

# Mission Letter

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM THE MISSIONARIES OF AFRICA (WHITE FATHERS)

June, 2015

Dear friends of the Missions,

Greetings from my new community in Toronto. Since I will be celebrating my golden jubilee of priestly ordination this month in my home parish in Cornwall, I wish to share briefly with you what these years have meant for me, more especially the 42 years that I served in Zambia.

I thank and praise the Lord for his loving faithfulness and for my missionary vocation. He has used so many persons to show me His Love and to grant me so many grace-filled years in his service. I have come to realize that as a missionary in Africa I have been enriched and **I have received far more than I have given.**



Fr Mike Merizzi

**I have been evangelized by the poor.** I have felt this more deeply when I served in rural parishes and later in the suburbs of a large mining city. I have been touched by their faith and commitment in difficult material circumstances. **I have witnessed the remarkable growth of the Catholic Church** since my arrival there in 1966.

First, **the commitment and the leadership of the laity**, more especially when I was director of a diocesan training center for catechists (Pastoral Agents), and in my meetings with leaders at parish and diocesan level. Women are the pillars of the parishes through their active membership in women organizations (CWL, St. Annes, Nazareth, etc) and their active participation in all parish activities. Eucharistic celebrations are well attended and appreciated thanks to the lively contribution of choirs and musicians. Charismatic prayer groups are increasing in number and are having a positive impact.

Then **the remarkable growth in vocations** to the religious and to the priestly life. When I first arrived missionary priests and religious were overstretched because of the lack of vocations. Now the Church has become *self-ministering* and can now cater for most of the pastoral needs

of its people and also has the personnel to run hospitals, schools, orphanages, and so many institutions for the loving service of the people.

At the same time the **church has become missionary** and able to send out Zambians as missionaries in other African countries. There are now 25 Zambian White Fathers. **The bishops** are all Zambians chosen among the diocesan priests and religious families. Their leadership and commitment has also had an impact and influence on the life of the nation. The parishes and dioceses have made progress in *self-reliance*. They rely less and less on exterior funding for the normal pastoral activities. Rural dioceses and the new diocesan religious congregations still need assistance for their formation programs and new foundations.

Missionaries played an important part in the foundation and growth of the Catholic Church in Africa. This has been made possible thanks to the spiritual and material assistance received from you our friends and benefactors.

The Catholic Church still faces **many challenges**. - Deepening the faith through a better catechesis, - coping with incidents of witchcraft and of Satanism - becoming the Church of the poor for the poor...

Since Independence in 1964 there has been remarkable growth and development in the nation. It has enjoyed continued peace and has been spared from military coups and political violence. The economy has grown, thanks to mining and agriculture, and Zambia has been declared a middle income society because of the emergence of a middle class. However the poor are getting poorer and it remains a challenge for both Church and State to bring about development to the poor and to assure a fairer distribution of the wealth.

I am pleased to be able to share with you, some good news about the Zambian nation and about the Catholic Church. Unfortunately international news broadcasters give the impression that only bad news come out of Africa.

May God bless you all!

*Fr Mike Merizzi, MAfr*

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