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Dear Friends and Family

The Christmas season has yet again arrived after a tumultuous 2022. I mentioned in my last newsletter of August 2022 that we were by then deep into the war between Russia and Ukraine, and still that war drags on with seemingly no end in sight. The stakes are indeed rising, but with both sides having already suffered heavy losses. In any war there are no real winners; I remember after the Second World War it took between 10 and 20 years for most countries in Europe to recover. By now much of Ukraine needs completely rebuilding.

Many spiritual writers point out that war is a result of sin. After the Second World War the United Nations was set up to ensure that there would be no more wars. Idealism is not always very practical but as Christians surely we should dream of a time when peace can finally reign in this battered world. If we can make a concerted effort at this time to accept with joy in our hearts the coming of Christ then at least we will be moving in the right direction. Indeed, Christ promised, "Come to me you who are heavily burdened and I will give you rest, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

There have been many activities at the mission and in our diocese over the last six months. In August we



had about 160 candidates who came to the mission for a course to prepare to be confirmed by our bishop (1). Later we had the confirmations at two of the centres, St. John's Mission itself (2) and

then St. Luke's Dambwamukulu (3), where the candidates for confirmation wore red. In our church, once a child reaches the age of 12 or more he or she is invited to receive the sacrament of confirmation, the same sacrament that the members of the early church received on the day of Pentecost, just 10 days after Christ ascended back to heaven.

Concerning the main road from our mission to Hwange, which is 40 Km long, the local roads department is struggling to fix it. In the last few years two of the bridges have become dangerous to cross since they were partially washed away. Last year we rebuilt one of them and a few months ago we rebuilt the other one; -



Photo (4) shows the bridge before work began, and photo (5) shows it after the work was completed. We also have a programme of repairing potholes in the road. The potholes are just too numerous, so we concentrate on the most serious ones.

These days much of the world has become rooted in the idea of using green energy in order to slow down global warming. I understand sub-Saharan Africa enjoys being the greenest part of the world, which might be partially due to the fact that it is the poorest part of the world. For example, my mission is in a rural area, with most of the people being subsistence farmers; in other words they are virtually all classified as poor. I have about 2,000 parishioners and at the last count two of them owned cars! Recently a poor old woman came to me and begged for just \$1-00 US dollar. I asked her what the money was for and she said she wanted to enjoy Christmas by treating herself to a loaf of bread!

Producing power using green energy has its own challenges. Wind turbines need wind, solar panels need sunshine and hydroelectric powers stations need a flow of water to drive their turbines. Between 1955 and

1960 Kariba Dam was built, creating a lake over 300 Km long, making it the largest man-made lake in the world at the time. It was built mainly to create hydroelectric power from its turbines, but in November of 2022 for the first time the turbines had to be switched off since the water levels of the lake became too low. Consistent low local rainfalls are partly to blame. It may not be until the middle of next year when the lake will have sufficient water to let the turbines turn again.

Meanwhile, I mentioned in my newsletter of August that a big extension to the local Hwange thermal power station is being built, and to supply water for the new cooling tower a one metre diameter pipe is being laid in order to take water 45 Km from the Zambezi River to the power station. With the problems at Kariba this project has taken on a new urgency. This pipeline happens to come right through our mission.



Photo (6) shows the excavations for the pipeline blocking the original entrance to the mission. The top of our church can just be seen above the rubble. Photo (7) shows the pipeline itself. This has forced us to make a new temporary entrance for the vehicles.



I hope the year 2023 will see an easing of the electricity shortages. Concerning our own projects, earlier this year we started building a new 4-bedroomed priest's house at St. Francis of Assisi Mission, Cross Dete. Photo (8) shows the roof is now on. This is a new mission, almost 100 Km from our mission.



The new bishop, Bishop Raphael Ncube, is actively promoting a number of new buildings in the diocese. We have a Marian Shrine at St. Mary's Mission, Lukosi, about 15 Km from Hwange. Photo (9) shows him in the centre of a group of priests, with the new shelter behind. Photo (10) shows the completed



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shelters with their blue roofs. In the foreground of that picture there is the entrance bridge, which was constructed by our own team of builders. Photo (11) shows a picture of Mary, the mother of Christ, depicting her assumption body and soul into heaven. I inserted this photo since the shrine is dedicated to her.

Photo (12) shows a group of the Junior Legion of Mary attending an outreach programme at one of the Hwange town parishes, St. Charles Lwanga, Cinderella Township. They visited the houses in the compound and also had some lessons concerning Christian living. A great time was had by all!

Concerning vocations to the priesthood, I mentioned in my last newsletter that 5 were to be ordained this year. The last one to be ordained a priest was Deacon Moment Mwinde, seen here (13) after his ordination on 14th August at All Souls' Mission, Binga. Bingasits on the banks of Lake Kariba.



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Not to be outdone, on the side of the vocations of our girls, one of the sisters who was originally from our mission, Sr Filisiwe Ngwenya, made her final profession as a 'fully professed' sister on 19th December, and on the 22nd December we celebrated with her a thanksgiving Mass. During the Mass she renewed her final vows (14) at one of our outstations, St James, Kalowa. On the side of our lay people, we had more weddings in 2022, with 9 weddings, which compares with just ? in 2021. Elijah and Gloria married at St. Vincent Church, Nkandebwe Hills on 29th October (15).



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In October the local Legion of Mary organised a pilgrimage for a few days to Mutemwa Leprosy Colony. This colony was set up in the earlier part of the last century and it was made famous by a certain man, John Bradburne, who spent the last 9 years of his life ministering to the patients, before being martyred in 1979. We used to go there every two years on pilgrimage, but Covid 19 interrupted everything so this was the first trip

since 2019. Photo (16) shows some of our pilgrims praying at the very spot where John was shot to death. Prayers are being said for John that he will be one day declared a saint, which will make him the first saint for Zimbabwe. Mutemwa is about 1,100 Km from our mission.

In 2022 we were also able to resume having our annual diocesan choir competition. Photo (17) shows our choir, of over 100 members, competing in the school hall of the Marist Brothers secondary school, Dete,

on 26th November. We came 15th out of 30 choirs, so we reached half way!

Over the last two or three years I have mentioned that we are constructing an irrigation scheme



adjacent to the mission, covering about 4 acres. At last we have started making use of it, with photo (18) showing some of the women at work. More news in the next issue.

I want to finish on a rather unusual note. As I was compiling this newsletter just before Christmas, one of the parishioners from Victoria Falls Parish, Patricia Mambinge, known as 'Trish', died suddenly on 19th December, aged 49, while preparing to go for Mass. I attended the funeral, which was held the next day. It attracted two bishops, 13 priests, several sisters and over 400 parishioners. Not every parishioner gets that sort of treatment! Something had to attract such a number, especially the priests and bishops? The reason is she was seen by all of us as a very special person. She gave her whole life to trying to fulfil the two great laws of love; - to love God and to love her neighbour. As regards her love for God she was a daily Mass goer, she was very active in the church activities, both at parish level and diocesan level. She was an active member of the Legion of Mary, one of the spiritual associations of the church. She was married with several children and was working in the tourist industry. Her superior at work gave a testimony during the funeral Mass, explaining that she was very honest at work, and because she was such a good social mixer she had been promoted to being a manager. The parish chairman also spoke, explaining that she regularly went visiting the poor and the blind, always giving them something.

Here was a dynamic woman, living in the modern world, who somehow managed to combine showing love both for God and for her neighbour. She never rested, even at home she would be cooking for a poor person. It struck me that this woman could be a role model for Zimbabweans living in the modern world. Since she died just a few days before Christmas it also struck me that she can be a good example for all of us to renew our commitment to Christ, even if we live in the 'fast lane' of the modern world.

Christ came into the world for the first time two thousand years ago. He came again this Christmas, and he has come with an invite to follow him. He has given each one of us several talents. Like the parable of the talents, those of us who make good use of our talents, in the way of loving God and our neighbour, will be rewarded in heaven, but those who waste their talents with lives of laziness or worldly living, will suffer, maybe even forever in hell. Let all of us try to make sure that we will rather arrive one day in heaven.

May God Bless you all during this Christmas season and in the year 2023

Fr Tim Peacock