



Fr Tom Kearney SMA checking out the polytunnel at SMA Wilton, Cork City.

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I am one person who has one responsibility – make things better

In August 2021 a UN report told us that our climate crisis is getting worse, we need to act and we need to act fast. The crisis will affect every aspect of our lives and the future lives our children hope to have. Everything our civilisation is built upon – a stable, reliable climate – is now a thing of the past.

It is hard to absorb the enormity of the situation, never mind feeling able to do anything about it. It's so tempting to throw your hands in the air and say, 'what can I do when global governments and corporations have all the power'. This is understandable. But Jane Hackett's point, in the face of this frightening reality, is: *I feel empowered. I have become empowered because I have started to accept that I am one person who has one responsibility – that is to do my bit towards making things better.* This article is edited from a piece Jane wrote for TheJournal.ie To read the original article go to

<https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/climate-change-what-can-i-do-5522199-Aug2021/>

One person can bring change

Living busy lives, many find it hard to find time to think about our climate, let alone act. But there are so many easy ways for you, your family, each and every one of us to get involved and to make a difference.

In the grand scheme of things, any changes you make can seem like a drop in the ocean, but cumulatively we have enormous power. There are almost five million of us in Ireland, each of us can start to get involved in making ourselves, our households and our communities more climate 'friendly', or carbon neutral, or just better.



Vegetables grown by Fr Tom in Wilton. © SMA Justice Office

Each of us is a piece of a giant planetary jigsaw puzzle, each connected to the other, influencing, supporting and motivating each other to get involved. Covid-19 has taught us that while we were affected as a global population, the focus became very much about local – our homes, our communities. If we do the same in relation to climate action and focus locally, we can make a global difference.

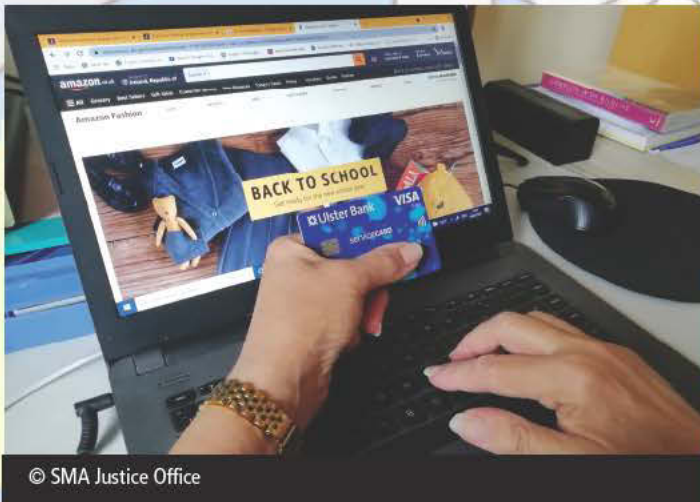
Another way of thinking about climate action is to see it as something that will benefit your family and others.

So what can you do? Start small and think big...

1 Money

Money makes the world go around and your money is hugely powerful.

If you are lucky to have savings or a pension you should explore if your money is being invested ethically, i.e. ones that are not linked to carbon-intensive industries but to more sustainable funds. Ethical funds have proven to be more resilient during the global pandemic so they make economic sense too. Don't be shy, ask your employer, your financial provider, this is how change comes about.



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2 Spending

With so much online shopping, maybe it's time to think about how much 'stuff' you are buying and why. 'Stuff' doesn't just arrive in a box but takes an enormous amount of energy to produce. From cotton production to transport costs, our addiction to 'stuff' has resulted in runaway consumerism and inevitably a hotter planet. Next time you're thinking of buying ask yourself if you really need this piece of clothing, furniture or tech, etc or just because you saw a glossy ad? If you do need (as opposed to want) 'stuff', then consider second-hand or borrow from a friend or neighbour. This particularly works for gardening tools. <https://www.thrifty.ie/> and <https://weshare.ie>

3 Digital Footprint

Hundreds of cat videos on your laptop? Saving thousands of images onto the 'cloud'? Over 4.9 billion people globally are streaming videos, using video calls and uploading cat videos. This transfer of data uses a huge amount of energy and this will continue to increase as our reliance on technology grows.

There are some great ways to reduce your digital footprint and if 4.9 billion people did it then we could make big savings.

www.myclimate.org/information/faq/faq-detail/what-is-a-digital-carbon-footprint/

4 Plant, plant, plant

If you have a window box, garden, allotment or farm then now is the time to get planting. We have not only a climate crisis but a biodiversity crisis, so getting your hands dirty and planting is a really fantastic way to take action.

Try growing some food in window boxes or planting some pollinator-friendly plants to support our bees. Trees are carbon heroes and will absorb extra carbon from the air, as well as looking beautiful and giving a home to wildlife so if you have space plant a tree or a native hedge.

Children particularly love planting trees and they can watch it grow over their lifetime. <https://pollinators.ie/gardens/>

5 Warm your home

If your home's temperature fluctuates between cosy and freezing then you know you need insulation, new windows or a new heating system. Insulating your home is a very positive step in reducing your energy bills and thus your carbon use. There are grants and support to help you when you are upgrading your insulation or heating system so check out: <https://www.seai.ie/grants/home-energy-grants/> and www.superhomes.ie

6 Do you need a car?

Modern society sees the idea of a 'two-car family' as the norm. I can hear those living in rural Ireland screaming now that yes, you do need your cars. It's difficult to disagree, considering our rural transport network is far below par, but if you live in a city or town, ask yourself if you need that car (or cars). Cars are so costly, both financially and environmentally, that it is time to rethink our use of transport.

You could start by working out the cost – how much to buy, how much is the insurance, tax, weekly fuel cost, etc. This will give you a potential savings cost for you or your family.

Bikes are much cheaper for those in urban settings and electric bikes are a great investment if you need to travel longer distances. Cargo bikes for families are now becoming much more common and are great fun – there's nothing like watching your kids in one.

If you live in a more rural location, you can make changes. Consider investing in an e-car. They are expensive, but they hold their value and maybe you could trade two petrol cars in for one e-car.

The main thing to consider is: Do I need to use my car today? Get into the habit of saying no more than yes. Try to keep it in the driveway as much as you can.



Abusy bee!

7 A load of rubbish

We have a waste crisis. Yes, we have the infrastructure in place to remove, sort and either compost, incinerate or recycle our waste, but the volume of waste we are producing is increasing, especially electronic waste.

Waste isn't really waste but a valuable asset, and in time the hope is that we will have a circular economy whereby each product can be redesigned for use over and over. However, now we have a linear model whereby each product bought has a short lifecycle and can either be recycled once or ends up as waste.

Stick to the classic: rethink, reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle. Get a compost bin,

question the amount of packaging you are being given at the supermarket, stop wasting water (yes, another resource to consider) and try to buy less plastic. If each of us starts to complain at the check out then eventually big business will have to listen. Check out: www.mywaste.ie

8 At work

Even those of us working from home can still influence how our workplaces take action on climate.

There is a growing corporate awareness of sustainability and many companies have signed up to Net Zero, the global campaign asking businesses and governments to set strong carbon reduction targets ahead of COP26. Find out more from your company's Sustainability Officer or CSR Officer.

However, if you work for yourself, you can set your own targets. There are many organisations helping SME's to set carbon reduction targets and many new employees are keen to learn more about how businesses are playing their part.

If you are a business owner, set the tone and be a leader – this may lead to many opportunities to network with like-minded people, save money, retain staff and ultimately help build a resilient economy. If you are an employee, start to ask questions, offer support and solutions and reach out to others who have done something similar. Check out: <https://unfccc.int/climate-action/race-to-zero-campaign> and <https://www.bitc.ie>

9 Talk, share, engage

To reach our national target of a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2030 we need to get behind the solutions offered. 2030 is only nine years away.

We have to now start to support radical decarbonisation, we can't sit on the fence and wait for the dissenting voices to shout loudest. We need to vocalise our support for ideas or projects which will benefit us and the climate (e.g. if there is a cycle lane proposed and you want to start cycling then offer support in writing or phone your elected representative).

Listen to each other and talk about your thoughts and concerns about changes that will happen during this time. We have to be open to change but change can be hard and some of us will feel left behind, but if we have strong communities with strong leaders then we will be able to face these challenges. Therefore, get to know your neighbours, volunteer if possible, vote and have your elected representative's number on speed dial. Remember leaders come from all sectors of society – do you fancy being one?

10 Mix up the BBQ

For a few weeks there, the Irish BBQ business was in full flow. Burgers were flying off the shelves and sausages were big business. We are big meat eaters in Ireland and we eat on average 10 times the amount of meat in comparison to someone from, say, Malawi. This means that our dietary carbon footprint is large especially when you add dairy into the mix.

However, we have a strong agricultural tradition in Ireland and farmers work hard. So how do we mix up our diet while at the same time supporting our farmers? Our agricultural system needs support so that it can adapt to our changing climate, whilst at the same time tackling its own carbon footprint.

Each of us has to think of our diet in terms of how it is impacting our national greenhouse targets. Ask yourself if you could reduce the amount of meat and dairy you are eating. Should you be buying better quality, local food? How much value do you place on your food and where it comes from? Is ultra-processed food good for you or good for our planet?



Vladimir Morozov AKX Media 2019 CC By 4.0

Food is the ultimate gift from nature and should be treated with respect. In the face of this climate emergency, we must reassess how we value our food system, how much we are willing to pay for our food and ultimately what type of food we wish to pass on to the next generation. Being a small island means that we can and should be producing food of high quality for our own population, we are a nation that once understood what it was to be hungry and now is the time to value our food system once again.

11 Become a Climate Ambassador

To learn more about our amazing planet, how its climate is changing, what solutions are available and how you can play your part then apply to become a Climate Ambassador. You will meet some great people from all walks of life, become excited about the solutions we have and feel empowered to get involved. Find out more at: www.climateambassador.ie

Go on, do it!

THE SMA IN SIERRA LEONE GOES ORGA

French-born Venerable Melchior de Marion Brésillac founded the SMA in 1856. On 14 May 1859, he landed in Freetown, Sierra Leone as the first Vicar Apostolic (Bishop) of that west African country. Six weeks later, he died of Yellow Fever, aged 46 years. This was a terrible start to his fledgling missionary society but, thanks to the commitment of those back in France, the work of the Society continued. After a few short years, the SMA presence in Sierra Leone came to an end... until three SMA priests began a new mission there in November 2012.

Here, Fr Patrikson SMA, from the Indian Province, gives a brief overview of our missions in Sierra Leone.

Facing the Country's Challenges

When the SMA returned to Sierra Leone in 2012, we were assigned by the Archbishop of Freetown to Kwama, a rural parish 50 kms from the city. By 2014 we moved into the mission house we built with the support of the SMA. Five kilometres away, on the road to Freetown, is our second Church, Newton. Fathers David Agbevanoo (Ghana, ordained in 2012) and Valery Aguh (from Togo, 2013) are now looking after Kwama, which includes a Catholic Primary school, for which Fr David is responsible. Next year, they hope to start a secondary school.

On 13 December last, Fr Sinda Peddy (Zambia, 2020) and I moved to Buedu parish in Kenema diocese, which has 21 outstations. Since then we have celebrated Mass in seven outstations which never had Mass before. 15 outstations have a simple 'church building' and only two of these are made with cement block.

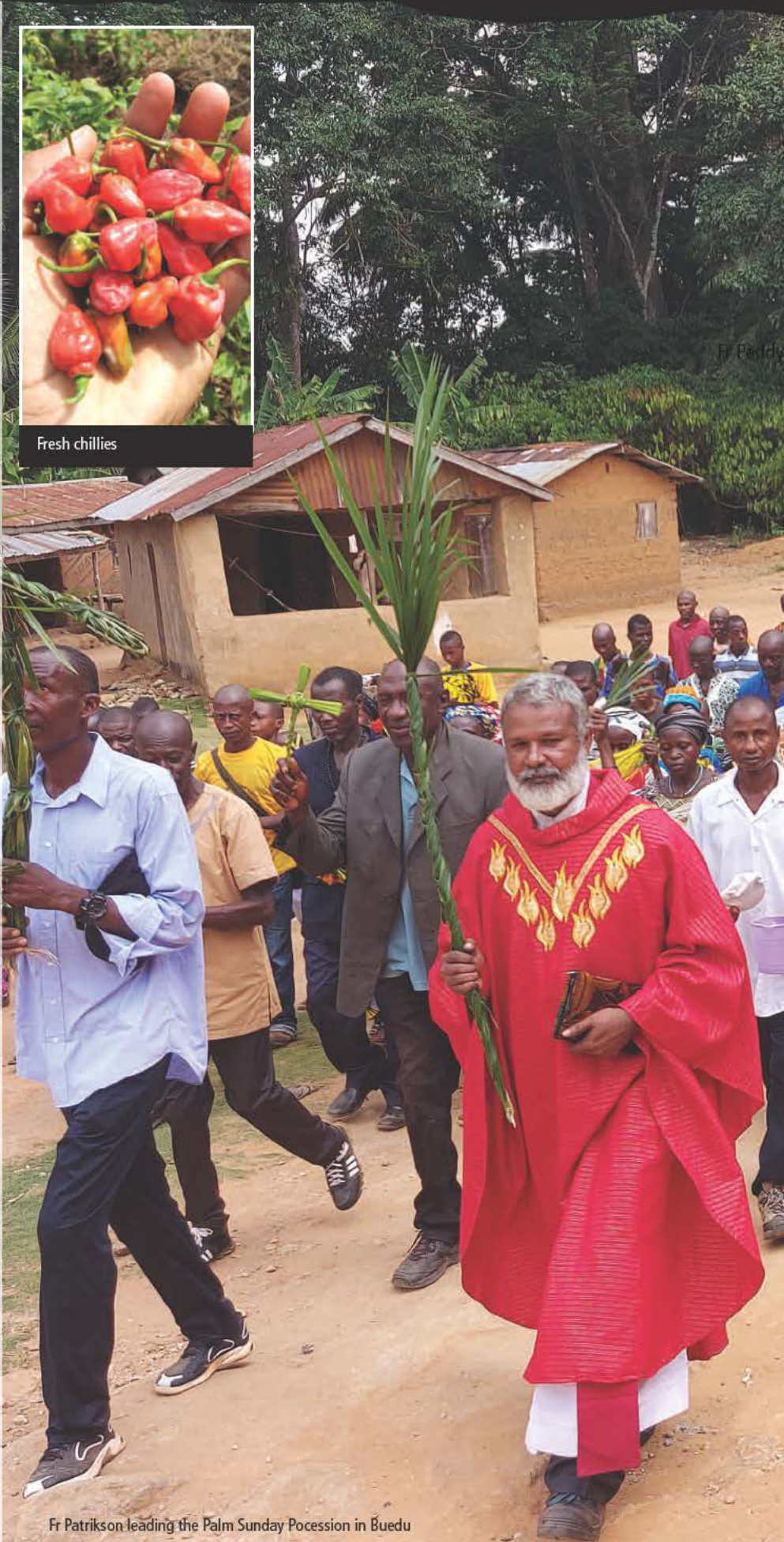
The rest are built from mud-block with a zinc roof. We hope to install Tabernacles in some churches but the cost is beyond the means of our people who are mainly subsistence farmers. We also care for 6 primary schools and 1 secondary school.

In both parishes we are promoting the use of solar energy. Fr Valery is also involved in various agricultural projects.

We began our agricultural activity as soon as we arrived in Kwama. At the initiative of Fr David, we began, along with the youth of the community, to use land proposed for a Marian Shrine. Due to the Ebola epidemic (2014-2017) we were unable to use the land in any serious way for large-scale farming.



Fresh chillies



Fr Patrikson leading the Palm Sunday Procession in Buedu



Pupils in Newton school praying before class.

When Ebola was brought under control, Sierra Leone experienced devastating floods. For six months, survivors found refuge in the National Stadium. Then the government decided to relocate them. In this process, the 7 hectares plot of land set aside for the Shrine was acquired by them as the place to relocate the flood victims. So not only do we no longer have land to carry out our first plan (construction of a Marian shrine), we no longer have any for agriculture either.

Partnerships

We work in partnership with the Kenema Cooperative Development Partnership (KCDP) NGO, assisting farmers in more than 14 villages in the area providing them with grain and fertilizers on the understanding that, after the harvest, each farmer will return 1.5 bags to the KCDP who will use them to help others to plant the following year. The rest of their harvest is for each farmer to use as he sees fit, selling most of it to get money for their family needs (medicine, education etc.)

In 2018, Father Valery did a training programme in renewable energy in Benin Republic, specializing in bio-gas and bio-diesel production from animal and vegetable sources. On his return, he carried out a survey with the help of the local farmers and they concluded that the production of chillies could be profitable. With the involvement of a number of farmers and making use of a swampy part of Kono Town and Compound 9 villages, they produced chilli peppers and cassava. From this they were able to sell five bags of organic peppers. The cassava was used to feed the families concerned. As a keen supporter of organic farming, Fr Valery is helping the villagers in Buehun and Songo-loko to produce their own organic fertilizer (compost) from biodegradable residue. He also supervises the activities of two hen houses, in Brama and in Kontaline.

During this past year, 2020-2021, in collaboration with the Bethany Farm Project, we have been cultivating chillies, cassava, corn, sweet potato, peanuts and okra. All going well, we are hoping to start breeding goats, pigs and hens next year. Thank God, our agricultural activity has not been negatively affected during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We also help run a computer training centre for the young people in the area, not just parishioners. Fr David keeps the financial records for all our different activities and also for the KCDP.

The greatest difficulty for us is the lack of a cooperative spirit among the people. They are too individualistic and don't like to work in a co-operative. They prefer to work for others for a low wage than to produce food for themselves. Theft is also a far too common occurrence. All the maize we had planted in Kwama, in the courtyard of ABC (Agriculture Business Center) and around the Church, was stolen. However, we are happy to see that, with perseverance and selflessness, our efforts are beginning to bear fruit. The people are beginning to look at us in a new way. Initially, they saw us as missionary priests who brought money to distribute. But as they see our simple way of life and the work we do their mindset is changing. As our SMA Founder, the Venerable Bishop de Marion Brésillac said, 'Neglect nothing that will advance the work of God.'

celebrates Mass in an outstation





Fr Arkadiusz with Maasai parishioners.



Mr Kelvin Bura and schoolchildren in parish school.



Auxiliary Bishop Prosper Lyimo of Arusha Archdiocese with Fr Julieta and Fr Arkadiusz after parish Confirmations.

Mission among the Maasai in Tanzania

On Good Shepherd Sunday (April 2018), the SMA began a new mission among the Maasai people in Malambo village (Arusha Archdiocese), on the eastern side of the beautiful Serengeti National Park. In the presence of the Church leaders and some Maasai elders, Fathers Arkadiusz Nowak (Poland) and Julieta Casapao (Philippines) became the first resident priests in Malambo, though other missionaries had been visiting since the 1960's and more recently, Fr Michael O'Sullivan (Pallotine).

Maasai Christian communities in Malambo Mission are generally new to the Christian faith and Catholic Church practices. It is defined as an area of Primary Evangelization, a special work of the SMA. Our catechists spend a lot of time teaching the Catholic faith, using local catechism books. Community prayer is based on reflecting on the Sunday Mass readings.

The Maasai way of life is greatly influenced by the climate. During the dry season some settlements are left with few people, usually women and children, while the men travel, seeking pastures for their herds. Some places are just temporary shelters during rainy season when water is plentiful and there is good pasture for the herds (cows, sheep and goats), otherwise during dry season those places are without people. However, there are other permanently settled communities that we serve as out-stations.

We need a lot of patience and initiative in this situation but the desire of the Maasai to become Catholics is not in doubt. About half of the 70 baptisms annually are babies, the rest are teenagers and adults. Most of those who attend Mass are not baptised but, slowly, some ask for the sacrament and they are introduced to community prayers. Later, after a period of time, they begin catechism classes as catechumens.

Though faith formation does not rely so much on numbers, there is a need to develop an awareness of the Christian faith among people who see it as an outside influence rather than as an essential part of their way of living.

Catechists in the different villages have been essential in helping to gather the people in prayer and imparting the basic knowledge of the faith. In the same way, with our regular visits around the Malambo Mission area, Fr Arkadiusz and I reach out to other villages where there is not yet a Christian community.

There is a diocesan Centre for training catechists and this is an essential tool in our missionary outreach. Our catechists are volunteers, and they receive some support from their community, according to what the people can provide. It is a challenge to get enough support for our catechists' usual needs. However, we send some of them for training so that they are more effective agents of the Christian faith to their own

community, and people will later on acknowledge the need to support them in their needs.

Malambo Church is dedicated to the Epiphany, symbolising the community as a church seeking for the bright light of a star, the light of all nations, drawing from the spirit of the Wise Men (Matthew 2:1), who with secure hope travelled from the east to be in the presence of the great king and to give homage to God. It is in that same spirit and hope that we, as we organize pastoral plans and work together, will never lose sight of the one who brings us together, Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Since our arrival, with help from the SMA Irish Province, we have fenced the Church compound to stop 'land-grabbing' attempts by those who want to set up businesses and build houses. The local council demanded some of the land to put in a new road they were planning which reduced our property.

We assist some infants and young children with special needs, e.g. clubfoot or cleft palate as well as those who have been injured due to fire or being scalded with hot water. The children come from all backgrounds, not just Catholic. The NGO, Plaster House, aims to improve the lives of children living with treatable disabilities across Tanzania, providing medical care for children with disabilities. We send children to their Centre in Arusha (7 hours road journey) for treatment. A small contribution is required but most of the cost (accommodation, meals, medical care) is covered by Plaster House. The support we receive from the SMA in Poland and Ireland helps with the travel expenses and other Centre costs.

It is customary for Maasai girls to be given in marriage whilst still in primary school. Supporting those who are willing to go to school can be a motivating factor for the Maasai to send their daughters (and not just their sons) to school. We asked the SMA Polish Province to help fund this mission work, paying for copy books, salary for teachers etc. In June 2020 (during school holidays), we organized classes to support the weaker students. Of the 86 who enrolled, 68 of them completed the month. In October / November we had a further group of 35 studying English and Maths, in preparation for secondary school. We are using a building in the Mission property for all the classes.

Like all missions, we have several needs. But we trust in God; after all, it is God's work! We are grateful to our SMA family, our own relatives and friends as well as the support of the local people, particularly our volunteer catechists, wonderful women and men who give of their time to share their faith with others.

Fr Julieta Casapao SMA



A GIRL IS AN EAGLE, NOT A CHICKEN

Kathleen McGarvey, OLA Provincial Leader, reports on her recent visit to Tanzania, which is part of the OLA Irish Province, where she visited the Mikono Yetu Women and Girls Empowerment Centre in Mwanza.

Sr Regina Opoku OLA, from Ghana, has been a missionary in Tanzania for the last twenty-eight years. During this time, she has worked as a teacher in secondary schools and as a lecturer in St Augustine University, Mwanza. She is now a researcher with Mikono Yetu where her responsibilities include the monitoring and evaluation of the organisation's work and projects.

Mikono Yetu, meaning "In our hands" in Kiswahili, the national language of Tanzania, is a women-led-non-profit organization based in Mwanza. Its motto is: 'A Girl is an Eagle, not a Chicken' and it aims to empower women economically and to seek gender equality in ownership of production resources while also sustaining the environment. The emblem they use represents the joining of hands to uplift the image of women.

Mikono Yetu grew out of the experience of its founders who, while engaging in a project to curb domestic violence, learned that when women are economically empowered, they have options to step out of violence and to improve their livelihoods and that of their children.

Mikono Yetu takes a gender equality approach to ownership of productive resources such as land, livestock, technology, industries etc. It seeks new ways of empowering women and girls economically so that they can own and control productive resources efficiently and profitably while also sustaining the environment to mitigate the negative impacts of climate change. To achieve these aims four areas of focus have been identified.

Economic Empowerment – reduce and increase!

- Reduce the number of women and girls living on less than \$1.25 a day.
- Increase the number of women and girls who own and control productive resources.
- Increase the number of women and girls accessing vocational skills.
- Reduce the number of youths particularly girls not in employment.
- Improving women and girls' abilities to access financial services.

Girls' Empowerment

- Support girls to become confident to reach their potential.
- Support girls to participate in social, economic and political life.
- Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of adolescent girls.
- Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls.
- Strengthen capacities of girls to access ICT.
- Increase number of girls in decent work.

Women and the Environment

- Strengthen the capacities of women and girls to manage natural resources.
- Increase number of environmentally friendly projects run by women.
- Increase number of women and girls using appropriate new technology.
- Increase awareness among communities on climate change mitigation adaptation and impact reduction.
- Contribute into reduction of deforestation.

Gender-based Violence

- Contribute in ending all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG).
- Reduce number of women and men who believe VAWG is justifiable.
- Increase awareness of the link between VAW and HIV/AIDS.

Programmes, training and partnerships have been developed in each of these four areas to enable Mikono Yetu to work with and provide support for women and girls while at the same time achieving its aims of gender equality and empowerment.



Mikono Yetu participants

We have provided the same items to local government offices and clinics in the Illimela district in Mwanza.

We encourage girls and young women, aged 9 to 20 years, who have dropped out of school at an early age, to dream and have a vision for their lives. Training is then provided for them to assist them to achieve their dreams.

Training includes: seamstress, artist, soap making, hairdressing, yogurt making and much more. The Centre also has outreach centres in the villages. For older women, they have similar programmes to foster empowerment.

They are very passionate about care for the earth and so work with and support many projects concerned with the use of herbs and recycling.

Sr Kathleen accompanied Sr Regina to visit the Communication Centre where young women are studying journalism and media. The centre has its own local TV channel publicising the activities taking place at the Centre as well as programmes on women and girl empowerment.

With thanks to Mikono Yetu for much of the information in this article – www.mikonoyetu.co.tz

During the COVID-19 Pandemic they have focused on assisting women to continue with their economic activities in order to ensure that they can continue to earn a living. Through mobile communications, they were able to speak with the women directly to ask what their needs were at this time. Some of the items supplied by Mikono Yetu were Veronica buckets, soap and microphones. Because of this, the women are able to continue to run their small businesses safely, taking the necessary precautions required so as not to spread the virus.



Sr Kathleen McGarvey OLA, Sophia Nshushi (Programme Manager) and Sr Regina Opoku OLA



Mikono Yetu
Empowering Women and Girls

Father Joseph Zimmermann, SMA Founder of the Irish Province

"This is the House of the Lord", Blackrock Road Church, Cork, erected by Fr Zimmermann in 1881.



Joseph Zimmermann was born into the farming community of Weggis, Switzerland, in February 1849. He was the 2nd of ten children and, after secondary school, he studied philosophy and science at the University of Innsbruck. In 1873, he entered the diocesan seminary at Mainz but, after hearing a talk by an SMA priest, Joseph decided to become a missionary. He was ordained for the SMA on 29 September 1876.

Fr Joseph taught in the SMA seminary at Lyon for four years, and after a visit to the Society's missions in West Africa, he began collecting funds in Alsace and in the German speaking countries. Joseph was good at this work, eloquent, persuasive, not easily put off by the obstacles which missionary collectors usually experience.

In 1883, due to difficulties with the development of the SMA branch in Ireland and getting suitable vocations for the Society's British West African missions, Fr Joseph arrived in Ireland to try to improve things. It must be remembered that, at the same time as the SMA was looking for vocations and financial support, the Irish Church was heavily preoccupied with supplying its emigrant communities in England, America, South Africa and Australia. The SMA leadership in Lyon, France, were already considering closing the Society's house in Cork and withdrawing from Ireland. Joseph Zimmermann had other ideas!

He saw that the Spiritans (CSSp), a missionary society with an education dimension, had won acceptance because of its

impeccable credentials in the field of education. The SMA, in contrast, had come empty-handed and was perceived as a typical French organisation bent on filching funds and priestly vocations. Zimmermann concluded that if the Irish branch was to have any prospect of success it would have to shed its French characteristics. Consequently, he developed a strategy which was to radically change the direction of the Irish branch. From its inception the branch had raised substantial funds both in Ireland and England. These funds were then sent to Lyon. Zimmerman resolved to do everything to ensure that these moneys and the proceeds of further collections would stay under the control of the Irish branch; furthermore, he determined to seek authorisation from Rome for the training of candidates in Ireland rather than in Lyon and for their subsequent assignment to mission-fields entrusted to the Irish branch and administered from Ireland.

The key to the success of Zimmermann's strategy was his capacity to win support from bishops and diocesan clergy. During the early years he sought to establish the good reputation of the society in the diocese of Cork and gain acceptance for his community. Eventually his efforts bore fruit, assisted in no small measure by the arrival of the missionary-minded Dr Thomas O'Callaghan, O.P., as Bishop of Cork in 1886. Thereafter Zimmermann set about cultivating leading figures in the Irish Church, suggesting that the time was ripe for the inauguration of an indigenous missionary enterprise to non-Christian peoples. Zimmermann's advocacy of an Irish enterprise was particularly appropriate, for by the closing decade of the century the Irish Church had solved most of its domestic problems, the task of internal reorganisation was almost complete, the education question was well in

hand, and the diaspora communities were producing their own clergy in increasing numbers. In all his contacts Zimmermann emphasised his desire to bring to birth a distinctively Irish movement which would revive the glories of Ireland's illustrious missionary past.

Eventually, in 1902, his efforts were rewarded when Bishop O'Callaghan and Bishop Robert Browne of Cloyne, with the blessing of Cardinal Michael Logue, agreed to become Trustees for the branch's funds. Later, in 1905, a second Trust involving Archbishop John Healy of Tuam (a historian who was greatly attracted by the prospect of an Irish missionary renaissance) was established. The formation of the Trusts made the Irish funds secure. But their significance went deeper. With the participation of the bishops, a policy of direct episcopal involvement in the affairs of the Irish branch was initiated. On a wider level, it signalled that the 'pagan' missionary cause was now no longer a matter of peripheral interest to Irish bishops.

From the start, Bishop O'Callaghan was impressed by the personal and priestly qualities of the SMA superior. As an early token of his approval, he permitted three things which the previous bishop had not agreed to: he allowed the SMA to fundraise in the diocese, he opened the SMA Blackrock Road church to the public, and granted Fr Zimmermann the right to hear confessions in the diocese. Well acquainted with the Church's efforts to evangelise non-Christian peoples through his contacts with Propaganda Fide in Rome (the Vatican Congregation responsible for the Missions), and anxious that Ireland should participate, Bishop O'Callaghan was immediately receptive to Zimmermann's proposal for an Irish movement. He was also convinced that the Swiss priest could provide the necessary leadership.



Scarcely less important to the success of Zimmermann's project was the support of a wealthy Catholic layman, Lieutenant-Colonel Llewellyn Blake. Unlike the Spiritans, whose fee-paying schools provided some income, the SMA was wholly dependent on private donations. During the first fifteen of the thirty years he spent in Cork, Zimmermann was compelled to devote much of his time and energy

in fund-raising, in Ireland, England and America. However, the amount was insufficient for the comprehensive training programme for students which Zimmermann's scheme required. Colonel Blake gave substantial financial support and made over his estates in Mayo and Galway for use as houses of training. Not only did Blake provide much of the branch's financial means, but his intervention on its behalf was an important factor in winning the support of Ireland's cardinal and bishops. His advocacy, both in Irish clerical circles and at Rome, of a distinctly Irish enterprise, free from continental control, won for that concept a measure of acceptance which Zimmermann, despite his exceptional powers of persuasion, could never have achieved alone.



Memorial plaque in Wilton cemetery

Within three years of Blake's intervention, Zimmermann was able to raise the number of students attending the branch's secondary school to 50 and was also catering for 35 French priests (who taught in the school, learned English, or simply convalesced after tours of duty in Africa). In addition, he saw to the needs of a community of between 25-30 missionary Sisters of the Congregation of Our Lady of Apostles which he had first introduced to Ireland in 1887.

In 1905, Zimmermann travelled to Rome to inform Propaganda Fide that the time was ripe for the development of an Irish 'pagan mission enterprise' and that the Irish branch of the SMA was eminently suited to do this. He requested that the SMA headquarters (in Lyon) should be instructed to authorise the Irish branch to train its candidates for priesthood in Ireland, and that specially designated mission territories should be confided to the Society's Irish branch. He argued that Egypt, under British control since 1883, would be an appropriate location for such an enterprise because French missionaries were no longer acceptable there. Appended to the petition were letters from Cardinal Logue, Bishop O'Callaghan, Archbishop Healy, Bishop Browne and other leading Irish ecclesiastics declaring support for these projects and confidence in Zimmermann. Through the good offices of Fr Thomas Crotty, Prior of San Clemente, who had been enlisted by Bishop O'Callaghan, Zimmermann obtained interviews with Cardinal Merry del Val and other influential officials in the Vatican. The Society's leadership in Lyon were not happy and requested that Zimmermann be withdrawn from Ireland. Officials at Propaganda, in an effort at compromise, rejected Zimmermann's petition, but informed SMA headquarters that Zimmermann's recall would be inopportune in view of the wide measure of support he commanded from within the Irish clergy.

Between 1907 and 1910 Zimmermann was to make four further excursions to Rome, bearing impressive dossiers containing submissions of the type already described, but, in addition, seeking the concession of Provincial Status for the Irish branch, and always armed with numerous letters of recommendation from his Irish supporters. Lyon continued to dispatch its own representatives arguing against the Irish position and seeking Propaganda's consent to Zimmermann's recall. By 1910 the affair had become something of an embarrassment at Rome and the Holy See could no longer procrastinate. In July of that year, Rome decided that the Irish branch should be raised to Provincial status with a large measure of autonomy, and that it should be allowed to train priests, retain funds and be assigned special mission territories.



St Joseph's SMA Church,
Blackrock Road, Cork

At the same time they agreed to Zimmermann's recall, while the new Province was awarded the extremely hazardous mission of Liberia instead of Egypt.

The reaction of the Irish hierarchy to Zimmermann's removal was even greater than Propaganda had anticipated. Many of the bishops made strong representations to have the decision reversed. Zimmermann, believing his work incomplete, made every effort to stay at his post, even orchestrating a series of

petitions from his lay supporters, including Colonel Blake. But Rome remained firm. The society's leadership withdrew Fr Stephen Kyne, an Irish member trained at Lyon, from his mission in Liberia and appointed him to govern the new Province. Strongly opposed by the bishops and local clergy, he soon found the strain unsustainable and resigned his position. His successor, Fr Maurice Slattery, during the subsequent decade, experienced serious difficulties. But he was made of sterner stuff than his predecessor, and the growing support for non-Christian missions and the firm financial base laid by Zimmermann made it possible for him to bring the Irish Province through the crisis. During the 1920's and 1930's the Province consolidated its position and in subsequent decades became one of the larger institutes working in the African theatre.

Zimmermann was re-assigned to the Society's mission among African-Americans in Savannah, Georgia, USA, dying there on 19 July 1921. It must be said that his heart had never left Ireland. Zimmermann's importance for the missionary movement of the 20th and 21st century extends beyond his work on behalf of the SMA. During his thirty years in Ireland, he played a major role in persuading leading churchmen that the time had come to inaugurate an indigenous non-Christian missionary enterprise. This achievement was quite distinct from his success in promoting the SMA as the vehicle for such a movement. For with his departure and the withdrawal of a measure of support from his institute, the interest in non-Christian missions remained firm.

Subsequently it contributed in no small degree to the readiness with which the Irish Church responded to a historic initiative by Irish diocesan priests at the close of the second decade of the century to found a mission to China (the Missionary Society of St Columban [Columbans]). Others were to follow: including St Patrick's Missionary Society [Kiltegan], and several Congregations of Sisters: Holy Rosary Sisters, Medical Missionaries of Mary, Columban Sisters ... Many of them, like the SMA, have members coming from the very countries they went to evangelize in the early decades of the 20th century.

SMA Family Vocations Community (FVC)



Anne Farrington, from Galway City, will complete her 4th group as FVC Group Leader next year, i.e. 32 years in all! Anne tells us a little about herself, the SMA and the FVC.

My family's association with the SMA goes back a very long way as my late uncle, the late Fr Martin Farrington, was an SMA missionary in Egypt, Liberia and Nigeria. Due to ill health he spent his latter years in Cork where, among other things, he was Editor of the African Missionary

and he trained the student choirs in both Blackrock Road and Wilton churches.

Growing up in the same family home as my late Uncle, I was always aware of the keen interest in and concern for the work of missionary priests and, more especially, the SMA.

The years rolled by following my uncle's death and, unfortunately, at some point along the way contact between us and the SMA was lost. In 1991, it was revived and renewed through a chance meeting with the late Fr Eamonn Kelly SMA whom I met in the Post Office at Caherlistrane, Co Galway. He had called there to collect the contents of the 'Mite Box' as they were described back then. This reuniting and new beginnings with the SMA has continued to this very day, thank God.

Fr Kelly told me about the FVC movement and its purpose within the Society. I expressed an interest in getting involved and, soon afterwards, Fr Tom Harlow SMA (the FVC Director for the West of Ireland) visited me and we arranged to start an FVC group later that year.

The Group has continued ever since with some of the original members still involved, though some have passed to their eternal reward. Others have joined over the years and I'm happy to say that there are quite a few young people in my present Group. This leaves me very hopeful for the future and possibly we'll end up with more than one group, God willing, when I can no longer continue.

I feel privileged and blessed to have met with and known so many hard-working, dedicated and inspiring SMA priests over the years and I ask the Lord to continue to bless them and their work, their Society and the people they work for and with on the Missions in Africa.

I hold many fond memories of Mass being celebrated in my home by an SMA priest with most of my Group present each time – always a wonderful and uplifting occasion.

My fervent prayer is for these house Masses and many FVC Groups to continue into the future.

Have you ever heard of the Shariah?

Today, in the Islamic community worldwide, there is a demand for the implementation of the **shariah** or the use of its rules in the lives of Muslims, even those living in the West. We are told or read of criminal penalties due to the use of this form of law. But do we understand what this means and from where has it come?

In Arabic, **shariah** literally means the 'path to water'. But in religious terms it means the 'righteous path' and it is the guide to Muslims on how to live and practise Islam. The **shariah** is presented as a code that all Muslims should follow. It includes guidance on everyday life such as for prayers, fasting, support of the poor, mode of dress, etc. The **shariah** guides them in family and criminal law, banking as well as the observance of the 5 pillars/practice of Islam. It is presented to Muslims so they understand how they should follow God's law in their lives.

From where did the source of these laws derive? The holy book of Islam, the Qur'an, is the main source of guidance for the formation of this code of Islamic Law. Furthermore, the life of the Prophet Muhammad sets an example to every Muslim. Consequently, from his practice and understanding of the message of God he guided the community and so instituted the first laws of Islam for the community.

We hear of Muslims in Britain, France or Germany, for example, call for the implementation of Muslim law/jurisprudence (**fiqr**). They are demanding that their followers lead their lives according to the laws of God. They are really calling for a stricter observance of Islam in their lives as this Islamic path presents laws on every aspect of their lives.

In Western society it is often the criminal laws and their implementation that grab the headlines. We hear of people being stoned to death for adultery, of criminals having their

hands cut off for theft or execution for what we would term non-capital offences. It is seen by those who are not Muslims as being a harsh system and often we use the term 'barbaric' to condemn it.


In the past hundred years or so, many Muslim reformers have called for the abolition or at least modernization of aspects of **shariah**, especially the legal criminal punishment elements. Some would say that these harsh punishments were additions to the understanding of Islam over the 14 centuries since the death of the Prophet Muhammad. As secular rulers took over in various Muslim majority countries in the 20th century, they modified aspects of **shariah** law to be more in line with a Western concept of justice.

Towards the end of the 20th century many of the regimes in states with Muslim majorities collapsed. Their attempts to modernize had ended in failure and often defeat, especially against Israel. The Muslim faithful felt they had to return to what they saw as the original path of Islam. This included the return of the **shariah**. Consequently, Islamic movements in many countries are in favour of the re-implementation of **shariah**, often with its penalties and practice.

In parts of modern Britain, for example, family **shariah** jurisprudence is used among Muslims over and above English common law. This practice of parallel law systems is becoming more common among Muslim believers in Western countries. In Muslim majority countries the re-introduction of stricter observance of Islam (and its legal system) is gaining strength. In the immediate future we will hear more demands than ever for its use among Muslims in our Western world.

Fr Jarlath Walsh SMA





I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith (2 Tim 4:7)

Please pray for our deceased supporters and our OLA and SMA missionaries.

Sr Bernadette Flynn (Stradbally, Castlegregory, Co. Kerry), served in Nigeria and Ireland, died on 4 January 2021, aged 86 years.

Sr Mary Catherine O'Sullivan (Knocknagown, Rylane, Co. Cork), served in England and Ireland, died on 15 January 2021, aged 84 years.

Sr Marie Treacy (Ballinturley, Athleague, Co. Roscommon), served in Nigeria and Ireland, died on 19 February, 2021, aged 79 years.

Fr Leo Silke (Borris, Co. Carlow) served in Nigeria, England and Ireland, died on 16 April 2021, aged 93 years.

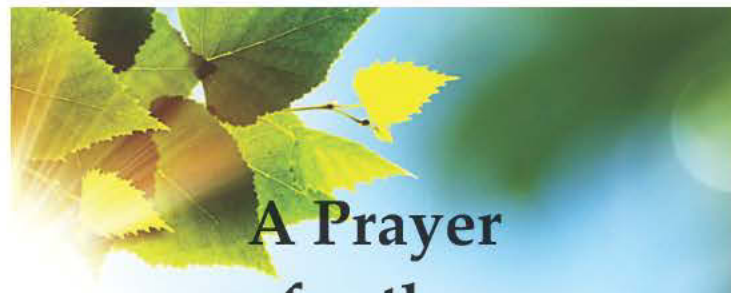
Lord God, welcome our deceased supporters, benefactors and missionaries into the peace of your Kingdom. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Donate

ONLINE DONATIONS

You may send money, at no additional cost, for our Missionary Work, Family Vocations Community (FVC), MissionAssociation Cards etc. using our **Donate Online** facility on the www.sma.ie homepage.



A Prayer for the Environment

*God our Father,
Your Son Jesus took images from
plant and animal life
to teach us about your Kingdom in heaven
and His mission of mercy in history.
With the aid of the Holy Spirit,
who hovered over the cosmos at creation,
may we appreciate the beauty and
diversity of nature,
act temperately to protect the environment
and to prudently
preserve the resources of the earth,
promoting peace and
justice among peoples
all over the planet.
May the intercession of Mary,
mother of the church,
and inspiration of Saint Francis,
impel us to collaborate
inter-religiously and work with all who wish
for a cleaner and better world,
for the common good and the glory of God.*



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