

Dear Friends of Africa,

April 2021

We have just completed a week of mourning for the death of Tanzania's fifth elected President, the Honorable John Joseph Magufuli. It was preceded by some two weeks of consternation on the part of many Tanzanians. The reason being that there was no official explanation given for the absence of the Head of State at National events where he was expected to preside. His missing Holy Mass on two consecutive Sundays was also cited by the local press. Here his presence was always duly noted, often with informal presidential remarks quoted and usually with photos of himself and his wife at the Sunday services in his Catholic parish.

For the full week of public mourning his body was brought by car, by plane, by boat and on the shoulders of stalwart soldiers to every major civic center of the country and brought at week's end to his home in central Tanzania where he found his final resting place. His funeral Mass was presided over by numerous bishops, priests and fellow worshipers. The official government representation was led by the former first lady Vice President now the fully sworn in as the President, Samia Hassani. The newly installed executive took the oath of office as President just three days after the official declaration of the death of President John Joseph Magufuli. The new President was highly educated and held degrees from European and American universities as well as the local one from the University of Dar es Salaam, if I have read correctly her Curriculum Vitae as reported in the local newspapers. In her acceptance address President Samia was quoted in the local press in highly erudite English and thereafter in Swahili a passionate appeal and entreaty that we should all refrain from rabble rousing and finger pointing at supposed opponents and instead we should be extending to one another our hands of support, mutual understanding and friendship. We hope and pray for a national response of solidarity to this impassioned call.

Just before the final exams for the Form IV and the Form VI students, the students have a three days retreat with special prayers, meditation, and private consultations with the retreat master when requested. Many of the catholic girls go to confession at this time and more recently even Moslem and Protestant students request the opportunity to share their thought and feelings with the confessors. I generally do not hear student confessions to avoid a conflict of interest with my position as school manager although the majority of the students see in me a father and not a manager.

Last year the government came out with new tax regulations and have imposed on us the burden of corporate income taxes which were nonexistent until now. Since they make and enforce their own laws, we are now bound to pay corporate income taxes. We are now obliged to pay income tax on the school fees the parents have agreed to pay for the care and education of their daughters who are selected to join our school. Not only are we required to pay taxes on the school fees which actually do not cover our costs to care for and educate a child but we have now to pay a penalty for non-payment which the tax people claim goes back to 2016. During one of our conversations (conflicts) with the tax men I asked the gentlemen if they way were

Christian. Both eagerly claimed to be practicing Catholics. I then asked if they ever gave thought to the expression of Jesus when in the Gospels he included tax collectors and sinners in the same category of evil doers. Their reaction was absolutely a blank stare, no comment whatever, and they continued to lecture us on the penalties that would accrue to non- payment and late payment of the required taxes. Since they have access to our bank accounts we are vulnerable to their direct withdrawals from our accounts. So far and thanks be to God, the donations from our



Funeral memorial at school Mass

benefactors come directly into a private account in my name and so does not fall, under the laws concerning money earned or accrued in the Tanzanian economy. Furthermore our donations are kept secure in European and American banks until we call for a specified sum to finance a particular project.

Getting back to the week of mourning for the death and burial of the late President John Magufuli there was live 24 hour TV coverage of every aspect of the events. There were constant showings of the motorcades accompanying the presidential coffin to the home of the deceased. The outpouring of grief of the bystanders was highly emotional

and women were spreading their colorful wrappers on the roadbed at the approach of the hearse bearing the remains of John Joseph Magufuli. Someone remarked that they did the same for Jesus on Palm Sunday which we celebrated just the following Sunday. Many were waving leafy green branches to complete the biblical spectacle. But we have a courageous woman in charge now and she seems not only capable but determined to do her job. May the Good Lord be with her and Tanzania. It is now up to Samia Hassani to earn her own palms and leafy branches on her performance as President. May the Good Lord be with you all and reward you on your devotion and generosity to our cause of education of those most in need.

Sincerely,

Father Damian Milliken.