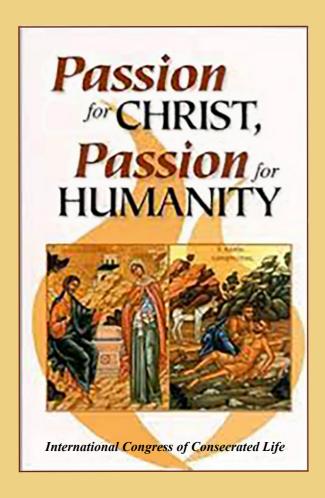
MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA

(WHITE FATHERS)



November 2022







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The month of November is traditionally the Month of the Holy Souls. We will be praying daily at Mass for our deceased benefactors throughout November. Please feel free to send in the names of your deceased loved ones to be placed at the altar.

Editor's Word

In December 2014 and January 2015 some 20 Egyptian Christians were kidnapped in Libya by ISIL militants. A year later another 30 Ethiopian Christians were also kidnapped. All were decapitated for being "People of the Cross" and for "carrying the Cross delusion for a long time". With the Egyptians there was a Ghanaian Christian who chose to die with them. As Pope Francis wrote, "they only said 'Jesus help me'"



Fr. Michael Heap MAfr

Last week I was in touch with a young African confrere (ordained 3 years ago). He had been on his first Home Leave from Zambia, where he works, to see his family in Congo. During this home leave he had to flee with his family into the forest because of rebels/terrorists. For his family this is not the first time (nor probably the last). At the end of his Leave he had to return to his parish naturally anxious for his family.

In the first article of our magazine today, Fr. Jim Greene describes the work he and others men and women religious are doing in South Sudan. He speaks about a book which prompted them to work together. "Passion for Christ Passion for Humanity".

It struck me that the Egyptians, Ethiopians and Ghanaian above were willing to die because they believed passionately in Christ. The young confrere could follow his vocation despite the tugs on his heart as a son and brother because he believes passionately in Christ. In greater or lesser degrees, it is the same for all missionaries. If there is no passion for Christ then we are simply propagandists, selling a product.

But surely the same is true of all Christians? By our Baptism we were immersed in Christ, we were filled with the Holy Spirit, we became Children of the Father, sharing the life of the Trinity.

To stand up on Sunday and say, "I believe", is a very poor response to Christ's passion for us. If we really believe, then how can our daily lives not be affected and changed by his Passion? Perhaps a first step towards this passion would be to say with our African martyrs, "Jesus help me."

A Call to South Sudan by Fr. Jim Greene M. Afr.

Fr. Jim is an Irish Missionary of Africa who worked in Malawi, then on the General Council in Rome, then as Bursar in St. Anne's, Jerusalem.



Three and a half years ago I was delighted to be appointed to South Sudan. This was the first time in my missionary life that I had ever asked for a particular job, as there was something about South Sudan that attracted me. When I asked to go to the newest independent African state, there was no Missionary of Africa community in the country although a number of our missionaries had worked there throughout the war torn years of the 1980s and 1990s. Since I have arrived, the Missionaries of Africa have decid-Sr. Jacintha gives Fr. Jim a haircut ed to open a new parish community in the northern diocese of Malakal, a

visible commitment to living mission on the peripheries! (see Mag. Aug 2022). Reading about the country before my arrival in January 2019, I learned that South Sudan was near the bottom of every social and development index. Clearly, the decades of civil strife between the Arab

north and the African south of the old Sudan had left deep wounds and enduring underdevelopment. For example, just before independence there was a total of 40 local registered nurses in a country with a population of 12 million 84% of women were illiterate. with the men faring only



Sunrise Nursery and Primary School



Rimenze Primary School

slightly better! These are some of the measurable outcomes of war, but they did not capture the lingering effects of violence on individuals and families. Even the institutional church was not exempt from this, with many parishes abandoned, priests living with trauma and only three

of the seven dioceses having a bishop. Matters were not helped when the country descended into a murderous inter-tribal war shortly after

independence. Thankfully, today there is peace in the country, even as an estimated 4 million refugees live in camps inside and outside the country, afraid to return home. This year marked 10 years of independence of the country, with many commentators noting that this time has led to the bet-



Solidarity Teacher Training College



Input from Sr Jacintha

terment of the few on the top, while the overwhelming majority on the bottom have not tasted many benefits. In all this, I was taken by one particular initiative of the Church. In 2006, over 400 religious congregations began to reflect on how they might respond to such



Solidarity Farm crops

an enormous challenge with very limited resources. They felt drawn to make a contribution, inspired by the theme 'Passion for Christ, Passion for Humanity'. The upshot of this reflection was the formation of a group of religious men and women from many congregations and nationalities, working together with

lay missionaries. They took the name 'Solidarity with South Sudan'. The idea was not to work 'for' but alongside and 'with' the local people and church. They opted, along with the church in South Sudan, to train primary school teachers, nurses and midwives and to form and support pastoral workers. An agricultural project would come later. Key ideas in all this were 'collaboration' and 'capacity building' - training the

leaders of tomorrow. What Solidarity with South Sudan wanted to do was very modest faced with its limited resources and the enormity of the challenge. However, it did represent a new initiative, with many religious congregations coming together under one banner and one roof, with a common mission and agreeing to live and work



Solidarity Members Assembly

together. At the time of starting, this initiative was referred to as 'a new paradigm of religious life for the 21st century'. Perhaps that title was a little overambitious, but there was (and is) something very refreshing about religious men and women cooperating and living together, leaving individual differences behind and focusing on the primordial call of the Gospel 'I have come that they may have life' John 10.10 Today, we



Roseline Edward Anthony Graduate at work

are 18 religious, representing 16 different congregations, from 4 continents working in a teacher training college, a nurses' and midwifery training institute, a sustainable agriculture project and a retreat and pastoral centre. Recently a lay missionary joined.

We hope that the impact we make is not simply judged by the limited numbers of people we form and train, but that we are able to touch the hearts of those with whom we come into contact. We are a very diverse group of different nationalities, congregations, spiritualties and profes-

sions, committed to living out our tensions and differences in a peaceful way and at the service of others. We hope that this might inspire others in a country that is divided in so many different ways. Like everywhere else in the world, South Sudan has been affected by Covid. However,



CHTI clinical rotation

it is difficult to know the extent of the pandemic here, since there is no national Covid testing program and the hospital system, such as it is, is already overwhelmed with all kinds of other medical challenges. One effect was that we had to close our training institutes for months on end, sending our students back to their homes, while we remained cocooned in our houses. A familiar scenario the world over! Thankfully,



Successful graduate nurses and midwives

everywhere is now open. Last month I was able to attend the graduation ceremony in our nurses and midwives training institute (CHTI). What a joyful occasion with 26 nurses and 15 midwives from all over the country graduating as state certified medical practitioners. It was great to see a group of self-confi-

dent and professionally qualified young people, happy to have received more education than vast majority of their peers from home, and parents who were proud that their children had reached a level that was always denied them. What is more, in a country where women are denied so many chances to advance, it was great to see that almost half of the graduates were female. Progress is often written in the small print of people's lives and not in big headlines. Statistics cannot measure the impact of education on these people's lives or the good that they will



Rejoice with me!

do afterwards in helping their country. Helping some young people to become nurses, primary school teachers and better trained pastoral workers, is one small way for the mustard seed of God's kingdom to grow.

My Sacred Journey

by Silvesta Daison, a Tanzanian student preparing to become a Missionary of Africa. He is in his 2nd year of Pastoral Experience in Liverpool.

"To go on pilgrimage really means to step out of ourselves in order to encounter God where God's grace has shone with particular splendour", wrote Pope Benedict.



We were starting as strangers to one another but with hope

A pilgrimage is a journey that has religious or spiritual significance and is usually taken to an important religious place, so when I heard that the Faithful Companions of Jesus (FSJ Sisters), with whom we work here in Liverpool, were organizing a pilgrimage to Lindisfarne/Holy Island my curiosity was aroused and I spoke to my community members about it. Since I am here in St. Vincent's Parish in Liverpool for 2 years as part of my preparation towards becoming a missionary priest, we decided that this could be a useful experience.



Lots of walking, lots of reflections

As Missionaries of Africa it is normal for us to immerse ourselves in the culture of the people with whom we are working. I had already been studying English, meeting people in the parish and elsewhere and now this was a chance to visit a major site in En-

glish spirituality, not as a tourist, but in prayer and reverence.

Lindisfarne is the site of a monastery off the coast of Northumberland from which missionaries (St Aidan, St Cuthbert and others) spread God's word throughout the Northern parts of England. Goodness seems to attract hatred, and so this was the first monastery to be attacked and destroyed by the Vikings. The First Day, three of us set off by car from Liverpool to Preston. There, we waited for the other pilgrims in a bunkhouse where we would spend our first night. We were warmly welcomed by the staff with tea and biscuits. This simple, rough building was surrounded by Nature. There were chickens running free and I shared some of my biscuits with them. Looking around, I could hear different bird's singing and insects buzzing. It almost felt as if I were back in Africa.



Sometimes take it easy



The others arrived. We were 2 men and 9 women. How would this turn out?

We started our pilgrimage with a hymn. "This is holy ground", we sang,



Look around and see the goodness of God

"we are standing on holy ground, For the Lord is present, and where God is, is holy". We were to sing this at every stop and stage of our pilgrimage. I had been asked by several people to pray for them, but in addition, I also had my own thoughts to share with God. What is important in my life at the moment? Where do I experience God? What significance am I bringing to this pil-

grimage? What are my hopes? On Day 2, we set off early and walked through Wooler to St Cuthbert's cave. As I walked, I reflected on my vocation journey, on married life, on the dangers of Clericalism. Some of these thoughts I shared with my fellow pilgrims. Day 3, we went on



Almost there. We reach the Cross

to Belford and St. Cuthbert's Way. Walking these 24kms I was aware of the beauty of God's creation and how God seemed to dwell in all these creatures I just asked myself if not God, who could have created them.

who else can do this? I looked at the mountains, the plants, the animals and my fellow pilgrims, each with their own characters. I looked at this one who was always smiling and how that one walked so majestically. All I could do was to give thanks for the wonderful work of God's hands. That became one of the significant things which I brought to the Lord in this pilgrimage, giving thanks for God's unconditional love, the gift of life and for encounter with God in the pilgrimage. I praised God for the vastness of the earth and the variety of its formation, but also prayed that my eyes should remain open to its beauty so that I might continue to discover God's wisdom in my life and strengthen my love for the whole of creation. During Day 3 the sun creams we had brought with us were not strong enough. My skin turned darker and all the others





Happy to arrive, yet sad to split up

turned bright red. We got lost - we got tired - we tried to follow our map - taking off our shoes we trudged along the black, slippery, mud of the pilgrims' path to the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. Trusting in God and encouraging each other. Day 4, St. Cuthbert's Island at last! We went along the

beach, competing in pairs to see who could collect most litter from the beach. We won! This was a special day, we prayed together and had our

dinner in a restaurant. The fish and chips were lovely.

Day 5 was a sad day. No one wanted to leave and yet it was our last day together. In Durham Cathedral, we prayed at the shrine where St. Cuthbert and St. Oswald's head are buried and so we concluded this our pilgrimage. This pilgrimage has now become part of my vocation history, part of my Faith history, especially visiting for the first time a place where the Saint's body rests. I enjoyed setting off on the journey, the sojourn at the shrine, the encounter with the sacred, then the homecoming, taking a train back to continue my journey with the Lord in Liverpool and.....?



MY INVOLVEMENT IN THE MEDIA

by Michael Okunola from Nigeria. Michael has begun his 3rd Year of Theology Studies in Kinshasa, Congo to become a Missionary of Africa

The lockdown which was imposed in many countries during the coronavirus pandemic as a means of curbing the dispersion of the virus, definitely came with a lot of challenges, and inconveniences. But then again, one has to acknowledge that it also helped us to discover new ways to do the things that we must do, especially on a daily basis. Furthermore, the lockdown helped us to discover that certain things which we were in the habit of doing through a physical attendance, such as work, meetings, and church gatherings, might also be done at a distance, when being physically present is not possible. Moreover, in lockdown, many people found themselves living a kind of monotony with a lot more free time than before. To use this free time and avoid boredom, many people ended up learning new things from home; some, indeed, were able to start a project which they had planned but hadn't been able to put it into execution due to lack of time.



Literally working from home

Personally during the lock-down, I ventured further into media creation. In April 2020, I was making my 2 years pastoral experience in a parish in Malawi, when the country was put into compulsory lockdown and everyone was forced to stay home. This, if you remember, also meant that churches have to put

a pause on all religious gatherings. But then how were we to continue religious activities at a distance? As a parish, we were preoccupied with the thought of leaving our parishioners like sheep without a shepherd; we did not want to leave the Christians without contact with the Word of God, as keeping them nourished with God's Word would be for them

a source of strength during the difficult time. During a pastoral team meeting the proposition which came up was to find a way of reaching out to them in their various homes.

The only possible solution was through the internet, specifically through Whatsapp and Facebook. Thus we started a Facebook page for the parish and we decided to make use of all existing WhatsApp groups formed by the parishioners. As a community, we were able to continue having daily masses, however the faithful were not able to participate physically, therefore, we would make audio recordings of our daily masses, especially the homilies, and diffused to the parishioners through Whatsapp every morning. We wanted to make the recordings look like



Live streaming the choir

a podcast with background music, preferably in an Mp3 format, so that the recordings could be transferred also to people who were not using smart phones. The challenge was how to do the editing as fast as possible so that it would get to the parishioners almost immediately after mass. So, I had to do a bit of "mugging up" on YouTube. The first few

days were slow and heavy going, but once I got the hang of it, I saved time by creating a template which helped me to do the editing in little or no time at all. On Sundays, instead of just making voiced recordings, we eventually managed to live-stream the Holy Mass, giving our parishioners a view of the church building and the altar. In this way we were hoping to give them a sense of physical presence during the Eucharistic celebration. In this way we were able to remain in constant contact with our parishioners, feeding them spiritually and helping them cope with the difficulties and challenges that came with the lockdown.



At Mass with the White Sisters (MSOLA)

The skill which I picked up during this time has continued to prove itself useful. I am currently in our seminary in Congo studying Theology, and I am one of the administrators of our community's Facebook page. As students undergoing formation, there are some important stages in our vocation journey that we would like to share with our friends and our family members. Unfortunately, since we are hundreds and hundreds of miles away from them, it is impossible for them to be present with us physically during important events and celebrations. But

live-streaming such important moments and events such as Final Oaths and Diaconate ordinations have proven to be a very effective means of uniting ourselves with our loved ones who are far away. Having picked up one or two things about live-streaming during my pastoral year, and with the limited resources that are available, I try my best to make as professional a job as possible of it. My hope is to educate myself to a deeper and more professional level in the media field as it has proven itself a useful tool in the work of evangelisation. Apart, from using it as a means of evangelising, honing my skill in this domain will be useful for me in mission, as it can be a source of empowerment for other people, in the sense that I can be able to transmit my technical and professional knowhow to others, especially to the youth.



In French behind the altar, "May it be done according to your word."

So there we have it. Out of the blockage to our work, which was the lockdown, a new possibility has been opened up for spreading the Good News. As one door closes, another opens. Thanks be to God!

THE BEAUTY AND THE HORROR IN KIVU MY TESTIMONY

by Fr. Cyprian Chia MAfr, a Nigerian working in Congo

Situated in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kivu (named after the lake) occupies a very crucial and substantial part of



People seek safety in the town

this giant country.
Kivu covers two
provinces: the Northern Kivu, with Goma
as its capital and Bukavu as the capital of
the Southern Kivu.
This vast region is
super rich in natural
resources, and so is a
great source of temptation to neighbouring
countries and beyond,

hence leading to illicit exploitation and to constant conflicts and wars. The beautiful vegetation, mountains and valleys, wild-life reserves, and mild weather, makes it an earthly paradise. There is also to be found in this beautiful region, men and women of faith.

However, "where lies a dead body, hover the vultures". Rich as Kivu appears to be, it is also fragmented and distorted by violence and conflicts of different kinds. It has become a haven for different groups of



Young or old, everybody flees



Parish groups try to help

rebels and armed insurgents. The northern part of Kivu has fallen prey to natural disasters; volcanic eruptions and erosion. The volcanic eruption of 2021 scattered thousands of people who are still in refugee camps without adequate basic necessities like food, water and proper housing,

exposed to disease and attacks by rebel groups.

Last year 2021, in an attempt to deal with the persistent rebel attacks, the Central Government declared a state of emergency in the North of Kivu and the Northern Region (Ituri) where rebellion has become the order of the day. Despite the implementation of this State of Emergency and military rule being imposed on these parts of the



They run with what they can carry

They put a brave face on disaster

country in accordance with the constitution, we continue to experience some resistance from the rebel groups as well as from some Congolese who, taking advantage of the situation, exploit and rob the poor population.

The recent escalation of violence at Bunagana, in the North-



Attempts are made to shelter everyone

ern Kivu generated a lot of agitation. The Congolese government pointed an accusing finger at neighboring countries for supporting and equipping the so-called M23 rebel group. It is a group that the Congolese government has always associated with

the Rwandan government, and whose activities in Northern Kivu are of long date. The Rwandan government has always rejected the accusation and refused to accept responsibility for the attacks and incursions. Nevertheless, these recurrent attacks have brought about tensions and misunderstanding between DR Congo and Rwanda leading to considerable mistrust, misconception, hatred and discrimination between the two countries. Those who suffer most are, of course, the poor citizens who, despite their innocence, suffer day-to-day persecutions, indignities and harassment. This tension and the atmosphere of distrust and discrimination have even spread amongst Christians in the Church, where prejudices are multiplying. Great efforts are being made to curb this "sickness". We have seen in the activities of the Catholic Bishop of the dio-

cese of Goma, Most Rev. Willy Ngumbi who in all his homilies and pastoral letters calls on all the faithful to work together for a sustainable peace, justice and reconciliation. This message of peaceful coexistence is not only for Catholics, or Christians in general, but also for all people of goodwill.



But a camp is not a home

We have also seen other positive initiatives for sustainable peace coming from the international community whose military and humanitarian 20



No-one chooses to be homeless and dependent

activities should not be neglected. The United Nation's presence in the region over the years has to some extend helped to ease some tensions and contain some rebel attacks, however the local population expects more concrete interventions that can lead to the lasting

peace for which they are desperate. In addition to the UN military intervention there is also the humanitarian relief services. Then there are different non-government organizations, individuals and partners whose activities in the different spheres of life have helped in encouraging employment and bringing relief services to the local population in this region of the Great Lakes. Sadly, despite all these efforts to bring about lasting peace, we are still very far away from attaining a sustainable Peace, with Justice and Reconciliation. Killings, kidnappings and criminal activities are still on-going. Those who fall victim to these atrocities are almost always the poor people whom we visit and talk to every day. That is why we are calling on the people of goodwill like you to reach

out to these innocent people of Kivu. Your prayers for peace, unity and stability in this region and your works of charity could save the lives of many people here and improve their future.

Please remember them.



People struggle to create normality in chaos

Even in old age, they still bear fruit

Fr. Olivier Uwayezu, M. Afr from Rwanda serving in 2 parishes in Uganda, writes here about an outreach in St. Ann Parish, Usuk by the young to the elderly.

Looking at the situation of old men and women in many parts of Africa, most especially in Uganda, we realize that this section of the population has been left aside. Many of these elderly people are despised, neglected and forgotten by their own children. Recently the youth of St. Anne Parish, Usuk in Uganda, began the apostolate of visiting the elderly throughout the parish. Here is a description of what we found: the challenges and joys of an apostolate of visiting the elderly. In the workplan



Tidying up the courtyard

for the year, the young people decided that visiting the elderly and prisoners would be the two priorities for their apostolate. The aim was to awaken all the youth to the realities that are lived by the elderly, to help them

learn from both the negative and positive experiences of the elderly. In every home we visited, we shared with those old men and women. Certainly we shared our food with them, but also in conversations, mostly through questions and answers, we got to know and understand their situation better. We learned how they came to be living alone, despite having children and grandchildren. We made our first visits from 21st to 26th July in order to finish with a party together with the elderly on the occasion of the Feast Day of St. Anne, who is the patron saint of our parish. It was not an easy task since most of the people who were selected for the visits live in villages in the remotest part of the parish. Young people who were born in the different areas were the ones who identified which people we were to visit. We organized things in such a way that the Youth Committee on the parish level together with the chaplain could visit all places designated. We also had to find youth who knew the area well to actually accompany us. That way we, as a team, would



have no difficulty following directions and identifying the correct homes. Nevertheless. although for some places we had someone ready at hand to lead us directly to homes other places, the young

people who were to show us the way, came late, when activities were almost done. We found we could only visit 3 families a day because of the distances between one home to another. Some areas so remote and hard to reach, that even a motorcycle could not get there. In particular we had to walk long distances to get through or around the swamps. I must say, these were tiring journeys, but the old people we found when we got there were the happiest. It was hard for them to believe that strangers would have come to see them. Majority of these people we met live all alone but in talking with them, they were all hopeful, believing that their situation would change. Many of them spoke to us along the lines of: "the same way God sent people to come and visit us now,



Repairing an old lady's house

the same way God will also remember us and continue to care for us through yet other people." Since we did not have enough resources to buy all the items these

old people needed, we opted to buy 5kg of Posho (maize flour), a kilo of salt, 1 bar of soap, 1 kilo of sugar for each individual we visited. We wanted to buy them beans for sauce but sadly we did not have enough money. However, these elderly people received with joy the little we



Sugar is always welcome

could bring them, especially the sugar. On our journey to reach and identify people in need, we came across others who are also in great need. It is true that we can't help everybody but, to my way

of thinking, those people deserved to be helped also. Unfortunately our resources ran out. This is a challenge most especially when we see a situation and yet we can't do much about it. For example, we met one man who is being taken care of by his own kids, the eldest of whom is 7 years old. It is difficult to imagine that this is happening in 21st Century, kids feeding the one who should have been the one feeding them.

They are deprived of education, first of all because the father can't send

them to school but also the father needs at least one of them to help him. It was most noticeable how some people really longed to get some sugar. However, all the items we brought were very much appreciated by the persons we visited, since most of them could usually go to sleep hungry, with only enough to eat every 2 days. In addition, most of them are also sick. It is hard to tell what they are suffering from since most live alone, no one to take them to the hospital, and anyway don't even have money for treatment, so they use local herbs to treat themselves. Most of the people we met were longing to receive the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Surprisingly, in some homes we visited, even people who are not Catholics wanted to receive the sacrament. It was hard to deny them because



Sacrament of the Sick

they are sick and everyone expects that they have to receive because 'Father has come'. Personally, I felt touched by the faith of these people. Most of them, told us stories of when they were baptized, remembering the old priests, others promising to start going to church again, even though we could see clearly that there was no way they could walk such a long distance. In most of the villages we reached, we met old men and women full of zeal in their old age, they can't work physically but they can contribute and direct young people. They show them the way, they share with them the experiences that have helped them cope and brought them to the age they were at, instead of blaming the young for their misfortune. Despite this attitude on the part of the elderly, many youths came to ask for prayers, believing that the grandfathers or grandmothers had cursed them before they died and that it is the main reason why they were not prospering or even dying young. In conclusion, it seems to me that the apostolate towards the elderly is essential and a priority for the parish. Christians should take it as their duty to care for these old people who still have so much to teach us, not least that they are human beings beloved by our Father and Creator.



R.I.P

Fr. Evert van Oostrom MAfr.

Fr Evert was born 5th May 1932 and died in Horn (Netherlands) on Wednesday 20th July 2022 at the age of 90 years, of which 68 years of missionary life. He studied in Italy and Tunisa. He taught scripture in major seminaries in Uganda, Israel, UK, USA, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya and the Netherlands. Some readers will certainly remember him from St. Edward's College, Totteridge in the 1970s.

WAYS TO HELP FUND OUR MISSION

WHITE FATHERS

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"I give to the **Society of the Missionaries of Africa**(White Fathers) the sum of free of duty, and I declare that the receipt of the Father Treasurer of the Society in Great Britain, who now resides at 64, Little Ealing Lane, London, W5 4XF, shall be of good discharge."

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Parents & Friends Association **EVENTS**



We had a fantastic bingo night on 9th September, it was great to see everyone, and a great night was had by all.

Margaret and the Committee members organised tea, coffee, and a lovely selection of cakes for everyone to enjoy at the interval.

We raised £700 which was great, and we are all looking forward to our next bingo night on Friday 11th November at 7pm.

Your charitable prayers are requested

for those who have recently died

and our deceased parents, relatives, friends and benefactors.







Sir Allan Ramsay (France) Mrs M P Butterworth (Clitheroe) Mr G A David (Surrey)

Mrs I Hulme (Cheshire)
Mr George Smith (Sunderland)

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The Bursary Fund is open to donations of all kinds, large or small.

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Information

The White Fathers Missionaries of Africa

In England & Wales:

The White Fathers 15 Corfton Road London W5 2HP

email: corfton@mafrgb.org.uk

tel: 0208 601 7900

In Scotland:

The White Fathers 9 Milrig Road Glasgow G73 2NG

email: wfscotland@btconnect.com

tel: 0141 613 0209 tel: 0141 613 0039



Enquiries concerning the Magazine should be addressed to: The Editor,

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA (WHITE FATHERS)
15 Corfton Road
London W5 2HP

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