

JULY — SEPTEMBER 2006



# RAFIKI

A PUBLICATION OF THE JESUIT NOVITIATE OF THE EASTERN AFRICA PROVINCE



## INSIDE

Novitiate Diary

New novices

Tribute to Sean O' Connor

ETHIOPIA

KENYA

SUDAN

TANZANIA

UGANDA





**The Editorial team (left to right):** Paul, Mboya, Natnael, Aldo and Allan

Like the legendary Phoenix, *Rafiki* has a habit of rising out of the ashes. Just when you had written it off, some fervent novices had to come and resurrect it. I think 'fervour' is an especially apt word to describe the spirit and purpose of this publication.

The readership of the newsletter is ludicrously small. *Rafiki* is sent out to Jesuit communities in the Eastern African province. There, it will compete with hundreds of other much more worthy publications for the eye of the resident. Perhaps on an idle day a Jesuit may pick *Rafiki* to reminisce on his novitiate years and his equally embarrassing efforts at journalism. Besides candidates to the Society of Jesus it is difficult to think who will be 'dying' to get the latest issue of this quarterly.

It is unlikely that the small circulation will discourage the novices at Gonzaga Gonza. Still in the first throes of fervour, they have applied themselves remarkably to preparing this issue. Hopefully, their fervour will inspire even the most indifferent reader in love and service of God and mankind.

Paul Kalenzi  
Editor

## CONTENTS

- 3 Novitiate Diary
- 4 First Novitiate Experience, New Assignments
- 5 Friday Apostolates, Novitiate Gossip
- 6 Profiles of new novices
- 7 More Profiles and an interview with one of the new novices
- 8 Opinion: Catechists, HIV/AIDS
- 9 Spirituality: Conversion, Companionship and Silence
- 10 Leisure
- 11 Tribute to Fr. Sean O' Connor

**Editorial team:** Paul Kalenzi (Editor), Allan Ggita and Joseph Thomas Mboya (Associate Editors), Aldo Kilas and Natnael Samson (Associate editors, Art)

**We want to hear from you, please write to:**

**Email:** rafikig@gmail.com

**Address:** The Editor, Gonzaga Gonza, P.O. Box 1726, Arusha, Tanzania

**Front cover:** *La Storta, chapel of the novitiate*; **Back cover:** *'To Love and to Serve' translated in various languages*

## NOVICE MASTER'S COMMENT



### Come and See

A few weeks ago I was invited by Br. George, a Christian Brother, to join him with others in celebrating his final vows. The ceremony took place in his native village called Dongobesh, a five hour drive from Arusha, The celebration was attended by all people living in the nearby villages. The party that followed went up to the wee hours of the morning. Late that evening one young man, who had been looking for me most of the day, got hold of me and put this question to me: who are the Jesuits and how he could become one of them? I told him come and see. Two weeks later he visited and spent a week in the novitiate. He has gone to college to study law and he promised to be back.

Those who join the novitiate come from a wide range of cultural, educational and religious backgrounds. Listening to their stories makes me think of a dragnet that has been laid by a fisherman and that has caught a variety of fish. Some are teachers, others are businessmen, vegetable farmers, former army men, and some from high school, and they speak several other languages apart from the official English language used in the novitiate. The stories that accompany their vocation are so different and yet point to one direction and have a link. What links up these stories is firstly, that deep down their hearts all these people have heard a voice calling "come after me" and secondly they have responded to that voice from deep within. Responding to a call is not immediately the meaning of an end. It is the beginning of a search and confirmation of several questions about the purpose and meaning of religious life, meaning and purpose of a life long commitment. The novitiate does not provide ready made answers to these question...it provides direction for the seeker.

Here is the story of the Last Visitor and the Last Chicken... One day a man went to his neighbor's home to ask for a chicken, for a friend of his had arrived from a journey. It is customary to honor guests with an offering of a chicken for food. He found the neighbor weaving out the roof of a hut. The two joined in the work and a warm conversation ensued. Moments later another man arrived and after the exchange of usual greetings, he said, "Friend, give me a chicken, for a friend of mine has just come in from a journey and I have nothing to offer him." Even though the old man did not have many chicken he gave the only one he had to his friend. Then the first visitor also said to the old man, in fact I have come to you with the same request, for a chicken for my guest at home. "Sorry you should have mentioned that earlier, I have given away the chicken I had" was the reply. From this story comes the proverb, *It is the last visitor who gets the chicken.*

To seek and to make an actual effort to find and get what we are looking for cannot be separated, they are like brothers from the same womb. When a young man joins the novitiate, he comes seeking for the meaning of the call *come and after me*. Achieving this goal requires a personal effort and learning. The novitiate points out some direction and invites the young man to seize the opportunity using the available tools of Jesuit spirituality and Jesuit formation. Those who seek and knock will have the door opened.

As I am writing this, the second year novices are preparing to go for experiments and the first year novices have started preparation for the long Retreat which begins on the 10<sup>th</sup> of November, 2006. Let us keep both years in our prayers.

Fr. Isaac Kiyaka, SJ

**DIARY**

# We remember ...



**2<sup>nd</sup> July:** 5 novices clad in clericals, finish their two-year novitiate program with a colourful 1<sup>st</sup> vows' ceremony.

**3<sup>rd</sup> July:** The new scholastics leave the novitiate for a short holiday home after being away for two years. This place is as quiet as limbo.

**10<sup>th</sup> July:** The novitiate is blessed with 14 new vocations!

**11<sup>th</sup> July:** One more candidate reports...all the way from Ethiopia. Must have been stuck with emigration bureaucracies in this era of terrorism. Even Jesuits are suspects!

**13<sup>th</sup> July:** All novices are part of the Jesuit family that attends Fr. Kabutta's Ordination at Burka Parish.

**15<sup>th</sup> July:** All roads lead to Sombetini for Fr. Kabutta's Thanksgiving Mass. Such a wonderful and memorable gathering.



**17<sup>th</sup> July:** Kabutta (centre) is not done yet! He celebrates his First Mass in our novitiate. A hearty dinner follows



**31<sup>st</sup> July:** St. Ignatius' Day! Preceded with big-time preparations and crowned with a nice evening celebration.

**1<sup>st</sup> August:** One of the *Primis* leaves us.

**2<sup>nd</sup> August:** Another *Primi* leaves. It seems Beelzebul is at work!

**12<sup>th</sup> August:** We host the one day *all-formators'* meeting of Arusha.

**14<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup> August:** All novices attend the inter-novitiate seminar on *Ecumenism* next door at the Canossa.



**28<sup>th</sup> -31<sup>st</sup> August:** Harvesting maize from our farm. The harvest was rich and the labourers many!

**4<sup>th</sup> September:** Receive news of Fr. Sean's death.

**4<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> September:** *Primis* on Awareness seminar c/o Fr. Trevor D'Souza SJ.

**5<sup>th</sup> September:** Each novice is 'missioned' to execute a particular in-door apostolate. Some are humbled; others exulted.

**11<sup>th</sup> September:** As America remembers 9/11, we too remember Sean as he is laid to rest. Fr. Master represents us at the funeral.



We also join Natty and the Ethiopian world as they celebrate New Year 1999.

**21<sup>st</sup> September:** Yet another *Primi* leaves us! He is deferred to next year and is now teaching at St. Charles Lwanga School in Nairobi.



**27<sup>th</sup> September:** The *secundis* pip the *primis* 2-1 in their first football match.



# First Novitiate Experience

**Paul Kalenzi**, a *primi* (first year novice), describes his first impressions of Gonzaga Gonza

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of July 2006 we officially began our Jesuit journey at Gonzaga Gonza in Njiro, Arusha. Arusha is a town of c.500,000 people at the foot of the majestic Mt Meru in Northern Tanzania. On a clear day we can also see the white peak of Mt. Kilimanjaro. The majority of its inhabitants are the warrior-like Maasai. However, the Maasai here are a more sedate sort who have taken up settled farming and seem unlikely to hurt a chicken let alone a lion. But I am yet to put this theory to the test.

The 24 novices are mixed bunch. All countries of the Eastern Africa province are represented. There is a former child soldier (who went on to command 90 men before leaving to do a business degree) and an ex-private detective.

The majority have worked as teachers and there a few who joined on leaving school/university. We are a talented lot: musicians, cooks, gardeners, sportsmen, (including karate) ... We were a bit worried about the martial artists but they reassured us that it helps control



one's mind and body, including the libido. The staff comprises three priests who are so humble, they are sometimes mistaken for casual workers.

Surprisingly, there is very little study. The days are filled with a few classes in the morn-

ing, some manual work or games in the afternoon and frequent bouts of prayer. It is no surprise the novitiate is called a house of prayer. The food is excellent and all the *primis* have put on a noticeable amount of weight. Having taken up weightlifting, it looks like my skinny days are over.

A recent visitor to the novitiate looked on all this and came to the conclusion that it is a Men's Paradise Club. He was not far from the truth. I often feel I am on a two year holiday: no mobile phone, few responsibilities, no Mondays to dread, no Fridays to look forward to. This is probably my biggest challenge after leaving the bustle of a big city. Life in Africa is unhurried at the best of times but at the novitiate it seems to have ground to a halt.

We come from a variety of backgrounds and bring to the community not only our talents but our foibles too. Even then, we get along great and there are many happy moments. □

## New Assignments

**Joseph Thomas Mboya** humorously attempts to get into the Novice Masters mind to explain the *primis*' new responsibilities.

In any home, every family member is expected to help with the chores and the novitiate is no different. Here, however, even 'lowly' tasks are elevated to 'apostolates' - clear ways to meet and witness to God. Each individual's duties are highly valued and aid the smooth running of the community.

For the first two months, all the *primis* did was to eat, sleep and pray. There was also some light indoor works, sports and classes. This all changed when each *primi* was assigned a duty according to some of their talents and abilities.

George was noted for his concern. He could be seen giving a helping hand in the garden, the chapel, the refectory, even driving the lorry to collect harvested maize. His hard work was rewarded with the Department of Kitchen Affairs. He is also our new humble sub-minister.

Paul could never be found in his room and only went back there to catch some sleep. He was usually in the library squaring it out with the books. It came as no surprise that he got the Department of Books and library affairs.

'Commander' Thomas struggled to make it in time for most activities. He is now time-keeper.

The tallest man in the novitiate 'Tall Mboya' was notorious for taking advantage of all the poor short guys on the basketball court got the department of sports.

Shigi, revealed that he has a passion for gardening was awarded with the Department of Works and Landscaping.

Daudi, the martial arts expert, was assigned to teach the dogs and guards self-defense techniques, as well as ensuring that they don't go hungry.

The enthusiastic Wasike, popularly known for his hit single "Amini, kweli, nawambieni ...." gets to work in the Department of Music and Choir.

Aldo-aldo, is known for his talents in re-

pairs and his genius with computers. He can assemble a computer from scratch in one morning. He is now responsible for the novitiate computers.

The sacristy is known to be for holy novices. Another criteria seems to be their height. The youngest and shortest -Bonny becomes our Liturgist and Sacristan.

Who shaves the community barber? It is said a barber shaves everyone and forgets his own hair. No wonder Natty, whose hair hasn't seen a clipper in a year, becomes our barber. To facilitate his learning Swahili he is also Guestmaster. We pray that he won't welcome guests with "Naomba kupigwa" (I beg to be beaten) as he is so often heard saying.

It is possible that Vunde would have made a part time clown or teacher for children had he not come to the novitiate. His three years at Medical School will be useful in his new job as Infirmarian.

Charles confessed his love for working with wood, metal and electrical appliances. He now gets to try his hand in our well-equipped workshop. □

## FRIDAY APOSTOLATES

Friday is designated for 'external apostolates'. Novices go out to the 'world' to begin putting their contemplation into action. They certainly provide a valuable service to the communities and people they work with but also get a taste for the joys and challenges of their vocation.

Michael Ochwo and Benedict Leyan recount their experiences.

### Companions in School

Michael Ochwo

I always look forward to my Friday encounter with high school students in the city centre of Arusha. I teach catechesm and have spiritual conversations with my mainly teenage audience. Just like me, these students are seeking answers which I still search for, or I once sought for. They ask about the Faith, the role of Our Lady, gender in the Church, sexuality ... Is celibacy and abstinence a myth? What about HIV/AIDS?

These questions are a manifestation of the transformation from infancy to adulthood in the Faith. At the end of some sessions I can still see a cloud of something unclear. However, one is amazed that at the next meetings the youngsters are even more eager to listen.

I have reaped a great deal of fruit. Besides. I have become more patient, flexible and humble. The discussions challenge me to deepen my relationship with Jesus Christ. It is an invitation to Christian maturity.

I encourage my young friends that it is possible to live as a youth and yet a follower of Jesus. The following Runyankore (Ugandan) proverb attests to it: "*Omu bya Ruhanga ne daaho ne zaara aba'rongo*" literally, 'in the things of God even a bullock produces twin calves'.

The apostolate has not always been easy. Initially I lacked proficiency in Kiswahili; contact time is minimal and unpredictable. The sessions are scheduled towards the end of the school time when the students are exhausted.

From these experiences I have come to appreciate that God is in control. The apostolate has given me more friends-in-Christ. My faith, hope and trust in Jesus have been increased and service of neighbour enhanced. □

### Village Apostolate

Benedict Leyan

My apostolate takes me to villages neighbouring the novitiate. I encounter different classes of people of diverse tribal backgrounds. Some are relatively well-off but beyond the gorges are the mainly poor and illiterate Maasai.

These people face a myriad of problems. There is widespread poverty mainly because the men are irresponsible and tend to exploit the hardworking women.

Land and cattle are valued a lot more than education. The parents who bother to send their children to school show little concern for their progress. As a result, many children drop out to look for work and others end up pregnant or married off young.

Many children have been orphaned by AIDS and some of the donations meant for them are misused leaving them even more destitute.

Even though the soils in these parts are fertile, farmers lack adequate knowledge



Leyan doing the village rounds

on practical soil conservation methods.

The apostolate is itself very challenging. Time is limited and yet the distances are vast and difficult to access; there being no bridges or good roads. People often expect money from me and are reluctant to accept alternative solutions.

Over the years, Jesuit novices have shown concern for this apostolate: advising the villagers on how to resolve their problems; even offering a portion of their personal allowances, but mostly being there to listen.

I am happy to see my companions giving me support in the apostolate among so many helpless people. Hopefully, our example will inspire them to improve their lives. □

## GOSSIP

### Banana Wine and Excitable Sisters

The Roving Companion

Before joining the novitiate, I had my suspicions that it was going to be very similar to boarding school. The suspicions were borne out when I began itching to get out after the first month. An opportunity presented itself when we went to an Agricultural Show in town on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August. These events are famous for having everything but agriculture on show.

After a visit to the token agricultural stalls, we moved on to where the action was: the beverage stands. One of these sold a liqueur made from bananas under the brand *Kibo*, at a very reasonable price. We got a few bottles and repaired to the 'refreshment' area of the Show grounds. Here, we selected an outdoor restaurant with *nyama choma* and a Rastafarian DJ playing reggae tunes: a different sort of paradise from the novitiate but a paradise just the same.

Soon had to make our way back home. But many show-goers had the same idea and it proved impossible to get public transport. It is here that *Kibo* kicked in as we set off on a brisk 6km walk to the novitiate, feeling rather lively and saying the Rosary as we approached home.

The other outing was a more civil affair: a seminar on Ecumenism. The zillion or so religious orders for women were



fairly represented. Some of the Jesuit novices did well to hide their excitement behind a façade of nonchalance. Some loudly proclaimed their aversion to sisters. The sisters, however, did not suffer from such inhibitions. Whilst the Jesuits preferred to greet them with a sneaky raised brow, the sisters would follow up the recognition with a hearty hug.

I discovered that they have been fed on some odd myths about Jesuits. One is that our Order only accepts post-graduates. This made the sisters rather subdued in group discussions. It was a relief whenever a Jesuit novice stood up to speak and proceeded to spew drivel.

Amazingly, I am glad to be back in our 'silent' house, enjoying its peace and serenity. □

## VOCATION



**Aldo Kilas**, 24, was born in Iringa, Tanzania. He attended Galanos Secondary School in Tanga ('A' levels) and Njombe Secondary School ('O' Levels) and graduated from the University of Computing (Mlimani). 'Aldo-Aldo' was active in Young Christian Students (YCS) and published a Biology revision text after school. He worked as a PC technician and enjoys playing basketball, long-distance running, drawing and composing Music.



**Boniface Onyango Okumu**, 21, was born in Siaya, Kenya. He went to Uthiru High School, after which he did a Computer course. He worked as an Office assistant to Fr. Terry Charlton SJ (the Province Vocations Co-ordinator) for one and a half years before joining the novitiate. 'Bonny' has also been active in youth ministry for the past six years. He enjoys reading, writing, acting, debating and music/choir. He also plays football, volleyball, basketball, table tennis, scrabble and mini soccer.



**Charles Kulwa**, 25, was born in Shinyanga, Tanzania. He attended Shinyanga Secondary School ('A' Levels) and Uhuru Secondary School ('O' Levels). Charles was active in YCS during his school years. After school, he taught in an orphanage and at Loyola High School in Dar-es-Salaam. His interests are reading, electric repairs and basketball.



**David Okerenyang**, 28, was born in Mbarara, Uganda. He went to Jinja College and then did a BA in Social and Philosophical Studies at Katigondo National Major Seminary (affiliated to Makerere University) where he served as Guild President. After his studies, David volunteered as a teacher at Don Bosco Vocational Institute (Jinja). He also worked with Jinja Diocese and with a charity for marginalised women and the girl child. David is into karate, enjoys reading, writing and learning languages.



**Evarist Shigi**, 27, was born in Mwanza, Tanzania. He attended Maua Seminary and holds a Bachelors degree in Commerce and Management from the University of Dar-es-Salaam. At the university parish, he was secretary of St. Philomena Catholics Community and did volunteer work with homeless children and people living with HIV/AIDS. Shigi has worked with The Coca Cola Company (as Stock Accountant) and with North Mara Gold Mining Company (as Assistant Accountant). He enjoys volleyball, tennis and classic movies.



**Gabriel Vunde**, 32, was born in Mawenzi, Moshi in Tanzania. He went to Hanga and Mabinga Seminaries before reading for a Bachelors degree in Commerce (Accounting) from the University of Dar-es-Salaam. After university, Gabriel worked with Standard Chartered Bank. At Secondary school and university, he started 'Jesuit' clubs to promote apostolic works, prayer and vocations to the Society. Gabriel's hobbies include reading novels, music, film and volleyball.



**George Macharia Njeri**, 24, was born in Murang'a Kenya. He went to Mugoini Boys High School and has a B. Ed (Sc), from Kenyatta Univesity and a certificate in computer systems. He was Co-ordinator of Catholics students at the university and also volunteered at a children's home. As a teacher, George worked at Ng'araria Girls High School in Thika for a year. He relaxes by taking walks, reading and charitable works. He enjoys volleyball, lawn tennis and mini-soccer.



**Joseph Thomas Mboya**, 28, was born in Nairobi, Kenya. He attended Upper Hill High School and studied for a BSc. Agricultural Engineering, at Egerton University, Njoro, Kenya. He also holds a diploma in Management Information Systems from Strathmore University, Nairobi. He led Catholics Students Pastoral Council at university and was Consulter in the National Executive Council of Christian Life Communities (CLC - Kenya). Joseph also volunteered with Jesuit Refugee Services in Nairobi. He enjoys hiking, travelling, playing basketball, reading and watching movies.



**Joseph Wasike Murunga**, 24, was born in Kakamega, Kenya. He went to St. Peter's Seminary, Mukumu. After school, Joe founded a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) which gave awareness of HIV/AIDS and provided home based care to the community in Lurambi constituency of Kakamega. He also taught at Burangasi Primary School and Sidikho Secondary School and Mukuru Skills Centre. He enjoys soccer, table tennis, volleyball and music.





**Josephat Pallister Mukaka**, 23, was born in Nairobi, Kenya. He attended Dagoretti High School. He then trained as a detective and worked on several undercover assignments. 'Jose' left detective work to teach Mathematics at Embakasi Girls Secondary School in Nairobi. He enjoys watching and playing football, reading, listening to music, socialising, cycling and tennis.

*'PJ', whose entry has been deferred to next year, is now teaching at St Charles Lwanga School in Nairobi.*



**Natnael Samson**, 23, was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopian. He went to Entoto Technical and Vocational School before doing a diploma in Philosophy at the

Capuchin (Franciscan) Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Addis Ababa. He also has a certificate in Music and plays several instruments. Natnael taught at two Addis school prior to joining the novitiate: Nazareth School for Girls and Miskaye Hizunan Medhanealem School. His hobbies include tae kwondo, volleyball, basketball, music, drawing and writing.



**Paul Kalenzi**, 27, was born in Kampala Uganda. He attended St. Mary's College, Kisubi. Paul obtained a BA (Econ) degree from the University of Manchester. After university, he

worked in a home for street children in Kampala and then returned to the UK where he trained and worked as a Chartered Accountant with KPMG in London. He volunteered with several charities in the UK and was active in his parish. He is into literature, art and film; enjoys listening to music and is an ardent Liverpool FC fan. He kicks the occasional ball and lifts the occasional weight.

## Interview: Child soldier to Christ's soldier

**THOMAS ATHIAN DANIEL** (Sudan), 32, studied at the University of Juba where he obtained a BBA (Bachelors in Business Administration). At university, he was Co-ordinator of students sponsored by the vice-president of Sudan. Popularly known as 'commander' Thomas worked as Assistant Manager at the Directory of major companies, in Khartoum. He speaks English, Arabic and Dinka. His hobbies include listening to music, reading, basketball and church activities. **Natnael Samson**, interviewed Thomas for *Rafiki*.



**RAFIKI:** Welcome, Thomas!

**THOMAS:** Thank you.

**R:** Why do the novices call you 'Commander'?

**T:** Okay..., during our first probation at the novitiate, we were doing self introduction. At the introduction, we presented our life history. I think my brothers picked the name when I told them that I was a soldier in the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

**R:** Why did you join the army?

**T:** You see... I was very young, when I joined the rebel army. I left home because of the injustices I had experienced. The Arabs destroyed our villages, killed our people and took our cattle. Those experiences sowed a seed and desire for freedom from the oppression of the Arabs. That is how I was forced to take up the gun and fight.

**R:** How long were you in the army?

**T:** I stayed ten years in the army. I rose to the rank of Lieutenant commander. During the struggle, I was shot in my right foot and spent sometime in hospital. After I got well (in 1996), I decided to go back to school and continue my studies that I had abandoned when I was 11. With God's help, I finished my high school and joined university in Juba.

**R:** What was your greatest fear as a soldier?

**T:** Judgment day. What would the lord say to me? He said don't kill but we were killing each other. But the fear did not give me a hard time because by the time you hear a blast it is all gone. (Laughs)

**R:** What prompted you to become a Jesuit?

**T:** I wanted to be a priest since I was young. I was brought up in a Catholic family but was distracted by the war.

However, I kept on reading books and doing my prayers even while at the war front. What really turned my ideals was the book "BORN TO FIGHT". It gave me the idea that soldiers like me are also called to greater glory. I was encouraged to say 'Yes' to Jesus like St. Ignatius.

**R:** How do you find the humble tasks of the novitiate?

**T:** It is the life I chose to live. I have accepted the challenges as they are. I will do anything that I have to do as a novice. Washing corridors, digging in the garden, sweeping paths etc. I benefit from it and I have left the name 'commander' behind. (Laughs)

**R:** What would you like to do as a Jesuit?

**T:** I will do whatever I am missioned to do. I desire to work with Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). To help refugees who are suffering because of war, drought and different phenomena. I would like to help educate and rehabilitate children who are recruited for war and abused in other ways. I know what it means to be in a war or in exile.

**R:** Finally, do you have any message for those who want to join the society?

**T:** I say, take courage and study hard. If God really wants you, He knows how to make you His. Just be there. Pray hard and work hard to get what you want, God will do the rest. ☐



# Catechists: Do we need them?

**Bernard Augustine Shitemi** discusses the role of catechists today

**B**efore joining the Jesuits, I trained as a catechist at Mitume Pastoral and Catechetical Centre from August–November 2003. Thereafter I worked as a catechist in Kolongolo Parish in Kitale diocese. I enjoyed the work despite its challenges. I feel they have an important role to play in the Church.

## Who is a Catechist and What do they do?

The catechist undertakes the initial instruction of people before they receive the Sacraments. He/she is an apostle of Christ, a teacher, a pastor and a servant of the people. Catechists promote love, faith and bring hope to the people.

In addition, catechists enhance the participation of the laity in the church. They act as counsellors promoting good morals in the family, youth and other groups. Often, it is they who lead Sunday services - 'Ibada' - where there is no priest.

It is evident that the Church really

needs this lay group to lead the others. However, it is true that we have some irresponsible ones who are a poor example to other Christians. There are catechists who have failed to be good parents; are heavy drinkers; not faithful to their marriage and who use their privilege to get money, power and fame. I remember a saddening incident where a catechist charged with the responsibility of taking holy communion to the sick stopped on the way to drink.

## THE CHALLENGES CATECHISTS FACE

Many of the catechists I met had not obtained enough pastoral and catechetical training. As a result, their effectiveness in teaching and pastoral care is limited. Even with training full cooperation from priests and the Christians is not guaranteed. In fact, I felt I would be appreciated if I convinced parishioners to bring more money and gifts to support the Church. I was seen as a letdown because I was more concerned with the spiritual development of my congregation.

I often saw that earning a living is a big challenge for many catechists. They usually



## The writer in his catechist years

work on a part-time basis so that they can support their families. A regular allowance from the church is not guaranteed. Some dioceses have made plans to start an account for them. This is encouraging. But as a group, they could start projects that can sustain them.

I think that the catechists are called to serve Christ as lay leaders and collaborators of the few priests. They need to be supported, understood, challenged and appreciated. They are certainly necessary in the church. □

# Confront and Speak Out

There is still much ignorance regarding HIV/AIDS, **Victor Okoth Awiti** argues, and Christians ought to respond creatively

**H**IV/AIDS is pandemic of not just disease but dire poverty and extreme suffering. I have been witness to its devastating effects particularly in Kibera slum of Nairobi. Ignorance remains one of the biggest hindrances to reining in the pandemic. There is still an awkward silence and apparent reluctance at various levels to provide adequate and reliable information about HIV/AIDS.

Some of the people I have encountered imagine AIDS is an act of bewitching which can be cured by, for instance, having sex with a minor. This has resulted in some horrific rape/defilement cases. Others spends fortunes on equally unhelpful remedies from quacks.

Persons living with HIV/AIDS in Kibera are always despised and looked down

upon. They are considered outcasts and subjected to severe discrimination even in the Church. This only adds worry and doubt to the many problems the poor victims already suffer. Chief among these is poverty.

If we discard our brothers and sisters who are dying of AIDS, how can we call ourselves human beings?

Pope John Paul the II once addressed and assured people living with HIV/AIDS saying:

"God loves you all, without distinction, without limit. He loves those who are sick, those suffering from AIDS. He loves the friends and relatives of the sick and those who care for them. He loves all with an unconditional and everlasting love."

Most of the HIV/AIDS patients that I have interacted with in Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia have testified that ever since they succumbed to HIV/AIDS, they have come to ex-

perience God's love and care even more than before. Personally, when I hear such statements, I begin to appreciate how we in the Church have responded to this disaster.

The African Jesuits Aids Network (AJAN) is one of the Jesuit apostolates in Africa that helps in educating people about the disease. It has approached this battle further by doing theological research into the lived reality of HIV/AIDS. The church as a whole has gone to the grassroots level to provide services, education, material help, moral support and even spiritual sustenance to those affected by the pandemic.

As Christians we are called to deepen our commitment to support the sick and their families who are also affected: the orphans, widows and widowers. These are people who are in need of our attention, love and care. □



# Conversion

Godfrey Masereka compares St. Ignatius' conversion to our own

In the past, God spoke to us through varied and fragmented ways. But today, God speaks to us through His son our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord revealed himself through his Word. He has also inspired individuals of good spirit, to write spiritual or holy books, and give sermons. St. Ignatius Loyola himself was converted during his recovery from injury by reading holy books. They inspired him to offer himself wholeheartedly as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God.

We who have joined the Society of Jesus have begun our Pilgrimage to holiness. We have read some of the holy books; maybe even more than those that our founder read before his conversion. This is an indication that God has already revealed himself to us as he did

to St. Ignatius.

What we need to do now is to reflect on our past lives and find out what we need to live a saintly life, worthy and acceptable to God our Father. We are blessed with the guidance to holiness put forward by St. Ignatius in his book *The Spiritual Exercises*.

St. Ignatius, considers 'silence' as a great tool towards conversion. He says; "Silence is an important prerequisite to listen to God's voice and approach him." 'Listen' is a key word in the Bible. It occurs 1100 times in the Old Testament and 445 times in the new.

As we celebrate this jubilee of the three founding fathers; Ignatius of Loyola, Francis Xavier, and Peter Favre, let us have a moment of silence to reflect on our spiritual lives individually, and the Society's life at large, to see our spiritual successes and failures. This will be a great tool to transform our lives. □

Sh! There is a meaning to it

**Joseph Wasike** explores 'silence'

A few years ago, I joined mourners in a neighbouring village. I was taken aback with the silence that prevailed at the funeral. There was none of the usual dirges and wailings. Not a sound could be heard except for the occasional cough. Seemingly, the only wailer was a cricket chirping away.

Curiosity spurred me to enquire about the silence. One of the mourners told me, "It is our belief that if one wails, they interrupt the spirit on its journey to the Creator."

"But how do you justify it?" I asked.

He said, "the tears form a fog that deters the spirit from viewing the way to God. Secondly, God is not to be found amidst noise. He is a God of silence. We are only allowed to praise him loudly when we are thanking him."

I concluded that this community valued silence because of the divine graces it brought. The community is in fact an African sect that claims to have adopted the Jewish religion. They go around with scarves on their heads and never cut their hair. They call themselves 'Abakambuli' or 'Abaushi', which means defected.

## POETS' CORNER

### THE KING OF LOVE

Who is the King of love I ask?

By his compassion he completed the task  
Dying on the tree  
To set us all free

On the third day He rose from the dead  
To heaven He ascended  
Let's be his witnesses  
He has freed all our weaknesses

Due to his love gave us the helper  
Who enlightens us forever  
And strengthened us to preach his word  
So that his word can be understood in the world

He is always with us  
When in him we deeply you trust  
Is a visitor at home  
For he gives us courage and hope

His love for us is more than life  
When he redeemed us by his death  
By his resurrection we became new creatures  
Waiting for our new home in future.

Christopher Mapunda

## JUBILEE YEAR

# Companionship

As we celebrate the Jubilee of three Founders of the Society, **James Moro** reflects on their exemplary companionship

One cannot help noticing that Sts. Ignatius and Francis Xavier and Bl. Peter Faber, were markedly different in age, character, temperament and ambitions. Yet, they had a positive influence on each other's lives and apostolates.

Their success is attributed to the deep relationship each had with the Lord. The relationship was not a personal treasure they jealously kept, but one that moved them towards each other. Their friendship was so strong, it survived personal differences as well as distances. For instance, Xavier, far away in India, kept on writing to Ignatius in Rome asking about the others. After he heard of his death, Xavier requested Faber's heavenly blessings.

My novitiate experience has given me the opportunity to experience a similar kind of friendship. My first few weeks in the novitiate saw me creating a rapport with my new friends and formators. All the while, I was trying desperately to

make a good first impression and get right all the new names and faces.

These first encounters unveiled to me the peculiarities in each person. Interestingly, they have not caused tensions in me or in the community. In a few instances, one may intervene when a companion's behaviour affects the harmony of the community.

I have found that true companionship elevates conversation to an effective way of building up a brotherly and hospitable community. Through conversation we can create an atmosphere of discerning, listening and exchange.

I have also found that the spirit of companionship energises us. I was in Rumbek, Sudan for 2 ½-months during my experiment. The mail I received from my companions made me feel that I was not alone. They also encouraged me to do my work with greater enthusiasm.

I pray that we cherish the value of companionship. We ought to pay particular attention to the quality of our conversations. Then, our companionship will be a source of joy and strength for us and those we encounter. □

Jesuits Jubilee Year 2006



St. Francis Xavier, St. Ignatius Loyola and Blessed Peter Fabre



## Did you know...?

- ☛ Most recently canonised Jesuit saint.
- ☛ The name of the Bull signed by Pius VII that restored SJ.
- ☛ He said it; "...the finger of God is here."
- ☛ The longest serving Superior General.
- ☛ The last of the 9 companions of St. Ignatius to die
- ☛ 1<sup>st</sup> Jesuit to be ordained Priest.

## Answers

- ☛ Bl. Pierre Favre [May 30, 1534].
- ☛ Niccolò Bobadilla [1509-Sept. 23, 1590] GC that put him in office!
- ☛ March 12 1652] who died within the General: Alexander Gottfried [Jan 21-posed to the shortest serving Superior Claudio Acquaviva [1581-1615] as op-cent SJ
- ☛ Pope Paul III in his praise for the nas-[August 07, 1814].
- ☛ Sollicitudo Omnium Ecclesiarum by Benedict XVI on October 23, 2005.
- ☛ Alberto Hurtado Churhaga [1901-1952]

## FRENCH

Si c'était...

- Si c'était une petite ville, ça serait NJIRO.*
- Si c'était un Jésuite, ça serait SEAN O'CONNOR.*
- Si c'était un Supérieur, ça serait ISAAC KIYAKA.*
- Si c'était un chien, ça serait SHAKA.*
- Si c'était une troupe, ça serait UNDUGU FAMILY*
- Si c'était une école, ça serait LOYOLA HIGH.*
- Si c'était une prière, ça serait ANIMA CHRISTI.*
- Si c'était un exercice, ça serait Exercice Spirituel.*
- Si c'était un humoriste, ça serait JIM GILLON.*
- Si c'était un pécheur aimé, ça serait MOI et TOI !*

Par : Allan G.

## AFRICAN PROVERB



Never mind that your nose is ugly; as long as it can be used for breathing

## JOKES

**KEVIN:** Why did you risk your life to save your friend?

**SAM:** I had to do it, man...he was wearing my jacket!

**NOVICE MASTER:** Why did you miss Morning Prayer?

**NOVICE:** It's because I had a dream.

**NOVICE MASTER:** Be concrete. What does that have to do with prayer?

**NOVICE:** I dreamt about a soccer match and the referee took it to extra time. I was forced to go back to my dream to watch the last part!

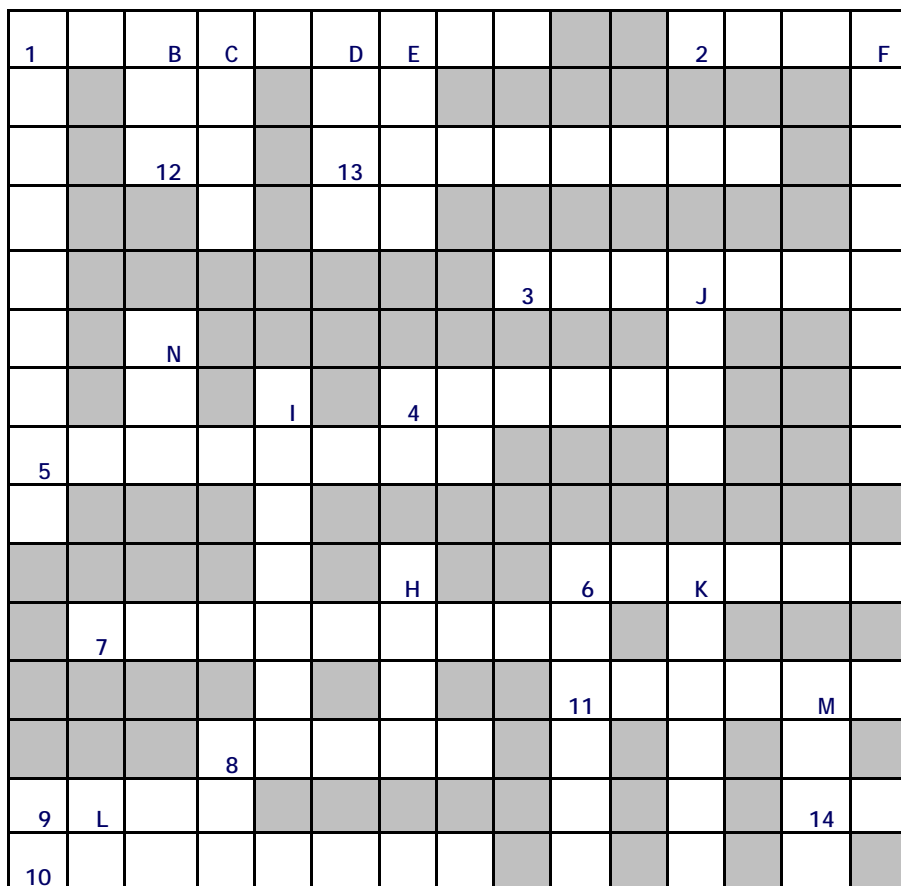
## ACROSS

1. Jesuit Advisor to Superiors [9]
2. Superior General of SJ.[4]
3. A Professed Jesuit who is not a Priest [7]
4. House for most senior Jesuits in the Province [6]
5. French theologian passionate about Geology [8]
6. Principal of Loyola High School [6]
7. Novices stay there [9]
8. JPII's appointed delegate to stand in for Arrupe [5]
9. German Jesuit theologian [4]
10. River associated with Inigo's conversion [8]
11. Assistant to Superiors [6]
12. Degree in Letters [2]
13. Said of Jesuits: They meet without joy and part without regret [8]
14. Jesuit Acronym [2]

## DOWN

1. A group of Jesuits under a Superior [9]
- B. HQs of AOR Province [3]
- C. Big-time 'fisher-man' in AOR Province [4]
- D. Another word for Charity [4]
- E. Francis Xavier traversed all over the East [4]
- F. Head of a Jesuit Community [8]
- G. Member of SJ [6]
- H. 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree of Obedience according to Ignatius [4]
- I. AOR Provincial [7]
- J. Wood on which hung the Saviour of Mankind [4]
- K. Superior of a Jesuit college [6]
- L. Recovering Alcoholics belong to this club [2]
- M. Former great Communist State [4]
- N. God (Lat.) [3]

## CROSSWORD By George Macharia





# A Fisher of Men

Novices remember the illustrious Fr. Sean O' Connor SJ

## Joseph Thomas Mboya

*"How Beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news" (Isaiah 52: 7)*

I remember Sean with great fondness and affection, mainly for his simplicity and humility. He left me with a few of his favorite phrases. In trying to encourage me to always clean up tables and wash cups and dishes, he would say "Don't say they will do it rather I will do it". To encourage me to do even the least I could do for God, he would say "light one candle and don't curse the darkness". To encourage me to be concerned and pray always for my country he would say, "Ask not what your country will do for you, rather what you will do for your country."

I met him for the last time before coming to the novitiate - to thank the man who cast the net that I stumbled into. He urged me to be very patient, persevering and above all very prayerful. He also encouraged me to keep writing letters to encourage my friends and family. Of many life's lessons that I have learnt, a great deal was from 'The great old man with a fine set of legs'

For Sean the harvest is great and the laborers few. Yet the seams of his nets were bursting with so much fish. His desire was that more people would participate in vocation promotion in order to reap from the large harvest.

## Sylvanus Ambani

During my first experiment in Kampala, I received a consoling letter from Fr. Sean. He reminded me of my past experience with street children in Mukuru slums of Nairobi. "A few days ago Sister Lori called me and I had a long conversation with her as I have always admired her artistic work with the street children. And of course, I was pleased that you helped so much while there. Please keep in mind that Fr. Eugene Hattie sj does tremendous work for street children and will indeed welcome your encouragement" Despite his fragile health he expressed a desire to visit the center near Mater Hospital in

Nairobi. I will never forget his inspiring words to me "keep up with your good work and never let go the love you have founded in Christ."

## George Macharia

I recall one instance when I learnt about giving myself wholly to others. I had invited Sean to come and give a talk to Catholic students at Kenyatta University. On that day he became ill and insisted that we use public transport. He was walking with the aid of a walking stick. His talk was well organized, and not even once did he mention that he was ill. He was lively and answered questions reflectively. On our way back I found that he was really straining and tried to convince him to use a taxi but he would not accept. When his condition became a

bit more serious I had to signal for a taxi that took him back home. From this experience I would describe him as a humble, self giving, dedicated, loving and one who cared for others more than himself.

## Bernard Shitemi

Fr. Sean once asked me how many people were in my catechism class. "Only 20" I answered him. He was surprised that I used the word only. He told me that it was a great number in the eyes of God. That I should never disregard anything however small since they were Gods gifts. I should see all as blessings and therefore I needed to be always grateful. That is one thing that I will always treasure.

## Victor Okoth Awiti

To me he was not only a priest but a father too, taking care of them the way a father would his own children.

I spent some time helping Fr. Sean in his office and one thing he taught me that I will always cherish is to be systematic and thankful."

I was always overwhelmed by his simplicity, spirituality, generosity, kindness and listening ability. He is one of the greatest treasures the Society of Jesus has had, especially in the East Africa Province. We thank God for a life lived well and to the full. □



The late Fr. Sean O' Connor  
20/7/1920— 4/9/2006

## A CELEBRATION OF LIFE

As I bid him farewell, Christ answers my question, Why him? He tells me:

"Believe in God and believe also in me,

There are many rooms in my father's house,

And I have prepared a place for Sean.

I have taken him,

So that he may be where I am.

Sean, God gave you to us and he has taken you.

Blessed be his Holy name.

*A dove surrounds him gently on his journey to peace,*

*Beckoning all who cherished him not to cry,*

*Directing eyes to the heaven above the sky,*

*Directing him to a beautiful place.*

*Memories live on and will never be gone,*

*Envisioning his gentle, smiling face,*

*Looking up to the sky with a smile not a cry.*

We loved you Sean, but God loved you most.

*Fare well you great son of the earth,*

*Fare well you great son of Ireland,*

*Fare well you great son of Africa,*

*Fare well you great son of Mother Mary,*

*Fare well you great son of the Holy Catholic Church,*

*Fare well you great son of the Society of Jesus.*

*Fare well OUR dear, Till we meet again*

REST IN ETERNAL PEACE.

Boniface Okumu

to love and to serve kupenda na kutumikia aimer et servir kwagala n'oku-  
werezwa olwanzo n'ericherezya nyadru ku kondra nakita  
maar gi kiwerezwa okwaagala n'okuweerezwa amina keda  
kaijanakin ba nhair ku ba loi uave wa uamale lavare et  
savire ousime nende okhukholera kwendana na gutun-  
gatanira ndapetu na akimituku a'gap'ao kai latreuo  
kutogwa na kwambiliya lieben und dienen hero kod tiyo adimba



bato love and to serve kupenda na kutumikia aimer et servir kwagala n'oku-  
werezwa olwanzo n'ericherezya nyadru ku kondra nakita maar gi kiwerezwa ok-  
waagala n'okuweerezwa amina keda kaijanakin ba nhair ku ba loi uave wa  
uamale lavare et savire ousime nende okhukholera kwendana na gutunga-  
tanira ndapetu na akimituku a'gap'ao kai latreuo kutogwa na kwambiliya lie-  
ben und dienen hero kod tiyo adimba to love and to serve kupenda na ku-  
tumikia aimer et servir kwagala n'okuwerezwa olwanzo n'ericherezya nyadru  
ku kondra nakita holera kwendana na gutungatanira ndapetu na akimituku  
a'gap'ao kutogwa na kwambiliya lieben und dienen hero kod tiyo

adimba to love and to serve kupenda na kutumikia aimer et servir kwagala  
n'okuwerezwa olwanzo n'ericherezya nyadru ku kondra nakita maar gi ki-  
werezwa okwaagala n'okuweerezwa amina keda ousime nende okhukholera  
kwendana na gutungatanira ndapetu kaijanakin ba nhair ku ba loi uave wa  
uamale lavare et savire ousime nende okhukholera kwendana na gutunga-  
tanira ndapetu na akimituku a'gap'ao kai latreuo kutogwa na kwambiliya lie-  
ben und dienen hero kod tiyo adimbato love and to serve kupenda na ku-  
tumikia aimer et servir kwagala n'okuwerezwa olwanzo n'ericherezya



nyadru ku kondra nakita maar gi kiwerezwa okwaagala aimer et  
servir kwagala n'okuwerezwa olwanzo n'ericherezya n'oku-  
nyadru ku kondra nakita maar gi kiwerezwa okwaagala uave  
weerezwa amina keda kaijanakin ba nhair ku ba loi er a  
wa uamale lavare et savire ousime nende okhukhol-  
kwendana na gutungatanira ndapetu na akimituku a'gap'ao kai la-  
treuo kutogwa na kwambiliya lieben und dienen hero kod tiyo adimba to love

