

## **Provincial Desk November 2023** **Provincial Desk**

### CHRISTMAS 2023

*“Do not dwell on the events of the past; resist contentment with the things of long ago. Behold, I am bringing forth something New.” Is. 43:18-19*



On this festive Christmas season, as we rejoice in the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, may the spirit of love, peace, and goodwill permeate your hearts and guide your mission. May the radiant light of Christ illuminate your endeavours, bringing hope to those you serve and inspiring positive change wherever you are assigned.

We always begin the Christmas season with the lighting of Christmas trees in our community houses, offices, and church buildings, as well as our humble

places of prayer. These evergreen Christmas trees, adorned with Christmas lights, symbolize the infinite capacity of nature and God's people to renew themselves and transform their circumstances into something new whatever the odds. As we exchange gifts and count our blessings, let us celebrate the enduring capacity we possess to significantly transform ourselves and the lives of those we serve by embracing a new and refreshing way of doing mission.

In October 2022, our Superior General launched the Congregation's Animation Plan, urging each one of us to reflect on critical questions that shape our mission today. How do we, as Spiritans, bring uniqueness to the local Church in our missions? How do we respond adequately to pressing mission situations, such as the new urban poor, migrants, refugees, prisoners, indigenous peoples, as well as situations of injustice and threats to life and the environment? Having completed the first part of phase one of the animation plan, we now embark on the second part (2023-2024) of Phase One, where we ponder the unique characteristics of our Spiritan mission and envision the mission the Congregation would choose if arriving in our context today.

I extend an appeal to every member of our province to embrace this invitation - an invitation to transform the way we approach mission and how we can respond more effectively and adequately to the needs of those we serve today going forward. As the book of Judges tells us “Don't expect past victories to sustain us”. (Judges 6:13). The past is a great place to learn from but it's a terrible place to live in. We must learn from them and let them go!

During Christmas, we commemorate the birth of a homeless child, born in poverty, who grew to become a prince of peace and a great reformer by embracing a new approach towards transforming

God’s people. As we embark on the second part of our animation plan, let us adopt this spirit and attitude of our Saviour by carrying out our missionary work in a new way and with excellence.

Throughout this year, I have had the privilege of visiting Confreres in their missions and schools, answering numerous phone calls, and attending numerous meetings, both within and outside our Province. Among the many things I am so grateful for this Christmas is the enduring spirit I observe in most confreres, joyfully continuing the mission of Christ in challenging circumstances. I am also heartened by the trust people place in our Congregation, appreciating the services rendered by our Confreres.

As we continue our sacred mission, may the Holy Spirit be our constant companion, guiding each one of us with wisdom and strength. May the bonds of fellowship with those we serve strengthen, and may the love we share reflect the divine love symbolized by Christmas.

**Wishing you a blessed and Merry Christmas**, filled with the warmth of faith, the joy of service, and the grace of God.

### **BLESSING AND NAMING OF VILLA CROCENZI**



*Fr George Crocenzi, CSSp.*

On 30 November, 2023 in the afternoon, Fr Jeff Duaima, 1<sup>st</sup> General Assistant, accompanied by the capitulants and observers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Kenya Provincial Chapter gathered in Lang’ata for the blessing and naming of the UCEAF house for Specialized studies. UCEAF owes a lot to the Generalate for the refurbishment of this house. The house was given the name, Fr George Crocenzi hence **VILLA CROCENZI**<sup>1</sup>. Just, who is Fr George Crocenzi? Below, you will read with benefit a historical note about Fr Crocenzi.

Year 2023 is significant as we mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the East African Foundation. It is appropriate to recognize a prominent confrere who made unique contribution in founding what later on evolved to East Africa Province and now UCEAF. By way of information, the director of Villa Crocenzi is Fr Eligius Mkulima. The first student is Fr Maliyamungu from Uganda.

#### *FR GEORGE CROCENZI: PIONEER OF THE EAST AFRICAN FOUNDATION*

In the “Joy of the Gospel” Pope Francis says that the Church, and that includes this house that we are blessing today and naming after one of the most prolific Spiritan missionaries, Fr George Crocenzi, be a place of mercy where everyone can feel welcome, loved, forgiven, and encouraged to live the life of the Gospel. (Par.114).

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Photo news on page 7

Fr George Crocenzi was born in Pittsburgh, PA in 1922. Following his studies at Duquesne university and novitiate at Ridgefield, Fr Crocenzi made his vows in the Congregation on July 16, 1944 and was ordained priest on June 3, 1949. By his ordination, he had earned two bachelor's degrees. In his 38 years of service in East Africa, Fr Crocenzi served in Umbwe secondary school and Kilema in Moshi and Kilomeni mission in Same, after which he served in the new Arusha diocese and later Mulago parish in Kampala, Uganda.

In 1966 he was elected principal superior of the Spiritan District of Kilimanjaro, a position he held for six years (two three-year terms). By the time he was appointed principal superior, the idea to found a new province of the Congregation in East Africa had already been taken up by the council of the district of Kilimanjaro as earlier as February, 1963. During his leadership, Fr Crocenzi gave wholehearted support to the idea.

By the year 1964, in Kenya, the confreres there were thinking of the possibility of sending Kenyan Spiritan applicants to the novitiate in Nigeria. On the Tanzania side, in 19 March 1967, the General Council granted a requested approval to send Tanzanian aspirants from the district of Kilimanjaro to the novitiate in Nigeria.

But the period from 1968 to 1969 was very much taken up with the General Chapter of renewal and the district council could not meet until Feb. 1970. It is during this period that Fr Crocenzi took matters into his own hand!! With the consent of only some members of his council, he decided to send four students to the major seminary as Spiritan candidates. Two were sent to St. Thomas Aquinas, Nairobi and two to Ntungamo seminary, Bukoba. The four began their studies as Spiritan candidates in January 1970. Fr Crocenzi went out of his way to personally solicit funds from benefactors to support these new Spiritan students. This pivotal move in the history of the spiritans in East Africa was not without critics. Some felt that Fr Crocenzi was stretching his authority by sending those Spiritan aspirants to the seminaries and that he had to await the decision of the District Chapter on this matter. In his letter to the General Superior, Fr. Joseph Lécuyer, on 17 July, 1970, Fr Crocenzi said that he had to act, otherwise "there would be just endless fruitless discussion".

Shortly after this letter to the Superior General, at a district chapter held in Moshi, Kilimanjaro from 21 to 23 1970, this issue of African vocations to the Congregation was taken up again. The following proposition was put to the capitulants on Wednesday, 22 July.

"That we accept African vocations into the Congregation and if sufficient numbers warrant it to begin a vice province or a province of East Africa"

Voting was by secret ballot with the following results:

Yes 18, No. 16, Abstention 1, blank ballot 1

A follow up resolution read:

"The Chapter demands action from the Principal Superior (Fr. George Crucenzi) and his council on actually implementing the acceptance of local Spiritan candidates."

This resolution was carried by 24 votes to 8

Fr Crocenzi's financial appeal to the American provinces for this new project was heavily defeated at the USA (East) provincial Chapter in December 1970. But within a few years, the Province made generous contribution that enabled the project to take off the ground. Fr Crocenzi succeeded in

persuading Bishop Dennis Durning of Arusha to transfer Usa River from the diocese to the Congregation and the agreement was signed between Bishop Durning and Fr Crocenzi in December 1971 ceding Usa River to the Spiritans. The burden of repairing buildings at Usa property and that of providing fees and other expenses for Spiritan seminarians fell to Fr Crocenzi and to the private donations of confreres in the district of Kilimanjaro.

Fr Crocenzi went out of office in March 1972. But before leaving office, he personally drew up a document detailing the state of the Foundation and making valuable suggestions and recommendations. He continued to live at Usa River taking an active interest in the new Foundation and assisting Fr. Joseph Babu in the completion of the work on the buildings there.

On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> January 1973 the first group of Novices were received into the Noviciate at Usa River by Fr Patrick Ryan and Francis Mketa. This marked the beginning of the East African Foundation. On 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1989 (Liebermann Day), the East African Foundation becomes the East African Province with Fr Daniel Macha as its first Provincial bringing to completion the good work started and supported so energetically by Fr Crocenzi.

In 1983 Fr Crocenzi moved to Mulago parish in Kampala, Uganda. Returning to the USA in 1988, he became director of the St. Peter Clever faith community in Philadelphia. In 1993 he took up the challenge of serving in the tiny islands of Grand Turk, Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean.

Fr. George Crocenzi, an excellent example of good leadership, a man of prayer with a heart for justice, and a true believer in the power of providence and the Holy Spirit, passed on to the Lord at Bethel Park retirement home on January 25, 2000. May he rest in Peace and may his good work continue.



### 3<sup>rd</sup> KENYA PROVINCIAL CHAPTER 2023



From 26<sup>th</sup> November to 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 2023, our sister Province, Kenya, celebrated 3<sup>rd</sup> Provincial Chapter with the theme “Availability for the service of the Gospel-attentive to the signs of the times (SRL 25). The venue of the Chapter was Saint Mary Magdalene Retreat Centre which is located within the compound of the Resurrection garden in Karen, Nairobi. The Superior General, Fr Alain Mayama and his First Assistant, Fr Jeff Duaimé were in attendance. There were 23 Chapter delegates and 3 observers from Uganda, Australia and Tanzania. The Chapter was moderated by Frs Kenneth Okoli and Gerard Nnamunga.

The recollection preacher, Fr Albert Toppo, Redemptorist, gave a spiritual food for thought to the participants urging them to have “the passion for Christ,” without which it will be impossible to touch the lives of the people whom they are called to serve as religious missionaries. The recollection gave a good momentum to the business which followed. The opening address from the General Council, Frs Jeff and Alain, was helpful in that the participants were situated in the wider context of the life and mission of the Congregation. The Congregation is experiencing “structural, demographic and financial transition,” enjoined Fr Alain, he continued “this transition has impact on the governance and leadership service in the Congregation.” He exhorted the delegates to be united and allow the Spirit of renewal to lead and guide them to do something new in mission today. Among other things, he reminded the participant that 77% of membership in the Congregation is comprised of Africans. This reality calls for more responsibility, commitment and ownership of the Spiritan mission in Kenya and beyond.

The tone was set. The timetable was somehow punitive but the presentations, contributions and discussions were both rich and profound. Exchanges were made with calm and respect even on divergent issues. The deliberations were made factoring in insights and decisions of Bagamoyo 2021. A planned excursion on Thursday afternoon to Spiritan House, blessing of Villa Crocenzi and dinner at Kamirithu parish was both replenishing and refreshing. It is symbolic that the Chapter took place within the compound of Resurrection garden, it is hoped that the light of the Risen Lord would illuminate the Chapter decisions and commitment to renew Spiritan life and mission in Kenya.

FROM MISSION



*Fr Joseph Mahimbali, 2nd squatting bent on the front row, and colleagues*

Fr Joseph Mahimbali reports: *“I am currently following a cultural induction course held in the city of Brasília, 15 hours by bus from São Paulo where the Provincialate is located and 1:30 hours away by plane. It is a one-month course which will end on 15 November, 2023. I appreciate the course because it allows us to interact and get to know other missionaries from different countries. I am glad to meet colleagues from Angola where I did my PME and some from Portugal where I did my 2<sup>nd</sup> Cycle formation. I will return to the Provincialate to receive my assignment. I arrived here by plane just on the second day of my arrival in the Brazil.*



PHOTO NEWS



*Blessing and naming of Villa Crocenzi 1*



*Blessing and naming of Villa Crocenzi 2*

### BIRTHDAYS

JANUARY		
Gegory	MALLYA	01
Nolasco	MUSHI	01
Festo	URASSA	05
Emmanuel	SAITOTI	06
Nicetas	KYARA	07
Ezekiel	MREMA	12
Clement	TEMBA	13
Linus	MBAJO	13
Joseph	MASHAKA	15
Peter	MAMBO	18
Arbogast	PLATO	20
Gaudence	MAEMBE	25
Eligius	MKULIMA	27
Joseph	SHIO	23
Rogasian	KIMARIO	31

### PRAYERS

Frs Evod Shao and Nolasco Mushi are back from India where they attended scheduled clinics. Fr Peter Assenga had a successful procedure in India. He is back and in convalescence. Fr Nicetas will soon leave for India for specialized treatment according to the recommendation of his doctor. Let us continue to pray for them and all who support us in the care of our sick Confreres.

Fraternally,



Florentine Mallya, CSSp.  
Provincial Superior

