



EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear distinguished readers, yet again, on behalf of *Team Rafiki*, I greet you all! It is Advent season and everybody is buoyed by the anticipation of The Lord's coming. It is a season of much rejoicing and thanking God for the graces gifted to us during the course of the year, and in the same spirit, asking for more graces for the year to come.

It has not been a bed of roses, even roses have thorns. There has been desolation and consolation, the most notable is the passing of our brother; Fr. Victor Luke Odhiambo. However, what is left (is) for us is to remember the joys, consolations and the example his life has been for us all and for the many lives he has touched in a certain way. He has run his race well and may God welcome him in his Heavenly Kingdom.

It is that time of the year again when the Master of Novices sends his young men on two months long experiments out of the novitiate. I hope the communities going to receive us have adjusted their budgets because it is not easy to feed a hungry missionary stomach. This time it is the *Primi* who are privileged for this experiment. The beauty of it all is the suspense of us not knowing where (you) we will be sent until the last minute. I think the Novice Master also is waiting for the Holy Spirit to reveal to him which novice to send where and who not to send where. All this is of course after prayer and long discernment. We are disposed and available for whatever God wills for us, and we trust the experiments will shape us in the line of formation.

By and large, life has been good in the novitiate, especially the past few days when we started ripping the fruits of our ranch and newly revived poultry project. In one day forty broiler chicken were massacred and on that same day a pig, to the joy of the entire community. Woe to those novices who work in the project because the surviving chicken are scheming revenge. I do not want to say what I overheard from the chickens' general congregation but let us see how events will unfold. We thank our benefactors for seeing the poultry revived and in a special way Fr. Christopher Mapunda who has worked tooth and nail to sustain the same project. *Team Rafiki* wishes you all a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year. AMDG

Deogratias Olowo nSJ



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Fr. Victor-Luke Odhiambo, SJ (1956 to 2018)

On mission to the final breath

Born on 20 January 1956 in Seme Kojwang', Kisumu, Fr. Victor-Luke was baptized on 02 March 1956, received Holy Communion on 11 September 1965, and was confirmed on 25 August 1966. He survived by his father Mr. Joannes Odhiambo, his mother Mrs. Serafina Ojwok, and his siblings Sr. Maryanne Odinga Odhiambo (Franciscan Sisters of St. Ann), Michael Owuor Odhiambo, and James Odinga Odhiambo.

Fr. Victor-Luke attended Bar Korwa Mixed Primary School, Seme, Kisumu (1964 to 1969). He went to St. Peter's Seminary-Mukumu in Kakamega for Ordinary Level studies (1970 to 1974) before going to Tindinyo College in Kaimosi for Advanced Level studies (1975 to 1976).

Driven by a desire to serve our Lord Jesus Christ, Fr. Victor-Luke joined the Society of Jesus at Chelston Novitiate in Lusaka, Zambia on 4 July 1978 and pronounced his first vows on 4 July 1980. After first vows, he studied Philosophy at Millton Institute of Theology and Philosophy (1980 to 1982) before doing regency at Starehe Boys' Center, Nairobi (1982 to 1984) where he taught English language and Christian Religious Education. Immediately after regency, Fr. Victor-Luke enrolled for Theology studies as one of the pioneering students at Hekima College, Nairobi (1984 to 1988). He was ordained to the priesthood on 22 August 1987 at St. Joseph's Church-Milimani grounds in Kisumu, by Rt. Rev. Zachaeus Okoth, then Bishop of Kisumu; Fr. Victor-Luke was the first Kenyan Jesuit to be ordained a priest. From 1988 to 1991, Fr. Victor-Luke went to Creighton University, Omaha, Nebraska where he earned a Master of Science degree in Educational Administration and a Master of Arts degree in English Literature. He did Tertianship at Detroit Province Tertianship, Michigan (1991 to 1992) under Fr. Howard J. Gray SJ and pronounced his final vows on 30 May 1993.

Fr. Victor-Luke served as Assistant Parish Priest at Airport Parish, Dodoma (1992 to 1995). He was an English Teacher at Loyola High School, Dar es Salam

(1995 to 1997) before he became the Headmaster of the school (1997 to 2003). After playing a significant role as one of the "Founding Fathers" of Loyola High School, he briefly moved to Nairobi and worked as a Sub-minister and Bursar at the Provincial's residence, Raira (2003-2004), and as Acting Socius to the Provincial (2004). Still hungry for Knowledge, Fr. Victor-Luke went back to class and did Postgraduate Studies in Education at Corpus Christi College, London (2004 to 2005) and Postgraduate Studies in International Education Management at King's College London (2005 to 2008).

His missionary zeal became more vivid when he was missioned to South Sudan. He first served as Headmaster of Loyola Secondary School, Wau (2008 to 2012) before moving to Rumbek where he taught English Language at St. Peter Claver Computer and Ecological Center (2013 to 2017). His final mission was in Cuebiet; he was the first Principal of Mazzolari Teacher's College (2016 to 2018) and the Superior (since 9 May 2017) of Daniel Comboni Jesuit Residence.

Fr. Victor-Luke dedicated most of his life teaching and he lived his life with great simplicity. He loved students as much as he loved the poor. He absolutely loved the people of South Sudan and he was willing to take risks for their sake, even at the cost of losing his own life in order to gain it.

We pray in gratitude for the life of our companion Fr. Victor-Luke Odhiambo, SJ who was unfortunately killed by unknown people at around 2am on 15 November 2018 at Daniel Comboni Jesuit Residence, in Cuebiet, South Sudan. He was shot dead while in the living room. He was buried where he was murdered as a way to witness to the fact that he had totally given his life for the people of South Sudan even in death. Fr. Victor-Luke was sixty-two (62) years old, a Jesuit for forty (40) years, and a priest for thirty-one (31) years when he "drunk the cup."

Extracts from the Office of the Socius to the Provincial, Fr. Lawrence Achal Kyaligonza SJ



In memory of the late

Fr. Victor-Luke Odhiambo, S.J.

ready to serve not only gladly but also with some humour. He was a man of action, going about his duties without any fuss. He was self-assured and yet so unassuming and so undemanding. He truly was a good community man just with his unobtrusive but pleasant and effective presence. He was a person in whom one could confide naturally. From what I know he was always efficient wherever he was assigned. I never heard anybody complaining about his way of doing things, on the contrary, people were usually quite happy dealing with him. He was able to fit easily anywhere, with anybody and at any time. He expressed himself freely in a straight but respectful way so that he could easily agree to disagree with anyone, thus avoiding unnecessary contention. He was

always much admired for being very steady and reliable in carrying out his commitments. I am sure that his character was shaped not just by his nature but especially by his spiritual development so that he was truly exemplary as a Jesuit. I felt that he was truly friendly without any show; that is why I felt it so much when I received the news of his untimely and violent death and I could hardly stop crying as I felt we had been so close in a very simple way. I am sure that what I am saying about him is shared by so many other people who came across him. May God bless him, have mercy on him and receive him in his happiness. Amen.

We were companions in Wau from 2012 to 2014, but, of course, I had known him already for quite a time. He struck me as a peaceful, calm and wise person, of few words but always

Bernard Mallia SJ

Losing Fr. Victor hurt me

I was dumbstruck when I read that innocent blood has been shed in Cueibet, South Sudan and with grief in my heart I recall my days with Fr. Victor-Luke Othiambo, S.J. as a student at Loyola Secondary School, Wau, and a man of a do-or-die heart, who inspired whether with his words or actions. My encounter with him at Loyola SS, Wau had a great role in my life and particularly my vocation as a Jesuit novice today. On reading about his death at the hands of cruel assailants, I couldn't believe it but I recalled his heart-searching words that have contributed so much to my vocation. On July 31st 2012, feast of St. Ignatius, in his homily he related to us (students) a story of his friend with whom he had finished theology together, but his friend was not sure whether to proceed toward priestly ordination or not. Fr. Victor just told him, Think for yourself; you are mature now, whether to serve God who created you; working for the greater Glory of His name or to run after world affairs and enjoy it But

how better it would be to save your soul. After this story, Fr. Victor simply said to the students, "you are mature, think well and make a decision for your life". This short story left me pondering the kind of vocation I should take. We were heart-rended when he announced his being transferred from Wau. Many of us cried and shed tears because we didn't want him to go away from us. He was a man whose gentleness, politeness and humility were not only reflected in his smile but also in his words, so firm, sincere and assuring, and in his actions, so determined with concern and great apostolic zeal. While a Principal at Loyola, SS, Wau, by letting us be free, unlike in other Catholic schools: prayer become sweet and meaningful, by relating to us simple stories about the reality of life, he helped us search for the truth and the light. By his action he moved our hearts to a wonderful world full of hope and light. Fr. Victor was a man for others; he came down to a lower level to lift up high those who were



lower, so concerned and generous for others rather than for himself. He showed no hurry in talking and he was able to achieve a good result from an impossible task. Losing him hurt me, but with a humble spirit I accept and pray for the eternal repose of his soul in the heavenly court where he may enjoy the fruit of his labour for eternity.

Valentino Okwero nSJ

**Compassionate Jesus Christ our lord,
I kindly ask you to receive the soul of your servant,
whom you have called, whom you inspired to look at you
amidst the suffering, he saw you and followed you,
He kept his focus on you till he was slain, in your vineyard,
his innocent blood poured out, in the field,
he totally surrendered to you, the Master, Oh Lord Jesus who
suffered willingly for us all, So did he followed you willingly.**

Amen





A Meditation On HELL

the stench of rot, smoke, and the heat alone emanating from this furnace can burn the hair on your head.

Across this abyss of hell was a simple narrow makeshift bridge which Jesus pointed that I may walk along if I still need to satisfy my curiosity. I was seized with sadness, fear and confusion and an intense horror as the magma boiled vigorously. But I still remained curious and so I took to the bridge, carefully step by step, as Jesus shouted words of encouragement and asked me to be careful. Reaching the middle of the bridge, I chose to look down into the pit, I saw souls wailing, screaming in agony, turning on their backs, then onto their stomachs and then on their sides as the flames continued burning eternally, but not consuming them. I saw that all the souls had not a single hair on their heads as the flames had eaten all of that. I tried to listen in the midst of their pain to the words they were screaming, as some were blaspheming while others called me by name to ask for a bottle of vodka or whisky to relieve them from agony and others for water to quench their thirst. One of them even stretched out his hand and grabbed me by my ankle. I leaped for safety but then I stumbled and I was about to fall into the pit when suddenly, Jesus, whom I had left on the other side, was right there to grab my hand and pulled me out. Like St. Peter sinking in the sea of Tiberias, I shouted; "Lord, save me!" and Jesus stretched out his hand and pulled me out. (Mt14:30).

Before joining the Jesuit Novitiate, I had no clue what mental prayer was (contemplation and meditation), Thankfully, in a few weeks of my noviceship, I was initiated by my brother novices, the *Secundi*, and even had classes on prayer, under the tutorship of the Master of Novices. Well, a few months later, I was doing the Spiritual Exercises. In the Exercises, I came to fully appreciate this type of prayer. I was particularly better in contemplation than in meditation. However, I have chosen to share with you the Fifth Exercise, which is a meditation on hell, which falls in the First Week (*SpEx #65*). It contains a preparatory prayer, two preludes, five points and a colloquy. Composition of place, using the power of imagination-see the length, breadth and depth of hell. To see with the eyes of imagination the huge fires, the souls damned, hearing the wailing, the shrieking, the cries and the blasphemies, to smell the smoke, the filth of rot, taste bitter flavors of hell, tears, sadness, sense the touch of flames on your skin as it burns the souls, basically employing all your five senses. Then comes a colloquy with Christ our Lord. Always close the hour of prayer with an Our Father.

I saw Jesus Christ our Lord standing right in front of me, He was wearing a white cassock and still had the nail wounds on his wrists and feet. I begged him to show me hell; so that I can see the pains and sufferings so that when I am about to fall into sin, at least the fear of hell will deter me. He wrapped one of his arms around my shoulder as a friend would do to a friend, and led me to the place. A huge enormous pit filled with lava, magma, sulphur and fire hissing and breathing heavily; the pit was spitting lumps of fire out onto the dry land. The wind was blowing violently and the magma was moving around like the waves of a tumultuous sea. It was something close to looking into the crater of an active volcano about to erupt any moment. For those who have never seen a crater of a volcano, maybe the furnace of a steel factory can be a substitute, but this one is more severe since there are souls burning in their bodies, wailing, screaming, twisting and turning,

In my colloquy, I told Christ that had I died, I too would have been among those souls. I thanked him for granting me my desire by showing me hell and all of my past life to the present moment during the First Week of the Exercises. I also asked Jesus for the grace to guide me so that I do not fall. I concluded with an Our Father.

However, my idea of God is that He is merciful and compassionate and He loves the human race so much that He sent his only begotten Son to die for us, that whoever believes in him may not perish but have everlasting life (Jn 3:16). God still gives each and every one, alive or dead, the opportunity to repent and He will forgive us. St. Therese of Lisieux says that she thinks hell is empty, since she believes one cannot be happy in Heaven when another is suffering in hell. For that matter, I am personally inclined to think of hell as being empty, as I join Pierre Teilhard de Chardin in his bold request:

"I pray, O Master, that the flames of hell may not touch me or any of those whom I love, and even that they may never touch anyone. And I know, my God, that you will forgive this bold Prayer. "AMEN.



Celebrate life.

It's here again,
"The last day to the first of the last month"
And again I catch this annual fad.
Of course yes, they are monthly
Celebrated by one and all.

Everlasting thanks to the Absolute Being,
Father of mercies, bless the days before me,
Grant many choicest blessings to us,
To us impart grace and mercy all around.

Congrats to my parents and all the best to the family:
For they are my gem,
And wishing her a Long Good Life,
To him "May his soul find eternal peace in God"

As I look back nostalgically to my childhood
As an itinerant shepherd in the fields,
And too as an altar-server next to a priest,
These could be a pointer to my would be future life.

At least these days in prayer:
Spiritual Exercises, Hour, Examen and Daily Eucharist
Everything gels
Here in the Novitiate.

Good luck to the members of the Society,
But let us all remember
That this is the womb
Which declares a Bright New Dawn.

For progress will be when this isn't news,
Let's give ourselves unequivocally to the Infinite,
Not to wise men who whine,
And fix our gaze on the Creator.

Fine, also important today is to thank God for His love:
For my life and the gift of my vocation;
And to you my brothers for companionship.
May God bless us all!



Deogratias Olowo nSJ

Ronald OWIYO nSJ



My six months in the novitiate

As days keep on moving, it is now six months since we the first year (primi) arrived in the novitiate. All of us in the novitiate are grateful for these months which have been a time to know each other, to cultivate our goal to seek God in everything, and give thanks to God for showering His graces upon us.

remove rust and other unwanted material, in the same way as the spiritual Exercises have the purpose of preparing and disposing our souls to rid itself of all its disordered affection, and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God's will in ordering of our life for the soul (*Sp. Ex # 1*)

We arrived in the novitiate in early May and began our way to Golgotha, where Jesus the Messiah was crucified so that he may later rise to Glory and offer us salvation. We have been applying oil and grease to our spiritual lives in the same way an Engineer does when carrying out maintenance on particular equipment to

We are now entering the second half of the year and everything seems new to us, notably the assuming of new offices and change of rooms and blocks.

TIGITI, Linus Richard, nSJ

Life in the novitiate can be funny

Life in the Novitiate is fun and it can be very funny. Sometimes I look at three things which bring a lot of curiosity among the novices and I cannot help smiling at how God is using simple and most ordinary ways to form us. The three things in question are: the assignment to various offices, the change of rooms and blocks after every six months, and the long experiments.

place of residence: today he is in Wau consoling, tomorrow he will be in Ihumwa Hills teaching, he will be seen on the pulpits taking care of souls- Is he going to these places alone? Certainly not, for we are his servants, and he goes with us.

cy of being attached to a particular room, office or an apostolate of our choice. It ignites deep in our hearts the fire of holy dependence/holy freedom, which in our common term we call 'obedience'. In addition, an inner disposition of accepting the unexpected cheerfully without wanting to remain in our comfortable 'nests' is nurtured.

I struggled in my first six months here in the Novitiate to find meaning for the above mentioned assignments. As time went by, I began to see some sense in them: apostles who are in training, longing to know, given an environment ample for knowing, following, and eventually being sent to exercise various ministries (Mathew 28:16...).

The suspense also creates some sort of alertness to our current assigned duties and those that are yet to come. It expels in us the tenden-

One of my companions gave a very beautiful analogy for the office of the coordinator- "He is an envelope, his, is to go and carry the information for the addressee. Period!" If not subjected to critical thinking, the analogy seems to be demeaning. Looking at it from another angle, this analogy is a humbling reminder that we are all called to service and responsibility and it also calls us to be aware of our human qualities and to use them appropriately for the greater good of all. And so, life and formation here to me are not mysterious but rather something visible and comprehensible.

When and where you will be sent is always not known. This creates suspense. I see something of value in this suspense; it keeps us ever ready for any kind of service in the household of Christ our King, who keeps on changing His



OKOTH, Evans Okoth, nSJ

Formator's note

Look to the past with gratitude, live the present with passion and embrace the future with hope [...] these are profound words of wisdom of Pope Francis in his Apostolic Letter to *All Consecrated People*. The Pope invites us to contemplate God in each and every moment—low or high moments—of our lives. Such a grasp instills in us the grateful heart that sees the hand of God in all that we have experienced in the course of the year, as individuals or community, seeing ourselves where we are and what lays ahead. When we look at the past year, it may seem like yesterday when we celebrated our last Christmas but here we are passionately

and optimistically awaiting to celebrate 2018's Christmas and to welcome 2019 subsequently. It is the festive season—when friends and families reunite. However, for us, Christians, it is the moment of anticipation and self-transformation as we are awaiting the coming of the Lord. We, thus, pray for the grace that when the Lord comes he may find a worthy place for his dwelling in our hearts. I wish you all fruitful preparations for Christmas and the New Year!

Fr. Chris Mapunda SJ

