this may be lost because of the growing mistrust and suspicion amongst people. And what of the Church and its Mission? Pope Francis, in his homily during the Chrism Mass in 2013 said, “Be shepherds with the smell of sheep, so that people can sense the priest is not just concerned with his own congregation, but is also a fisher of men”. So the priest or the missionary must be one with all the people, must share their day-to-day lives, share their joys, worries, and sorrows. This means visiting them in their homes and in their communities. In a typical African context, a visitor must be well fed and taken care of. However, how can this happen if there is a fear of being poisoned even by one’s flock?

Learning Arabic in Egypt

by Fr. Victor Domshiwe Shehu MAfr.

I enjoy being a missionary, not just because I love to preach the Good News but also, because of the challenging nature of the work which, in many instances, requires great flexibility and adaptability on the part of the missionaries. Apart from having an unpredictable work schedule,



Victor in front of the Pyramids

as well as learning the cultures and traditions of other peoples, a missionary may be required to learn, sometimes simultaneously, multiple languages, which may or may not be familiar. This is all for the sake of the Mission. My recent experiences fit very well within this scenario. On finishing my previous commitment as Vocation

Director in Nigeria, as I wrote in my previous article, I was appointed to Tunisia for my next mission. For this new mission, both French and Arabic were essential. Learning Arabic has been a completely novel experience for me. It has been a challenge that is both strenuous and interesting. The unexpected challenges started even before I got onto the plane for Egypt. Answering questions from friends and relatives who were curious about me going off to learn Arabic in Egypt was sometimes even more challenging than the multiple difficulties I was having trying to get a visa. What does a priest need Arabic for? Are you a Muslim in disguise? What is a priest going to do with Arabic? Does he want to be an Imam or does he want to convert to Islam? What are you going to do in a country that is dominated by Muslims? Are there any churches there? Are there any indigenous Christians in Egypt? These are a few examples of the numerous questions I had to answer just before leaving for



Egypt. It is natural to be curious about things we do not know. To answer my people and many others who may not have much knowledge about the Arabic language, I wish to state that Arabic is a language and not a religion. This language is not exclusive to any religion. The Arabic language and culture

existed before Islam. Rather, Islam was born into an Arab culture and language. In Acts 2:7-11, we find that the Arabic language was one of the languages that was spoken by the Apostles when the Holy Spirit descended on them at Pentecost. Nor is Christianity alien to Egypt. St. Mark, the Apostle, introduced Christianity into Egypt as early as the 1st Century, and the Coptic Christians have remained resilient and faithful there despite intense persecution from bigots and extremists until the present. The vast majority of Christians in Egypt are of the Coptic tradition, but there are also Maronites, Chaldeans, Greek (Orthodox and Catholic), Syriac (Orthodox and Catholic), Melkites, Armenians (Catholic and Orthodox), Latin Catholics, Anglicans and other Protestants as well as some Evangelical and Pentecostal churches scattered across this ancient state. In Mathew 2:13-23, we find that even the Holy Family took refuge in Egypt, so suffice it to say that Egypt is not short of Christian presence in the past nor the present. Indeed



Greek Orthodox cathedral

it is noteworthy to mention that monastic life was born in Egypt. There are monasteries in the Wadi Al-Natroun dating back to the 4th. Century. The most famous of the anchorites, or hermit monks, was St. Anthony of Egypt (251- c. 356). So Egypt is a marvellous place to be. Apart from coming into contact with a unique Arabic culture, one gets to visit historic sites like the Pyramids of Giza, the Valley of the Kings, the Abu Simbel Temples, the Saqqara necropolis, the Hanging Church, the underground library of Alexandria, the Nile and the famous Suez Canal. All these and many other sites have brought tourists to Egypt and have left Cairo with a surging human population, as huge numbers of tourists fly in and out from across the entire world just to catch glimpses of the ancient sites of Egypt. On the more tragic side, there are also huge numbers of refugees who have fled to Egypt from the Sudan, South Sudan, Yemen, Syria and Eritrea. This heaving human population naturally needs to get about and the buses, trams, cars, donkey carts and other vehicles regularly cause huge traffic jams lasting for hours, especially where there are major road junctions. I was stuck in one such traffic jam till 1 a.m. after a New Year's Eve vigil Mass.

As many people know, Arabic is the main language used in the Maghreb (Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia). To be able to live and work in the Maghreb, one must at least learn to speak Classical (Modern Standard) Arabic. Learning Arabic, from the perspective of someone with a background of Western education already, is a challenging task. The eccentric appearance of the alphabet, the completely reversed grammatical structure of a sentence and a totally different way of writing (from



Everyone likes a selfie

left to right) requires more energy from those who have had contact with western texts and writing. Arabic words looked like graffiti when I first saw them. I wondered if I was ever going to get any meaning at all out of them. The day after my arrival, I was sitting in class. Just like a child, I was taught the alphabet (consonants). The next day, I learned the vowels

and how they are pronounced. After three days, I started reading two and three letter words. The graffiti were gradually becoming not just legible but intelligible. I am however, yet to understand why the English and French have adopted the “Arabic” numerals but the Arabs, instead, use “Indian” numerals! In fact, I had always wanted to learn the Arabic because there is some mutual intelligibility with Hausa and Swahili with both of which I am already familiar. The Swahili civilisation in East Africa adopted many Arabic words (and even the alphabet at first) whilst keeping a Bantu grammar. The Hausa states in West Africa and the Berbers of the Maghreb traded for centuries across the Sahara Desert and so many Arabic words entered into the Hausa language. Knowing both languages drew me to Arabic.

As God will have it, I am now here to learn the language so that I can carry on with my apostolate. I am in community with five other confreres (Missionaries of Africa) all studying Arabic at the Dar Comboni Institute for Arabic studies. The Institute takes in many other students of Arabic from other religious congregations, Salesians, SMA, Franciscan Sisters, Benedictines, and as well as Comboni Fathers and Sisters. It also admits secular students. At the moment there are secular students from Korea, India, Italy, Belgium and the United Kingdom as well as other countries. Most of our tutors are Muslims, but they know the Bible well. Their student-centred approach to teaching and learning makes them very open. Mindful of the diversity of cultures and religious beliefs in their classes, they treat everyone with respect and humility. This leaves us feeling highly integrated and



better motivated to learn the language without unnecessary stress. But despite all the beautiful experiences, learning a new language still means hard slog at the beginning, however I believe that with time and commitment I will be fine. With each passing day, I grow just a little less ignorant of the language.

With only a few months left to finish the language course, I am looking to the future with hope, and preparing to go back to Tunisia in June. *Insha'Allah.*

Fr. Victor smiling as always

Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity



**Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald
Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral**

Cardinal Michael Fitzgerald MAfr was awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list in January for services to interfaith and inter-Church partnerships. Then in March he received an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Divinity from Hope University.

He thanked the authorities of Hope University for the honorary Doctorate and went on to thank two other institutions, "First the Society of Missionaries of Africa, the religious institution to which I belong. Without the formation with which the Society provided me, I would not have been able to engage in interreligious relations in the same way. The second institution is the Holy

See, and in particular Pope John Paul II who appointed me Secretary and then President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. This gave the possibility of engaging in dialogue at a world level. Thirdly I would add the people of other religions, Muslims, Buddhists and others, because without partners there could be no dialogue. I have been awarded an honorary degree as a Doctor of Divinity. This, in some ways, is strange because, though a trained theologian, I have never taught Christian theology. I have indeed been engaged, through lectures and publications, in trying to make sure that interreligious relations are grounded in sound theology. The fact that this award is granted

by Hope University, an ecumenical institution, is especially pleasing, because working together with the World Council of Churches was always a source of great joy”.

Cardinal Fitzgerald was awarded the Honorary degree in recognition for his work fostering links and friendships across Merseyside. Having retired as Apostolic Nuncio in Egypt and Delegate to the League of Arab States in 2012, Cardinal Fitzgerald arrived in Liverpool in December 2018, to join his fellow Missionaries. He explained, “The community to which I belong, the Missionaries of Africa, has been situated in St Vincent de Paul parish in Liverpool 1, on the edge of Chinatown, and has been given the task of relating to Muslims. A member of the community and I started to make contact with Muslims, and we were establishing friendly relations. In May 2019 we were invited to a wonderful Iftar (the meal for the breaking of the fast during Ramadan) organised by the Merseyside Network of Mosques at the Pier Head. Then COVID arrived and stymied us. We are just getting ready to make new efforts.”

On the theme of peace and referring to the conflict in the Ukraine, Cardinal Fitzgerald said that the crisis illustrates the global need for dialogue, understanding and peace. He then added, “We see that the reaction of Pope Francis to the war in Ukraine is to call for an end to armed combat and for dialogue to take its place. He has offered the good offices of the Church to pursue mediation. This is very much in line with the Document on Human Fraternity that he co-signed together with Dr Ahmad al-Tayyeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, Cairo. This document calls on ‘ourselves’, that is all Christians and Muslims, ‘upon the leaders of the world...to work strenuously to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace; to intervene at the earliest opportunity to stop the shedding of innocent blood and bring an end to wars’. In my opinion this statement presents a wide-reaching programme for Christians and Muslims throughout the world, as also for people belonging to other religions, and indeed for all people of good will.”

Cardinal Fitzgerald is an advisor for interfaith affairs to the Commission of the Archdiocese of Liverpool for Dialogue and Unity.

In 2019 he became the Patron of the charity ‘Fellowship and Aid to Christians in the East’ (FACE). He was created Cardinal by Pope Francis on 5 October 2019.

The Brothers' Vocation: a personal reflection

by Br. Patrick Babagereh Norah MAfr.

Drawing on 28 years as a fully-fledged Missionary of Africa working in Formation, here is a personal reflection on the Brothers' Vocation in general and in the Missionaries of Africa in particular. Since starting with the Society in 1984, in every General Chapter time and space has been devoted to the question of the formation of the Brothers. Yet, so few young men are interested in the Brothers' vocation in our Society. Why? To answer this, we need humility, honesty, frankness and an awareness of the history of our Society/Church. Firstly, the low image of the Brothers has its roots not only in our Society, but in how Vocation itself is seen. Formerly in our Society, the Priesthood was meant for those who were "intelligent" and the Brotherhood for those with a low IQ. This image of the Brother still exists today, whether we like it or not. In the past, Brother candidates had to have a profession as an entry requirement to begin Formation. These days this is no longer obligatory. The entry requirements are now the same for both Brothers and Clerics. Over the years, our Society has tried to create an awareness of the uniqueness of the Brothers' vocation, and yet there has never been a time when the number of Brothers is anywhere close to that of the priests. Indeed until 2018, our Society was defined as 'a **clerical** institute of Pontifical Right by Decree dated 16th March 1879'. It seems to me that in the Church at large, the problem is the same. In some countries society is very "clericalized" and I can't see Brother candidates coming from such places into our Society anytime soon, especially when in some congregations the place of Brothers is reserved for those candidates who are academically incapable of studying for the priesthood. Superiors still regularly ask those candidates who have failed their exams to proceed to the Brotherhood. Even the way the word 'brother' is used blurs the uniqueness of the Brothers' vocation. For some it merely means those on their way to the Priesthood. Again members of some lay organisations also call one another "brother". Finally, for me there is room for our Society to improve upon the recruitment and formation of Brother candidates, but I personally believe that the problem lies with how Brothers are perceived, not only in our Society, but in the Church in general.

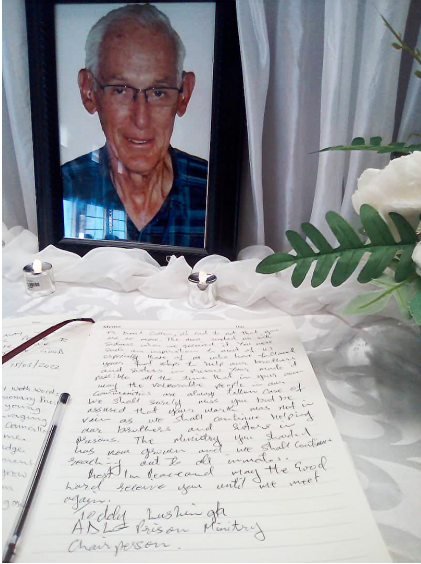




Book of Condolences for Fr. Dave



Fr Douglas Ogato MAfr. sends a few of the memories (too numerous to include more than a few) shared by friends, colleagues and parishoners in Zambia in a Book of Condolences. Mass will be celebrated there to coincide with his funeral in London.



Parishioners of Good Shepherd parish, Kabwata, in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, where Fr. Dave Cullen served as a priest for more than 20 years from 1986-2009, described him as a selfless missionary who had a big heart for the poor in the parish and beyond. One parishoner wrote, “There is a lot one can pen down about the altruistic, simplicity and practical works of Fr. Dave Cullen. He was a humble and selfless man. A ‘saint of our times in action’.” Another added, “As long as a person or family needed help, he reached

out to them. He did not ask them whether they were Catholics or not. However, some ended up stealing from him especially young people who needed school support. But this didn’t deter him from helping those who came to him seeking help. And due to close proximity of the University Teaching Hospital in Lusaka to our parish, patients from different parts of the country discharged from the hospital but lacking bus fare back home, came to him seeking help. The hospital staffs knew that there was a ‘saint’ at Kabwata parish and they therefore referred such patients to him. Our St. Vincent de Paul office for the poor was always full of people in need of help.” Fr. Dave is credited with having begun the prison apostolate in the Archdiocese of Lusaka, still vibrant today. There, he advocated for the integral well-being of prisoners across prisons. One laywoman who worked closely with him for 12 years in this apostolate wrote, “I remember the late Fr Dave as a champion of Justice and Peace in Lusaka prisons. He advocated for speedy hearing of cases

of prisoners who had overstayed in the prisons. He bought medicines for sick prisoners. He made sure that detained illegal immigrants were repatriated back to their respective countries. He helped them with letter writing to their relatives, informing them where they were incarcerated. He built a very big visitors' bay for Central Prison in Chimbokaila. He built a counselling room for inmates. He made sure prisoners had Masses on every 1st Sunday of the month in all the five prisons in Lusaka. He advocated for the separation of juveniles from adult prisoners. He also facilitated bus fares for freed prisoners going back to their respective places in the country. He did all these things with patience and love. It was not easy for him as he was sometimes denied entry to the prison to visit sick prisoners, but he persevered." "Each time he was in prison I could see him smiling to the prisoners and embracing the sick on ARVs and TB drugs. At one point he contracted tuberculosis, and upon being healed he did not stop supporting them in his own simple way until was transferred to Chipata". A Jesuit priest who worked with him wrote, "What a great priest and gentleman he was! His passion for years for parish ministry and Marriage Encounter and for Ignatian Spirituality. May his spirit live on in us his brothers and sisters!" A sister who knew him for more than 30 years wrote, "Fr. Dave went to St. Beuno's Retreat Centre in Wales. There he picked up all the tips he could and on his return organized individually guided retreats in Zambia. He admitted that he didn't know how these retreats would be received, but it was worth giving it a try. They were so popular that we always had a waiting list! I would like you and your confreres to know the wonderful legacy that Fr. Dave has left. He started something tremendous and we are ever grateful to him. May he rest in peace."

Fr. Dave Cullen MAfr 1932 -2022 was laid to rest in St. Mary's Cemetery, Kensal Rise alongside his Missionary of Africa confreres after a Requiem Mass in St. Peter and Paul parish in Northfields where two months before, he had celebrated his 90th birthday surrounded by family, friends and confreres. Now we celebrated his return to his Father, a task and a life completed. The Mass was televised live and was seen by many in Zambia who were praying for him.



Family and friends pay tribute to a generous, kind, holy man and a dedicated missionary. Taken in the fulness of time to the place prepared for him by the Father.

A simple basket-ware coffin. On top the symbols of Fr. Dave's life - the stole worn at Mass, the chalice for the blood of Christ, the cross of Jesus' love and the Bible - life giving word for all.



A sombre, cold day in London. Fr. Dave's body is laid in the ground.

Messages from UK and Africa testify to the warmth with which Fr. Dave is held in the hearts of those who knew him. Rest in Peace, Dave.

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May they rest in peace



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