



In all things to love and to serve  
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# Irish Jesuit Mission Office Newsletter

Issue 18 – Summer 2016

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## Vision

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

## Mission

The Irish Jesuit Missions 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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Aileen, chef with Byron Catering, cooks up a storm for jesuits and friends

## Summer BBQ in Milltown Park

The Irish Jesuit Missions (IJM) held a social gathering with Milltown Park Community for our men home on leave, missionaries in Cherryfield and other friends and colleagues in late July. This turned out to be a very enjoyable afternoon.

Everyone who attended commented on how pleased they were to catch up or meet new friends. There was a good mixture of young and old, Irish and other nationalities. The food was great, the conversation flowed, and it was nice to see people enjoying each other's company. But the highlight of the day were the ice cream cones!

We were delighted to be able to use the walled garden in Milltown, which has been beautifully looked after by Fr. Bill Callanan SJ over the last six years. It was a real treat to walk around and appreciate this wonderful haven, to smell the flowers and experience this delightful environment.

A big thank you to all in Milltown including Byron and all his team, Eileen and Bill, also to Rosaleen at IJM for arranging this event.

We hope to make it an annual occasion from now on.

## A Word from the Director

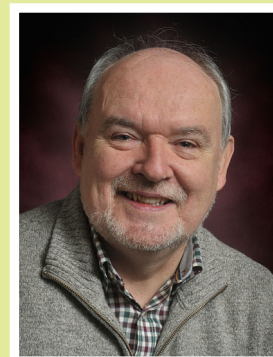
I hope everyone is having an enjoyable summer in Ireland even if the weather is somewhat mixed. It has been wonderful to have so many Jesuit visitors, including our missionaries, at home with us.

The great Jesuit event coming up is the 36<sup>th</sup> General Congregation of the Jesuits. On October 2, 2016, General Congregation 36 will convene in Rome. A general congregation is the supreme governing body of the Society of Jesus; GC36 was convoked by Jesuit Superior General Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, 80, who has announced his intention to resign after serving as the Jesuit's leader since 2008.

Among the 200 plus delegates from around the world who will attend the congregation will be myself, along with the Irish Provincial Tom Layden SJ.

Please keep us in your prayers as we elect a new leader for the Jesuits and reflect on the vision and mission of the Society of Jesus in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Blessings and peace, John



## “Something about Martin reminds me of Pope Francis”

Fr Martin Curry SJ left the Irish Jesuit Missions (IJM) in April after 10 years' dedicated service. He returned to his beloved Galway to take up new duties there. Martin's persevering work assisted Jesuit works in securing funding for programmes and in following through on their progress. This new chapter in Martin's life was marked by his friends and colleagues at a farewell event held in his honour.

Good wishes and messages to Martin flooded in from various parts of the world. Fr Orobator SJ writing from Nairobi, Kenya wrote: “As I reflect on it now, something about Martin reminds me of Pope Francis. Obviously, both are Jesuits!

“When Francis insists on the priority of mercy over judgment, the mutuality of learning, and the virtue of listening with compassion, Martin embodies all of that for me.

“I am almost certain that Martin will never become the next pope, but when I think of Francis, I remember Martin as the Jesuit companion who modelled these core teachings of Francis for me.”

Fr Peter Henriot SJ shared in the celebration of Martin's work from Malawi: “When we list the supporters of the Zambia-Malawi Province new Loyola Jesuit Secondary School in Kasungu, Malawi, one name will surely shine out: Martin Curry SJ!

“Martin was with us right from the start seven or eight years ago. Words of encouragement, suggestions for funding, help with proposals, praise for work accomplished, challenge for new steps. His personal involvement meant a lot to our team in Malawi.”

“Galway's gain is our loss”, said Rosaleen Kenny, IJM receptionist, to widespread agreement as she thanked Martin for being a wonderful friend and colleague.

Fr John Guiney SJ complimented Martin on his wonderful companionship, sense of humour and skills in relationship building, adding: “In Swahili we don't say good bye – ‘kwaheri’. We say ‘tutaonana’ – we'll see each other again”.



Martin with members of the IJM staff



# News from the Far East.

## The Irish in Sisophon

*Fr Ashley Evans SJ, currently on leave in Ireland, leads the Xavier Jesuit School project in Sisophon, Cambodia. He is ably assisted there by Deirdre Ryan, a volunteer from Dublin. The aim of the project is to serve young Cambodians who are most in need of a quality education.*



### Education for all in the community

After three years of discernment and planning, a large piece of land for this project was finally purchased in 2013 just outside the small town of Sisophon, in Banteay Meanchey Province, about 40 kilometres from the border with Thailand. The project will include four mutually interacting components—a Community Learning Centre, a Teacher Resource Centre, a small Primary School and a large Secondary School.

The first educational activities began in 2014 with a summer school program for children transitioning from primary to secondary school and then with the re-opening of a small kindergarten school in a poor Khmer village called Dey Lo. In 2015, the first building—a Community Learning Centre with a Teacher Resource Centre—was constructed facilitating a second summer school program and then another kindergarten school which will feed into the one primary school later.

### Safety, silence and nature

During 2015, the whole Master Plan was revised with the help of experts. The five key words directing the plan were 'Happy Learning Community', 'Khmer Village', 'Safe', 'Silence' and 'Nature'. While people could readily understand and see the relevance of four of these words, some found the word 'silence' puzzling.

Only when the Buddhist and Christian emphasis on 'interiority' and 'serious personal study' or 'the search for wisdom' did people understand why the 'sacred

circle' is beside the library which is at the heart of our education project.

### Buddhist and Christian learning

Even though the schools are Catholic and Jesuit in identity, most of the children come from Buddhist families. In January 2014, an inter-religious blessing ceremony of the land was prepared. The local Buddhist monks first blessed the land according to the Buddhist rite and traditions. This was followed immediately by a Catholic blessing service.

The whole ceremony finished with the planting of eight trees in the 'sacred circle' at the centre of our school site. This 'sacred circle' will become a place of silence, peace and quiet at the centre of our schools and education project.

### A lot done. A lot more to do.

In 2016, the first class of the secondary school is due to start while eight primary classrooms and a multi-purpose hall are being constructed. The project will be self-sustaining in the long run but it is estimated that it will cost nine million euro to set up over 10 years.

Although almost three million has been raised to date, it will still be a big challenge to raise enough to construct the secondary school within the next few years.

*If you would like to contribute to this education project, please contact the Irish Jesuit Missions office.*

## 'Bits and Pieces' from Michael J Kelly SJ in Zambia

### A Museum Piece

Early in May a new state-of-the-art interactive museum, EPIC Ireland, was opened in the vaults of the docklands CHQ Building in Dublin. It focusses on the Irish abroad and the Irish diaspora, what they have done and are doing in various parts of the world.

The Museum Director has informed me, as a matter of courtesy, that they are featuring my story in the visitor experience and will do so for the coming 10 years. I have no idea what aspects of my 'story' are touched on, but it is reassuring to know that at last I have found my proper niche - as a museum piece!



### Distinguished Visitor

On May 25<sup>th</sup>, Africa Freedom Day, I was greatly honoured when the former Irish President Mary Robinson, called at Luwisha House to see me. She was in Lusaka for a few days to speak to a top-level meeting of the African Development Bank on ecological, clean power and climate-change issues.

Noting that I was not present when she met members of the Irish community after her arrival in Lusaka, Mrs. Robinson asked the Irish Ambassador if she could come to see me as I was "her hero", God save the mark!

### To talk of many things

We talked about many things – progress against HIV and AIDS, empowerment of women, the children's problems, clean energy and solar power, population growth, and family. Unfortunately I had to acknowledge that at Luwisha House nothing had been done about installing a solar power system. But I redressed the balance a little by drawing attention to the work of the Jesuit Centre for Ecology and Development in Malawi.

I greatly appreciated this surprise visit from Mrs. Robinson, an eminent and busy person.

## Mass in Dromantine Retreat Centre

On Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May, Fr John, Carol and Rosaleen from the Irish Jesuit Missions in Dublin travelled to the Dromantine Retreat Centre near Newry to meet our supporters from the North of Ireland.

We gathered to celebrate Mass, to remember our missionaries, in particular those from the North and to thank their relatives and friends for their support over

the years. The weather was very mixed but when the sun shone, Dromantine and the surrounding countryside was glorious.

The Oratory was just the right size for our small group. We decorated the room with items from overseas to give a touch of Africa and Asia to the event. Our group gathered close to and around the altar.





John welcomed all and celebrated a lovely, positive and inspiring Mass. As it was the Trinity Sunday weekend, his homily was based on this subject and he spoke of his complete faith in God and his trust that God would always be there and could be relied upon in all situations.

He also spoke of the Year of Mercy and told us about a lady in Kenya whom he felt showed God's infinite Mercy. Her son was a thief and spent his whole life doing wrong but John saw this mother praying in the church for him every day and when he was dying of AIDs she contacted John and asked him to attend him at his deathbed. She never gave up on him as God never gives up on us.

Janice Gribben sang and played the keyboard and her music added greatly to the Mass. John invited those present to pray for their own special intentions and many of our group asked for special prayers for their family or friends.

Individual candles were lit in remembrance of deceased friends and family members. After Mass we took the opportunity to catch up with old friends and greet new ones.

We would like to thank all our supporters in the North for their friendship and solidarity.

## News from the Near East. Ordinary life goes on in Aleppo.

When Fr Michael Zammit SJ visited Aleppo in Syria this summer, he had expected to find a destroyed city. But it was a city in which life seemed to be carrying on as normal: "It's absolutely wonderful to see how resilient people are". He described what happens when the bombings start—the locals go to shelters and stay there until the shelling ends. They then emerge, clean up the mess and continue going about their daily lives: "The desire to live is extremely strong," he said.

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) employs 350 people in Syria and in Aleppo, with its population of 1.5 million, some of those workers help out with emergency relief. "Everyone needs help in Aleppo so JRS staff has a kitchen where they cook meals for 8,000 people every single day. The food is given to over 35 aid agencies who distribute it."

Muslims, Christians, Armenians and Kurds work alongside each other and while only two of the agencies are Christian, he believes it is very important to have a Church presence there showing solidarity and support.

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The Jesuits in Aleppo work in the government-held areas providing a clinic where people with chronic illnesses like high blood pressure or diabetes can go. This is an important service given the targeted bombings of the hospitals in the city and the shortage of medical staff overall.



JRS also provides a place where students can come to study. "Yes, there is normality but at the same time, death is ever present".

Life is, of course, extremely difficult there with the insecurity, high unemployment and cost of living. But, says Fr Zammit: "It is amazing to see ordinary life continue like this in the midst of the chaos of war."

Fr Michael Zammit SJ is JRS' Middle East Regional Director. This article is taken from his interviews this summer given at the offices of the Irish Jesuit Missions and Jesuits in Ireland.

*Please remember in your prayers the inhabitants of Aleppo as the struggle for control of the city intensifies between government and rebel forces.*

# Mission News

## ● Hong Kong

Fr Tom McIntyre SJ, one of our missionaries in Hong Kong, passed away on the 4<sup>th</sup> August, aged 90. May his soul rest in peace.

## ● Comings and goings this summer

From the Hong Kong community, Fr John Russell SJ spent a few weeks in Milltown, Dublin and enjoyed the company of Fr Ashley Evans SJ from Cambodia, Fr John Moore SJ and Fr Michael T Kelly SJ. They have travelled from Zambia and Malawi to spend some time in Ireland.

## ● There and back again

Fr Richard O'Dwyer SJ has returned from South Sudan and is now living in Gardiner Street Parish, Dublin.

## ● Visitors from Africa and the Middle East

The plight of African refugees was brought into sharp focus by Fr Endashaw Debrework SJ, JRS Eastern Africa Regional Director. Fr Endashaw reminded us that the majority of refugees are moving across Africa, especially from South Sudan.

In conversations with staff, Fr Michael Zammit SJ, Jesuit Refugee Service Regional Director for the Mideast and North Africa, described the refugee situation in the Middle East and his impressions of daily life in Aleppo, Syria.

## ● Good bye and thank you Bríd

Bríd Dunne has left us to return to her career in teaching. Bríd established the Irish Jesuit Mission office's Development Education programme in 2013 which was the first of its kind for the province. We wish her continued success in her new job. Krizan Vekic has been appointed to carry on this very important work of the Justice and Education sectors.

## ● To Rome for a worldwide gathering of Jesuits

A rare event in Rome in October will be the Society of Jesus' General Congregation. Fr Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, has announced his intention to resign as the Jesuit's leader and called the worldwide gathering. 200 plus delegates from around the world will attend with Fr John K Guiney SJ and Fr Tom Layden SJ representing the Irish Province.



Fr. Adolfo Nicolás SJ/Image Jesuits in Peru



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