

Dear Friends of Africa,

May 4<sup>th</sup> 2021

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May the girls in Form VI began their final exams. The results of these exams will open the door to the prize of higher education at the university here in Tanzania and if they are lucky, abroad as well. The anxiety level of the students is high and they crowd to the altar after Mass and press together to get a chance to grasp the crucifix in its place at the center of the altar. Other students line up before me to get a blessing which entails placing my two hands on their lowered heads and a blessing with holy water. There are over 300 candidates taking these Form Six exams and they represent religious backgrounds of all sects, Catholic, Protestant and Moslem. In general I find our girls are sincerely religious and have never experienced any open display of religious prejudice. Now that I have become accustomed to using a walking stick, there will always be a student, or a bevy of them, wanting to take my hand leading to my office or any other destination in the school compound. Since the school has achieved a reputation of providing exceptionally good academic results and is nationally known and highly regarded, these redound to special perks. When we get stopped for a police check on the highway and the officer sees me in the passenger seat, we usually get by with a smart salute from the traffic officer. If it was for a speeding infraction the driver will be reprimanded for endangering the welfare of father. I recall an occasion when I was alone driving and was stopped by a pair of police traffic officers. I was definitely in the wrong and was over the speed limit. I could see that the arresting officers were in a quandary as to what course of action they should take not wanting to take a stern stand against a priest. They were both obviously Catholics and perhaps with a yearning for a place for a daughter in our school as well. They looked at one another searching for a solution to their dilemma when one of the officers spoke up and said, "So now Father what do you think we should do with you?" Seeing my way clear I now said, "You could forgive me this time for speeding and warn me not to do it again." They nodded to one another in agreement and sent me kindly on my way.

The whole country is watching and waiting to see how Samia Hasan, the former vice President, will now function as the new president of Tanzania. Already there are some hopeful signs of her maternal hand on the tiller of the ship of state. The 26<sup>th</sup> of April was the commemoration of the union of Tanganyika mainland with the Island State of Zanzibar. The ruling class of Zanzibar were forced out of power and most fled for their lives and the Africans filled the position of power. There was a national holiday celebrating the union and a solemn ceremony was enacted with two kneeling Africans each holding a gourd of soil, one from Zanzibar the other from Tanganyika Mainland and pouring the contents of the two gourds into a single basin symbolizing the union of the two countries becoming one nation. The 26<sup>th</sup> of April was then designated as a national holiday celebrating this singular event. Our new President in spite of being a born Zanzabari and held senior political posts there declared that there would be no celebrations of this national holiday and the funds normally allocated for the festivities would be used for development projects and all funds diverted to the urgent rising costs of dealing with the current covid-19 crisis. President Samia's take on this yearly celebration was a breath of fresh air especially when compared with the seeming denial of the epidemic that prevailed



previously where prayer and herbal concoctions were the preferred remedies. Just as a footnote, the new name of the creation of the newly united nation became Tanzania the amalgamation of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. If I recall correctly Tanganyika that word is also a combination of Tanga and nyika meaning the plains of Tanga. Another item of note in the character of the new president is her singular frame of mind. When for example a popular opposition political personality was the victim of an assassination attempt being hit 16 times with the assassins bullets, he miraculously survived and was hospitalized in Dar es Salaam. The only public figure that visited him while in the hospital was herself, Samia Hassani, the Vice President at that time. The victim of the deadly attempt on his life, Tundu Lissu by name, was further vilified when he went abroad to Belgium for the medical care that was not forthcoming for him here in his own country. Let us hope and pray that our land will be blessed by a motherly care especially in this trying time of the COVID epidemic. I thank you all for your generous hearts for our care of the children in our schools that they too will become givers of care when they leave Mazinde Juu and have a giving heart to the challenges that they will face. May the Good Lord bless you all in good health, work and deed.

Sincerely, Father Damian



Every little Girl helps