



SMA reaches out to Ukrainian refugees

On 24 February last, President Putin of the Russian Federation launched a totally unprovoked war on the people and territory of Ukraine. We are well familiar with the consequent destruction and terrible loss of life, particularly innocent women and children. Poland, and many other countries, opened their borders to receive millions of Ukrainians who have fled their homeland. All over Europe, people are mobilizing to help in different ways.

In February, the SMA parish in Wilton, Cork, sent a container filled with clothes, non-perishable food etc. to Ukraine. The Polish SMA Provincial Superior, Fr Grzegorz Kucharski wrote telling us that they are already sheltering 125 Ukrainian refugees in their two houses (one in Piwniczna Zdroj, near the Czech border and the other in Borzecin Duzy, near Warsaw).

"Every day new families arrive seeking refuge in our houses. We would like to give them not only a shelter where they will stay for as long as necessary but a home where they will feel loved, taken care of and safe. That is why this work of assistance is divided into several stages. First of all, we want to welcome and to provide them with whatever support we can, especially for the children who have seen and experienced such terrible destruction and death. Then, with the



help of our neighbours, we are providing whatever they need (clothes, toiletries, etc.). Getting the children into the local schools is being organized with the local authorities. We will try to find employment for the women so that, when this war is over, they can return home with some money to begin rebuilding their shattered lives. As we all know, men over 18 years of age must remain at home to defend their country from this unjust aggression. We also want our houses to act as meeting places for the Ukrainians living in the area where they can meet and spend time together."

In response to this appeal the members of the Irish Province have gathered money in each community to help pay for food, gas, water, heating and electricity. Just as in Ireland, the cost of these utilities is rising all the time. Other branches of the Society are also playing their part in supporting our Polish SMA to care for those in great need at this time.

Finally, let us pray incessantly for an end to this senseless war. May the Prince of Peace touch the hearts and minds of those who launched this war and may peace soon return to Ukraine.

Saint Josaphat, Patron Saint of Ukraine, pray for us. Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us.



Good Shepherd SMA parish hosts Catholic Womens Organisation groups from the 19 parishes in Caxito diocese

Sebastião Moniz opens a ne

One of our Founder's most cherished aims was to establish a local clergy in the different countries of Africa where there are SMA missionaries. For that reason, for over 130 years the SMA didn't accept local vocations but trained them for the diocesan priesthood. Speaking in Kampala, Uganda, in 1969, Pope Paul VI said that Africans are called to be "missionaries to yourselves, in other words, you Africans must now continue, upon this Continent, the building up of the Church."

In the 1980's, conscious of what Pope Paul VI had said and recognizing the growth of local clergy in many parts of Africa where the SMA worked, the decision was made to begin training young men to be SMA missionaries. Since 1992, the Society has ordained more than 280 African priests from 12 of the 17 African countries where we work. And in that same period, we have ordained over 100 priests from Argentina, India, Philippines and Poland (all part of the 'new' SMA coming from the 1983 SMA General Assembly). These young SMA missionaries are continuing the work begun in 1859, when SMA priests first set foot on African soil (in Freetown, Sierra Leone).

Caxito diocese is on the outskirts of Luanda, Angola. Over 50% of Angolans are Christian. Italian SMA priests are working there for twenty-five years. We now have 7 SMA priests in three parishes, coming from Benin Republic, Italy, Ivory Coast and Nigeria. These three parishes have 49 outstations.

In 2014 we began accepting Angolan vocations for the SMA and, today, they number 15 at various stages of their formation. One of them is Sebastião Moniz, who grew up in the Good Shepherd parish run by the SMA in Kicolo. After a period of discernment with the missionaries, while still living with his family, Sebastião went to the SMA International Centre at Calavi, Benin Republic, in



San Domingo Outstation community gather for Mass



The Offertory Procession at Holy Family Catholic Church

ew chapter in SMA Angola

West Africa, for a one-year Spirituality course. Sebastião's father was opposed to his son becoming a priest, as he had other plans for him. "Over time, things have changed. With my mother's prayers and the advice of many friends, my father accepted what my heart desired". Fr Ceferino Cainelli SMA (from Argentina and now the Provincial Superior of Italy) was one of those who played his part in convincing Sebastião's father to allow his son to join the SMA.

After completing the year in Calavi, Sebastião moved to the Notre Dame de la Paix (Our Lady of Peace) parish in Sokodé diocese, central Togo, in an area where most people have never heard about Jesus Christ (an area of Primary Evangelization). During this Stage (Pastoral Training) Year, Sebastião lived with SMA priests and worked in the parish (e.g. teaching catechism to the children, visiting the sick, leading a Sunday Prayer Service in some of the villages etc.).

When Sebastião joined the SMA he spoke Kikongo language (one of seven official languages in Angola) and Portuguese. Since then he has learnt both French and English, the official languages of the SMA.

"If someone asks me today why I want to be a missionary, the answer is different from that at the beginning. It is not just a feeling, it is something deeper. I feel that the Lord wants me to be

part of His project of love for all, as Bishop de Brésillac said: 'Missionary for the glory of God'."

"My vocation arises from the desire to serve where I am most needed. At first I did not know the charism of the SMA very well." Sebastião was struck by the work the missionaries were doing. Over the years, he grew in his prayer, love and understanding towards others. "I feel my love for the Lord. I had to learn to close my mouth and open my eyes and ears to better understand what God wanted and wants from me".

Sebastião is now doing his Theological studies in Nairobi, Kenya. We pray the guidance of the Holy Spirit on him and all our seminarians throughout the world. Bless their families whose faith helped them to discover a call to missionary priesthood and our SMA supporters, especially FVC members whose prayers, concern and financial support allows us to accept them into our Society and cover all their formation expenses. Without this help we could not continue our missionary work.



Sebastião Moniz

If you would like to support the costs of training an SMA priest please contact your local SMA House (addresses on back page).

Fr Walter and Fr Gigi Maccalli, celebrating Mass in the SMA Provincial House, Genoa, Italy



Catechists in Africa: reference point for Christians of small communities



Fr Gigi baptising in his former parish in Bomoanga, Niger Republic.

"In Africa I would never have been able to carry out my missionary service without the help and support of so many catechists" is what Fr Walter Maccalli, SMA, told the Vatican News Agency, FIDES, when responding to a document released last year by Pope Francis formally establishing the ministry of catechists – "Antiquum ministerium".

Fr Walter explained to FIDES what the catechist does in the African Church. "They are the point of reference for Christians in small communities, since they live in close contact with them and animate Sunday celebrations when the missionary is unavailable. For example, in Angola, during the long civil war, catechists always remained on the spot, even when priests and nuns had to abandon their missions for security reasons. They gave proof of their faith, despite the danger and persecution", underlines Fr Walter. "They never stopped the work of evangelization, they continued to give Christian formation and assistance to the faithful, even in precarious conditions, in isolated villages in the forest, in the neighbourhoods of the displaced people, or in refugee camps beyond the Angolan borders".

As evidence of the irreplaceable role of catechists, Fr Walter remembers one, Estêvão Tomais, born in 1961, two years before the Angolan liberation war began. "He was destined to die because he was mestizo" (i.e. mixed race), he says. "In fact, his father was Portuguese. He was saved by his Angolan mother, who fled to the forest. Catechist by vocation and responsible for the communities scattered in the large parish of Nambuagongo, he became the faithful collaborator of the missionaries. He is still

today the formator of new community leaders, to whom he teaches liturgy and how to explain the Bible."

"The Angolan Catholic Church owes a lot to catechists for the incalculable contribution they have made to evangelization over the forty years of the war, according to Fr Walter. "The impact of the words of an African catechist on the Christians of their communities is very strong, certainly greater than that of us European missionaries. As a connoisseur of local culture and traditions, his word is a stimulus and encouragement to live the Christian faith in those situations in which the Gospel comes into conflict with certain ancestral practices and mentalities. They know how to synthesize the many good things that exist in the African tradition and the novelty of the announcement of Jesus."

Fr Walter has since transferred to an SMA mission in Liberia, West Africa. "Here in Foya mission", concludes Fr Walter, "we can count on a catechist sent to us by the diocese. Among the various services offered, he prepares adult catechumens for Baptism, exercises an itinerant ministry in the villages, for catechesis and liturgy in the local Kissi language, as well as helping to restore peace in families and villages where conflicts have arisen".

Fr Walter is the brother of Fr Pierluigi (Gigi) Maccalli SMA who was held captive for more than two years by Islamic jihadists in Mali / Niger, West Africa. Fr Gigi is now at home in Italy recovering from his ordeal and preparing for his next mission. Thank you to all our SMA supporters who prayed for Fr Gigi's release. Please continue to pray for those still held captive.

The challenge of SMA formation in India

The SMA 'return' to India began in 1985, following a decision of the 1983 SMA General Assembly. Our Founder, Melchior de Marion Brésillac, was a missionary in India for twelve years (1842-1854). His final years there was as Vicar Apostolic (Bishop) of Coimbatore, a position he resigned from following differences with his fellow-bishops on several fundamental issues about how to build up an Indian church. De Brésillac was deeply committed to establishing a local clergy – Indian priests ministering to Indian people – but this was not shared by others. Eventually, after resigning from his position, de Brésillac founded the SMA with the aim of 'establishing a local church' in different parts of West Africa.



SMA Nivas

Fr Pat Kelly SMA (from Belfast) was asked to establish a permanent SMA presence in the sub-continent and, in 1989, he began what was to be a twelve-year assignment (just like the Founder!). He was greatly helped by local diocesan clergy and Jesuits in Chennai. We will be ever grateful to them for their indispensable support in establishing the SMA in India. Our first Indian SMA priests were ordained in 1993. Today, we have 58 Indian priests, working in several African countries, including Benin Republic, Niger, Nigeria, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa. Another priest will be ordained later this year.

SMA House, Mangadu, near Chennai (formerly Madras in Tamil Nadu State) was opened in 1991. In the early years it was the centre for everything: Preparatory Programme (learning about our Founder, the work of the SMA in Africa, spiritual and human development etc.), Philosophy and Theology studies. Many of our more senior SMAs did all their training in Mangadu, attending the nearby Sacred Heart Major Seminary at Poonamallee. There are three students there approaching the end of their formal studies and preparing for permanent commitment in the Society and ordination as Deacons. As the Indian unit grew, new houses had to be built.

In 1995, the SMA Illam at Karumathur, near Madurai, was opened. Our 5 students attend a Jesuit College for Philosophy, Arts and Science studies. The Rector is Fr Joy

Andrews, a former diocesan priest who worked with us in Kenya before making the decision to become an SMA member. Fr Joy also served as Superior of SMA India from 2013 to 2019.

Realising the need to have a House exclusively for the Preparatory programme, and with the financial support of many SMA units, particularly from Ireland, SMA Nivas was opened in 2012. Over two years, the aspiring candidates focus on learning English, one of the two official Society languages (the other being French). During their second year, they concentrate on Scripture, Catechism, learning about the Founder and the SMA, gradually initiating them into a 'missionary' mindset before they begin philosophy studies in SMA Illam or at Sacred Heart College in Chennai. We have 8 candidates in the Preparatory Programme at present, with four SMA priests responsible for their training.

Whilst vocations to the priesthood are declining in southern India, there is an increase in the northern states. Perhaps we will need to fish in new waters. There are challenges in recruiting suitable candidates for our Society: educational and job opportunities have improved in India; smaller family units; challenging young men during their formation is often seen not as opportunities to grow but as unacceptable criticism etc. The political situation is not favourable to non-Hindu groups (such as Christians and Muslims).



Three SMA theologians in Mangadu

For sure, forming SMA seminarians is a real challenge for us. Through the intercession of our Founder, the Venerable Melchior de Marion Brésillac, we continue to pray for vocations to the missionary priesthood, particularly in our own Society. It is a great responsibility of our members to "run the race", holding the flame of mission.

Taken from an article written by Fr Francis Kalan SMA, the first Indian SMA priest.

Buyer Beware – human traffi



Globally, twenty-five million people are trafficked for forced or slave labour, generating a staggering \$43.4 billion annually for the governments, corporations, businesses and individuals who abuse the rights of these people. These profits drive human trafficking – the enslavement of human beings.

A Global Injustice that reaches our Shops and Homes

In 2021 the US Department of Labour published a list of "Goods Produced by Child Labour or Forced Labour". It identifies 156 items from 77 countries, ranging from minerals, such as gold and cobalt, through to cotton, palm-oil and foods (including fish, coffee, tomatoes, chocolate, and sugar). Along the supply-chain, these are converted into the clothes, cosmetics and electronics we use daily. Forced labour is used in the mining, farming, harvesting, transporting, manufacture, distribution and selling of goods.

BUYER BEWARE

The choices you make matter

**When you buy on line or in a retail outlet
DON'T MAKE PROFITS
FOR TRAFFICKERS**

How products of trafficked persons travel through supply chains

Chocolate: Forced and child labour is used to harvest Cocoa beans in South America and West Africa. These are exported to producers who turn them into chocolate products which we buy.

Batteries: Cobalt is mined by forced labour in Central Africa and exported to factories in China. They refine the cobalt and use it to produce batteries and conductors which are exported to produce electric vehicles / mobile phones which are used around the world.

Soap and Cosmetics: Malaysia and Indonesia produce most of the world's Palm Oil, often using child or forced labour.

Supply-Chain Abuse

While human trafficking is a hidden crime, the goods produced by its victims move relatively freely through the supply-chains that facilitate commercial distribution. Because supply-chains are global and complex they help mask and "launder" the production, distribution and sale of goods tainted by forced labour. This abuse of supply chains is deliberate and widespread – a means exploited by traffickers and unscrupulous traders to hide their coercive profiteering. Most forced labour occurs at the lower end of supply chains and in locations far from where finished goods are sold. It is also common in manufacturing activities such as the garment industry. Evidence of slave labour is not seen higher up supply-chains, e.g. you don't see such people as shop assistants. Thus the link between trafficking and the goods on sale remains hidden. Consumers are unaware that the chocolate they buy is made from Cocoa beans harvested by slaves in West Africa, that their cotton T-shirt was produced in a factory using forced labour in Asia or that the tin of tomatoes in their cupboard came from forced farm labour in Spain.

Lack of Corporate Responsibility

EU and most European countries do not hold corporations accountable for human rights abuses in their supply-chains. Neither do they require that the raw materials or goods imported must not have involved using trafficked labour. By omission, this is a structural injustice that sustains the demand for slave labour and the trafficking of human beings.

Demand for Big Profits and Cheap Goods

There are many documented cases in which corporations, high-end brands and large retail chains have, either knowingly ignored human rights abuses, turned a blind eye or deemed themselves not responsible for what happens further down their supply chains – all convenient ways of maintaining higher profit margins.

Buying and the things we buy

On the consumer side, the wish for cheap goods, fast-fashion and unending choice has created a huge opportunity for producers, manufacturers and for traffickers to cash-in on the wealth and buying power of the public. Online shopping has magnified demand and facilitates the anonymous sale of goods produced by trafficked people.

This explains why goods produced through the labour of trafficked people are widely available. The bottom line is that their availability and sale generate the billions that sustain Human Trafficking.

Stopping the Profits

Removing the profit incentive, key to addressing human trafficking for forced labour, will not be easy. Firstly, it will need legal sanctions and preventative measures that disrupt the production and distribution of forced labour goods. Secondly, we need measures to deter the sale of these goods by retailers and their purchase by consumers.

Addressing the first is the responsibility of International Organisations and Governments. They must regulate those who import, manufacture and sell goods to ensure respect for human rights and to require that corporations and businesses exercise due diligence to ensure that unjust practices such as forced labour and human trafficking are not happening in their supply-chains.

Addressing the second, which centres around consumer demand, will mean raising awareness of forced labour goods in order to deter their sale by retailers and purchase by consumers. As buyers and consumers, we are at the top of the supply-chain and can unwittingly be the source of the profits that trickle down to Traffickers. Therefore, the choices we make when we buy matter; they are moral as well as financial.

The Choices We Make

Without doubt it is difficult to know whether or not something we buy in a local shop or online is produced ethically, but we do have a responsibility to try to find out and to not knowingly buy products made through human trafficking. In recent times there is much more media attention and information about companies and brands selling the products of slave labour. This helps to inform our choices.

If an item we want seems impossibly cheap, then there is a fair chance that it was made with slave labour. But it's not just cheap goods – big brand names in fashion, footwear and smart-phones have also been linked to slave labour. If we have doubts then the safest option is not to buy or to find an alternative "fair-trade" brand.

Legislative Progress?

At present both the United Nations and EU are in the process of drafting legal instruments to regulate the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises. The fact that the UN began its process in 2014 shows how difficult it is to get international agreement. In 2021 the European Parliament began a similar process. Both initiatives aim to introduce regulations and laws that will lead to transnational corporations and business enterprises being held accountable for human rights abuses in their supply-chains. In both the UN and EU the content and scope of these legal instruments are hotly debated with human rights organisations and faith groups calling for the strongest possible protections for human rights and the environment, while some Governments, Transnational Corporations (TNCs) and businesses are reacting strongly to protect their national and business interests and also to minimise exposure to legal accountability.

What the Catholic Church says

The position of the Church in this debate was made clear in a submission to a 2021 EU consultation on the proposed legislation. It calls upon the European Union to adopt legislation that will require all companies operating within the EU to map their supply chains in order to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for human rights and environmental impact. The submission also calls for new EU rules to clearly indicate the obligations of Member States and the European Commission in monitoring, enforcing and imposing sanctions for non-compliance. The submission also calls for EU legislation to complement and reinforce the treaty currently being negotiated by UN Member States.

It is likely that both the EU and UN efforts will take time to reach a conclusion. Whether or not their scope will be broad enough or strong enough to have a significant impact on injustices such as human trafficking remains to be seen. In the meantime, the choices we make when we buy matter. **Buyer Beware – what we buy may cost much more than the money we pay in terms of human suffering and the bondage of people who produce them.**

Pope Francis attaches enormous importance to the plight of the millions of men, women and children who are trafficked and enslaved. They are among the most dehumanised and discarded of people in the modern world and all over the world.

Human trafficking, he says, is an "atrocious scourge," an "aberrant plague" and an "open wound on the body of contemporary society." ... We are facing a global phenomenon that exceeds the competence of any one community or country," and therefore, "we need a mobilization comparable in size to that of the phenomenon.



Synod
2021
2023

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Last October, Pope Francis launched a world-wide consultation among all members of the Church leading to the next Special Assembly (Synod) of Bishops to be held in Rome in October 2023. The theme of the Synod, as seen in its Logo, is 'For A Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission'. The General Secretariat of the Synod has already published a Preparatory Document and Handbook (Vade Mecum) to guide the consultation process. For Pope Francis, the purpose of this new Synod is **'not to produce documents but to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions...and awaken a dawn of hope.'** He sees it as critical moment in the life of the Church, a transformative event involving all the members of the Church in a sustained process of listening, discerning and participating, starting from the grassroots level.

'Synodality' is one of Pope Francis' favourite topics. According to Fr Gerry O'Hanlon SJ, it is the key to understanding the quiet revolution he is creating in the Church. Pope Francis says that 'synodality' is an essential dimension of the Church's life and mission in the service of God's reign. But what is 'synodality'? What is its theological foundation? And what are the obstacles and challenges that must be faced in order to create a synodal Church. In this short article I will try to answer each of these questions.

What is Synodality?

The word 'Synod' is of Greek origin and literally means 'together on the road'. It expresses an understanding of the Church as a community of Christ's disciples, guided and bonded by the Holy Spirit, and journeying together on the path of Christ. In the words of Pope Francis, 'it is the way in which people in the Church learn from, and listen to, one another, and take shared responsibility for proclaiming the Gospel'. It is clear that, for Pope Francis, synodality is not simply another word for 'collegiality' which refers to the relationships of collaboration and co-responsibility between the Pope and the bishops of the Church. Synodality embraces the relationships between all the members of the People of God.



Theological Foundation

The theological foundation of 'synodality' is to be found in the documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), particularly in its vision of the Church as the People of God united on earth as the body of Christ. This vision underlined what all the members had in common:

- All have the same fundamental dignity as sons and daughters of God, in whose hearts the Spirit lives as in a temple.
- All share in the three-fold office of Christ, their head – the priestly, prophetic and kingly offices.
- All are called to be holy and to imitate the perfect love of Christ. There is only one standard of perfection for clergy, religious and laity.
- All are called to participate in the Church's mission of bringing Christ to the world and advancing God's reign on earth.

The Council sought to renew the Church and to function more as a community than as an Institution, and thus make it a more effective agent of mission. It wanted to get away from the institutional model that had been dominant for centuries – a model that had created a great divide between the hierarchy (bishops and priests) and the laity. The Council stated clearly that all baptized members are recipients of the gifts of the Spirit and are called to actively participate in the Church's life and mission. The concept of synodality, which is not found in the documents of Vatican II, gives concrete expression to this vision of the Church: a vision in which all the members of the Church, sharing a fundamental equality by virtue of their common baptism, listen, discern and collaborate with one another in the service of the Church's mission.

Over the past sixty years, the principle of collegiality has become well embedded in the life and mission of the Church with regular meetings of bishops (including synods) at national, regional and universal levels. However, the principle of synodality, embracing all members of the Church, that Pope Francis is calling for, is still in its infancy. While we can say that Vatican II sowed the seeds of a synodal Church, these seeds need to be nurtured. This nurturing requires a change of mind-set, the creation of new structures, the formation of lay leaders, openness to the Spirit present and active in the lives of all the members of the Church. Pope Francis is hoping the synodal process he has set in motion will help to make the dream of Vatican II more a reality and create a truly synodal Church. However, a number of obstacles and challenges must be faced with courage and determination.

Obstacles and Challenges

1. Clerical Mindset: For centuries the Church was identified with the hierarchy (bishops and priests) and in the minds of many people (including those in the media) it still is. Pope Francis often speaks of the virus of clericalism: a sense of superiority among the clergy and of certain assumed rights that go with it; an arrogant use of authority; a controlling mentality; an inability to listen to others and trust them. Sometimes this virus is hard to recognise and acknowledge, and therefore to cure. It is often reinforced by subservient attitudes among laity.

2. Creation of New Structures: The 1983 Code of Canon Law failed to take sufficient account of the need for a structural expression of Vatican II's vision of the Church. It created structures for collegiality but not for synodality. Even Parish Councils were viewed as optional rather than obligatory structures, consultative rather than deliberative. Parish Councils need to be made mandatory everywhere and to be given real clout.

3. Extending and Diversifying the range of ministerial and leadership roles in the Church: Many ministerial and leadership roles that existed in the early Church became clericalised over the centuries. These now need to be de-clericalised and lay women and men trained to take up these roles and ministries. We already have the diaconate available to men. Could this ministry not be also available to women? And what about lay cardinals? There are lay leaders of basic ecclesial communities in South America and East Africa? Why not throughout the Church everywhere? We should also ask the question, does a parish have to be led by a priest, especially in this day and age.

4. Dealing with fears. Perhaps the greatest obstacle to the creation of a synodal Church is the fear, especially among the clergy, of losing control, of letting loose the demons of confusion and anarchy. For Pope Francis this fear is evidence of a lack of trust in the Spirit, that speaks through others and a lack of that courage which characterised the first Christian community. It is easy to forget that bishops and priests do not have a monopoly on the Spirit. Yes, bishops and priests have a specific and authoritative teaching and governing role in the Church. But as Pope Francis reminds us in his most recent book, *Let us Dream: 'A Church that teaches must be firstly a Church that listens. The synodal method is fruitful because participants listen and discuss in groups, but above all pay attention to what the Spirit has to say to them.'*

Conclusion

Trusting in the Spirit and developing throughout the Church, at all levels, a culture of open discussion and honest debate will certainly involve journeying through unfamiliar territory and lead us to a new place. The synodal method involves a profound change in the understanding and practice of the Church. Like the 'anawim' (the little ones) of Old Testament times, we need to let go of our familiar moorings and actively await the 'new thing' that God is doing among us today. As we continue along the synodal path Pope Francis has put before us, let us hearken to his invitation to participate in the process of consultation with courage, trust and openness. If we do God will surely surprise us.

Michael McCabe SMA

PASSING ON THE BATON

Back in the early 1980s, I wouldn't have known much about the Missions, never mind the SMA and less so the FVC (Family Vocations Community). But that has all changed since.

My relationship with the SMA started when I and my cousin Feargal were sent by our parents to Dromantine, outside Newry, for the Boys Summer Camp. We were easily persuaded by a week of sport and besides everything was always easy when we were together. We got to attend the Camp as children of FVC Sponsors. My Mum and Fergal's Mum, my Auntie Imelda have been Head Sponsors of several groups over the years.

We attended the Boys Camp every Summer for the next seven years and wouldn't have traded that week for anything else. Morning and Night Prayer and Mass were incorporated into every day, and we learnt more about the SMA and their missions across the world.

We made lifelong friends there and would go on to share our stories of the Camp in later years, at football matches, university etc. Those friends also include some very special missionary priests who may have been happier in a distant country but we benefitted from some of their mission work at home, and continue to do so.

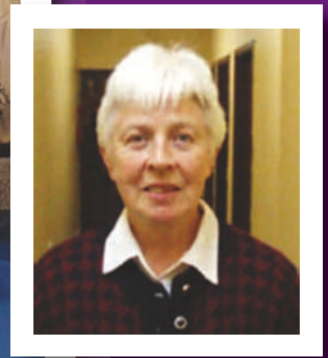
My wife Nuala and I have just completed our first FVC eight-year term as Head Sponsors. Some of the sponsors were those who had been with my Mum and Auntie over the years and others were new to the SMA and FVC. We were fortunate to begin our first group with Mass in Dromantine. Sponsors and their families took part in the liturgy and music and it created a very special start to the transfer of the Head Sponsor role from our parents to us, the next generation.

With electronic banking, it is easier to be a Head Sponsor than it was for our parents. Many Sponsors set up a Direct Debit for their annual subscription. We don't have to go knocking on every door looking for it. Contact your local SMA House if you would like to help sponsor an SMA priest. Unfortunately, the pandemic has prevented us from gathering in person to celebrate the support and prayers provided throughout the last 8 years. However, it has taught us to connect virtually by joining Mass in the SMA Parishes in Ireland and beyond (www.sma.ie).

My family and I have been truly blessed through our involvement with the SMA and continue to pray for all in the FVC, especially the young men we have helped to become missionary priests. May they do great things for God.



Damian Horisk, Belfast



Members of the parish making a presentation to Sr. Nora as a token of their appreciation for her many years service in Wilton parish.

Wilton says 'Thank You' to Sr Nora Lucey OLA

Sr Nora Lucey, from Ballyvourney, Co Cork, entered the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles (OLA) in 1961. After her Final Profession, Sr Nora was involved in the Ardfoy Primary School before joining the many other OLA Sisters involved in education in Nigeria – in Ijebu-Ode and Effurun. In 1981, Sr Nora joined the staff of the Ubiaja Teacher Training College, after which she took on the role of Director of Religious Education in Warri diocese, a post she held for 14 years.

After thirty years in Nigeria, Sr Nora spent some time working with refugees in Cork City before joining the OLA team in parish ministry in London for three years. Given her expertise, Sr Nora was then asked to be part of an international OLA / SMA team working with Migrants in the Netherlands. Her gentle character added to the welcome received by those who made the All Saints Church Drop-In Centre, an English-speaking parish, their first port of call in Amsterdam. Many Ghanaian, Nigerian and other Africans found it a welcoming place as they adjusted to life in Europe.

In 2006, Sr Nora responded to an invitation from Fr Cormac Breathnach SMA to join a parish team in St Joseph's SMA parish, Wilton, Cork.

The connection between the OLA Sisters and Wilton went back many decades until the 1980's. Sr Nora's arrival in the parish heralded the 'return' of the Sisters to Wilton. Coming from a Gaeltacht area of west Cork, Sr Nora felt that this gave her the opportunity to be involved in the Gaelscoil Uí Riada, particularly with the preparation of children for the Sacraments.

Responsible for the RCIA programme (Rite of the Christian Initiation of Adults) as well as visiting the sick etc. Sr Nora was always available, whatever the need. Over her years in Wilton, Sr Nora has prepared adult candidates for baptism / Reception into the Church

from Belarus, Brazil, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Scotland, Uzbekistan and several African countries.

Shortly after her arrival, Fr Cormac got a call to visit someone who was seriously ill. When he arrived at the house, whom did he meet but Sr Nora leaving it! Sister had been passing and the family called her in. Sr Nora was also involved in Bible Study, meetings with the Ministers of the Word and the Ministers of the Eucharist, visiting the house bound (particularly on First Fridays), leading a Word and Holy Communion Service in the Cope foundation and many other Parish activities. The regular Sunday Children's Liturgy was an important part of Sr Nora's ministry.

As well as her parish responsibilities, Sr Nora developed her keen interest in **Care for our Creation** and other **Justice** issues. During 2021, as Covid limited so many parish activities, it was decided that Sr Nora would step down from her responsibilities in the parish. Fr Michael O'Leary SMA, PP, decided to mark Sr Nora's long years of service. Following the 2021 Christmas charity appeal, in which €4,000 was collected, the decision was made to divide the money between the **OLA** and a group who **Knit for Africa**. Over the years the parish has supported the work of various SMA priests but this is the first time that they supported the work of the OLA Sisters. A cheque for €2,000 was presented to Sr Nora to be used by the OLA to assist in the empowerment of women in Northern Nigeria.

Sr Nora ended a recent Parish Report with the words: "Thank you for the opportunity to serve." Fr Augustin Planque, who founded the OLA Sisters, once said "do the will of God in the smallest detail. Submit to him in thoughts, words, affections, desires and in a word, everything." Sister Nora, we in the SMA, the OLA, and the people of SMA Wilton parish and beyond say: Thank YOU for doing that will of God which saw you generously serve God's people, in Nigeria, London, Amsterdam and Cork. May you have many more years of happiness in your retirement.

Islamic Celebrations in Islam (part 2)

In a previous edition of The African Missionary, I drew your attention to two major celebrations in the Islamic Calendar. Like ourselves in Christianity, and in other religions, there are various celebrations spread throughout the year on which major events in Islam are called to mind by special days. I would now like to draw your attention to three more celebrations.

Laylat al Qadr

In translation this is known as The Night of Power. This night is regarded as the holiest night in Islam as it is believed to be the night in which the first revelation was given by the Angel Jibril (Gabriel) to the Prophet Muhammad. This night falls on or around the 27th night of the month of Ramadan (fasting). This night is so holy (in Islamic tradition) it is felt that it should be a night of prayer (especially recitation of the Qur'an – the holy book of Islam) as it can merit a person special blessings for oneself and those for whom we pray.

From this night onwards, and for the following 24 years, the Angel Gabriel revealed the contents of the Qur'an to God's special messenger, Muhammad.

Id el Milad un Nabi

This is a celebration of the birth and life of the Prophet Muhammad. It is celebrated on the third month of the Islamic lunar calendar. Often lights and decorations are put up in the streets and in houses. Special food is then prepared to celebrate this occasion.

After the death of Muhammad, Muslims did not want to forget him and his virtues. So people still

gather to read poetry and sing verses to honour the Prophet as well as to discuss his life and deeds.

Just as we send greetings on the birthday of Jesus Christ, Muslims do the same on this day. Greetings such as 'May the blessings of Allah bring happiness in your life' or 'May the noble teachings of the Prophet Muhammad spread harmony and peace' are used.

Muharram or Islamic New Year

Based on the lunar calendar, Muharram is the first month of the Islamic New Year. It is considered a holy month, second only to Ramadan in its significance. Day one of this calendar is calculated from the day the Prophet Muhammad fled from Mecca to Medina (Yatrib) in 622 AD. His followers were being persecuted by the authorities in Mecca because of his preaching about the one god (Allah) as opposed to those who believed in many gods. So both Muhammad and his followers withdrew (hijrah) to Medina for their safety.

Islamic Tradition has it that the 10th day of Muharram marks the day Nuh (Noah) left the Ark after the Flood. Furthermore, also on this day the Prophet Musa (Moses) was saved from the Pharaoh of Egypt as he crossed the Red Sea with his people.

This concludes our series of articles on Islam. I hope it has helped our readers know a little more about Islam in the modern world. Thanks to Fr Jarlath Walsh, SMA for preparing them for us.

Editor





SMA Pilgrimage to Knock – 28 May 2022

We will celebrate the final Mass of our Novena at Knock. Due to concerns about the spread of Covid we are not organizing buses this year but you are most welcome to make your own way to the Shrine. Those who are unable to attend in person can join us for the Rosary and Stations of the Cross at 2pm, followed by Mass at 3pm via the Shrine webcam: www.knockshrine.ie

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord

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

Fr Thomas KEARNEY (Ardee, Co Louth), served in Nigeria, England and Ireland, died on 22 November 2021, aged 86 years.

Fr Thomas TREACY (Claretuam, Co Galway), served in Nigeria, died on 11 December 2021, aged 76 years.

Sr de Pazzi FARRELL (Clogheen, Co Tipperary) served in England and Ireland, died on 8 March 2022, aged 96 years.

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

INTERESTED IN A LIFE AS AN SMA MISSIONARY?...IN AFRICA?



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