

AFRICAN LINK

Newsletter of SMA Laity groups



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

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2

NEW LEADERSHIP TEAM FOR IRISH PROVINCE

A warm welcome to the Autumn edition of AFRICAN LINK .

Back in July while we were all enjoying the warm weather and glorious sunshine, the SMA held their 16th Provincial Assembly here in the Dromantine Conference and Retreat Centre, and among the many outcomes of the Assembly was the election of a new leadership team to take the Irish Province forward for the next six years.

Fr Michael McCabe, the new Provincial Leader, has come from Kenya where he was Spiritual Director in the SMA House of Formation in Nairobi, and taught courses in Mission Studies at Tangaza College. Originally from Cavan , he also spent several years teaching in Kimmage Mission Institute in Dublin and was President there from 1999—2001. He also worked in Zambia and Liberia, as well as serving on the SMA General Council in Rome.

Fr Malachy Flanagan, a native of Louth, began his

missionary work in Nigeria, in primary evangelisation and pastoral work in Ilorin Diocese and then as Secretary/Chancellor to the newly-formed Vicariate of Kontagora. He was recalled to Ireland in 2006 and became the Provincial Bursar, based in Cork, in 2007. The 2013 Assembly delegates elected him to the role of the Vice Provincial Leader.

Fr Maurice Henry, from Offaly, joins the leadership team as the Provincial Councillor. Fr Maurice returns to Ireland after 42 years in Nigeria, the last 12 as Regional Superior. During his years in Nigeria he ministered in pastoral work, education and administration, having responsibility for areas such as social development and Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation.

Please remember them all in your prayers as they adapt to their new roles and responsibilities.

FVC Annual Meetings



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.

Our photo shows from left Fr Maurice Henry, Provincial Councillor, Fr Michael McCabe, Provincial Leader and Fr Malachy Flanagan, Vice Provincial Leader following their election at the SMA Provincial Assembly in Dromantine in July.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

SMA Justice Office	2
FVC Annual Meetings	2
FOA volunteers in Africa	3
Dromanteens Annual Summer Camps	3
Novena to St Therese	3
Sr Mary leaves Dromantine	4
Dromantine Christmas events	4

AFRICAN LINK



The **SMA Justice Office** was established over 10 years ago and is based at the SMA house in Wilton, Cork. Fr John O Keefe SMA, the Wilton community leader is the interim Director and the office is staffed by Mr Gerard Forde, the full-time Programme and Development Officer.

Faithful to the SMA Founder's vision of mission to the most abandoned, and in light of our universal duty to respect and protect the integrity of creation, SMA accompanies and supports the peoples of Africa in their struggle for a more just society and world.

We do this in several ways:

SMA JUSTICE OFFICE

-by researching, highlighting and publishing material to raise awareness of Justice issues affecting African peoples;

-by providing a series of briefings on Justice issues affecting Africa and African people. These are available on the SMA website and in any of the SMA houses;

-through cooperation and links with agencies and organisations working for Justice in Africa;

-through advocacy, supporting campaigns focused on removing the causes and effects of injustice in Africa;

-by providing reports and information about SMA's, OLA Sisters and other missionaries working for justice in Africa;

-by providing pastoral care to Africans in Ireland through Cois Tine, an outreach Project of the SMA Justice Office.



Cois Tine works directly with African immigrants and has been involved in initiatives to encourage Muslim-Christian dialogue.

The Justice Office is working closely with all the SMA communities in Ireland and hopes to engage more of our lay supporters in the many issues which affect Africa and its peoples.

To contact Gerard Forde, email justice@sma.ie or phone 00353 21 4933475.

See also www.sma.ie/justice



Fr Dominic Philip, SMA who attended FVC gatherings in September.

Family Vocations Crusade Annual Meetings

September is a busy time of year for the **Family Vocations Crusade** members as the Area Head Sponsor meetings take place here in Ulster and across Ireland, and the Annual Year 8 Celebration Day is held here at Dromantine.

Meetings took place in Dromantine, Dungiven, Strabane, Ballymena, Coalisland, Maghera, Omagh and Letterkenny recently and it was great to see so many of our wonderful Head Sponsors, Sponsors and Mission Awareness Card Promoters at each venue.

As always, a member of the SMA from Africa joined us representing those recently ordained. Fr Dominic Philip, pictured above, arrived in Ulster after a week with FVC Munster attending meetings in Cork and Kerry. Before that he had been spent several days in the SMA house in Claregalway while attending various gatherings in the West. After his stay in Dromantine he travelled to Dublin and Leinster to participate in FVC gatherings there. Fr Dominic, who is originally from Tamil Nadu, Southern India, is now the parish priest in Shafaci, a parish in the Vicariate of Kontagora, Nigeria which is roughly the size of Ulster and consists of 142 outstations/ churches. He spoke eloquently about the challenges that his parishioners face, the lack of basic essentials such as clean water, and accessible healthcare. He was anxious that

those attending events in Ballymena, Coalisland and Dromantine would realise how vital their prayers and support are, both to those already ordained and to the young men still in formation. Fr Dominic, who was ordained in 2009, was especially pleased to represent the 25 newly ordained SMAs at the Thanksgiving Mass for their sponsors in Dromantine. He emphasised that we all have a role to play in God's mission, telling those present at the Mass "Some go, by giving; some give, by going." He also applauded the length of time many of our supporters have been members of FVC, noting that for some, it has been longer than he has been living!



Pictured are some of those present at the Year 8 thanksgiving Mass in Dromantine, enjoying a cup of tea and a chat afterwards.

FRIENDS OF AFRICA (FOA)

Back in June, another group of **Friends of Africa** volunteers set out for several destinations in Africa to lend their skills and support to the peoples of Zambia, Tanzania and South Africa as short-term (6 weeks) volunteers. Some of the young people are pictured below. The groups had spent the months leading up to June fundraising for their trip and the projects they would visit, as well as preparing for the realities they would face once in Africa. Mentored by other members of FOA, they undertook much preparation to assist them in the experience ahead. Some of them went to Tanzania, to teach in the Moita Bwaani tuition camp where they delivered an intensive programme



to children from the local Maasai tribe and engaged in various activities and sports with them, Friends of Africa currently has 1 long term volunteer, Anita McWilliams, a social worker from Draperstown, who is working in Zambia. She has been heavily involved in preparation work for the first FOA project in Twafane, where a community centre and pre-school facility are being planned. This project will support the community now living in the Twafane housing development which was spearheaded by Fr Anthony Kelly SMA.

As well as sending 30 short term volunteers to various projects in 2013, FOA also accompanied school trips at Easter for senior pupils from Holy Trinity College, Cookstown, St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon and Our Lady's Grammar School, Newry.

The application process has just opened for volunteers for the programme in summer 2014. More information is available on both the FOA or SMA websites or on the FOA Facebook page.



The FOA logo, a foot as a map of Africa, symbolising their motto "Small Steps Together"

NOVENA TO ST THERESE

The Annual Novenas in honour of St Therese took place in September in Cork and here in Dromantine., beginning on 23 September and ending on 1 October, the Feast of St Therese.

St Therese, who is also known as The Little Flower, has a special significance for the SMA and many other congregations as the patroness of the Missions. Mass each day had different themes that included "At Home with God," "My Vocation is Love" and "St Therese and Prayer". Record numbers attended the Novenas, seeking the intercession of St Therese for their personal and family petitions, while countless others sent their petitions by post to each house.

DROMANTINE

The annual **Dromanteens** Boys and Girls camps took place here in Dromantine from 21 July until 23 August.

Up to 130 boys or girls spent each week involved in football, running marathons, participating in talent shows, and learning more about the missions, the work of SMA and their own faith lives. During the camps the young people are all divided into teams named after the various countries where the SMA work, and the competition to be the most successful or the noisiest or the most entertaining country made Dromantine a very interesting place to be over the summer months, particularly around lunchtime each day!

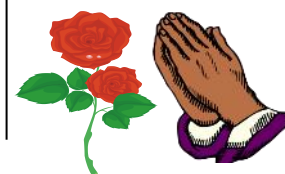
As well as lunchtime singing, a great display of talent was produced during each camp. The range of individual talent, including singing, Irish dancing, instrumental music, stand-up comedy, poetry and contemporary dance was astounding, while the team competitions produced some entertaining and unique interpretations of



Ulster and Ireland rugby star Rory Best with some of the girls when he visited Camp this year.

interpretations of current events, and some truly memorable performances. Prayer time and daily Mass are a feature of the Camps and each week parents, family and friends are invited to a special Mass to mark the end of Camp, in which the young people read, sing and contribute in a variety of ways.

The Camps simply wouldn't happen without the input and commitment of Friends of Africa who lead and manage the Camps and give generously of their time, often for the full 5 or 6 weeks.





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SR MARY LEAVES DROMANTINE



Sr Mary (right) with some of her friends at a recent celebration of her ministry and work here in Dromantine.

After more than 9 years keeping the Retreat and Conference Centre running smoothly, it was with great sadness that everyone at Dromantine said goodbye to Sr Mary Connellan SSL. Having worked tirelessly to sort out bedrooms, heating, mealtimes and bookings, among other things, Sr Mary will take a well earned rest and spend some time on sabbatical. We wish her every health, happiness and fulfilment in her future ministry.

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 Society of African Missions, Dromantine, 96 Glen Road, Newry, Co Down, BT34 IRH, ph (028) 3082 1024, email: laity@sma.ie.



DECEMBER EVENTS AT DROMANTINE



The annual **FVC Advent Retreat** will take place here in Dromantine from 29 November to 1st December. This is a great opportunity, not just for spiritual renewal but also for some peace and reflection at a time of the year when life gets very busy—and you might just meet some old FVC friends too!! Please contact the Retreat and Conference Centre on (028) 3082 1224/1964 for more details or to make a booking.

The busy days leading up to Christmas will offer something new this year at Dromantine—**Santa** will be visiting us for a few days before Christmas and will bring some interesting friends with him. Visitors will have one of Santa's elves to act as their guide, the Fairy Godmother will tell them some of Santa's best

kept secrets, Mrs Claus will have some tasty treats in her Christmas kitchen for all the visitors and the visit will be rounded off by a chat with Santa himself. Booking is essential and details are on the flyer (see right) or from the office here at Dromantine.

As well as hosting Santa for a few days, the Conference Centre will hold a **Christmas Fayre** on December 21st & 22nd. The Fayre will offer a stylish mix of gift and food stalls in a beautiful setting and may even sort out last minute shopping problems for those people who are hard to buy for! The Fayre will run from 12—8pm on Saturday 21st December and from 1-6pm on Sunday 22nd December and will ensure that Dromantine offers lots of festive fun for the Young and the Young at Heart in the run up to Christmas.

Santa at DROMANTINE

Admission: Children £12.00
(two years or under £5)
Adults £10.00
Discount for Group bookings.

Contact Paula at
Tel: 028 3082 1224 or
e.mail santa.dromantine@sma.ie
Bookings times strictly 11.00am -1.30pm Mon to Fri