



# African MISSIONARY



No.22 | Autumn/Winter 2013



## Silver Jubilee of the Brésillac Centre

The SMA has more than 250 priests from 11 African countries. During their training all have spent nine months undertaking a Spiritual programme at the SMA International Spiritual Year (Brésillac) Centre at Calavi in the Benin Republic. The ISY experience has a profound effect on each seminarian and it gives them a 'missionary spirit' which will help them live out their lives as SMA missionaries in the future. The present Superior, Fr Basil Soyoye, describes the class who have just completed their Spiritual Year at Calavi.

### 25 years

2013 is the 25th anniversary of the Brésillac Centre. The first twelve seminarians began their programme in September 1987. Coming from several African countries, Europe and India they were welcomed by three SMA Fathers: Georges Fonteneau

(French), Giacomo Ubbiali (Italian) and Michael O'Shea (Cork City). Since then, Calavi has welcomed more than 300 seminarians preparing to take their First Oath of membership in the SMA, leading eventually to their making a life commitment as an SMA after completing their Stage and Theology studies. Today, Calavi 'graduates' are to be found at all levels of the Society – in the General administration in Rome as well as on the different Councils throughout the SMA. Two of them have been chosen to serve as bishops in the Central African Republic.

### A new year

The 2012 – 2013 academic year began with 22 seminarians: one each from Benin, Kenya, Poland and Tanzania; two each from DR Congo, India and Togo. The Central African Republic, Ivory Coast and Nigeria had four students each. The five staff members who welcomed them reflected the changing face of

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Registered Charity numbers: CHY 4696 (Republic) XR 1207 (Northern Ireland)

(Continued from from page)



the Society: Frs Basil Soyoye (from Nigeria) and James Shimbala (Tanzania) are former Calavi students. We are joined by Fr Raja Lourdasamy (India), Pierre Garreau (France) and Wilfried vanKouijzer (Netherlands).

### Calavi programme

It is a three dimensional programme: prayer (the heart of the Spiritual Year experience), studies and manual work (planting and harvesting food etc). In class the seminarians learn about the charism of the Society through studying our SMA history and documents from the time of Bishop deBrésillac (Founder) and our different meetings since then. Students are also required to study the second language of the Society so that all are fluent in both English and French. Human development is also part of their formation, to help them develop their particular talents. Sport is also an essential part of their weekly timetable as well as 'weekend service' in the many outstations of Calavi parish.

### The richness of internationality

A noteworthy characteristic of the ISY is the openness to other cultures. We are 27 men from twelve different countries, each with a rich culture to share. Our cultural differences are seen as a source of enrichment and not division. From the start, we work on developing a multicultural life among us so as to counteract the natural prejudices we may have arrived with from our home countries. This is greatly appreciated by both seminarians and staff, one of the most enjoyable aspects of their Spiritual Year. International living helps them discover the different cultures we share. It helps prepare them for their mission in a continent where, far too often, cultural differences are a source of conflict and war.

### Thanks to SMA Sponsors and supporters

Calavi Centre could not exist without the spiritual and practical support of thousands of people over the last 25 years. All over Ireland, sponsors in the SMA Family Vocations Crusade (FVC) and other individual supporters contribute each year to 'training SMA priests'. I am the fruit of that support as are all our African priests and those from India, Philippines and Poland. On their behalf I say a sincere Ese pupo, e ku se Oluwa (Thank you, well done for doing God's work). Each day we pray, both morning and evening, for all our supporters. May God bless you and all your families.

Contact the nearest SMA House (see back page) for information on helping to train our seminarians.

## The varied life of a missionary

Fr Tony Gill was reared in the shadow of Croke Park. The thousands who attend matches there pass by the door of the family pub! As an SMA priest he has served in Argentina, Zambia, Ireland and Tanzania.

After ordination in 1965, Fr Tony, along with three other Irish SMA priests, was appointed to Cosquin in north central Argentina, where there was a huge shortage of priests. His first Good Friday in Cosquin was celebrated with 10,000 people processing through the city! The fact that 10% of the people owned 95% of the wealth was a scandal to the missionaries. In 1970 Fr Tony moved to La Rioja diocese which had made an option for the poor. Because of this the Church (laity and religious) suffered much at that time: parish houses and convents were ransacked, priests and lay people imprisoned and there was a constant campaign of calumny against Bishop Enrique Angelelli, who was eventually martyred for his work with the poor. Fr Tony well remembers the words Bishop Enrique said to him when they first met: **"Keep one ear to the Gospel and one ear to the poor. Listen to the cry of the poor and respond to it in the light of the Gospel."** Are they not similar to the words of our present Pope Francis who in 2005 visited the grave of the late bishop to honour his memory? Fr Tony's work with an Association of Priests lobbying for Social Justice landed him in jail for a period.

After ten years in Argentina, Fr Tony transferred to Ndola diocese in Zambia where he worked in the large urban parish of Chimwemwe in Kitwe (1977-1980).

Noted for his thirst for justice, Fr Tony returned to Ireland and launched the SMA Justice Office, getting involved in many campaigns including the anti-apartheid movement and Solidarity with El Salvador.

At the same time he was the Editor of the African Missionary magazine and Calendar. In 1987, following several requests to return to Africa, he was assigned to Tanzania.

Fr Tony was appointed to Kilulu parish in Shinyanga diocese. There, with local help, he built a bridge so that dozens of villages under his care would no longer be cut off in the wet season. Villagers trying to walk across the river often got swept away and drowned. To combat the effects of deforestation in the area Fr Tony undertook a tree-planting programme in the parish. This has helped raise awareness among the people that they should not just cut down the trees for firewood etc. but should also plant for the future.

When more than one million Rwandan refugees established the largest Refugee Camp in the world at Benaco Camp in Tanzania, the Irish SMA immediately redeployed two of our priests to care for them, Fr Tony and Fr Fionbarra O'Cuilleain.

After he completed his work in Benaco, he joined a four-man international SMA team to work in Masumbwe parish, a large area in the north-east of

## The bridge under construction



Tanzania, in Kahama diocese. They came from Ireland, Benin Republic, Philippines and Poland and had the care of 52 outstations (villages). Despite the fact that there are very few Christians in the area, the people built two houses for the SMA priests (at different ends of the parish). Among the priorities they set, in consultation with the local community, was to train catechists (who would teach Catechism classes for those who were interested in being baptised, of which many were adults), courses to empower women in the community, provide a clean source of water (well-digging). Courses are run in seven centres of the parish.

The Wasumbwa people are traditionally hunters, harvesting honey and felling trees for their living. One of the projects Fr Tony started there, as the result of discussions between himself, leaders of other Christian denominations and the local Muslim Imam, was Masumbwe Children's Residence. Many children had lost their parents due to different illnesses, including HIV/AIDS and were now living on the streets. They needed proper accommodation and schooling. And so the Residence opened in 2007 with ten children and Mrs Sabina Joseph as Matron. It is close to the local Primary school where the children begin their schooling. Today there are 30 children / teenagers living there.

The Local Government Council refer children to the Home which is run by a multid denominational committee with a Tanzanian Nurse as the Chairperson.

Fr Tony is now in his fourth parish: Holy Family, Pasiansi in Mwanza Town, on the shore of Lake Victoria. Along with Fr Jean-Baptiste

Vodoukpé SMA they care for 3,000 Catholics in three Mass centres. Pasiansi is one of 20 parishes in Mwanza and is the headquarters of the diocese, which has a total of 40 parishes, staffed mainly by local diocesan priests.

One of the projects Fr Tony is now involved in is with the Upendo (love) community. It is an ecumenical group of women and men, all HIV positive, who have come together to offer mutual support. At present there are 50 in Upendo and they meet regularly to learn more about different health issues and to encourage those who might be experiencing difficulties with keeping to the regime of food and medicine assigned for them by the local health authority. Fr Tony has helped each one to set up an income generating business (selling fish caught in the Lake; cooking small pasties to sell...). The money they make helps them

supplement their diet with vitamins. If anyone misses the weekly meeting some of the group will visit them to see if there are problems for that person. It is truly 'love in action'.

So even though, nearly 50 years later, he may miss the roar from neighbouring Croke Park, Fr Tony is a very happy African missionary in the heart of Africa.

Speaking to Fr Tony about his early time as a seminarian he spoke of the SMA Mission Circles – groups of Dubliners who supported the work of the SMA. There were eleven groups at the time, coming from all parts of the city, and they organised Jumble Sales, Tombolas etc to help the work of SMA missionaries. "Their prayers and sacrifices kept us going."

They were the forerunners of our present Family Vocations Crusade (FVC) network. For information on FVC contact your local SMA House (contact details on back page).

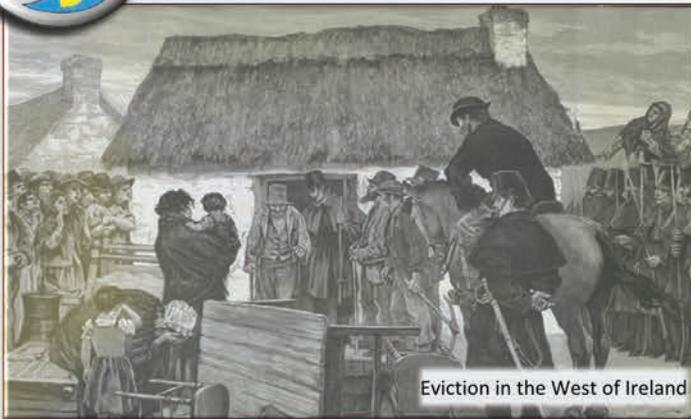


Upendo community enjoy a picnic on the shore of Lake Victoria



# IRELAND

# WORKING FOR



Eviction in the West of Ireland

## From Plantation to Land Grab

Even today, Irish people still have a deeply felt sense of the injustice suffered by our ancestors. Successive plantations forced them off their land. With no choice they became tenant farmers dependent on the potato crop. When, in the 1840's, blight destroyed the potato harvest they suffered even more. Famine, emigration and death followed.

Sadly, in Africa and other parts of the world, there are still places where greed, corruption and profit-seeking cause people to be dispossessed and evicted. The land that sustained them is sold or leased to foreign investors by corrupt officials or the local elite. The events of Irish history are being repeated and the effects are the same. Those who depend on the land are dispossessed and as a result suffer deprivation, hunger and homelessness.

**Plantations still exist in Africa. Their number is growing faster than at any time in history. Land that once supported and fed local people is being grabbed to establish industrial scale farms that grow crops for export to wealthier countries.**

Initially land-lease was welcomed as a means of achieving development. However, the last decade has clearly shown that, in most instances, land-lease is having a severe impact on the human rights of the poorest. It makes them even poorer. While foreign investors and the local elite benefit, ordinary people lose the land that sustained them for generations.

Experience over the last decade has also shown that benefits promised by investors such as employment, infrastructure development and improved local economies have not materialised to any significant extent. There are also real concerns about the long-term environmental effects of these industrial scale projects whose methods focus on achieving profits for investors and exporting the produce to generate them rather than on caring for local people or the environment.



## Facts and Figures

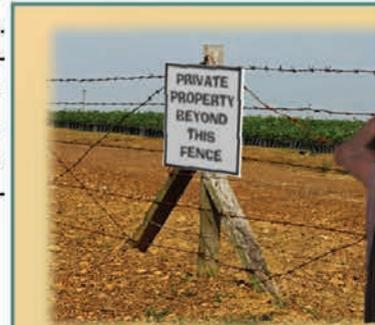
Land-lease deals have been made in at least twenty countries across Africa. They vary in size, some up to hundreds of thousands of hectares. It is this scale, the negative impact on local people together with secrecy and corruption associated with these deals that have led to them being called "Land Grabbing." Figures estimating the actual amount of African land under lease vary widely. Research published in 2012, which is at the more conservative end of land-lease estimates, has identified 754 land deals covering 56.2 million hectares. **See [www.landmatrix.org](http://www.landmatrix.org)** It is certain therefore, that **land at least nine times the size of Ireland has been leased to foreign investors.** The number of people displaced as a result is unknown.

## Misconceptions

Those who favour land-lease often claim it is a win-win situation that benefits local people and the investor. As already stated, experience has shown that this is not the case. Land-lease is also promoted as the use of 'idle' or 'unused' land. This also is not the case. Even where local people are not evicted from land they actually farm they still lose access to areas that provided water, grazing, raw materials, fruit, hunting grounds and traditional medicines.

In many African countries land is, in law, owned by the state. However, the *de facto* situation is that long before these countries came into existence, and even before the colonial era, customary rights of use and occupancy were recognised for generations with families or ethnic groups "owning" the land. In foreign investment lease deals these customary rights are ignored. Villagers are evicted or duped into accepting compensation that will not, in the long-term, replace the loss of their land.

As the negative effects and injustice of the land-lease system became evident, especially over the last three years, church groups, development agencies and local communities have protested and called for **the legal recognition of customary land rights and for transparent consultation with local communities before any land-lease deals are made.** The need for laws and policies that protect local people and the environment rather than the short-term interests of investors and corrupt officials is also a priority.



**LAND GRAB**  
Is the purchase or lease  
land by wealthier nations  
investors from poor developing  
in order to produce crops

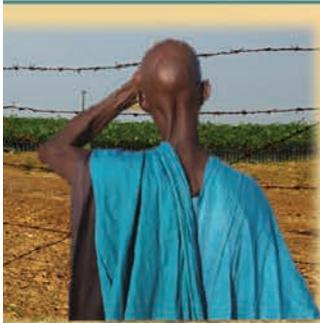


# FOR JUSTICE

# AFRICA

## Who and Why

Oil rich, but land poor Gulf States and emerging economies such as China, India and South Korea have leased huge tracts of African land mainly for food production. Biofuel companies from the UK, Germany, Sweden and other European countries have also invested on a lesser scale. Land is leased for periods up to 99 years to grow rice, maize, fruit, vegetables and biofuel crops such as sugar-cane, palm-oil and jatropha.



In 2008 the price of staple foods doubled. In order to ensure future food security, countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar poured millions of dollars into long-term land-leases. The growth of economies in China, South Korea and India led to a greater demand for food and hence for farmland in Africa. EU Governments seeking to reduce dependence on oil introduced lucrative subsidies that gave biofuel producers the incentive to lease land in Africa in order to cash-in on the opportunity.

Recently land-lease has come to be viewed as a safer and more stable investment for financial institutions such as banks and pension funds who are now shying away from the more volatile traditional investments.

Together the above factors have led to an increased demand for farmland and contributed to the African land-rush of the last few years.

## Unjust Exploitation

There are many unknowns around land-lease deals. They usually happen outside public scrutiny, and details are hidden. As a result nobody knows exactly how much land has been leased, the terms of these deals or how much rent is paid. However, some things are certain. **Secrecy, corruption and the denial of human rights are integral to the present form of land-lease in Africa. The practice is therefore, in most cases, a rip-off of Africa's people, land and resources.**

**The benefits of land-lease are flowing out of Africa, and Africans are again, as in colonial times, being unjustly exploited.**

## Make Justice Flourish

In its work for Justice and Peace the Church seeks development consistent with Catholic Social Teaching. This aims to establish a sustainable and equitable world where people are put before profit and the future of our planet before short-term interests.

The greed, corruption and denial of human rights that have become evident in land-lease deals are in direct contradiction to this aim. They violate the principles of human dignity, solidarity and the common good, upon which Catholic Social Teaching is based and which reflect the core Gospel call to love our neighbour.

Land is much more than an economic asset: it also has a social, cultural, spiritual and environmental function. Recognising this, the 2009 African Synod of Bishops stressed the need to protect land as a resource for future generations and specifically criticised the secrecy and corruption around land-lease deals. *"If the Church is serious about being the voice of the poor, it must bring this hidden agenda out into public discussion and defend the land rights of traditional communities against corrupt leaders and greedy investors."*

Pope Benedict XVI also criticised the exploitation of Africa's resources both by external interests and by African politicians and businessmen who seek to ensure *"their own prosperity at the expense of the well-being of the local population."*

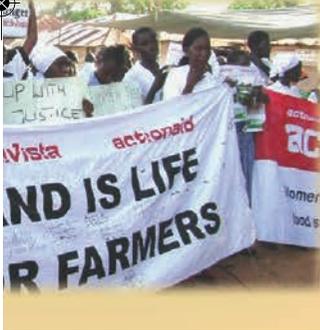
***"I call upon the Church in Africa to encourage political leaders to protect such fundamental goods as land and water for the human life of present and future generations .... Acting in concert with all other components of civil society, the Church must speak out against the unjust order."***

Africae Munus N. 79. 2011



**Let us become agents of God's mercy, channels through which God can water the earth, protect all creation and make justice and peace flourish."**

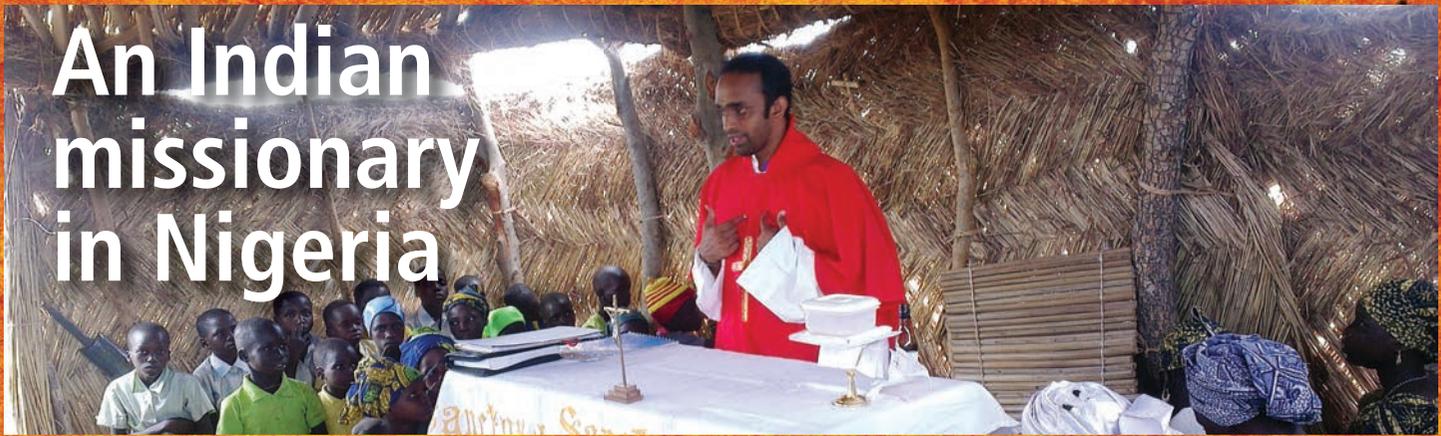
Pope Francis



Swiss owned, Sugarcane/Biofuel plantation in Sierra Leone

g. Land Grabbing which separates people from the means of sustaining their inherent dignity is therefore unjust.

# An Indian missionary in Nigeria



**Fr Dominic Maria Anthuvan** was born in Salem, Tamil Nadu, India in September 1980, the 2nd of three children. Even though India still has a great need for priests, Fr Dominic wanted to be a missionary because he was moved by what he knew of the SMA and he always wanted to become one. A cousin, Fr Francis Rozario, was already an SMA priest and this too had its influence on him (Fr Rozario is now a member of the SMA General Council in Rome). For the young Dominic, Africa has a greater need of missionaries and it was a matter of "it's now or never." He joined the SMA in 1998 doing his Philosophy studies in India, followed by an International Spiritual Year programme in the Philippines. He became an SMA member in June 1998 and was then sent to Nigeria for his pastoral training. Fr Dominic completed his theological studies in Nairobi, Kenya. He was ordained a priest on 8 August 2009, one of 5 Indian SMA priests ordained that year. After ordination Fr Dominic was appointed to Kontagora Vicariate, Nigeria.

He spent some months learning the Hausa language with Fr John O'Keefe after which he went to Shafaci parish, where Fr Donall O'Cathain (from Cork City) was the Parish Priest, caring for 128 outstation villages. There are no tarred roads in the area and the priests use motorbikes or a 4x4 pickup to reach some outstations, some as far away as one and a half hours driving (i.e. about 50kms). They measure how long it takes to get somewhere by time rather than the length of the road. All roads in the area are laterite.

Kontagora Vicariate covers 46,000 sq kms with an estimated population of 1.6 million drawn mainly from seven distinct ethnic groups. Though the Kamberi are the

traditional people of the area the Hausa-Fulani people have political and economic control. The first SMA missionaries came to the area in 1937 settling first at Masugu and Zuru.

Kontagora was created in 1995 from neighbouring dioceses, with Millstreet-born Fr Tim Carroll SMA as the Prefect Apostolic. He was succeeded as bishop by the first Kamberi priest, Bishop Bulus Yohanna.

There are fourteen parishes with hundreds of outstations in the Vicariate. To care for this vast area there are 9 SMA priests (from Ireland, India and Africa) as well as twelve diocesan priests. Two more are due for ordination by the end of 2013.

There are seven convents, six Catholic Nursery / Primary schools and three Catholic secondary schools. OLA Sisters also minister in the Vicariate looking after Primary Health Care needs in Kwimo, Papiri, Shafaci and Pissa. Conscious that the best evangelization is from within, a great deal of attention is devoted to providing Adult Literacy programmes and training Lay Leaders. There is a Training Centre at Masuga for Lay Leaders and Catechists. A number of priests have 'well-digging' teams to go around the villages to provide clean water for the people.

Earlier this year Fr Dominic succeeded Fr O'Cathain as Parish Priest. Sharing the work with him now is another Indian SMA, Fr Maria Valan. Fr O'Cathain has moved further west to establish a new parish at Pissa (with 66 outstations culled from Shafaci

together with 14 from the neighbouring parish of Guffanti), closer to the border with the Benin Republic.

All three priests are heavily involved in the normal parish ministry (celebrating sacraments, teaching catechism etc) as well as training Catechists / Service Leaders (local villagers, women and men, who prepare children and adults for sacraments as well as lead the Sunday Prayer Service). Two of the pastoral priorities in Kontagora are the provision of clean water and the Dry Season Literacy programme. Shafaci has been involved in both since its establishment in 2001. There is a Healthcare clinic run by the OLA Sisters once a week on market day, with another clinic at Pissa also on market day.

Youth Ministry is another ministry that the priests are greatly involved in because our churches are full of youths, children and women. Courses and seminars are held in different parts of the parish to address issues identified by the people: human rights, health education, empowerment of women through literacy, environmental awareness and justice and peace are some of the topics addressed at these gatherings.



Fr Donall O'Cathain and villagers at their new well.

# In the midst of turmoil some moments of joy

The history of the SMA in Egypt began in November 1877 with the arrival of two French SMA priests, Fathers Duret and Le Gallen, to work in Cairo. From the earliest years the Society and the OLA sisters have engaged in various ministries, particularly in the education and health field, founding several schools and parishes in the Cairo area and along the Nile Delta.

One of these parishes is now the Cathedral of St. Mark in Choubra, Cairo which was opened in 1910. Evangelization was, and still is, very difficult in Egypt. Very few Egyptians converted from the Islamic or other faiths. So most of our parishioners were from traditionally Christian families, either Egyptian or foreigners. This remains the case up to the present.

The education apostolate was a very important part of the SMA / OLA presence in Egypt with the SMA founded St George's College being one of the most prestigious in the country. Christians from all denominations attended though most of the students were of the Islamic faith.

In the early years, Choubra also hosted the SMA seminary. Due to the political situation in France in the late 19th and early 20th century many seminarians were sent there to train for the priesthood. Among them were many Irish candidates for the SMA. The first Irish SMA Superior General, Fr Maurice Slattery (from Abbeystown, Co Kerry) was ordained there in 1900. Ordinations continued there for several years but, by the 1920's, the seminary was closed and SMA priests were trained in their home countries.



A reminder of the 'old days' was the 2013 Ordination of Fr Jean Paul Silué Niénafoingognon from the Ivory Coast. Having joined the SMA in 2004, he spent his Stage (in-the-field training programme) in Cairo in 2008 / 2009. In 2012 he returned here for his pastoral training as a Deacon and on 10 May last he was ordained by Bishop Adel Zaki, an Egyptian Franciscan.

The Cathedral was full for the event with lay faithful (from different Rites), Sisters, Brothers and 30 concelebrating priests. The local Catholic Scout troop

arranged the tables for the buffet after the ceremony as well as practising their marching steps and tuning up their musical instruments. They led the procession into the Cathedral for the Ordination Mass. The Ladies Committee looked after the decoration of both Cathedral and grounds, with magnificent floral displays adding to the colourful occasion. Our 4 SMA seminarians had prepared the liturgy, under the guidance of Egyptian SMA Fr Farid Ibrahim. For most of the congregation this was the first time they had participated in a priestly ordination of the Latin Rite.

Pride of place at the ceremony, apart from Fr Jean Paul, was reserved for his elder brother, Koné Douyéri who had travelled from his home in the Ivory Coast accompanied by his wife, Koné Assomption.

After the Ordination all gathered in the church compound for a buffet meal and drinks. It was a fitting end to a wonderful day. Fr Jean Paul is now an SMA priest and will continue to exercise his ministry in Egypt, a country he loves and whose 'SMA history' continues with this fresh blood. He will join Fr Casimir Kieszek (from Poland) and Fr Robbin Kamemba (Kenya) in Choubra and be involved in different services. The Club de Bonheur [i.e. a centre for 50 handicapped young adults] is funded from the parish. We also care for a Senior Citizens Residence as well as a large group of Africans from south of the Sahara who meet each week to pray and seek help with their difficulties. The majority of the people we serve are non-Catholics but our witness is to the love that God has for all people.

Fr Farid Ibrahim (Egypt) and Msgr Gennaro de Martino (Egyptian/Italian) work at the Notre Dame Basilica in Héliopolis.

Despite the turmoil we are experiencing in Egypt at this time, the ordination ceremony was a brief moment of joy and peace for us all. God grant that this land, which welcomed the Holy Family, may soon experience peace and justice for all its people.

- from an interview with Fr Robbin Kamemba SMA



## Changes at the top

2013 saw new Leadership teams elected at both the international and Irish levels of the SMA and OLA.

Our photo shows the new SMA General Council with Corkman Fr Fachtna O'Driscoll (on right) as the new Superior General. He is assisted by, from left, Fathers Antonio Porcellato (Vicar General), Francis Rozario and Francois Gnonhossou (General Councillors). They will lead the Society until the next General Assembly in 2019.

Sister Mary T Barron was elected as the Vicar General for the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA). The OLA Sisters were founded by the SMA Co-Founder, Fr Augustin Planque. Sr Mary was serving on the Irish Provincial Council until her election. The Irish OLA will hold their Provincial Assembly later this year.





## My soul is longing for your Peace...

We commend the following OLA and SMA members and our deceased supporters to your prayers.

- **Fr Billy O'Sullivan** (Cork City), served in Nigeria, England and Ireland, aged 79 years on 25 March 2013.
- **Sr Máire O'Driscoll** (Ballydehob, Co Cork), a missionary in Ghana for 51 years, aged 77 years on 1 April 2013.
- **Sr Carmel Cox** (Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh), served in Nigeria and Ireland, aged 78 years on 14 April 2013.
- **Fr Michael Darcy** (Drumcorra, Co Cavan), served in Nigeria and Ireland, aged 79 years on 10 May 2013.
- **Fr Hugh McLaughlin** (Cork City), served in Nigeria and Ireland, aged 81 years on 13 May 2013.
- **Fr Donal M O'Connor** (Tralee, Co Kerry), served in Nigeria, Ireland and England, aged 80 years on 31 May 2013.
- **Sr Nathy Walsh** (Oranmore, Co Galway), served for 56 years in different SMA Houses in Ireland, aged 95 years on 7 July 2013.

Lord God, welcome our deceased SMA supporters, benefactors and missionaries, into the peace of your Kingdom. Reward the good they have done; forgive their faults.

May they pray for us and, one day, may we all be reunited in our eternal home. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

## Online Donations

You can send money, at no extra cost, for our missionary work, Family Vocations Crusade (FVC), Mass Association Cards etc. through our Donate Online facility through the [www.sma.ie](http://www.sma.ie) homepage.

# CHRIST'S CALL

To serve...  
To proclaim...  
To bring Good News...



**AFRICA STILL LONGS FOR GOD'S WORD. WHY NOT JOIN US IN THE LORD'S SERVICE AS A MISSIONARY?**

Contact the Vocations Director at any of our SMA Houses below

Designed by: Ron Rigby Design 087 752 5490

**"TO BE MISSIONARY FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART"**

- Bishop Melchior de Marion Brésillac, Founder of SMA

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