

# Society of African Missions

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From: The Provincial's Office

Email: [provincial@sma.ie](mailto:provincial@sma.ie)

To: Ms Winnie Rocchiccioli VMM

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018

## LETTER OF APPRECIATION AND CONGRATULATIONS

Dear Winnie,

Greeting from a snowbound Cork!

On behalf of the Irish Province, I write to congratulate you - belatedly, I regret - on your forty years of outstanding service as a lay missionary in Africa. For most of those years, you worked in close collaboration with several SMA Fathers, first in Nigeria and later in South Africa. Your missionary apostolate began in January 1978 with your first appointment as a VMM to Notre Dame High School, Oro, Ilorin Diocese. Soon after your arrival in Oro you met Fr Vincent Brennan and Fr Danny Monahan – a meeting which was to prove a significant turning point in your life, marking the beginning of “a forty year friendship and association with the SMA Fathers,” as you put it.

You worked in Nigeria for nine years, in partnership with Fr Vincent and other SMA Fathers (Frs Dan McCauley, Sean Lynch, Brendan Lawless, Tim Carroll, Gerry Murray and Eamon Kelly) in the areas of Catechesis, YCS Apostolate and Communications – Radio, TV and Print.

In 1986, at the behest of the Bishop John Onaiyekan, you took over the running of the Diocesan Communications Centre in Ilorin, producing radio programmes for broadcast on the State Radio Station, while continuing your management of the diocesan printing press (launched by Fr Peter McCawille), and co-ordinating the catechetical programmes at Ilorin Cathedral, where Fr Martin Conboy was Parish Priest.

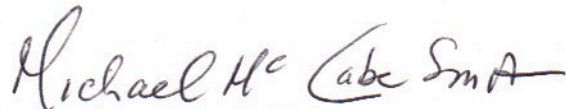
While you returned to Scotland in 1987, Africa and its peoples were never far from your mind, and, two years later, you resumed your ministry as a lay missionary, this time in the Diocese of Rustenburg. In collaboration with Fr Brennan, you ran training programmes for Lay Ministers and Catechists in Phokeng. When Fr Brennan was transferred to Mogwase in 1992, you took over responsibility for the running of the Pastoral Centre there. You also worked in close collaboration with Fr John Kilcoyne in various pastoral programmes at the Rustenburg Diocesan Catechetical Centre and with other SMA priests in South Africa. More recently, as the request of Fr Pius Afiabor, Regional Superior at the time, you became involved with the orientation programme for SMA priests newly appointed to the Region, providing valuable input on Catechesis.

Winnie, you speak of your gratitude to the SMA for their “friendship, support and encouragement” over the past 40 in your missionary apostolate. You pay particular tribute to Fr Vincent Brennan for helping you to discover “the true meaning of the lay missionary vocation.” Thank you for this generous tribute. However, I also know that the friendship and support of which you speak was a two-way process, and that the SMA priests with whom you worked are truly appreciative and grateful for the many ways in which you supported them in our common mission. They remember you as a selfless, energetic, and deeply committed missionary who both imparted and deepened the inchoate faith of a young and emerging African Church.

On behalf of the Irish Province of the Society of African Missions, I wish to put on record my sincere gratitude to you for all that you contributed to the success of the mission in both Nigeria and South Africa. You were, and are, an outstanding model of the kind of relationship that should exist between priests and laity in the life and mission of the Church, mirroring the inspiring vision of Church espoused by Second Vatican Council. I pray that your work and witness will inspire new generations of lay missionaries to bring the Good News of God’s love to the ends of the earth.

May the Lord continue to bless you abundantly in your well-deserved retirement,

With warm fraternal regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McCabe SMA". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael McCabe SMA  
Provincial Leader

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