









Irish Jesuit Mission Office Newsletter

In all things to love and to serve
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Vision

A just and humane world based on Gospel values and Ignatian Spirituality.

Mission

The Irish Jesuit Mission Office supports Jesuit works in the service of poor and marginalised people, particularly in Africa and Asia.

To learn more about our missions or to make a donation, please contact:

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An Irish Jesuit Engineer in Sudan



Sunday Mass under a tree at the Loreto Sisters boarding school in Rumbek



shared with the Irish Jesuit Mission office his recent experiences in South Sudan.

Eddie Cosgrove SJ hails from Drogheda, Co. Louth and is a Jesuit theology student presently studying in Canada. He

The invitation came as a total surprise to me. I arrived in Africa from Dublin exactly four weeks after my Jesuit superior received an e-mail from an Irish Jesuit from Dublin, Fr. Richard O' Dwyer SJ, requesting that I travel to Rumbek to give advice on a construction project.

Richard invited me there to give advice on the construction of foundations for a number of buildings as part of the MAJIS project (Multi-educational Agricultural Jesuit Institute of South Sudan). MAJIS is an initiative of the East African Province to help

local people develop agriculture as a viable resource for themselves and the local community. 85% of the land in South Sudan is said to be suitable for agriculture yet most of the food in Rumbek is imported from neighbouring countries or is given by NGOs as food aid.

Before I joined the society I worked as a Geotechnical Engineer in Dublin, giving advice specifically related to the design and construction of foundations for roads, buildings, railways etc. on difficult soils, usually soft soils in Ireland. Richard was concerned about the possible presence of expansive soils, including black cotton soil, at the site in Rumbek, and so invited me to give some independent advice.

We organised a number of trial pits to be dug at the site and I logged the soil profile and took soil samples at the site of the proposed buildings, undertaking basic tests. My work also included

A Word from the Director



A Big Heart Open to God was the title of the exclusive interview given by Pope Francis to the editor of the Italian Jesuit Journal in September 2013. The interview has received wide publicity around the world. One of the remarkable things he said was about the mission of the Church today – *The thing the Church needs*

most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the Church as a field hospital after battle.

He describes in a special way the work of our missionaries and volunteers who work and live close to the people. They are with them in their struggles and pain and heal them through their encouraging words and concrete actions in education, medical, development and pastoral work.

The stories in this Christmas edition of our newsletter tell of their work but this is also our work. They could not do the work out there without the love of families and friends. Three lay volunteers - Deirdre Grant in Zambia, Rob Osborne in Kenya and Pádraic MacOireachtaigh in Burundi - continue the great tradition of long term volunteering in Africa with the Jesuits.

Christmas time is a time of remembering and giving thanks. The Irish Jesuit Mission office gives thanks to you, our friends, for your friendship, prayers, moral and financial support over the last year. The Swahili proverb that says “We are because you are” is so true. The work we do in the field, the support given to our brothers and sisters working at the frontiers and for the thousands of people they serve in Africa and Asia, happens because of you. Our work together makes such a difference and in the words of Pope Francis it does indeed ‘heal wounds and warms the hearts of the faithful’.

May this Christmas time be a time of relaxation and rest and may the peace of the new born Jesus fill your hearts and remain with you throughout the New Year.

Fr. John K. Guiney SJ



a desk study looking at geological and hydrogeological maps of the area, which were available on the web. On my return, I wrote a report and made some recommendations to Richard regarding the foundations.

In terms of my life as a Jesuit, it was a consoling experience to use my expertise as a Geotechnical Engineer for such a worthwhile project. I spent many years studying and working in this field before I joined the Society, and it was good to have an opportunity to use this knowledge when it was needed.

Looking back, the main high points for me are the experiences of meeting the people of South Sudan. As a background to this, it is relevant to note that South Sudan in general and Rumbek in particular is extremely underdeveloped. Most adults are illiterate, live in earthen houses with a thatched roof, with no running water or much in the way of sanitation. They have suffered deeply through long-term conflict and civil war lasting more than thirty years in recent times. Despite this, I found much life and hope among the people of Rumbek.

One such occasion that highlighted this was Sunday Mass under a tree at the Loreto Sisters’ boarding school for girls in Rumbek. It is one of the few all girl schools in the country. It was a joyful occasion, with plenty of singing and dancing by the confident, friendly and lively students. Women from the Dinka tribe do not have an easy time in South Sudan and it was really inspiring to see what a difference the Loreto sisters make to their lives.

Another encounter was on one of our daily trips to the MAJIS project from Rumbek, a journey of about 10 kilometres each way. People would ask us for lifts along the way and Richard generously obliged. Often it was women carrying heavy loads or young men travelling to a local village. Once when we dropped people off in the centre of Rumbek, a woman put her hand on her head for some time and prayed for us in silence. It was quite moving. She was really thankful.

It seems that it is the small gestures towards each other that are most meaningful and help to build community.

Agriculture and food production is key to sustainability of life in Zambia as it is in South Sudan. The Irish Jesuit Mission Office supports both the MAJIS project in South Sudan and the Kasisi Agricultural Training Center in Zambia in the training and upskilling of men and women farmers.



Keeping Hope Alive

Diana Karua, Communications

Life in the Nairobi slums in Kenya is very harsh. The most affected groups are women and especially children. Children are vulnerable for different reasons. Some are orphans or street children; others are just living with a single parent or whose parents are sick.

The Jesuit Parish of St. Joseph is supporting the Upendo Rescue Center (upendo means “love” in Kiswahili), which is situated on a small patch of land on the edge of Nairobi’s Kangemi slum in Kenya. It was founded by the Director of the Irish Mission Office Fr. John Guiney SJ, while he was Parish Priest.

The Upendo Rescue Center is a primary school for orphans and underprivileged children in the slum. Around 300 of the slum’s most disadvantaged children gather here for the education they otherwise would never have received. Many are orphaned; others just desperately poor. The children at Upendo Rescue Center find not only free education but also an alternative to life on the streets.

When 22 year old Maurice Macharia was enrolled into the Upendo sponsorship programme 16 years ago, he did not know what fate would bring him. Maurice, alongside other children, had to undertake a 2 year programme that included psychosocial counseling as well as academic work. 2 years later, he qualified to join St. Joseph’s Primary

School. *“Because I knew this was the only opportunity I had, I worked hard. I enjoyed reading so I spent most of my free time reading.”*

True to his word and hard work, Maurice attained good grades that gave him an opportunity to join Dagoretti Boys High School. Four years later, he scored an A- and joined the University of Nairobi for a Bachelor’s degree in Quantity Surveying.

Like many other children in Kangemi, Maurice comes from a single parent home; he lives with his mother and 8 siblings. Being the fourth of 9 children, Maurice is the first one in his home to go through both secondary school and university. For this reason, he is faced with a lot of responsibilities. Although Maurice and two of his sisters have received much support from Upendo Intensive Vulnerable Care and Support centre, he still has a lot on his mind.

For instance, with the little money he receives from student loans, Maurice provides food for his family and pays secondary school fees for one of his younger brothers. He is also faced with the responsibility of educating the youngest child who is currently in class 4.

Besides worrying about his siblings’ education, Maurice also worries about his mother who suffers from cancer and is currently bedridden. Although it is difficult, he helps out whenever he can. *“At times when I get a little money, I use it to buy*

medicine for my mom. Upendo has also been very supportive since they helped to pay her medical fees during therapy.” How does he manage all this? Laughing, he explains that he is supported by Upendo and his friends.

During his free time, Maurice sings in the church choir and is the leader of Youth Alive Africa, a group attached to the church. He also spends time at Upendo centre teaching children during the school holiday programme and helping out with social work. Because he is inspired by the children in Upendo, his aim in life is to encourage them so that they can achieve what he has achieved.

He explains that though he comes from a financially poor family, he has made it despite the challenges. According to Maurice, he is a fulfillment of Upendo’s motto that behind every successful child, **there is someone who cares**. *“I am a fulfillment of that motto because there is no single day I have missed school fees. There is always someone who cares. I will make it no matter what challenges I face. In the end you succeed.”* Maurice is now in his 3rd year at Nairobi University studying Quantity Survey; he expects to finish in 2014.

The Irish Mission Office has assisted the Upendo Rescue Center in educating children at Primary and Secondary levels, and has recently begun to fund young adults further education at Third level institutions.

In the Shadow of Mount Kasungu



Pádraic MacOireachtaigh

As you approach the small town of Kasungu in central Malawi, the first thing that strikes you is the mountain. It's actually a hill, but the people of Kasungu won't hear of such narrow definitions: to them, it's Mount Kasungu. It is also known as Ngulu ya Nawambe, which in Chichewa means 'The Shield of Nawambe,' a reference to Chief Nawambe's brave defence of the mountain against the invading Ngoni people.

Malawi is usually introduced as one of the poorest countries in the world. It is also known as a small African country with four times the population of Ireland. It's famous for its beautiful lake and Madonna's adoption fetish. It also has the continent's second female head of state. This is about all you'll hear of the country called The Warm Heart of Africa. This is the country I chose to work in as a volunteer with the Jesuit Missions.

Jesuit Missions

My parents met in Papua New Guinea on two-year stints with Voluntary Service Overseas. This was, of course, long before mobile phones, emails, or Skype.

I always had at the back of my mind that as soon as the tedium of formal education was out of the way, life could really begin with a jaunt abroad doing some good for people less fortunate than me. It was important to work with a faith-based organisation: the Soldiers of Christ are by far the coolest missionaries.

I have always been proud of the many legacies of Ireland's missionary endeavours. Even today, on hearing that I am Irish, many Africans will tell me, "So you are a priest then." Sometimes agreeing with this statement can earn a swifter passage across national borders, a narrow escape from traffic police, and a little leniency when needed.

It is not normal for a young layperson to choose to live in a Jesuit community. Mass at 6am every morning, community meals, prayers: depending upon mood and circumstances, these can be daily blessings or taxing trials. Sometimes you settle into the rhythm of life and appreciate the routine. At other times, it's chokingly claustrophobic and you pray for interruptions. Most people who have lived in community for any length of time, however, will tell you that when you step back and see the bigger picture, the rewards far outshine the detractors. And so it was for me.



Pupils celebrate a goal on the netball pitch at St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Kasungu, Malawi

Opportunities and Initiatives

It's now a tired cliché among volunteers and aid workers that you receive far more than you are able to give. My time in Kasungu led to many other exciting opportunities and initiatives: I founded The Nsanja Project, a platform for creative ideas coming out of Malawi; I was Project Manager for the Lake of Stars Arts Festival, a three-day international festival held on the shores of the enormous Lake Malawi.

After almost a year in Kasungu, I moved to the capital, Lilongwe. There I worked for nine months fundraising for Loyola Jesuit Secondary School, an 'option for the poor' in Kasungu in the tradition of great Ignatian education. I also facilitated a Performing Arts course in Dzaleka Refugee Camp, as part of the Jesuit Commons: Higher Education at the Margins project under the auspices of the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS).

Now I work for the JRS Great Lakes Africa regional office in Burundi, mostly covering our work in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as Advocacy and Communications Officer.

Being 'in Africa' does not feel as strange or surreal as I might have expected it to. It feels quite natural. I was able to go in with an attitude of saying 'Yes' to every opportunity. This might not have been in the interests of health and safety, but the experiences and the friendships are worth it all. I wouldn't be here if it weren't for the Jesuit Missions.

Thanks to our friends, what was an empty field in Kasungu only one year ago is now a busy construction site building classrooms and so much more. September 2014 will see the first students enrol at the new school. The construction of the second phase of the school will begin after funds are available.

Our Man in Cambodia

Fr. Ashley Evans SJ, born and educated in Dublin, has spent most of his priestly life in Cambodia where he has taught Mathematics and Philosophy at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, while remaining a member of the Irish Province. Last summer he has resigned from the university in order to take up his new assignment as Director of the New School Project. After his return to Cambodia from his holiday in Ireland in September, he has moved to Sisophon to be better able to oversee the establishment of the new school the Society of Jesus will establish.

This will be the first SJ school in Cambodia, and is expected to take 12 years before it is fully operational. What is planned is a secondary school, a small primary attached to it, a teacher resource centre, and a community learning centre that will offer whatever adults

seem to need, possibly including online learning. Sisophon, where the project will be centred, already has good internet connections.



The project has been talked about for some time but now has the backing not only of the Jesuits working here (mostly from Asia: predominantly India, Philippines, Korea and Indonesia), but also of the General, Fr. Nicolás Adolfo SJ. Ashley will be the Director of the Project, which will be called the Fernando Project.

Richie Fernando SJ was a Jesuit scholastic who was killed in 1996.

He was working at the Banteay Priep (Centre of the Dove), a technical school for disabled veterans. One of them went crazy and was about to throw a live hand grenade at the others when Fernando restrained him. The grenade dropped and exploded, and Richie was the only casualty. He was a lovely guy, remembered with great warmth.

Ashley is now in Cambodia to find a site, personnel and funding for the project. The

secondary school will comprise six years with four classes (each of 30 to 40 pupils) in each year. Funding will include a family contribution of \$15 a month, the norm in Cambodian schools.

It is a formidable challenge for the 55-year-old, but one that is relished by Ashley, who was home this summer seeking support from our office to continue the project.

New Irish Volunteers



Robert Osborne recently replaced Shane Burke as the Programmes Officer with the Jesuits in Eastern Africa Province. The role involves close collaboration with the Irish Jesuit Mission Office as funding is sought for various education and development projects across the Province.

Deirdre Grant is the latest volunteer working with the Irish Jesuit Missions in Africa. She's busy setting up the Development Office in Zambia and getting the newsletter and fundraising going. Deirdre will work and communicate with donors on their projects, as well as working directly with the local communities in Zambia and Malawi.



Mission News

Fr. Joe Mallin SJ was born in September 1913. He celebrated his 100th birthday with visiting family and friends in Hong Kong on Friday 13th September. He is, he says, the oldest Irish priest in the world. He's also a surviving child of the 1916 Rising.



His father was Commandant Michael Mallin, who commanded the fighting in Saint Stephen's Green on Easter Monday along with Countess Markievicz. He was executed by the British for his part in the Easter Rising of 1916 while Joe was only two and a half years of age.

The Irish Mission office, along with many other Irish people, sent proud and heartiest congratulations to Joe on this very special birthday.

Fr. Clive Dillon Malone SJ was recently nominated by the University of Zambia for a Labour Day Award for 36 years of service. The presentation was made by the Vice-Chancellor.



The website of the Irish Jesuit Mission Office has been updated. The website features the latest news from Sandymount Parish Friendship Programme that supports the feeding and education of orphans and vulnerable children in Matero Parish, Lusaka, Zambia. Niall Leahy SJ, a Philosophy student at Heythrop Jesuit College, London, recounts his summer experience in the Jesuit Hakimani Faith and Justice Center in Nairobi, Kenya. Please take a look and let us know what you think. The address is: www.jesuitmissions.ie

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**Educate One Child
Change Their Future**



Christmas Appeal 2013

Please help us to continue supporting our missions abroad. Every donation will make a real difference to the lives of the people in Africa and Asia.

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