

# JHIA Newsletter

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# Éditorial

## Bonne Fête de Saint Alphonse Rodriguez !

**L**e mois d'octobre a ceci de beau qu'il se clôture par une belle fête pour nous jésuites : Saint Alphonse Rodriguez, SJ (1533-1617), le saint patron des Frères Jésuites et de la



ville de Majorque en Espagne. Il était à peine un tendre enfant lorsque ses parents accueillirent Pierre Favre dans la maison familiale, lors du passage de ce dernier à Segovia, la ville natale des Rodriguez. Le passage du futur Saint Pierre Favre eut un tel

impact dans le jeune Alphonse qu'il se résolut à rejoindre la Compagnie de Jésus. Il se rendit donc à Alcalá de Henares pour poursuivre ses études, et ainsi pouvoir devenir jésuite.

Malheureusement, à peine commencées ses études, une tragédie survint. Alphonse perdit son père et, fils aîné, dut retourner à la maison pour s'occuper des affaires familiales. Il se maria et eut trois enfants. Sa femme mourut, ainsi que ses trois enfants, laissant Alphonse dans une situation de désarroi. Mais il trouva consolation et forces à l'idée de retrouver ses premiers amours, c'est-à-dire, de devenir jésuite.

Si les consultants votèrent à l'unanimité contre l'admission de celui qui, au fil des tragédies, avait vu réduites sérieusement ses capacités intellectuelles, le Provincial l'admit comme Frère. Il l'envoya ensuite en mission au Collège majorquin de Montesión, qui reste ouvert jusqu'à ce jour, à jamais marqué aux sceaux du saint Frère.

A Montesión, Alphonse servit pendant 46 ans comme portier. Il devint l'âme du collège pour les jeunes élèves, leurs parents, et tout le personnel. Chacun savait trouver auprès du portier l'aimable sourire, le bon conseil, cette paix que Notre Seigneur sait produire aux âmes qui, en lui, ont souffert patiemment et ont appris à se pétrir dans la prière. Des vocations ne tardèrent pas parmi les élèves du collège, l'une des plus célèbres étant celle du futur Saint Pierre Claver, apôtre des esclaves. L'impact fut tant que jusqu'à ce jour, le collège de Montesión, continue de s'identifier au Saint portier.

Au moment même où Majorque devient de plus en plus sécularisé, il reste un fait saillant parmi ses

habitants : L'on peut bien enlever les statuettes du Christ au Majorquin, mais surtout pas son Alphonse Rodriguez qui, du collège, est devenu le saint patron de toute la ville.

Terminer un mois aussi chargé en activités avec cette note spirituelle recentre notre mission à l'Institut Historique sur ce qu'elle a d'essentiel. Rien que la semaine dernière, nous avons célébré la publication de trois livres publiés par l'Institut, l'un de ses membres et affiliés, ou imprimé par ses soins. Ce fut un moment de grande célébration au sein de Hekima University College, avec un sentiment de fond que la mission de l'Institut Historique faisait son bout de chemin avec un succès plutôt extraordinaire au regard de nos moyens limités. Et s'il y a une discussion qui a nourri beaucoup d'âmes pendant le lancement de ces livres, c'est lorsque le *Jesuit Ethos* a affirmé qu'il existe une spiritualité de l'historiographie jésuite sans laquelle l'histoire, même profane, de la Compagnie de Jésus resterait incomplète et manquerait d'objectivité scientifique.

Au seizième siècle comme au 21<sup>e</sup>, la simplicité et l'humilité continuent de parler à notre humanité. La sainteté, telle que l'a incarné Alphonse Rodriguez, ne laisse aucune âme indifférente. On trouve une certaine paix, un sentiment de libération de nos angoisses dans notre quête effrénée des grands succès, qu'il n'y a pas un travail qui soit trop petit, trop simpliste, et trop négligeant pour le Seigneur. Cela, je l'espère, nous ramène à cette joie que nous éprouvons lorsque, nous rendant disponibles, nous nous laissons mouvoir par la providence du Seigneur qui, à Montesión, était à la fois la porte, le portier, et le visiteur.

Revenir à ce qu'il y a d'essentiel, c'est croire aujourd'hui et espérer pour demain. C'est en tout aimer et servir, sachant sentir et goûter Dieu dans de petites choses. C'est, comme beaucoup d'entre vous, se lever chaque matin, non pas nécessairement pour réaliser de grandes choses pour le Seigneur, mais pour le laisser réaliser de grandes choses en usant de notre petitesse.

En souhaitant une bonne fête aux Frères Jésuites, nous exprimons notre gratitude envers une « race de jésuites » qui devient de plus en plus rare, et dont le travail simple, humble, et discret a toujours été si essentiel à la pleine réalisation de notre vocation jésuite et de notre mission dans l'Église. Nous prions pour que, par l'intercession de celui qu'ils tiennent pour patron, nos Frères sachent trouver de la joie d'appartenir à la *minima Compañía*, ainsi que l'a voulu Ignace, forts de ce que ce n'est pas d'en avoir beaucoup qui nourrit et satisfait l'âme de la Compagnie, mais de savoir sentir et goûter Dieu intérieurement dans la petitesse de nos tâches. Nous prions surtout pour que

le Seigneur continue de susciter des vocations de Frères pour la Compagnie de Jésus. Parce que c'est la partie de notre Corps qui continue de diminuer numériquement et qui est faible, elle est aussi pour nous la plus essentielle (1Cor 12 :22-23).

Bonne fête de Saint Alphonse Rodriguez !

**Jean Luc Enyegue, SJ**  
**Directeur JHIA**

### **Editorial: Happy Feast of Saint Alphonse Rodriguez!**

**T**he month of October closes with a beautiful feast for us Jesuits: Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez, SJ (1533-1617), patron saint of the Jesuit Brothers and of the city of Mallorca in Spain. He was barely a tender child when his parents welcomed Peter Faber into the family home during the latter's visit to Segovia, the Rodriguez family hometown. The visit of the future Saint Peter Faber had such an impact on young Alphonsus that he decided to join the Society of Jesus. So, he went to Alcalá de Henares to continue his studies and become a Jesuit.

Unfortunately, no sooner had he begun his studies than tragedy struck. Alphonsus lost his father and, as the eldest son, had to return home to look after the family business. He married and had three children. His wife died, along with his three children, leaving Alphonsus in a state of disarray. But he found consolation and strength in the idea of returning to his first love: becoming a Jesuit.

Although the consultors voted unanimously against the admission of a man whose intellectual capacities had been severely reduced by tragedy, the Provincial admitted him as a Brother. He then sent him on mission to the Majorcan College of Montesión, which remains open to this day, forever marked with the seals of the Holy Brother.

At Montesión, Alphonsus served for 46 years as a porter. He became the soul of the school for the young students, their parents and the entire staff. Everyone found in the doorman the kind smile, the good advice, the peace that Our Lord knows how to give to souls who, in him, have suffered patiently and learned to knead themselves in prayer. Vocations soon followed among the school's students, one of the most famous being that of the future Saint Peter Claver, apostle to the slaves. The impact was so great that, to this day, the Montesión college continues to identify itself with the Holy Gatekeeper.

Even as Mallorca becomes increasingly secularized, there remains one salient fact among its inhabitants: You can take Christ statues away from the Mallorcans, but you can't take away their Alfonso Rodriguez, who, from the college, has become the patron saint of the whole town.

Ending such a busy month with this spiritual note refocuses our mission at the Historical Institute on what is essential. Last week alone, we celebrated the publication of three books published or printed by the Institute, one of its members and affiliates. It was a moment of great celebration at Hekima University College, with a deep sense that the mission of the Historical Institute was doing its bit with rather extraordinary success given our limited means. And if there was one discussion that nourished many souls during the launch of these books, it was when *Jesuit Ethos* asserted that there is a spirituality of Jesuit historiography without which the history, even secular, of the Society of Jesus would remain incomplete and lack scientific objectivity.

In the sixteenth century, as in the 21<sup>st</sup>, simplicity and humility continue to speak to our humanity. Holiness, as embodied by Alphonsus Rodriguez, leaves no soul indifferent. We find a certain peace, a sense of liberation from our anxieties in our frantic pursuit of great success, that there is no work that is too small, too simplistic, and too neglectful for the Lord. This, I hope, brings us back to that joy we feel when, making ourselves available, we allow ourselves to be moved by the providence of the Lord who, at Montesión, was at once the door, the doorman, and the visitor.

Getting back to what is essential means believing today and hoping for tomorrow. It means loving and serving, knowing how to feel and taste God in little things. It means, like many of you, getting up every morning, not necessarily to do great things for the Lord, but to let him do great things by making use of our smallness.

In wishing the Jesuit Brothers a happy feast day, we express our gratitude to an increasingly rare "breed of Jesuits" whose simple, humble, unobtrusive work has always been so essential to the full realization of our Jesuit vocation and mission in the Church. In fact, contemplating the life of Alphonsus, makes us desire, all Jesuits, to nurture the Brother in each of us.

We pray that, through the intercession of the one they hold as their patron, our Brothers may find joy in belonging to the *minima Compañía*, as Ignatius wished, strengthened by the knowledge that it is not having many that nourishes and satisfies the soul of the



Society or our sense of belonging, but knowing how to feel and taste God within the smallness of our life-mission. Above all, we pray that the Lord will continue to inspire vocations of Brothers to the Society of Jesus. Because this is the part of our Body that continues to

diminish numerically and is weak, it is also for us the most essential (1Cor 12:22-23).

Happy feast of Saint Alphonse Rodriguez!  
**Jean Luc Enyegue, SJ**  
Director JHIA

## CAFÉ ENGELBERT MVENG (THE 5<sup>TH</sup> CAFÉ OF JESUIT HISTORIANS)

The Jesuit Historical Institute in Africa (JHIA) has organized a webinar that was conducted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 2023. We witnessed a good number of participants.



The presentation was delivered by Rev. Dr. Festo Mkenda, SJ who introduced his audience to his recently published book: *The Splash of Diamond: The Jesuit Presence in Ethiopia from 1945 to Present*, a joint publication by the *Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu* (IHSI) of

Rome, and the Jesuit Historical Institute in Africa (JHIA), Nairobi. The session was moderated by Dr. Jean Luc Enyegue, SJ., director of JHIA.

Dr. Mkenda is a Jesuit Priest from Tanzania, currently serving as the Academic Director at *Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu ARSI* (Roman Archives of the Society of Jesus). Before joining ARSI, Dr. Mkenda served as the founding director of the JHIA, Nairobi from 2011 to 2020. His publications are mostly in books, articles and journals focusing on Jesuit History. Examples of such publications are: *A Mission for Everyone. A Story of the Jesuits in Eastern Africa 2014 — (1555–2012)*; *Jesuits in Africa: A Historical Narrative from Ignatius of Loyola to Pedro Arrupe* (Brill Research Perspectives in Jesuit Studies); an edited volume: *Encounters Between Jesuits and Protestants in Africa*, which came out of The Boston College International Symposia on Jesuit Studies, 2, 2013. These and many other publications have earned him international recognition with the Ganss Award in 2022, which recognizes the prominent world scholars in field of Jesuit Studies.

*A Splash of Diamond* is the first book featuring in the series of IHSI Global, launched in 2023. This series looks at Jesuit History through global lenses. Dr. Camilla Russell, the Publications Editor - IHSI congratulated the team that helped produce the book, which, she believes, is the first of a promising series. The book itself revolves around three key players which are the Jesuits, Canadian government and the Ethiopian people and their successive governments. It is outlined in six chapters namely: Before the Canadians, Ethiopia Calling Again, Tafari Makonnen School (TMS), The University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA), TMS, UCCA and Beyond and Canadian Jesuits in Ethiopia in the Province of Eastern Africa.

The catchy title of the book is informed by the value that Emperor Haile Selassie invested in education. He was obsessed with the idea of having quality education for young generation of Ethiopians.

*...many books have been written to the effect that **knowledge is a treasure** that must be grasped and which no one can confiscate. It is **a diamond without price**, which prevents, the breaking of heaven's decrees and preserve one from the path of destruction...*



*JHIA receives a shipment of *A Splash of Diamond* from ARSI-Rome delivered by Ammona Forwarders Ltd*

The second reason that informed the authors choice of title was the arrival of the Canadian Jesuits — 1946 which is seen as the critical Diamond Jubilee for the continued presence of Jesuits in Ethiopia that culminated with the year 2020 celebration of the 75 years Jubilee.

### SELECTED CHATS FROM THE WEBINAR

**CAMILLA RUSSELL :**

*« Just a note from co-publisher IHSI here in Rome – greetings, all ! Thank you, Fr. Festo, and Fr. Jean-Luc, for your kind words earlier - it's been a great project to work on and to publish as the first volume of IHSI Global and a valuable opportunity to work with the wonderful JHLA team as co-publishers with IHSI. Thank you to everyone who collaborated on the volume and congratulations to the author for this beautiful book. We are proud of this volume and encourage everyone to get hold of a copy ! »*

**KIFLE W. WAKAYO, SJ :**

*« Thanks millions, Festo, for this another great work and contribution to the history of the Society in Africa, East Africa in particular. Well appreciated... »*

**PETER L. OMONDI, SJ :**

*« So well outlined. Am looking forward to reading it. Thanks so much Festo ! »*

**GROUM TESFAYE, SJ :**

*« Truly thankful for your informative and wonderful book and presentation without forgetting what you have already written, lectured and numerous interviews. Asante Sana. »*

**ISAYA MWIPOPO :**

*« Congratulations Fr. Festo for a very wonderful mission which fosters curiosity on the works of the Society of Jesus. »*

**SR. MARY MBURU :**

*« Mary mburu Sr. : Thank you Festo for the good work. It's a great inspiration to us and generation to come. »*

**DR GILBERT MARDAI SJ :**

*« Bravo, Festo! This is a fascinating story and brilliantly told. »*

**ALEXANDER WAINAINA :**

*« Congratulations Festo! Thanks for educating us and inspiring us, God bless you. »*

The first two chapters of the book tell the story before and the immediate arrival of Canadians in Ethiopia which summaries Jesuit History from 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> century. The third chapter highlights different successful Jesuits activities in Ethiopia with focus on the Tafari Makonnen school.

The fourth chapter focuses on The University College of Addis Ababa (UCAA) now commonly known as The University of Addis Ababa where the Emperor requested the Jesuits in collaboration with Ethiopian ministry of education to design tertiary programs that could answer the needs of the Ethiopian people. The fifth chapter talks about the change of political situation in Ethiopia, the resistance forces that made Jesuits operations in Ethiopia untenable. The last chapter of the book is a narrative of the absence of Canadian Jesuits in Ethiopia and the presence of Ethiopian Jesuits in the land, with growing vocations among the Ethiopians, some of whom attended the webinar with certain excitement and a sense of gratitude.



*Arrival of shipment of A Splash of Diamond at JHLA*

Ultimately, in this new book, Dr. Mkenda shares a new chapter on the history of the Jesuits in Ethiopia with some fascinating factual evidence given in both narrative and pictorial illustrations. In the first part of this history he brings out the scholarships in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. The author addresses the gaps in the history of the Society in Ethiopia, by developing a narrative that meets every scholarly credential and, at the same time, remains accessible to ordinary people everywhere. A special attention is given to the Ethiopians people, the Ethiopian Jesuits, the specific contribution of Canadian Jesuits in reforming Ethiopian education system place under Emperor Haile Selassie. One cannot state enough the enormous contribution of these missionaries in nation building of post-independent Ethiopia. Yet, as Dr. Enyegue observed, the originality of *A Splash of Diamond* lies on the fact that it talks about contemporary history of the Society of Jesus in Ethiopia, under the direction and supervision of an African political leader.

*By Geoffrey Obatsa and Jean Luc Enyegue, SJ*



# HEKIMA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE (HUC)

## RESEARCH WEEK

Hekima University College (HUC) held a very rich and engaging research week, spanning from the 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2023, themed: “*The Catholic Church’s Synodal Journey, Peace and Stability in Africa, and the Theological Implications of Artificial Intelligence*”

The principal of HUC Marcel Uwineza SJ, shared that the Research Week offers students and faculty members an opportunity to share their research work over the last academic year. The principal reiterated the fact that at the heart of any serious academic institution, research, teaching, and publications are mandatory and HUC offers a good ground to all.

HEKIMA RESEARCH WEEK played host to an exciting event - The Book Launch; a number of books published during the year were showcased among them three books which were produced at Jesuit Historical Institute in Africa (JHIA).

- [\*A Splash of Diamond: The Jesuit Presence in Ethiopia from 1945 to the Present\*](#) by Festo Mkenda, SJ
- [\*Challenges Facing Higher Education in East Africa\*](#) – by Joseph Oduor Afulo, SJ
- [\*The Jesuit Ethos: A Social and Spiritual History\*](#) by Jean Luc Enyegue, SJ

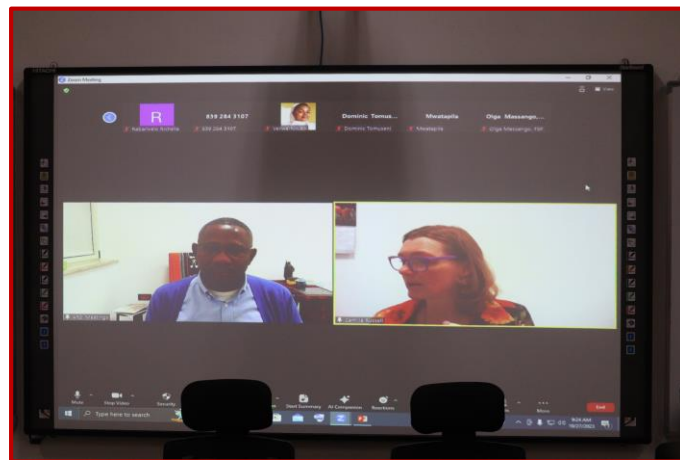
### “A Splash of Diamond: The Jesuit Presence in Ethiopia from 1945 to the Present”

This publication is the result of a collaborative effort between the *Institutum Historicum Societatis Iesu* (IHSI), Rome and JHIA located at Hekima University College, Nairobi.

The launch kicked off with an introduction by Jean Luc Enyegue, SJ the session moderator, who expressed his excitement about the book's release and its potential to shed light on an intriguing chapter of history. However, he humorously cautioned that the book's title, “*A Splash of Diamond*,” might not involve any historical treasure hunts.

Dr Camilla Russell, the Publications Editor at IHSI and the **IHSI Global Series Editor** where *A Splash of Diamond* is the first book in the series, then took the virtual stage to provide a detailed insight into the book's content and its significance. Camilla shared that the book had come to their attention as they were

looking for opportunities to expand their publications related to regions less represented in Jesuit history.



The book, “*A Splash of Diamond*,” delves into the Jesuit presence in Ethiopia, focusing on the modern period, beginning in 1945. The history unfolds in a series of chapters that showcase various aspects of the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia, from its early modern origins to their educational initiatives and beyond. The book not only provides a historical narrative but also incorporates oral testimonies and visual sources, adding depth and authenticity to the story.

One of the key highlights of this publication is its emphasis on the African perspective. The book's content and its historical significance reveal that the Jesuit mission in Ethiopia was different from the typical notion of “*Mission*.” Rather than imposing a foreign agenda, it was marked by collaboration with local authorities and institutions.

Festo Mkenda, SJ., the author, highlighted the importance of this African-led initiative, where the conditions for the mission were set by an African leader. This stands in contrast to historical missions often imposed by outsiders from Europe or Northern America. The book underscores the significance of this Ethiopian initiative and offers a positive example of an African-led approach.

A fascinating aspect of the book is its exploration of the early Jesuit presence in Ethiopia, which dates back to the 16th century. The Jesuits' initial role was to reconcile the Ethiopian church with the Roman Catholic Church, making this history an intriguing narrative of dialogue and engagement.

The conversation touched on the concept of "Mission" and whether it was a *Mission* to evangelize or to civilize. The book's content reflects that the Jesuits in Ethiopia were not on a mission to convert the Ethiopian people to Catholicism. Instead, they sought to collaborate and serve the local communities, primarily through education. The Jesuits aimed to provide educational opportunities, and their mission was more about "presences" than traditional missions.

In summary, *"A Splash of Diamond"* offers a fresh perspective on the Jesuit presence in Ethiopia, showcasing a collaborative and mutually beneficial approach. It stands as a testament to African-led initiatives and challenges conventional notions of "mission." This book is a valuable addition to the world of Jesuit History and provides a deeper understanding of the Jesuit presence in Ethiopia from 1945 to the present.

As we look forward to more publications that explore lesser-known aspects of Jesuit history, this book sets the stage for broader dialogues and encourages a more inclusive approach to storytelling.

### ***"Challenges Facing Higher Education in East Africa"***

This publication is a reprint of the First Edition by Reach Publishers South Africa, reprinted on a Hard Cover, this echoes the mantra by JHIA of serving researchers through affordable, high-quality, scholarly publications accessible on the continent as the book is a fraction of the cost of the original soft cover copy.



The event shed light on the fascinating history and challenges of higher education in Eastern Africa. The book, authored by a distinguished scholar Joseph Oduor Afulo, SJ., who is also the Vice Chancellor of Arrupe Jesuit University in Harare, delves into the complex journey of higher education in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

The book takes us on a journey through time, starting with the colonial era when there were mixed messages about the purpose and shape of higher education. It highlights the gradual development of higher education institutions and the pivotal decisions that led to the establishment of universities in the region. These proto-universities eventually became the foundation for higher education in independent Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

One of the critical themes explored in the book is the on-going struggle for relevance in higher education. What is the purpose of higher education in these countries? Is it solely for the elite, or does it serve a broader societal goal? This question remains pertinent to this day.

The book also discusses the phenomenon of "Massification" in higher education, where the number of students entering universities has significantly increased over the years. With this growth comes the challenge of resource allocation, infrastructure development, and ensuring quality education.

The expansion of higher education in Eastern Africa, including the rise of private universities, is another focal point. Private institutions play a unique role, often providing a different approach to education. However, this expansion raises questions about equality and access to education.

Finally, the book addresses the crucial issue of financing higher education. How much of the GDP should be allocated to this sector, and who should bear the financial burden? Private universities introduce their own dynamics, with the ability to charge higher fees and attract staff with competitive salaries.

In the discussion that followed the book presentation, it became clear that the issues raised are not confined to the past but continue to shape the current landscape of higher education in Eastern Africa. The challenges of overcrowding, resource limitations, and outdated policies persist.

The impact of global influences, such as the World Bank and international educational policies, was also discussed. These global forces have shaped the trajectory of higher education in the region and, at times, have created unintended consequences.

A significant takeaway from the conversation was the unique role faith-based and private universities play in addressing some of these challenges. Their ability to

adapt, offer specialized programs, and provide a different approach to education can complement the efforts of public institutions.

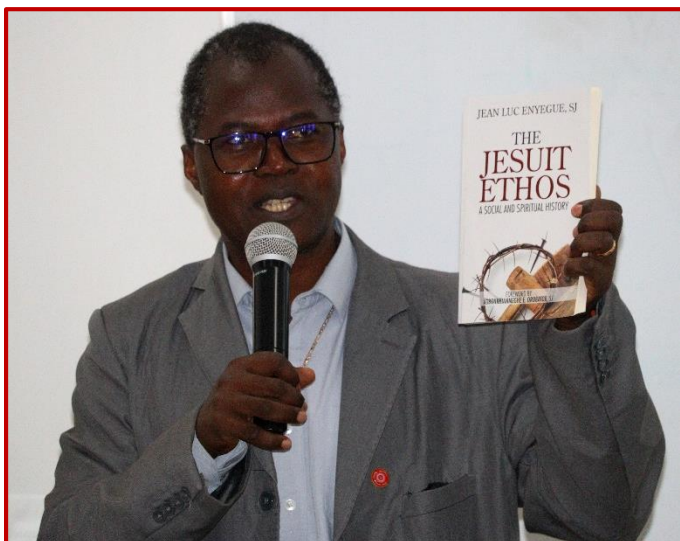
However, as one participant pointed out, the influx of students sent by the government to private universities, without adequate funding, remains a pressing issue. This raises concerns about whether these institutions can continue to thrive and deliver quality education under such conditions.

In conclusion, the book launch event opened up a vital dialogue about the past, present, and future of higher education in Eastern Africa. It highlighted the enduring challenges and opportunities in the field and underscored the importance of continuous dialogue and innovation in the pursuit of quality education for all.

We look forward to further discussions and research that can help address these challenges and ensure that higher education in Eastern Africa continues to evolve and thrive.

### ***The Jesuit Ethos: A Social and Spiritual History***

In a conversation setting with Emmanuel Foro, S.J., the session moderator; Jean Luc Enyegue, S.J, the author of the intriguing new book “*The Jesuit Ethos: A Social and Spiritual History*”, he delved into the depths of the history, spirituality, and cultural relevance of the Society of Jesus. The book offers a unique perspective on the Jesuits and their mission. Jean Luc shared his insights on various aspects of his work, shedding light on the motivations behind it and its relevance to today's world.



### • ***The Journey of Writing***

One of the initial questions posed, was about the time it took him to produce this remarkable book. The author responded that it took him just one year, which is quite impressive for a work that reads like a compelling story. His ability to condense vast amounts of information into an easily digestible format is commendable.



### • ***Motivation behind the Book***

Jean Luc explained that his motivation for writing the book stems from a critical examination of how history has been written, particularly in the context of religious institutions. He emphasized the importance of incorporating the spiritual dimension into the historical account, as it is often overlooked in modern historical narratives. This perspective challenges historians to consider the spiritual motivations behind the actions of religious organizations.

### • ***Ethos and the Title of the Book***

We delved into the significance of the book's title, "Ethos" and how it aligns with the concepts of *Logos*, *Pathos*, and *Ethos*. Jean Luc noted that the title reflects the idea that every action, including the way history is written, is motivated by a spiritual element. It's not just about the institution; it's about the people and the values that drive them. The book, in essence, aims to bridge the gap between the institutional and the spiritual in the history of the Society of Jesus.

### • ***Revisiting Accommodation and Strategy***

A thought-provoking discussion emerged around the Jesuits' historical approach to accommodation, especially in Asia. Jean Luc pointed out that this



strategy might have neglected the importance of popular piety and the power of holiness. He questioned the overemphasis on strategic plans and urged a reconsideration of the role of holiness and virtue in the missionary approach. He also challenged the notion of accommodation, which can sometimes appear as a secularizing project, by sharing examples of how it has been applied in various contexts.

- ***Vulnerability and the Jesuits' Ethos***

The conversation took a turn toward vulnerability, a theme that runs deep in his book. He spoke of the need to make history more relatable, accessible, and inclusive for people with disabilities, both physical and intellectual. The Society of Jesus, with its commitment to social justice and helping the marginalized, must find ways to adapt and accommodate those with different needs. The author urged us to explore how to open up the Spiritual Exercises to a wider audience.

In closing, this book offers a fresh perspective on the history, spirituality, and culture of the Society of Jesus. It challenges us to look beyond traditional narratives and consider the ethos that drives the Jesuits. His work inspires us to make history more inclusive, relatable, and spiritually meaningful in today's world. It is a book that not only explores the past but also offers insights for a more compassionate and adaptable future. We invite you to delve into this thought-provoking journey through history, spirituality, and culture and discover the ethos of the Society of Jesus.

*Denis Mányua*  
*ICT & Digital Archives, JHLA*

## **Memoires: A MAN OF GOD, A MAN FOR OTHERS: TRIBUTE TO FR OSKAR WERMTER (1942 – 12.10.2023)**

“The splendid growth and achievements of the Church in Africa are due largely to the heroic and selfless dedication of generations of missionaries. This fact is acknowledged by everyone. The hallowed soil of Africa is truly sown with the tombs of courageous heralds of the Gospel. When the Bishops of Africa met in Rome for the Special Assembly, they were well aware of the debt of gratitude which their continent owes to its ancestors in the faith.”



(John Paul II from *Ecclesia in Africa*)

I know for a fact that some people do not acknowledge this as a fact. Prominent among them could be journalists like Lawrence Vambe, a product of Chishawasha mission, the first successful catholic mission in Zimbabwe, who had a sympathetic, but critical view of this place and its Jesuits priests. His assessment was that the white missionaries could have done more for the blacks. Others could be scholars like Elizabeth Schmidt who is less sympathetic. Her argument is that even though the mission empowered some women all it did was to give them a choice between African patriarch and western paternalism. Mhoze Chikowero has an unsympathetic and devastating critical view. He accuses missionaries of “epistemicide,” decimating of African cognitive and intellectual structures of consciousness. Not to mention many people who just have nothing but contempt for everything missionary or catholic like those who posted some distasteful comments that I saw on one websites (Mafaro), after it posted about the passing on of Fr. Oskar Wermter.

Those of us who had the privilege of meeting and living with Fr. Oskar Wermter can testify that he was an embodiment what JP II expresses in the above quote. My first encounter of him was through some controversy in his writings, long before I met him in person. I think he was responding to comrade Mugabe’s allegation that the church was not doing anything to uplift women, because it does not involve them in decision making. Oskar must have remarked that the church does a lot for women. In fact, it is the president who keeps the women down by making them

dance and grovel for him at the airport when he comes from his many trips, to which the His Excellence cde Mugabe had responded by saying, “this is the case of a white man who does not know our culture.” I found it daring and courageous for Oskar to say such about the head of state, and one of his fellow missionaries remarked that it was not prudent for him to say so.



When I finally came to meet him, I realize that this statement had nothing to do with an arrogance of a white man who does not appreciate African culture. Rather, he was just being Oskar and he derived his authority to say such things from the people he served in whose lives he was steeped. He did respect people in authority but appeared stubborn sometimes because his priority was ordinary people’s right to a God given dignified life. I remember a few times, I will tell him there is a meeting at the province curia (headquarters) to which all Jesuits are required to attend, but he will say he had some sick people to visit first. He would come after he had attended to his pastoral duties. The people of God came first before any requirement from any political or ecclesiastical leaders.

I remember one Jesuit complaining that Oskar took Mukai which was an internal magazine for Jesuits to do some theological reflection on what they were doing and had turned it into his personal platform for his political views, but for those of us who worked with him in the magazine know that this was not any hijacking of a privileged platform, but it was his way of doing what we now call in the language of current talk on synodality “enlarging the tent” (Isaiah 54: 2). In one of our editorial committee meetings, someone once remarked that we streamline the distribution of the magazine by focusing on specific readers whom we know can read because she had been to places where we distribute the magazine and had noticed that no one

is reading the magazine. Copies were not opened and they were piling on magazine racks. Oskar’s response was that he does not care even if he finds a copy of Mukai being trampled in the street or under the tyre of a truck in a muddy street because for him, we must follow the example of the Sower, who threw some seeds on the road, and on the rock and among thorns, some will eventually will reach good soil and they will produce a hundredfold.

He was equally stubborn when we brought to his attention that some people were not happy with his editorial style because they said he was altering people’s ideas and he maintained that nowhere in the world is an article published the way it is first submitted that is why there are editors. I wanted to contest this position, but I gave up after noticing that the complaint came from those who wanted to make the journal more academic, but Oskar was stirring towards an accessible journalism.

Sometime later someone took over the running of Mukai, and Oscar submitted an article for publication, and it was rejected because they said they would like to get other peoples’ views, he humbly searched for another outlet to publish his article. He did not claim that I am the one who started this thing so my article had to be published. I know from some editors of different magazine that he was in constant looking for outlets for his writing. So Mukai was not a personal platform. It was something that he started and he allowed it to have its own life beyond him.

Fr. Wermter desired and endeavored to empower people. He empowered me on many occasions, he allowed me to edit an issue Mukai, with all the powers and privileges associated with editing and did not control me. I even limited his contribution to one article. I learnt a lot about what is involved in editing and knowing that it was not as easy as I thought. My ordination was during a very difficult time in July of 2008, and I did not have any privilege of receiving mass kits or liturgical books from well-wishers and from the province. Fr. Wermter gathered all the books I needed from different places, the Roman missal, the lectionary, book for anointing of the sick and another for burial. He also collected a few sacred vessel, a chalice and ciborium from different sources and he placed them in some form of messenger bag. So in the end I had an assorted mass kit, like those assorted biscuits from our youth. It was an experience of being empowered with the tools of the trade. He invited me a few times to

mentor the youth from his parish, which happens to be my home parish, taking them out for retreat and days of recollection which the parish paid for and guiding them into coming up with self help projects. It was a privilege to be an unofficial assistant parish priest to the parish of my youth. Once I got sick, I remember one of the youths telling me that Fr Wermter was almost angry that you are sick. He says you are too young to get sick.



His political positions are the ones that endeared himself to some and to others they endangered his life. Once he had to go into hiding when some of his parishioners in Mbare reported him to some rogue elements during the violent 2008 elections. But reading through his writing especially the book about his life from German to Zimbabwe, shows that he was not a political party cadre, but that he understood Vatican II statement that "...while earthly progress must be carefully distinguished from the growth of Christ's kingdom, to the extent that the former can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God." (GS 39). Although Vatican II acknowledge the church is in the world and that the world can contribute to the building of the kingdom, earthly progress must be distinguished from the growth of Christ kingdom because not all earthly progress is necessarily a growth of the kingdom. This is where Oskar disturbed most people. he not carrying an agenda for any political party neither was he just criticizing the ruling party as some claimed but he was distinguishing some so-called earthly progress from the growth of the kingdom, and I think this position is not unrelated to his German experience of the two wars, from which he originated which affected him at a

personal level. He knew better how not to trust so called earthly progress, without abandoning it.

Many things will be said about him, good, bad and ugly, but I am sure the Catholic church in Zimbabwe in particular and Zimbabwe in general are different and better because there was once a Father Oskar Wermter. May he rest in peace and rise in glory. May his tribe increase.

*By Fr. Dominic F. Tomuseni, SJ  
Dean of Students, Hekima University College.*

Photos:

Fr. Tumuseni

JesCom/[https://m.facebook.com/JesuitCommunications?refid=52&\\_\\_tn\\_\\_=%2As-R](https://m.facebook.com/JesuitCommunications?refid=52&__tn__=%2As-R)

## BIRTHDAYS & MEMORIES

**November 1: ALL SAINTS.**

**BB:** Muhigirwa K. B. (ACE); Adandjai Senakpon A. (AOC); Yangambele B. Toussaint (AOC).

**DD:** Filion Paul-Emile (AOR/GLC); Matzke John (SAP).

**November 2: Mass 1, 2 or 3 of All Souls. Priests may celebrate three masses: Second for the Faithful departed and third for the Intentions of the Pope.**

**BB:** Korassi Teweche Carlos (AOC); Luyembe Sosthenes (AOR); Rasolofoarimala Jean Leonce Herve (MDG).

**DD:** Wisely Lawrence (SAP).

**November 3: Bl Rupert Mayer, priest: St. Martin de Porres, Religious.**

**BB:** Fayama Mantuono Fabrice (ACE); Galli Agide (AOC); Ramde Relwinde Denis (AOC); Van den Akker Rob (ACE).

**DD:** Borecki Stephen (SAP/PME); Nicot Victor (SAP); Gately Bernard (SAP); Matadi Lefang W'Inkye Edouard (ACE).

**November 4: St. Charles Borromeo, Bishop.**

**BB:** Agorhom Edmund (ANW); Tang A. Paul Emile (AOC); Somda Beterbeteon (AOC).



**DD:** Desportes Pierre (AOC); Lopes Antonio (SAP) ; De Quirini Pierre (ACE).

**November 5: All Saints of the Society of Jesus SJ**

**BB:** Masini Makuku Jean Bapt. (ACE) ; Nyurahayo Jean Gaetan (RWB).

**DD:** Glavey Thomas (ANW); Sherry Patrick (SAP); Ormonde Jose (SAP); Armstrong Raymond (SAP/UK).

**November 6:**

**BB:** Essengue Amougou Yannick A. (AOC) ; Triaille Etienne (AOR); Ngoso Emimi Christian (ACE); Pitti Djida Alain (AOC).

**DD:** Andriejauskas Michael (SAP); Dos Santos Waldir (SAP); Chishiri Canisius (SAP); Gwembe Ezekiel (SAP).

**November 7:**

**BB:** Edema James (AOR); Julien Jaovory (MDG); Walmsley Gerard Anthony (SAF).

**DD:** De Strycker Eugene (ACE); Cento Emilio (MDG).

**November 8:**

**BB:** Moffat John (SAF/BRI); Nayanah Brandon Gerard (SAF).

**DD:** Tulengi Gibwilayala Martin (ACE).

**November 9: Dedication of the Lateran Basilica.**

**BB:** Kegne Fossouo Aubin R. (AOC) ; Mulemi Patrick (SAP) ; Nsielanga T. Simon (ACE).

**November 10: St Leo the Great, Pope and Doctor.**

**BB:** Fedry Jacques (AOC); Magagula Eurico Matthew (SAP); Mbiribindi Dieudonne (ACE); Rabarison Hugues (MDG); Solonirina Rivolalaina Christophe (MDG); Kambandji Kisandji Nicanor (AOC).

**November 11: St Martin of Tours, Bishop.**

**BB:** Andrade Jose de (SAP); Herrmann Karl (SAP); Searson Charles (SAP); Strzok James J. (AOR/WIS).

**DD:** Mateus Cirilo Moises (SAP).

**November 12: St Josaphat, Bishop, and Martyr.**

**BB:** Banda Emmanuel (SAP); Onjala Douglas J. (AOR); Paulo Fernando Eulario (SAP); Rakotoarisoa Eugene (MDG); Kezanutima J. M. Vianney (RWB)

**DD:** Adams Raymond (ANW); Burbridge Alfred (SAP).

**November 13: SJ SS, Stanislaus Kostka, Religious, Frances Xavier Cabrini, virgin.**

**BB:** Ayina Desire Rigobert (AOC); Bodjoko L. Jean Pierre (ACE); Ekom M. Niku (ANW); Gaspar Casimiro (ACE); Pitroipa Anatole France (AOC); Ramarolahy George Adrien (MDG); Obiezu Lotanna F. (ANW); Owiyo Ronald Odhiambo (AOR); Mboh Joseph Antoine (AOC).

**DD:** Edmonstone George (SAP).

**November 14: St Joseph Pignatelli, priest SJ.**

**BB:** Noubiassem Tobian (AOC); Pichu M. Jean-Faustin (ACE); Randriamamonjy Joseph E. (MDG); Munazi M. Munazi (ACE).

**DD:** Casset Ambrose (SAP/BRI); Baton Guy (ACE); Charles Vincent (ACE).

**November 15: St Albert the Great, Bishop and Doctor.**

**BB:** Dounia Cheflengar Richard (AOC); Makaka Patrick (SAP); Nlandu Ephraim (ACE); Mwanza David (SAP).

**DD:** Padreddi Basil (SAP); **DD:** Padreddi Basil (SAP); Van Der Beken Pasteel Alain (ACE); Odhiambo Victor Luke (AOR).

**November 16: SS Margaret of Scotland; Gertrude, virgin; Roch Gonzalez, Alphonsus Rodriguez.**

**BB:** Cardoso Carlos Dom. (SAP); Mbogue Theophane (AOC); Messingue Jean (AOC); Ugochukwu Vitalis C. (ANW); (ANW); Ulbrich Horst (SAP); Mwibonere Munazi Paulin (ACE); Hama Michael (ANW).

**DD:** Menyhart Ladislaus (SAP); Tryers Henry (SAP); Lewis Langlois (SAP).

**November 17: St. Elisabeth of Hungary, Religious.**

**BB:** Buensi Gosi (ACE); Holvoet Carlos (ACE); Nguruwe Philo. J. (AOR); Rakotoson Benoit Jean Jacques (MDG) ; Honore KY L. Magloire (AOC).

**DD:** Lindekugel Edward (SAP/ORE); Barthelemy Marc (SAP); Bradley Hugh (SAP); Jackson Felix (SAP); Taylor John (SAP); Vierstraete Gerard (ACE); O'Connell Jeremiah (SAP).

**November 18: The Dedication of the Basilicas of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles; St Rose Philippine Duchesne, virgin.**

**BB:** Esenther Keith (SAP/CDT); Mango ASlberto Chipalanga (ACE); Wangbi Michel (AOC).

**DD:** Cusimano Francis (ANW); Da Costa e Silva Luis Ferdinando Torres (SAP); Lange Emile (ACE).

**November 19: Saturday Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

**BB:** Rwezaura Deogratias M. (AOR); Setibo Batuzolele Victor (ACE); Brou Franck (AOC).

**DD:** Linder Joseph (SAP/ASR); Wardale Henry (SAP); De Seille Robert (ACE).

**November 20: Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.**

**BB:** Forbi Kizito Stephen (AOC); Lutaku Nzama Aime (ACE); Mortiaux Henri (ACE); Fafoumi Olaye Franci T. (AOC); Wnagbi Michel (AOC).

**DD:** D'Agostino Angelo (AOR/MAR); Moskopp Gaspar (SAP/ASR); Vervenne Arnold (SAP/NER); De Billy Guy (AOC).

**November 21: The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

**BB:** Djimoguinan Bertrand (AOC); Lubega Aloysius (AOR); Missanga Damas (AOR); Moreno Rexach Jaime (APC/CAS); Ogun David O. (ANW); Rabeony Fulgence (MDG); Assefa Lalisa Runde (AOR).

**DD:** Loubiere John (SAP); Gonda wa Gonda Gerard (ACE).

**November 22: St. Cecilia, virgin, and martyr.**

**BB:** Delville Alain (ACE); Fanambiana Juvenal (MDG); Ndomba Mathieu (AOC); Rakotondramiadanirina M. Ignace (MDG); Ratefiarino T. Yvon (MDG); Rakotomalala Solofoniaina German (MDG); Mantubu Mbo R. (ACE); Bangirimana Joel (RWB).

**DD:** Arkwright William (SAP); Weisbrich John (SAP); Dassenoy Albert (ACE); Croegaert Luc (ACE).

**November 23: SS Clement I, Pope, and Martyr, Columban, abbot SJ**

**Bl Miguel Agustin Pro, Priest, and martyr.**

**BB:** Francisco Bobby Omar (SAP); Kouassi Kouame Clement (AOC); Mulenga Godwin (SAP); Ramarozatovo Donna Fulgence (MDG); Oduor Gabriel Paul (AOR); Mukoko Luzingu Adrien (ACE).

**DD:** Duffy Peter (SAP/BRI).

**November 24: St Andrew Dung-Lac, priest and companions, martyrs.**

**BB:** Kielbasa John (SAP); Munganga Gikug J. Allary (ACE); Ntsolani L. Christian (AOC); Musabyimana Angelo Patrick (RWB); Lenga M. Barthelemy (ACE).

**DD:** McGarry Cecil (AOR/HIB); Corboy James (SAP/HIB); Nunes Francisco Pires (SAP); Guer Michel (ACE).

**November 25: St Catherine of Alexandria, virgin and martyr.**

**BB:** Batantou Patrice (AOC); Maquia Alberto Pedro (SAP); Randriamapionona Solonjatovo Jose Perlin (MDG).

**DD:** Law Augustus (SAP); Dejoux John (SAP); Moulinard Albert (SAP); Fitzgerald William (SAP); Ketterer Francis (SAP).

**November 26: St John Berchmans, Religious SJ**

**BB:** Nsengiyumva Innocent (RWB); Ramonja Maurice (MDG); Randrianirina Jean Aime (MDG); Dono Fabrice (AOC); Mark Dinoshan (SRI).

**November 27:**

**BB:** Etamesor Patrick O. (ANW); Nepa Wa Nepa Deogratias (AACE); Pugin Graham (SAF); Zinhumwe Kundakwashe E. (SAP).

**DD:** Antunez Francis (SAP); Gibb Greorge (SAP); McGinty Franci (SAP).

**November 28:**

**BB:** Abitan Olawole Christian (AOC); Bones Nelson Jose (SAP); Heriamilalaina V. William (MDG); Iriabe Solomon O. (ANW); Kalu Anthony (ANW); Madinunga K. Alain (ACE); Magoba Ronald (AOR).

**DD:** Mathieu Augustin (AOC); Keenan Samuel (SAP); Goncalves Manuel Brito (SAP); De la Kethulle Henri (ACE).

**November 29: Bl. Bernard Francis de Hoyos, priest SJ.**

**BB:** De Maurin Guenole (AOC); Jussa Jorge Inacio (SAP); Mugozhi Ashton I. (SAP); Simalalo Kennath (SAP); Uwineza Marcel (RWB); Monampassi Giordani L. (AOC).

**DD:** Stempfelfel Anthony (SAP); Cordier Joseph (SAP); Ferguson Charles (SAP).

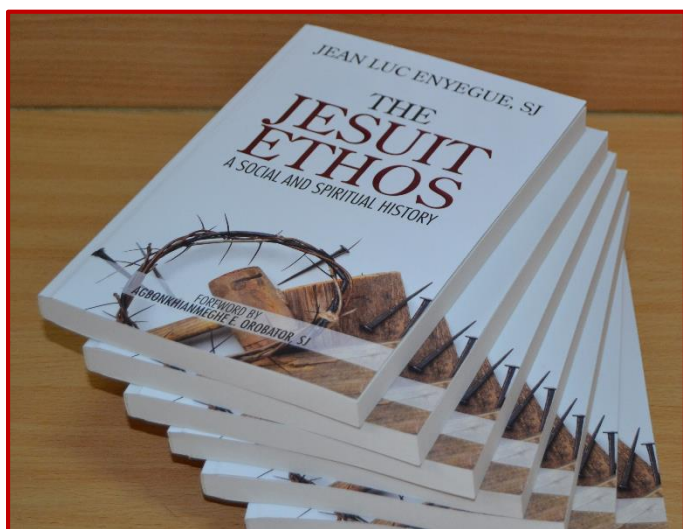
**November 30: St. Andrew, Apostle.**

**BB:** Ngongo Elie Lutshwiw (ACE); Da Silva Domingos (SAP); Sanchez Alvar (AOR/ESP); Ronald Owiyo Odhiambo (AOR).

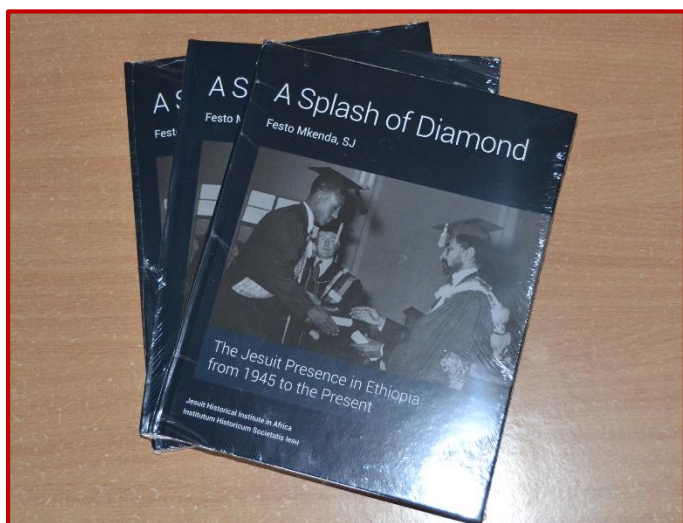
**DD:** Breiten John (SAP).

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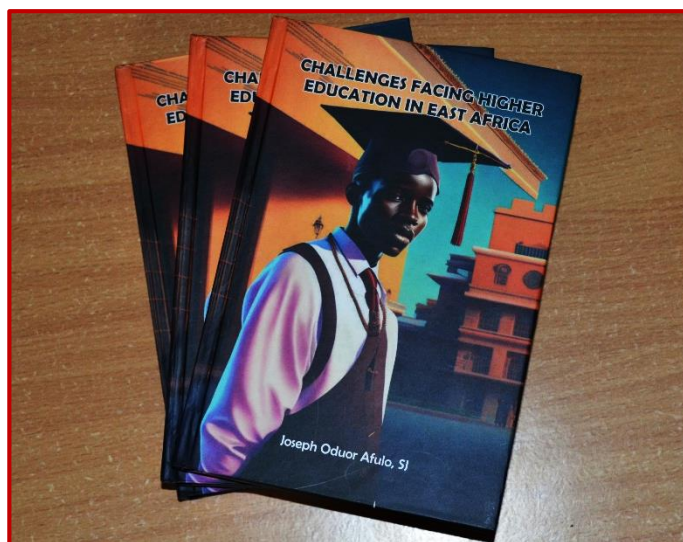
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