

Missionaries of AFRICA

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POPE'S VISIT TO CAMEROON AND ANGOLA.



From 17th to 23rd March of this year, Pope Benedict XVI paid his first visit to the African continent. It was a great success. According to one report "vast and pumped up crowds flocked to see the Pope". Yet we at home in Ireland seldom got to see or hear his progress through Cameroon or Angola. We certainly did not get any chance to appreciate the marvelous welcome he got. Twice the Pope referred to Africa as a continent of hope. He seemed to be genuinely affected by the enthusiastic reception he got. He came with a message of hope that was very much appreciated by his audience. The Pope asked the people of Africa to take their responsibilities and overcome all the difficulties that prevent their development; especially the prevalence of famine, wars, illness and corruption. The pope talked about solidarity and democracy and on the need to refuse policies imposed from outside, which often lead to a neo-colonial attitude that allows local and often valuable resources to be plundered at the expense of the African

people. He also warned people adopting western cultural values which seemed to deny any spiritual element in people's lives. In Cameroon he also criticised the President of the country for strong arm tactics in holding on to power by occasional repression and constant corruption. It was a courageous statement that was remarked on by the African press but ignored in the western media.

For us living in the west, it was difficult to get any idea of the success of the visit. One western journalist did remark that it almost seemed that there were two trips going on. All the western media were interested in was what would he say about condoms and the treatment of Aids and what he might say about abortion. Many local journalists in Africa were incensed by this aspect of reporting of the visit. For many people in the local media it seemed as if the western media were imposing their own agenda on the visit. During his visit Pope Benedict insisted that Christians must never be silent in the face of corruption and abuses of power. He also had a remarkable meeting with the Muslim community in which he emphasized the fact that "Cameroon is home to thousands of Christians and Muslims, who often live and work together in the same neighbourhood. Both believe in the one, merciful God who on the last day will judge mankind. Together they bear witness to the fundamental values of family, social responsibility, obedience to God's law and loving concern for the sick and suffering. By patterning their lives on these virtues and teaching them to the young, Christians and Muslims not only show how they foster the full development of the human person, but also forge bonds of solidarity with one's neighbours and advance the common good." He then went on to pray that "the enthusiastic cooperation of Muslims, Catholics and other Christians in Cameroon be a beacon to other African nations of the enormous potential of an interreligious commitment to peace, justice and the common good." It was a remarkable statement yet we did not seem to hear much about it in our part of the world.



After the success of his visit to Cameroon and Angola, the next major initiative of the Pope will be a visit to the Holy Land from 8th to 15th May. By the time you read this the visit will be over. Hopefully it will have been a highly symbolic visit. Indeed security will be a major issue and an added dimension will be the fact that he will not only have to be even handed in his dealing with the Jewish and Muslim communities but also with the divided Christian community as well.

Thanks to Zenith New Agency, John Allen of National Catholic Reporter and Missionaries of Africa website (www.mafrome.org)

SPECIAL APOSTOLATE IN MOZAMBIQUE

My name is Fr John O'Donoghue, a member of the Missionaries of Africa from Tralee. Having served previously in Nigeria and Uganda, I decided to offer myself to work in Mozambique in 2004 basically because there are so few diocesan priests in that country. My major commitment since my arrival is serving the Christian communities in two rural parishes. However, I have also been visiting the prison in Sussundenga which is in one of the parishes. Touched by the plight of the prisoners, another colleague and I, have helped the prison with blankets, sleeping mats, soap, clothes, bus fares for men to return home on release, and this February, maize flour as the prison was unable to feed its population.

It is the dramatic increase in the prison population over the past few months, however, which is causing us most alarm. On Easter Sunday, 12th of April 2009 the number of prisoners – both on remand and those condemned – were 101 men. The only facility in the prison is a single cell measuring 10 X 6 meters. What makes the situation even worse is that the prisoners are kept in this overcrowded cell all day, everyday except when a few are needed to help with the cooking and to draw water. This is because there is no enclosing wall around the prison and the couple of guards on duty are afraid that the prisoners might attempt to flee if released to take some fresh air.

In 2008 there were 4 deaths among the prisoners and three more have lost their lives in the first three months of 2009.

The funding from the government for the prison is so little that the warder is unable to buy hoes for the men to cultivate the prison land, in February we were asked by the local magistrate to help feed the prisoners.

To all intents and purposes these prisoners are held in sub-human conditions, indeed I believe that if an investigation were made by Human Rights professionals, their treatment could very well be judged as to constitute torture.

Our judgement is that it would be best for the prisoners if we were to help the local authorities to improve the prison facilities. We are therefore looking for funds to build another cell and a high wall within which the prisoners could be released without fear of them fleeing.

We hope that the prisoners will make the bricks and collect the stones and sand for the project. We shall employ skilled local tradesmen, buy the building materials and pay the transport costs for the construction.

We also intend to continue to make the local magistrate and prison officials aware that the prisoners, though they have done wrong, ought not to be subject to dehumanizing and life threatening conditions. They listen to us, seeing our efforts to help them better the conditions of the prisoners. We are working on the magistrate to deal less harshly with those who have committed minor offences. For example, we have secured the release of a man who was imprisoned for stealing a Bible!!! We also continue to point out to him the injustice of keeping prisoners on remand for up to 6 months in such appalling conditions.

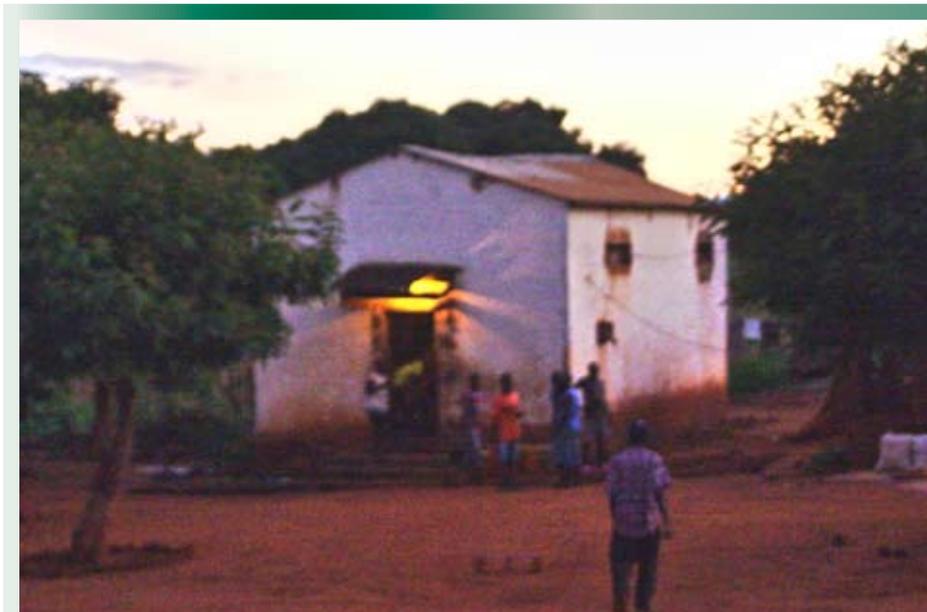
I therefore make a plea to your generosity so that we may lessen the suffering of these men in Sussundenga.

If you feel you can help John, you can do so by sending any donation to us in Dublin and we will see that he gets it

Fr. John is from Tralee, Co. Kerry. He was ordained in 1986 after completing a degree in Computer Science in UCD; he joined the white Fathers doing his novitiate in Fribourg in Switzerland and his Theology in London. He has worked in Nigeria, Uganda and in Mozambique.

Top Photo, Prison in Sussundenga

Photo 2 Fr. John baptising in an outstation of Sussundenga parish



VISIT OF FR. GERARD CHABANON,

SUPERIOR GENERAL AND GEORGES JACQUES, ASSISTANT GENERAL

We were happy to receive Frs. Gerard Chabanon and Georges Jacques for a short visit to our house in Templeogue. They came for a meeting of the leaders of the Missionaries Societies of Apostolic Life European/Africa Section which was held at the St. Patrick's Missionary Society in Kiltegan, Co. Wicklow from 21st to 25th April. 11 congregations were represented.

The Missionary Societies of Apostolic Life are not religious. They do not take the traditional vows of obedience, poverty and celibacy. In Ireland the St. Columbans Missionary Society, the St. Patrick's Missionary Society and SMA Fathers would be the missionary societies who belong to this group. The Missionaries of Africa are also members. Our distinguishing characteristic would be our commitment to community life. The St. Paul's Missionary Society from Nigeria is the only African representative in the group. They have missions in Africa, Europe and the USA.

The topic for the meeting was; "The challenge to Missionary Societies in an increasingly secular Europe: New Ways of Missionary Animation" Each Congregation spoke about how they are operating in Europe. Over the years, there has been a radical change in the attitudes of people towards Christianity. There has been a huge increase in people coming from other parts of the world. There seems to be little interest in religious matters. Nevertheless there is a missionary task to go and tell the Good News. To bring people hope in what are, for many, quite desperate situations. We have to believe that the word often falls on good soil, but sometimes we also have the impression of sowing in a seemingly parched earth, crying in the wilderness. Yet it is not to us to stop sowing. Our duty is to pray over and over, but also fearlessly and honourably to propose the missionary vocation. The rest depends on God and each one's freedom to respond to it. During their meeting the delegates got a chance to visit Glendalough, the Boyne Valley and to the permanent missionary exhibition in Dalgan Park

Fr. Ian Buckmaster, Delegate Superior with Frs. Chabanon and Jacques



CHARLIE IN CEBU:

The Oldest Swinger in Town?

Fr. Charles Timoney is from Clonmel in Co. Tipperary. He was ordained in 1968 and has worked in Ghana, Zambia and the Philippines. He was provincial of Ireland from 1982 to 1988. His most recent appointment is to our Formation House in Cebu. He arrived there in 2007 after an eventful journey from Ireland. These are his early impressions.

So what, I'm asked, do you like about the Philippines? And the dialogue can go like this:

"Many things: the gentle and friendly people, the lovely customs, the sunshine, the food. But what do you not like? Two things: the city of Cebu, even when it is not cloudy has too much ground-light for telescope use. Secondly, your beer is too small! The Mickey Mouse bottle delivers only one small glass. But we are small people. Okay." And then they bring a refill for this pot-bellied foreigner.

Last month I attended a Vocations Jamboree. Can you imagine, ten thousand young people paid fifty cents to attend the all-night session? It involved music, talks, adoration, confession, Eucharist. Where else in today's world could this happen? All the Religious Congregations and Societies set up stalls and displayed their work and ministries. As I circulated among these stalls and all the young people I felt just a little out of place. My old aunt's tape was playing in the back of my head "Wouldn't you think he'd have more sense at his pensionable age and be at home in his bed." I probably was the oldest swinger in town. What we do for God's Kingdom!



THE STORY OF YUSUF

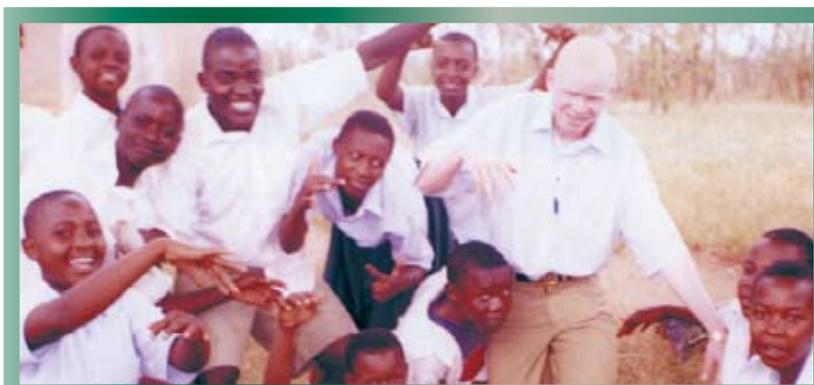
I really like that ad on the TV where two charming little girls pluck up courage to tell their Dad that its "time" to tackle his grey hairs. I am long gone past that stage. I also like the ad that advises me to get rid of wrinkles because I am worth it.

When I was in Tanzania in 2006, I met Yusuf. He was top of his class in Primary School and he had high hopes of going to Secondary School. He had problems with his sight so he needed glasses, really thick glasses. The reason why he needed these special glasses was that he was an albino. (Albinism is a skin condition caused by a deficiency in the pigmentation of the skin, that makes the skin appear white or pink, white hair and weak eyesight. And a vulnerability to skin cancer). An eye examination was done at the local Mission Hospital close by. He got the glasses and he was able to study more. He got his place in the local secondary school. He was a member of the church choir. However things were not going well and he began to feel rejected by his fellow students. It was at this stage that I discovered that there was a school in eastern Tanzania that specialized in educating albinos. Yusuf applied and got a place. With a little bit of fund raising, the school fees were paid. He did well in his first year. However just before he went back for his second year, I got a call from the parish to say that he was not going back. He rang me and explained that his sister who was also an Albino has cancer and that he had to look after her. He did eventually agree to go back to school after arrangements were made to look after his sister and I hear that he is doing well.

Yusuf's story highlights a problem that afflicts nearly 200.000 people in Tanzania alone. In our culture of perfect looks, the plight of people with skin problems can be forgotten. Yusuf's journey back to school would

be more hazardous than most. I read in the Economist recently that some 35 albinos had been killed in Tanzania over the past year. They were killed in order to supply witch doctors with limbs, organs and hair for their "magical potions. It seems incredible that such superstitious practices still exist to-day. According to the Economist report the government of Tanzania has acted. Albinos in Dar-es Salam have been given mobile phones with speed dialing to a dedicated number so that they can ask for help if they feel they are in danger. The government has appointed an albino women as a Member of Parliament to champion the interests of albinos. While the government moves have been welcomed, the albinos feel that a lot more has to be done by way of education, and to overcome judicial corruption in cases involving the murder of albinos

I hope Yusuf does well in his school. I will continue to support him as best I can. Is he worth it? I hope so. He has a mountain to climb, not only in the physical sense but he will also have to overcome superstition and prejudice on his journey through life.



Yusuf with his friends

MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA (WHITE FATHERS) DRAW RESULTS 2009

1st Prize: €2,000

Mr. David Doherty, Tinderry House, Knock, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary.

Seller €100

Ms. Mary Doherty, Tinderry House, Knock, Roscrea, Co. Tipperary

2nd Prize €600

Ms. Aileen Lillis, Brisla South, Cooraclare, Co. Clare

Seller €100

Ms. Maura Lillis, Brisla South, Cooraclare, Co. Clare

3rd Prize €400

Mr. Brendan Allan, 1 Kansas Ave. Flats Belfast



Photo Fr. Ian Buckmaster, our staff members: Corah Dalton, Muriel McGovern, Fr. Joe McMenamin and 2 guards from Terenure Garda Station who came to supervise the draw.

We are sincerely grateful to all who contributed to the raffle. The money goes to a fund that helps us to take care of our sick and elderly colleagues especially if they need around the clock care. We are well aware of the numerous collections and appeals that face you every day. We are grateful for your concern for our elderly returned missionaries.

May the Lord bless you and reward you for your generosity.

NEW SHOOTS PART 2

In our last issue of the newsletter we gave you some idea of the new life that is permeating our Society. Most of the new candidates are from Africa, but there are other areas that are attracting vocations to the missionary life in Africa. In the 1980s new foundations were started in Brazil, Mexico, Poland, The Philippines and India. Opening up to Continents other than Europe and North America is of rather recent date in the Society of Missionaries of Africa.

Communities were started in Brazil and Mexico in 1984, followed a year later by Poland. In 1991 the first Missionaries of Africa community was founded in Cebu in The Philippines and Bangalore India. It could be said that we were hoping for a big increase in the numerical membership of the Society by way of recruitment in areas of the world where there were a great many vocations. This has not happened, but we have been exposed to a great variety of cultures with their own unique perspective of Christian life that has enhanced the way we live out our missionary life.

This month we will present two of these new foundations: India and The Philippines

Philippines: the Cebu community



Fr. Timoney with students and friends

Since we started in the Philippines in 1991 we now have the joy of having six Filipinos in our ranks. Father Armand Galay is currently on Mission in Burundi, Father Bernard Monteron is Delegate Superior in Cebu. Father Luisito Poe Suarez, is in Zambia. Fr. Walter Tubis is working in the Philippines, and Fr. Coro Pancito Mulagao is working in Zambia. Bro. Lito Dougilles has been appointed to Tabora Tanzania to work with the youth of the Diocese.

There are two full-time Mission promoters, Father Bernard Monteron (Filipino) and Father Thomas Schwiedessen (German), who devote a great deal of their time to visiting vocation clubs. These clubs bring young people together and in various towns they gather twice a month to pray, share and support one another in their interest in Africa and Missionary vocation. Fr. Charles Timoney from Clonmel recently joined the community and is working with students who have begun their missionary training. We are actively looking for more vocations and there are 6 students in Formation. It is not an easy task but we are hopeful

India: the Bangalore Community

Located in Karnataka State, to the north-east of the better-known State of Kerala, the Bangalore community numbers 4 confreres, including one Missionary of Saint Thomas, and focuses on missionary promotion and the training of young men. Canadian Father Martin Grenier, is the Superior of the project. Formerly in Zambia, and in India since 1999, he is also in charge of the aspirants and of missionary and vocation promotion.

Dutch Father Cor de Visser is the Rector and in charge of candidates. Practically all his missionary life has been devoted to young men and their education, firstly in Uganda, then six years in Rome. He is in India since 2003.

Dutch Father Piet Kramer is the doyen of the community. In India since 2006, he is a teacher and a spiritual mentor.

Indian Father Biju John, Missionary of Saint Thomas, is the fourth member of the community. He is the third member of his Congregation to help us. We greatly appreciate his contribution and his presence among us.

India amazes all those who discover its richness and diversity in its religions, cultures, traditions and languages. The young men who are interested in our vocation for Africa and who come to join the Bangalore community are therefore already, among themselves, a rich experience of intercultural life. As aspirants, they begin learning English as a language in common, before entering into Formation as such.

They then attend courses in philosophy at Suvidya College, run by the Missionaries of St Francis de Sales, (MSFS). Our candidates meet up there with 330 students from about twenty different Congregations

The Bangalore community, founded in 1991, can take pride in what it has already achieved. Today, there are 35 Indian candidates in Formation: 19 in First Phase, 6 at the Kasama Spiritual Year, 4 in their second year of 'stage' and 6 in theology. Among these last-mentioned, there are two confrere deacons who will be ordained to the priesthood this year. With the 12 aspirants from Bangalore and contacts made by confreres in this immense sub-continent, the future of the Society in India promises to be bright.



Staff and students in Bangalore

Please Pray for our Friends who have Died

Mrs Amelia Finucane, Sycamore Road, Finglas, Dublin 11
Mrs Kathleen Fennell, Brooklodge East, Glanmire, Co Cork
Mr Tom Lally, Homefielf Gardens, London, England
Mrs Maureen Kiernan, Shannon Haven, Dromod,
Co. Leitrim

Mr James Collins, Carlanstown, Kells, Co. Meath
Mr Mark Collins, Carlanstown and Silver Lawns, Navan,
Co. Meath

Mr Henry Burke, Lisnagon, Carnaross, Co Meath
Mrs. Mary Crampsie, 9 Ballycolman Ave, Strabane,
Co. Tyrone

Very Rev. Cornelius Lee P.E. St. Pius X, Templeogue, Dublin
Miss Mary Mc Shane, Meenablugh Rd Castlederg
Co. Tyrone

Mrs Kathleen Shortt, Clay Rd, Keady Co. Armagh.
Mrs Ellie Byrne, Lismore, Co. Waterford
Mrs Mary Hardy Carricknamore, Killygordan, Co. Donegal
Miss Maureen McGilloway, Glenfin Rd, Ballybofey,
Co. Donegal

Ms. Vera Cassidy, Coorclare, Derrylin, Enniskillen,
Co. Tyrone.
Mrs. Katherine (Kitty) Harkins, Hillquarter, Coosan
Athlone, Co. Westmeath.

Mrs. Anne(Nancy) Rooney, Blacklion, Co. Cavan
Mrs. Emily Kelly, Battery Road, Longford.
Miss Lucy Cooke, Convent Road, Roscommon

*Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will
come again.*

*May they Rest in Peace with the
Father*



Novena to St. Anthony June 13th-21st:

Because we are convinced of the power of prayer and the powerful intercession of St. Anthony, we invite you to join us in nine days of prayer.

Please write down your intentions, place them in the enclosed envelope and return to us as soon as possible. The envelopes are placed on the altar during the novena and burned unread at the end. Please do not place any money in the small envelope.

Each day during the Novena we shall be offering Holy Mass for all your intentions.

We shall have a particular remembrance of all those doing exams at this time.

St. Anthony was a great friend of the poor and all those in need. He even risked his life by going to Morocco as a missionary, because he wanted to help the poor.

He is the patron of our Bursary Fund for the training of missionaries.

PLEASE REMEMBER THE MISSIONS IN YOUR WILL

Our legal name is Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers).

A suitable formula is:

I give to the Society of Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) the sum of €..... free of duty. And I declare that the Delegate Superior of the Society who now resides at Cypress Grove, Templeogue, Dublin 6W shall be in good discharge.

Carry on the good work you have been doing during your life by helping to spread the Gospel after you have gone to the Father.