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Dear friends and supporters

Since I last sent a newsletter in January of this year we have received many blessings. On 6th January all roads led to Dete, about 115Km from our mission. It was the occasion of Sr. Filisiwe Ngwenya making her first profession as a sister of the Daughters of Calvary. In photo number (1) she is cutting the cake, flanked by Sr. Indra Munkuli and myself. Sr. Indra received her first profession just two years earlier. Both these sisters are from our parish. Thank God we still have vocations, and it seems they are on the rise. Sr. Filisiwe had earlier been to a poor secondary school, and had failed her 'O' levels. She had even given up all hope of joining the sisters, but thanks be to God the sisters gave her a chance, and with much study she scraped through her exams.

During the Christmas holidays we had a 4-day rally at the mission for the Junior Legion of Mary, with around 90 attending (2). After lessons in the mornings they played sports in the afternoons, with camp fires in the evening. Please God some will have a vocation, while others will marry in a Christian way.

Meanwhile the exceptional weather pattern continued to surprise us. Last year, after a very poor rainy season (El Nino), we had the hottest summer that I can remember, followed by an unusually heavy rainy season (Nan Nino), which went on from November 2016 until March of this year, thanks be to God. All our dams spilt, as you can guess, which means hopefully they will still retain at least some water up until the start of the next rainy season in November 2017. The team of dam builders at present are busy raising the walls of Dundu Dam (3). This dam was constructed about 4 years ago, but since it performed so well we decided to raise the level by 1,2 metres. As I write now the project is about half way through. We again thank our donors from Ireland 'Zimbabwe Rural Development Trust' for the dam development work. As I write this we are having the coldest winter I can remember since I came out here in 1983.

Concerning the school children we help some of the most marginalised with school fees, uniforms, books and exam fees. During the school term we look after 16 girls and 4 boys at our mission. Most of them are learning at secondary school. Several elderly men and women are registered with us at the church for food aid. We assist them also with transport to take them to the local clinic, 10 Km from our mission, for their regular medication. They are about 10 in number.

The incidence of psychosis is quite high in rural Zimbabwe. Often the families can't cope very well. If they don't get their medication these people can become anti social, and even some can get quite violent. Hence we often help by buying the tablets in town. In theory these patient should be treated free, but the government clinics and hospitals often do not have the medication in stock. We employ one such patient at the mission, Onias Chuma. He also suffers from chronic epilepsy, so we regularly buy his medication.

At Katete Primary School, which is being sponsored from private donors in Ireland, the children are thanking the donors as they stand in front of their newest classroom (4). They are also grateful for the new desks and teachers tables (5). There was a time when many of our churches had thatched roofs, but there is now only one left, at Chunga. We have repaired this particular roof several times, but the termites are ever active, feasting on the grass and poles. Finally a large section of grass fell recently, so we are looking for a donor agency to help us erect a more permanent roof (6).

In Bulawayo the Precious Blood Sisters are close to finishing the new infirmary (7). All the building work is complete, and most of the interior. It will house about 24 occupants when completed. It can accommodate bed ridden patients and includes a physiotherapy department. Meanwhile progress has been made at Lumbora Secondary school, where the new teacher's cottage was finally commissioned on 31st May (8). I offered Mass that day for the school and then blessed the cottage, after some entertainment from the pupils. We thank an Irish charity,

S.H.A.R.P for that. Now the school is crying for a second cottage, so we will be crying to our kind donors for more assistance.

I mentioned earlier our vocations seem actually be increasing these days. On 24th June 2017 one of our parishioners, Rev. Albert Mudenda, was ordained a new priest at our mission (9). It was a wonderful day for the parish, with the Bishop and about 30 priests and 20 sisters being accompanied by over 1,000 of the faithful. He has been appointed to work as an assistant priest at Kariyangwe Mission, where we have been involved in building a new priest's house and developing the hospital. On 22nd July another deacon was ordained to be a priest, but from another parish. On that occasion I managed to get a photo with seven of our parishioners who have vocations (10). The names are, from left to right: - Myself, Kelvin Munkuli (Capuchin, studying for priesthood), Fr. Albert Mudenda (Ordained 24th June 2017), Teresa Shoko (Candidate to be a Franciscan sister), Lashiwe Muzamba (just completed priestly studies), Tarcisius Munkuli (Capuchin, studying for priesthood), Octavia Nyathi (Novice for Daughters of Calvary), Gift Sibanda (Studying 2nd year to be a priest).

The new church of St. Joseph at Gwaai mouth is slowly taking shape. It has been delayed for several reasons, but at last it is ready for the roof to be put on (11). The sisters of the Daughter of Calvary are rebuilding an old mission, called Tshongokwe. It had been closed due to the civil war of Independence (1970-1980). I have assisted them with plans to build a new convent and hospital. The convent has just been completed (12). The new classroom block at Dambwamukulu Primary school is also taking shape, and it is ready for the roof (13). At Katete Primary school the new teacher's cottage is also about to be finished (14). You may notice we have already started putting on the roof sheets. We are still waiting for the missing sheets, which are held up since they are imported. I explained already that there are difficulties now getting foreign currency for importing goods. Finally, at the project to extend the girl's hostel at Neshaya Secondary School the walls are almost complete (15). Hopefully this will accommodate another 40 girls once it is finished.

In September this year I will be going on 'home' leave for two months. Please God I will reach the UK, followed by Spain, Germany and Ireland. Much of my time will be spent fund raising for the various projects, but also for the needs of the mission. There are always many people in need, and we try never to send any away empty handed.

Next year will be a milestone for my twin sister Sue and me. On 28th January, if God wills, we will celebrate our 70th birthday. Dear Christopher, our older brother, died last year, not quite reaching his 70th birthday. Sue plans to celebrate our birthday by coming out for a short visit to Zimbabwe, so that we can celebrate it together. Her youngest daughter Ruth is coming with her. She has been a couple of times before, but the last visit was around 25 years ago, with her twins Ruth and Tim. We have to thank God both of us seem in reasonable health.

I haven't mentioned our vehicles yet. I can't write a very rosy story, since we have gone from one breakdown to another, especially with the trucks. Thanks be to God, however, all four are running at present. One big factor in their lack of reliability is the fact that most roads are just gravel, and some are just clearings made through the bush. Even the tarred roads are poorly maintained these days, with many potholes. We also cover a high mileage, and this year our newest vehicle, our 2008 Isuzu 1-ton pick up truck, passed the 400,000 Km mark, meaning that it averages around 45,000 Km per year, which is almost 100 Km per day!

I wish to thank all those who have helped us either with their prayers or with donations. To set up a Standing Order, or give a donation to the charity my sister Sue Jennings runs for us, Children and Families in Need in Zimbabwe (CFNZ), please contact her either by email: jenningsue@gmail.com, or ph:01367 820013.

Our web site: www.childrenandfamiliesinneedinzimbabwe.weebly.com The 2016/7 Annual Reports can be found on the Charities Commission website. Type in CFNZ in 'Charity search' box.

May God bless you all.

Fr. Tim