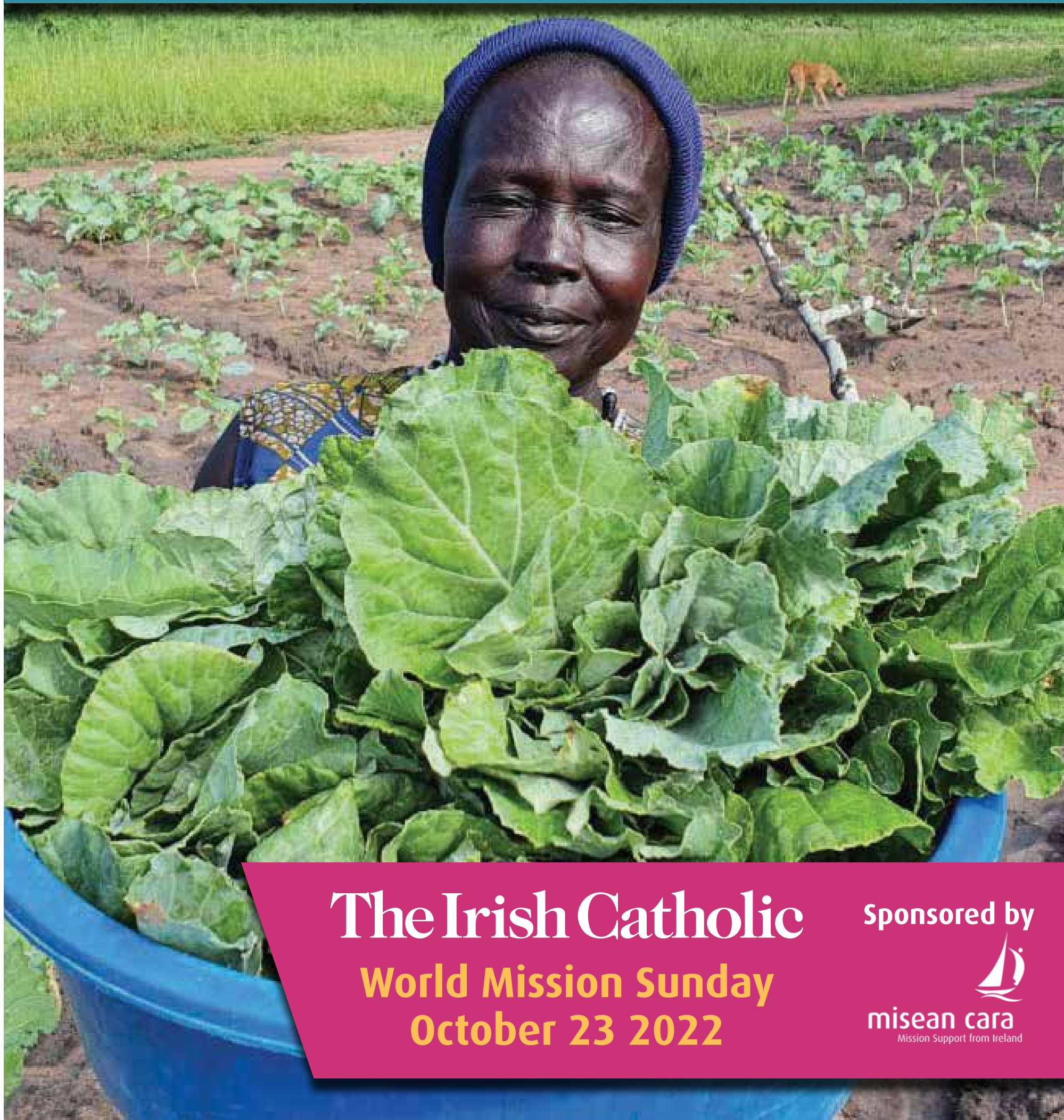


Reaching the Furthest Behind First – The Continuing Legacy of Irish Missionaries



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Missionaries stay with their people despite horrors overseas



Misean Cara CEO John Moffett and Misean Cara staff visit students and teachers in a Three2Six Project classroom at the Sacred Heart College, Marist Observatory in Johannesburg, July 2022. Photos: Lizette Cressey



Engaging with people's faith is crucial to any development work overseas, Chai Brady hears

Waiting in a small village in Peru as the threat of execution by a terrorist group increases is not a scenario many people find themselves.

That was the situation in which Sr Josephine (Jo) McCarthy found herself many years ago when she was working as a missionary. Speaking to *The Irish Catholic*, the Presentation Sister discussed the role of missionaries abroad and how valuable they are in whatever community they find themselves – particularly when circumstances become hazardous.

Sr Jo worked in Ecuador and Peru for more than

20 years and was recently appointed a board member of Misean Cara, a role she says has further enlightened her to the “impressive” volume and spread of the Church’s work in developing countries across the world.

Funding

Misean Cara receives substantial funding from the Government through Irish Aid and coordinates, monitors and evaluates the work of missionaries. Missionaries’ unique and holistic approach, Sr Jo states, has created one of the most important things needed to implement positive change: trust.

She says: “Missionary work is not confined to one particular project in an area, they live there and they have a commitment to and knowledge of the area. They respond with the community, they’re engaging with the community on the ordinary issues of everyday life, on water, light, housing, drought or whatever the case may be.

“They have a trust with locals. It is very interesting that trust is one of the issues that the World Bank identified as a feature of faith-based organisations,” she says.

“You need to engage with the faith aspect of people’s lives in order to do any kind of developmental work with the community, because that’s

a huge influential factor and certainly I can say that as a missionary myself – faith is a huge resource.”

Sr Jo adds that there is a difference between engaging with faith and evangelising, saying: “Sometimes people think missionaries preach and provide religious services, that’s a very separate thing to recognising faith as a motivational factor and influence. When missionaries are doing development work, which is a huge part of their work, they work with people of all faiths and none. The people they’re working with might be motivated by their Muslim faith or Evangelical faith, it’s irrelevant, faith is still an important factor and central part of their lives.”

While faith is still important in missionary countries, many Irish people may not understand its role in development work. Sr Jo says “I think in Ireland people are moving away from organised religion and in the process moving to a lack of appreciation of faith or spirituality and that is still hugely important in people’s lives”.

“Missionaries are providing religious services in places but that’s very distinct from the development work they do. A huge bulk of the work they do is development work which is irrespective of the religion or no religion of the people they

serve, so maybe that’s something that people might not appreciate.”

The influence of faith not just on individuals but also communities and countries can be extremely influential. Sr Jo mentions the challenges facing Presentation Sisters working in education in Pakistan “where boys are educated and the culture believes there’s no need to educate girls”.

“Congregations have long had a commitment to the education of Muslim girls as well as Catholic girls”

“They educate Christian girls but in order to be able to fund the education of Christian girls they also educate Muslim girls. Their belief is that you want to educate future leaders, obviously in Pakistan the education of girls is very much a hot topic as it’s very undervalued. Congregations have long had a commitment to the education of Muslim girls as well as Catholic girls.”

The issue is much wider than education, Sr Jo says: “It might be female genital mutilation (FGM) in Africa, that’s a deeply embedded belief and there’s no easy answer to it, so you need to engage with local



Sr Josephine (Jo) McCarthy, board member of Misean Cara.

leaders, whatever their beliefs are and move with them to make change.”

Trust in communities and engagement with faith can help change these practices, according to Sr Jo who says development work is not a secular activity.

Asked about some of the major obstacles missionaries face, Sr Jo says climate change, particularly in Africa, is a huge issue.

“No matter what development work you’re doing, if there are extreme droughts, it’s impossible to be effective. It’s a huge challenge because people who are poorest are most effected. I would have seen that in Peru when I was there, I was there after an earthquake, during El Niño, and our sisters where in Ecuador during the earthquake in 2016. It’s always the poorest who will suffer most in those situations – natural disasters.

The biggest challenge is climate,” Sr Jo says.

“One of the concerns we have is there was a downturn in the economy, that it’s always the poorest who will suffer because obviously donations go down, everything goes down, that would be another fear – as their need goes up donations go down,” she adds.

It’s not just climate change that drastically affects missionary work, this is obvious from Sr Jo’s own experience in Peru when a wave of unrest, terrorism and human rights violations hit the country in the 80s. Despite this, missionaries waited it out with their communities.

Sr Jo says: “That’s another element of missionary work, what I call psychosocial, but sometimes called pastoral support, and that’s not a religious support, it’s being there with people. Just to be there at



Tando Allah Yar (Sindh, Pakistan), Srs Emer, Nasreen and Mehwish celebrating Presentation Day with the teachers and students in one of the congregation's schools.

a time of crisis. In that time of terrorism, we just waited and were there for the rebuilding.”

Other organisations face more red tape in these scenarios, with Sr Jo saying there is a big difference between a missionary and a development worker whose employer is obliged to withdraw them for security reasons.

“It was the whole community, not just the Catholic community”

“Missionaries are there on a personal, voluntary basis. I was able to say to my congregation, to my family, ‘I’m staying because that’s my own wish’. So missionaries can stay when it may not be sometimes safe to stay,” Sr Jo says.

“It’s not a judgment on other organisations but their leaders have to answer for the safety of their workers, whereas missionaries we have a personal vocation, it’s a different thing. I was there because I wanted to be there. Some missionaries did leave because their leaders made a decision, very few.

“You’re there because you were there before the crisis, you know the people, so you’re staying with your people. It was the whole community, not just the Catholic community.

“That’s why at the time when I was there in Peru and talking to other missionaries, all of them said the same thing. When you can’t do anything, you just stay with the people and you believe there’s something beyond yourself, the transcendent, then what you’re doing there makes sense,” she says.

Terrorism

Peru during that period of terrorism beginning in the 1980s involved guerrilla attacks by members of anti-government groups and “was very frightening” according to Sr Jo. “That’s when you call on your

own resources, and your only resource to call on is your own depth of faith at the end of the day”.

One of the occasions in which she felt in mortal danger, and remembers well, was when she was living in a remote village in the Andes with an American sister called Sr Sharon.

The terrorists had started targeting the rural population. Sr Sharon says: “The pattern was they were moving to a village at night and called all the community out to the public square and often executed the mayor or town councillor, or a missionary. There was an Australian missionary shot at one stage and I think two Franciscan priests.

“One day the mayor came to us, to Sharon and myself, and said the terrorists moved into a local town last night and the rumour in the town today is that they’re coming to us tonight. The mayor was a young woman, she said ‘I’m not going to run but I don’t want to expose my children to danger’, so she said, ‘would you mind my children tonight?’

“We just looked at one another and said ‘yes of course

we will’. After that at about 6 o’clock her and her husband brought their two children over to us, the children were young they were primary school age. They went away and the children went to bed. We waited and wondered all night what was going to happen, thankfully nothing happened, there were several other moments like that but that was one that stands out crystal clear.”

Sr Jo is adamant that she doesn’t believe staying with the community was brave or courageous, it was a simple fact of living there and “it was what you did”.

“You were just there with your people. At that time it was the life we were living – that terrorism dominated the agenda for a few years basically,” she added.

Lockdown

The act of remaining behind when others leave was also a feature during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to John Moffett CEO of Misesan Cara. Missionaries are still helping locals deal with the impact of lockdowns including the loss of livelihoods and closure of schools.

A few months ago, Mr Moffett visited South Africa where he met with Antrim-born Sr Mary McAteer who has been in the country for 35 years and assists people in numerous ways. Sr McAteer, of the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption, is a board member of the Catholic Health Care Association of Southern Africa (CATHCA). One of its projects is in Orange County, a township outside Johannesburg, working with a community group called Inkanyezi which was established initially to address the epidemic of HIV and AIDS in the early 2000s. Due to improved treatments for the disease they have moved on to work tackling gender-based violence which Mr Moffett said is a serious issue in the country.

Speaking of Sr McAteer he said: “She’s a really energetic woman who has a great vision for challenging and addressing some of the endemic problems that exist in the urban townships in South Africa, particularly with violence against women being major. Violence in South Africa is a major problem anyway, but violence against women is particularly challenging.”



Misesan Cara CEO John Moffett (centre) and Misesan Cara staff meet with Inkanyezi project staff and project participants in the Orange Farm Township, Johannesburg, July 2022.



Three2Six Project staff and leadership sit down with Misesan Cara CEO John Moffett at the Sacred Heart College, Marist Observatory in Johannesburg, July 2022.

Mr Moffett said missionaries have a very broad approach to their work, as outlined in Misesan Cara’s recently published paper in the peer-reviewed journal *Environmental Sciences Proceedings* called: ‘The Missionary Approach to Development: Ensuring Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education for the Most Marginalised.’

“In Ireland the work of missionaries is not often acknowledged in mainstream media or by the majority of politicians”

He gives the Marist brothers’ work as an example. They are educating refugee children who are not receiving an education from the authorities in South Africa as they have no documentation. The project is called Three2Six. They’re using their schools in Johannesburg and teachers volunteer to teach them.

The number of health facilities established across Africa by Christian Churches, mainly the Catholic Church, stands at about 70% according to Mr Moffett, “missionaries are still providing a vital service in health across the continent”.

Regarding social justice pursuits, Mr Moffett said: “Upholding human rights and being very vocal on behalf of communities on human rights, we have great people like Fr Gabriel Dolan (MHM) in Kenya with the Kiltigans. He’s been there for 40 years working on legislative programmes, calling out injustices and helping people access justice who would otherwise find it really difficult to get access to supports and services, people who would be indiscriminately chucked off their land for richer people’s projects, because they don’t have the education or the paperwork to retain their rights. They’re just supporting people in that way – it’s incredibly important. It is dangerous.”

In Ireland the work of missionaries is not often acknowledged in mainstream media or by the majority of politicians. Highlighting their importance in improving how Ireland is viewed in the eyes of the

world, Mr Moffett says: “Historically the Irish missionaries who have gone overseas have been the original diplomats and ambassadors for Ireland. They have led the course for Irish diplomatic missions to set up in some of these countries and have been fantastic in that way.

“I think our missionaries here are incredibly humble and don’t seek a lot of attention for the work that they do but when you amalgamate the amount of work carried out by Irish missionaries and indeed their counterparts overseas, and increasingly more so by the indigenous missionaries they are passing their charisma on to, it’s an incredible network and body of people that are working towards common goals and common ends with a common purpose which is fantastic.”

Future

Looking to the future missionary landscape, he said: “It’s important to remember that Ireland is a bit of an outlier. Across the developing world, connections with Church, connection to faith is still incredibly important and we can actually see growth in Churches, growth in people joining orders and congregations in the developing world, so while we’ve got the decline in Ireland and maybe an aging population of missionaries here, we’re seeing a real growth and vibrancy in missionary development work with new entries coming from Africa, Asia and Latin America. They are carrying on the charisms that have been passed on to them by our original missionaries from Ireland.

“I think definitely the way we support mission from Ireland in the future will be different, we might not have the personal connection of the Irish missionary overseas, the aunt or the uncle who’s gone off, but what we will have are a very active group of Irish congregations that are supporting missionaries from other countries overseas and working with them to uphold the charisma and the vision that was originally established and continue on the legacy of their work in an appropriate way.”

Mission outreach with the Irish Salesian Community



Fr. Dan Carroll

In Italy from the late 19th century, poverty-stricken young people had been gravitating to the cities seeking employment. Turin already had a large unemployed youth cohort and this influx from the countryside caused immense challenges. It was in this context that St. John Bosco, or, as he is commonly known, Don Bosco, started the Salesian Congregation at Turin.

Both Church and State were failing to respond to the youth challenge. Don Bosco walked the streets, visited the prisons, and talked to the young people. Their despair and hopelessness saddened him. In December 1841 he started a welcoming club which he called an "Oratory" because he wanted it to be a place where the young boys would experience Home, School, Church, and Playground. Here mostly teenage boys came every Sunday. With Don Bosco and his helpers, they felt welcomed and safe, enjoyed a meal, made new friends and prayed. The youth were given hope and a belief they could be responsible people. Shortly after its inception, the Oratory was able to offer vocational skills and eventually a school that prepared young people for life. This vision of education and evangelisation realised by Don Bosco is lived throughout the world in 134 countries.

“Almost every year since 1875, Salesians have been leaving their own countries to bring God’s Word, compassion, and mercy to new cultures”

On the 18 December 1859, Don Bosco formally started the Salesian Congregation when 17 young men made religious vows and offered their lives to God. The first and principal beneficiaries of the Salesian Congregation’s mission were the young, especially the poorest and those preparing to enter the work force.

This work which began in Turin soon spread to other nations. Almost every year since 1875, Salesians have been leaving their own countries to bring God’s Word, compassion, and mercy to new cultures. The first group went from Italy to Argentina and ministered to Italian emigrants whose circumstances were very difficult.

The Salesian Mission in Ireland began at Pallaskenry in 1919. Over the years, Irish Salesian missionaries served in countries such as South Africa, Eswatini, India, the United States, and the Philippines. Nowadays, Salesian missionaries come to Ireland from diverse countries including Vietnam, Poland, East Timor, Angola, and Nigeria.

The Irish Salesian province, through its development office Don



Refugees working on a livelihood project at Palabek, Uganda

Bosco Aid (DBA), works with several Salesian provinces to support vulnerable youth and disadvantaged communities in different parts of the world. This is possible through the support of friends, donors and Misean Cara.

DBA is connected with three refugee camps: Palabek in Uganda, Kakuma in Kenya, and Don Bosco Gumbo in South Sudan. The Salesian communities have set up educational and skills centres, oratories, playgrounds, and parishes. Refugees are accompanied, given a listening ear, and encouraged to be as independent as possible.

The plight of children and young people at risk everywhere is an immense challenge. In Ghana, children are trafficked and forced to work in fishing, agriculture, and mining industries. International traffickers also use the country as a transit point for trafficking young girls to the Middle East and Western Europe. DBA has been able to help the Ghanaian Salesian community establish a project that supports these victims.

Vulnerable

Street children worldwide are very vulnerable. DBA has been privileged to help Salesian communities in Zambia establish initiatives to address issues faced by street children, through support and re-integration programmes.

In India, 40% of children drop out of school by the age of ten. Drop-out rates are very high among indigenous children due to migration, child marriage, poor school infrastructures, negative attitudes to schooling, and a harsh education system. By the age of ten some are forced into child labour. DBA has given assistance to major projects run by Salesian communities in Chennai, Bangalore and Navajeevan, whose mission programmes are addressing this issue.

In South Africa, 38% of young people aged 15 to 34 are not in employment, education, or training. In both Johannesburg and Cape Town, Salesian centres have educational projects that tackle this problem and offer training that equips learners for the job market. With grants from Misean Cara, DBA has been able to assist our brothers in South Africa educate and train a significant number of young people.

“At Salesian mission locations, the missionaries live with the people and share their struggles, pain, challenges, and joys”

Covid-19 impacted most on the poor and vulnerable. When India went into lockdown, migrant daily wage labourers, pavement dwellers, and slum dwellers were all stranded in the streets. The Salesian community in Bangalore sought support and DBA was able to provide financial aid.

DBA has been able to provide emergency relief in the context of natural disasters and war, in countries such as South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Ukraine. There are Salesian centres at nine locations in Ukraine. The response from friends and donors to our appeal for this cause has been exceptionally generous.

Don Bosco Aid also supports projects engaged in purely pastoral work. Oratories were kept open every day in Aleppo and Damascus during the Syrian war. Support has been given for the training of young Salesians and catechists in Madagascar and Mozambique.

At Salesian mission locations, the missionaries live with the people and share their struggles, pain, challenges,



A Salesian Youth Summer Camp in Kiviv August, 2022,

and joys. The local people learn to trust them. All who come to the mission centres are welcomed, given comfort and assistance, and where necessary, help to rebuild their lives in a safe environment.

At the core of the Salesian mission is proclamation of the Word of God. Where possible, a parish is established. Prayer is taught in schools and relevant locations. However, it is not always possible to talk about Jesus. In such circumstances, the only proclamation possible is by one’s way of life and care for those in need. There is no place for proselytism.

Volunteer

Don Bosco Aid also runs a volunteer programme, which aims to offer a Salesian missionary experience to interested people. Volunteers from Ireland are provided with placements in Salesian communities in India, Ghana, and Kenya. Volunteers are also received from Salesian communities in other countries. A number

of people are volunteering in Ireland with DBA. The Salesian community in Ireland welcomes anyone who wishes to support the Salesian movement.

As stated, Don Bosco’s vision was to inspire the young, particularly the poor, their families and communities. This dream is inspiring the Salesian movement today in most of the countries we hear about daily in the news: Ukraine, Syria, India, Brazil, and many more.

God’s love is always inviting us to join him bringing hope, care, and support to those in need.

For more information or if you would like to get involved, see www.salesiansireland.ie or contact us at dba@salesiansireland.ie or at our head office: 45 St Teresa’s Road, Crumlin, Dublin 12, D12 XK52.

 **SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO IRELAND**

The Changing Face of Mission



Janet Nutakor OLA

Ireland has a great history of sending missionaries to different parts of the world, including Ghana, where I am from. Mission has been an integral part of the Irish church and the Irish people have always supported work on the missions through donations and prayer. In recent times, we see missionaries coming to Ireland from former mission territories, showing the changing face of mission right here. I am an obvious example of that, and I am sure that you have also witnessed this in your local parishes where there are often non-Irish priests ministering to the congregations.

Currently, there are four OLA sisters from different African countries on mission in Ireland, and engaged in several ministries alongside our Irish sisters. Although the numbers in Missionary congregations in Ireland today are diminished, our Sisters and Fathers continue to live their missionary identity in whatever capacity they can and to the best of their abilities. I am inspired by their lifestyle, commitment, and the many ways in which they give of themselves.

Being on mission simply means that we have been sent to proclaim God's love and salvation to the nations. Pope Francis reminds us that "we are all invited as missionary disciples, each offering talents, creativity, wisdom and experience

in order to bring God's message of tenderness and compassion to the human family."

While there is still a great need for missionaries to spread the faith in Africa, and indeed in all parts of the world, there are very few missionaries sent from Ireland today. The OLA Sisters recognise the need to engage in new forms of mission here in Ireland, and to augment the work of our ageing sisters. As OLA sisters, both Irish and African, we live our mission through many different works. We are engaged in various volunteering activities; we encourage and support young people to develop a personal encounter with God; some of our sisters teach English to migrants and refugees to foster their communication and integration into Irish society. We share the love of God with refugees and migrants who seek a new form of life in Ireland by being a presence and offering hope and support to the new Irish. We remain actively engaged and are committed to supporting African families in Ireland in whatever way we can, especially women and the youth.

“The OLA Sisters recognise the need to engage in new forms of mission here in Ireland, and to augment the work of our ageing sisters”

Collaboration forms an integral part of our mission and so we work with organisations and charities, through volunteering in services to the poor, the homeless and families in need. We promote the building of basic Christian communities and family life through our own witness to international community

living. Our elderly sisters in Ardfoyle engage in a special mission and ministry of prayer, constantly in touch with the mission world through prayer.

We make good use of technology, reaching out to as many people as possible through our social media channels and website. In order to be more effective in this area, we have employed the services of a professional communications officer who assists us with technology and keeps us up to date. We strive to be a stronger voice on issues of injustice, especially in the area of environmental crisis, human trafficking, and racism by working with a full time justice officer and collaborating with our SMA fathers, other religious and organisations.

If you have visited Ardfoyle Convent recently, you will have seen that we encourage and welcome different groups to use our property for various activities. Women, men, youth, families, as well as our African communities in Cork. These offer us the opportunity to reach out to people of different races and backgrounds in order to support them and allow them to experience the love of God.

A New Mission in Balbriggan

With the influx of African peoples and others into Ireland, the OLA Irish Province, over a period of deep reflection, made the decision to open a new international missionary community in Balbriggan, north of Dublin. The community opened in February, and witnesses to international and multicultural living in our contemporary society. I am a member of this new mission. There are four of us in this community, Sister Josephine Aboagye from Ivory Coast, Sister

Joan Murray and Sister Philomena Mulligan from Ireland and myself from Ghana. Our hope is to work in collaboration with the local diocesan priest and SMA Father's Tony Gill and Donal Toal, in the parish. Balbriggan's population has grown from about 5,000 to nearly 40,000 in the last 20 years. It is a multicultural, growing community with many different nationalities, more than half of whom are people of African descent.

These are all new undertakings that point to the changing face of mission. The scope of participation as missionaries is as wide as you can imagine. Here in Balbriggan, I continue to bring Christ to the people I encounter each day through personal witness. My main ministry lies in outreach to and promotion of migrants and people of African descent. I am also involved with the members of the African Chaplaincy in Dublin, through their centres in Talaght, Swords, Balbriggan, Lucan and many more. The Chaplaincy creates opportunity for African people to come together to celebrate and share their faith from their own cultural perspective, and to get to know each other. The intention is to empower Africans living in Ireland and make them feel welcomed and valued and to assist them with integration into the church in Ireland. We are working to set up a similar Chaplaincy in Cork.

Wherever we go as missionaries, we seek ways to journey with the people to whom we are sent. Pope Francis sums it up beautifully when he says, "Every man and woman is a mission; that is the reason for our life on this earth. To be attracted and to be sent are two movements that our hearts, especially when we are young, feel as interior forces of love; they hold out promise for our future and they give direction to our lives."

There are some challenges to living this mission and taking up these ministries and activities, and it is hard to measure the impact I

make in my missionary work. Having a different cultural background, it is not always easy to reach out and meet people or to find my way into the Irish church community. It can be frustrating sometimes, and most spaces where young people meet are guarded and protected, as they should be. There are a fairly large number of single parents in the communities where I work, and it is sometimes difficult to reach out to them. Due to fear and the recent pandemic, people are still not ready to open their doors in welcome.

“Wherever we go as missionaries, we seek ways to journey with the people to whom we are sent”

St Therese's ardent desire was to plant the cross of Jesus Christ in every land, and to announce the gospel even to the end of time. Though she never went on mission outside her own country, she was passionate about the missions.

We are called to be missionaries, each and every one of us. We are called to be missionaries to our families, in our homes, parishes and workplaces. As baptized Christians, we are called to reach out to proclaim the good news, share God's love and to make God known and loved. Let us strive to make our parishes communities of love, caring and sharing. As we journey together on the synodal path, let us be the St Therese of our time, sending roses of love, comfort and peace.

Without the support for mission of the Irish people all through the years, I would probably not be here in Ireland today. Thank you. I ask that you continue to support the missions and pray for us as I promise to pray for you. May St Therese, Patron of the Missions and missionaries, continue to intercede for you and your families. God bless you all.

Solidarity Garden Launches in Ardfoyle

Michelle Robertson

The 6th September saw the official launch of the Solidarity Garden by the Lord Mayor of Cork City, Cllr. Deirdre Forde. The garden was set up on the front lawn of Ardfoyle convent towards the end of last year. The initiative was spearheaded by Dr Naomi Masheti of the Cork Migrant Centre, and began with seven migrant families as a pilot project. It has grown to create a safe space for migrant families from around the world. These are families who are living in Direct Provision Centres; involved with the Cork Migrant Centre and Nano Nagle Place; as well as newly arrived Ukrainian refugees. They come together to grow food crops from their home countries.

Some may think it fortuitous that the LTI (Local Training Initiative) Horticulture Programme that was previously in Bessborough, now runs their annual training programme from the old Laundry Garden in Ardfoyle. We

believe that Larry and his team were directed to us through an act of providence. The students and team have provided valuable assistance and expertise in the international garden, enthusiastically passing along their own learning to these new gardeners.

However, it's about so much more than gardening. With childcare always a challenge and often a barrier to participating in activities and learning initiatives, the garden allows for family participation. "Witnessing the pleasure of the children laughing and playing as their parents garden is an unexpected and delightful reward," said Sr Maura Cranney OLA at the launch.

Fionnuala O'Connell, a youth project worker at the Cork Migrant Centre agrees. She says that the positive impact of being able to grow familiar foods, and then provide that food to their children not only helps families to keep their own culture alive, but also assists them with integration into life in Ireland.



For over 130 years, the OLA have sent Irish sisters, from our house in Ardfoyle, to the African continent. We are well aware of the hardships faced in a foreign land. Now, 136 years later, we have the pleasure of witnessing the full circle of our mission in welcoming sisters from all over Africa to Ireland. We see this garden as an extension of our mission and a part of who and what we are. It is representative of all that we stand for.



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Reaching the Furthest Behind First – The

Irish Missionary Work – an Enduring Tradition

In recent decades, the work and impact of Irish missionaries overseas has garnered acknowledgement at home and abroad for its distinguished contributions to international development and efforts to eradicate poverty. The centuries old tradition of Irish missionary life, one of faith and service to the poor and vulnerable around the world, continues today with many dedicated religious and lay missionaries who seek out the furthest behind and walk alongside them to achieve a better life.

Since 2004, Misesan Cara – an Irish missionary membership organisation generously supported by Irish Aid – has provided funding and practical support to Irish missionary congregations working across Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East, to deliver education, healthcare, livelihood training and human rights protection. In 2021, Misesan Cara member organisations brought hope and life transforming projects to 1.9 million people in 51 countries.

Missionaries have a unique way of conducting development work that enables them to identify and serve the furthest behind first. At the heart of it is a willingness to commit long-term to living and working in one place despite what hardships may come. Missionaries stay devoted to the people and communities where they live, even in conflict zones or remote and hard to reach areas. They are driven by a passion to see poverty reduced, people's dignity recognised and basic human rights promoted.

Today's Missionaries

In the past many Irish families would have had a family member serving overseas with the Church – an aunt, uncle, brother or sister who would share stories of their missions while back home on leave. But who are today's missionaries? Where are they working and how are they keeping the tradition of Irish missionary work alive? World Mission Sunday provides an ideal opportunity to highlight the incredible lives and impact of some of Misesan Cara's missionary members.

Sr. Eunice Quigley, Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa, Zimbabwe

Sr Eunice Quigley was drawn to missionary life very early, as a young girl growing up in Dundalk in the 1960s. While at school, she attended a retreat at Mt. Oliver Convent and learned about the work the Franciscan



Fr Gabriel Dolan at an event in Vikobani, Mombasa to hand over a community title deed after a nine year land rights court case

Missionary Sisters for Africa (FMSA) were doing with poor and marginalised communities overseas. She knew immediately that she wanted to devote her life to helping others in the same way. After her formation with the Sisters, she was sent to Zambia and taught high school for three years.

A pivotal change for Sr Eunice came in 1980, after a year home in Ireland she was transferred to Zimbabwe, which had just achieved independence. "There was great excitement at that time, with the building up of the nation" she says. Sr. Eunice was in her element, being a part of the movement to help young Zimbabweans access new pathways out of poverty.

However, when the AIDS epidemic hit Zimbabwe the impact on many young people was devastating, not only having to live with the illness but the associated social stigma. The economy suffered for years with worsening job and life prospects for many, especially those affected by HIV and AIDS.

Inspired by Sr Miriam Duggan – based in Uganda at the time but in Zimbabwe to teach about her successful 'Education for Life' youth programme – Sr Eunice set up 'Youth Alive Zimbabwe'. In 1999 St. Dominic's High school and the teaching profession to establish an interdenominational youth organisation which would empower youth and young adults with life skills to adopt positive attitudes, values and behaviour. Its mission is to see Zimbabwe realise an HIV and AIDS free generation in which young people are enabled to fulfil their dreams and ambitions in life with respect for humanity.

In response to the evolving needs in the communities, Youth Alive now implements life skills education, health and wellbeing, child protection, gender-based violence and women empowerment interventions. The organisation

also reaches vulnerable groups in marginalised communities through psychosocial support, nutrition, education and vocational skills training, and assists women through saving and lending groups.

Sr. Eunice has been in Zimbabwe more than 40 years now, and just recently celebrated her 50th Jubilee with her Sisters in the FMSA. "There is a joy in the long-term commitment, in seeing where we've come from and being a part of where we are going," she says. "They are very highly qualified young professional staff and Sisters now who are spear-heading Youth Alive programmes. They're all Zimbabweans. My Deputy, Sr Elizabeth is from Zimbabwe. We are training the local teams out in the communities, choosing the natural leaders to continue the programmes. That's the only way that we continue to empower communities," she says. "I am grateful to my congregation FMSA and to Misesan Cara for their support down through the years. I am proud of this Irish support."



Sr Eunice with a local mother and child in Zimbabwe.

As she reflects on her life's work as a missionary and how she'll soon be passing on the leadership and future of Youth Alive Zimbabwe to the local FMSA Sisters, Sr Eunice comments "Ireland has a history of reaching out to the needy. We ourselves have suffered from famine, from racism and discrimination. In the beginning I was working for people here, now I'm working with them. My role now is to walk alongside them."

Visit www.miseancara.ie/2022/10/world-mission-sunday-2022/ to learn more about Youth Alive Zimbabwe and how you can give your support.

Fr Gabriel Dolan, Saint Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegnans), Kenya

For more than 40 years, Fr Gabriel Dolan of the Saint Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegnans) has lived and worked in Kenya, fighting tirelessly for the human rights of marginalised and poor citizens.

Originally from Co. Fermanagh, he was ordained in 1982 and appointed to Kenya straight after.

As is typical for many Irish missionaries, Fr Gabriel has lived overseas for decades, posted first to the vast and remote arid northern region of Turkana (including during the severe famine years of 1979-1981), later to the West Pokot region and then on to Mombasa where he's stayed since 2008.

Though social justice and human rights causes have been the focus of his work, he was in Kenya five or six years before starting on this path, first absorbing the local language, establishing local connections and getting to know the political landscape. "You need to be immersed in the culture, you need to know its nuances, how it works, you need to know where power lies and how systems fail people or profit from them, and why things are the way they are," he says. "I always remind people 'Change will come, but be patient, be consistent, be determined.'"

In 2008, after moving to Mombasa, Fr Gabriel set up the human rights organisation Haki Yetu ("Our Rights" in Swahili). Haki Yetu advocates for a peaceful society, dignity and justice for all those living in the informal settlements of Mombasa. Inspired by the motto "Act Justly, Love Tenderly and Walk Humbly with Thy God" Haki Yetu focuses on gender rights, land and housing issues, and advocating for fair treatment by government and housing bodies.

In 2021, Fr. Gabriel published a book of stories and memoirs of his more than four decades of work as a human rights defender, activist and founder of Haki Yetu. *Undaunted: Stories of Freedom in a Shackled Society* chronicles his time working on political and democratic rights, the right to land, housing, shelter,

and freedom of speech for the marginalised peoples of Kenya.

Speaking of his decades as a human rights missionary defending the poor and the persecuted, Fr Gabriel says, "The greatest reward for those who respond to this calling is the satisfaction of witnessing positive change, even if only after many years of struggle."

To learn more about Haki Yetu and to support the work of Fr Gabriel in upholding human rights in Kenya, visit www.miseancara.ie/2022/10/world-mission-sunday-2022/

Sr Yvonne Mwalula Mwila, Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, Zambia

Sr Yvonne Mwalula Mwila grew up in Chingola, Copperbelt Province, Zambia and felt the calling to a life serving the Church when she was young, joining the congregation of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary in 1997. Her work as a missionary has taken her to the UK, El Salvador and now back to Zambia, where she has worked mostly with children and young adults with special needs.

For four years now, Sr Yvonne Mwalula Mwila of the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary has served as the Director of the Bauleni Special Needs Project and School (BSNP) in Lusaka, Zambia. The school, which opened its doors in 1996, is recognised as a Centre of Excellence for inclusive, special needs education in Zambia and is also the only school in the country to provide education and support to children who are both deaf and blind. Bauleni is a very poor and densely populated area of Lusaka where few other schools provide any kind of education or support options for the many disabled, orphaned and vulnerable children. "We are welcoming to all children and our work makes a big difference in their lives," she says. "Most of the children we have here cannot be placed in other schools around Lusaka."

The school also provides support to parents and families of children with disabilities, and trains youth in job skills to help them build a secure future. The promotion of child safeguarding and the rights of children, especially those with disabilities and special needs, is a crucial aspect of the school's mission. A home-based programme for severely disabled children in the area has brought hope to families formerly suffering with no support but whose children are now receiving care for their developmental needs.

The holistic approach of the school is emblematic of missionary development work, placing an importance on upholding the essential dignity

Continuing Legacy of Irish Missionaries



Sr Gertrude Mensah (2nd from right) MDO for the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny, with colleagues and former mentors (from left) Sr Rowena (Haiti involvement 2010-2018); Sr Louise Marie, former MDO; Sr Mary Sweeney, Sr Gertrude, and Sr Teresa Munow.

of all human beings. "Everyone can teach or do work in the community with vulnerable people. For me though, what makes missionary work different is the compassionate way that we work with people, that extra mile that we put into everything we do for the students here," she says. "The work we do cannot be put in monetary terms, it's so much more than that. It's also the psychosocial and spiritual support we give the children and their families. At Bauleni, some of our children are here with us 24/7. It's another home for them. We create a space where they can really feel at home."

To learn more and support the work of the Bauleni Special Needs Project, visit www.miseancara.ie/2022/10/world-mission-sunday-2022/

Sr Gertrude Mensah, Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny, Dublin, Ireland

Growing up in Ghana under the nurturing influence of her devoutly Catholic grandmother, Sr Gertrude Mensah had a strong faith from an early age. At just six years old, Sr Gertrude was already certain that her life path was to serve the church as a Sister. Before joining the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny after secondary school, she was very active with the Legion of Mary, going out on home visits to pray for the sick and bring gifts at Christmas to those in need.

Sr Gertrude, based in Dublin since 2020, is currently fulfilling a call to serve as the Missionary Development Officer with the Cluny Sisters on overseas projects, and works closely with Misesan Cara, which is among its project funders. Sr Gertrude represents the growth of a vibrant movement of younger international missionaries who have trained in missionary work and carry on the charism of their Irish forebears. As the population of Irish missionaries around the world declines, the focus has shifted to training the growing number of young people joining congregations in Africa, Asia and Latin America, passing on the missionary

vision and transferring leadership and management to a younger generation.

After completing her initiation, Sr Gertrude lived and worked alongside the needy in Sierra Leone, arriving in 2005, just three years after the end of the nation's brutal 10-year civil war. "Missionaries always stay with the people. They remain in place before, during, and after a crisis," she observes.

Many of the Sisters she served with in Sierra Leone had been there for years, and even relocated temporarily to refugee camps alongside their neighbours during the war, returning with them afterwards to rebuild their communities and lives.

While in Sierra Leone, Sr Gertrude worked closely alongside an Irish Sister from Donegal, Sister Mary Sweeney, who recognised the potential in Sr Gertrude's strong devotion, faith, and emerging leadership skills, and was an important mentor to her and challenged her to take on more and more responsibility. Though Sr Gertrude herself sometimes doubted her strength and readiness for the work, as time went on, she began to see that through her experiences she was growing closer to the local people and becoming embedded in the community. "Relationships of trust are essential for effective, long-term development," she says, recalling a time in Ghana when the trust and communication she had built up with local leaders in rural Domeabra was pivotal to reversing a reluctance to educate children of farming communities. The leaders eventually donated land on which to build a new school.

Over the years, Misesan Cara has funded several Cluny Sisters education projects, including schools in Tanzania, The Gambia, and Mozambique along with a school for the hearing impaired in Sierra Leone. After the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, Misesan Cara funded the rebuilding of a school, housing for orphans, and facilities to harvest rainwater and solar energy to sustain the project. "The impact of Misesan Cara's

support on our projects is enormous," Sr Gertrude says. She hopes in the future there will be support to enable the Sisters to continue improving their education projects and provide access to even greater numbers of students.

To learn more about the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny, visit www.miseancara.ie/2022/10/world-mission-sunday-2022/

Sr Mary McAteer, Missionary Sisters of the Assumption, South Africa

"I was aware from a young age that the world was unevenly divided," says Sr Mary McAteer, who grew up in Glenarm, in the Glens of Antrim, and was a boarder at the school of the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption in Ballynahinch. "So, it was early on that I decided that my life would somehow be about how to make a difference".

Her life in missionary work began in the mid-1980s, in a township in Pretoria, South Africa at a time when the unrest and backlash against the injustices of the country's harsh Apartheid system of racial segregation was in full swing. "It was a time of great anger and hurt and desperation," she says, for those living under Apartheid oppression. "I was very happy to be there at the time even though it tore the heart out of me, really, the suffering and injustice."

It is very common for missionaries to serve willingly and remain steadfastly in places that others avoid, such as conflict zones, remote areas, and during times of great upheaval. Sr Mary stayed in Pretoria for another four years, working at a secondary school and later moving out to work at a high school in a rural area, where the community had no electricity or running water. The children there hardly knew there was trouble in the country, she comments. "Their concern was food, getting enough to eat." She was present for the 1994 election, which brought the formerly imprisoned activist Nelson Mandela to the Presidency during the coun-

try's first free elections. "It was a time you could never have dreamt would happen. It was like living through a miracle."

She has remained living and working in South Africa since that time. In 2016 she was part of a team in Port Alfred, Eastern Cape who set up a small school for children with disabilities and special needs. The school provides a space where children can play, socialise and partake of simple skills training as they get older.

Funding support from Misesan Cara helped the school stay open in its early years, as it gradually improved the quality of its programmes and outreach to increasing numbers of families. Misesan Cara still supports the project which actively advocates for the rights of all those with disabilities in the province.

"If any young people are thinking about what they can do or contribute, or if they are thinking of becoming a missionary, I would 100% encourage them because it's very worthwhile and it makes a huge difference," she says. "I'm very grateful that God called me to do this." She encourages others to be open to the idea of service too, to come as volunteers and give a year or two of their time if they have skills to share.

Sr Mary is now a board



Sr Mary McAteer and Misesan Cara CEO John Moffett visit the CATHCA Inkanyezi project in July 2022. Photo: Lizette Cressey

member of CATHCA, the Catholic Healthcare Association of Southern Africa, based in Johannesburg. CATHCA supports Catholic health care projects in South Africa, Eswatini and Botswana.

To learn more about the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption and their work with CATHCA in Southern Africa, visit www.miseancara.ie/2022/10/world-mission-sunday-2022/



Misesan Cara gratefully acknowledges the funding support of Irish Aid

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For more information: info@miseancara.ie | www.miseancara.ie | 01 405 5028

Congregation of Dominican Sisters of Our Lady of the Rosary and St. Catherine of Siena (Cabra)

“Our mission as Dominican women is to study, share, proclaim and witness to the liberating Word of God in order that right relationships be restored between God, People and the Earth where these are broken due to lack of knowledge and distortion of the truth”
We presently serve in Ireland, South Africa, Argentina, Portugal, and Louisiana, USA.



LOUISIANA

The Sisters began the mission in 1968. Up to August 2005, they were primarily engaged at St Leo the Great Parochial school and other parish ministries. However, after Hurricane Katrina, this changed as many schools and parishes in the surrounding area were severely damaged. Until 2021, sisters continued to serve in school and parish ministry. Sister Lillian Flavin is still serving in New Orleans. She works in Hope house which is a neighbourhood centre in St. Thomas-Irish Channel area of New Orleans. Programmes offered include adult education, emergency assistance, youth recreation, etc. The mission statement is: “We strive to be a gospel people, a visible sign of Christian community, to live and work with the poor, to manifest the human concern of Jesus for all people, to foster dignity and respect for all, and to help build a society where justice and truth abide.” Lillianne is seen here holding an award she received for her faithful service, which includes prison ministry.

LISBON, PORTUGAL

In Lisbon, Portugal, the mission of the Congregation begun in 1639, continues today through FORSDI – Foundation of the Social Works of the Irish Dominican Sisters. This Foundation was set up in 1993 and its mission is to continue the work and mission of the Congregation through the commitment of our lay colleagues in Education and Social Action. It consists of three Centres – the College of Bom Sucesso, the Creche of Our Lady and the Holy Family Centre.



Children and staff in the church of Bom Sucesso



Arco Iris

Arco Iris Community House is a social organization which has as its main objective giving services to the community of Cuartel V. The local people run the Primary school and secondary school for adults; workshop for knitting, a workshop for healthy relationships.

Together opening up pathways (Juntos Abriendo Caminos- J.A.C.)

This is a project that has been operating for 9 years. Its purpose is to strengthen the academic progress of students in Higher Education, using tutorials, workshops and integral and holistic accompaniment throughout their studies. The students come from poor families so a small monthly subsidy is helpful to ensure they do not abandon their studies.



DOMINICAN SISTERS IN MISSION IN OUTER BUENOS AIRES AND IN BARILOCHE, ARGENTINA

Our present mission includes accompanying two parishes in Buenos Aires ensuring *faith formation* through bible courses and reflections on the Word of God. And *care for the most vulnerable* by providing meals, helped by local volunteers, for those who are most affected by the current social and economic crisis.



Food for the hungry

SOUTH AFRICA

Dominican Sisters, Cabra currently have a presence in Capetown and its Southern suburbs, in Port Elizabeth and in Gauteng province. We are committed to working for a more just society and this is integral to our ministry. We have a strong sense of service to the poor and underprivileged.

Education remains an important aspect of our ministry although all schools are now under lay management. We serve as Trustees on the Catholic Schools' Trust and as board members of the schools, and as members of National and Provincial Catholic School structures.

Implementation of child Safeguarding Policy, Restorative justice and the building of peace within the school community is a priority.

We remain faithful to St. Dominic and his dream which has a strong focus on working

together “on the healing of the human community so as to turn hostility into friendship and break the spiral of violence that surrounds us today. We need to create communities of viable life in this kind of mission which inspires hope”. (Hope for a World: Mission in a Global Context). The decades between 1970 and 1980 were marked by opposition to the apartheid regime. The sisters established night schools to offer education to adults and Hedge Schools to offer education to older children in black communities. Many Sisters worked for Justice and Peace commissions and some were arrested for participating in illegal marches against apartheid. The 1976, Dominican schools defied the government by opening up all their schools to children of all races. To remember the first voting by African people, we offer this poem by Sr. Dorothy Balfe who was a UN observer at a polling station.

SUFFRAGE

An old leather-skinned man has travelled three days to the township from his home in the hills. He has arrived at the polling station. He stands in the doorway “This way, Sir...” The old man cannot stir, because with his bare feet swollen from walking He must savour this doorway.

He must close his eyes and sigh, And lean his whole voiceless life into this doorway. “This way, sir...” first he fingers the number. This too has to be caressed “This way, sir...” Bowing like an acolyte, he takes the voting paper in both hands. A stillness falls in the polling station. The old man X's his paper, folds it, holds it, over the ballot box. He cannot let it go.



BARILOCHE (PATAGONIA)

SALÓN OBRA DE MARÍA- CAPILLA MADRE DE LA UNIDAD

We Dominican Sisters came to Bariloche 5 years ago, and work with the Diocesan agency of Caritas and Social Development; whose coordinator is Mrs. Laura Velazquez.

Some activities we provide are:

- Support teaching for primary and secondary school pupils
- The EMMAUS programme for **Adolescents** on Saturday afternoons 12-14 hours with time for play, reflection, sharing the mate tea drink, and practice working together building up the group.

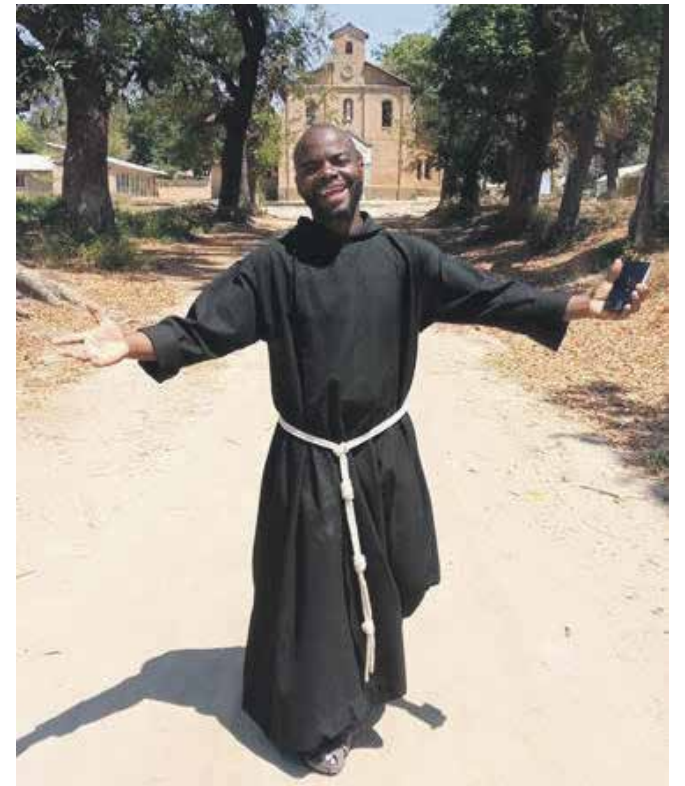


CLAR (Conference of Latin American Religious) invites us to “await the dawn of a synodal Church, helping this new time of salvation to emerge.” This is a horizon of hope, in the hands of Women of the Dawn, women who even in the darkness of life, seek light, life and Resurrection, and do not deny the action of God in our history.

Capuchin Overseas Missions



90th anniversary presence in South Africa



We are the Irish Capuchin Franciscan Friars and mission is in our very DNA. Today we have Irish friars ministering in Zambia, South Africa, New Zealand, South Korea and California. We follow the rule and life laid down by St Francis of Assisi – to live and embody the Gospel message of Jesus Christ wherever we find ourselves or whatever we do.

Mission Sunday is an important moment in the Church year whereby we acknowledge the lifegiving and lifechanging work of our missionaries. The Irish Capuchin Friars have brought much needed practical help to some of the poorest people on the planet. Today, by God's grace, they have been joined in this mission by

many local men who have come to embrace the gospel life.

A very practical way to help support this work is by enrolling in the Capuchin Missionary Mass Association. Our dedicated team in the Capuchin Mission Office in Church Street Dublin are available to help you in person, by phone or email. The money raised funds the training of young friars on our missions as well as the many practical projects we run across four continents.

For more information on how to support the Capuchin Overseas Missions, you can phone 01 8731022, email capuchinmissions@gmail.com or call into the office on Church Street.



Left Top: Br Odilo Mroso, blessing at Makometsane outstation.

Left Bottom: Building of new church at Makometsane outstation.

Right Bottom: Noel and James.



SMA MISSION - Witness, Justice and Collaboration



The Society of African Missions (SMA) is an international organisation with over seven hundred and sixty members, three hundred and twenty seminarians and has a presence in sixteen African countries. While the African membership of the SMA is increasing, in Europe and Ireland it is declining. Nevertheless, there are still Irish SMA Missionaries working in Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria, Liberia and South Africa. They are involved in pastoral work, priestly formation and the promotion of justice and peace.

Here in Ireland, the mission of the SMA also continues, through pastoral involvement in parishes, its retreat centre in Dromantine, Co. Down and though collaborative work promoting justice, peace and care for the earth. Another important role is supporting and funding the growth of the newer, SMA Provinces,



The SMA was founded in 1856 by the Venerable Melchior de Marion Brésillac

Districts and Delegations, the education of SMA Seminarians and Development and Pastoral Projects run by SMA's in Africa.

A newly constructed building near Lake Victoria in the city of Mwanza, Tanzania, houses the Tanga Project. "Tanga" means "sail" in Swahili. It aims to create a real home - not an institution - a place with a family spirit in which fourteen boys and girls, affected by albinism, not only



find a safe home, quality education and good living conditions, but also the love of a community that welcomes these vulnerable young people and children.

Increasing violence

Father Janusz Machota, a Polish SMA priest, reports that violence against Albino people is increasing. "There have been numerous attacks against them. Some have been maimed or even killed. These attacks are fuelled by a monstrous belief that use of an albino's organs in witchcraft rituals will bring good luck in business or even electoral success".

The priority of the project is to help these vulnerable and marginalized children. They not only struggle with the terrible ideology and aggression towards them, but also with many health problems such as vision impairment and, most dangerous of all, a high risk of skin cancer, which is exacerbated by the strong African sun. People with albinism generally have fewer opportunities to get a good education and a job. Many of them will never start a family of their own.

Tanga not only hosts this group of disadvantaged youth, it also seeks their full protection and integration into Tanzanian society. To do so, it wants to be involved



Fr Janusz Machota SMA with members of the Tanga family.

in a process that addresses the causes of their exclusion from society and the violence directed against them, in order to find concrete solutions and to bring about real changes in their lives. "There are certainly difficult tasks ahead of us," concludes Father Machota, "but building a real family is more important than the construction work and fundraising. The sailing ship named Tanga embarks on the voyage of a lifetime, from the port of Mwanza towards unlimited horizons to bring these children and young people to the realization of their potential and dreams". This project is a truly Chris-

tian response, one which respects and protects the human dignity at the core of Catholic Social Teaching and that challenges the injustice of trafficking of persons for human organs.

Human trafficking

For the SMA in Ireland, challenging Human Trafficking is one of three justice areas it has chosen to prioritize. The other two are advocacy on behalf of Africa and people of African descent and Promoting Care for Creation. The SMA recognises the importance of giving witness to Gospel values through our lifestyle, the choices we make and through public advocacy and action for justice. It will particularly do so in relation to these three areas, as we believe that

this approach will allow us to make the best use of the skills, strength and resources currently at our disposal. At the same time, focusing on these areas will allow us to remain faithful to the vision of the SMA founder, the Venerable Melchior de Marion Brésillac and to his commitment to bring the Good News to Africans and to the most abandoned. In order to be as effective as possible in continuing this mission and to making a real contribution in these priority areas the SMA works in partnership with the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles and is also open to a collaboration with other congregations and likeminded civil society groups.

i For more information about the SMA see www.sma.ie



Tanga staff and residents - a boat trip on Lake Victoria.

Celebrating 85 Years of Healing

Since we, Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM), were founded in 1937 by Mother Mary Martin, we have been bringing hope to people in some of the poorest and most remote areas of the world. As MMMs we bring our faith, skills and tenacity to the work that needs to be done despite the possible challenges of the place or situation. Over the years, our work has changed, but the focus of bringing health and healing and the love of God to women and children in need has been constant.



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MMM
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Jesuits serving as witness in South Sudan

Noelle Fitzpatrick

'You Shall Be My Witnesses'

Today, the 10th October is the feast of St Daniel Comboni, an Italian missionary and one of the first to come to Sudan. He was the only surviving child of a family of 8. He endured the judgement of many for leaving his aging parents to follow a deep conviction to dedicate his life in service to the people of Africa. Like so many before him, he died young (aged 50 year) during a cholera epidemic, but not before leaving an amazing legacy of love and service which lives on to this day in South Sudan. This evening, the Cathedral of St Teresa's in the Archdiocese of Juba was filled with people who came to honour him. His legacy is in education, in championing the role of women and the laity in an inclusive, expansive vision of Church. He is seen as an honorary patron saint of South Sudan. Today his feast was celebrated all over the country. The strength of this evening's gathering is a testament to the power of one person's response to the call to be witness to the love of God, a witness that has gone on to inspire generations later.

With the support of Irish Jesuits International and Misean Cara, we as Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) have an important and valued presence in South Sudan. One of these is in Maban County, Upper Nile State where we have a teacher training, occupational and physiotherapy programme, services to the refugee and local host community and provide various supports to local schools. JRS Maban also supports the local parish and provides pastoral accompani-

ment to many in the absence of a parish priest. Maban which is a very isolated and deprived area bordering Sudan and Ethiopia where approx. 160,000 refugees and 60,000 local people live very simple and precarious lives. On 17th August this year, people here endured numerous incidents of serious flooding. Heavy rains from the Ethiopian highlands were carried upstream on the river Yablus inundating the low-lying areas in Maban, destroying houses, crops and drowning small animals. In the early days of the flooding with our own compound inundated, pit latrines full and road access to many places including the refugee settlements cut, it was difficult to begin to know how to start responding to the needs of others! Yet orienting our focus outwards, one of the ways we accompany people in their suffering is to simply get out and about amongst them, be visible, witness the suffering and the resilience and, from there, in faith we find a way of responding to the most critical needs – food, blankets and shelter. The Jesuit and SVD (Society of the Divine Word) priests working as part of our wider team also pressed on with the mobilization of community preparations for celebrating the feast of St Comboni. In this way we also help create some normality, lifting people's eyes and spirits from the water to focus for a short time on this community celebration.

You shall be my witnesses – in big and small ways, day by day

As we moved around some of the communities affected by these floods, a woman started shouting. She was angry and



Women carry water in the Kaya Refugee Camp in Maban County, South Sudan. The camp shelters thousands of refugees from the Blue Nile region of Sudan, and Jesuit Refugee Service, with support from Irish Jesuits International and Misean Cara, provides educational and psycho-social services to both refugees and the host community. Credits: (Paul Jeffrey/Misean Cara)

frustrated. We stood and listened. We came to understand that the heavy rain the night before had taken its toll. She was tired of the water, the mess and the misery, and she needed to vent. So, we listened, and after two minutes she fell silent. Nothing had immediately been resolved, but, she had felt heard and seen in her misery and frustration which seemed to give her some satisfaction. As JRS we must also accompany and witness to people in this way. It is important to take time to listen, help carry a heavy sack across a stretch of flood water, give something to the hungry animals around

our compound, take time to drink coffee with the elderly as a mark of respect and care. These things do not, in the first stages of a crisis require silver and gold, only a heart oriented outward toward the suffering around and about us.

To me, having a missionary spirit means courageously loving God and neighbour by word and deed as part of everyday life. It means a corporal 'all in' commitment toward working for justice and the common good day by day. It means in faith doing what we can with the gifts we have been given and trusting for the rest. It doesn't require coming to Africa, or even leaving your

home-town to live this commitment. But, rather, it means making a clear choice about the life we want to live, from a place of deep desire, and being prepared day by day to make sacrifices in service to that choice.

“With the support of Irish Jesuits International and Misean Cara, we as Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) have an important and valued presence in South Sudan”

When I have visited other Jesuit works in South Sudan I see this same spirit alive and kicking. The Jesuit co-ed secondary school in the city of Wau, Loyola Secondary School, was occupied by armed forces for 26 years during civil conflict before being re-opened in 2006. The Jesuits here lived through a lot of conflict and insecurity but are making this school into a beacon of hope and possibility within which students evolve a dream for their lives. This year the school was the best performing in the State in the second level leaving exams. Fr Jean-Baptiste is the Head Master who is known to give additional civic education lessons at 6.30am in the morning by request of the students!

At the Jesuit community in Cuibet, Lakes State, Fr James is the Principle of a small teacher training college and secondary school for stu-

dents from rival Dinka clans. He knows that some of his students carry weapons. The culture of seeking revenge as a form of justice for past wrongs is strong amongst these clans. The environment is fragile. Yet, through this college where the students live and study alongside each other, he models a different way, and opens out a different vision for the future - one that connects the best of tradition and culture with a new way of being and thinking. In Rumbek, the Jesuits have also lived many tough years transitioning with people through times of extreme violence to the current time of greater peace where new possibilities continue to emerge, and they work to meet the growing demand for quality vocational training.

In South Sudan there are a lot of hard, dark and heavy challenges. This is a place where your heart can be shredded over and over, but it is a place I love with all of my heart. There is so much life, colour, culture, diversity, kindness, graciousness, humour and giftedness in the many peoples of this land. There is so much beauty and so much need. We are the ones blessed to experience it. Starting with what is in our hearts, our heads and our hands, working with people we can help create new pathways toward the future. If there is a more satisfying way to live life, I have not found it.

i Noelle Fitzpatrick is Country Director of JRS South Sudan. To donate to the Maban Flood Response contact Irish Jesuits International on 01 836 6509 or www.iji.ie.



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— Irish Jesuits International Director, John K. Guiney SJ

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A Simple but Strong Message

Paul Francis Spencer C.P.

At the heart of the mission of the Passionists is the conviction that the Passion of Christ is, in the words of our founder St Paul of the Cross, “the greatest and most overwhelming work of God’s love.” Passionist Missionaries from Ireland have worked in many countries, including Botswana, South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Paraguay, Argentina and India.

Missionaries abroad

Nowadays Ireland is more likely to receive priests and religious from overseas than to send missionaries abroad, but new forms of missionary cooperation mean that the tradition of the Irish Passionists continues to bear fruit through the support we give to the formation of our African Passionist priests and brothers. This year we have also been engaged in supporting the work being

done among refugees by our brothers in Ukraine and Poland.

“Pope Francis reminded us of what being committed to the Cross means”

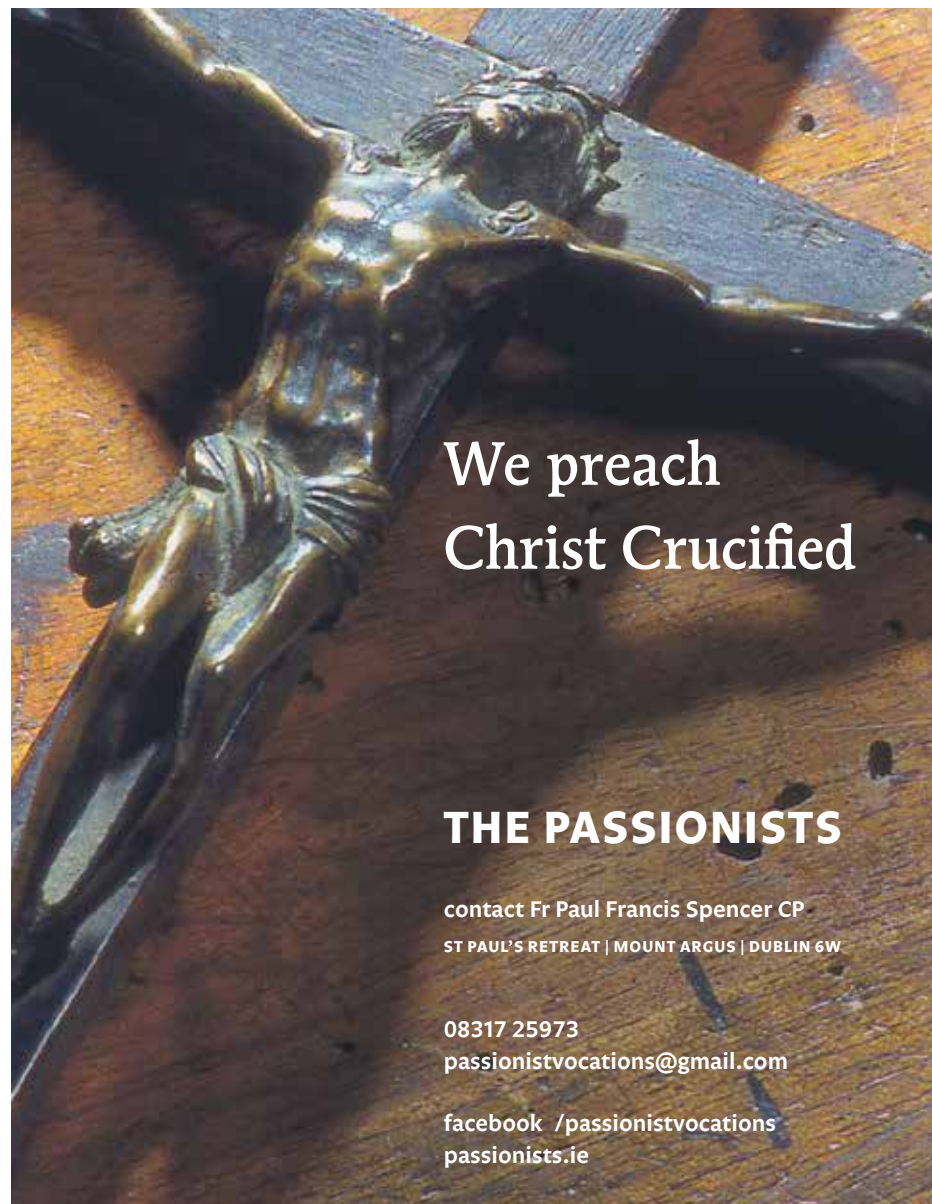
While much of our missionary effort today involves development projects or advocacy work, we cannot lose sight of the primary role of evangelisation in our task as missionaries. In his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, Pope Francis recalls that “the primary reason for evangelising is the love of Jesus which we have received, the experience of salvation which urges us to ever greater love of him.” (*Evangelii Gaudium* 264) As men and women religious committed to witnessing to the love of God which flows from the Cross, Passionists are called to be people who have experienced God’s love and who can share that experience with others.

Commitment

In a recent message he sent to the Passionists, Pope Francis reminded us of what being committed to the Cross means. He wrote: “Do not tire of accentuating your commitment to the needs of humanity. This missionary calling is directed above all towards the crucified of our age – the poor, the weak, the oppressed and those discarded by many forms of injustice. The implementation of this task will require a sincere effort of inner renewal on your part, which derives from your personal relationship with the Crucified-Risen One. Only those crucified by love, as Jesus was on the cross, are able to help the crucified of history with effective words and actions.”

Ours is a simple but strong message: the love of God is revealed on the Cross, and each of us, religious and lay, is called to bring love into situations of suffering as Jesus himself has done.

“Ours is a simple but strong message: the love of God is revealed on the Cross”



We preach
Christ Crucified

THE PASSIONISTS

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