

Provincial Desk May 2022 Supplementary – 18

**Rt. Rev. Augustino Shao, CSSp., Bishop of Zanzibar,
celebrates the Silver Jubilee of his Episcopate
in a colourful ceremony at Amani Stadium**



*On the right-hand side of Bishop Augustino Shao, CSSp. is the President of Zanzibar
Dr. Hussein Ally Mwinyi*

On the 10th May, 2022, the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Zanzibar Rt. Rev. Augustino Shao, CSSp., celebrated the silver jubilee of his episcopate (1997-2022), in a celebration held at the Abeid Amani Karume National Stadium - Zanzibar. The celebrations were attended by, among others, nearly almost all the Catholic Bishops of Tanzania, with very few exceptions due to illnesses or other emergencies, the President of Zanzibar Dr. Hussein Ally Mwinyi, the Spiritan Provincial Superior of Tanzania Rev. Fr Florentine Mallya, the Deputy Mufti of Zanzibar Mahmoud Mussa Wadi, a regional commissioner, countless number of priests from mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, and most Zanzibar Christians and some Muslims. The colourful celebrations, which lasted for hours, were preceded by a celebration of Eucharist presided over by Rt. Rev. Bp. Augustino Shao and concelebrated by the cardinal, all the bishops and priests in attendance.

In his homily, Rt. Rev. Bp. Rogath Kimaryo, CSSp., of the Catholic Diocese of Same, praised Bishop Augustino for a celebration of 25 years of great achievements in Zanzibar as a whole, thanks to his heroic leadership. He pointed out that Bishop Shao's unwavering commitment to evangelization; Peace and a holistic development of his people are, in fact, part of his DNA, for throughout his pastoral ministry the bishop has displayed these qualities wherever he was appointed, in or outside the continent of Africa. He added that, like his master the Good Shepherd, Bishop Shao never abandoned his people even when the

security situation in the islands had deteriorated significantly for Christians and especially for his priests. He revealed that the bishop refused to heed to many voices urging him to temporarily leave the islands until the situation in Zanzibar was under some control. But Bishop Shao chose to stay with his people in the midst of many dangers and even threats against him personally. Bishop Kimaryo made the entire stadium burst into a great laughter when he revealed that, among his fellow bishops, Bishop Shao is known as Mufti. It is a nickname he earned due to his firm commitment to interreligious dialogue, especially relations between Muslims and Christians. He concluded by saying that, given everything the Bishop did in these 25 years of his episcopate, the principle legacy he has left the people of Zanzibar is LOVE AND FORGIVENESS.

Bishop Kimaryo paid tribute to two of the Sultans of Zanzibar for their significant contribution in the establishment of continuous evangelization in Zanzibar and later in mainland Tanzania. In 1860 Sultan Seyyid Majid bin Said (1856-1870) permitted three priests and six sisters from the diocese of Reunion - a French Island in the Indian Ocean - to begin work in Zanzibar offering them support in their work of looking after the sick and the poor and teaching their converts useful trades.

Two years later the Bishop of Reunion entrusted the mission to the Spiritans and in the following year, Frs Anthony Horner and Edward Baur arrived in Zanzibar. In 1868, Sultan Majid provided Fr. Anthony Horner with a suitable compound to start the “Christian Freedom Village” for ransomed ex-slaves. This land is now occupied by Marian Girls school. The Bagamoyo Journal called him quite often: “*Our good friend.*” On July 21, 1875, Sultan Seyyid Bargash bin Said (1870-1888) paid, invited by Fr. Antony Horner, an official visit to the headquarters and mother house of the Spiritans in Paris France, and was warmly welcomed by the Superior General, Fr. Schwindenhammer. With his visit, Sultan Bargash demonstrated his close relation with the Spiritan Missionaries of Zanzibar and Bagamoyo. (*Fr. Horner in “Mission Catholique de Zanguebar” in 1880.*)

In his remarks, Bishop Shao expressed his sincere gratitude to the people of Zanzibar with whom he journeyed in these last 25 years. He thanked them especially for their love and faith in him and their continued support both moral and material. He reminded the audience at the stadium that when he was consecrated bishop in the same stadium 25 years ago, the ceremony was attended by, among others, President Benjamin Mkapa, President Salmin Amoor of Zanzibar and a multitude of people from both mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar. He took the opportunity to sincerely thank President Hussein Ally Mwinyi for gracing the celebrations with his presence. He said that the President’s presence at the celebrations was a clear expression of his sincere respect for the Catholic church and the bishop of Zanzibar and that it was yet another demonstration of the good relationship that has existed for centuries between the Church and various leaderships in Zanzibar, dating back to the time of the Sultans.

Bishop Shao took the opportunity to appeal to the President to address a variety of challenges that Catholics and other Christians unfairly face when living and working in Zanzibar. Most of the challenges revolve around land ownership, residential and work permits, segregation in employment opportunities, drugs and human trafficking and a failure to uphold the rule of law by some of the security services personnel and immigration department officials. On the issue of land, the Bishop told the president that over all, Christians and their institutions are denied land ownership and are often treated unfairly whenever they are involved in a land dispute. He said that in his interpretation, the difficulties around land ownership and that of unfair employment opportunities are both religiously motivated and constitute a violation of the constitution of Zanzibar, which ensures equal rights for all citizens. The Bishop acknowledged, though, that in his presidency, Dr. Mwinyi has introduced a lot of positive changes and he commended his excellent leadership that has put Zanzibar on a firm path to development, accountability, respect of democratic norms and peace.

The Bishop thanked his family, his teachers and guardians. Through the Spiritan Provincial of Tanzania, Rev. Fr Florentine Mallya, Bishop Shao expressed his special thanks to the Congregation of the Holy Ghost especially to all those who were involved in his priestly and religious formation.

In his address, the President of Zanzibar Dr. Hussein Ally Mwinyi congratulated Bishop Shao on his silver jubilee and acknowledged significant achievements that have been accomplished under the firm leadership of Bishop Shao in the last 25 years. He thanked the bishop for his active role in peace building and conflict resolution in Zanzibar. He commended his leadership and collaboration with both the Government and leaders of other faiths to ensure that the people of Zanzibar live in peace and harmony to ensure sustainable development for all.

He promised the Bishop and the nation as a whole that his government will move quickly to address the shortcomings that the bishop had pointed out earlier. He reiterated that in order to maintain peace, there must be fairness for all. He emphasized the connection that is always there between justice and peace and said that everyone deserves to be treated fairly. The President concluded by saying his government will address, as soon as possible, the challenges that were identified by the Bishop so that everybody in the islands will get their rights and the church be able to implement their programmes unhindered.

In his message through the Nuncio's office, Pope Francis commended Bishop Shao for his glorious services to the church and God's people especially his commitment to interreligious dialogue within his Diocese.

Addressing the Bishop as "Our dear brother Augustino Shao", the pope said, "on the occasion of the silver jubilee of your episcopate, we congratulate you with a heart full of joy especially for the glorious mission you are carrying out for your people in Zanzibar and for your effort to promote dialogue among people of various religious denominations. Through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and your patron St. Augustine, we wish you apostolic blessings and heavenly blessings, for you and for your people," the pope concluded.

Born on the 25 September 1951 to Lusia Manyange and Mwaleli Mabolio Malamsha, Bishop Shao went through a traumatic experience when his mother Lusia passed away before he was even a teenager; he was only 9 years old. On the day of her burial, his uncle told him that his mother would return home in a few days. As a child, he believed him but his beloved mother did not come back. Being the last born, the child Augustino had a very close relationship with his mother who continued to breastfeed him until he was almost 6. He stopped breastfeeding at the intervention of his sisters. In 1967, while two of his sisters were already married, his father, a coffee farmer and polygamist, fell ill and was hospitalized in Mawenzi district hospital in Moshi. A standard 7 young Augustino was given an opportunity to visit his father in hospital. This first visit became also the last, for his father passed on to the Lord a few days later. In life, his father was not very enthusiastic about his desire to become a religious missionary and after his death his extended family tried their best to pressure him to get married, an idea he flatly rejected.

Bishop Shao started his religious vocation journey by joining Usambu seminary in Kenya and later Uru seminary in Moshi, Tanzania. After he completed form four, the late Fr Josaphat Msongore, the vocation director at the time, recruited him into the Holy Ghost Congregation.

After a lengthy process of religious and priestly formation, he was ordained priest on the 4th June, 1983 at the age of 31 and was appointed to the diocese of Monze, Zambia. He also worked for a short time in the diocese of Livingstone. He was later appointed to the Federal Republic of Germany where he worked for the youth and studied missiology at the University of Bonn. He later joined the University of Duquesne, Pittsburgh, after which he was elected Provincial Superior of the Spiritan East African Province.

After completing his two term of office, he returned to the University of Duquesne from where St. Pope John-Paul II appointed him bishop of the Diocese of Zanzibar on 30th Nov. 1996. Initially he did not accept the appointment, and he was given one week to pray over it and consult with his spiritual director and his religious superiors both in the USA and in Tanzania. A week later he finally accepted the appointment and was ordained bishop of Zanzibar on the 27th April 1997, an event attended by the then presidents Benjamin Mkapa and Salmin Amoor of Zanzibar. He was consecrated bishop by His Eminence Polycarp Cardinal Pengo and the late Bishops Bernard Ngaviliau and Dennis Durning, both Spiritans.

The three key pillars of his missionary work in Zanzibar are evangelization, education and healthcare.

Fr Gaudence Mushi, CSSp.