

# AFRICAN LINK

Newsletter of SMA Laity groups



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

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## FAMILY FUN DAYS AT CLAREGALWAY & DROMANTINE

The annual Family day took place at the SMA house in Claregalway on June 1, with crowds attending throughout the afternoon for a whole range of entertainment. Many came to watch the dog show, with 19 different varieties of dogs taking part. The young and not so young participated in the sports, and made good use of the bouncy castles. Back at the event after being absent for a few years was the local scout display. One of the highlights of the Claregalway event is Padini the Magician's show, with the main hall always full of enthusiastic spectators (and patient parents and grandparents). There was a steady supply of tea and sandwiches, cakes and buns thanks to the ceaseless effort of the ladies in the kitchen and all the volunteers who had been busy baking beforehand. The food and plant stalls were also popular with the crowd and music was supplied all afternoon by the Lackagh Ceili Band, Matt and Mark Cunningham and Gabriel Monaghan.



A couple of weeks later than usual, the annual Family Fun Day took place at Dromantine on June 29. The fine day brought huge crowds out to enjoy the

event. All the amusements were in great demand throughout the afternoon as were the bouncy castles. The young audience who gathered around the magic show were full of appreciation and there were a variety of stalls to occupy the parents and grandparents. The football tournament was well attended on the far side of the lake with Ballyholland the eventual winners, and the county and western music extravaganza was as popular as ever. There was a steady queue at the barbecue right until the end of the afternoon, with the Dromantine staff responding to a constant demand for burgers, hotdogs, chips, and stew, while the local ladies and SMALA members had a huge selection of cakes and buns for those in search of a cup of tea in the coffee dock. The PSNI, Fire & Rescue and Ambulance services attracted a lot of interest as did the vintage tractors.

Neither of these events would take place without the input and support of huge numbers of volunteers, both on the day and in the planning stages - that generosity of time and energy is greatly appreciated and valued by all the SMAs.



*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. December 2nd 2013 was the 200th anniversary of his birth in Castelnaudry, France.*

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## SMA PILGRIMAGE TO KNOCK

Saturday 24 May saw the SMAs, OLAs and their supporters gather at Knock for the 34th Annual Pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady. As usual there was a huge crowd present, with buses and cars travelling from each of the four provinces of Ireland for the event. The FVC supporters were joined by pilgrims from Paisley, the SMA Parish of Our Lady and St Patrick, Walthamstow, London and a number of other groups.

The ladies and volunteers from the SMA house in Claregalway provided tea, sandwiches, cake and buns for the hungry pilgrims as they do every year. This is a huge task which they undertake with great generosity and is an essential aspect of the pilgrimage, reflecting as it does, the importance placed on hospitality and welcome by the SMA.

The concelebrated Eucharist involved more than 50 SMAs, as well as Bishop Emeritii Tim Carroll SMA, who preached the Homily, and John Mone (Paisley, Scotland). The singing was led by the choir of the Mercy Girls Secondary School, Tuam, soloists were Pádraig and Victoria Henry, FVC members took part in the Readings and Prayers of

the Faithful, and Sr Kathleen McGarvey OLA Provincial Leader led the Offertory Procession. The Gospel was proclaimed by Fr Michael McCabe, SMA Provincial Leader, after the Book of the Gospel was presented in music and dance by the members of the Loreto House International Formation Programme (pictured below). Bishop Tim Carroll's Homily which highlighted the importance of the ordinariness of our lives in our lifetime Pilgrimage back to God, was followed by the anointing of many of the pilgrims by 47 of the SMA priests present.

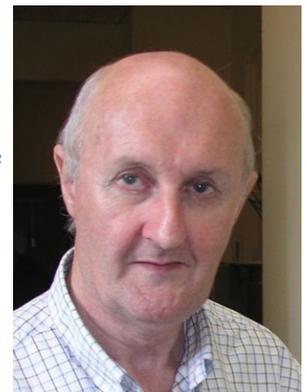
The day's events were concluded, as always with the blessing of the buses and the pilgrims before they began the long journeys back to their homes.



## BOMB ATTACK ON SMA PARISH IN KANO, NORTHERN NIGERIA

St. Charles' Catholic Church, Kano, one of the ten SMA parishes in Nigeria, was attacked on Sunday 28 July. This was the first SMA parish to be hit directly in the ongoing recent insurgency and the attack bore all the hallmarks of the work of the now infamous Boko Haram. A well-dressed woman entered the Church compound at the end of the last Mass as a large congregation was emerging from the Church. She was intercepted by a soldier, one of the many security men engaged at all Christian places of worship on Sundays all over the northern parts of Nigeria. She detonated the bomb, blew herself up together with the soldier and five worshippers who were coming out of the Church after Mass. As well as the soldier, the dead included a toddler, two

women and a man, and eight others were injured. Kano is the second largest city in Nigeria and is the commercial hub of the North, bordering on the Republic of Niger. It has a minority Christian population which in the past has suffered many pogroms at the hands of the Muslim majority. Even with greatly heightened security in the region, it is virtually impossible to intercept or prevent the suicide bombers. The large St. Charles' Catholic parish has a population of about 10,000 Catholics who are served by Fr Tom Treacy, (left) and two assistant priests, all of whom are SMAs.



## FRIENDS OF AFRICA: ZAMBIA REPORT

Below is part 2 of the report of Anita McWilliams, the Friends of Africa long-term volunteer who has been working in Twafane in Zambia



### Street Kids

The other main project in which Friends of Africa play a major role is in working with the street children in Kitwe. As a social worker coming to Zambia with a child protection background, I get very angry and frustrated with how children can be left to live and survive in the horrific and abusive conditions of the streets. On this project, Friends of Africa work alongside a Zambian charity called Friends of the Street Children to provide care and support to these vulnerable children through a number of areas.

When working with street kids who are being physically and sexually abused on the streets and quite often are also addicted to drugs, a lot of patience and support is needed to encourage them to come to a safe environment where they will be cared for. Many of these children are orphans, some come from abusive homes and others come from families where there is not enough food at home so they go to the streets to find money and food. Street outreach- going out onto the streets and building relationships with the children - is the most important part of the rehabilitation process as during this time the children gain trust in workers and the helping process begins.



Workers encourage the children and young people to come to the shelters where they can attend school and be rehabilitated to move away from drugs and street life and where they can also receive therapy to help them cope with the abuse they have suffered.

Whilst children are being rehabilitated, family tracing needs to be completed in order to gain an understanding of the situations from which they are coming and also to try and identify where the child can be returned to once they are ready, as it is not always suitable for them to return home. Friends of Africa are a vital support to the work of Friends of the Street Children as we have provided funding for a number of areas such as buying chickens whose eggs they can then sell as a sustainable project, as well as buying books and materials for the classrooms which has enabled some of the street kids to go to school for the first time ever. However, some of the vital programmes for street kids could not be run without the support of FOA; without our funding and volunteers for night outreach and home tracing there are no other resources available for these to happen. During night outreach, we get to see the children at their most vulnerable and this is also when they are most at risk of abuse so it is good to have a presence on the streets. During night outreach, the children really see that someone does care and are more likely to share their stories or ask for help. On a number of occasions during night outreach it has also been necessary to bring children to hospital



due to illness, burns or other accidents such as being beaten up. Children should not have to live like this, they should be protected and cared for within an environment which encourages them to have dreams and goals in life and with people around them who will support them with this. Step by step, Friends of Africa are enabling some young people who used to live on the streets to have more positive futures through their work with Friends of the Street Children.

The people that I have worked with during my time in Zambia are truly grateful and appreciative of the help they have received from Friends of Africa. I have met some of the most amazing people who despite their hardships and poverty always have a welcoming smile and a hug for me and it is their infectious spirit which makes me feel at home here and want to help these people more. I am very grateful to Friends of Africa for giving me this opportunity to be a volunteer here so that I am able to give a little back to these people who, everyday teach me something new about life, and I am excited about what the future holds for these communities when Friends of Africa are walking alongside them and helping them on their way.



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## SUMMER CAMPS REUNION

There is some early stage planning being done to host a Reunion for anyone and everyone who ever attended the Summer Camps (or Boys Camps) here at Dromantine. Please forward the details of anyone who attended the camps, particularly in 1980s/90s to Dympna Mallon, SMA Laity Coordinator at the address or email given below. The more contact details we have, the more people can be notified about the details of the event.

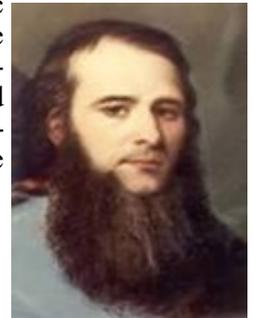
If you have any items for inclusion in the newsletter or if you know of anyone who would like to receive AFRICAN LINK, please get in touch with Dympna Mallon, SMA Laity Coordinator at SMA Dromantine, 96 Glen Road, Newry, Co Down, BT34 IRH, ph (028) 3082 1024, email: [laity@sma.ie](mailto:laity@sma.ie).

## YEAR OF de MARION

**December 8 2013** marked the bi-centenary of the birth of Melchior de Marion Brésillac, founder of the **Society of African Missions**, and the beginning of a year dedicated to him by all international units of SMA. In recognition of the importance of the Founder's life and principles, each African Link during 2014 will highlight some aspect of his life and work.

Although he had returned to France in 1853, Melchior's burning desire to return to the missionary field did not abate and after lengthy negotiations with the Vatican, he was given approval to found the Society of African Missions, the principal aim of which was "to evangelise the countries of Africa which are most in need of missionaries". Throughout 1856, he spent weeks travelling around France, speaking at Masses and slowly accumulating the funds he had been instructed by Rome to gather for the establishment of this new Society.

Having acquired a house for the formation of missionaries in Lyons and recruited Fr Augustine Planque as well as three aspirants, he went, on December 8, 1856, with these few members of the new Society to the Shrine of Notre Dame de Fourviere, Lyons and consecrated the Society and its work to Our Lady. Melchior spent much of the next year travelling around France making the Society known, with Fr Planque engaged in formation of the aspiring missionaries back in the Lyons house. Having finally been granted the Vicariate of Sierra Leone, including the republic of Liberia by Rome, the first three SMA missionaries set sail for Africa on November 3, 1857. It would be several more months before Melchior himself would set out for the new mission territory.



## Court Success for Walthamstow "Christian Kitchen"



A charity fighting to save a popular town centre 'soup kitchen' which has served the homeless and the vulnerable for more than 25 years has won a High Court ruling that a decision to terminate its licence was "unlawful".

A judge has quashed an April 2013 decision by the London Borough of Waltham Forest to revoke the licence for the operation of the Christian Kitchen soup kitchen at the Mission Grove car park in Walthamstow, east London. The Kitchen which provides hot meals to homeless people

365 nights a year, also provides overnight accommodation between January and March in association with the local churches in Walthamstow. During 2014, the volunteers in the SMA parish in Walthamstow provided this service for 13 weeks, accommodating 6-8 people in the parish hall each Friday night. Members of the parish were also among the group who pursued the recent successful court action. Keep up the good work!