



Provincial Desk March 2022 Supplementary – 16

PREAMBLE (to the article below)

The Guide for Spiritan Formation: Annexes 2013 says,

A people with no history are like trees without roots. Our history is itself the “place” where we have made ourselves known as Spiritans. Our history is not just tied to events and peoples but also connected to places. Spiritan history shows the great ardour of the pioneers, in the foundation of local churches and in multiple works created for the service of the peoples (GSF Annexes: Annexe II: pg. 50 - 6.1.1).

Every year the novices are accorded the opportunity to visit some of the historical places in Tanzania as part of their formation and training. It is clear from this article that they have witnessed how history and the current ministries within the province speak of our charism. The article shows how Spiritan missionaries always work to promote human person in all his/her dimensions - from the proclamation of the Word of God to giving education; working among the youth; from pastoral ministry to providing health care and being in solidarity with the poor and the most neglected in our society. It is our hope that the experience these novices had during their pilgrimage will become a source of inspiration for their vocation as well as instilling in them a sense of preserving and conserving our patrimony. We wish our novices all the best in their journey of faith and Spiritan life.

Florentine Mallya, CSSp.





ECHOES FROM OUR PILGRIMAGE TO THE HISTORICAL SPIRITAN PLACES: 21-25 MARCH 2022

Introduction

It is indeed a wonderful privilege which has been granted to us to witness with our own eyes where Christianity actually began on mainland East Africa almost two centuries ago, most precisely in 1868, thanks to the initiative of Bishop Armand Maupoint of St Denis, Reunion Island. Fr Anthony Horner was the pioneer of this mission. Bagamoyo has been and is still undeniably a place with an amazing history which should be taught to many generations to come! Being there is to experience in one's heart and soul on one side, the very hard labor performed both by our ancestors whose first work was the liberation of slaves, and on the other side, to taste the succulent flavor of the abundant fruits made available from the work of evangelization whose vibrant faith we see today in East Africa.

With a pilgrim baton to Bagamoyo

The privilege to get in touch with the history of the Congregation was granted on the 21st March 2022. We left the Spiritan Novitiate in Oaklands Magamba at 5.30a.m. The journey was so wonderful as we were going to dig deeper into Spiritan roots in East Africa. On the way, we had an opportunity to visit St Francis Xavier Parish in Mandera which was formerly under the Spiritans. The Church built in 1881 is really beautiful but needs to be renovated. Fr. Emmanuel, the parish priest, was very hospitable to us. In the rectory, we were really amazed to see the pictures of our founders and ancestors like Poullart des Places, Libermann, Levavasseur still hanging on the walls. It is interesting to note that many diocesan priests and other religious confreres do acknowledge and appreciate the wonderful work accomplished by the Spiritan pioneers. The visit to Mandera Parish was welcoming evidence that indeed the Spiritans left an indelible mark that is worth recognition. Their presence there in the 19th century contributed to the spread of Catholic faith in the mainland of East Africa. We were also informed that the Congregation of the Sisters of the Daughters of Mary from Reunion, popularly known as *Filles des Marie de la Reunion* worked here with the fathers. We also learned that as individuals we have to make efforts to know the reality of people's lives and culture where we are missioned. This can help to avoid the problem of syncretism. It's through symbiotic relationship that the Church grows and the inculturation of the Gospel will breed forth a genuine local Church.

On our way to Mlandizi, just before turning to Mandera junction we met the Provincial Superior, Fr Florentine Mallya, on his way to Morogoro. He greeted us in our bus. We were really touched by this gesture. It really shows the fatherly love that the Superior has for us. We arrived at Mlandizi early in the afternoon where Fr Peter Kilasara, is



trying hard to start a technical school. Unfortunately, he was not around when we were there, but Br. Erick Kyara and the staff around were really kind to us. We visited the compound and had a lovely lunch. We were really inspired by what we discovered there. People who have vision and contacts can really do wonders! They challenge us not to give up in life especially when the wind doesn't blow our side. We need to be resilient and determined to go beyond what we see so as to bring positive changes around us. Above all, it became clearer to us that the Holy Spirit is the protagonist in mission who can guide us through even when we are opposed and discouraged. We finally reached at Stella Maris hotel (an incredibly huge and marvelous hotel built by Father Valentine Bayo) which was our base during the 5 days we spent at the coast. The structure we saw invited us to think of ways to support our Circumscriptions through the little that we can do. The building itself creates some job opportunities for the youth in the area. Spiritan Rule of Life spells out clearly the need to have income generating activities for self-reliance and sustainability of our life and mission.

We participated in weekdays Masses at Immaculate Heart Parish at 7:00 AM, followed by breakfast at Stella Maris hotel. The 1st parish church was built in 1872. We were imbued with the deep sense of reverence each morning as we felt to be in communion with our Spiritan ancestors who prayed and praised the Lord in the same building. At a different level, our participation in Masses was uplifting in that we developed a profound sense of connection with the history of our Congregation and the Catholic Church in East Africa.

The second day of our pilgrimage was marked by visits to different historical sites together with the various Marian institutions founded by Fr. Valentine Bayo. Br. Straton Ngowi proposed to be our guide for the day. We first stopped at the Mission Cross (Msalabani) erected for the first time in 1868. Then, we visited the cemetery where the pioneer missionaries were buried together with the last known ex-slave, Maria Ernestina, who died on 8 December, 1974. The youngest Spiritan confrere who died was Br. Appolinaris who was only 21 years old. We then moved to Marian Girls secondary school founded in 1997. Fr. Faustine Emil and Sr. Albina were our hosts. The school is really doing well. From there, we entered the grotto dedicated to the Immaculate Conception where there are weekdays Masses for Marian students. We also visited St. Joseph Training Centre specialized in woodwork, electricity and metal work. Sr Gabriela took the initiative of adding hotel and catering training and that is why the institution is now called Marian Training Centre. The training of young people for specific professions and trades has been a Spiritan educational priority. The skills acquired help them to secure employment or hire themselves to earn livelihood and support for their respective families.

We then moved to the Museum within the mission compound where much can be learnt about the tragedy of slavery and the way the missionaries struggled to ransom some, educate and evangelize them. We saw their shackles and other vestiges of



torture. The visit to museum gave us a clue on how the first missionaries worked indefatigably to ensure that slave trade ends. Their dedication to freedom led the missionaries to sign abolition treaties to end the shameful slave trade which is one of the remarkable things they did. This dark page of history should be a reminder for us to take seriously our Congregation's commitment to issues of justice and peace where we are sent.

We proceeded to Marian University College (MARUCo) and had a copious brunch at Daniel Brottier community where Frs. Casti Mushi, Silvanus Mringi and Rogasian Kiraia reside. We then made a short trip to Kitopeni postulancy community. Frs. Lucas Tilisho, Gervas Taratara and the postulants were delighted to receive us. We had enough time for sharing and mutual encouragement. We took lunch together and visited their garden-they even grow rice! We had a lovely and friendly football match with the postulants. This particular visit reminded some of us about the initial steps we made when we began our vocational journey.

In the evening, we were invited for supper at the community of Immaculate Heart Parish. Frs. Nicetas Kyara, Peter Mambo, Eric Temba and Br. Straton Ngowi were our gracious hosts. They offered us a welcome which exemplify the legendary "Spiritan hospitality." With much zeal, Fr Nicetas Kyara shared with us a brief history of Christianity in East Africa.

On the third day of our pilgrimage, we visited Marian Boys secondary school and the dispensary adjacent to Christ the King parish at Kerege. Fr. Mugisha was really hospitable to us. He took us around the compound and visited the new rectory under construction. We continued to the Holy Ghost School Daniel Brottier Centre, popularly and formerly known as Dogodogo Centre, where Fr. Maliti is giving his best for the 'little ones'. The centre gathers desperate boys and girls. The process of partnership with Auteuil has just been completed. Overall, it was an enriching experience and we gained insights from the conversation we had with Fr. Maliti about the life of these children at the centre. We played a friendly football match and had time for a social evening together with the children.

We spent the last day further South, in Dar es Salaam, at Libermann pre & primary school and deaf school (a new Spiritan initiative) at Mbezi beach. We met Fr Maendeleo, the chaplain. His jovial nature made us feel at home. He shared much with us about Libermann institutions. We were given a thorough tour of the deaf school and awed by the use of sign language after which we crossed to the other side of the compound where there is a normal pre & primary school. Madam Loyce Gahutu, the headmistress, gave us a warm welcome and proudly shared with us the exploits of her school in the arena of quality education and academic excellence. We had an impressive brunch together and shared much with the two headmistresses and some Spiritan confreres including Frs. Rogasian Masoy and Deacon Emmanuel Saitoti. The next leg of the trip was a visit to St. Dominico parish where Frs Daniel Kilala, Dan

Macha and Liberatus Mapendo minister. The new towering church building and other structures within the compound look magnificent. We also visited Salasala parish where Frs. Peter Assenga is the parish priest, temporarily assisted by Fr Raymond Joel on his way to Taiwan.

We spent the last evening at Epiphany parish in Bagamoyo with Frs. Joseph Shayo, Joachim Karabwe, Faustine Emil and invited confreres. Wherever we met Spiritans, we were made to feel comfortable and at home. This wonderful experience of hospitality has taught us that we are strong when together and that no human being is an island.

Conclusion

We would like to express our deepest and sincere gratitude to our formators, Frs. Deus Tarimo and Joseph Amasi who made our pilgrimage wish to Bagamoyo a reality. Many thanks go to our driver, Mr. Nick Shirima, for his professional driving and to all Spiritan confreres and staff in the communities and institutions we visited. Finally, a word of thanks to Fr Joseph Kavishe and the personnel who took good care of our house and compound while we were away. We wish that future groups of novices benefit from the same historical pilgrimage which, without any doubt, has qualitatively contributed to the growth of our sense of belonging to the Congregation.

Novices 2021-2022