

THE CATHOLIC

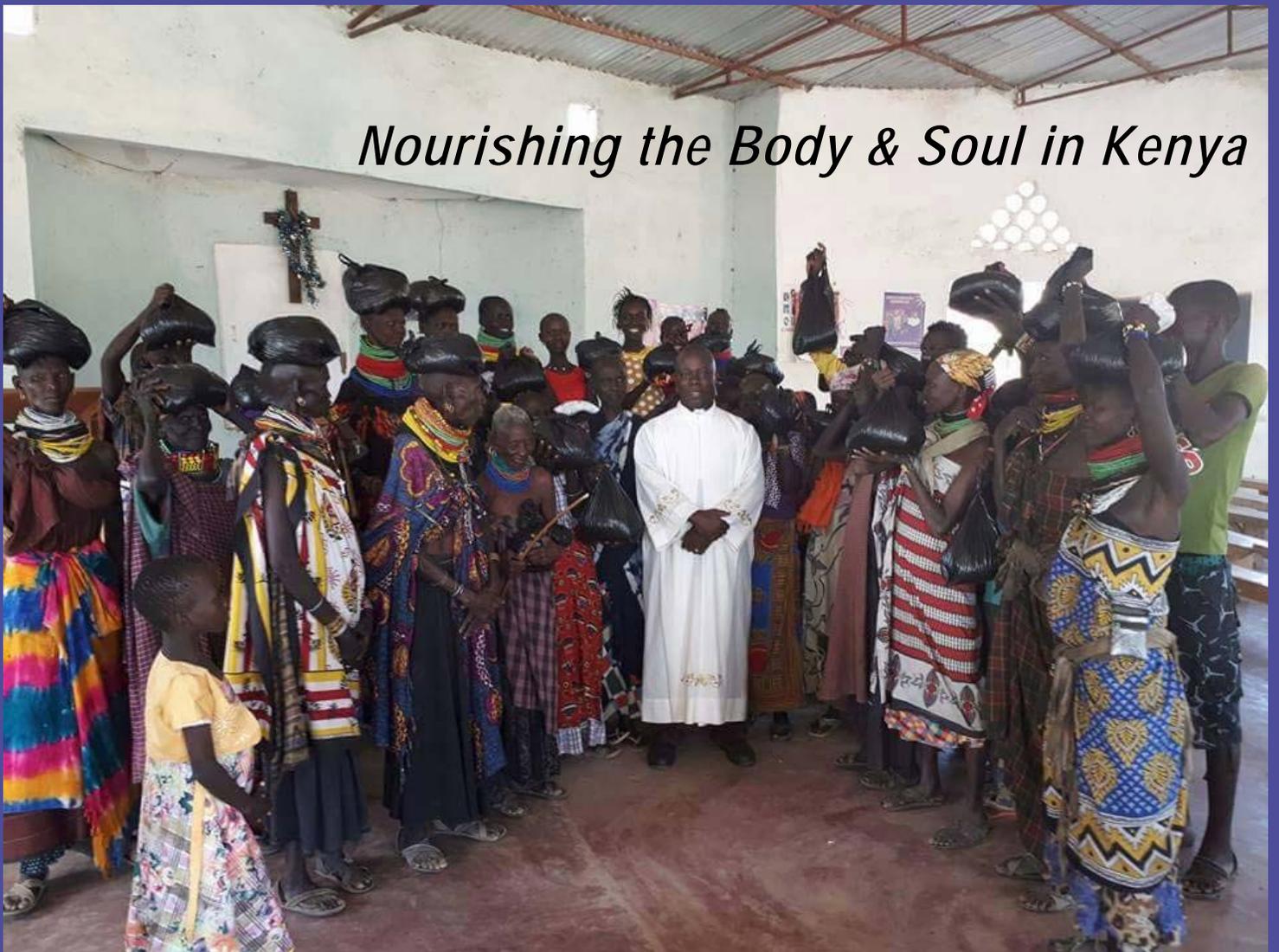
# AMBASSADOR



A Mission Magazine of the Missionary Society of St. Paul

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## *Nourishing the Body & Soul in Kenya*



*Two Texas parishes flooded by Hurricane Harvey*

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**Cover:** Fr. Joseph Ibiwoyo, MSP, and his community in Losjait, Kenya, with food distributed by MSP Charities.

**EDITOR'S NOTE**

**Do Whatever He Tells You**



**W**hile everyone was eating, drinking and rejoicing at the marriage feast at Cana in Galilee, they ran out of wine. The mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine", and Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." Not being discouraged with the answer from Jesus, she told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5). In the Jewish culture, running out of wine was a big disaster at ceremonies. There is a culture where weddings were community events which lasted several days, while the period between betrothals and weddings

lasted for at least a year. Unfortunately, to run out of wine was considered disrespectful. You could be sued or ostracized from the community.

It is no accident that the Blessed Virgin Mary was there at that Wedding Feast. She was the only one who noticed the anomaly. In her love to save them from embarrassment and her passion for interceding for others, she brought about the first miracle of Jesus Christ. As the Church marked the centenary of the apparition of our Lady in Fatima last year, the intercessory role of Mary cannot be overemphasized, as she has intervened in various times and places in our own era. The messages of Fatima which the Blessed Virgin Mary communicated to the three little children Ss. Jacinta, Francesco, and Blessed Lucia as later revealed, was an urgent call for peace, repentance, and prayer—a message that has no less urgency today.

The Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria (MSP) has in her own way, brought the blessings and benefits of the Blessed Virgin Mary's intercession closer to the people in Nigeria by the establishment of the "Our Lady, Undoer of Knots" shrine at the MSP Formation House in Iperu-Remo, Ogun State—envisioned to help people bring their knots of pains, sicknesses, misfortune, and depression to the Blessed Virgin Mary to untie it for them as she has always done. As the MSP marked 40 years anniversary of her existence last year, she is grateful to all her priests who through their heroic sacrifices and unwavering commitment have labored in different missions of the world to spread the gospel for the past years as replicated in the mission experiences shared in this magazine by Frs. Bonaventure Iyogun, MSP and Joseph Kolade, MSP in South Sudan and Malawi respectively. Also our gratitude goes to the Associate Missionaries of St. Paul (AMSP), sponsors, friends, benefactors, and benefactresses for all their unflinching support to our missionary activities.

On behalf of the *Catholic Ambassador Magazine* editorial crew, I wish to congratulate the Missionary Society of St. Paul and the Archdiocese of Abuja for marking the posthumous Centenary Birth Anniversary of her founder, Dominic Cardinal Ekandem on June 23, 2017. It was a beautiful celebration that reverberated a great Prince of the Church who sought for the growth, unity, and peace of the Church in Nigeria.

As Mary is the Mother of all Christians, she knows the spiritual needs of all, and knows all that concerns our salvation, since she is in Heaven united in love with her Son, Jesus Christ. So let us seek Mary's powerful intercession in our various needs, so that we may experience God's love and blessings in whatever we do. Never forget to listen to the words of Mary, "Do whatever He tells you." Make a novena to Our Lady, Undoer of Knots today!

by Fr. Dan Ifiok Udofia, MSP | difiok@yahoo.com



P. 7—St. John the Evangelist in Port Arthur, Texas, received assistance from Catholic Charities following Hurricane Harvey.



P. 11—MSP priests and guests celebrated the society's 40th anniversary and annual Appreciation Day on October 28, 2017.



P. 17—Feeding the hungry is the first calling of the Missionary Society of St. Paul in South Sudan, story by Fr. Bonaventura Iyogun, MSP

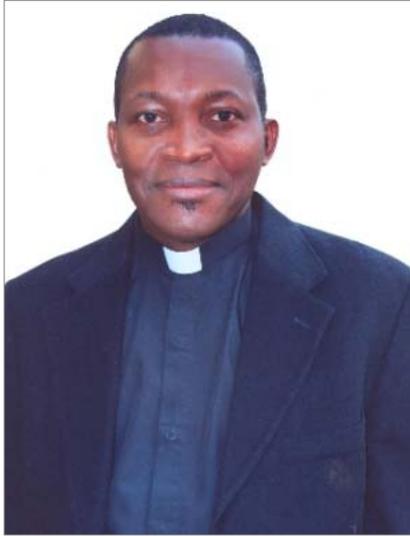
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# MESSAGE OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

## Forty Years of Missionary Witness

by Very Rev. Fr. Victor Onwukeme, MSP



Some years back, Nigeria received a lot of missionaries (men and women) from Ireland, Italy, Canada, Spain, Portugal, and the United States, to mention but a few. Those missionaries were brave men and women. The priests among them belonged to one religious congregation or another, while others were diocesan priests who volunteered to go on mission. Those men and women defied our excruciating heat; they did not mind our strange language, our mosquitoes, scorpions, snakes, strange food, unfamiliar culture, or differing environment. Nearly all of them died within few weeks of arrival.

In his book, *Cardinal Dominic Ekandem and the Growth of the Catholic Church in Nigeria*, Cosmas Nwosuh captures what a pioneer missionary to Eastern Nigeria once wrote:

*“As man followed man into the soft red clay of Africa, the survivors gathered around his grave, crossed hands, and kneeling with bent heads, made a solemn demand on God: “Accept O Eternal Father, the sacrifice of the life of this our brother in Christ; the sacrifice of our life too. But grant that over his bones and ours a great Church will arise amidst a people whom we serve.”*

Reflecting on their lives and their sacrifices, I asked myself: “What was motivating them? Why did they refuse to yield to fear and many other dangers threatening their lives?”

I found the answer in 2 Cor. 5:14—*Caritas Christi urget nos* (the love of Christ propels us).

Yes, they were led by the love of Christ. Many of those missionaries would go home and ask for help from their families and friends in

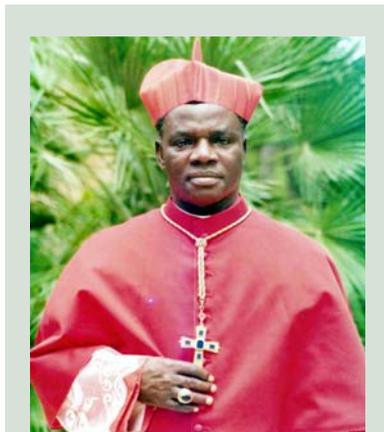
order to help build churches, build schools, and help the poor in Nigeria. The Church in Nigeria owes a lot to the Church in Europe and America.

In 1976, Pope Paul VI said to the African Bishops gathered in Kampala, Uganda: you Africans have received a lot of missionaries, now you too must become missionaries. Dominic Cardinal Ekandem took the words of the Pope to heart and this led to the founding of the Missionary Society of St. Paul in 1977.

Cardinal Ekandem was then President of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria and he pushed the Nigerian Bishops to focus on this noble project. St. Patrick’s Missionaries (Kiltegens) did a lot in order to see that this missionary congregation saw the light of day.

Today, MSP has 283 priests and over 10,000 associate missionaries dispersed and working in various parts of the world. At the moment, our priests are working in 19 countries. As we travel to these places, the aim is to continue with the zeal of our patron, Paul, sharing the Gospel values with all. We make efforts to enrich the people with our faith as we ourselves are enriched.

In 2017, I visited Malawi. Malawi is the place where Fr. Bartholomew Monye, MSP (aka Leather) died and was buried. I visited his grave and prayed there. There in Malawi, I was edified by the great initiative taken by our missionaries to that noble country. Our missionaries saw that young boys and girls had nothing to do and so they established a vocational school where these young people learn various arts and skills. When I visited, some were learning to be mechanics, some learning sewing, others tiling, painting, and so forth. Our



*Cardinal Dominic Ekandem founded the Missionary Society of St. Paul and was the first Nigerian bishop to be made a cardinal. Priests and lay people celebrated the centennial anniversary of his birth in Abuja, Nigeria, on June 23, 2017.*

priests did this in order to give meaning to young Malawians.

As we travel around, we learn and adapt to different cultures in the spirit of our patron, Paul, who was all things to all people (1 Cor 9:22).

I learned a few cultural differences when I visited Malawi. Bishop George Tambala of Zomba Diocese took us to St. Martin's Catholic Church in Katamba, and the attached school. On entering the school, I expected the students to greet us, but they simply looked on until the Bishop greeted them and then they responded. Within me, I thought: "Wow, these children have no manners!"

I kept wondering why until someone told me that it is the adult who must greet first. Along the same line, women will never greet men first. Men must greet women first. Men are not allowed to embrace women, but they give handshakes.

Our missionaries have been able to adapt to the new environments, new foods, new cultures, and so forth. MSP priests are struggling to follow in the footsteps of St. Paul and those early missionaries. We thank our missionaries who have worked in Malawi. Through them, we reach out to many of our priests who are burning themselves out for Christ.

As we celebrate 40 years of our existence, we are called to rediscover the burning zeal of Paul and the early missionaries and their passionate love for Christ which led them to surmount every difficulty as well as their spirit of detachment which enabled them to consider every other thing as rubbish for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus (Phil 3).

Eight of our brothers ordained in 1991 celebrated 25 years of their missionary priesthood this past October. We congratulate them and we rejoice with them. They are, as Christ would say, the men who have stood faithfully by me in my trials. Brothers, happy silver jubilee! Ad multos annos!

## News & Notes

### JOYOUS ORDINATION



Five new priests joined the ranks of the Missionary Society of St. Paul with their ordinations on June 17, 2017. The celebration marked the Society's 33rd priestly ordination and was held at the seminary in Gwagwalada, Abuja, Nigeria. Most Rev. Matthew Hassan Kukah, Bishop of Sokoto, presided as Ordaining Prelate.

As a sign that their journey as a Catholic priest had already begun, postings for each new missionary were announced as follows: Rev. Fr. Alphonsus Obiele—Secretary to the Superior General; Rev. Fr. Felix Agibi—St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Karshi, Abuja Archdiocese; Rev. Fr. Patrick Igwe—Lagos Archdiocese; Rev. Fr. Damian Ohagwa—SS. Peter & Paul Catholic Church, Nkutaku, Onitsha Archdiocese; and Rev. Fr. Peter Akor—Lafia Diocese.

### NEW DIOCESE ANNOUNCED WITH MSP BISHOP

Pope Francis elevated the Apostolic Vicariate of Bomadi in Delta State to a diocese on September 21, 2017. Very Rev. Dr. Hyacinth Oroko Egbebo, MSP, was appointed as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Bomadi.

Bishop Egbebo was ordained on June 23, 1990. He worked at the MSP Formation House in Iperu-Remo, Ogun State for six years before moving to Ireland for further studies. He was elected as MSP Superior General in 2001.



# Feeding the Poor in Malawi

*Fr. Joseph Bola' Kolade, MSP  
Holy Family Parish  
Bowe-Kasungu Malawi*



## Answering the Call

**O**n learning in April 2015 of my posting to work in our Malawi mission, many thoughts started running through my mind. I kept imagining what the country would be like because of tales I had read and heard during my formation years in the seminary. Yet, on September 29, 2015, I proceeded without delay to the Central African nation of Malawi. I arrived at Holy Family Parish in Bowe the following evening.

I soon enrolled in a language course to learn Chitumbuka, the local language of northern Malawi people. After three months learning the basic rudiments of Chitumbuka, stationed at St. Peter Cathedral in Mzuzu—a northern city of 180,000 residents—I returned fully to our Mission parish at Bowe in late January 2016.

My first year in Malawi was a year of severe hunger and pain for the nation's people. Many people suffered greatly and around 2,000 people died of starvation. It triggered exorbitant pricing for the little food available on

the private market. Our parish was not exempt. As early as June 2016, media outlets reported severe hunger across the country. In April 2016, the President of the Republic of Malawi said, "I declare Malawi to be in a state of national disaster following prolonged dry spells during the 2015-16 agriculture season."

Malawi as a country experiences little rain each year. Before climate change, Malawi ordinarily experienced six months of rain, from early November through the end of April each year. But for the past 2-3 years, the situation has grown worse with rain only from December until early March. This period is too short for common crops like maize, soya beans, and cassava—planted in most parts of the country—to survive and produce a bumper harvest of food for the entire nation.

## Causes of Famine & Drought

Malawi's normal weather pattern with dependable rainfall produces bumper yields in nearly all types of crops grown on local farms. Bumper

yields to Malawi mean a 20-liter bucket full of maize will cost the same price as one packet of brown sugar that weighs 1 kilogram.

According to Malawi's national paper, *Malawi News*, in 2014, rainfall started in the last week of December, soon after Christmas. From mid-January to mid-February 2015, it rained continuously, eventually causing devastating floods that covered almost 13 of the nation's 28 districts. Most lowlands of the southern and northern regions were all flooded. Villages, crops, animals, and humans were swept away and completely submerged. In short, many people drowned; approximately 200 people were swept away.

The Malawi government tried to rescue people but did not have sufficient resources. Hunger stroked the entire country; 90% of the rural population suffered.

In 2015, rainfall also started in the last week of December. Instead of six months of rain, our region experienced just over two months. On February 27, 2016, it rained last in

Bowe, our parish, and the surrounding area. By this time, all cereals, including maize, were flowering, but rain did not come again and the crops withered. All crops dried completely.

In early 2016, the president of Malawi, Professor Peter Muntharika, declared the country a state of disaster. In May 2016, every parliamentarian applauded President Muntharika for his love of the nation by exposing the nation's current status to international donors. There was an acute shortage of maize, the staple food for 90% of Malawians.

### **Our Mission Area**

Our mission area is in Mzuzu Diocese, in the northern part of Malawi. The area traditionally experiences little rain compared with the southern part of the country. My first year, 2016, was a most challenging time for the people of our parish. The pain of hunger struck as a result of a lack of rain in most parish catchment areas. Almost 150 area people died, mostly related to hunger/HIV issues. The rate of childhood malnutrition is about 65% among our parishioners. Towards the end of 2016, the government ordered about 400,000 tonnes of maize from neighbouring Zambia and Zimbabwe to salvage the situation.

### **Most Vulnerable Populations**

Malawi has not been spared from the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Here, it is described as the disease of the rich. Between 1985-2004, the HIV/AIDS prevalence within rural communities was 12%, while it was 20% in urban areas. Before 2004, there were no free anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) and people died by the hundreds per day. For example, in the Kasungu District, where we are working, there were 320 primary schools and the average death rate among teachers alone was 11 per month. Consequently, there are many orphans in Malawi right now.

Some of the people who are HIV/AIDS positive in the rural area



are now on free ARVs. These people, without food, fail completely to take drugs and some give up to sudden death. This is mainly due to food shortages. Frankly speaking, the most-affected people in terms of hunger are orphans, the aged, and those on ARV treatments.

Our parish assists these affected populations. If they see us in outstations for Masses, the first greeting most times is, “A Bambo, ni na njala so no,” meaning “Father, I am hungry now.”

Our Missionary Society of St. Paul priests who have worked here in Malawi will agree on these clear facts. This is why, I boldly make a passionate appeal to our friends in Nigeria and all over the world to kindly come to our aid in Malawi mission for relief materials: food items and financial assistance to alleviate the sufferings of our people—the needy and the less privileged.

### **Our Contribution As Missionaries**

The response of our mission, like other faith groups, to this great challenge of hunger was to write an

appeal to people of goodwill and international donors. We wrote to different donors and organizations asking for emergency relief, money, and food for our parishioners.

After a short delay, by November 2016, about 500 bags of maize were donated through a U.S.-based charity organization, Orant Charities, to give to our people as a means of relief and to alleviate hunger. We try to complement the government's efforts. These bags of maize have been shared within our substations. We have a great hope that this year's harvest will be better and if there is any need to appeal for our people next year—we hope that more generous people will assist us.

Our work as missionaries, apart from primary evangelization of the people of this rural area, is to partner with NGOs and charitable organizations to complement the government's efforts in alleviating hunger, sickness, and the lack of good water. The shortage of food has made many young people go into unethical behavior and practices, such as robbery, excessive drinking, and smoking Chambal. There is a high

*Malawi, continued on Page 14*

# Hurricane Harvey Floods Two Texas MSP-Led Parishes

When Hurricane Harvey made landfall near Corpus Christi, Texas, in the late evening hours of August 25, few were prepared for the historic rainfall and catastrophic flooding that would inundate the region in the days to come. Up to 51 inches of rain drenched parts of Houston and surrounding communities. The storm center next shifted east, stalling over Port Arthur and Beaumont, Texas, where it dumped 47 inches of rain, including 26 inches in one night.

Two eastern Texas parishes led by MSP pastors were among thousands of flood victims impacted by the hurricane. Both Fr. Martin Eke, MSP, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Houston, and Fr. Mark Ameh, MSP, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Church in Port Arthur, are now focused on restoring parish properties, while ministering to the needs of their parishioners—many of whom also suffered damage at their homes, schools, and places of work.

## St. Francis of Assisi

Fr. Martin awoke at 2:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 27 to the sounds of heavy rain. Half an hour later, he left the rectory—the highest elevated property on his parish’s 11-acre campus—to check the church so he could save precious items.

“When I opened the rectory’s exit door, the level of water was already hip high,” he said. “I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Fr. Martin waded through rising waters on the grounds, entered the church and had raised just a few items when the church lost power. After retrieving a flashlight from the rectory, he returned to the church and set to elevating items as quickly as possible. As water rushed more rapidly into the church, he knew it was time to leave.

“By then, the water was waist high and I had to struggle to push the exit door open,” he said.

After safely making it back to the rectory, Fr. Martin waited, watched, and prayed. He couldn’t sleep, but felt fortunate that power stayed on inside his home, despite an outdoor electrical box being totally submerged. Four feet of water covered most of the parish grounds.

“The rectory was like a ship on a high sea,” Fr. Martin said.

Within 48 hours, the rain stopped, waters started to recede, and he began to salvage religious articles and equipment. Parishioners and others came to help once the property was accessible. The campus is surrounded by a high fence with electronic gates that jammed in a closed position during the flood.

“There are two ways I look at the recovery—the spiritual recovery and the physical recovery,” Fr. Martin explained in mid-November. He had celebrated one year as pastor at St. Francis in August.

“We did not allow the hurricane to affect our spiritual activities.” Just days later, first Saturday adoration was still held, amid the flooded debris. Weekend masses were moved to a nearby parish the first Sunday after the flood. By Sept. 3, Fr. Martin



*Top: View of the flooded parish grounds at St. Francis of Assisi, looking from the rectory toward the church. Middle: Outdoor Mass following Harvey. Lower: Some of the debris and building materials lost to the floodwaters.*

began holding Sunday 8 a.m. Mass outdoors on parish grounds, keeping the 1 p.m. Mass at Mother of Mercy.

“After three weeks, word got out and the Knights of Columbus gave us a large tent for outdoor masses.

It was not the first time the parish has experienced flooding—a purposefully elevated portable building, the Bakhita Center, remained dry and was used as a parish office and meeting room for various ministries. It seats 57. The building also serves as a St. Vincent DePaul food pantry.

Parishioners preferred the outdoor Mass on their own premises, but by October, Fr. Martin knew fall weather would soon present a challenge.

“If I canceled the outdoor Mass, I knew the spirit of the people would be crushed,” he said. “Someone suggested we could move to the garage.”

It took two weeks to clean a spacious garage, hang draperies, and prepare it for liturgies.

“Two months after Harvey, we resumed our full Mass schedule in the garage, now renamed Providence House. The first Sunday we were there, it rained, the wind blew—if we had been outdoors that Sunday, it would have been a disaster,” he said.

The church was not the only casualty. St. Francis of Assisi Catholic School was also flooded. The gymnasium, science lab, library, classrooms, and school office were damaged. Students, who had started the fall semester in early August, were transferred to Resurrection Catholic School, 15 minutes away.

At least one-third of the parish’s 250 families experienced flooding in their homes as well. Some of those families relocated and have left the parish. “Some moved very far away. Some are suffering. Two-thirds are back and active,” Fr. Martin explained.

St. Francis has been an MSP-affiliated parish for nine years. The church was built in 1964 and the school was built in 1950.

Two special committees were formed to deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey—a disaster management/building committee and a parish support committee. The



*Above: Fr. Martin Eke, MSP, celebrates Mass inside a parish garage that was converted to a temporary church for St. Francis of Assisi services following Hurricane Harvey. Fr. Martin saved clerical vestments immediately after the flooding by laundering them before mold set in. Right: Fr. Martin has requested the church altar and walls be rebuilt with stone, tile, or concrete materials that are resilient to water damage. He said the parish is grateful for support received from across the United States.*



# New Year's Prayer

*God, thank you for a new year. May everyone in our family be willing to begin anew with a clean slate.*

*We know that you are always ready to forgive us. Help us to be willing to forgive ourselves and to forgive one another.*

*As we begin a new year, remind us of our truest values and our deepest desires. Help us to live in the goodness that comes from doing what you want us to do. Help us to put aside anxiety about the future and the past, so that we might live in peace with you now, one day at a time.*

*Amen.*

*"New Year's Prayer" used with permission of Loyola Press. For more resources to nurture your faith, visit [loyolapress.com](http://loyolapress.com).*

## *Hurricane Harvey devastates two MSP Parishes, continued*

latter group helped parishioners apply for FEMA funds, find housing, fill out paperwork, and attain resources.

The disaster/building committee includes Fr. Martin and eight parishioners who brainstormed and attended meetings with Archdiocesan project managers to plan the rebuilding of the church and school, to be funded through insurance and the Archdiocese. The parish expects architectural drawings for the church to be approved in late February. They will use water-resilient building materials for lower portions of the church walls and the altar, to avoid expensive rebuilding in the future. Hunting Bayou, a natural waterway just north of his parish, is prone to flooding, leaving the beautiful church vulnerable.

### **St. John the Evangelist**

As Fr. Martin found refuge inside his rectory, 84 miles to the east, Fr. Mark Ameh, MSP, awoke in Port Arthur on January 29, feeling weary from three days of rain caused by the hurricane. Yet, he reassured family and friends that he was safe.

St. John the Evangelist Church is located near a pumping station, canals, and a reservoir. As that Tuesday progressed, the rain intensified. Upon retiring to bed, Fr. Mark couldn't sleep. Shortly after 11 p.m., he looked out the window to see rising waters. Gathering essential documents, he opened the rectory door, only to be greeted by a water snake that rushed in with floodwaters. He quickly disposed of the snake and left the rectory, hoping to escape.

"I secured the Sacramental records and headed straight for the Church to secure the Blessed Sacrament," Fr. Mark wrote. "When I regained entry into my car the water in the compound had risen so high that the car could not go anywhere; I was surrounded by a mass of water impossible to cross."

Fr. Mark retreated to the church, which he deemed the safest location

on parish grounds. He experienced a full range of emotions—fear, sadness, anger, and panic—as he watched waters sweep away furniture, hymnals, and musical instruments before his eyes. Waves of water battered the stained glass windows. He sat on the presider's chair upon the altar, the highest point inside the church.

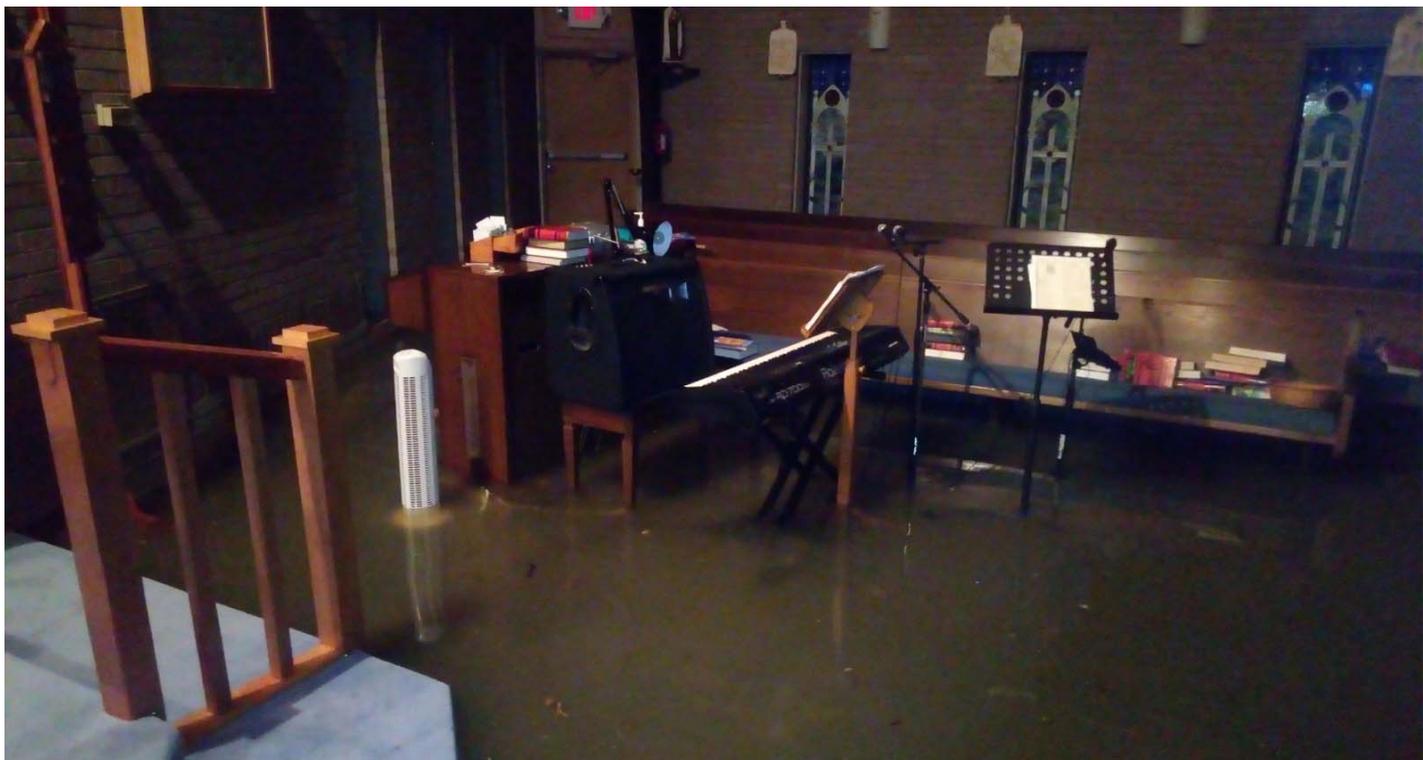
"I remember the song that came to my mind at that time was: 'Alone with none but thee my God, I journey on my way...' I made phone calls to some of my priest brothers in Port Arthur and Beaumont," he reported.

Learning that the entire city of Port Arthur was under water, Fr. Mark knew that street rescues were impossible. His cellular phone continued to work and he reached a friend who began searching for rescuers to save the priest. By daybreak, he was rescued by a boat summoned by his friend.

Fr. Mark would learn that every parish building sustained damage and the entire El Vista neighborhood where most of his parishioners lived was devastated. Hundreds of Port Arthur residents were rescued with little more than the clothes on their backs.

St. John services are now being held at Sacred Heart-St. Mary Parish. Fr. Mark met with the Bishop of the Diocese of Beaumont in early January to discuss his parish's future. With so many parishioners struggling to rebuild their own personal homes and insurance settlements pending, it is still to be determined whether the parish will merge with a nearby parish or rebuild.

Fr. Mark said most of his parishioners have settled in with family, friends, grandchildren, or in some cases, are living in FEMA-funded trailers or hotel accommodations. Supplies donated in the months after the hurricane have helped lift spirits among his flock.



*Fr. Mark Ameh, MSP, took sanctuary on the altar of St. John's Church as flooding engulfed his parish and 90% of the city of Port Arthur. Furniture, bibles, and hymnals were destroyed. At right, Fr. Sampson Etim, MSP, Bishop Curtis Guillory, SVD, and Fr. Mark greeted worshippers following Mass at Sacred Heart-St. Mary Parish, temporary home to St. John's parish activities.*

*Photos contributed. Story by Anne Farrell Peterson.*







# U.S. MSP Anniversary Celebration & Appreciation Day

With an uplifting liturgy and a joyous celebration, two significant occasions were observed at St. Mary Magdalene Church in Humble, Texas, on October 28, 2017. MSP priests serving throughout the United States celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Society's founding, and at the same time, held their annual Appreciation Day for friends, benefactors, and the Associate Missionaries of St. Paul (AMSP).

Mass was celebrated by Most Rev. Joe Vasquez, Bishop of Austin, Texas, and concelebrated by Most Rev. George Sheltz, Auxiliary Bishop of Galveston-Houston. Twenty-one MSP priests concelebrated the Mass. Dozens of parishioners, nuns, and friends from Texas, Louisiana, and elsewhere attended the liturgy and enjoyed a meal and program that followed. Many wore beautiful traditional cultural attire or AMSP-print garments.

In his homily, Bishop Vasquez remarked about the Missionaries of St. Paul following in the footsteps of their namesake: "Forty years ago, they quickly spread and moved out, truly with this missionary zeal and spirit, seeking to go to different corners of the world and proclaim Jesus Christ.

"The motto of the Missionaries of St. Paul is 'We are Ambassadors for Christ,'" he continued. "The Society is an important community in the efforts of the Church to promote the *new* evangelization."

The bishop reminded the congregation that St. Paul was one of

the most prolific writers and historians of the early Church: "We would know hardly anything of the early Church if it were not for St. Paul and his letters.

"...I think Paul would have felt very comfortable in today's new world and society, because he would have used all social media to communicate about Jesus Christ!"



Bishop Vasquez said, to a chorus of chuckles.

"He would have been very comfortable to use Twitter and Instagram and Facebook...so you and I, brothers and sisters, must also utilize that social media for the good, not for bad, but for good, for Christ and His Church."

The bishop spoke of Paul's conversion story and remarked on its similarities to our conversion stories.

"I hope that people will be able to understand that conversion is a lifetime journey. It doesn't happen just one time and then we're done. Paul encountered Jesus Christ at his radical change (on the road to Damascus) and then for the rest of his life, he was being converted; he was being changed. Christ was calling him to something deeper, more personalized."

Whether our encounters with Christ are extraordinary like Paul's or more ordinary, perhaps in prayer or in the Sacraments, the Bishop urged all to continue seeking a deeper spiritual connection throughout our lives.

He thanked the MSP priests for going out into the world to evangelize like St. Paul, and thanked the Ambassadors and benefactors for supporting their work.

On the altar was the Very Rev. Dr. John Osom, MSP. He received special recognition as the first MSP priest ordained in 1985. He traveled to Texas from Great Falls, Montana, where he serves as Associate Pastor of St. Ann Cathedral. Fr. Osom later gave the blessing before the meal.

The faithful moved to St. Mary Magdalene's Family Life Center for a delicious buffet meal prepared and served by the Knights of Columbus (KC) Council 6878, and others.

MSP American Regional Superior, Very Rev. George Okeahialam, gave an informative presentation on the history and works of the Missionary Society of St. Paul around the world. Young, talented Addy Anyichie performed a praise dance.

Awards were presented at the ceremony to friends and supporters. Armor of Courage awards went to Deacon Orrin Dwight Burroughs of St. Philip Neri Catholic Church in Houston and to KC Council 6878 at St. Mary Magdalene.

Joyce Randel was presented with the Shield of Faith Award for her outstanding service as an AMSP.

The Fisher of Men award went to Very Rev. Fr. Felix Elosi, MSP, first elected MSP Superior General.



*Snapshots from the October 28 celebration and appreciation event. See collage on pages 11-12.*

## ***Feeding the Poor in Malawi,***

*continued from Page 6*

dropout rate among young people, both male and female, in this rural area. In the face of hunger, people will go to any length, even commit crimes, just to fill their stomachs. Without adequate rain and the lack of governmental financial support to establish an irrigation system, the local way of farming is difficult to practice. Malawi's poverty rate remains high.

As Missionaries of St. Paul, we are here to preach the Gospel for the conversion of souls, but as we know, "a hungry man is an angry man," and no amount of Gospel preached will penetrate the heart of one who finds little or no food to eat daily. So we make efforts to win friends, both locally and internationally, who will assist us in our mission of feeding the poor at Bowe Parish in Malawi.

### **We Need Your Assistance**

Our Lord Jesus Christ, during his public ministry, saw a multitude of people who were hungry, weak, dejected, and like sheep without a shepherd. He had compassion on them, made them to sit, and provided them with food (Mk 8:1-10). Similarly, for missionary work to be effective and meaningful to the people of our mission, there is a need to identify with them in their plight, pain, and hunger. The people of God are ever ready to listen to the Gospel, to respond to the sacraments, and to worship their God at any moment, but they look forward on a daily basis to find solutions to the numerous challenges confronting them. Blessed are those who have responded to their cry. We pray and offer masses for the intentions of those who assist us in this mission to feed these children of Abraham.



more than enough. He also noted that it can only be a true life of

## Bishop Confirms 205 Catechumens in Kenya

Memories of the visit of the Catholic Bishop of Lodwar, Rt. Rev. Dominic Kimengich, to St. Stephen Parish in Losajait from April 21-23, 2017, will for a long time remain fresh in the minds of her parishioners. The three-day visit gave the bishop the opportunity to assess the extent of work in the parish since the Missionary Society of St. Paul took over in October 2015. The bishop also visited some parish outstations.

Bishop Kimengich could not hide his joy as he noted the efforts and great missionary zeal of the MSP priests in ensuring that pastoral activities continue in the parish. He commended the tremendous development the parish has witnessed, both spiritually and physically, within a short period of time.

The high point of the bishop's time in Losajait was the confirmation of 205 catechumens. Confirmation celebrations took place at two different parish stations due to the distance between stations. It also gave the bishop the opportunity to be as close as possible to his flock in Losajait. The joy of the host station parishioners knew no bounds—for

one of the stations, it marked the first time a bishop had visited there.

The first confirmation Mass witnessed the confirmation of 84 candidates, drawn from five stations. The second Mass was held April 23 at the parish center, where 121 candidates were confirmed. The two high masses were concelebrated by Rev. Fr. Joseph Ibiwoye, MSP, pastor. The bishop admonished the catechumens to welcome and cooperate with the Holy Spirit which has come now to dwell with them, in all they do. He likewise encouraged all present to take all their worries to God in prayer.

Emphasizing the importance of peace and harmony between the priest and Christians in the growth of any parish, Bishop Kimengich noted that the parish's current growth is a fruit of these virtues. He acknowledged past difficulties in getting a priest to stay in Losajait parish due to its extreme remote location. In encouraging Fr. Ibiwoye, the bishop noted that, though the village lacks social amenities, the grace of God is always

prayer, detachment, and self-giving that has kept this young missionary priest here in the face of modernization. He observed that the number of catechumens presented for confirmation and the turnout of people to welcome him, all point to the stable pastoral life of Losajait now.

It is important to note that since the arrival of the MSP to Losajait, the number of parish stations has increased from 8 to 10. Over 260 have received the sacrament of baptism, and about 120 have been added to the number of communicants. Now, 205 parishioners were newly confirmed, a sacrament last received in the parish in 2011.

St. Stephen Parish Losajait was happy to have the bishop in our midst, and thank God for the success of the confirmation and the visit.



# MSP Charities Initiative in Losajait Parish

At the start of the last quarter of 2016, the Kenyan national government declared the current drought situation in the country a national disaster. With this declaration, an appeal was extended to the international community to come to her aid in easing and alleviating the pains and horror drought is inflicting on her people: a call long overdue in the opinion of most government critics, and an opinion I share as one working in one of the worst-hit parts of the country.

Turkana County, among other counties, was identified as one of the most affected counties, and would need, according to survey, urgent and immediate aid and attention. In a further categorization within the county, Losajait, village of Lodwar Diocese—the village where the MSP parish is situated—was also named as in need of aid and attention.

I must say that indeed Losajait village has passed through hard times during this period. We have lost lots of our animals, and Christians are struggling to survive. The youth and the fairly strong have abandoned the village in search of survival. Thus, the care of the aged, the weak, as well as the children, has become one of the important aspects of our apostolate here—a trying period indeed for St. Stephen Parish, Losajait.

It is in the face of this hardship that the Missionary Society of St. Paul of Nigeria responded to our call in Losajait through her MSP Charities initiative. Our parish received food supplies and even clothing to help ease this current suffering among our people. On April 22, 2017, the Catholic Bishop of Lodwar, Rt. Rev. Dominic Kimengich, kicked off the MSP food distribution in the parish.

Full of appreciation to the MSP, the bishop noted that this initiative would go a long way to ease the hunger of Turkana people in Losajait village. Thus, on behalf of the people of Losajait, we extend our sincere



appreciation to the MSP, who has come to our aid through her charity program. Thanks to our donors.

I will quickly add that the situation here in Losajait is far from over, and the people of Losajait continue to solicit your support for survival.

Finally, the bishop also assisted in kickstarting the food distribution in the parish, an initiative of the MSP Charities program. He appreciated

and noted with joy the concern of the MSP, through her charity program, in easing the pains and hunger the drought situation has inflicted on Turkanas in Losajait parish. He stated that his invitation, as well as the acceptance of the MSPs to work in the diocese, could not be termed any other thing than Divine providence.

*By Fr. Joseph Ibiwoye, MSP*



**“WHEN I WAS  
HUNGRY YOU  
GAVE ME TO  
EAT...”**

**Matthew  
25:35**

by Fr. Bonaventure Iyogun, MSP

**T**hese words of Jesus come alive in war-torn South Sudan. It is no news that South Sudan, the newest country in the world, has been in civil war since December 2013. Those who follow international news have seen the effects of this evil on the common people—hunger, disease, famine, homelessness, fear, rape, child abuse, and more. Efforts were made by the international community to broker peace between the warring parties.

In August 2015, peace was reached and a transitional government was formed in 2016—giving the common people of South Sudan some ray of hope, able to see some light at the end of the tunnel. Unfortunately, this didn’t last long as the government and the opposition fell apart again in July 2016.

As a missionary priest from Nigeria working in South Sudan, there are a number of challenges that the pastoral situation presents. To say the

continuous unrest in South Sudan makes it more and more a place for primary evangelization would be overemphasizing the obvious.

There is a general feeling of hopelessness among the people. For instance, a soldier was rescued from drowning after he attempted suicide because he could not feed his family. He lost a child due to hunger. Since there was no hope for survival, he decided to kill himself because he couldn’t bear seeing his family die. Another family was found dead in their hut. The narrative was that the mother had gone out the days before to look for food. There was no hope. She gathered some greens and vegetables which she took to the market for sale. Nothing came out of it. So, she and her children gave up on hope and were found dead in the morning due to starvation.

My experience in the past years has been one of preaching to a people who indeed need to be given food to eat before they can listen to the Word of God. Each day people come

*Even at odd times, I can hear a knock at the gate, and when I ask “Who is that?”...the response would be, “Abunaakil fi? Anaayan.”*

*Translated, this means, “Father, is there food? I am hungry.”*

around our house asking for food to eat, money for school fees, uniforms, books, or medication. Even at odd times, I can hear a knock at the gate, and when I ask, “Who is that?”—the response would be, “Abunaakil fi? Anaayan.”

Translated, this means, “Father, is there food? I am hungry.”

There are no limits to the time they come knocking or the age of

persons who come asking. Parents have left their children to go and fend for themselves. Little children who ought to be in school are seen moving from shop to shop, house to house, looking for food to eat. They beg, scavenge, and do menial jobs just to get money for food. They hardly take a bath or wash their clothes.

Replacing clothing is out of the question as they can't even afford to buy detergent, let alone clothing. Sometimes you have to give them soap to go and clean themselves and money to cut their hair before you give them food to eat.

I remember an "abuba" (advanced woman) who came to our house to start sweeping the compound voluntarily with the hope that she would get something to eat at the end of her chores every morning. The effects of the war continue. The inflation rate is on a steady increase, making goods in the market unaffordable for importers and consumers.

The church continues to play a key role in bringing the people together and encouraging them. But from my experience working in the Diocese of Torit, the church needs to do more for the people. Once I was in the midst of some parishioners discussing the situation of things and

I was told that when people come to church on Sunday, they would rather remain in church than go home. This is because if they go home, they would be faced with the challenge of searching for something to cook. Remaining in church gives them the opportunity to stay with others, interact, and keep themselves busy.

It is sad to see the common people who know nothing about politics or the economy suffer because of the greed of the political class. It is even more frustrating to see that there is no end to the circle of violence and hardship.

With a crack on the bridge of the peace accord in July, the first Vice President, Dr. Riek Machar, fled the country, accusing President Salvar Kiir of trying to assassinate him. He was replaced by his chief negotiator, Taban Deng Gai a few days later. This did not go down well with the rebel group who, through their leader, has threatened to continue the arms struggle unless their leader is reinstated to his position as first Vice President.

Other conditions given by the rebels include discussing 28 new states created by the president; allowing the 4,000 strong African Union peacekeeping force in Juba to complement the already existing



12,000 United Nations peacekeeping force; and removing from office members of the opposition already appointed (like Taban Deng Gai), whom they call traitors.

As the world experiences the worst refugee crisis since World War II, all hands must be on deck to bring about peace in the world. But peace cannot be achieved if victims of wars—refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs)—are not fed, clothed, and sheltered. Our little efforts and contributions—financially, materially, and spiritually—can make a great difference.



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*The Missionary Society of St. Paul has more than 100 seminarians studying for the priesthood, with all of them supported by the society. It costs an average of \$3,000 to keep each student in the seminary for one year—this is becoming a very difficult task for the society. You can be of great help here. Please contact us to sponsor a seminarian or make a financial contribution toward his training.*

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# 25-Year Jubilee Reflections

Members of the MSP ordination Class of 1992 recently reflected on their mission assignments, their calling, and their Silver Jubilees. Several have served as Missionaries to the United States. Excerpts of their stories are shared here.

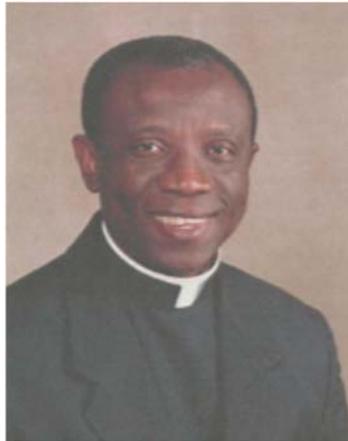
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*“Fr. Esukpa and I left Nigeria on April 6, 1994, and arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, the following day. While on our way, the bus stopped in front of a mosque. Knowing no one, we asked the help of a young man, who told us that he was a Muslim, but he could take us to the Catholic church. On getting to the church, we realized it was a Lutheran church, not Catholic.”*

—Fr. Patrick A. Otor, MSP

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## Fr. Anthony Mbanefo, MSP



### 1992, UYO DIOCESE, NIGERIA.

At St. Mark, Oron...I once visited a sick old woman whose house the catechist discouraged me from entering because, according to him, she was already dead. I insisted on anointing her. In the process, she opened her eyes and gazed at me. She lived more than one week more.

**1994, BARRA, GAMBIA.** ...Four months after my arrival, I preached my first homily in Wolof at St. Matthew Catholic Church Barra, an outstation of St. Michael Njongon. I preached my Sunday homilies in Wolof for the rest of my ten years in The Gambia.

**1996, BRIKAMA, GAMBIA.** I became the parish priest of the vast parish of the Resurrection Brikama on March 1, 1996. I went regularly to the outstations for weekday masses, weekend retreats and outreaches. I carried a house-to-house campaign to propagate sacramental marriage. The number of sacramentally married couples in the Parish rose from 14 on March 1, 1996, to 67 by November 23, 2004.

With grants secured through the Diocese, I constructed churches for seven outstations. As the number of Catholics in the Brikama central Church grew too big for the 300-capacity parish church, I was able to build a 900-capacity church through the help of the bishop and donors.

I wrote a column in the Gambian national newspaper, *The Daily Observer*, offering weekly reflections on the Word of God. I also frequently participated in a weekly Christian panel discussion in the Gambian Radio and Television called “Talk on Christianity.” Through these media, I was able to impact the religious and social life of many Gambians, including non-Catholics.

**2005, TEXAS, U.S.** Arriving in the United States in January 2005, I assisted for one year as the Associate Pastor of Sacred Heart-St. Mary’s, Port Arthur, before proceeding to Houston where I resided at the regional headquarters as I pursued my Master’s in theological studies.

On September 23, 2008, I went to serve as associate pastor of the Church of Ascension in Bastrop, where I assisted the dying Msgr. Michael Dokupil, who had been pastor for 37 years. After his death, I led the Church through a six-month period of mourning, reorientation, and healing. Bishop Gregory Aymond was quite appreciative of my service.

From 2009 to 2011, I was pastor of twin parishes in the Diocese of Austin—Our Lady of Lourdes, Gatesville and St. Thomas, Hamilton. I helped to build the two faith communities and to strengthen the prayer ministry and faith commitment of the parishes’ Latino communities. I said Masses and preached in English and Spanish. In Austin, I earned my Ph.D. in theological studies from Graduate Theological Foundation.

**2011, GEORGIA, U.S.** Coming to the Diocese of Savannah in 2011, I was assigned to the twin parishes, Holy Redeemer, McRae, and St. Mark, Eastman. My major work was the building of faith communities, teaching doctrine, and establishing family prayer groups for Latino communities. I was fully involved in

prison ministry in three correctional facilities. Just before leaving Georgia, I was named Volunteer of the Year by McRae Correctional Facility.

**205, NEW YORK, U.S.** I came to New York on February 4, 2015, where I serve as parochial vicar of St. Bartholomew Parish, Yonkers. Apart from providing pastoral care to the parish community, I have a weekly apostolate to the sick and aged at the Westchester Nursing Home, Yonkers.

### Fr. Anselm Kentus Eke, MSP



**JOY IN KANSAS.** As I reflect on these past 25 years, I can say that I have had what I could term “Missionary Joy.” I had always known deep down in the core of my being that I was happy in my ministry, no matter what parish I found myself, but it became so amplified to me on July 1, 2017, as my parishioners and friends gathered to celebrate with me on the occasion of the silver jubilee of my ordination.

On that evening in Hoisington, Kansas, speaker after speaker underlined that one quality they observed in me was my joy and happiness—even when it looked like the place was tough. I didn’t know that my joy was that visible and that it had such a great effect on my parishioners.

People testified how my joy in what I do has such a ripple effect on them and has helped them to adopt a positive attitude. So many chose to be involved in parish committees and ministries because they felt they could work with me and they wanted to have some of the joy they felt around

me. Here I was, attracting people to Christ, even when I did not know it.

Yes, missionary life has its challenges; one finds oneself in a foreign land, away and far from home. I have had to be absent at family celebrations, births and baptisms of my nephews and nieces, weddings of my siblings, and most painfully, I couldn’t be by the bedsides of both my parents in the final days of their lives. Yet I have always had the consolation of knowing that God has always taken care of things for me.

The challenges have not mitigated my joy nor my zeal in any way. They have instead strengthened my commitment to the missionary life. All in all, I agree with St. Paul when he wrote: “We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

In my missionary work I have always counted on the joy of the Lord as my strength and I have not been disappointed.

### Fr. Patrick A. Otor, MSP



**1994, KENYA, “MADELEO PEOPLE.”** Fr. Esukpa and I left Nigeria on April 6, 1994, and arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, the following day. While on our way, the bus stopped in front of a mosque. Knowing no one, we asked the help of a young man, who told us that he was a Muslim, but he could take us to the Catholic church. On getting to the church, we realized it was a Lutheran church, not Catholic. There, we found someone

who took us to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour Catholic Church.

We were warmly welcomed by the parish priest, Fr. Joseph Mwatela. ...I spent the next four months learning the language... to celebrate Mass and deliver homilies in Swahili.

In Kenya, missionaries are believed to be people who bring development (Madeleo). So they were expecting that from the young Nigerian missionaries as well. Fr. Esukpa and I prayed to God to help us not to disappoint His people in Mwatate, and God heard our prayers.

In 1995, there was drought and famine in Kenya. The Catholic Bishops’ Conference called U.S. Catholic Relief Services for help and they shipped food (corn, vegetable oil, peas, and sugar). The Archbishop called a meeting of all the priests in the Archdiocese and informed us that food was coming from the United States and the priests were to help distribute it to the people. The priests were not very willing to take part.

Fr. Esukpa looked at me and said to me, “Patrick, we are going to do it. That is the only way we can be of help to the people.”

And I said, “Yes, my brother”. We then signed up for food for 5,000 families. When the food came in May 1995, it was unbelievable. It came in three Lorries.

The people had to do some community work to get the food. Since neighboring parish priests did not sign for the food, people got the impression that missionaries from Nigeria brought the food. Now, we were “Madeleo people.” We built classroom blocks in some schools, built two churches in two of our stations, repaired a bridge, and dug a pit toilet in a school.

**1996, SOUTHERN U.S.** In the United States, I have worked in three dioceses and an Archdiocese. The people generally are very appreciative of my ministry. During Hurricane Katrina in 2005, I helped move people to safety from New Orleans.

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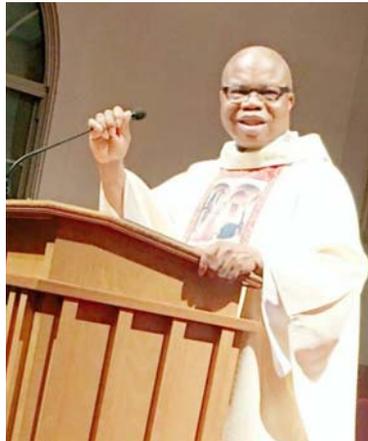
*“As a church faced with the reality of declining numbers, we have a choice to do nothing or to do as Jesus did and tell the Good News. God will help us through all our challenges; he certainly has been with me on my 25-year journey of priesthood. I have dedicated this year to praying for more vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and good married life.”*

—Fr. Desmond Ohankwere, MSP

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I have helped built a church hall and a parking lot in Orange, Texas; a parking lot in Donaldsonville, Louisiana; and in Sacred Heart, Waynesboro, Georgia, formed pastoral and finance councils in parishes, Bible study groups, etc. I thank God for all He has used me to do for His people in His Church.

**Fr. Desmond Ohankwere, MSP**



**BE BRAVE, BE STRONG.** Pastoral work isn't easy; it takes time and effort. Someone once told me that pastoral work is for the brave and strong. To be brave and strong means that no matter what, whether the sun is shining or it's pouring rain, if it's time to go on a pastoral journey, then I must go and not make excuses. Pastoral work and prayer go together. It is of no use just praying for people and neglecting to visit them. Words without action are of no use to anyone.

**CLERGY ABUSE SCANDAL, U.S.** When I got my second assignment, to the U.S. Mission, the clergy sexual abuse scandal was just beginning to gain attention in the media. I remember local news airing an interview of clergy and laypersons, asking their opinions on the scandal. That was a great challenge because all priests were suddenly viewed with questions of guilt before innocence.

During that time, I was even reluctant to wear my priest collar out in public for fear of being chastised by people who only saw me as “one of those priests.” The word pedophilia was new to me. It was also very

difficult for the vast majority of priests who have tried to live lives of holiness—this was shocking, embarrassing, and humiliating.

**CHANGING TIMES.** Despite the magnificent Church buildings and environment, it is surprising that Christian churches are no longer the center of people's lives. I remember when I was first ordained in Nigeria, the parish scheduled many weddings each Saturday of the year. During Lent, I presided at a penance service with over 2,000 people in attendance. Confessions were compulsory and Mass attendance and reception of Holy Communion very important.

In our society today, worship of God in the church is no longer a priority. Sunday morning has moved from being the time to go to church to a time of involvement with other activities, such as sporting events, or runs/walks to raise money for worthy causes. In fact, Sunday has become the busiest day of the week for mundane events.

As Fr. Ted, my spiritual director, once said, “The Catholic Churches in the United States and the developed worlds are waking up to this realization and realizing that we need to overcome these challenges. The work of evangelization is crucial to who we are as a Church.”

I can't agree more! There is hope, for as people of faith, we know that light always wins out over darkness. God will not abandon his Church. But we can't just sit back and do nothing. As a priest faced with the reality that clergy abuse did take place, I had a choice: go into hiding or try to live a life of holiness and integrity.

As a church faced with the reality of declining numbers, we have a choice to do nothing or to do as Jesus did and tell the Good News. God will help us through all our challenges; he certainly has been with me on my 25-year journey of priesthood. I have dedicated this year to praying for more vocations to the priesthood, religious life, and good married life.

## Fr. Raymond Joe Abuga, MSP

**1992, MSP PROMOTIONS.** It was an exciting experience being ordained a priest. There was the feeling of joy and a great sense of fulfillment... As I sensed in me the beauty and joy of the priesthood, I also realized that it's not all about me, I was merely an earthenware vessel (Jer. 18:5-6; 2 Cor.4:7).

For five years, I served in the MSP promotions office. I enjoyed the hospitality and generosity of some priests and the people of God in certain places and rejection in others. I remember sleeping on the floor in a parish boys' quarter with my driver, because a brother priest did not welcome me to the presbytery. Sometimes, the question was, "Who sent you?" On one occasion, the priest threatened to unleash his guard dog if I didn't leave the presbytery immediately. Despite these challenges, it was a great joy and honor to have served in that capacity.

**1997, CHAD.** My first foreign mission was to the Republic of Chad...being sent on mission to Chad in those days was viewed as a very tough assignment. It was perceived metaphorically as being sent to the war front and it evoked fear and trepidation and in some sense, anger. I recall people coming to me to sympathize and console me as if I had lost a loved one, or was going to die. The temptation was to ask "why me?"

After a tortuous journey by road...Fr. Crysanthus Udoh, MSP, and I arrived at the diocese of Sarh on November 14, 1997. We were warmly welcomed by Bishop Ndjitarang who was so pleased to have pioneer MSP priests from Nigeria.

Chad is a beautiful, but landlocked country. It was a poor country and sparsely populated. Driving on the dusty roads, you could see poverty everywhere with dotted hamlets of settlements in the countryside.

With no knowledge of either the French language or the local language of Sarh, I was like a fish freshly out of a stream, gasping for breath...

The people were extremely poor and quite simple, but rich in faith and culture. The Diocese had a very organized catechetical program which kept the faithful well informed about the Catholic faith.

Life was hard in Chad mission, given the harsh weather, lack of adequate rainfall and economic situation. We came from Nigeria and therefore were seen to be rich. Wherever we visited, the request was always, "Build us schools, health centers, and provide us food."

I made a farm from the seed yams I had asked my Superior General to bring in 1999 from Abuja. Yams are not grown in Chad. The youths who saw me preparing the ground wondered how I would harvest the crop. God blessed the harvest and when we invited the bishop for a meal of pounded yam... he was amazed.

The morning I was leaving the parish in 2000, an old woman came with a calabash full of water and presented it to me as a sign of farewell and good wishes. I was deeply touched.

**2000, CAMEROON & 2006, ENGLAND.** My two other missionary placements have taken me

to Douala in the Republic of Cameroon 2000-2006, and to England from 2006 to date. In Holy Trinity Parish, Douala, a bilingual community spoke French and English. The French language I learned in Chad helped me immensely.

In my present parish and mission, St. Ethelbert Parish, Slough, UK, my community speaks 41 languages. The big challenge here is to foster unity in culturally diverse communities such as ours. My ministry in Slough has centered mostly on the Eucharist, which is the sign of unity. The apostolate has aimed at leading all to speak the language of love, drawing from the love that God has for all people. This is still a work in progress.

I marked my Silver Jubilee of priestly ordination on July 1, 2017, at the parish of Our Lady Immaculate and St. Ethelbert. For the 25 years since my ordination...in the process of evangelizing, I have been evangelized myself. Each mission has offered me different experiences and challenges.

Has it been worthwhile? ...Oh, yes, it is worth it and today I give thanks to God for all his goodness and mercy to me over these 25 years.



*Pilgrims carry the statue of Our Lady, Undoer of Knots last May in a rosary procession in Nigeria. Fr. Dan Iliok Udofia explains the devotion and shrine to "Our Lady, Undoer of Knots" on page 1.*

# Why not consider sponsoring an MSP project today?

*The Missionary Society of St. Paul sponsors projects in the regions where we serve to provide a better life for local people. Your gift can help us provide clean water to people in Abuja, Nigeria, educate young children at St. Paul's Nursery/Primary School, or feed Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) who have been uprooted by war, famine, or conflict.*



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