

# AFRICAN LINK

Newsletter of SMA Laity groups



Society of African Missions, Dromantine, Glen Road, Newry, Co Down.

VOLUME I, ISSUE I

## Welcome to the First issue of the AFRICAN LINK



*The SMA logo shows a map of Africa and three doves symbolizing Faith, Hope and Charity, the last words of SMA founder, Bishop de Marion Bresillac.*

**Hello to all of you from Dromantine House**, the Ulster base of the Society of African Missions (SMA) located just outside Newry. Although you are all connected to SMA in some way, you will not all have been to Dromantine and many of you may not be aware of the range of groups who are linked to SMA or the sorts of things they do. Bearing that in mind, it seemed like a good idea to issue a newsletter with up to date information about what is happening within the various groups, to help to keep everyone well informed and con-

nected to the wider SMA family.

Here at Dromantine we are fortunate to have a solid base of lay supporters, some of whom have been involved with us for over 50 years. Inside this newsletter you will learn a little bit about all those various groups, from the longest established to the more recent developments and also about the links that exist between the different groups.

For example you might be surprised to know that as a supporter of SMA here in Ulster you belong to a group of

almost 7000 people.

You might also be surprised to know that some of our supporters are the 2nd or even 3rd generation of their family to be involved with Dromantine.

Hopefully you will find the AFRICAN LINK both interesting and useful and you will discover how important the Laity groups are to the work of SMA.

### *SMA Pilgrimage to Knock 2013*

On Saturday 25 May, SMA supporters from all over Ireland gathered at the Shrine to Our Lady at Knock for the Annual Pilgrimage. Buses were organized by FVC members from all four provinces and somewhere in the region of 3000 people joined in the events of the 33rd SMA Pilgrimage.

The celebration was enriched by the presence of multicultural dancers from Loreto House in Dublin who proclaimed the Gospel and presented the Book of the Gospel in song and dance. The Offertory was presented by the dancer of the Mary Baxter school of Dance in Omagh adding tremendously to the celebration. Over 50 SMA

priests concelebrated Mass and Bishop Kieran O'Reilly, SMA of Killaloe, preached the Homily. It was wonderful to see FVC members from all over Ireland assembling in the Basilica and outside, meeting and chatting with old friends and new.

#### Inside this issue:

Family Vocations Crusade (FVC)	2
Missionary Association Cards (MAC)	2
SMALA	2
Friends of Africa (FoA)	3
Dromanteens Camps	3
SMA News	3
Dromantine Fun Day	4

AFRICAN LINK

## FAMILY VOCATIONS CRUSADE (FVC)

The **Family Vocations Crusade (FVC)** is the oldest of the laity groups attached to Dromantine. It was established in 1959 primarily to sponsor the educating and training of young clerical students. Between 1926 and 1972 Dromantine was the national seminary for the SMA. Many people still refer to FVC as the “sponsor movement” and the various groups

formed are still based around Head Sponsors.

Members of the FVC generally make, over an 8 year period, an annual donation to the SMA to support the training of missionary priests, although these priests are now all based in Africa, India or the Phillipines. In addition members are encouraged to pray for vocations.

Many members often attend meetings or Mass in a Head Sponsors house or at the annual regional gatherings.

Children of members aged 11-16 are given the opportunity to join the “Dromanteens” club and are eligible to attend the popular summer camps held in July and August every year.



*Fr Kevin Conway from Co. Tyrone after his ordination in 2011 with Fr Damian Bresnahan.*



## MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION CARDS (MAC)

*All prayer intentions are placed before the Altar in the SMA Community Chapel in Dromantine and remembered in the daily prayers and Mass of the Community.*

**Missionary Association Cards (MAC)** have been a source of much needed support for the work of SMA in Africa for many years.

The cards are an ideal way to let someone know you have remembered them in a prayerful way, All prayer petitions

are placed before the Altar in the SMA Community Chapel in Dromantine and remembered in the Community’s daily prayers and Mass.

The cards are available through promoters, many whom are also members of FVC but

some have no other connection with SMA except through the MAC.

Promoters return the petitions and donations either by post or in person. Requests for cards are generally dealt with by phone and post although some promoters choose come to the Main office here in Dromantine.

## SMALA (SMA LAY ASSOCIATION)



The Society of African Missions Lay Association or **SMALA** was formally established in 2001 and has about 40 members.

Most are also members of FVC who have expressed an interest in a closer link with SMA and furthering the aims and goals of SMA.

SMALA members meet together with their Chaplain, Fr Kelleher, to pray,

study scripture and review their activities. In the ten years since their formation, they have assumed responsibility for the distribution and collection of the SMA Mission Boxes which are located in shops, bars and homes across Ulster.

SMALA members are also engaged in fund raising for specific

projects in Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria.

They contribute to the organizing and running of the Annual Family Fun Day and are involved in the Novena to St Therese of Lisieux held annually in Dromantine in September.



*SMA building project in Twafwane, Zambia which has been supported by FoA*

## FRIENDS OF AFRICA (FOA)

**Friends of Africa** was formed in 1998 after some ex-members of the SMA Boy's Club expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the work of the mission of the church to the Superior General of the SMA

Among their aims and objectives was to make a positive contribution to the lives of the people

of Africa. Taking the name "**Friends of Africa**" the group is now a registered charity, many of whose members have been long term or short term volunteers in Africa.

The Core Group and members are involved in raising awareness of African issues, organizing social events, fund-raising, working with

school groups, giving retreats and preparing those schools who work with the charity for experiential trips to Africa. They also assist with the FoA Volunteer Training Programme for those young people who volunteer to go to Africa.

They are also involved as leaders and Managers of the Summer Camps in July and August for children of FVC members.

## DROMANTEENS

One of the most popular things about Dromantine is the Summer camps held here in the Retreat and Conference Centre each July and August.

For many years, what was formerly known as the SMA Boys Club enjoyed sole use of the premises but in the past number of years, Dromanteens has been opened up to

include girls aged 11-16 too.

The Camps run from Sunday afternoon to Friday evening and in the course of the week the young people are busy with daily Mass, sport, music and competitions of various kinds, as well as learning about the work of SMA in Africa.



## SMA NEWS

Fr Fachtna O Driscoll, the Provincial General of the SMA here in Ireland was recently appointed as the new SMA Superior General and is now based at the SMA international house in Rome. Fr Fachtna was based in Cork for the past 12 years in his role as Provincial General and was a regular visitor to Droman-

tine in that time. He is succeeded by Fr John Dunne, assisted by Fr Damian Bresnahan and Fr Malachy Flanagan. The Provincial Assembly of SMA in Ireland will meet in July to elect a new leadership team for the next 6 years. Please remember them in your prayers.



*The new SMA Superior General, Fr Fachtna O Driscoll (2nd left) with the Irish Provincial Leadership, Frs Damian Bresnahan, John Dunne and Malachy Flanagan*



## SOCIETY OF AFRICAN MISSIONS

Dromantine  
96 Glen Road  
Newry  
Co Down BT34 IRH

Phone: 028 3082 1224/1964/ 1024  
Fax: 028 3082 1704  
E-mail: [dromantinecards@sma.ie](mailto:dromantinecards@sma.ie) or  
[laity@sma.ie](mailto:laity@sma.ie)

One aspect of SMA work which is not yet among the projects here at Dromantine is the area of **Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation**. The Justice Office is based at the SMA house in Wilton, Cork and has worked consistently over the past decade to raise awareness of the many issues affecting Africa. We will include some facts and information on different topics in each future edition of AFRICAN LINK.



If you have any items for inclusion in the newsletter or if you know of anyone who would like to receive AFRICAN LINK, please get in touch with Dympna Mallon, SMA Laity Coordinator at SMA Dromantine, 96 Glen Road, Newry, Co Down, BT34 IRH, ph (028) 3082 1024, email: [laity@sma.ie](mailto:laity@sma.ie).

## DROMANTINE FAMILY FUN DAY 2013

The Annual Family Fun Day here at Dromantine on June 9th was a huge success. With some of the best weather that anyone can remember in recent years the grounds of Dromantine were full of activity from early morning as stall holders set up for a busy afternoon. The annual under 12 football tournament “kicked off” the day at 11 am with Clonduff emerging overall winners.

There was something for everyone and many family groups included three generations, all out to enjoy the sunshine as well as the entertainment. The amusements proved a big attraction for young and old; the bouncy castles were just as popular but the Friends of Africa made sure that the age limit was strictly applied, so the children had the bouncy castles all to themselves. The antiques stall, the plant stall, the cake stall,

the religious stall and the chocolate fountain all did steady business but the barbecue organised by the kitchen staff here at Dromantine and the ice cream vans were the most popular stops all afternoon.

Large crowds enjoyed the country and western music and both young and old watched in admiration as the gun dogs were put through their paces on the front lawn. Big trucks and vintage tractors were lined up in the lower field for inspection by the visitors. Away from the sun, in the coolness of the dining room and coffee dock, SMALA served tea, coffee, sandwiches and a range of cakes and tray bakes. Picnics were spread out across the lawns and the atmosphere was relaxed and happy. It was well after 6 o'clock when our visitors began to make their way home. Many thanks to all our helpers!

