



**JESUIT'S
EASTERN AFRICA**



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Shukran

Shukran:
Swahili/Arabic
for Gratitude



THANK YOU FOR JOINING HANDS WITH EASTERN AFRICA PROVINCE

Dear Friends,

The last four months has seen a beehive of activities taking place in the Province: In the month of May, 11 novices took their First Vows and have since been sent for Philosophy and other studies. 13 young men also joined the novitiate in that time. The Jesuit Development Officers of Africa and Madagascar (JEDOAM) - including communications and programs officers - held their annual meeting in Nairobi Kenya. The Development Offices continue to collaborate in many ways to support the advancement of the Jesuit mission in Africa and beyond.

The month of June saw the official inauguration of St. Charles Lwanga Parish in Malindi, Kenya. This becomes the second Jesuit run parish in Kenya. The Province hopes to contribute to peace and reconciliatory efforts in the region more effectively through the Parish. Also, between June and July, 8 Jesuits were ordained to the priesthood: 5 in Kenya, 1 in Tanzania and 2 in Uganda. We welcome them to continue advancing the mission of Christ. Echoing the words of Henry B. Eyring, "in the priesthood, we share the sacred duty to labor for the souls of men. We must do more than learn that this is our duty. It must go down into our hearts so deeply that neither the many demands on our efforts in the bloom of life nor the trials that come with age can turn us from that purpose." It is my hope that these new priests will always respond with faith to their priestly mission.

The month of July also had great milestones for St. Joseph Catholic Health Centre which opened a theatre wing. Patients can now receive minor surgical procedures at the centre besides access to maternity care, eye clinic and dental care among other services.

Another ongoing development is the expansion of Galilee Centre in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia. The first phase of the expansion is in its advanced stage. Its completion will allow the centre to take in more retreatants. Soon, development of more facilities will start at Mwangaza Jesuit Spirituality centre, in Nairobi, Kenya.

Lastly, our mission in South Sudan remains a priority for the Province despite the ongoing logistical, inflation, and insecurity challenges. Through Mazollari Teachers' College (in Cueibet), St. Peter Claver Ecological Centre, St. Theresa Parish, the Multi-Agricultural Jesuit Institute (in Rumbek), Loyola Secondary School (in Wau), and Jesuit Refugee Service (in Juba, Maban, and Yambio), we continue to collaborate with different partners across the world to bring hope and positive change to the people of South Sudan. We recently had the first graduation of students at Mazollari Teachers College. The third batch of students have already been admitted to start their program. We hope that through these small steps, more qualified teachers will be available to address the dire scarcity of teachers in South Sudan.

My dear friends, all that we have accomplished in the short time has been made possible by your generous support, prayers, and collaboration. I thank you for joining hands with Eastern Africa Province so that we are present where the need is greatest. Happy Feast of St. Ignatius.

May the Lord Bless you abundantly!

Fr. Joseph Oduor Afulo, SJ
AOR Provincial



Left: The newly opened theatre room. Right: Hon. Beatrice Eleachi (Centre) and Sr. Magdalena (right) talk to one of the beneficiaries.

St. Joseph Catholic Health Center: Quality Health Care in the heart of a slum

St. Joseph Catholic Health Center started as a dispensary in 1987 and by then it focused primarily on first aid because that was the need of most patients who visited the dispensary. Over the years, the dispensary registered the need for improved services partly because the population in Kangemi slum increased, the impact of poverty became more pronounced and accompanied with an increase in the prevalence of illnesses, e.g. Diabetes, Hypertension, and opportunistic diseases that require more specialized attention.

As part of the response to the increasing healthcare needs, the dispensary was upgraded into a health center during which it established a maternity unit in July 2014. For the 4 years that the health center has run a maternity unit, it has had to refer many women to other hospitals whenever they needed theatre services. Due to these challenges, and the centre's dream to offer cesarean section services, the management decided to mobilize resources for establishing an operating theatre within the premises. The Centre would start with basic equipment and then build the capacity gradually.

On Sunday, 22nd July 2018, this dream became a reality as the Centre officially launched a surgical theater. This was a great milestone in the history of the health center. It's believed that this could be the first theater opened in a hospital that is located in an informal settlement anywhere in Kenya. The launch was officiated by Hon. Beatrice Elachi, speaker of the Nairobi County Assembly, who has been a great supporter of the health centre. Since its opening, there have been two successful caesarian sections; the mothers are recuperating well.

Despite the milestone reached by the Health Center, there are several residents of Kangemi and its surrounding that lack access to basic

health care due to limited services at the health centre and financial challenges by the local community. While these difficulties affect all members of the community, the problems are significantly outstanding for expectant mothers and young children because these two groups are more prone to socioeconomic marginalization. While St. Joseph Catholic Health Center gives preferential treatment to such marginalized population, the needs outweigh its capacity. Besides, patients who need referral for more specialized care in government hospitals, have to travel far in poor roads where public means of transportation is costly and unreliable.

Although St. Joseph Catholic Health Center is a fairly small facility limited in its capacity to offer a wider spectrum of services, it strives to offer the community an opportunity to get good medical services at an affordable rate. Typical services include treatment of general illnesses, laboratory services, dental services, wound dressing, minor surgeries, and maternity facility with several safe deliveries every week. The facility's readiness to offer affordable services to patients, and particularly the maternal and child health care, has come at an opportune moment for those who need them most.

By: Fr. Alexander Wainaina, SJ - Director, St. Joseph Catholic Health Centre

Priesthood as a Joyful, gifted service

The occasion of priestly ordination is always something to look forward to and certainly a joyous, festive and solemn moment. Such was my impression at witnessing the ordination to the priesthood of Fr. Fredrick Meela, who became the first priest to be ordained at the less-than-one-year-old St. Josephine Bakhita Parish in Arusha, Tanzania, on 21st July 2018. It was a day that gave testimony that the gift of priesthood is one of a joyful gifted service. The priesthood is a gift from the people - a Christian community where a vocation is born and nurtured; a gift for the people - a priest is ordained for service to the people; and a gift to the people, who welcomed this gift with ululations and immense joy.

Ordinations to the priesthood as witnessed in the Eastern Africa Province are ever certainly joyful celebrations and thanksgiving of families and friends, villages, and parishes, as well as a communion and reunion of Jesuits from all over the world. Ordinations become a moment of an encounter with Christ and

Pentecostal moment filled with the gift of joy. After all, Christian life is “Joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 14:17).

When one sees Fr. Meela, the word that comes to mind is joyful. His cheerful nature reminds us that priests are called to be bearers of God’s joyful word and

infinite mercy, and transmitting the joy that comes from within. This is the same for 7 other companions who were ordained to the Priesthood on 23rd June (Victor Awiti, SJ, George Macharia, SJ, Patrick Ng’ang’a, SJ, Keneth Ogot, SJ and Oscar Momamnyi, SJ) and 14th July (Allan Ggita, SJ and Robert Ssekyanzi, SJ). All these priests have been encouraged to embrace priesthood as a great service. Pope Francis on ordaining 10 priests on 7th May 2017 at the Vatican, told them, “be joyful, never sad. Joyful with the joy of service of Christ, even in the midst of suffering and incomprehension, of our sin”. He further urges them to always have before their eyes the example of the Good Shepherd, who didn’t come to be served but to serve (CNA, May 7, 2017).

Our priests are called, anointed, and dedicated to become joyful servants of God and joyful ministers to God’s people, proclaiming mercy with cheerfulness (Rom 12:8b). A priest should therefore, put the interest of those he is called to serve before his own interests and become one whose main preoccupation is joyfully announcing the Good News of Christ, whom he follows. Indeed, “how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation ...” (Isaiah 52:7).



Top from Left: Frs. Allan Ggita, SJ, Robert Ssekyanzi, SJ, Ken Ogot, SJ, Frederick Meela, SJ.
Bottom from left: Frs. Oscar Momamnyi, SJ, Patrick Ng’ang’a, SJ, Victor Awiti, SJ, and George Macharia, SJ.

By Fr. Joseph Mboya, SJ.

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. 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 6 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.

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

MAJIS Turning Guns into Garden Tools

“He will wield authority over the nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war.”
Isa 2:4



Groundnuts and maize crops on the MAJIS farm.

Death through the barrel of the gun is sadly one of the experiences that connect all people in South Sudan. Normalization of killing and its utilization as a form of solving problems has robbed this country of the most energetic and productive generation. Most of the victims are young men who may or may not be married. For example, in Akoljal, where the Multi-Educational and Agricultural Jesuit Institute of South Sudan (MAJIS) is located, each household has lost at least three of its members in senseless inter-clan killings. These deaths have left behind widows and orphans with no one to look after them. Out of the 55 women that receive direct support from MAJIS, 28 of them are widows. Frequent attacks and cattle raids aimed at stealing cows have rendered many people poor and

thus susceptible to hunger and famine. According to data collected by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 2017 titled *“Food Security and Nutrition in South Sudan”*, 60 percent of South Sudanese were found not to consume sufficient food that provides a nutritious diet. The same findings attribute the current high cases of malnourished children to widespread starvation caused by food insecurity.

MAJIS EXPANDS IMAGINATION AND CAPABILITIES

About the situation in places such as South Sudan, Pope Francis asks the question, “When will the time come in which weapons will be disassembled and turned into tools of labor?” MAJIS responds to this question in a creative

and contextually sensitive way by expanding people’s imagination to realize the possibilities of a better life beyond the barrel of the gun. This is done by offering training and formation in sustainable agriculture. MAJIS aims to expand the capabilities of people in the hinterland of Rumbek by helping them to recognize alternative means of livelihood. This implies improving people’s knowledge and skills in terms of crop production and animal husbandry/livestock management so as to improve food security and to make them more self-reliant. Vegetable production is one of the main programs which has succeeded to expand people’s capabilities and imagination.

MAJIS: “OUR GREAT UNCLE”, “OUR NEW-HUSBAND”

The vegetable production program has given beneficiaries a new way of ‘fighting’ using garden tools. It has given hope to many women by way of food production and as an income generating activity. The program focuses on the production of *sukuma wiki* (kales), onions, eggplant, local vegetables such as *Kudra*, and *okra* (also known as ladies’ fingers or ochro). Beneficiaries are provided with seeds and ongoing professional accompaniment. MAJIS also supports the beneficiaries by marketing and promoting their products, because the farm is 12 miles from the only market in Rumbek town. Most of the widows in the group see MAJIS as a God-given gift to fill the gap left behind by their late husbands. For them, MAJIS is a “new-husband”, “great uncle”, “great friend”, and a shoulder to lean on in times of need.



Fr. Ekeno, SJ, puts his ploughing skills to the test.

By Fr. Augustine Ekeno, SJ - Director, MAJIS

In Love With A Displaced God

“Paradoxically, it is among those who most intimately know the power of death that we find the most stubborn faith in the power of life and, therefore, in the power of the God who is the source of life.”

Roberto Goizueta



Fr. Pau plays with children in a refugee camp

I hail from Barcelona, Catalonia. I joined the Society of Jesus in the year 2000 with a deep desire to serve the poor. That initial desire has been refined over the years into what can be called “journeying together” thus stressing the reciprocity of a deep life-changing relationship.

I have been privileged to work with JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service) for eight years; first in Liberia, later on briefly in Nogales (USA-México border), more recently in Kakuma camp (Kenya) and for the past four years in Maban, South Sudan. In all these places I have witnessed that the lives of the forcibly displaced are indeed cramped by sorrow, wretchedness, violence, and suffering but also punctuated by joy, celebration, healing, transformation and beauty. With the refugees, I have experienced, time and again, the mysterious human capacity to celebrate life in the midst of death.

It has never been easy for us human beings to reconcile with the dark and apparently senseless portions of our individual and communal itineraries. To try to ignore them helps nothing. Deep down, we all long to comprehend the meaning of so much evil in our world. We desire to find humane ways of accepting it, lessening it and accompanying each other through it. Was not this what Jesus told his beloved disciple and his mother from the agony of the cross (John 19, 26-27)? Was not this what Etty Hillesum, in the midst of the horrible Nazi holocaust, also expressed by reminding us that “we should be willing to act as a balm for all wounds”?

One of the members of our psychosocial team in JRS Maban, a refugee himself, expressed this beautifully one time upon having completed a home visit to an elderly person by saying: “when I visit them they touch my heart and I think that I also touch their heart.”

I recently rediscovered this beautiful prayer attributed to Fr. Pedro Arrupe, SJ, the founder of JRS:

“Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.”

And it dawned on me:

Indeed, I have really found God in the forcibly displaced, I am really in Love in a quite absolute and final way My imagination is full of faces - both joyful and sad - of displaced people, I get out of bed because of the displaced, in the evenings I prepare things to serve them better the following day, Over the weekends I celebrate mass with them, I read about them, I know so many of them by their name, It breaks my heart when I witness once more women and children having to run away from home, I wonder in amazement at the joy and hope they share with me.

Yes, I think I am madly in love and I shall stay in love with God, a displaced God. It has decided everything in my life. Thank you JRS for making it possible, for allowing me to journey with the forcibly displaced and discover God with and in them.

By Fr. Pau Vidal, SJ, JRS South Sudan Country Director

For videos and pictures of JRS South Sudan work here: <http://enpau.blogspot.com/>

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