



No.20 | Autumn/Winter 2012 NEWSLETTER



As part of the celebrations to mark the 100th Anniversary of the creation of the Irish Province, the **Kevin Carroll Conference on African Christian Art** will take place at the SMA Dromantine Conference Centre in Newry, Co Down from 5 – 7 October 2012.

This is the first exhibition of such art, other than that of Ethiopia, and is the fruit of a decade of research and planning. The art is the result of collaboration between traditional Yoruba carvers, including one of its greatest exponents, Areogun of Osi (Nigeria), and innovative SMA priests beginning in 1947.

Following the three-day Conference an exhibition of African Christian Art will take place in the African Link Gallery until 15 December 2012. Further details on page 2.

**Father Kevin Carroll**, anthropologist, linguist, ornithologist and photographer, was an English-born member of the Society of African Missions. He died in Ibadan, Nigeria on the morning of his 50th Ordination anniversary and is buried in Oke-Are cemetery.

During his 50 years as a missionary in Ghana and Nigeria, Fr Kevin took more than 4,000 photographs, most of which are now catalogued in the Kevin Carroll Collection at the Irish Provincial Headquarters in Cork where they can be viewed by prior appointment with the Provincial Archivist. The Collection, covering all aspects of life in Africa: artistic, cultural, religious and social, provides a richer understanding of Africa, its beauty, diversity, its peoples and traditions.

During the course of his busy missionary career Fr Kevin also found time to produce two very important books on African culture: **Yoruba Religious Carving** - subtitled **Pagan and Christian Sculpture in Nigeria and Dahomey** (1967), and **Architectures of Nigeria** (1992). The first of these books describes the "Oye-Ekiti

Dr Nicholas J J Bridger will present his latest work, Africanizing Christian Art, during the Conference.

Paul Gifford, of the University of London, writes of Dr Bridger's work: "The impact of mission Christianity on indigenous African cultures is one of the most debated issues in African Studies. This detailed, rigorous, sophisticated - and fascinating - case study of Kevin Carroll advances this debate considerably."

**Society of African Missions (SMA)**

Blackrock Road, Cork, Ireland • Tel: 021 429 2871 • Email: [amnewsletter@sma.ie](mailto:amnewsletter@sma.ie) • [www.sma.ie](http://www.sma.ie)

Registered Charity No: CHY 4696

**Scheme**" in the course of which – with a fellow-SMA member, Sean O'Mahony from Cobh – the available sources of skill were identified and the carvers and weavers, bead and leather workers, organised in a new and purposeful way. Together, they established a workshop for Yoruba artists and craftsmen for the purpose of preserving and using traditional indigenous skills such as woodcarving and beadwork in the design and production of Christian images. These would furnish the Roman Catholic churches and schools associated with the SMA missions in Nigeria.

The exhibition brings together a number of important works connected with the SMA workshop at Oye-Ekiti. Among the artists associated with it was Areogun, a master carver, one of the three greatest in Yoruba land in the 1940s and 50s. Areogun was an Animist, but he produced many wonderful Christian works under the influence of Fr. Carroll. Among the best of these is the equestrian figure (pictured), carved in 1952 near the end of the artist's life and identified by him as **'Eshu, as One of the Three Kings of the Christian Narrative'**. Eshu is the 'Trickster God' of the Yoruba pantheon. 'Three Kings' refers to the three Magi who followed the star to Bethlehem to pay homage to the infant Jesus of Nazareth. A second king/magus has been lent to our exhibition by St. Leo's Church, Ibadan, Nigeria. The existence of or the whereabouts of a third king is unclear.

The core value of Kevin's ministry for fifty years and on which he concentrated his many talents and skills was the single objective: to inculturate Christ into the lives and religions of the people he felt privileged to serve, the peoples of Africa. He was utterly single-minded as he felt called by God for His work and, like all prophets, proclaimed His message, welcome or unwelcome. Kevin mastered the languages of his people; was the first in Nigeria to use indigenous composers for sacred music, local carvers to produce acceptable Church art and local weavers to make liturgical vestments. Every talent given him was used to proclaim Christ.

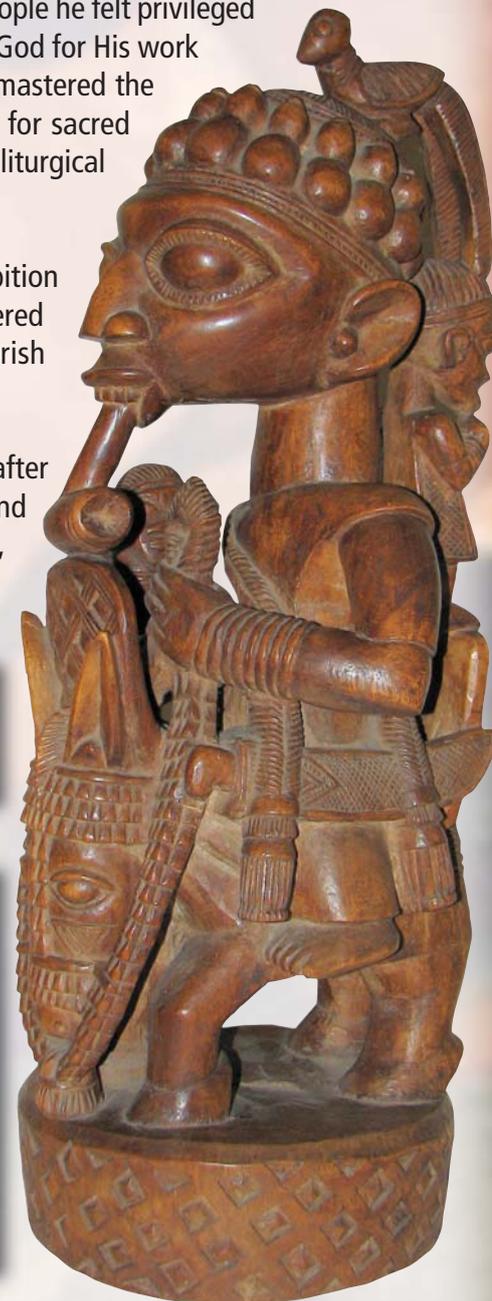
His legacy is a promotion of all that is good about Africa. The Dromantine exhibition will take place in the African Link gallery, a space dedicated to African art gathered by SMA missionaries many years ago. The Link also gives a history of the Irish Province.

The highlight of the exhibition will be the reuniting of Areogun's two works, after several decades apart. The SMA American Province have loaned us their 'King' and we are indebted to the SMA Superior of the Bight of Benin District-in-formation, in Nigeria, for loaning us the second 'King' for the exhibition.

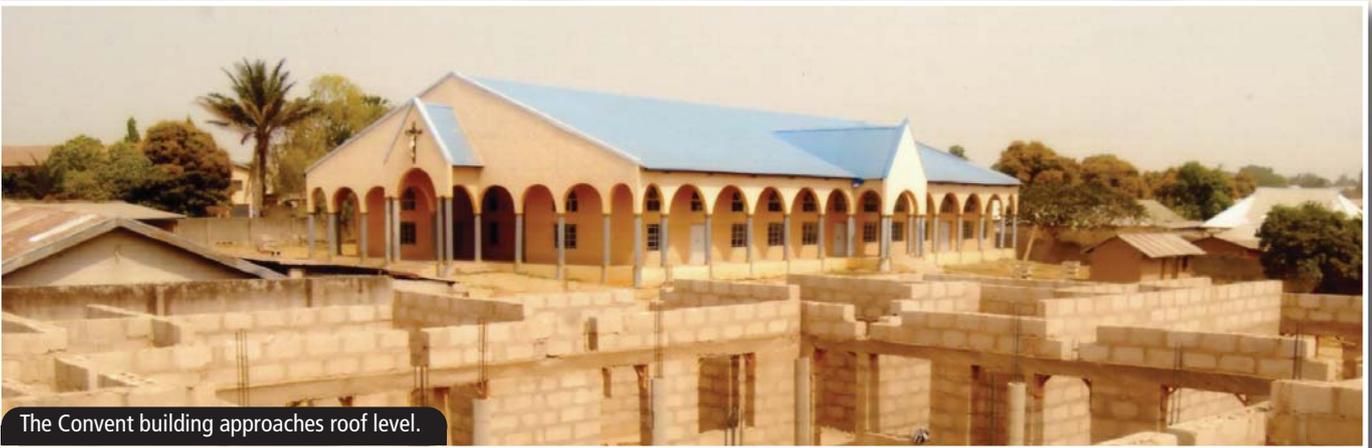
To Register for the Conference and for details about the Opening hours for the Exhibition etc please contact the Conference Centre on 30821964 [from the Republic please dial 048 308211964 or by email to [admin@dromantineconference.com](mailto:admin@dromantineconference.com)

### Explanation of the carving of the King

The horse, a mark of great prestige in Yoruba land, is not one of the symbols of Eshu, but it is associated with the journey of the Magi. The pipe held crosswise in the mouth is a mark of the trickster god. The figure holding the axe blade in his mouth is a symbol of Ogun, the Yoruba god of metal work, wood carving and war. The bird on Eshu's head and back is a messenger to heaven. The indigenous animistic prototype of this type of carving among the Yorubas is the shrine figure, to be placed on a cult altar. Traditionally, these were painted.



# The bits and pieces of missionary life



The Convent building approaches roof level.

Fr Donal Fennessy is a member of the SMA British Province. Limerick-born he joined the SMA in 1959 and, after studies in Dutton Manor, England he was ordained a priest by the retired Archbishop of Cape Coast, William Porter SMA on 18 December 1965 in St John's Cathedral, Salford.

After ordination Fr Donal attended UCC and after achieving a BA and the Higher Diploma in Education he left for Nigeria. From 1970 – 75 he taught in the Government Teacher's College, Keffi. He was then appointed as Rector of the SMA Formation House in London, following which, in 1978, he was elected Provincial Superior for Britain. In 1984 he returned to Nigeria where he has been ever since. He has been in charge of both Keffi and Agyarague parishes. In 2001, when a new diocese of Lafia was created, Fr Donal was appointed by Bishop Matthew Audu as his Vicar General and Financial Administrator. He continues to serve in these roles as well as being responsible for Shinge parish.

Throughout his missionary life, Fr Donal has been a builder. He has been involved in the building of many churches, schools and clinics. Several parish communities owe their existence to his commitment to build up the kingdom of God, both spiritually and physical.

At present Fr Donal is completing the construction of a Convent for the Sacred Heart Sisters. He is pictured here with some parishioners as they dig out the foundations etc, with the Parish Church in the background.

The Sisters run a school, with 450 pupils, 50% Catholic and the rest drawn from other Christian groups and Muslims. The school aims to provide education for all, regardless of tribe or religion. The pupils interact with each other and, hopefully, this will help them to have respect for people of different tribes and religions in the future and lessen the possibility of inter-ethnic or religious conflict.

Normally, after returning from leave in August / September he is unable to travel to most of his fifteen village Outstations. This is due to the fact that this is the peak months of the rainy season. But he was able to continue supervising the Convent construction. To help reduce costs, the local people, women and men, dug the foundations and septic tanks / soakaways. For the new Convent they also made 6,000 nine-inch blocks and 3,000 six-inch blocks. "By making the blocks ourselves we are able to ensure they are of the right quality."

The construction of buildings has been achieved through the generous support of the British Province, friends and other donors (including An Garda Siochána, Little Way, Apostolic Workers, the SMA Blackrock Road Parish Aid for Africa Fund etc.)

Fr Donal describes his work once the rains had stopped: "October – December are our months for Harvest Thanksgiving Masses (when the different groups in the parish give thanks to God for the Harvest. It is also an opportunity to raise funds for Church projects). In November we had the Harvest Thanksgiving Mass at the main parish church in Shinge.





***Níl aon tinteán mar  
do thinteán féin***

**There's no place like home.** Growing up, most of us took being able to "go home" for granted. Home was a place of family and warmth, a safe place from which we went to school, went to work and eventually left so that we could set up our own home and begin the cycle again. As we grew older and especially in these recessionary times we have become more aware of how precarious the hold that we or our children have on the place we call home. We are especially aware of how this uncertainty can be caused by the unjust actions and greed of others.

*A street child is: "Any girl or boy for whom the street has become her or his habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, supervised or directed by responsible adults"*

Many Africans in Ireland are people who have unjustly lost or been forced out of their homes. Here they seek a new safe place in which they can resume the normal cycle of life - making a new home from which their children can go to school, grow up and build their lives just as we did and just as we hope our own children can do.



## Street Children in Africa

Many children around the world do not have a safe home. While exact figures for street children in Africa are unknown, it is certain that they number in the millions.

The traditional African extended family system simply cannot cope with the rapid growth of urban populations, poverty and the effects of the HIV/Aids pandemic.

According to the United Nations, children, because of their vulnerability, **"need special safeguards and care."** In reality the world of street children is far removed from the rights and protections espoused in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The opposite is true, millions of children are being exploited, abused and denied of even the most basic human rights: to food, shelter, education and health.

## Focus on Zambia

In Zambia, many parents are dying due to HIV/Aids. As a result thirty per cent of children under the age of fifteen are orphans. On any given day in the urban centres of Zambia somewhere in the region of 100,000 children between the ages of five to eighteen either wake up on, or go to work in the streets. Often seen as a threat they are shunned, beaten and sometimes even killed. Because they are too young to have developed work skills they have no choice but to engage in the most menial of tasks such as picking firewood, carrying loads, tending to animals, street vending, begging, scavenging in dumps and prostitution. They hang around bus-parks, markets and bars trying to eke out a living. Because of poverty and the lack of access even to the most basic education these children are locked in a cycle of deprivation that few can break out of without some sort of external supportive intervention.



## What the Church Says

The church's approach to the pastoral care of street children is to focus on their re-incorporation into society and above all into a family environment or home where they can be cared for, educated and so be prepared for their responsibilities as adults.

***"The first right of children is that of being born and educated in a welcoming and secure family environment where their physical, psychological and spiritual growth is guaranteed, their potential is developed and where the awareness of personal dignity becomes the base for relating to others and for confronting the future."***

*Monsignor Silvano Tomasi, Vatican Representative at the Ordinary Session on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 2007*

**"Children are a gift from the Lord; t**

## The Twafwane Project

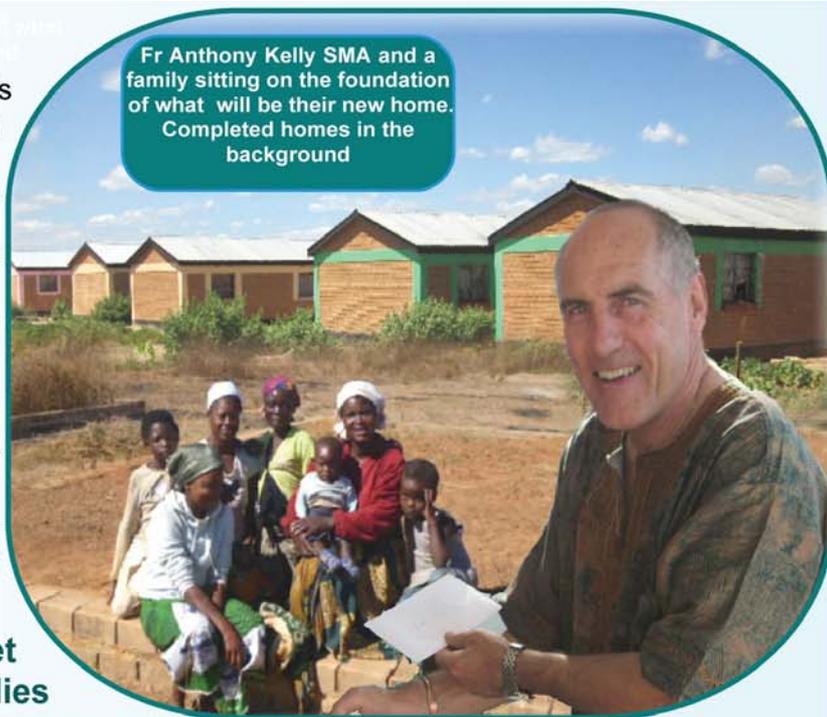
In Kitwe, Zambia, the teaching of the Church is being translated into practical action. Fr Anthony Kelly SMA is in charge of the Twafwane project that aims to complete 64 homes for street children, vulnerable widows and their children by June 2013. The project began in 2006 after a consultation with young people living on the streets in Kitwe. Part of this involved asking them to collectively represent their saddest and happiest times in drawings. First they produced a sketch depicting the burial of parents and then the drawing here showing a home scene of a family gathered outside their house. The project, as much as possible, tries to re-create this home scene.



**Twafwane aims to give street children and vulnerable families the chance to own their home, a safe place from which they can build and live a normal life.**

By December 2012 forty-two houses will be completed. Each has 2 bedrooms, a kitchen, shower, toilet and a sitting room. So far 24 homes have running water and sanitation. This is the most expensive part of the build. The pump, stands and water tanks cost €15,000 and bore-holes €5,000 each. Blocks for the walls are made on-site and other building materials are purchased locally.

Those who will ultimately live in the houses help with labouring, mixing cement, carrying bricks and water and digging the septic tanks. This is their contribution to the cost of their homes. Orphans, and families like those in



Fr Anthony Kelly SMA and a family sitting on the foundation of what will be their new home. Completed homes in the background

the photograph above, are now actually involved in the building of the homes that will give them a secure and much safer alternative to street life. They will definitely have a roof over their heads but whether or not their houses will have running water and proper sanitation, like those completed earlier, depends on additional funds being found.

The last phase of 22 houses is now underway and depending on resources the 2013 completion date looks feasible. There are 3 builders at the site. They were trained at the beginning of the project in 2006 and oversee the work of the street children and widows who will live there.

Each household contributes €8 per month in order to create a revolving fund for future projects which they will initiate themselves. This fund will help provide a Police Post for their security, a Community Hall and a Play Area for the children.

The former street-children and widows of the new Twafwane Community have a brighter future and plans for a better life. This has been made possible through a combination of their own labour and the generosity of many donors including those from Clonbur, Cong and Cornamona Parishes.

**The work of the Twafwane Project is truly the work of the Church. It has been made possible through the cooperation of many good people.**

**Want to help? Contact the Development Office, African Missions, Blackrock Road, Cork.**



Block-making on site for the final phase of the Project

They are a real blessing.” Psalm 127: 3

# International Eucharistic Congress 2012

Sr Anne Falola is a Nigerian member of the OLA Sisters. She has served in both Nigeria and Argentina. Since 2005 Sister Anne is the Mission Secretary for the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria at the Catholic Secretariat in Abuja.



The International Eucharistic Congress is not an everyday event, so it was a sheer privilege when I was asked to be part of the Nigerian delegation to the 50th International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin in June this year. The last time a Congress was held in Dublin was eighty years ago, in 1932. The spirit of communion took a most profound dimension when peoples from every race, colour, language and culture from 130 countries of the

world gathered together to sing the Congress hymn: 'Though we are many, we are one body...'

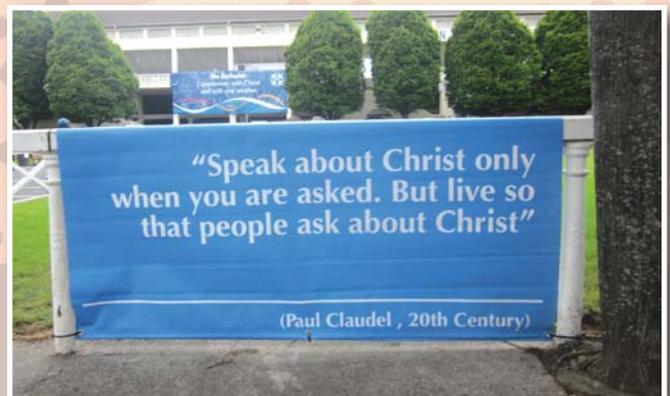
Landing at the Dublin Airport, the whole atmosphere was charged with the spirit of the Congress. Undoubtedly, these are challenging times for the Church in Ireland, but in spite of this, the Eucharistic Congress was very well prepared; one could see the high level of organization, the spiritual disposition and quality of service rendered throughout the Congress. From the airport, the pilgrims were received and directed to the various hotels and places of accommodation. I had the pleasure of acting as an interpreter in the bus from the airport for some Latin American pilgrims, a good opportunity to retouch my Spanish! The spirit of communion was quite evident, the volunteers were quite extraordinary, they never seemed to tire! Old men and women, young boys and girls, all offered their volunteer services, they contributed in no small way to the huge success of the Congress. It was a clear statement from the Irish people, that, even though the Church might have failed in some way, they are still part of this body of Christ and they displayed unparalleled love and loyalty with a deep sense of humility.

The week flew by very fast with various activities each day. The activities started at 9am with Morning Prayer led by different people and they gave a reflections for each day. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed from after Morning Prayer until about 3.30pm when all gathered in the main arena for the celebration of the Eucharist. I particularly enjoyed the

peace of this Prayer Space, the quiet and comforting Presence of our Lord in the Eucharist is the foundation of our faith. While the Blessed Sacrament was being adored, a series of talks and reflections on various themes were going on in different halls. The organization was superb! So much was on offer that choosing which talk / activity to attend was not easy. It was a great time to meet old friends and catch up over a cup of coffee and lunch break.

The sense of communion and the spirit of collaboration between SMA and OLA were heightened by our joint exhibition stand. With about 500 stands from various groups, societies, religious congregations, lay associations, civil societies and faith groups from different countries, one could not get tired moving round the stands. The OLA/SMA Stand 123 was beautifully located at the corner, strategically positioned near the central performing area. The stand was super, very colourful with African cloths and symbols, information materials, a TV with slides of OLA and SMA works in different countries. Guests to our stand were encouraged to light a candle for some missionary intentions, so they could join us to pray and work for a better world. They were also invited to a snack of plantain chips to show the beautiful African and Irish hospitality. I am grateful for the sense of communion and inclusion with which the exhibition was done. Well done!!!

Each day of the Congress culminated with Catechesis, testimonies and the celebration of the Eucharist in the main RDS arena. Various themes were selected for each day, e.g. youth, family, consecrated life, priestly ministry, reconciliation and the anointing of the sick. Many testimonies touched on Christian witness amidst real life struggles and challenges.



The closing Mass at Croke Park was a real life giving experience with more than 75,000 people attending from all over the country and beyond! Everyone agreed that God in his merciful love is using this wonderful occasion to help reconcile and heal His broken children in Ireland and the world over. Even those who were antagonistic of the Church



Fr Paddy O'Rourke SMA is pictured with Teresa and Tommy Moonan from Co Antrim.

had to admit that it was a worthwhile experience. Even in this worst of times, it is clear that Ireland remains a strongly Catholic country! I have never seen so much on offer at the same time: the numerous Sacramentals, prayers groups, and hospitality groups showed the richness and depth of the faith of the Irish people, a legacy which we are proud to inherit and keep alive in spite of all odds.

For me the climax of my pilgrimage to Ireland was my visit to Cork where I was able to spend a night in the OLA Convent in Ardfoy and a quick visit to the SMA House on Blackrock Road. There, I touched base again, meeting all those great OLA and SMA missionaries who taught me, nurtured my faith as a child and inspired my own missionary vocation. It was short and sweet, and as one would expect, saying good-bye to these octogenarians was accompanied by affectionate tears and the big unuttered question – Shall we meet again and when?

## The bits and pieces of missionary life (cont.)

On other Sundays I go to the different outstations churches to celebrate Harvest Mass with them. The whole thing is a full day affair, with Mass generally lasting three hours. The people really enjoy dancing to the Altar with their gifts. Then in the afternoon we have different activities, dramas, cultural dancing etc to entertain the people and then we end up auctioning off all the goods presented at the Mass.

Each year, on the Feast of Christ the King, we have our annual Procession of the Blessed Sacrament through Lafia. The procession, which lasts about three hours, takes us across the town from our Church to the Cathedral, a distance of about two miles. All along the route people join in and by the time we reach the St William's Cathedral there can be more than 2,000 people for Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Not all are Catholic but it is quite normal for people from other denominations to join in Church activities, for we all adore the One God."

Lafia has a majority Muslim population. In recent years an extreme sect, Boko Haram, has been targeting Christian churches in different parts of the country, principally in the north of Nigeria as well as in Abuja, the Federal Capital. Fr Donal and his parishioners decided it would be good to develop a dialogue with their Muslim neighbours. He writes: "Here in Shinge we started an inter-religious dialogue between Catholics and Muslims. Our first meeting was attended by a few local Imams, Muslim Village Heads and some of our parishioners. It went well. The Muslim Village Head of this area came two weeks ago to remind me it was time for a further meeting. So we met last Tuesday and, again, it was worthwhile. We intend to continue our dialogue and hopefully it will help us to avoid such bombings etc which have taken place in Abuja, Maiduguri, Jos, Kaduna and other parts of the country".

## The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God

Since the last Newsletter the following OLA and SMA members have died.

**Sr Mary Cecilia Fitzgerald** (Newmarket, Cork), a missionary in Ghana, England and Ireland, aged 82 years.

**Sr Ciaran (Catherine) O'Driscoll** (Cape Clear, Cork), who ministered in Ireland, aged 92 years.

**Mrs Ellen Galvin** (Taughmaconnell, Co Roscommon), an SMA Honorary member.

**Fr Robert (Bob) O'Regan** (Cork City), who ministered in Nigeria and England, aged 97 years.

**Lord God, welcome our deceased missionaries, SMA supporters and benefactors into the peace of your Kingdom. Forgive their faults; reward the good they have done. May they pray for us who continue on our earthly pilgrimage. One day, may we all be reunited in our eternal home. Amen.**



Lily Doyle poses with Fathers Paul and Donal and the delicious Cake she baked for the occasion. Thanks Lily!



Fr Fachtina O'Driscoll SMA, Bishop Ray Field, Fr Paul Monahan SMA [Curate] and Fr Donal Toal SMA [PP] before the Mass

# SMA bid Farewell to Neilstown Parish

Pentecost Sunday 2012 was both a day of joy and sadness in the Parish of St Peter the Apostle, Neilstown in the Archdiocese of Dublin.

A day of joy for we celebrated the sending of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church; a day of sadness as the SMA Provincial Leader, Fr Fachtina O'Driscoll, formally handed back pastoral care of the parish to the Archdiocese of Dublin.

In 1975 Fr Ben Dolan (from Co Leitrim) was entrusted with developing the new parish of St Peter the Apostle, Neilstown, the first time a parish in Ireland was entrusted to the SMA. Over the last 35 years sixteen SMA priests have worked here.

For some years SMA seminarians were involved in parish visitation, youth work, choir etc., helping them get hands-on experience to be used after ordination and when working in parishes in Africa.

Bishop Ray Field, Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin, was Principal Celebrant of the Pentecost Mass, assisted by Fr O'Driscoll and other SMA priests as well as priests from neighbouring parishes.

In his homily, Fr O'Driscoll reminded the people that they have their own unique way of worshipping: "It is always lively and dynamic. I have always loved coming here to share liturgy with you. Celebrating here in Neilstown there is a sense of real connection with the people. It is always good to be here, it is always nourishing.

Today is a bitter-sweet occasion for SMA. There is gratitude for the years we have been here – all good years. Living among and serving the people of Neilstown has been a really good and positive experience for SMA. Because of that there is today also a real and

genuine sadness at parting. Unfortunately, the reality is that we simply do not have the personnel to fulfil the commitment we have to honour. Like many companies today, SMA Ireland has to 'down-size'. Letting go is part of the reality of life. However, in this context we are not alone. We do so in the sure and certain hope that the Spirit of God is in charge and the Spirit will provide what is needed for the people of Neilstown.

But the Spirit is not only given to the priests or the Parish Sister to exercise. The Spirit has been poured over the people of this parish and is evident by the variety of gifts exercised by you. You are active in all the ministries in this parish. You have taken ownership of your parish and have not taken the attitude that that is the priest's business. From the very beginnings of this parish it has always been a peoples' parish. Nothing was imposed for outside or from on-high. You have always been centrally involved at all stages of development. That is why I have no fears for the future of this parish: it is yours, you own and live it; the priest is here to facilitate your living the gospel in your own place. You have within you the capacity to continue to develop this parish and to make it again a missionary place. You are resilient and you are adaptive. You are solid in the tradition and yet open to the new. Your Choir, Novena, Taizé, parish mission, the small prayer chapel, where you persevere in prayer and Eucharist each day, are all examples of the wonderful capacity you have to adapt and be creative.

I want to say Thanks to you for the wonderful warm welcome you have given to SMA here in Neilstown. Through Bishop Ray Field I want to thank the Archdiocese of Dublin for giving us the opportunity to exercise missionary witness in this blessed place."

African Missions (SMA)  
Blackrock Road  
Cork  
021 429 2871  
sma.blackrock@sma.ie

African Missions (SMA)  
Wilton  
Cork  
021 454 1069  
sma.wilton@sma.ie

African Missions (SMA)  
Dromantine  
Newry  
028 3082 1224  
sma.dromantine@sma.ie

African Missions (SMA)  
Claregalway  
Co Galway  
091 798 880  
sma.claregalway@sma.ie

African Missions (SMA)  
81 - 83 Ranelagh Rd  
Dublin 6  
01 496 8162  
sma.dublin@sma.ie