

Pope Francis and the symbols left behind

Pope Francis has left the shores of Africa after making his historical visit to Kenya, Uganda and Central African Republic. So deep was the spiritual and moral connections that, few minutes after his departure, many felt sad and wished he could have stayed longer. Words he spoke left deep impressions on the hearts of Christians. His manner of engaging all shades of people endeared him to Catholics, Christians and non-Christians alike.

Personally, what stood out for me was not only what he said, but the bold symbols of his actions. Actions that drew even the deaf to connect with him at a deeper level. It is said that "action speaks louder than words," and he certainly left bold actions for any who dared to appreciate this man of God, the Vicar of Christ.

One of such actions was, him carrying a small briefcase on board the aircraft. Simple as this may look, it communicated among other things, a man who accepted the leadership of the church to serve and not to be served. In such gesture he entered into solidarity with many simple and ordinary men and women who carry each day their symbols of trade and wares, women who carry their baskets and pans, and men who carry briefcases and bags each day to work. Such a simple action of humility, uncharacteristic of world great leaders, endeared many to him and many felt connected to their leader, the Vicar of Christ. At a much deeper level the Pope carrying his briefcase may point to what Christ invites all Christians to do, carry your cross and follow me, in love and humility. May we

carry our simple symbols of life to follow Jesus, our master and leader.

The holding of hands at the Kasarani stadium was another powerful symbol. The Holy Father held hands with the youth gathered in the stadium including President Uhuru Kenyatta and said, "... We are all a nation, that is how hearts must be. Tribalism is not just raising our hands today... but also demands that we work with our hands and open our ears in listening..." Here, he shows himself part of a struggling humanity, but willing to be side by side with others to work for peace and to eliminate corruption and tribalism; two evils that have engulfed our country. A biblical image that comes to mind is the image of Jesus inviting his followers to come to him, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:29). The evils in our world will only be eliminated if we take the yoke of Jesus and with one another united in mind and heart for peace and justice in the world.



JESUITS
EASTERN AFRICA



A BLESSED YEAR

The year 2015 has been a blessing to the Eastern Africa Province. Firstly, the Pope's visit to Kenya was not only significant to the Catholic Church in Kenya, but it was also important for the numerous religious and non-religious organizations working for social justice, peace and reconciliation as well as inter-religious dialogue. These are issues partly addressed by the apostolates run by the Jesuits in Eastern Africa. More focus and efforts on our Social Justice Ministry, Jesuit Hakimani Centre, will have to be carried out toward the realization of our mission in Eastern Africa.

Another significant event to the Province was the visit by Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus. Fr. Nicolás visited the Jesuit communities and works in Ethiopia, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania. Part of his visit saw him receive the final vows of Fr. Odomaro Mubangizi and Tomasz Nogaj. During his visit, South Sudan emerged as a continued priority for the Province with regard to pastoral work. We will therefore continue to commit ourselves towards realizing this dream.

Secondly, on the Solemnity of Christ the King, we opened the new Christ the King Church, an outstation of St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Kangemi, Nairobi. The Church, which was blessed by Bishop Emeritus Rodrigo Mejia, SJ, will see more Christians served and accompanied in their desire to follow closely in the footsteps of Christ. We thank all the parishioners of St. Joseph the Worker Parish, the Irish Jesuits Mission Office, St. Laurent Parish in Flawil, Switzerland, and several well-wishers and friends of the parish for their enormous support.

In spite of insecurity and constant inter-tribe fighting, the ongoing preparations for the opening of Mazollari Teachers College in Cuelbet, South Sudan, also give us hope for the coming New Year, 2016. With this new apostolate, we hope to train new and in service teachers to serve schools in South Sudan. It is also our expectation that the schools connected to the Society in Eastern Africa will continue molding students to be transformational leaders in their own context and in the region.

Efforts are being made by communities and individual Jesuits towards inviting young men to join the Society. We must individually and collectively continue putting more efforts towards vocation promotion as the future of the Society really depends on our small at times even insignificant steps. We however must encourage them to get in through the door not through the window.

As we approach Christmas, I pray that the spirit of giving may fill your hearts that you may be available for prayer, service to the poor and accompanying each other in spirit. We appreciate all the support towards the continuity of our mission in Eastern Africa. On behalf of all the Jesuits in Eastern Africa Province, I wish you and your family a MERRY CHRISTMAS and abundant blessings in the New Year 2016. Happy New Year!

May the Lord Bless You abundantly.

Fr. Joseph Oduor Afulo, SJ
Provincial

The most powerful symbol yet was to come: Visiting the Central African Republic, Pope Francis entered the Koudoukou mosque. There the Pontiff removed his shoes, before entering and turned towards Mecca with a bow. He then addressed the many who had gathered saying, "Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters and God is peace, Salaam." Moses' encounter with God in the desert left a similar symbol: "Take off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). When religion is stripped off of all its garb of doctrines and theologies, there is only one thing left, indeed one person, God who is peace.

The journey of the Holy Father to Africa spoke to us in symbols and in actions and invites us in our encounters to touch depth and heal, to listen and affirm, to speak and console, but above all to recognize each one as a child of a loving father. May his Advent draw us to Jesus who comes to us at Christmas.

John Ghansah, SJ, Rector, Hekima College

Shukran

Vol. 4 Issue 03, December 2015

Shukran:
Swahili/Arabic
for Gratitude



Bishop Rodrigo Mejia, SJ, welcomes Pope Francis to St. Joseph the Worker Parish, Kangemi

Pope Francis in Kenya: More than a Diplomatic Visit

The recent visit of Pope Francis to Kenya can be rightly called a pastoral success. The reason to say this is not based on the external publicity and the massive participation of people, but on the reactions of the great majority of Christians after the Pope left the country. There was more than simple curiosity in seeing one of the greatest leaders of the Church and of the world in our times. Christians and non-Christians alike were touched by the Pope's spontaneous and familiar attitude, his simplicity and humility. At the same time, his messages touched the main challenges and concerns not only of the Catholic Church but also of the Kenyan society with neither ambiguity nor compromise in stating his observations and impression. The Pope expressed his fundamental ideal on the role of the Church, namely, it is a Church that is poor and in favour of the poor.

Without possessing mastery of the English language and thanks to the outstanding skill of the translator, we could all appreciate the conviction and the interior fire of Pope Francis when he was speaking in his own mother tongue, Spanish. This approach of communication greatly captured his audience rather than artificially applying effort to read an English text in a cold and somewhat hesitant way which only drew sympathy but left out the message. As a matter of fact, the audience simultaneously got two messages: his teaching and his body language expressing his inner spiritual energy and faith conviction. The translator did a phenomenal job.

We can ask ourselves "What next?" Giving a retreat to a group of 76 priests recently in the Archdiocese of Mombasa I got, from them, the clear impression that the visit and the teaching of Pope Francis has not just been a brief and passing "straw fire". He has awakened the pastoral zeal of many pastoral agents. Further, the teachings have kindled in them a new enthusiasm, a new "missionary impulse" as the Pope explicitly recommends in his Apostolic Exhortation "The Joy of the Gospel". His visit will not just be a souvenir of the past but a point of reference for the evangelizing mission of the Catholic Church in Kenya.

The great privilege we had, as Jesuits, in welcoming him in our Parish, St. Joseph the Worker, was not meant as a special "reward" to our pastoral performance during 30 years, nor was it determined

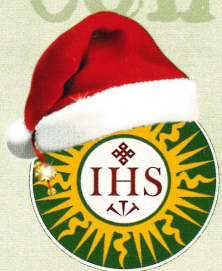
by the Jesuit common identity with the Pope. As a matter of fact, it was not the choice of the Church authorities but rather the choice of the security services of the Vatican because of its vicinity to the Apostolic Nunciature and the geographical location making security easier. However, for us, Jesuits, it was like a symbolic confirmation of our mission of the promotion of faith that does justice and the preferential option for the poor. These were the real motives inspiring the Society to start this new parish at the request of His Eminence Cardinal Maurice Otunga in 1985. At the same time, the presence of the representative groups from all other major "informal settlements" in Nairobi was a great sign of solidarity with all those who are working for the poor.

Finally, the Pope's approach and dialogue with other religious leaders deserves a special mention. This gesture of ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue expresses a desire for collaboration that should not die after his departure. In the face of so serious moral challenges in our contemporary society, the Pope has left us the clear message that we have to be together in the common mission of looking for the common good, the defence of human dignity and the preferential option for the poor and the forgotten in society. For all this, Pope Francis' visit was more than just a diplomatic visit or a mere touristic event. *Karibu tena Kenya, Baba Mtakatifu!*

By Bishop Emeritus Rodrigo Mejia, SJ

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Conversation with Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, Superior General of the Society of Jesus

Thank you very much for granting us this opportunity to have this talk with you. It is the first time you are visiting most of the Jesuit apostolates in the Eastern Africa Province, what were your expectations before the visit and your impression after the visit; have your expectations been met?

Father General: My aim was to go where Jesuits are working and are involved in different ministries. It has been a very good visit experiencing Jesuit communities working very well and dedicated in areas that we consider frontiers. I think to come and meet the Jesuits and to see the work they are doing was a very enlightening experience for me and I am very happy that I came. My expectations have been fulfilled to the top. I am very happy with the Jesuits I have met and the work I have seen.

One of the apostolic preferences for the Society of Jesus is the Intellectual Apostolate. Do you think enough is being done in this apostolate?

Father General: I think we now have enough Jesuits, in the African provinces, prepared well in teaching in international universities to make a difference. So my hope is that this influence will be seen more and more as Jesuits contribute to the Intellectual Apostolate.

Ecology is fast becoming a priority for the Society of Jesus as previously mentioned in GC 34. How, in your opinion, can this be achieved?

Father General: Well, I think it was mentioned before as you say and now with the *Laudato Si* of the Pope it becomes a central concern. I think we have to find a way that ecology links with our life, then it will be a natural thing to incorporate it into our daily life.

How can the Society of Jesus collaborate more with the laity and local church?

Father General: We have to think of our institutions, our work, our mission, and projects as a mission of the church and ultimately of God; this is a mission where everybody contributes and we Jesuits are part of this greater mission.

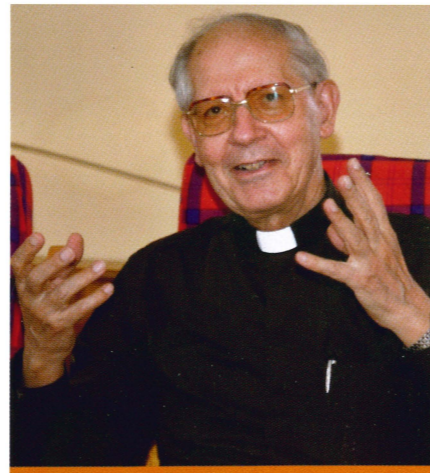
The Pope is due to visit Kenya, Uganda and Central African Republic. How is this visit important to the mission of the Society of Jesus in Africa and the church at large?

Father General: I know that the Pope wants to have a church that is flexible, near the people and one that makes sense to the people; these are the three points that can help the mission of the Society of Jesus. So wherever we are if we can reflect on this church that is close to the people, speaks the language of the people and that goes out of itself, then we are moving in the right direction.

The General Congregation 36 is set for 2016. What direction do you think it will take the Society of Jesus?

Father General: It is difficult to know the direction GC 36 will take the Society because as you know it is an open discussion. When the congregators get together, a number of dynamics take place; dynamics of ideas, exchange of values and our way of proceeding. These are what give direction to the Society. The General Congregation is a discerning team therefore it is supposed to come up with decrees on concrete issues like what aspects of modern life imply a change of policy, attitude, and perspective for the future.

Africa, in GC34, was declared a priority for the Society of Jesus. Is it still a priority and



Fr. Adolfo Nicolás, Superior General of the Society of Jesus during the interview

how is the mission in Africa being supported by the universal Society of Jesus?

Father General: Africa continues to be a priority and there are many Jesuits in the Society willing to come to Africa to help in the mission. We still expect Jesuits from Africa to say what they really need. We are waiting for that call and may be it can be in the form of technicians, experts in different fields that can help in spiritual direction or founding universities or opening different ministries because we have these experts in the Society of Jesus. Whatever Africa will request, it will be welcomed by other provinces.

What would be your advice to young Jesuits and novices who want to deepen their faith in God and the mission?

Father General: They should expect what the whole Church will expect from them; depth, creativity, and life in the spirit. So we have to inspire the Church in terms of spirit and depth so that when Jesuits do something it is well founded, even in terms of creativity. The world needs creativity more and more and I think we have to provide it. That's why our training or formation takes a longer time.

Thank you very much for the time you have taken to talk to us.

Father General: Well, thank you very much.

Ms. Diana Karua (AOR Communications Coordinator) and novice Lawrence Mwanzia (for Rafiki newsletter), November 11, 2015

Father Adolfo Nicolás, SJ, the Superior General of the Society of Jesus On Education, Interfaith Dialogue and the Spiritual Exercises

Discerning Vocation

My vocation was to become a La Salle brother; the La Salles are teachers. Then my parents moved from Barcelona to Madrid where I met the Jesuits. Instead of a brother I decided to become a Jesuit.

Education

I admire teachers because they are dedicated to teaching and caring for their students. They have no time of their own. They are always available. I have therefore always considered education to be an important aspect in life. Education happens mostly through interaction. This is already a preparation for leadership. You can be a good leader even if you are not competitive. Competition can be a distraction because the essence of leadership is that the good of others becomes a primary concern. A good leadership is one that is oblivious of the self. When I was elected Superior General, I had to read a lot about leadership and everything I'm reading insists that a good leader is one not only has vision but also the ability to communicate that vision to the subjects.

Interfaith Dialogue

Part of the Jesuit mission is to promote interfaith dialogue. I'm fascinated by this because I find that every culture has its own wisdoms. We need the wisdoms of the world to make our lives a little more human. The main work of the missionaries is not to increase the number of Christians but to learn from the wisdoms of all traditions; Islam or Buddhism and so forth. The missionary plays a great role in



Fr. Nicolás greets pupils of Abay Mado Catholic Academy, a Jesuit school in Bahir Dar, Ethiopia

bringing them to the center, a center that continues widening. I think we need that new theology of wisdom, a statement made at the end of GC 34. This means that the principal work of missionaries should be to bring the wisdom of all the traditions, to draw the best of everyone and every culture as a contribution to the good of all. Eastern Africa Province, for instance, has 6 countries. This is a tremendous opportunity to put together different cultures and to learn from this rich diversity. The more we become international and cross-cultural, the more universal we are and the more we can contribute to the growth of others.

Ignatian Spirituality

Another important characteristic of the Jesuits is Ignatian Spirituality, which can be

used by all Christians and non-Christians. Ignatius used Christian books because he was Christian. When I was in Japan, we were challenged when giving retreats to non-Christians because we had to distinguish the works of St. Ignatius from the structures of the Spiritual Exercises, which are for everyone. I believe one can learn from texts such as the Qur'an, Bible or Sutra. The experience of the Spiritual Exercises is the same as it can be guided by a Jesuit or anyone who identifies with the text. We have to strive to make the Spiritual Exercises more available and accessible to many more people in spite of their faith inclination.

Adopted from interview conducted by staff at Loyola High School, Dar es Salaam

About the Jesuits

The Society of Jesus was founded by St. Ignatius of Loyola in 1540 and is today the largest religious order of men in the Catholic Church. We serve in 127 nations on six continents and are organized in administrative regions called Provinces.

The Eastern Africa Province consists of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan. Though the province was established in 1986, the earliest missions date back to the times of St. Ignatius in 1557 in Ethiopia.

Our works in Eastern Africa include:

- **Education** - through our educational institutions we form well rounded and competent persons committed to a faith that does justice. Our students are aware of the social ills that are present in Africa and they generously give of themselves to put an end to these ills. We train men and women for others.
- **Retreats** - for more than 470 years, Jesuit spirituality has led countless women and men to a greater intimacy with Jesus Christ and to a dedication to serve those most in need. We maintain retreat houses in Kenya, Sudan and Ethiopia. In addition, we run mobile retreats in all countries of our province.

- **Parish ministry** - we run 5 vibrant parishes with a variety of pastoral, formation and service programmes. All our parishes give emphasis to 'community' and have dynamic Small Christian Communities.
- **Social Justice and Communication** - we aim to transform unjust structures and offer hope to the marginalized in society. We reach out especially to refugees, those affected or infected with HIV/AIDS, poverty and violence. Our justice and communication ministries include: Jesuit Hakimani center, African Jesuits Aids Network (AJAN), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) and Radio Kwizera.

Visit www.easternafrijesuits.org for more information on our work

