



EDITOR'S NOTE

On the 31st of July 2018, we celebrated the feast of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus and author of the Spiritual Exercises. As the first year novices prepare to do the Spiritual Exercises, we need to remember; "It is from the Spiritual Exercises that the Mother Church recognizes St. Ignatius as the patron saint for Retreats."

Pope Pius XII, in his letter to Jean Baptist, Fr. General of the Society of Jesus on the occasion of 4th Centenary celebrations, in honor of St. Ignatius had this to say; "Saint Ignatius has left nothing more precious, nor useful, nor of more lasting worth, as heritage to his sons, than that golden book which has constantly received the highest praise from Sovereign Pontiffs since Paul III, and from very many saints in the Church." If it is true that the book of the Spiritual Exercises was the first-born of St. Ignatius, it can equally be affirmed that the saintly author was himself the first child of the Exercises. For it was those Exercises that enlivened his spirit, directed his first steps in the way of perfection, and gave him strength to choose to follow a divine King who was worn out with labor, who was loaded with insults, and who suffered torments and death in the service of His Father.

The Exercises enabled him to follow this King to the greatest heights of charity, so that burning with the flame of divine Love, he wished to bring not only himself, but the whole world to the feet of Christ our Savior. Ignatius, having experienced the tremendous grace of the Exercises, once testified that they contain "all the best means that I can think of, and feel, and understand, whereby a man may make progress himself, and bear fruit so that he may be of help to the progress of others." From the Exercises, St. Ignatius himself had drawn new life. From them, he wished his sons to imbibe the spirit that gave birth to the Society of Jesus. That wonderful and holy fire of the Holy Spirit, aroused by God's grace working in the Exercises, would render them not only desirous, but eager and prompt to serve the divine glory and to undertake strenuous labors to that end."

Deogratias Olowo , n.SJ



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St. Gonzaga Gonza Jesuit Novitiate, Arusha—Tanzania.



Archbishop Emeritus Josephat Lebulu laying hands on Fr. Fredrick Meela, SJ during his ordination on the 21st of July 2018 in Arusha

ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA PARISH HOST FR. FREDERICK MEELA'S ORDINATION

St. Josephine Bakhita, which was elevated a parish hardly a year ago, generously accepted to host the memorable event upon the humble acceptance of Emeritus Archbishop of Arusha, His Grace Archbishop Josephat Lebulu, to preside over the ordination of Fr. Fredrick Meela. The parish has been an integral part in the formation of many Jesuits. It has facilitated an environment for developing and enhancing pastoral skills in different groups, such as choir and youth ministry, without the exclusion of the formators who have been presiding over Masses.

The ordination was such a historical event, it being the first one in the new parish within the environs of the novitiate. The colorful celebration, as usual, commenced with the Eucharistic celebration at 10:00 am. The procession was long comprised of the altar servers, Pontifical Missionary Children, dancers, the choir, religious sisters, three serving deacons and about 40 celebrating priests, presided over by His Grace the Emeritus Archbishop Josephat Lebulu who gave a moving homily, addressing Fr. Meela in person on the nobility of being a priest. Before the concluding blessings, the newly ordained priest, together with the Archbishop were given gifts courtesy of

the parishioners and of many guests from different places especially people from Moshi, Fr. Meela's home of origin. Thereafter was the reception at the parish grounds preceded by the cutting of the cake and a luncheon. Just before people dispersed at around 4:00 pm, there were brief entertainments; a song by Canossian Sisters and a special poem dedicated to Fr. Meela from the choir master.

The novitiate community held a special dinner in honor of the newly ordained Fr. Meela, his family and friends. The evening saw about 31 Jesuits, 6 scholastics, 2 brothers, 3 deacons and 20 priests from different parts of the Province, the Church council and representatives of our neighbors the Canossians who came to witness the occasion. Let us keep the ordained priests of our Province this year in our prayers so that they may labor fruitfully in the Lord's vineyard.

Benard Owour Adika n.SJ

RAFIKI INTERVIEWS FR. MEELA FREDRICK, SJ

Thank you for granting us this opportunity to talk with you. You were just ordained recently, how are you feeling?

Fr. Meela: Thank you for having me. I feel joyous, and I profoundly thank God for that.

We would like to know your vocation story; the circumstances of your call. How has the journey to this point been like?

Fr. Meela: I was born in a Catholic family. Our family had friends among priests. I particularly remember a Passionist priest who used to visit us occasionally. Despite all these encounters made possible by my family, I didn't feel any moving desire to become a priest. Nevertheless, my commitment to serving the church in different ways, especially by being active in different faith-related groups was thanks to these early encounters, cultivated at a young age.

I desired to join a seminary for my Ordinary studies, not because they would channel me to priesthood, but because they provided good education. Unfortunately, I wasn't lucky to join one. I found myself joining a government school which, however, proved to be helpful in cultivating my catholic life. The school provided a platform for several religious events involving students. I stayed active throughout! I believe this constant engagement had a lasting impact on me. At the point of completing form four I had come to the point of considering the possibility of becoming a priest.

As I was about to complete form four I wrote to Maua seminary. I wanted to pursue my A-level studies there. They responded positively. Unfortunately, due to several reasons, I found myself joining Umbwe secondary school, which is run by Spiritans. I can say it is at Umbwe that I found myself fully accepting the call of God to become a religious. I went through a long process of reading about several religious congregations. I also came across the Jesuits, but I wasn't pleased by some of their aspects. Before completing form six I

had made a final decision that I will be joining the Spiritans. I joined the Spiritan noviciate in Uganda in 2003. I spent a year there and came back to Arusha, Tanzania, to do a 3-year degree course in philosophy, [i.e. from 2004 to 2008].

The four years with the Spiritans were not only formative but also informative. I thank them a lot for everything good they did for me. I learnt a lot about religious life, not from outside but from within. At times I could feel a sincere sense of self-misplacement. As I was about to complete philosophy studies I made a decision to begin a new life somewhere else.

I had encountered Jesuits in the philosophy books we were reading in class, and I found myself admiring their accomplishments. As well, having a Jesuit noviciate in Arusha gave me a first-hand opportunity to witness the lives of these people. I was attracted by what I read about and saw in them. I made a decision to identify myself with them. I initiated contacts with several Jesuits, and the discernment process began immediately. Of course, when it was clear that I would be leaving the Spiritans, I opted to come clean with my Superiors. They received the news with mixed feelings which is empirically understandable. I had a conviction that God wanted me to serve Him in that way. Whenever I pray or reflect about this change, I still find it reaffirmed time after time.

I was accepted to join the Jesuit noviciate in Arusha in 2008. The Jesuit noviciate was a bit different from the Spiritans. It had its own challenges. I capitalized on my previous experience to pull through. It was easier for me than for some of my brothers to muddle through the difficulties we encountered. This fact notwithstanding, I had scathing moments in this [Jesuit] noviciate that I wouldn't like to go through once again. Immediately after completing the noviciate, it was time to be missioned for a masters' degree in philosophy. I was supposed to go to India. Because my degree was from a religious institute, it



Fr. Fredrick Meela SJ

proved hard to get accepted to study in India. I was therefore, instead asked to go to Paris, France, to do studies in French, a language I didn't master very well. I accepted the mission, though timidly.

Two scholastics from our class were missioned to France for studies. I remember our life in France was initially very challenging and tough. Food, language, people and almost everything pertaining to French culture proved tricky! My colleague was deeply affected by this experience. He came back done in and later, unsurprisingly to me, left the Society. He was largely disappointed with how his life had fared within the Society.

After completing my studies in Paris of course still willing to stay in the Society, I was missioned to Dodoma for Regency. I remember I did my best for the Society. I did everything within my capacity for the love of the Society. All these accomplishments notwithstanding, it's during Regency that I suffered the biggest blow of my Jesuit life. There was miscommunication of how some matters had been handled, and because I was at the centre of the controversy, I was made the scapegoat. The joy brought by my accomplishments in Regency was severely dulled by this particular experience. I became inconsolably bitter and almost threw everything behind. I was determined to bow

out of the Society. Lucky enough I was counselled by some brothers in the Society who asked me to be patient, fervently pray about the matter, and make an informed decision. I capitulated. Upon careful examination, it was identified that, in fact, there was an error in the manner in which certain aspects of the affair had been addressed. The dust finally settled. I was vindicated, having learnt something important in this challenge that almost irreparably sundered my entire Jesuit life into pieces.

Immediately after Regency I was sent to Hekima College to do theology. I was ordained a deacon there and finally made a priest recently. I thank God for everything. The journey was not easy, but God has been my reliable refuge all along and made all this possible.

We always hear our formators telling us that 'Every Jesuit is a product of the noviciate'. What does this mean? And how much of you is the product of the noviciate?

Fr. Meela: Well, in your 20s or 30s you are an adult. You are something, not nothing. The formation in the noviciate builds upon that something. It is implausible to assert that you are expected to be emptied into nothing and totally be a different you! What happens is how the formation here builds upon that same you. We have different histories and therefore will receive this new formation differently. Some people adapt easily, others manifest their real selves and are at peace with that even if it means being 'formatively offside'. And of course others become 'artificial' in order to sustain themselves along the way. When you see a Jesuit-out-of-noviciate you will be able to tell how he absorbed the formation in the noviciate; he is either a real epitome of Jesuit ethos, or he's himself but doesn't seem formed he's an embarrassment, an antithesis of what a Jesuit ought to be. Or else he is artificial, he is not himself! These marks are indelible in people. That is why you hear it. Likewise, since my first empirical encounter with the Jesuit life is in the noviciate, I also had a unique way of integrating that truly still influences some aspects of my behaviour as a Jesuit.



Fr. Fredrick Meela SJ on his thanksgiving mass in St. Aloyce Gonzaga-Huruma-Rombo

We congratulate you for your new mission at Radio Kwizera. Do you find journalism or communication truly your passion, or it is something you have accepted out of mere obedience? Did you ever share about it?

Fr. Meela: Thank you. In fact journalism is my passion. I have always manifested that I would like to work in journalistic settings from the moment I was sharing information about why I wanted to become a Jesuit. True, I wanted to become a priest, but I made it clear that what attracted me to Jesuits is that a priest is not there solely to celebrate mass. You can also be engaged in other apostolates. Looking at the missions of the Jesuits, I found journalism among the priorities. I knew I had found a home.

I remember before joining the Jesuits, while I was with the Spiritans, there was a competition on the BBC on some journalistic piece. I decided to compete and was amazed when I was announced the winner. My name kept circulating among my colleagues. I had done what no one around me expected doable.

When I was being sent to France I unsuccessfully begged that I be sent there to do studies in journalism. Although my plea wasn't successful, I remained steadfast that one day I will realise my dream. In France I remember writing an article that was also applauded by those who happened to see it. I remember being commended by my provincial when he saw it.

I had an experience of working at Radio Kwizera in a short stint during one

of my experiments when I was in the noviciate.

I used to accompany reporters as they roamed streets to research on different matters and report about them. I learnt the work easily and the integration process wasn't turbulent. I was able to provide good reports that were on par with other trained professionals. I am going back there to wear the shoes of my brother Fr. [Damas] Misanga, SJ, who has been running the radio for the past 12 years. He was looking forward to having someone follow in his footsteps but found no one. I can surely tell you he is relieved and very happy that he has finally found someone with deep love for that work to pick up the baton.

The primi are soon going to embark on their first ever Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. There is much talk about what the Spiritual Exercises are and what one should expect from them. Perhaps, because of this air of confusion, people seem restless about this impending, inexplicable experience. What is your message to them?

Fr. Meela: Of course it is normal to be anxious after hearing all this talk about the Spiritual Exercises. One wonders what to expect; what will I experience vis-à-vis my brothers? Will I come out a different person? What sort of person exactly? Will I come back the same person? What does that imply? How much of a transformed man will I be?

It is said this experience makes Jesuits. And of course each one is affected differently. I would advise you not to

focus on the above questions. Focus on who you are today.

I am confident your current formators, who are well versed in these matters, will be helping you to prepare properly before embarking on the Exercises. Follow carefully the materials, instructions and advice being given to you. The Spiritual Exercises act on a historical man, one who is affected by his past; meaning his response will be determined by who he is before being exposed to the Spiritual Exercises. As well, the Spiritual Exercises are a prayer. Their efficacy therefore, just like with any other prayer, will be determined by the 'repertoire' of this historical man doing them. How one prepares himself is very essential to making the Spiritual Exercises effective and successful. Your formators become crucial in this respect. They play a crucial role in preparing you and making the Exercises fruitful.

What is your last message to the novices?

Fr. Meela: I urge you to remain focused on your vocation and, two, know thyself!

Many thanks Father for your availability and frank answers. On behalf of the noviciate community, RAFIKI wishes you nothing but success and every blessing from the Lord as you take up your new mission. Remember to pray for us.

Fr. Meela: Thank you, too. I will pray for you. Pray for me, too.

*Nobert Chrisantus, nSJ
Deogratius Olowo, nSJ*



THE BURNING FIRE

When a fire is burning, in order for it to continue burning, people add firewood. The addition of firewood has a significant role in making that fire keep burning and that fire will not be off unless those who took care of it stop caring. Since I entered the novitiate, I can describe my vocation as this burning fire. Much wood

is being added to it in order for it to continue burning. Some of this wood are the things which happened in the novitiate since I arrived; like the vows of our brothers, the ordination and the silver jubilee of three companions. This and other things keep on inspiring me, giving me hope and courage that my fire will not be off. Also, the other firewood to be added is the Spiritual Exercises which we are now preparing to do.

Others will be added according to time and our way of proceeding in the novitiate. We know that God is the source of all vocations, so it means that He is the one who lit this fire. He will make sure that this fire continues burning by sending people to take care of it on his behalf. And that is why I am in the novitiate, so that later this fire may be also used in lighting other fires. So I believe this is a good place for me that my fire will continue burning for the greater glory of God.

Angelo Benedict, nSJ



HEAR GOD'S VOICE EACH DAY A NEW

Since joining the novitiate, this question had been asked by my friends "How is life?" my answer makes them sink simply because I say life is good. My desire for the Lord is intense and always moved by Mother Mary's humblest "yes" to make salvation come to humanity through her. It's the same voice today that keeps on calling and tells each one of us; before you were born, I dedicated you, a Prophet to the nations I appointed you (Jer. 1:4-5). So I hear God's voice each day a new calling me for a mission and that's my focal point. So what the experiences taught me is not my interest but where I am going is the heart of matter. The months of June and July were a time of reflection and inspiration. I hope not only for me or even the novitiate community, but the Society of Jesus as we were blessed to have new Priests who showed on us on their part of the blessings they received from the Lord. We had also celebrated the feast of our founder Saint

Ignatius. The movement of thanksgiving mass of Rev. Fr. Fredrick Meela SJ, at St. Aloysius Gonzaga outstation in Huruma was a reflective movement that inspired in me the vocation of following Christ most earnestly. My prayer always is that the Lord gives me a grace of seeing each day the direction of my call and to be able to give myself fully without reserve like mother Mary who willingly replied with sincere and complete submissive will "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to His will".

Valentino Okwero nSJ



FORMATOR'S NOTE

The initiation period is the reality which is reflected in most of the indigenous African cultures. Prior to being fully integrated into the society as adults or assume responsibilities, the youths have to undergo initiation, during which they learn through their personal experiences enriched by examples of their instructors on how to be responsible. Such experiences are transformative an initiated person is never the same often he or she is expected to lead a morally integrated life to positively influence his or her own indigenous community.

Just as the indigenous African youths, the *primi* have been preparing themselves to be initiated into the Society of Jesus through the Spiritual Exercises which is the fundamental step towards becoming a Jesuit. This is the moment of deep personal prayer, reflection and confirmation of one's vocation, self-discovery and most importantly to discover about God. So let us pray for them that they will be docile and open to the Spirit of God to guide them through such a profound experience of prayer.

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Christopher Mapunda SJ