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The Irish Catholic World Mission Sunday

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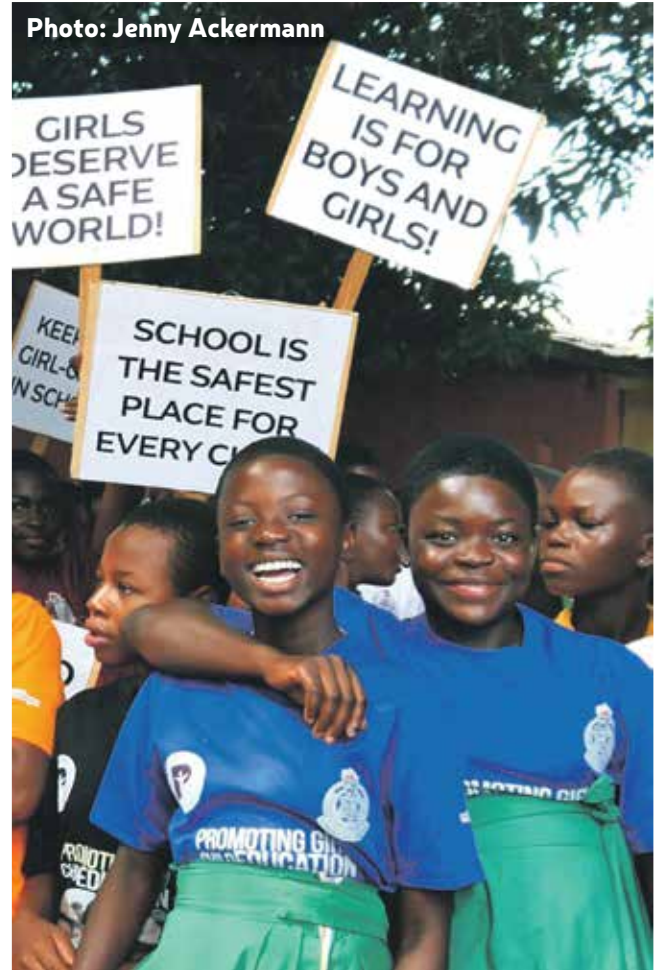


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Loreto South Sudan – building the future

While the focus of Loreto South Sudan is the empowerment of girls and women, educating boys is essential for gender equality as it helps prevent gender-based violence and transforms cultural norms that traditionally disadvantage girls. Like in Rumbek, the kindergarten and primary school in Aweil will welcome girls and boys. This is the inspiring story of one of our male graduates from the Rumbek Primary School named Kenya Abraham Machuei.

“And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.” (Gal 6:9)

My name is Kenya Abraham Machuei, from Rumbek Central County, Lakes State.

I grew up in a small village called Tit-Agok-Rot-Jot, five kilometres away from Rumbek town. I was raised by my mother, a widow with five children.

Learning

Before she was hired by the Loreto family in 2013 to serve as a cook, she worked as a farmer and a local vintner. She is an extraordinary woman who balanced the roles of both mother and father so gracefully that we never felt the absence of a paternal figure.

She first enrolled my elder brother in school in 2006, followed by my younger brother and me in 2010. It was a difficult journey for my elder brother, and unfortunately, he had to drop out in 2021 while in Senior 3.

I began my education in 2010 at Loreto Primary School under the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP). At that time, we studied alongside the school cooks under a neem tree. As our numbers grew, we moved from the shade of the trees to a dormitory under construction, and eventually to our permanent site.

Reflecting on my years at Loreto, my greatest inspiration came from being surrounded by educated individuals. Their advice and their command of the English language strengthened my resolve during difficult times. I grew determined to become like them. Despite the challenges—such as seeing friends being



Kenya Abraham Machuei.

taken to cattle camps and others leaving school for early marriage—I refused to give up.

“It was a significant challenge, but I quickly realised that leadership, regardless of age, is an essential part of learning”

My dream of a proper education became a reality when construction of our classroom began in 2014, and I was honoured to be elected head boy that year.

“Reflecting on my years at Loreto, my greatest inspiration came from being surrounded by educated individuals. Their advice and their command of the English language strengthened my resolve”

It was a significant challenge, but I quickly realised that leadership, regardless of age, is an essential part of learning. Over the following months, I faced numerous challenges, particularly in public speaking and communication. I vividly recall the daunting experience of speaking in front of a large gathering of girls at secondary sites. However, the self-confidence instilled in me enabled me to find my voice.

Schooling

The Construction of our classroom was completed early in 2015, allowing us to transition from learning under the trees to desks inside a building. Initially, this adjustment was difficult, but we soon adapted, making learning immensely enjoyable. As pioneers, we faced adversity—our num-

bers dropped from over 40 to only 14. Despite this, I persevered, representing our school in the state examinations and achieving the 10th position.

“We eventually sat for our final Exams in 2022; we were 22 in number, and we all came out with good results”

I joined La Salle Boys Secondary School, Rumbek in 2019. Invited from the Loreto family, the brothers had just started the school.

Our journey again began



Kenya with his mother.

in the bushes of Aber, four kilometres away from Loreto Girls Secondary School, Rumbek. It wasn't easy for us since the school was just starting, but thanks to the Loreto family, they accommodated us for one and a half years while the construction of classrooms and dormitories continued at the site.

In 2021, we finally could move into the boarding school as the pioneers. We eventually sat for our final Exams in 2022; we were 22 in number, and we all came out with good results.

Finances

Throughout my four years of secondary education, I was fortunate to face no financial barriers, thanks to my destiny helper, Eng. Robert Andama. He was a father figure for me, strengthening me through mentorship and immediate action when needed. Robert pledged that if I worked hard, he would support me until university—a promise he has fulfilled. Furthermore, in 2015, before we even knew each other, he had already ignited in me the dream of becoming an engineer like him. Consequently, I am now pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering at the University of Juba.

I am thrilled to have started my professional journey, laying the foundation for the kindergarten and the Secondary School

for the new Loreto Branch in Aweil as an intern engineer under supervision.

I started my own educational journey under the trees in Loreto. Now I build classrooms for the next generation of Loreto pupils and students. My dream is to create a place where everyone could flourish.

“I dedicate this journey and my future success to my mother. You were the cook who fed a school so that you could feed our dreams”

“We build bridges to connect our past with a better future.”

I am determined to use my skills to develop the infrastructure of South Sudan, proving that with faith and persistence, no distance is too far to travel.

I dedicate this journey and my future success to my mother. You were the cook who fed a school so that you could feed our dreams. You played the part of both parents with such strength that I never felt I was lacking.

LORETO SOUTH SUDAN

20 YEARS OF TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION



The Loreto Sisters first came to Rumbek in 2006 at the invitation of the Bishop of Rumbek to begin a new mission for girl child education in South Sudan. This mission was to establish a girls boarding secondary school located in the community of Maker Kuei, 8km from Rumbek town Centre. The local community offered the land for the Sisters to begin their ministry.

Over the years, the mission has expanded significantly. Today, Loreto Rumbek has four core programmes: a community based co-educational primary school, an all-girls secondary boarding school, a woman and child focused primary health care centre and an education centre. Other projects such as agriculture, internship, and vocational training serve to support the four core programmes. All projects in Loreto hold education as the central focus.

In 2024, the Loreto Sisters were invited by former graduates, the community and the Diocese of Wau to start a new and similar mission in Aweil, in Northern Bahr El Ghazal State, South Sudan. The Sisters accepted this call and are currently settling in the land and setting up essential infrastructure to establish a primary and secondary school as the first programmes in this new mission. The first secondary school class of 35 girls have been selected for Aweil. They study in Rumbek since 2026 while the school is completed.

LEGACY

In the 20 years since the Sisters first arrived in South Sudan the impact has been extraordinary. When the Sisters first arrived in 2006 there were only 13 girls attending second level education in the Rumbek Diocese – an area half the size of Ireland. Since the school started over 600 girls have graduated, with many supported to continue their education at 3rd level. They are now women working in South Sudan with qualifications in education, health, law and multiple other areas to help develop this young and troubled land. Today there are over 456 girls studying currently in Loreto Girls Secondary School. We now want to replicate this success in Aweil.



Help us build our new mission in Aweil

The transformative impact of our mission in South Sudan would simply not be possible without the very generous funding from our supporters. We are very grateful to all those who believe in our mission. If you would like to support our new mission in Aweil please see our donate options below. Thank you!

Donate now directly on our website or via bank transfer.

Bank: Bank of Ireland | **Currency:** € Euro
Account Name: Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary – Irish Province – Loreto Rumbek
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The Changing Face of Mission



Author: Emer Kerrigan, Irish Jesuits International, Deputy Director

Ireland is well renowned across the globe for the impact of Irish missionaries – both religious and lay who dedicated their lives to serve those on the margins.

Mary Robinson refers to our missionary movement as our national heritage. It bore fruit to the overseas aid sector as we now know it and has encouraged our government to continue our commitment to overseas development aid, when other countries are faltering. The impact of US funding cut over the last year, has had a ripple effect across development globally – with many charities having to cut staff, peel back programmes and entirely close projects in some of the most needy locations in the world.

The role of the missionaries has become more critical than ever – missionaries are respected amongst local communities for staying when funds dry up and for staying when conflict escalates. With the aging profile of Irish missionaries, a new generation of missionaries are taking their place – missionaries born in Africa, Asia and South America being called to mission in locations where people have major challenges in accessing schools, vocational training and basic health services.

In South Sudan, the lowest ranking country in the globe on the UN Human Development Index, cuts in the aid sector are being tragically felt. We at Irish Jesuits International (IJI) have South Sudan very close within our hearts. **In the last year we've directly supported 21,747 people (50% male; 50% female) in education, vocational training, teacher training, livelihoods and preparing for their very first national elections.** South Sudan is still the newest country in the world, now 15 years old.

The appetite amongst Irish missionary congregations to continue support to South Sudan is as strong as ever. This year, we launched the Forum for Irish Missionaries in South Sudan (FIMSS) at our Jesuit Provincialate Curia in Milltown – a collective of 18 missionary congregations based in Ireland working in 70 projects across South Sudan. The aim is to collaborate, work together, share resources so that we can continue to work in places where other charities can't – given the complexity of the community dynamics, or won't – bound by their tight security protocols.



(L to R): Fr Eric Simiyu SJ (Director of MAJIS Rumbek and St Peter Faber Primary School), Fr Lucas Ng'hwagi SJ (Director of St Peter Claver Ecology & Computer Centre), Rev Kizito Kiyimba SJ (Provincial of Jesuit East Africa Province), Fr Francis Wambua SJ (Parish Priest, St Therea's Parish & Kindergarten), Fr Kizito Busobozi SJ (Director of Victor Luke Odhiambo Memorial Secondary School)

As we celebrated Irish Jesuit International's 80th anniversary last year, Michael D Higgins expressed **"my heartfelt gratitude to all the members, past and present, of Irish Jesuits who have offered their selfless services over the past 80 years"** and wished IJI the **"patience, endurance and success with the positive changes that are so necessary for the years to come... with your efforts to create a more equitable, just, and fair future for all."**

We have 8 Kenyan, Tanzanian and Ugandan Jesuits missioned in South Sudan, working alongside local sister congregations and over 100 lay personnel across the 13 projects. They face added challenges to what our Irish missionaries would have faced. They don't have direct access to international support, media or donors. They are more likely to be targeted during times of insecurity. Kenyan Jesuit, Fr Victor Luke Odhimabo SJ was killed 8 years ago, when on mission at Mazzolari Teacher Training College in Cueilbet, South Sudan.

I remember my own time as a lay missionary over twenty years ago when I was placed with Jesuit Refugee Service in South Sudan. Just my presence as an expatriate, gave extra security to the camp of 33,000 people, much like a 'human shield'. That international visibility would be called

upon, if the camp was attacked by rebels, given the access I had to international media, embassies and international offices. This is a luxury our African missionaries don't have – that platform to access or call upon European media, to advocate when there are serious violations to human rights.

For this reason, our role in Ireland is even more important. Irish congregations like us are continuing to back our brothers and sisters as they put themselves through considerable personal sacrifice. Our accompaniment of our counterparts is strong, in terms of monitoring, mentoring and support. Our mission is as strong as ever, crossing cultures, in the spirit of collaboration to serve those furthest behind.

Emer would love to hear from you.



If you would like to chat more about our work or share your thoughts on South Sudan, please do get in touch. You can reach Emer by phone on (01) 8366509 or by email at deputy@iji.ie.

STAND WITH SOUTH SUDAN



A gift today brings HOPE to generations



As global aid cuts threaten the world's most vulnerable, our new generation of African missionaries are staying on the ground. Your gift enables Irish Jesuits International to continue supporting these brave men and women.

Together, we can provide vital education, healthcare, and safety where it is needed most.



**Please give
today.**

**YOUR GENEROSITY WILL
TOUCH COUNTLESS LIVES
IN THE MOST MEANINGFUL
WAYS.**

**Phone Emer to talk
through how you can
help:**

☎ (01) 8366509 ✉ deputy@iji.ie

📍 Irish Jesuits International,
20 Upper Gardiner Street, Dublin 1

🌐 www.iji.ie

Sowing hope: how Irish Missionaries are backing the women who feed Africa



Nazenti Mbavungu, South Sudan: Photo credit: Nyokabi Kahura

To mark the UN's International Year of the Woman Farmer, Mísean Cara is spotlighting projects across four African countries that show what happens when women smallholders are given skills, savings and a fair chance.

Ask most people to picture a farmer and they usually won't imagine a woman in her twenties with a baby on her back, hoeing a field in a drought-prone corner of northern Uganda. Yet across much of the developing world, that is the reality. Women grow a great deal of the food that reaches rural tables, while often struggling to secure land, borrow money, attend training or be heard in community decisions. The United Nations has named 2026 the International Year of the Woman Farmer, calling on governments, organisations and communities to recognise that imbalance and start to fix it.

For Irish missionaries, this is familiar ground. Mísean Cara was founded in 2004, with Irish Government backing, to channel Irish Aid funding to missionary groups working among the world's poorest communities. It has grown into a network of 77 missionary-led organisations operating in more than 40

countries. In 2025 alone, its members reached 1.13 million people globally through 344 projects spanning education, healthcare, human rights and sustainable livelihoods. Missionaries often work where few others can, in remote villages and conflict zones, and they tend to stay long after the headlines move on. These stories from Uganda, Mozambique, South Sudan and Malawi, show what that patience can achieve when it is pointed at the fields women work every day.

Uganda: scattered seeds and savings groups

In Uganda's far north-west, families had no shortage of land. What they lacked was know-how. Seed was scattered by hand with no spacing, so crops crowded each other out. Fields were cleared by burning the bush, which wrecked the soil and wildlife. Animals wandered freely, and households relied on wild greens instead of growing vegetables. Hunger and malnutrition were common.

Adraa Agriculture College, run by the Franciscan Brothers, set out to change this through its Sustainable Agriculture Livelihood Programme. Villagers learned

early planting, crop rotation, and how to protect soil and water. They were also taught kitchen gardening, tree planting, sound livestock care, nutrition and basic financial management.

“She now pays school fees without anxiety and can afford treatment when her children fall ill”

Ires Candiru, a 47-year-old widow raising three children, is one of those who put it to use. Her first kitchen-garden profits bought three goats. The goats multiplied and she swapped them for a cow, which in turn produced more animals. When she sold one, she used the money to buy a plot at the Giligili trading centre, where she plans to build a commercial property. She now pays school fees without anxiety and can afford treatment when her children fall ill.

Perhaps the most striking change is what women have

done with their earnings. Doris Maturu, 32, belongs to a village savings group the college helped set up in Ayuu. It now has 75 members, who have saved about 27 million shillings on average each year. Doris bought a boar, sold it for 760,000 shillings, and used the money for school fees, household furniture and a goat that has already had two kids.

Elsewhere in the same community, 63-year-old widow Betty Atrii received fifty tree seedlings, planted more of her own and established a small woodlot. She no longer walks long distances for firewood, her home is sheltered from strong winds, and she is teaching younger neighbours to plant and protect trees.

Mozambique: growing through crisis

Cabo Delgado, in northern Mozambique, is a place of displacement and fear. Hundreds of thousands of people have fled violence there, and a large share are women, many of them facing food insecurity with children in tow. The Augustinian Sisters, long present in the region, decided that women smallholders were the group most

in need of support and most able to turn it into lasting change.

“The women, who had begun to manage project funds themselves, described a growing sense of control over their futures”

In the years following its formation, the number of women's farming groups supported by the project grew from three to eight. Around 175 women were formally trained, and because the courses were kept open, at least 300 people in total took part. Training combined theory and hands-on practice, taught by a university lecturer, and alongside it came classes in literacy, since most of the women had never learned to read, along with lessons on hygiene and human rights. Each group received a set of tools, including a fertiliser and bio-pesticide sprayer. Staff prepared land for veg-

etables, and installed green-houses.

Climate change brought its own problems, including new pests that attack a wide range of crops. The response was homegrown and affordable: an expert showed the women how to make fertiliser and pesticide from sugar-cane molasses and farm waste, a technique that was new to the whole community. When drought threatened the dry-season harvest, the sisters went beyond their original plan and dug eight hand wells, one for each village. They are about ten metres deep and easy to maintain, which suits places far from any town. Household incomes among participants rose by 20%, and the women, who had begun to manage project funds themselves, described a growing sense of control over their futures.

South Sudan: nutrition begins in the garden

In Riimenze, in South Sudan's Western Equatoria State, the Solidarity with South Sudan programme has linked farming with family health. Nazenti Mbavungu, 33, is a single mother of seven and has been involved

dóchas

The Irish Association
of Non-Governmental
Development Organisations

**PRESIDENCY
PROJECT**
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Doris Maturu, Uganda. Photo credit: Nyokabi Kahura

“Training combined theory and hands-on practice, taught by a university lecturer, and alongside it came classes in literacy, since most of the women had never learned to read, along with lessons on hygiene and human rights”

for two years. Before the training, she says, children often went without breakfast because their mothers left for the fields at first light, and one starchy dish was usually the day's main meal. Many local children looked frail.

“Farmers from across the Diocese of Tombura-Yambio visited the Riimenze demonstration farm to see sustainable methods”

The programme taught the women to grow vegetables such as nightshade and amaranth, to cook them briefly to keep their goodness, to

keep kitchens clean, and to breastfeed for six months before introducing other foods. Nazenti now keeps some of her crop for her family and sells the rest, using the income for school fees, meat and cooking oil. She says malnourished children are now rare in her village.

The project reaches beyond individual households. In July 2026, farmers from across the Diocese of Tombura-Yambio visited the Riimenze demonstration farm to see sustainable methods in practice. A radio programme taught listeners about balanced diets, a community animal health worker visited pig farmers, and advice on drying harvested grain on raised racks helped families cut post-harvest losses.

Malawi: sun, seeds and a cooperative

Malawi offers a stark illustration of why this work matters. In 2024, an estimated 4.2 million Malawians faced

acute food insecurity, and the national poverty rate climbed above 71%. In Mchilawengo, in the north of the country, a baseline survey found maize harvests that varied wildly between households. A few did well, but most struggled with very little, and few had any means of earning income from higher-value crops.

“Erratic rainfall once left her family hungry and unable to afford fertiliser, and she often ate only one meal a day”

The Ungweru Organisation, supported by Miseen Cara through the Saint Patrick's Missionary Society, worked with 320 house-



Veronica Phiri, Malawi: Photo credit: Ungweru Organisation



Ires Candiru, Uganda. Photo credit: Nyokabi Kahura

holds. It installed a solar-powered irrigation system so families could grow beans in the dry winter season instead of depending on the rains. It gave pigs and chickens to dozens of households on a pass-on basis, meaning each recipient shares offspring with neighbours. And it helped farmers form a cooperative, which the government duly registered.

A year on, bean yields had more than doubled, from an average of 80 kilograms per household to 196, and groundnut harvests rose from 105 to 256 kilograms. Use of solar technology jumped from 4% of respondents to 64%. The cooperative then won a substantial government loan, which it used to buy more panels and irrigation equipment.

Veronica Phiri knows what that means. Erratic rainfall once left her family hungry and unable to afford fertiliser, and she often ate only one meal a day. With irrigation, she can now farm

through the dry months and plan ahead with some confidence.

What the stories share

These projects differ in climate, language and politics, yet they share a pattern. Women are given practical skills, often in their own villages, along with the tools and water they need to use them. They then build on that foundation through savings groups, cooperatives, small livestock or new crops. Income goes to school fees, medicine and better food, and what women learn is passed on to neighbours and daughters. The result is not dependency but confidence, and in many cases the women are now teaching others.

Recognising the work

Miseen Cara is marking the International Year of the Woman Farmer with Dóchas,

the Irish network of development organisations, with the support of the European Union. The timing is apt: Ireland currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU, and climate change and food security are high on the agenda. The message from the partners is that women's work in agriculture deserves far more recognition and recognition than it gets.

Many of the women in these stories ask for one thing above all: that the training reaches neighbouring communities still waiting for it. As Miseen Cara marks Mission Sunday this October, it is sharing the work Irish missionaries began more than a century ago, so that their legacy can carry on reaching the poorest communities for generations to come.

① This document was co-funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Miseen Cara and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Honouring the legacy of Irish missionaries while empowering local leaders



Frida Hennig

Reflecting on the past year ahead of Mission Sunday on October 18, Misesan Cara CEO John Moffett and Chairperson Philip O'Brien spoke to *The Irish Catholic* about their observations in the field, the transition underway to local indigenous leadership, and their pride in being associated with Ireland's missionary work.

Much of Misesan Cara's work in the last few years has focused on transitioning mission projects being led by Irish missionaries to being managed and run by local leadership. The process is one of necessity, as numbers of Irish missionaries fade, but also one of empowerment, allowing those closest to the problem to be most involved in finding the solution.

On the ground observations

Reflecting on a visit to Kenya in April, where he attended a conference with a focus on children with disabilities, the Misesan Cara CEO observed the work of indigenous leaders first-hand. The conference drew together various project teams working with children with disabilities across nine Sub-Saharan countries.

"What was very telling was the majority of participants at that meeting," explained Mr Moffett. "We might have had some of the programme team from the headquarters of our members here in Ireland, but all of the project leaders and managers were indigenous sisters from Sub-Saharan Africa who are running some fantastic programmes across those nine countries."

Mr Moffett visited one of the projects that's run by the Daughters of Charity and led primarily by Kenyan Sisters, a school and health facility in Thigio, north of Nairobi, "where they cater for children with a wide range of disabilities." Many of the students who pass through the facility also take classes in vocational and life skills, enabling them to later work alongside their parents, which gives them an opportunity to "provide a bit of inde-



Daughters of Charity, Kisima Special Needs School – Thigio, Kenya. Photo: Misesan Cara.



Sr Pauline Nakayale, Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa with Misesan Cara CEO, John Moffett – Nairobi, Kenya.

pendence and income for themselves," said the CEO, who described the Daughters of Charity sisters who he met there as the "most patient and delightful group of sisters you'll ever meet."

“We’re investing a lot of our own resources into strengthening capacity, and working with our members and their project teams to identify where there might be gaps”

"The number of Irish missionaries that we work with continues to decline on a yearly basis. But we are so encouraged by the succession planning that's in place, and the ability of the Indigenous sisters just to continue on, run with, and carry on with the projects.

"Of course, with Misesan

Cara, what we want to do is set them up for success. So we're investing a lot of our own resources into strengthening capacity, and working with our members and their project teams to identify where there might be gaps in organisational management, and provide them with the training to scale up in the areas that they need to."

From his visits such as the one to Kenya, Mr Moffett is encouraged by the desire to learn and improve he sees in the indigenous congregations. "We find them really receptive to all of those initiatives," he continued.

Commitment

Misesan Cara chairperson Philip O'Brien, who has served in multiple roles with UNICEF around the globe, and is a founding member of UNICEF Hungary, has spent a lot of time in Tanzania and Kenya, and in his role as Chairperson, has plans to visit mission projects early next year.

Mr O'Brien described a few things that struck him during his visits to Africa with UNICEF. He said it was incredibly inspiring to see



Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception – Lagos, Nigeria.

the "extraordinary commitment of individual Irish missionaries to work with very disadvantaged communities over a long period of time" and to see them "make that their life's labour."

“There wasn’t the same number of young Irish people coming through into the vocational fields... and they were very conscious of trying to build up local capacity in the projects we were looking at”

Touching on the transition to local leadership that Mr Moffett described, Mr O'Brien noted that even during his time with UNICEF there was a "growing awareness that this isn't going to last". In other words, Irish missionaries were aware that someday there would need to be a handing over of



St Teresa's Kindergarten (Irish Jesuits International) – Rumbek, South Sudan.

the torch from their leadership to a local one.

"There wasn't the same number of young Irish people coming through into the vocational fields...and they were very conscious of trying to build up local capacity in the projects we were looking at. I saw that in hospitals in Tanzania, but also in trade schools," he said.

Continuing, Mr O'Brien said that in consultations with leadership in the congregation, there is a distinct awareness of the need to manage the transition between Irish missionary leadership to the local indigenous leadership, "and in some cases to building a missionary goal." For example, indigenous sisters in Kenya can be working on mission projects in Zimbabwe, so that the missionary element of their work remains.

'Indigenisation' in the development sector

The process of "indigenisation", as Mr O'Brien referred to it, is a slow one amongst the development sector as a whole.

"When you've got a lot of policies, procedures, and

ways of working in place, trying to adopt those to new ways of working takes a bit of time, but I think certainly what we've seen over the last year is a real shift within the overarching structures of development from the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development) countries that lead on development assistance", which includes moving away from just the rhetoric of localisation to actual action, explained Mr Moffett.

“Mr Moffett emphasised that her ability to negotiate within the culture of that community in South Sudan, one that is steeped in patriarchy, is essential to the school's success”

Because of the way missionary groups are structured, specifically in



Solidarity Teacher Training College – Yambio, South Sudan
Photo credit: Nyokabi Kahura



Edmund Rice Centre Nairobi – Kenya.



Misean Cara members' meeting – Uganda.

regards to their long term presences in countries, they set themselves up for success. Spending lots of time in these spaces cultivates a closer relationship with the indigenous leadership, making the transition smoother when Irish missionaries leave.

An example of this strategy is Sr Orla Treacy's involvement at the Loreto School in Rumbek, South Sudan. Speaking with pride about Sr Treacy's presence in the Rumbek community, Mr Moffett emphasised that her ability to negotiate within the culture of that community in South Sudan, one that is steeped in patriarchy, is essential to the school's success. Her ability to "encourage the leaders and families to commit to allowing their girls to finish their education

and seek out these opportunities has been fantastic," shared the CEO.

"Those negotiating skills in very patriarchal societies are not to be underestimated. I mean, I think it's a huge skill to have and an ability to have to bring people along with you, and in small ways, chip away at some of the more harmful cultural practices and create opportunities."

With missionary work like Sr Treacy's the intention was always to "develop new formations, bring in novitiates, and develop indigenous congregations in the countries where they're operating," not, "to be there for all time, but to put the structures in place, get the congregations up and running, and then have the local sisters brought through the

whole process of formation to take on the leadership and continue the work that they've started and leave that presence in place," explained Mr Moffett.

“I think that’s a really important point for missionaries who are working with communities, to actually think of their handing over as being to local communities”

"That's one of the strengths of the missionary approach, is that long term



Philip O'Brien, Misean Cara Chairperson (left) and John Moffett, CEO (right). Photo credit: Jenny Barker.

presence but not the long term dependence on external support."

Discussing the shift in the international development sector's approach to missionary work, Mr O'Brien differentiated between government policy, which tends to focus on government to government communication, and the work of the local mission projects, which tend to work through a congregation to community, congregation to project stream of communication.

Continuing, he said the latter has potential to be "more resilient and less subject to the vagaries of political processes that you find in various countries.

Mission Sunday

With Mission Sunday approaching, Mr Moffett emphasised the opportunity the day presents; to celebrate and make known the "wealth of activity" that the 77 member organisations of Misean Cara are involved in across Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

For the CEO, the goal of

the day is to "bring that information to the Irish public at large, to show them the amazing amount of impact and work that our congregations continue to undertake in exceptionally increasingly difficult circumstances.

"The last year or two have been incredibly difficult years globally, just with the increasing number of crises across the globe and the reductions in Official Development Assistance (ODA)," explained Mr Moffett. "We've seen a 20% reduction in 2025 alone, and yet the needs continue to increase. There are areas of work that our members and, in particular, the Catholic Church has supported for years, like education. And we've seen remarkable advancements in education over the last couple of decades, and those are really at risk of being eroded.

"It's now more than ever that we need to continue to support the really trusted actors like our members who are engaged in education in the Global South to ensure that we're continu-

ing to provide opportunities for the growing population of young people in the Global South who need to have those opportunities to get a foot on the ladder, find themselves good livelihoods, and move forward with productive, genuine, and and well-lived lives."

The format for this year's World Mission Sunday, to be celebrated on October 18, will be different for Misean Cara. In past years, RTÉ has hosted Misean Cara at their studios for their Mission Sunday programming, with a small number of invited guests, said Mr Moffett. This year RTÉ will be broadcasting their Mission Sunday programming from the Cathedral of Assumption in Thurles, where Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly will celebrate Mass. AMRI and Missio will also be present at the Mission Sunday Mass, which will give the organisations a chance to collectively showcase "the expansion and scope of the mission support from Ireland," said Mr Moffett.

“Not just as CEO of Misean Cara, but as an Irish citizen, I’m really proud to be associated with the congregations and the work that they do”

When asked about the values that Misean Cara shares with organisations such as AMRI and Missio, Mr Moffett said that while they all have different methods of operation, they are "all on the same page".

"I think that there's a growing awareness and recognition that this is a task for all of us together, and that there is need for deeper collaboration on issues like this," added Mr O'Brien.

Sharing his pride at being a part of the work that not only Misean Cara, but also organisations such as Missio and AMRI do, Mr Moffett described what makes Irish missionary work unique: "What I admire most about Irish missionaries and our Irish missionary organisations is their ability to find ways to work with the people who are the most disadvantaged, the poorest, those that are being left out of social safety nets and really provide them with support. And their willingness to go to the hard to reach places that others would find very very difficult to operate in."

"Not just as CEO of Misean Cara, but as an Irish citizen, I'm really proud to be associated with the congregations and the work that they do."

“There are areas of work that our members and, in particular, the Catholic Church has supported for years, like education. And we’ve seen remarkable advancements in education over the last couple of decades, and those are really at risk of being eroded”

We are the Irish Capuchin Franciscan Friars and we have been ministering in Ireland since 1614 bringing with us the spirit of St Francis of Assisi.

The Capuchin Franciscan vocation is a call to live the Gospel and to bring the Good News to all we meet. We do this as brothers united in prayer and service. This service calls on us to be missionaries at heart.

Irish Capuchin Franciscan Friars have served in Zambia, South Africa, South Korea, South Africa, Namibia, New Zealand, Western America and the Great Britain. Weather at home or abroad we are called to be brothers of the people as we follow in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi.

CALLING

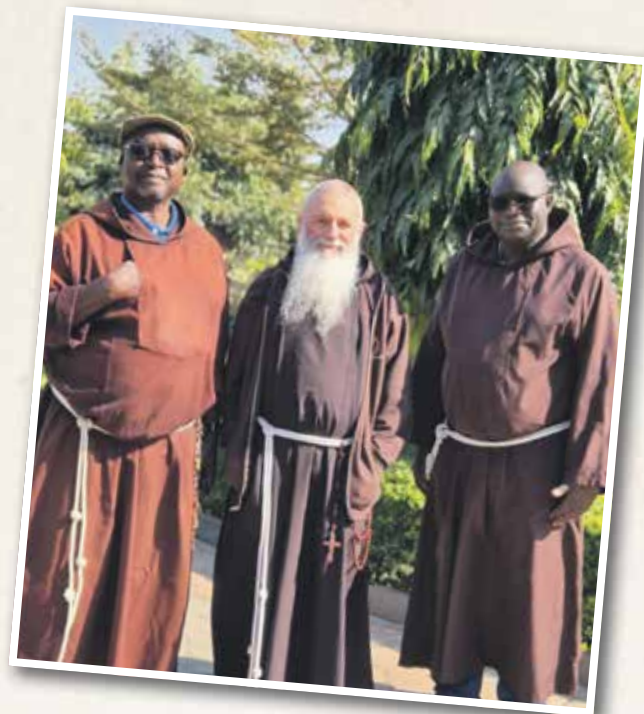
This year we celebrate 800 years since the death of St Francis of Assisi in 1226. To mark this Pope Leo declared a jubilee Year that runs to the end of January 2027 in honour of St Francis. Francis lived in a time different from our own time in terms of our access to information and the use of technology but similar due to increasing uncertainty and political instability across the globe.

Francis was called to rebuild God's Church and he chose to do this by rebuilding the crumbling relationships he saw all around him. Our relationships with God and each other are at the very

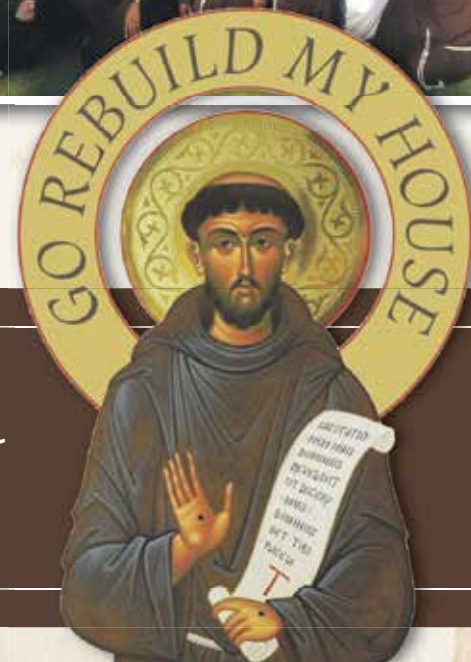
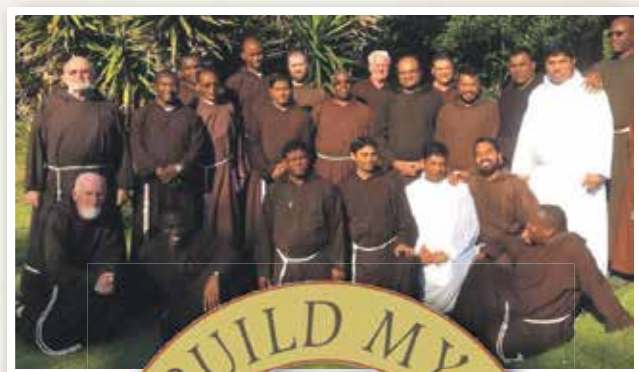


core of the Christian life and Francis knew how important it was to live in what St Bonaventure called 'right relationship': relationships orientated to the service of God, others and all of Creation. A missionary heart is needed to do this.

Over the centuries, Capuchin Friars have brought this desire to build and sustain right relationships to people around the world. Our Missionary brothers were known for their ability to work with local people and communities to help them connect with the message of the Gospel. This often happened through education, healthcare, agriculture, building projects and pastoral care. This hard work has produced much fruit and all of Mission territories now have an abundance of homegrown vocations. We thank the Lord for this blessing. Our Mission Office in Dublin continues to support this important work.



“Capuchin Friars have brought this desire to build and sustain right relationships to people around the world”

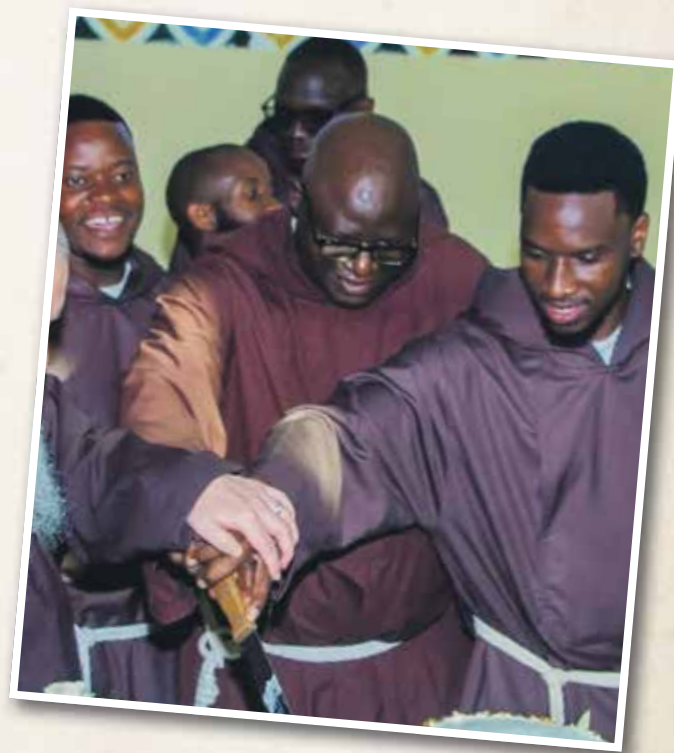


***Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in
the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi***



The Capuchin Way of Life

You can support the work of the Irish Capuchin Missions through our Mission Office on Church Street and by enrollment in the Capuchin Seraphic Mass Association, available from all our Friaries in Ireland.



What path has the Lord prepared for you?

For more information on the Capuchin way of life
visit www.capuchinfranciscans.ie/Vocations

Salesian Missions Ireland are reaching out to the world's poorest children



Fr Dan Carroll

"Whoever receives one such little child in my name receives me."
(Mk 9:37).

In Don Bosco's time

The Salesian missions work of caring for the world's poorest children began with the childhood experiences of John Bosco.

Don (Fr John) John Bosco the founder of the Salesians was born in 1815 to a peasant family dependant on agriculture for a living. His father died when he was two years old. The family experienced economic hardship and insecurity. His childhood was marked by hard work, and he saw the sacrifices his mother made to provide for her children. John was intelligent and eager to study, but poverty made access to formal education very difficult.

At 12 years of age John left home to work as a labourer. He lived in poor accommodation and often his meals were inadequate. John Bosco's desire to become a priest did not seem possible because of the family's financial circumstances. However, he received the necessary support and with a personal awareness of how education and support can provide opportunities that can shape one's life, he began what we now know as the Salesian missions.

During his early years as a priest in Turin, John Bosco encountered large numbers of poor boys, many of whom had migrated from rural areas in search of work. Some were homeless, orphaned or separated from their families.

Don Bosco realised these young people needed shelter, food, a sense of belonging and someone to care for them. On December 8 1841 he started work that would

respond to their needs, and so the Salesian mission work unfolded.

Don Bosco addressed the material poverty of these young people by providing food clothing, shelter and practical assistance. His response to educational and social poverty was to build schools, youth centres and provide work skills for locally available employment. For spiritual care Don Bosco offered friendship, a family spirit, faith, dignity and hope.

Don Bosco 21st century

Today, this ethos that Don Bosco developed and lived at his Oratory in Turin is what informs and inspires the Salesian missionaries' outreach across the world.

Hunger, now, is a major obstacle to education for millions of children and minors worldwide. The Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations (FOA) stated in 2024 that 783 million people were living with hunger due to conflicts, weather shocks and economic fragility. The FOA also indicated that 2.8 billion people in the world are unable to afford a healthy diet. Inadequate diets lead to malnutrition, diseases, mental health challenges and low energy.

This is the present-day context for our Salesian missionaries work in over 130 countries worldwide. There are over 11,000 Salesian mission centres responding to the needs of particularly poor and vulnerable youth. These centres are in parishes, youth centres, and educational facilities. There are also centres helping young migrants, street children and trafficked people, along with health centres. However, all of the work in these centres would have very little impact if they were not providing meals for the pupils and students from impoverished backgrounds who are attending.

Everywhere in our world education is the key to overcoming poverty. Salesian educational programmes equip young people with knowledge and practical skills to pursue employ-



Students at Don Bosco School, Polsonda, Salesian Calcutta Province, India. Photo: Salesian Missions Ireland Don Bosco Aid

ment, earn a livelihood and achieve financial independence. In addition to formal education, these programmes address essential needs, such as providing nutritious meals for school children, refugees and street children.

“Children cannot focus on school or learning when they are hungry”

The following are short statements made by beneficiaries of Salesian food programmes.

- A Salesian in Uganda noted that “meals provided adequate nutrition for the students and staff, allowing them to continue their teaching and learning activities without interruption.”
- Jeannot, aged 15, from

Haiti lost his mother at the age of 5. He joined a Salesian programme where he receives a hot meal every day and has become healthy and able to study and learn.

- Naomie, age 15, is from the Democratic Republic of Congo. She lived with her mother and father until they died. She found her way to a Salesian centre where she received good meals and has learned to read and write.
- Mary from South Sudan talks about being displaced. “Life is challenging. Going to school gives me hope. It is a place where I can learn, play with my friends and feel safe.”

Invitation

Physical nourishment allows those who are poor to have hope and dignity and to follow their dreams for a better world.

Salesian missions Ireland invite you to support our ‘Seeds of Hope’ project supporting programmes offering nutritious meals at different Salesian centres across Africa and Asia. This is an invitation to support the neediest youth in our world.

The Salesian family in Ireland invites you to be part of this journey. We invite you:

To pray for the missionaries. Ask the Lord to bless

them with all the courage, hope and faith they need.

Help us make the story of our missionaries and the poor of the world better known.

If you can, please help financially to enable the missionaries provide food where it is needed. The Salesian Ireland details are below.

Salesian Missionaries planting Seeds of Hope.

Every day, Salesian Missionaries and their partners provide meals to vulnerable children living in extreme poverty around the world. Your generosity can transform a child's life by providing the nutrition needed to learn, grow, and reach their God-given potential. Together, we can help children build brighter futures for themselves, their families, and communities.

✉ dba@salesiansireland.ie

🌐 www.salesiansireland.ie

📞 01 465 0717

Bank details:

Account: Salesians of Don Bosco Ireland Mission Aid

IBAN: IE91 AIBK 9354 7624 7683 45

BIC: AIBK IE2D



SALESIAN MISSIONS IRELAND
DON BOSCO AID

“I am cared for by my grandmother. I go to Don Bosco School in the morning and come home in the evening. I have nothing at home to eat so what I receive at Don Bosco is all I have. I bring some home to share with my grandmother”

– Emily (Age 5)

Your 'yes' can change the world

We are the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption, a religious congregation of consecrated women. Each sister has answered God's call to serve the less fortunate, and to make God's Kingdom a reality.

Through our prayer life, religious communities, and ministry, we seek to bring God's love and compassion to those we encounter.



We are inspired by the example of our foundress, Mother Gertrude de Henningsen, who dedicated her whole life to serving the emerging needs of God's people in South Africa.

Say 'yes'!

Serve God as a Missionary Sister of the Assumption

Contact Us



Sr Peninah
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Amplifying voices of Catholic sisters around the world



GLOBAL SISTERS REPORT

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One in Christ, United in Mission

Occupation: Religious

On the evening of Sunday April 18, 1926, 29 women were counted in the household at Ardfoyle Convent in Ballintemple, Cork, on a three-page census return. The Superior, Rev. Mother Agnes Havet, is entered first as head of the household, aged 50 and born in the Nord in France. Beside her name and beside every one of those beneath it, a single word has been written for occupation: Religious.

Sisters

These women were missionaries, the Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles.

Brigid Meehan was the youngest, only 15, from Kiltyclogher in Co. Leitrim. Sr Cassien, at 60, was the oldest and had already crossed one border to reach Cork, born in Bas-Rhin on the eastern edge of France. Between them the return holds Sr Regis Duffy, 19 and Glasgow-born, Sr Rosina Cooney, a novice of 17 from Stradbally in Co. Waterford, and a run of names from Cork, Kerry, Galway, Clare, Dublin, Liverpool and Belfast. Few of them would stay in Ireland. Most, in time, were bound for Africa.

The census schedule records only one night and nothing more.

That same year, Pope Pius

XI established World Mission Sunday. The OLA was already 50 years old.

Pope Leo XIV is using the centenary of Mission Sunday to speak of missionary renewal, communion and the need for Christians to undertake mission together, under the theme "One in Christ, united in mission." What that unity looks like in practice is easily romanticised. At Ardfoyle, in 1926, it meant women preparing for missions they had not yet begun, brought together under one roof with people they had not chosen and could not yet know. Mission began in community, and for OLA, community has remained the primary place from which mission is lived.

Two of the women present in Ardfoyle that night can be followed further. Sr Salve, 29, would spend 47 years in Ghana, arriving in the late 1920s and remaining until her death on March 16, 1975. She was there through the era of the first boarding schools and into the growth of secondary and teacher education across the country. Sr Patricia Loughnane, 31, would become the Irish Province's third Provincial Superior in 1938, ensuring that Sisters leaving Cork afterwards went as trained nurses, midwives and teachers, with preparation in tropical medicine before departure. This year, OLA congrega-

tion celebrates 150 years. Today, 622 Sisters live and work in 21 countries across four continents.

Many of the Sisters who listen to the readings this Mission Sunday will have spent most of their adult lives in OLA. There are Sisters whose missionary lives began before mobile phones, email or cheap international travel altered the experience of distance and home, and others for whom modern technologies are simply a part of life.

“Some will hear the Mission Sunday readings from a chair in a community where the work of their lives has long since passed to others”

Across West Africa there are Sisters in formation, and Sisters at the beginning of active ministry. The needs of women and children remain central to OLA mission. Today that includes ministries that would not have been prominent in an OLA account 100 years ago, among them human trafficking, environmental justice

and safeguarding. Education, healthcare, pastoral work and interreligious dialogue continue alongside them, as they have for generations.

Some will hear the Mission Sunday readings from a chair in a community where the work of their lives has long since passed to others. Their memories hold schools from their early years, clinics before modern equipment reached them, parish communities that grew around small beginnings, and colleagues long departed; traces of those years remain in the congregation's archives.

All of them belong to the same 150 years.

A Jubilee gathers names and dates around itself, and OLA has plenty of both, along with graves far from the countries in which Sisters were born, letters that preserve friendships across decades, and and photographs of young women filled with expectation, who could not know then how their mission would be lived. 29 of those names were recorded under one household in Cork on an April evening in 1926, on the schedule Sr Agnes Havet signed. The congregation those women belonged to did not remain unchanged around them.

Change

On this 100th Mission Sunday, OLA's 150 years of Mission will be present in women



Page 1 of the 1926 census record.



Ardfoyle convent c. 1926.

at very different points in Religious life: Sisters who remember people and places now known to younger generations through photographs and stories, Sisters deeply involved in present ministries, women still in formation, and others whose years of active mission lie largely behind them. They belong to a congregation that has

changed repeatedly during their lifetimes and will continue changing beyond them.

The census taken at Ardfoyle in April 1926 could record only who was under that roof on one particular night. Beside 29 names it gave the same occupation: Religious. A hundred Mission Sundays later, those three pages have become part of a much longer record.

Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles 1876 - 2026

150 YEARS OF MISSION



One Heart, One Mission... Witnessing to God's Love in the World



Dromantine 100 years – the work goes on

In 1926 - 100 years ago, responding to the need to accommodate more students for the priesthood, the SMA opened a Major Seminary in Dromantine, Newry, Co. Down. In the decades that followed 587 priests were ordained for mission in Africa. They ministered in Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania, South Africa and Kenya. They engaged in parish pastoral care, education and social development work. In these countries, over the past 100 years, Irish SMA's played a major role in building faith communities, running schools, improving lives and wellbeing, and also in establishing a local Church with indigenous priests and bishops.

In 1983 the SMA General Assembly decided to invite candidates from African and Asian countries to become members of the Society of African Missions. It embarked on building an international formation programme and developing teams of formators to run it. Irish SMA's played major roles in these formation teams. There are now 21 SMA Formation Houses spread across Africa providing Preparatory, Philosophy, Theology and Spiritual Year Programmes. This year thirty-two new SMA priests were ordained, an amazing number in these days when ordinations are, in Ireland, a rare occurrence.

The work of SMA Missionaries, trained in Dromantine, has borne much fruit. Over the last

100 years strong Christian communities, now served by their own priests and bishops, have been established. Vocations to the SMA are now coming from these same communities. At present there are over 400 students at various stages of formation. The Gospel call to love each other as 'I have loved you' needs to be heard as much as ever before, in the troubled times in which we now live. The number of students and ordinations this year, is for us a great encouragement, a sign of hope in the future of the SMA's mission, and assurance that we can continue to proclaim this Gospel message.

“As we celebrate this Centenary milestone we offer heartfelt praise and thanks to all our friends throughout the country”

There are now only a handful of Irish SMA's working in Africa. One of them is Fr Fachtna O'Driscoll, a former Irish Provincial Superior and also Superior General of the SMA worldwide. Now serving as a staff member at the SMA House of Formation in Kabwe, Zambia, he is at present overseeing a building project that

will increase accommodation for SMA students there. This is what happened in Dromantine 100 years ago. Here in Ireland, while our membership is ageing, we are still committed to our African Mission. We show this commitment by supporting initial formation in Africa as well as the pastoral work and development projects undertaken by SMA missionaries who now are mostly African and Asian.

100 years ago, the Irish Province of the SMA responded to the growing number of vocations in Ireland by opening a Major Seminary in Dromantine, Co. Down. Today, we still respond to the same need, but this time in Africa. Fr Fachtna O'Driscoll is doing this on the ground in Zambia, while our mission here in Ireland is to provide the spiritual and financial support that allows this work to flourish. Please pray for the thirty-two new SMA Missionary Priests as they begin their missionary journey and may they be strong in mind, body and faith in the coming years and decades.

As we celebrate this Centenary milestone we offer heartfelt praise and thanks to all our friends throughout the country who, down the years, may have visited Dromantine, and to all our benefactors whose prayers, encouragement and support have ensured that Dromantine remains a family-friendly, holy place of welcome, renewal and mission. Long may it remain so!



Some of the 32 SMA Missionaries ordained this summer.



SMA Summer Camp 2026 – a week of fun, faith and friendship.



SMA's with friends and supporters at a recent Mass to celebrate 100 years in the Chapel at Dromantine.



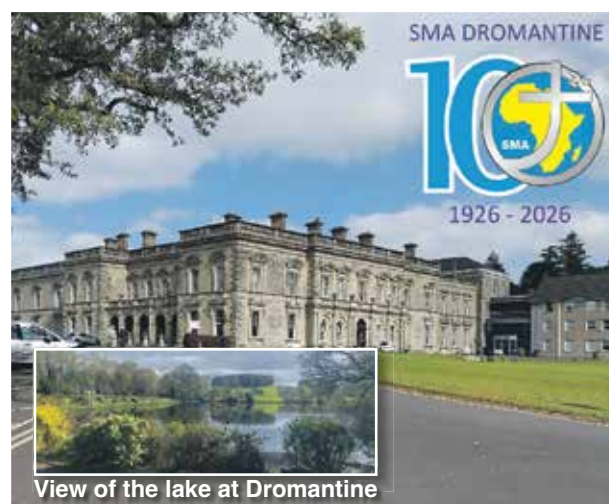
Students and staff. Flanking Bishop Edward Mulhern are Fr William Butler SMA, first Superior of Dromantine and Fr Maurice Slattery SMA, Provincial Superior.



Building work in Kabwe, Zambia: Fr Fachtna O'Driscoll SMA and Fr Fabian Sognon SMA (Togo).

Dromantine

Today Dromantine continues to play an important role in the life of the local community and the Church in Northern Ireland as a place for Retreats, Conferences, Workshops and events such as the SMA Family Fun Day and the Summer Camps for teenagers. It is a place of prayer, tranquillity, natural beauty and spirituality – a place where SMA Missionaries are present bringing an on-going awareness of mission and promoting support for Mission in Africa.



View of the lake at Dromantine



For more information about Dromantine Retreat and Conference Centre scan this Code.



To view a short video about Dromantine please scan this Code.



100 YEARS OF WORLD MISSION SUNDAY
SUNDAY 18th OCTOBER 2026

—❤—

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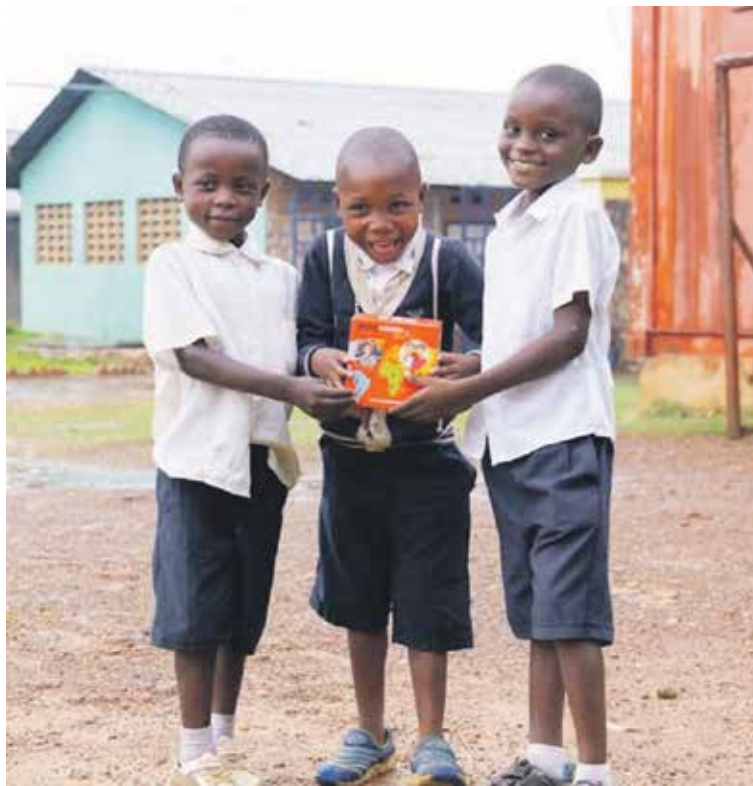
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We want to keep you up to date on how you are helping missionaries change lives. More information about projects assisted by Missio Ireland is available on our website.

Your support makes the work of missionaries possible.

World Mission Sunday is the Holy Father's annual appeal for spiritual and financial support so that the life giving work of overseas mission and missionaries can continue. All funds collected go to projects abroad. This year marks the 100th anniversary of Mission Sunday. Missio Ireland co-ordinates the celebration of this event in Ireland every year.

To make a donation simply complete the form and return it to Missio Ireland, 64 Lower Rathmines Road, Dublin D06 N2H1. Alternatively, you can also offer a donation by calling:

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‘We can never go back’: why the stories of the past matter

Roisín Coll

There are some evenings when a conversation stays with you long after you have left the room. Last night, in my favourite Donegal pub, I witnessed something that reminded me of the extraordinary power of a story well told.

My two teenage daughters were sitting listening to Marie, a 76-year-old Belfast woman whose capacity for storytelling is quite remarkable. Marie and her husband, travel down to Donegal most weeks to relax, and they have been coming to this particular place for 54 years. She is one of those people who can bring a room to life! She is animated, funny, full of detail and wonderfully nostalgic. When Marie starts telling a story, you listen.

History

But last night was different. The humour gave way to something more serious as the conversation turned to the events unfolding in the North of the

country this week and the scenes surrounding Garvaghy Road. Marie spoke not simply as someone watching the news, but as someone who had lived through the Troubles. Her message was unequivocal.

“We can never go back.”

Then she began to explain why.

“The past was no longer a distant chapter in a history book. It had a face, a voice and a family behind it”

She recalled 1969, when her mother was in labour with her seventh child. Marie was the eldest, and she was helping her mother get to hospital amid the turmoil of the time. There were riots. Tin lids banged against the pavements. What should have been an ordinary journey to bring a new life into the world had become a frightening struggle to reach safety.

It was the intervention of priests at St Paul’s Church on the Falls Road, who helped the family through the church grounds, that enabled them to reach the hospital in time. Twenty minutes later, her youngest brother, was born.

Marie continued. Another memory, another experience, another glimpse of a life shaped by circumstances that no family should have to endure. My daughters sat mesmerised. They had seen the news, watched the footage and encountered the commentary on social media. Now, however, they were listening to someone who had been there. The past was no longer a distant chapter in a history book. It had a face, a voice and a family behind it.

Lessons

As I listened to Marie, I found myself thinking about something I had been discussing with my students earlier that week - Jesus the teacher. One of the most distinctive features of His teaching was His use of

stories. Through His parables, Jesus took familiar experiences of everyday life - a farmer sowing seed, a traveller on a dangerous road, a father welcoming home a lost son - and He used them to reveal deeper truths about human nature, our relationships with one another and the kingdom of God.

“It was the conclusion of a woman who had lived through years of uncertainty and fear and who knew what it meant for ordinary families”

Marie’s stories were different. These were not parables designed to teach a lesson but they were memories of events she had lived through herself. Yet both reminded me of something important: a story can reach us in ways that explanation alone cannot. It can give meaning to an experience

and leave us seeing the world a little differently.

And isn’t that what the best storytellers do?

When we listen to stories, we are drawn in by the details, the characters, the humour and the suspense. But when a story is rooted in personal experience, something else happens. We begin to understand not just what happened, but what it meant to the person who lived through it. We hear the fear behind the memory, the conviction behind the words.

Marie was not delivering a history lesson. She was handing on a part of her life.

Her repeated insistence that “we can never go back” meant something different when we understood where it came from. It was not a slogan or a soundbite. It was the conclusion of a woman who had lived through years of uncertainty and fear and who knew what it meant for ordinary families when violence became part of everyday life.

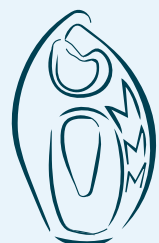
This is why the events of

this week matter beyond the immediate headlines. Whatever our individual perspectives on the past, there is something deeply important about listening to those who remember it. Their experiences remind us that peace is not simply the absence of conflict, nor is it something that can be assumed or taken for granted. It is fragile. It requires commitment and a willingness to recognise our common humanity, even when our histories and convictions differ.

We cannot change the stories that have already been lived. But we can decide what we do with them. We can dismiss them or distort them. Or we can listen carefully, learn honestly and accept the responsibility of ensuring that the next generation inherits something better.

“We can never go back,” Marie told us.

Some stories are entertaining. Some are moving. And some are entrusted to us because we must never forget what they teach.



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Our 2026 MMM Yearbook and the 2027 MMM Calendar are out now! If you would like a FREE copy of these and our upcoming supplements, please fill in the form underneath with your details for mailing and post the form to our address (see below).*

*Please do not fill this form in if you are already receiving our calendars and yearbooks in the post. We appreciate that you are already on our mailing list and thank you for your continued support!

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