

OCTOBER — DECEMBER 2006



RAFIKI

A PUBLICATION OF THE JESUIT NOVITIATE OF THE EASTERN AFRICA PROVINCE



INSIDE
Experiments
The Long Retreat
Tribute to Fr. D' Agostino

ETHIOPIA ♦ KENYA ♦ SUDAN ♦ TANZANIA ♦ UGANDA



EDITOR'S DESK

Oct—Dec 2006

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On Growth

2006 has finally come to a close but for many novices it will be an unforgettable year. For the *primi* (first-year novices) it is the year they took a leap into the unfamiliar world of religious life. The *secundi* are almost veterans now, but 2006 is the year they tasted the harsher realities of 'to love and to serve'.

They went on two experiments; returning to the novitiate battle-scarred but having experienced something called 'growth'. (Not to be confused with the economic or physical kind). The *primi* certainly grew during the 30 day retreat in November/December. Judging from their accounts in this issue, the Spiritual Exercises was the highlight of the year for most.

For many *primi* this was the first time away from home during Christmas and New Year celebrations. If they felt homesick, they certainly did not show it. They joined the *secundi* in vigorous preparations and equally vigorous celebrations.

On a sad note, the past quarter has seen the passing of Fr. Angelo D'Agostino. He was very much loved and will be sorely missed (Tribute at page 11).

Rafiki, for its part, seems to be making good its 'resurrection'. Many thanks to our readers for your encouragement and support and do write to us at: rafikig@gmail.com.

Paul Kalenzi
Editor

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NOVICE MASTER'S COMMENT

An African proverb says, "a male tortoise is tested in fire", meaning to know the inner strength of a person, he must first pass through an endurance test.

The letter of Fr. General on the Meaning and Goal of the novitiate opens by stating that Novitiate is fundamentally a time of probation, a time of formation and checking one's vocation. Furthermore, he states that the various experiments are to make the novices gain first hand knowledge of the life that awaits them as Jesuits. And elsewhere in the constitution we read that the aim and the goal of the experiments must place the novices in those circumstances wherein they are called to give evidence of what they really are and show how far they have made their own the spiritual attitudes proper to our vocation. (CN 46 #1)

Thus in sending out the novices out to Addis Ababa, to Bugando Hospital, to Rhino Camp Refugees Settlement, to Dodoma and Nyumbani, the novitiate has an agenda; that of forming our young men and drawing forth strengths, talents, gifts, skills and courage that are required to adequately deal with difficult situations. We also intend to keep the novices in touch with the realities, experiences, the struggles, joys and sorrows and aspirations of our people.

In this issue of *Rafiki*, after reading the reflections of the novices on the long retreat and the experiments, I am struck by the link they make between the exercises and the experiences of the people they have met at the various places of experiment. Being able to make this link is already an achievement of the purpose of our formation. I thank Paul, Allan, Aldo, Thomas and Natnael for their hard work and diligence in making this issue a success.

Fr Isaac Kiyaka, SJ

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Front cover: *Primi* (first year novices) with Fr. Kiyaka and Fr. Jim at Sanya Juu at the end of the long retreat.



NOVITIATE DIARY

BY ALLAN GGITA

September 30 & October 07: Novices go on a house construction project for an elderly handicapped man.

October 09 - 13: First years attend 5-day seminar on discernment with Fr. Terry Charlton, SJ. Who also initiates us to an indoor game - Bridge.

October 14: 'Missioning Mass'...when the *Secundi* are sent for *Experiments* in pairs or so to various areas for 6 weeks.

October 17: A jovial evening celebration to mark Fr. Jim Gillon's 64th anniversary.



November 03: *Villa* at L. Duluti; fishing, boat-riding and taking walks.

November 10: The *Long Retreat* at Sanya-Jju, off Moshi road. [See cover picture and spirituality page 8]

November 19: The retreatants spent their first *Repose day* at Moshi Jesuit community. Some go swimming while others visit around town.



December 02: Second *Repose Day* spent visiting Arusha National Park enjoying great views of crater lakes, forests and other landscapes; fauna and flora galore.

December 04: *Secundi* arrive home from *Experiments* save the 3 from Mwanza who arrived the following day.

December 10: *Primi* return home from the *Spiritual Exercises* and are heartily received by their *Secundi* brethren.

December 12 - 20: Sharing of experiences of the *Experiment* and *Long Retreat*.

December 21: Fr. Francis Lado arrives from Nairobi to step in for Fathers Kiyaka, Jim and Paschal who will shortly be away for the *Provincial Congregation*.



Novices sing Christmas carols

December 24: We attend Vigil Mass from our nearby Sub-Station at 2100hrs. Back home, we have a convivial celebration as we await the birth of our Lord and Saviour - Jesus Christ.

December 26: Fathers Kiyaka, Jim and Paschal leave for Nai-



robi to attend the *Provincial Congregation* and *Assembly*.

December 28: Feast of the Holy Innocents. Hosted a grand fete for 200 children from the nearby environs.

December 29 - 30: We go to St. Elisabeth hospital for charitable service especially in Cleaning and tidying up the facility.

December 31: Night Mass at Novitiate followed by a congenial convocation till 0100hrs! ☐



NOVITIATE

The Christmas Bush and Other Festive Stories

By The Roving Companion

The preparations for Christmas started in earnest two days before the big day. Everyone got busy. Fr. Lado trimmed the hedges with the same gusto as novices slashing grass. Some necessary modifications were made to the preparations as Fr. Master inspected the work. In one memorable quote, he took one look at the Christmas tree and dryly noted, "This is just a bush!" Fortunately, Fr. Lado came to the rescue of the hapless novices and it finally took on the shape of a Christmas tree.

The celebrations kicked off with a

Vigil Mass at the nearby St. Josephine Bakhita out-station. The Mass is memorable for a rousing Swahili homily by Fr. Master and the widely differing dress tastes of novices. Some thought the occasion called for three-piece suits, but others preferred simpler attire. The Mass was followed by a generous supply of *nyama choma* (roast meat) and different tribes of *convivium* (beverages) at the novitiate. To light up the celebrations, there was a Primi vs Secundi dancing competition followed. It is difficult to say who won, but memorable mention goes to Charles' *mpaka chini* ('to the floor') and Benedict's *one-leg-in-the-air* styles. □

The Holy Innocents

On 28th December the novitiate was overrun by about 200 children. They listened patiently to our story-telling; ate food ravenously; played the games with a passion and delightfully accepted the presents we gave to winners and losers alike.

Some were not so innocent. They showed much promise as future swindlers and thugs when they tried to dupe us into giving them more presents. A few even tried to rob the smaller ones of theirs. □

TRIPLE ANNIVERSARY

The Grace of St. Francis Xavier

By Christopher Mapunda

Whenever I think of Mwanza, my mind goes back to the Triple Anniversary celebration on the 3rd December 2006. At Nyakahoja parish it was special since St. Francis Xavier is its patron saint. In preparation, we had a special prayer after every Mass for the Jubilee and a Novena of grace of St. Francis Xavier in the last nine days before 3rd December; the Jubilee was on! 94 children were confirmed by Archbishop Mayala, 264 baptized and 37 couples got married.

3rd December was the D-Day. Holy Mass started around 10:00am with a procession graced by seven priests. The main celebrant was a diocesan priest who represented the Archbishop. The parish priest gave a moving homily on the lives of the three holy men (Sts. Ignatius and Francis Xavier and Blessed Peter Fabre) in relation to our Christian lives. Offer-tory time was exciting when the group of *Mama wa Shauri Jema* brought a



St. Francis Xavier

well-decorated goat walking down the aisle on its hind legs to the altar as an offering! After Mass, all the parishioners converged in the church courtyard. I busied myself distributing the pamphlets on the three saints to everyone who wanted to know more about them. The opening prayer preceded the entertainments and *Harembée* (fundraising) for the construction of an out-station called Nyanshana. Many people generously contributed and others made considerable pledges.

A Teresian sister volunteered and invited all women to come forward to con-

tribute the little they had. All the women including the sisters came forward dancing as the DJ accompanied them with the lyrics of "*wanawake na maendeleo*" ('Women and Development'). The men were led by the parish priest. He himself was at the front dancing towards the contribution box. This time the DJ played a gospel hit - "*hakuna mwanaume kama Yesu*" ('There is no man like Jesus').

At one point it rained but no one went away; thanks to St. Francis Xavier's graces. Everyone, including the street kids, ate and drank to their satisfaction because each small Christian community prepared enough. After lunch entertainment continued with traditional dances, poems and *bongo flavours* (Tanzanian hip-hop) from the altar boys. After the last prayer the youth took the floor as the DJ put suitable music for them till 6:00 pm. □

The Jesuits Need You!

By Joseph Wasike

I left home in Kakamega, Western Kenya on the 1st of February, 2005 in the wee hours of the morning for Nairobi without telling anyone. It was my first time to travel to Nairobi. I did not have any particular mission except for a burning desire from within. I arrived in the city at around 3 pm and fell in love with the beautiful scene. I ventured leaving almost no corner unvisited. At around 8pm it dawned on me that I needed a place to lay my head. I remembered that my brother lived in the outskirts of the city.

Without further ado, I started looking for the bus stop in order to board the *matatu* (commuter mini-bus) to Karen. As luck would have it, I was kindly directed by someone on the bus.

On arrival at Karen at around 9pm, I tried to inquire for my brother's residence; only to be told that it was in Langata which was in a different direction. I then took a taxi to Langata. The car dropped me off between a road and a thicket. It was not Bogani stage as I had asked.

I forged my way forward. After 15 minutes I came to cross-roads. In the dark, I could not read the sign-posts. I prayed for a car to come so that I could use the headlights to read the sign posts. Eventually, one came and I read the sign post that pointed, 'Bogani Road'. Without dilly dallying, I followed it.

I kept searching and from a distance I beheld a lit gate that read, 'St. Camillus Seminary'. It took almost 10 minutes for the gatekeeper to let me in. My brother was very surprised to see me. I was at the right place at the wrong time. I stayed for three days and phoned a friend who lived and worked in Nairobi.

My friend accepted me as I was but later made me a house servant. One fine day in March 2005, my friend left for up-country leaving me with only Kshs 100 and promised to be back after three days. Three days later I ran out of pocket money. I prayed on my knees and asked the Lord for a miracle: 'I wanted to return home because at home, I could even chew sugarcane in time of extreme hunger.'

I left for evening Mass at Our Lady, Queen of Peace in South B. No sooner had I passed the Church gate than I saw a face that seemed familiar smiling at me. I ignored it at first. I looked at him for a second time and I saw him advance towards me. It was Ambani, a fellow I had known in high school. After a brief exchange of greetings, he told me, "The Jesuits need you." What a surprising expression! I tried to evade the issue but found myself in the hands of Fr. Terry Charlton SJ, the Vocations Promoter at Loyola house in Nairobi. My vocation to the Society of Jesus had begun!

The following year on July 10th, 2006 I entered the gates of the Jesuit novitiate where I found the friend I had bumped into, now in his second year of formation. □



Wasike (left) and Ambani, before joining the novitiate

God Brings Good out of Bad

By Bernard Augustine Shitemi

I had never imagined that one day I could be in any formation house. I always thought that the religious life is meant for special holy people. This changed suddenly in the year 2003, on 23rd January.

At the beginning of the year I was employed at the Kenya Seed Co. Ltd. Although I was promised a decent job, I was asked to do heavy work like carrying the bags of wheat as part of orientation.

After one week my boss relieved me of the heavy work and took me to work with the tractor driver. I was hopeful that this would also take a short time since I expected to do office-based work. The job there was actually good but I got problems from the driver. He was very cruel to me.

After four days we had an accident. The driver was over-speeding and lost control while turning a corner. This prompted him to apply emergency brakes. I fell from the mudguard. I tried to get up and get off the road. Unfortunately, he released the brakes. The rear wheel hit me as I tried to get out of the way. I was helpless and the tractor ran over my hip. It was a very painful and awful experience. The accident occurred round about 7:45am. I was rushed to the hospital and was put on traction for ten days.

In the hospital I began reflecting upon my life. It was providential that a family friend - Terry Hanley visited me. He encouraged me to do spiritual reading and pray. In addition, he introduced me to Ignatian prayer. At first I thought that it would be hard but I came to like it. I enjoyed silence and reflection which was something that I had never liked before. I had ample time to reflect upon God's purpose in my life. Although I didn't believe in miracles, I began to understand that God works miracles in people's lives if He wishes to.



Bernard in hospital with Fr. Terry Charlton SJ (left) and the Late Fr. Sean O' Connor SJ

The desire to serve God as a priest was growing in me every day. After long discernment I talked to Terry. He was happy and encouraged me to inform my parents. My parents accepted and promised me their support and prayers. Terry gave me some material of various congregations. I was really attracted to the Society of Jesus because of the Ignatian spirituality to which I was introduced by him and also the long and thorough formation. I started off with the Jesuits in CLC meetings. Fr. Terry Charlton SJ accompanied me during my candidacy program and I joined Gonzaga Ganza Novitiate in July 2005.

Since then I haven't regretted my decision of joining the Jesuits. The formators and my confreres have really helped me to heal the painful wounds that I had in my past life. More importantly, I have been helped to know myself and my relationship with God. □

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From October 16 to December 04, the Second Year Novices went out for their second and last apostolic experiment, a phenomenon that has come to be popularly known as 'Foreign Service.' Novices are sent to various places within the Eastern Africa Province to live among and work alongside Jesuits and their collaborators. This time round, the 11 *Secundi* went to Addis Ababa, Nairobi, Dar Es Salaam, and Mwanza. Below, some narrate their encounters. "...experiments of the novitiate established by St. Ignatius are a time of probation where a novice checks one's vocation. He verifies whether God is calling him to the Society, whether his deepest desires and aspirations coincide with such a call and whether he is truly free to follow Christ as a Jesuit. On its side, the Society checks whether those who wish to enter possess the gifts of nature and grace which permit them to adopt as their own the Jesuit way of proceeding." - *Spiritual Formation in the Novitiate*, by Fr. General, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, SJ.

In Mother Teresa's Home

By Sylvanus Ambani

My first text home on arrival at the Mother Teresa's home in Addis Ababa started, "My goodness me, every known disease and ailment seems to abound." James Moro, Bernard Shitemi, Godfrey Masereka and I had arrived after an evening flight from Nairobi. We were tired and hoping for an hour on our beds before anything else. It was not to be. We embarrassingly had to be helped with our masses of luggage through to where the male volunteers slept. They were a lot of possessions to those on-lookers who only had what they wore and precious little else.

The first day went in a bewilderment of being shown round the compound by one of the philosophy students, a serious candidate for the Jesuits. On the way we met a 70-year old Maltese lady called Monica, who had given her all to build a home for some of the disabled children to live in. She lived as we did for most of the year. We saw the children's home, where many of the children were available for adoption; the men's wards, the women's wards, the HIV ward, the chapel, the patients' kitchen, the volunteers' kitchen and the dining room.

The volunteers were amazing. I counted

16 different nationalities. There were some young doctors or interns, making a valuable contribution to the work and gaining good experience at the same time.

Two weeks later, I was hauled in front of an Assembly of University Students and asked to speak about what I was doing. I talked of helping take the dressing off a man's eye in the out-patient to find no eye. Just a huge gaping wound - cancer left untreated. Three of us tended an old woman whose knees where up on her chin. We washed her from top to bottom as she was filthy and lying on a wet piece of plastic. The others dressed her wounds and I washed her mouth with a piece of gauze. She sucked the water on the gauze. I changed her bed clothes and her bedding and prayed that God would take her home soon. She died that night.

Then of course there were those who captured my heart. Some for their youth, others for their helplessness or sheer gratitude for what little I was doing for them. Rahel was one such. A 22-year old and dying of AIDS. He was paralyzed down one side and had horrid wounds. He needed to be fed and tended continuously. The shocking, unusual things are, of course, the ones that remain in my memory. I saw sights I had never seen before,

awful raw wounds, possibly caused by burns and other accidents. Most of the time it got so much for me that I had to retreat and find myself again. However heavy it was, I had to find God in it so as to go on.

If really we have to change the world we should deeply observe and explore the relevance of our spirituality and intense human suffering. I wonder, if like me, you had no idea that there are 710 Missionaries of Charity homes around the world and, in particular, two in Addis Ababa! They ask for no money simply trusting that God will provide what they need; and He always does. □



Godfrey (second left) and James

Christian Charity

By James Moro

I was touched by the dedication of the Sisters of Charity in Addis Ababa and other workers who laboured round the clock to attend to the multitude of sick and dying people. This had a bearing on my reflections on Christian charity.

I found that even when we grieve at the evils of the world, we should also rejoice in its goodness and potential for greater good. This will inspire us to action and make our love an operative and efficacious one, willing even to die.

This kind of love thrives on self abnegation and what I saw especially among the sisters and other people who offered their help seemed to confirm this fact. I realised that people who love their bodies most are quite obviously not the ones who give it all it deserves. A little bit of sacrifice makes Christian charity solid and com-

plete.

As people were dying in the home everyday, I saw the possibility of the fear of death affecting the enthusiasm and work among the Sisters and workers. But this was not the case. Their zeal for their work remained constant and even increased.

This taught me that death is a certainty which cannot be wished away. Probably God doesn't intend that a morbid fear of death poison the beauty of our days. Nor does He intend that the thought of death diminish our enthusiasm to be and to accomplish. Rather, God intends that we see a profound union which is meant to harmonise the reality of life with the reality of death. It is only this which will enable us to offer ourselves selflessly and generously to the service of each other in perfect Christian charity. In this way, the created will offer us an ultimate meaning and render us authentic satisfaction. □

No school for shoe-shine boys

By Godfrey Masereka

I was struck that, in Addis Ababa, there are many children below the age of twelve begging or polishing shoes in order to earn a living.

Responsible men who could help or advise these children to go to school sit on the stools - legs stretched, enjoying the services of the young ones. This caused pain to my heart. The government cannot set a policy which would allow these boys to be in school - at least free primary education to all.

This gives me an idea that, there might be many other children in different parts of the world facing such a situation. The future of this young generation then is not certain.

They need someone to lead them out of their predicament. You, and me are called to initiate a solution. Let us stand up for them. □

Briefs on the Mwanza Experiment

By Patrick Ngamesha

Bugando hospital is a referral hospital in Mwanza under the auspices of the Government of Tanzania and the Tanzania Episcopal Conference.

While there, I worked in the hospital kitchen, the male surgical ward, the children's surgical ward, and the psychiatric ward. During power cuts, my two companions and I were obliged to carry the patients on stretchers. I helped the patients especially those who could not move to attend to their calls of nature. I also served them food; talked and listened to them. I tried to give them hope to accept that Jesus Christ is with them in spite of their anguish, sharing their suffering.

In our parish out-station I visited Christian families every Saturday and Sunday afternoon. It was a long walk uphill from the Parish. I talked to the members of the families in each house I visited. Here, I shared with them the true living of our Christian faith. I prayed with them in their houses together with their sick. Through these conversations I came to the appalling realisation that many children were not baptised and many 'marriages' were not blessed. I encouraged them to take their children for baptism and to bless their marriages especially at the time of Jubilee celebration (see article on the right).

We had Mass in this out-station for the first time in its history on November 12, 2006. The homily of the parish priest encouraged the Christians to heed what I had been instructing them; I felt elated!

He also encouraged them to participate fully in the Jubilee by contributing the little they had in the *Harambee* (fundraising) for building the church in the out-station. The cross of Christ which I placed before me every day of my experiment, was my strength, hope, encouragement. I realized my helplessness in the face of suffering and death. I was able to know the great love which Jesus has for me. □

Little Angels

By Benedict E. Leyan

The challenge to me has always been what I can render back to God for the many good things He has given me. I felt that, at last, I had given a little to God during my second experiment. Yet, I felt that God is inviting me to do more than that for His people.

Being missioned to Nyumbani raised a lot of anxiety and fear in me at the very start since I had never lived or even worked among very vulnerable children like these. I asked God for courage to face the mission and this is what He granted me!

I liked working especially in the garden, helping children with homework and talking to them. They were free to share their little life experiences with me, concerned about the problems of our times and wanting to be part of the solution. They have lots of hope and are so positive about the future. They carry a big message to the world that one can live positively with HIV/AIDS. It was inspiring and this gave me strength during my experiment to celebrate life each day with them - little Angels indeed they were! I liked the Nyumbani team which is really hard-working and resolved to carry on Fr. D'Agostino's vision to greater heights.

Words cannot suffice to express my appreciation to these little children who taught me how to love and be happy with life. I would have wished to stay with them for a longer time. After all, the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these! □

Abandoned Children

By Victor Okoth Awiti

During my experiment I was at *Mji wa Furaha na Amani*, a home run by the Missionaries of Charity in Mburahati, Dar Es salaam. It is a home for old men and women, the crippled, physically disabled and many abandoned children. The children, between the ages of one month and eight years, are very tender, lovely and obedient. I wondered where these innocent and lovely children came from. The fact is that they come from society but, "who owns them?"

It is a question that disturbed my mind and the minds of the many people who visited *Mji wa Furaha na Amani*. I consciously and carefully tried to find out from the Sisters where they get all these children. From all the answers I got, I further discovered that most find themselves in this home because of poverty related issues and other due to hardships of life.

Mji wa Furaha na Amani opens its doors to these children where they find love, happiness, and peace among other basic needs. Some could have died if it were not for Good Samaritans

who brought them to the home. Despite this, childless couples come to the home to adopt a child or two. The adoption process is very long and intense but all this is done to ensure the safety and well being of these children once in the hands of their new parents. □



Victor (left) and Michael (right), take time off at the beach with Billy, a volunteer from the US.

Journeying with Christ

By Boniface Okumu

The long retreat was an enriching experience for me. It was a privileged encounter with my Lord and God, who is love. I felt his presence, accompaniment and support.

During the first week, I meditated on sin in the world and particularly, on my own sins. I experienced intense sorrow for the many times I have gone against God's will. Yet, I was consoled by God's mercy and abundant love towards me. I came to realise that I am a sinner yet loved and called to serve God.

In the second week I was led into personal discovery of who Christ is for me. By journeying closely with Jesus, I came to: know him better, learn from him, open up to his will, imitate him and deepen my love for him. Our relationship grew gradually and deepened. I made a decision to follow him and help in the spreading of Good news.

The third week was very painful for me. I felt compassion as I experienced how Christ is suffering so as to deliver me from the bondage of sin. Through his passion and death, he showed me a perfect example of total submission to the will of God the Father.



To crown the whole journey, came the fourth week. The focus was the contemplation of the risen Lord in a calm and gentle way. I experienced the joy of being in the presence of the risen Christ. I felt encouraged to share in his mission by having a vision like his: the salvation of mankind.

The *Contemplation to attain love* also enabled me to reflect on and experience God's goodness and unselfish love towards me. I feel called upon to share this love with God's creation. □

The Prayer in Darkness

By Aldo Kilas

If you sow a seed, do not expect to see any leaves until the roots develop in the soil. This statement was proved when I was doing the long retreat. I used to pray and contemplate before; but prayer during the retreat was special. Using Ignatian spirituality, the directors provided the soil in which my seed was sown. The roots grew and the leaves started to appear one by one.

I was directed on how to pray by applying all the senses I have. Following St. Ignatius' directives, the directors suggested that midnight was a good time to do this method of prayer. I didn't force myself to wake up. Automatically I found myself awake from deep sleep and free from hunger, heat, cold, tiredness and fear. My ears and eyes grabbed no sound or image. I was neither happy nor sad. I found it easy to shift from applying one sense to another. I had no problem closing my eyes because initially there were no images, just darkness. I was then able to bring the images I had seen before in contemplation so as to place myself in the scene.

The benefit of this prayer is the lack of distractions. I usually close my eyes when I pray. But in the prayer in darkness, I wanted to close not only the eyes but also my ears so that no voice was heard and my nose, so that no smell could be sensed. If I had to pray in public during the day, it would be very difficult to avoid distractions. For example; if I pray while feeling hungry, then my nose will be diverted by the smell of food. It would be difficult to prevent the brain from interpreting the smell. But in this darkness there is no need to redirect the brain to managing the senses. I can really concentrate on the prayer.

We may complain that it is too difficult to get up in the middle of the night to pray. Let us remember that Jesus used to pray for the whole night. As a human being he denied himself sleep and offered his prayer in darkness to God (The Father). It is possible for us too, to deny ourselves a few minutes/hour of sleep and offer our prayer in darkness to God. □

A Remarkable Journey

By Evarist Shigi

The *Spiritual Exercises* took me on a special journey for a special purpose. Here, I note the specific exercises from which I derived most fruit.

I found the *Standard of Christ* so attractive and I discovered that he is sending me throughout the whole world to spread his gospel among people of every state and condition. I learned of how God has chosen me despite my unworthiness and sinfulness. Looking at Jesus' standard; his way is simple, lowly and not exaggerated.

I understood that I will meet challenges and difficulties on the way. Jesus assured me of his availability and support all the time as he is journeying with me. When I feel discouraged I just think of the name 'Jesus' and immediately he lifts me up. This was also the time when it was revealed to me the meaning of spiritual poverty, completely detaching myself from all material things but only using them where necessary and for the greater glory of God.

The *Three Classes of People* taught me to remain neither inclined nor attached to any object except when motivated solely by the service of God. It was really a time of enrichment, learning from Jesus how to make sound and reasonable judgements directed to the

glory of God. It made me reflect on my decision of following Christ in this least Society of Jesus. When I reflected on this I felt more free and relaxed and great desire to be with Jesus all my life.

Yet the *Three Degrees of Humility* made me desire to serve rather than to be served and to love rather than to be loved. Humility remains a very important virtue in my life. It is a grace that I asked for from Jesus all through my retreat. The question that I asked Jesus often was "Lord Jesus, please help me to be humble". I learned that it is only by loving Jesus and my neighbour more that I will become truly humble. Moreover, I desire and choose to imitate Jesus in his humility and meekness even to the point of death.

The central idea in these three meditations is choosing Christ before everything else, even my *self*. It is the realisation that apart from Christ who is humble, all is folly. Thus, I ought to imitate him in everything and desire to even suffer for his sake.

My expectation is to practice Ignatian spirituality after the long retreat. I expect the experiences of the retreat to help me live my vocation more deeply. I believe this retreat has added a remarkable distinctive spirituality to my life. □

[INTERVIEW]

Jesuit for Life

FR. JIM GILLON is Socius at the novitiate. NATNAEL SAMSON interviewed him for Rafiki

Rafiki: Welcome, Fr. Jim, to this Rafiki interview. Tell us about yourself, and your career as a Jesuit.

J: I joined the Jesuits because I felt attracted to the seriousness in their vocation. They were competent, hardworking, and serious about serving God and they had a great sense of humour. I desired to go to the missions when I was a novice. The Prefect of Studies convinced me that I should study philosophy and surprisingly I got a Doctorate in Philosophy before being ordained a priest. As a priest, I did go to the missions, first to India, Jamaica and then Eastern Africa (EA), where I taught philosophy and theology. I also worked as a novice master for ten years in my home province (New England).

At a Novice Master's meeting in the US I was surprised to meet Fr. Kiyaka who had completed his studies in pastoral counselling. He was the Novice Master designate for the EA Province. I offered to come to East Africa to assist in the novitiate. First thing I did when I got here was to study Kiswahili in Dodoma, Tanzania. I also served as assistant parish priest. In 2002 I came to the Novitiate in Arusha to be Socius.

R: What is your most challenging experience of working in Africa?

J: Well! The war and poverty in Sudan, there were sounds of rocket launchers and gunshots everywhere. I was considering the possibility of being martyred; it would have been good for the Society of Jesus. Otherwise it would have been harder for me.

R: And what of your most gratifying experience?

J: Coming to know the seminarians. They came from a disruptive, violent and frightening background. The peace and security of the school and learning about God and themselves transformed them. Seeing them become peaceful, educated holy men made me happy.

R: It's been sixteen years in the novitiate and still counting, how do you feel about this?

J: I'm here until God tells me to move. I came to spend just a couple of years in Arusha. But during a retreat in Dodoma, God said "stay where you are until I tell you its time to go".

R: You love watching movies and reading novels. Who are your favourite writers



and actors/actress?

J: I like reading Dickens, Trollope and Tolstoy. As for actresses I like Meryl Streep - I think she is beautiful in a funny way, and Julia Roberts who is fetching. For actors; Bruce Willis - I think he likes children.

R: You saw Fr. Isaac as a candidate and now you work with him. How does it feel working with him?

J: It's very wonderful working with him. But the good thing about being a Socius is that he makes all the decisions and takes all the flack.

R: You like sports and still play basketball despite your age. You even score more points than the younger and stronger players. What is the secret of your strength?

J: I think it's a grace of office. I need exercise, otherwise my ears will become worse (Fr. Jim is partially deaf). I like to keep fit. Basketball also enables me to know other sides of the novices.

R: You've recently been at the province congregation. How do you see the future of this province especially regarding vocations?

J: Well! I think the province has a splendid future. The works already began are good and largely successful. With all the young men coming along, whom 'Uncle Gaspar' [Province Delegate for Formation] says are wonderful, the future will even be richer than the past and the present. Work in the parishes, JRS and the other projects are good. The Jesuits in this province are competent and hardworking.

R: What do you feel when you think of Arrupe House?

J: The only time I was there it was dark and I didn't see much (bursts into laughter). It looked okay, though. I feel glad that the Society of Jesus really does take seriously its promise to take care of its members.

POET'S CORNER

I, TOO ARE HUMAN

David Okerenyang

**I am the darker brother
They say to me, "Shut up!"
When discussions are on,
I revoke but continue,**

**Developing my thought,
And grow more enlightened.
Oooh!**

**Firmly, walking down the street,
Do they glance at me with a blink of an eye,
And be porcupined.**

**Thus,
I was not mapped on their way up,
But now they need me on their way down.
I too are human.**

The Pineapple

Aldo Kilas

Here is the pineapple,
The fruit from an unknown flower,
It is sweet more than an apple.
It looks so aggressive;
No attraction as an orange,
If you do not know it has pines,
The pines cover its sweetness,
Can easily be thrown with all its sweetness!
By itself it cannot pick out its pines,
Fearful one cannot taste its sweetness,
Ask who know how to pick untouchable pines.
Sharp knife can try to pick out its pines,
When you taste its sweetness,
You won't let it go bye bye.
Here is the pineapple!



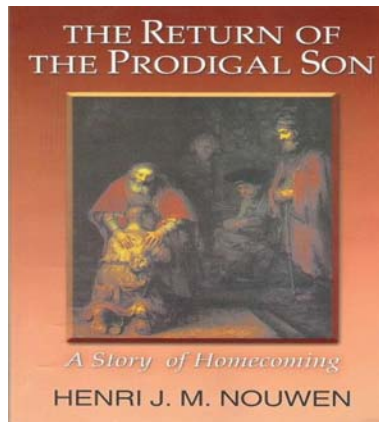
BOOK REVIEW

By any measure, Henri J. M. Nouwen stands out as one of the most important Christian spiritual writers of the 20th Century. Of *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, one biographer described it as 'the summit point of all Nouwen's writing'.

The book tells the story of a painting that would have an immense impact on Nouwen's life. When Nouwen died of a heart attack in 1996, he was on his way to Russia to see the original for a second time and make a film about it. At his funeral, a copy was placed beside his coffin. Why would a painting have so much influence on a man?

Nouwen was a highly acclaimed academic (he taught pastoral theology at Yale and Harvard) when in 1986 he gave that up to spend his life with mentally challenged people at L'Arche Daybreak in Toronto, Canada. Three years prior to this, Nouwen had been paying a visit to the L'Arche community in Trosly, France. His eyes fell on a copy of Rembrandt's masterpiece, *The Prodigal Son* in a friend's office and he was overcome with emotion. What struck him was 'the-son-come-home', a parallel to his own state of fatigue at the time. This consolation would continue for much of his life and effected a conversion experience that would eventually lead him to be pastor to the mentally challenged. In 1986, he flew to the Soviet Union to see the original in the Hermitage museum, St. Petersburg.

As with many of his books, Nouwen is not



The Return of the Prodigal Son. By Henri J. M. Nouwen. St. Paul's. (2005 print)
Reviewed by Paul Kalenzi

afraid to share the deeply personal and intimate details of his life. It is this quality which has made him most endearing to readers. In *The Return of the Prodigal Son*, however, he also derives a substantial analogy from Rembrandt's personal life. He charts his sensual and spend-thrift youth; followed by a life of grief and misfortune and near blindness in old age. Shortly after painting the *Prodigal Son*, Rembrandt died.

The book sometimes reads like an art critique. Nouwen discovers many nuances in the painting, some of which are not evident in the Gospel story. For instance, he notices that the father's feminine and gently placed right-hand contrasts with the more muscular and grasping left. He goes on to explain that the Father is not merely a great Patriarch but a mother who caresses, confirms and consoles.

For this reviewer, the greatest quality of this book is Nouwen's interpretation of the Gospel parable beyond the familiar Younger Son.

He shows how we can find ourselves in the uncomfortable shoes of Elder Son too. It is much harder to see ourselves as the Elder Son than the Younger. Nouwen writes:

"The conversion of the Elder is more difficult because the distance travelled is an inner distance".

Nouwen himself was a first-born who did everything right. He could see hidden in his heart many resentments, judgments, condemnations which are typical of the 'just' and 'saintly'. Precisely because of their self-righteousness they do not see themselves in need of conversion. Nouwen's remedy is the discipline of trust (in God) and gratitude.

Most challenging for anyone, is to see themselves as the Father. It is a role Nouwen was very reluctant to accept even at L'Arche and yet the call was persistent enough for him to conclude:

"Becoming the compassionate Father is the ultimate goal of the spiritual life." □

TRIBUTE TO FR. ANGELO D'AGOSTINO, SJ.

Fr. Angelo D'Agostino SJ (aka 'Fr. D'Ag') entered the annals of Kenyan history as a dedicated *Samaritan* towards the plight of underprivileged children infected with HIV - AIDS. Hailing from Maryland Province, this Jesuit founded Nyumbani Children's Home in 1992 and Kitui Village in 2006. There, he indefatigably worked for its success till his death. The Novitiate has regularly sent its men to do their experiments at this Home. Three novices recapture profound moments from the life of a man who quietly touched their lives:

Benedict Leyan

The second week after Fr. D'Ag's arrival from the USA and Italy, I managed to have a chat with him. Despite his age, he always operated a busy schedule. When he learnt that we were novices on experiment at Nyumbani, he told Br. Soreng SJ, "These novices have to be taken to Kitui to see the village." That week, he fell seriously sick and was admitted to Karen Hospital from where he breathed his last. I went there with my colleague to pay my last respects together with the children, men and women who were soaked in tears, mourning the death of a father.



Fr. Angelo D'Agostino SJ MD (middle)
(26 January 1926— 20 November 2006)

Wherever we look, we are surrounded by people suffering from disease, hunger, famine, war, poverty, and natural catastrophes, all in dire need of help. Someone ought to answer their cry. D'Agostino did just this and his work will never be forgotten.

May he rest in peace, Amen.

Boniface Okumu

Fr. D'Ag always made me *feel at Nyumbani*. His encouragement and advice to me

on the few times I ran into him were quite a treasure. Moreover, his dedication and total submission to God's will through service of the less fortunate in the society left an imprint on my heart.

Fr. D'Ag once told me that every one of us has a role to play, no matter how small it is, in making this world a better place to live in.

Rest in peace dear Father, Friend and companion.

Allan Ggita

Sunday 29 January 2006 is still fresh and vivid in my memory when we celebrated Fr. D'Ag's 80th birthday; still agile, boisterous and hearty, still youthful. Little did I know that there wouldn't be any more birthdays of his to celebrate! Always the first to leave the house and the last to enter. His work ethic was just unbeatable. Within him the aspect of *The Magis* was unquestionably spontaneous. "It's not enough studying theology. We need Priests who can work," I reminisce over these words that he once shared with me one morning. It still hasn't sunk that D'Ag is gone. I entrust your soul to the mercy of our Lord, that eternal rest He may grant unto you. □



HAPPY NEW YEAR

2007