

Missionaries of AFRICA

February 2010 Issue no 127

White Fathers, Cypress Grove, Templeogue, Dublin 6 W.
Tel: Office: 405 5526 House: 405 5263/64. email: provirl@indigo.ie

REFLECTION ON AN EARTHQUAKE

Remember little Kiki. The little Haitian boy dug out alive after being buried for over a week in the rubble as a result of the earthquake that struck Haiti recently. I am sure that people will remember the big smile and the thin outstretched arms as if he had scored a goal. There was also the joy of the rescuers who had struggled hard for a long time in order to free him. There are other countless images of hope and despair coming from the earthquake area. I was struck by the fact that many of the rescuers praised the resilience of the local people in the face of such adversity. Gena Heraty the Special Needs Director of the Little Brothers and Sisters in Kay Christine which is a home for special needs children, writes on the website of the organization (www.nph.org) that she "was very happy to hear that several of the staff stayed with the kids and shielded their bodies with their own during the 1st earthquake. So if they were to die they were going to die together. The staff are brave and despite their fears they do as I ask and stay indoors to cook and take care of the kids as is required. With each tremor comes more fear and my heart aches for all of them. Gena herself confessed, I put my trust in God but nonetheless, I am scared not for myself but for the kids. So I tell myself this" God brought me to these kids so they are ultimately his responsibility. I can only do my best and the rest is up to him.

The overwhelming aspect of an earthquake is that nowhere is safe. The people in Port au Prince are sleeping outside because of fears of aftershocks and perhaps another earthquake. So when people stay inside buildings in order to look after those who are very vulnerable then one can only admire their courage and faith. The very uncertainty reveals all the fault lines in our make up, physically, mentally and spiritually. Many of us have been battered over the past year. Belief in God is brought into question. If we are fixated on an almighty and powerful God who could have prevented the

earthquake in Haiti then I admit we are in trouble. Although the idea of God who randomly highlighted Port-au-Prince and then pressed the delete button is not a god I can say I believe in. The Gospel of Luke, which we will be reading this year, reveals a different kind of god. The Gospel of Luke tells us of a God who proclaims to us salvation for all. It tells us of the mercy and forgiveness of God. It tells us that we are on a journey. It tells us of a vulnerable God who suffered death by a humiliating execution on a Cross. But it also reveals the hope of a genuine authentic life after death. We are called to be witnesses to this good news as well. If we concentrate on the negative aspects of life, then the headline grapping sentiments of revenge, hate, unforgiveness, will blind us so that we can fail to see another aspect of life. The courage of rescuers, the bravery of people who reach out to those who are most vulnerable. The acts of kindness to one another that builds up a community spirit such as we saw during the recent flooding at home. All these are, to me, evidence of God's spirit in us. Can we see the hand of God in the huge multi cultural multi national effort that is going into helping the people of Haiti? People were touched by compassion and were moved to help. It is important to remember that one does not have to be a paid up member of a church to do this. Can we believe in a God that we do not fear? I believe we can but be prepared for a bumpy ride. I imagine that this journey is best undertaken as a community where we will be supported by others and where the breaking of bread will be a reminder of God's covenant of love with us.

Happy Easter

Haiti some facts: 10,714 sq.miles (Just a third the size of Ireland). It occupies the western end of the island of Hispaniola. It is close to Cuba and only 1 and half hours by plane from the U.S.A It is one of the poorest countries in the world.

It got its independence in 1804 when the slaves revolted against their French colonizers. They had to pay a high price for their freedom and they only finished paying off France in 1947. Since then it has been a country that has

been bedeviled by corruption in political leadership and big business. Although it had a large amount of debt wiped out it still owes \$800 million dollars to its creditors of which it is expected to pay \$100 million dollars over the next five years. The Debt and Development Coalition has urged the cancellation of all Haiti's debt. Otherwise it will not be able to build the infrastructure necessary to withstand the frequent hurricanes and earthquakes to which the region is prone. Indeed the Oireachtas Committee for Foreign Affairs recently urged the cancellation of all Haiti's debt.



CARDINAL DALY

Many tributes have been paid to the late Cardinal Daly for his notable contribution to aspects of Irish life and the Church in general. Another aspect that needs mentioning has been his missionary contribution.

In 1970 when he was then Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise he welcomed the White Fathers to Longford and allowed us to set up a promotion centre for our missionary activities in Ireland. On his visits to our community in Longford he always showed a keen interest in our missionary work in Africa

In 1978 he came to a decision in consultation with Bishop M Mazombwe of Zambia to link up their respective dioceses namely Chipata Diocese in Zambia with Ardagh and Clonmacnoise.

Initially priests from Ardagh and Clonmacnoise would be sent to help out the Diocese of Chipata which was still very low in terms of priest personnel. Later it was foreseen when the local clergy in Chipata Diocese would become more numerous some would be invited to come and work in Longford.

In 1978 the first group of volunteer priests from the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise arrived in Chipata Diocese. Some took on the work of parish ministry while others were sent to teach in the Junior Seminary of the Diocese. Later a group of Mercy Sisters from Longford also volunteered to assist the church in Chipata. This group took on the administration of one of the Diocesan hospitals. Both groups, the Sisters and the Priests made a valued and much appreciated contribution to the needs of the Diocese of Chipata.

When Bishop Daly came on a visit to the Diocese of Chipata he showed a special interest in the customs and culture of the people

observing as he himself said the close similarities, (hospitality, folklore, superstitions etc) to what was formerly the traditional way of life in Ireland

When Bishop Daly was appointed to the Diocese of Down and Connor, his successor, Bishop Colm O' Reilly continued that missionary commitment to Zambia for many years.

However, in 1997 due to the decline in vocations to the priesthood and the religious life in Ireland the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise had to reluctantly withdraw its personnel from Chipata Diocese to fill the various posts that were now urgently in need on the home front; thus ending an important link with Zambia for which the Diocese of Chipata will always be grateful,



The Late Fr. Connie presenting a gift from Africa to Cardinal Daly

Mary Boyce R.I.P (1917-2010)

Mary Boyce died in early January at the end of a long and fruitful life. She was 91 years of age and had many careers.

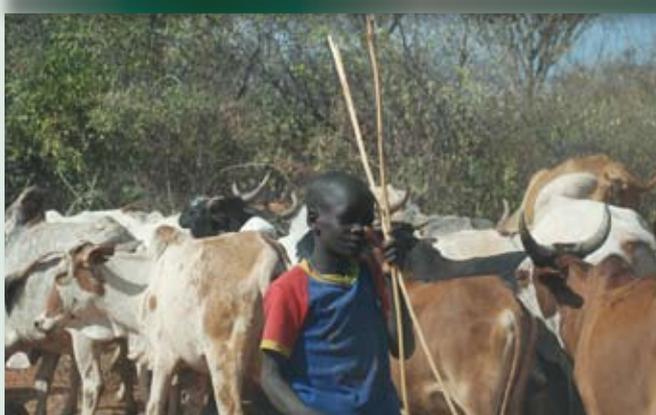
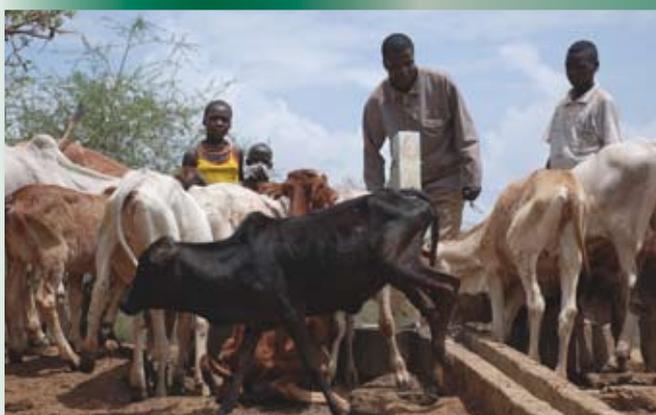
When Mary's beloved husband Tom died in March 1980, her daughter Gay said at her funeral, her world was turned upside down. She went back to work at an age when people normally were thinking of retiring. She came to the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) to work as a secretary. The house at that time was the Administrative centre of the Province as well as being a residence for African priests studying in Dublin. Added to that were our own students who were studying for the priesthood. It was a lively house and Mary fitted in perfectly. Her secretarial skills were not needed as she took on the role of matron, mother and manager to the whole community. She worked for us for 20 years more or less and eventually retired at the age of 81! She was greatly appreciated by the community and made many friends who are now scattered all over the world but especially in Africa. Among the messages of sympathy were messages from 2 Ethiopian bishops who appreciated the welcome she gave them when they arrived as young priests in our house in 1981.



Mary's funeral was a celebration of a life lived to the full. She had a great love for all the members of her family and still had room to fit in the multi cultural dimension of the family of the Missionaries of Africa. (White Fathers)

The following article is written by a young Missionary of Africa from Burkina Faso who Guinko of Tapac parish are under 40 years of age and are enthusiastically facing the cha

Welcome to Karamoja Tapac: Slowly bu



The journey to Tapac is fun

As you drive from Kampala to Moroto to journey to Tapac Parish, you have fun throughout the journey. Of the 550kms, only 230 are tarmac. You cross the Karamoja border and a certain fear invades you because of the many stories, real and unreal, that you were told. Sometimes, it is better to travel alone than to have a passenger who will be telling you stories about the place. Every 10kms you cover has a different story of bloodshed. The more you get the stories, the more your fear increases, and the more you press the accelerator.

Karamoja welcomes its visitors. You are welcomed by people who pay less attention to clothing. There may be a group of young warriors who stride out with nothing on, walking sticks or bows and arrows in hand, while some may stop you fearlessly to ask a lift or cry out, "Akoro, kingarakinai." i.e., 'Hunger, help me.' It is a command, "Give it to me too!" The journey becomes unpleasant at one point; you start seeing many crosses along the road. Well, the informed person will tell you that so-and-so has been killed here by Karimajong warriors. Where there is no cross, you might hear that a priest, a confrere or another person has been ambushed here during the day. If it is like that, there is a likelihood you will meet a group of warriors returning from a raid. At last, you are in Moroto. You have a good beer at the Sisters' house because you made it, or simply a warm welcome by the bishop. However, be careful not to stay longer, because you still have to reach Saint Paul's Parish, Tapac. You will undertake a 2-hour journey across 50 rivers and between high hills to cover the 35kms.

You meet practically no one. Everybody is concerned about security. Houses are built in the mountains to guarantee security against a potential enemy who might come from the surrounding area to rustle your cattle. You might meet soldiers; just go your way, they are not harming you. They are just there to disarm the warriors. All this shows that Missionaries of Africa and other Religious Congregations working among the Karimajong, while trying to speak Ngakaramajong, are in a fault-line zone. We are not in a war zone; we are simply working in an insecure zone. This is Karamoja.

What we are doing here: Living with them for peace

In Tapac, we talk of pre-evangelisation. The lack of structures is a challenge to us and to our lives as a community and as individuals. All the structures are basically Catholic foundations. The Diocese made all kind of efforts to improve the lives of the people and bring them the faith. Health, school, justice and peace and catechesis are a priority for all of us. Nothing is undermined or left out. As a community, we strive to work as people of faith, sent first of all to love people, and bring to them a concrete Gospel, a liberating message, a tangible Word of God: Peace be with you!

As we climb the mountains or find ourselves in the kraal to make people understand that Jesus has come also for them and that God

is working in a very remote area of northern Uganda. Fr. Luke Kola and Fr. Hilaire
challenge of missionary work just as their predecessors did before them

ut Surely

loves them, and that prayer is important in their lives... Today, as you invite yourself for a Sunday Mass in Tapac, you may find a half - if not full - church of people expressing their faith in the One God who can journey with them in their suffering and give them the peace they are lacking.

It was with great joy that over 100 young girls, boys and women were baptised at Easter this year after waiting for so long. All our energy is now to be concentrated in strengthening their faith and to keep the flame alive. Men are not yet concerned... they will join us later in our journey of faith. Today, a few people will accept to dig a grave to bury their relatives, although we have to start the grave, and some people will join in. In fact, they don't bury their dead. They put them in gullies; the hyena will devour them.

Our dream is one day to have a society where the term "emoit" (enemy) will disappear, where guns will not be a walking stick. This is a big challenge. As a matter of fact, as we live closer to the people, we come to realise that some people still hold guns despite the presence of the soldiers. Since 2001, the Uganda Government has been carrying out a disarmament operation seeking to seize firearms in order to improve security in the area. Soldiers are well aware that we know our people better than they do, so they seek our cooperation. We find ourselves sometimes between two huge hammers which can collide at any time. Our work is to negotiate with both parties, but we try to remain neutral.

The WFP is our major granary in Karamoja and no exception in Tapac. Once in a blue moon, relief is brought to people at no cost. The relief consists of rice, maize, oil, beans... As soon as people receive the food, some malicious businessmen find their way to the place and buy the relief from the people at a very low price. Sometimes, people will bring cheap local gin to exchange for foodstuffs. For just 2 sachets of gin, a businessman gets a water-jug measure of rice. Poor people will drink the local gin without eating. The Ugandan Government is on the move to ban these drink sachets as their contents have created many victims. However, the law will take ages to reach Tapac, where there is no police, no local authority. It is again our work to speak out, to cry loudly, but who cares?

In Karamoja, what matters more is our witness as community. People are very sharp in observing the lifestyle of the Fathers and how we respond to their needs. We are not asked to look after cattle, but we become aware that we cannot talk of peace to a Karimajong warrior without also loving his cattle and knowing how much he values them. Cows are central to their whole lives. In reality, our trouble, and what makes the place so insecure is basically the cows. Take the cows away from Karamoja, and you have eternal peace! Our people keep on raiding cattle from one another, and call each other enemies. Most of the time, this requires bringing both opponents to one place and asking them to stop raiding one another. However, it has to be borne in mind that a Karimajong warrior minus cattle-rustling is simply miserable. Before talking of peace, people need to see us living in peace in our small community.

The challenge continues

As we speak, the situation is improving. We realise that the worker did not labour in vain, because the Lord has been watching over the city. All the energy invested in peace is bearing fruit. For a couple of months, we haven't heard a serious gunshot. When it does happen, we know that it is only soldiers who have clashed with some stubborn warriors.

The presence of missionaries in such a place is seen as a blessing and a challenge for the people. As we bring in the Good News, we are not just passive, faced with the culture and the mentalities. Hence, we have to stand up against some rampant vices, such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), the place of the woman in society. Girls are married off as young as 12. A girl could be taken as the 12th wife of an elder!

Our community life and our prayers are saturated with such daily life events. As we pray for the situation to improve, we strive to be omnipresent; we see, judge and act wherever we can. We need a lot of courage; we keep on crying, 'If the Lord is with us, nothing is impossible.' It might take a whole lifetime, it might not be during ours, but we have a strong belief that things are improving. By the way, our stagiaire Joseph had made a prophecy last week. For Jo, in 5 year's time, Tapac will be a city parish: Masses every 2 hours on Sundays. Oh, yes, dreams are allowed.

Hilaire Guinko, M.Afr Tapac Parish alistelhilaire@yahoo.fr

This article is reprinted from the Petit Echo.No 10 2009.

Misean Cara, the Irish Missionary Aid organisation, is funding a fencing project for a local primary school and a bore-hole for peace project in Tapac Parish.

Missionaries of Africa 2010

Every year in January, our Secretary General in Rome gives us an update on the numbers in our Society. For many years now our numbers are declining and this will continue for the foreseeable future. However we are not without hope and many young men continue to join us and try their vocation as missionary priests and brothers in a land far away from home.

As of the 1st January 2010, the Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) were present in 259 communities in 42 countries of which 23 were in Africa. We number 1,541 fully professed members from 37 different nationalities. During the year we had 27 new members of whom there were 26 priests and one brother. We lost 47 members during the year. However the big news is a big increase in the numbers joining us. There are 420 students at various stages in the training programme. Most of them are from Africa but India and Mexico are well represented and there are new shoots coming from Europe as well as the Philippines and Brazil. Not all will stay the course, indeed most will not, but hopefully all will have received a formation that will help them play important roles in their communities.

Please pray for them all during this Year for the Priests

GREENING A DESERT ETHIOPIA

From Adigrat in northern Ethiopia precipitous gorges sweep down eastwards from an altitude of 7,500 feet to 5,200 feet in just 25 miles. Down the slopes the annual rainfall is quite irregular, although occasional flash floods from the surrounding mountains can dislodge vast quantities of soil. Such conditions, either because of the lack of rain, or from the disastrous effects of soil erosion, reduce the people's standard of living to subsistence level. Quite often they suffer from famine.

The Missionaries of Africa have been working in the Diocese of Adigrat for 40 years. And they have shared the diocese's concern for the plight of the people in these circumstances. But it was difficult to respond to the challenge of providing them with water for agriculture and basic needs. Then, by chance, the late Fr. Kevin Doherty, C.S.Sp and Patrick Vahey, a retired Irish engineer visited the area in 1973. The local parish priest gave them a tour of the area while explaining the plight of the people. As they faced one gorge called The Red Cliff, Patrick Vahey suggested that it would be an appropriate place for a dam. Fr. Doherty remarked that it would be an ambitious undertaking and the work would be nothing short of heroic – cutting through hard rock with sledgehammers and chisels!

At that time it was only a dream. Who could imagine building a dam 130 feet high and 45 feet across when not even a small lorry could maneuver the winding bends on the steep track?

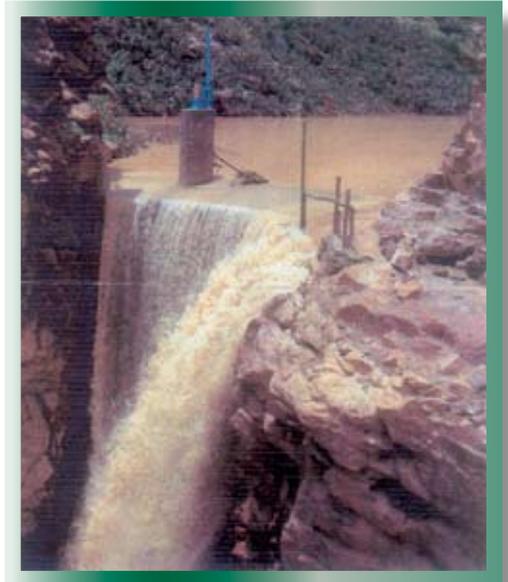
Apart from such an ambitious undertaking as building a dam, there seemed to be more basic and simpler ways of improving local agriculture. The Adigrat Diocesan Development Action (ADDA) in which we were involved, decided to promote terracing down the slopes to prevent soil erosion and to build check dams access gullies. Measures were also taken to preserve soil conservation by cultivating nurseries for seedlings and afforestation.

All work, however came to a virtual standstill during the oppressive years of the Communist regimes in Ethiopia. But once the regime was overthrown in mid 1991, ADDA was able to resume work with renewed vigour. To compensate for a shortage of cash, the policy of a food for work programme was introduced with the agreement of the workforce. Slowly but surely a variety of ecological measures were completed and eventually the rough winding track became a rough bumpy road.

A Swiss ecological engineer had been paying regular visits to the area and had been giving advice on soil erosion to local farmers and it was he that decided that the building of a dam should become a reality. In 2000 the project was launched as part of a local millennium goal. To make the site properly accessible, a team of local workmen had to blast and remove over 300 tons of rock. Once that had been done the actual construction could begin. Progress on building the dam was slow. By 2004 the dam had reached a height of 51 feet, in June 2006 it was at 99 feet and finally in June 2008 the required height of 130 feet was reached. Later that year the dam was officially opened by the Bishop of Adigrat Diocese.

Behind the dam a lake has formed, about one and quarter miles long covering 175 acres. A constant flow of water is assured to the local farmers. To carry water to more remote areas seven and half miles of pipeline have been laid. Farmers are no longer dependent on irregular rainfall; neither do they fear the disastrous effects of flash floods. Instead of being able to cultivate their fields for a few weeks a year, they can farm most of the year round. Previously, the women had to trudge long distances to get and then carry water for their households, now it is running close to their doorsteps.

It is estimated that a total of 60,000 people will benefit from this regular supply of water. Little by little their standard of living and quality of life will improve.



VIATORES CHRISTI

Congratulations to Viatores Christi, the lay missionary organization who are celebrating their Golden Jubilee year this year. Since 1960 more than 2000 lay people have traveled abroad under the aegis of Viatores to play their part in the spreading of the Good News. They brought their own distinctive skills to many missions and greatly enhanced the work of the local church. If you happened to be watching Nationwide on RTE recently you will have seen the work that Sarah O'Connell is doing in South Africa. The Haiti earthquake has also shown us the dedication of Maeve

Bracken and Gena Heraty in their work with physically and mentally handicapped children. However the beginning of their Jubilee Year has been tinged with sadness as one of their founding members Hugh Brady died on the 5th January 2010.

Please continue to pray for all missionaries who are often working in difficult circumstances.

Interested in their work, you can contact them on www.viatoreschristi.com

Please Pray for our Friends who have Died

His Eminence Cahal Cardinal Daly
Mrs. Mairin Concannon, Moore Village,
Inishmnaan, Aran Island, Galway
Mrs. Anna Gray, Cleenrath, Aughtnaccliffe,
Co. Longford
Mrs. Mary O'Regan, Newtown, Bruff
Co Limerick
Mrs. Margaret O'Neill, 66 Ballinderry Rd,
Lisburn, Co. Antrim
Mr. Thomas Perry, Ballybrennan. Ballymote,
Co Sligo
Mrs. Mary Creedon, Cluain Searrach,
Cloghane, Castlegregory, Co. Kerry.
Mrs. Marie Kavanagh, 86 Granitefield,
Rochestown Ave, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin
Mr. Michael Gallagher, Aughafin, Keadue,
Boyle, Co. Roscommon.
Fr. Desmond Fahey, Cortoon, Tuam ,
Co. Galway.
Mr. Pat Hopkins, Ferefad, Longford,
Co. Longford

Mrs. Eileen Quinn, 60 Blaney Road,
Crossmaglen, Newry, Co. Down. BT35 9AH
Mr. Joseph Lee, Ard Aoibhinn, Cornakib,
Ower P.O., Co. Galway
Mrs. Bridget Traynor, Cypress Grove,
Templeogue, Dublin
Mrs. Winnifred Ferry, Glenvar, Co. Donegal
Mr. James Sweeney, Ailesbury Grove,
Dublin 16
Mrs. Angela Murphy, Hillcrest Park, Dublin 11
Rt. Rev. Mgr. Michael Nolan, Donnybrook
Dublin 4 (Brother of Fr F. Nolan w.f.)
Mrs. Mary Boyce, Clondalkin and
Templeogue, Dublin
Mr. Jim McGovern, Greenwood Drive, Newry,
Co. Down
Mr. Michael Moore, Ballinagard Road,
Roscommon.
Mrs. Sinead Devitt, Templeogue, Dublin
Mr. Hugh Brady, (Viatores Christi)

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

May they Rest in Peace with the Father

RAFFLE

With this issue of the Newsletter you will find some raffle cards for our Annual Raffle. The money raised will go towards a fund that we established for the care of our elderly missionaries, most of whom have spent many years of their lives in Africa and who may one day require special care.

We hope that our elderly friends and those who already help us in other ways will not be offended by being sent raffle cards. The cards (2) are automatically put into the envelopes. We would like to assure you that if you cannot sell the lines yourself, you should not worry. However, selling lines is an ideal way of enlisting the help of a wider circle of people who are not regular contributors.

We thank you all for your faithful support of our Missionary Society.

CALLING THE DIOCESE OF KILLALA.

This year as part of the mission awareness programme of the IMU we have been allocated the Diocese of Killala. We look forward to visiting all the parishes in the diocese.

We are grateful to the Bishop. *Most Rev. John Fleming* for giving us permission to preach about our missionary work. We will be asking for your help in making sure that this work continues. If you know us please make yourself known to the Missionary who comes. We would love to meet you.

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 Provincial 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.