



Word Aflame

Botswana Province Newsletter

August-September 2009

Word from the Vice-Provincial



The Year of the Priest has begun. Celebrations, activities, prayers and plenty of materials start to appear on daily basis. In this context a question emerges once again: "What about the religious, what about their priesthood?"

Is there still any difference between the diocesan clergy and the religious priests?

I have met many confreres in my life for whom being a priest was more important than being a religious; and some of them were openly saying that.

Perhaps, in the context of the Year of the Priest we shall reflect on the priesthood in religious life, reflect on our primary vocation as Divine Word Missionaries.

In the past people had different understanding of those issues, and this process of defining our vocations is still continuing. From today's perspective some things in the past were rather embarrassing, like the attitude towards religious brothers in our communities. On the other hand, some feel today that we sometimes lose focus as primarily religious missionaries and become "just" priests.

We shall not forget that priesthood is also a Sacrament, a special visible sign instituted by Jesus Himself, of the invisible grace working in a person in the celebration and life of the church. He wanted to remain with us in sacramental ways; it is Him who forgives, heals, comforts, nourishes, unites and gives life. The Incarnate Word becomes once again a reality amidst human race under the simple and humble Bread and Wine – a true Emmanuel. Priest, therefore, is sacramental – is a visible sign.

What does it mean for those of us who are SVD priests?

Marek Marciniak, SVD

WE HAVE A NEW BISHOP



12th of September 2009 was truly a memorable day for all SVD confreres in Southern Africa. One of us became the new archbishop of Bulawayo, Fr. Alex Thomas.

The celebration was well prepared and beautiful; with thousands of people attending. Hundreds of priests and religious were present to witness this very special sacramental occasion. Well done, diocese of Bulawayo, well done the great resourceful People of Zimbabwe.

Father Alex Thomas formally took over from Bishop Pius Ncube as the Catholic Archbishop of Bulawayo in a low-key ceremony. Ncube, who attended yesterday's ordination ceremony, was forced to resign in



September last year.

Unlike Ncube's ordination as the first black bishop of the archdiocese in 1997 which was attended by President Robert Mugabe, politicians were not invited for the event held at the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair (ZITF) grounds.

The Pope's representative in Zimbabwe Pro Nuncio George Kocherry presided over the ceremony graced by Catholic bishops from other parts of the country. Father Nigel Johnson, a spokesperson for the church said politicians were not invited this time around because "this was a religious event" and the "church does not want to be tangled in politics".

Archbishop Thomas was born in 1960 in Vallamchira in the archdiocese of Changanacherry in India.

After elementary school, he entered the minor seminary of the Divine Word Missionaries in Changanacherry and took his final vows in 1987.

On May 7, 1988 he was ordained as a priest.

He has served as a missionary in Zimbabwe since 1989 where he has held various posts in the church including that of regional superior to the Society of the Divine Word Missionaries in the country.

In addition to his missionary experience, Archbishop Thomas has a background in econom-

ics, having studied it at university.

He holds a degree in economics and political science and has pursued administration and management studies with the Zimbabwe Institute of Management (ZIM).

Since 2001, he has been the Caritas ex-officio advisor to the Catholic Development Commission (Cadec).

He has been the director of Cadec, the Catholic Church's agency responsible for supporting feeding schemes, health and education.

The archdiocese of Bulawayo was established on January 1, 1955 and comprises 14 civil districts.

It is home to more than 116 000 Catholics, 40 parishes, 87 priests, and 11 religious orders.

Bishop Giovanni Matteo Konings was the first bishop of the diocese and was appointed in 1926. He died in 1929. After that, several others followed until October 1997 when Ncube took over.

Meanwhile, Ncube who is now based at the Hwange Diocese in Matabeleland North wrote a letter to South Africa's national catholic weekly, The Southern Cross, asking for prayers.

BY NQOBANI NDLOVU

NEW APPOINTMENTS

We received a good news from Generalate. Three confreres are appointed to Botswana Province.

Fr. Boro, Agustinus	From
Fr. Jalang, Anselmus	Indonesia (IDE)
Fr. Przybyl, Tomasz	Indonesia (IDE)
	Poland

We welcome them in our mission and wish them successful completion of their studies and language preparations.

Fr. Yoseph Ruma

was officially transferred by General Superior to Ende Province in Indonesia. We wish him a good new beginning and growth.

BAD LUCK

In Poland there is a proverb saying: "misfortunes go in pairs." That became a reality for Fr. Francis Allah. He just recovered from his car accident when he was hit by a car, injuring him.

If you want to be philosophical and positive about it, our

confrere was given an opportunity to grow.

Hopefully, the chain of bad events will end there. We wish you Francis speedy full recovery and good luck for the future.

Fr. Provincial

Fr. Paul is enjoying his well deserved holidays in India. He is missing one thing however ... – meat, especially seswaa.

Formation

Our student, Frt. Nathan Nyanga, has decided not to renew his vows and to discontinue his formation in the Society. His decision is firm and final.

We wish Nathan a good new start. We hope that the time spent with us was not wasted, but rather equipped him to face challenges of life and faith in the modern world.



LEAVING SICHILI

It was a very difficult decision but after a long process of discussions, consultations and discernment the provincial administration decided to withdraw our confreres from Sichili mission in Zambia and to handover the mission to the diocesan clergy.

On the 12th September, the bishop of Livingstone, Raymond Mpezele, in the presence of our representative Fr. Klemens Amaunut, officially handed over the mission from the last SVD in charge, Fr. Roman Janowski to the diocesan priests.

It is a very unfortunate development, sad for us in the province, distressing for Generalate and depressing for the Bishop of Livingstone.

The reasons are several, and most probably they

will (they should) provide some important material for our future discussions and evaluations. Some things went wrong there, recently and in the past; there was nobody ready to redeem the situation by being transferred...

At the very end the only option left was to pullout. Indeed a tragic development in the environment of enormous pastoral needs and challenges of the place, and in the context of our SVD spirituality and priorities.

Sichili might be a symptom of something very profound affecting our life and mission. Perhaps a serious reflection is needed, perhaps we are at the crossroads once again...

Fr. Marek Grzech

Is not feeling well. Recently he was very ill and a decision was made to send him for a proper treatment to Europe. He was planning to leave for his sabbatical in December, but now he might go earlier. We wish Fr. Marek a speedy recovery and good health, and a wonderful and fruitful sabbatical experience. Our prayers will accompany him on his way home and during his treatment.

WATER FLOWS INTO THE DESERT ONCE AGAIN

A spectacular flow of water into the Kalahari Desert after decades of bone-dry river beds is a very special event for many people of Botswana. After many months and after more than 2.000 kilometres the water from the Angolan mountains pushed down through the Okavango River, then through the Okavango Delta and now flows hundreds of kilometres into the desert via Thamalakane, Nhabe and Boteti Rivers. The water is already reaching Mopipi, near Orapa. The people along the rivers celebrate with great joy. The domestic and wild animals can drink now without any restrictions, farmers can plant vegetables and trees, and the boys catch fish in the desert. Hippos and crocodiles follow. Lake Ngami is again full, like during the time of Livingstone. Most of the people lost hope and very few believed to see water in the lake again.



The Savuti Channel after more than 25 years flows again, not yet very far but the water slowly comes back and recharges thirsty sands. After many years Selinda Spill Way flows again practically connecting the great waters of Okavango, Chobe and Zambezi.

In some place the water surprised people, who build their houses in the old channels and flood plains. In Maun many houses are flooded because people

hadn't believed that the rivers will flow again. Maybe there is something we can learn from that story. Story of life-giving water coming from far, unpredictable, untamed, flooding and recharging the underground aquifers, surprising, destroying and renewing, changing the landscape, blocking roads, bringing joy, food and purpose to stay in the desert... And we know once again that miracles do happen.





LEFOKO CENTRE

To secure the land already given to us (2 ha), a fence was erected and a small cottage build to provide accommodation for the farm workers. At the moment they grow vegetables there. We benefit from that arrangement – the farmers are taking care of the land, fences and other facilities, at the same time they can provide for their families.

This development was absolutely necessary. Otherwise we could lose the whole land altogether. New allocations are frozen in the whole area, especially close to the river and in the forest outside the town. We hope that this secured land will become a core area for the envisaged Lefoko Centre in the future. We still keep the dream alive.

Word Aflame
Dear Confreres. Please, contribute some materials for the next issue

BIRTHDAYS FOR AUGUST & SEPTEMBER

AUGUST

Marichu Gacayan	5
Petroneldis	10
Alejandro Villasante	11
Natun	11
Charles Ashun	17
Biju	20
Donatus	21
Maciej Niezychowski	23
Karolina	24

SEPTEMBER

Louis Mathew	5
Tawanda Mbvengwa	6
Sunny	8
Raul	12
Peter Chibale	12
Max Bwalya	14
Alberto Saco	14
Zolty Wojciech	25

