

MARYKNOLL FATHERS & BROTHERS

# AFRICA REGION



## A MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL SUPERIOR

This is the first issue of our Regional Newsletter in the new year of 2002. I hope that each one of us (here in the Region or in the States) will take our turn to add our own two cents. You can't tell me you don't have an opinion or something good to share. This is ours, so please let's share with each other. Tom Shea is our Editor and Dave Smith is our Publisher. They can't do it alone. Hoping to hear from/about you.

*~ Tom Tiscornia*

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*By Dick Quinn*

On Oct. 13<sup>th</sup>, 2001 I was taking lunch at Mundelein Seminary in the Archdiocese of Chicago. I was sitting with five Kenyan seminarians studying for the priesthood there. A local seminarian asked if he might join us. He was called James Madison and looked around thirty-five years of age. I asked him what he was doing in the world before joining the seminary. He mentioned his job and told me that his family left the church twenty years ago. I asked why. They complained that the Catholic Church didn't teach the Bible enough. Now he and most of his family are back. Again, I asked why. He said that they discovered that the teachings of their evangelical church were too thin. Then one of the Kenyan seminarians suddenly confessed he was outside the church for six years. I asked him why. He was led to believe that Catholics are not saved. Now he is in third theology and will become a Deacon in 2002. I have literally heard hundred and hundreds of stories like this. There is no end to it.

Coming back from visiting the graves of my parents on Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup>, All souls Day, my brother, David startled me when he asked, why did so many of our nephews and nieces leave their Catholic Faith. He had never asked this question before. He attended all their marriages outside the church and was hurt by it all. I told him there may be many reasons. I could start blaming their parents, the world with its secular messages that ridicule our faith, the Leaders of the Church for failing to respond to this great defection, or the sudden expansion and thrusts of the evangelical churches. Maybe for a time these churches seemed more suitable, more lively and evangelistic. It is very hard to talk about this with members of your own family.

Their departure was more than fifteen years ago and not one has come back. I have found this same situation in Catholic home after home. Sometimes, it is too painful to talk about. It is far easier to keep quiet and pray that they come back than to find out THE WHY OF IT ALL.

I have read that the church has lost about twenty million Catholics in Latin America and ten million Hispanics in the States. If I could count my nephews and nieces and others from non-Hispanic homes, I am sure that there would be another ten million or more. There is not a parish or home that hasn't been touched. How many Catholics have defected in Kenya? I have no exact number, but from the stories I have heard they are many. It is better not to think about it and carry on from where we are. But can we? Are we on the right tract?



I will be the first to say that many Catholics are doing wonderful things for the Church. I know many adult youth who reach out and from the younger youth. There are many Catholic institutions like hospitals, clinics, schools, educational programmers, retreat houses, and development projects, pas toral and religious centers doing outstanding work. I know that many personnel and great finances have been put in to run these projects. So much of our work falls under the title of social and development work. So little of it deals with the proclamation of the word as Jesus did in every town and place. We have a whole army of religious, well trained and dedicated and so few of them deal with the Gospel, a phrase I have coined to express the pastoral and spiritual aspect of our calling. So many have found Jesus in other places than in our Church and communities. Like Christ, I hate to lose even one of our sheep.

The Church has hundreds of congregations, societies, various ministries, movements, institutions but our impact is not what it should be. A former director of the Kenya Broadcast Corporation told me "what a big church with such a little voice." He was right.

THE JOHN PAUL II PARISH-BASED EVANGELIZING TEAMS is a response to the Great Commission and the Great Defection. It is a response to the Vatican II Council and the African Synod. Next year it will celebrate ten years. We have tried to form and equip leaders of teams with the tools to proclaim and defend the faith. Many of our good lay people were influenced by the booklet, "Who Are Stealing Our Sheep?" and asked to join us. They had experienced the same defections in their own homes and parishes. Many came and stayed for a short time and went.

It has been hard to sustain the momentum. Some had other expectations than evangelization. Our successes for the most part have been sporadic. We have had our good days and many sad ones. Since we are not a movement but

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dedicated Catholic men and women responding to the Great Commission of Christ, some wondered who we are? In fact, some church leaders and Catholic traditionalists oppose our work of Catholic Evangelization. The Catholic Charismatic Renewal has tried to minimize our initiative and initial successes in many parishes. At times it seems like Catholic Evangelism and the Public Proclamation of the Word of God was a dirty thing, uncatholic to say the least. JPII has produced wonderful preachers but most are without honor in their own Nazareth. The question is how do we make the Catholic Church Evangelistic? Our energy, our personnel, our finances are top heavy in maintaining the social Gospel. The Gospel has been neglected. We are bogged down in so many movements, so many social and development projects, that there is little time or resources left for Evangelization. Interestingly enough, many people who leave our faith because of various reasons are the first to use our institutions. They want the service without the message. Who else is seeing this?

I shall give two recent examples. A Sister just returned from the States with a Masters in Pastor Counseling. I was happy to hear this since I knew how much this expertise is needed for people involved in pastoral ministry. Then she decided to return to the States to get help to start another AIDS project. I was hurt and asked myself, why another AIDS project? How about the countless lost sheep that are suffering from spiritual AIDS? Christ asked, "will the Son of Man find faith on earth when he comes?" Lk 18:8.

There is a lay Catholic studying journalism at Day Star University in Athi River. Everyday his Catholic faith is attacked and ridiculed by professors and students. He is very intelligent and articulate and challenges them. When they find a faith believing and dynamic Catholic, they back off. That is what Catholic Evangelization is all about. "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" 1 Cor 9:16

Fr. Richard J. Quinn, M.M.  
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Dear Father Thomas,

Love from Mary's hill.

A happy, Holy advent and a Merry Christmas. We want you to know that we continue every Wednesday with Eucharistic adoration in our Main Chapel from after 7 a.m. Mass until 4 p.m. for the Spiritual and Material needs of the Maryknoll family and those who we serve and those with whom we work. So all of you are especially remembered by us. "Us" – "we" are older Sisters in the Maryknoll Center who are chronically ill, handicapped or some working part-time.

There are some who question the wisdom of our endeavor saying that we "have tapped all these old, sick Sisters who are half way to the grave." (Aren't we all!) "and what will happen to the project when they die off?" Our answer is that it is not "our" project; it is that of Jesus and Mary. Others will take our place. Our task is just to be faithful as we are able.

Mission life, we know, is wonderful but it is also not easy. Padre Pio said, "no suffering borne out of love for Christ, even borne poorly, will go unrewarded in eternal life". May you all have strength, courage, and happiness for the year ahead.

Love and prayers in Jesus and Mary,

Sisters of the Wednesday Adoration Group

P.S. Please share this in whatever way possible with the Fathers and Brothers in the Africa Region.

Sister Mary Lou

Sister Center  
Maryknoll, N.Y.  
Christmas 2001

## Global Concerns in Africa

*By Jim Eble*

I attended a workshop for Justice Peace Coordinators for religious communities in Tanzania at Mbagala Spiritual Center in Dar es Salaam from Oct. 18-19. It was an opportunity for me to meet the eleven other priests and brothers who are making a contribution to matters of Justice and Peace in their respective communities.

What became very apparent from the start was that many of us were asked to be there by our superiors. As a whole, motivation to be there in our group was low. And yet in an African way we bonded at table, prayer and in our workshop discussions.

The workshop was given by a White Father, Bill Dyer, a member of the leadership council for the White Fathers in East Africa. He enabled us to take a look at the many obstacles and baggage that we carry around that block us from working for Justice and Peace.

Bill suggested that what keeps us from making the connection with Justice and Peace was the lack of awareness of our common ground. What we human beings hold in common is our brokenness, our weaknesses, when people become aware of their common ground of neediness, then they can make a move towards Justice and Peace.



This is strikingly similar to my experience in Clinical Pastoral Education. When one becomes aware of one's weakness in the face of another, one cannot judge but instead one generates compassion for the common ground we all share.

I would like to suggest two ways to become more aware of our common need to live justly and compassionately with each other here in Africa. Perhaps we can reflect on the ways we share with Africans a common ground of brokenness. And if we find it difficult to find such a common ground, ask ourselves what's inhibiting us from knowing and living a common brokenness with our African people.

The second thing we could do is to become more aware of how we are already, all of us, working for Justice and Peace. The following are some questions we can ask ourselves about how we are already working for Justice and Peace for our people.

1. In what way as a Maryknoll Missioner am I contributing to Justice and Peace?

(Please mark where appropriate)

- a.  I pray for Justice and Peace.
- b.  I make reference to Justice and Peace issues in my homilies.
- c.  My work is directly focused on Justice and Peace.
- d.  Through the media I keep up on situations of injustice in Africa.
- e.  I read articles/books on the social/political situations in Africa.
- f.  I have personally taken action in situations of injustice.
- g.  I have taken part in groups where situations on injustice were discussed.



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- h. \_\_\_ I have participated in seminars on Justice and Peace.
- i. \_\_\_ I keep in touch with an international Justice and Peace organization
- j. \_\_\_ I have come into contact with situations of injustice (wife-beating, mob violence, police violence, corruption, unpunished crimes, witchcraft, etc.)

We, Maryknollers, care about our people. We have built up a strong foundation of love and charity throughout the years. Now, we can create a new possibility for a common ground of brokenness to work together for justice and compassion with, not for, our people.

by Tom Shea

Early in the new year, Bro. John Wohead, Bro. Cyril Vellicig and I traveled from Buhangija in southern Shinyanga about 100 miles to the parishes of Herb Gappa, Paul Fagan and Bill Stanley in the way northern reaches of Shinyanga Diocese. The rains were delayed this year so the roads were bad as ever but everywhere was fresh and green. After noon we reached Bill Stanley's mission at Ngulyati. The first impression was a white-washed cottage set amongst trees and flowers and in the middle of a sea of green grass. Bill has a carpenter there who has done all the doors and furniture Zanzibar-style. A simple show and very warm and welcoming. We saw Bill's work in the area and next day went to several of the chapels he and the people have built. There is a building used as a community center. All of the materials were carried in by bicycle, pikipiki or the occasional small pick up from Bariadi. It was a great visit and very good food.

Then out to Old Maswa where Paul Fagan's driver brought us out to Nkololo -- Paul's new area of Pastoral work. The road itself 24 km was built by Paul and Maryknoll. The new road has encouraged many people to move closer to the road and to the services now more readily available. Nkololo has a beautiful new Church, dispensary and meeting rooms all done to make the most of light, air and space. After lunch in a comfortable re-furbished container we went out to the even more remote area of Gasuma. A Church will be built at the plot of Gasuma hill. We went to the top of the hill and there had a wonderful view of miles of grass, trees and streams looking silver because of all the rain. In the distance was Halawa hill covered in green. The top area of the hill had beautiful small flowers which prompted Cyril to say:



Full many a flower is born to blush unseen  
and waste its sweetness on  
the desert air.



There was silence after that or we didn't know how to respond to this poetic outburst. However reality soon came back when a flock of birds flew over and Cyril said he could have gotten five of them with one shot.

All of us went back to Old Maswa in the night for a pleasant dinner and evening. Next day we stopped at Bariadi and Herb gave us a tour of Bariadi town. Bariadi has four Centers named Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Herb estimates the population of Bariadi at 20,000 and it will double in just a few years time. We saw the Church buildings and wells and trees put in by Herb and the Christians. Again there was the spirit of people working together to bring the presence of God to their part of Shinyanga.

After a good lunch at Bariadi we began the five hour trip back to Buhangija. We went away with the feeling that here we were Maryknollers happy and pleased with the work they were doing and the response of the people. Thanksgiving at Ndolejeji Dan Ohmann and Don Sybertz remarked that that is why we are here in Shinyanga: To share the good news and be with our people here.

We arrived early evening to a warm welcome at Buhangija from Leo Kennedy, Dick Hochwalt and Lou Quinn who was in from Salawe.

Bill, Paul and Herb welcome all of you to visit them and share in their hospitality and the spirit of Northern Shinyanga.