



AFRICAN MISSIONARY

No. 42 | Autumn - Winter 2023



From a Church founded by missionaries to a missionary Church



Fr Martin O'Farrell (Cork City) and parishioners preparing plants for sowing.

Out of a population of 19 million inhabitants, about 40% of Zambians are Catholic. The country has 11 dioceses. The Archbishop of Kasama and President of the Zambian Conference of Catholic Bishops (ZCCB), Most Rev Ignatius Chama, spoke recently about the challenges facing the Church and the country.

"Our challenge is the spread of Pentecostal and Evangelical churches and the Islamic faith. The latter has great resources to invest in social activities that attract the poorest segments of the population. There are two entry points for Muslim preaching: on the Tanzanian

side and on the Malawian side", Archbishop Chama said, stressing that "the Catholic Church in Zambia is highly appreciated for the many institutions that are made available to all Zambians: there are a good number of clinics and hospitals, from schools to universities".

On a social level, the greatest concern is the high unemployment which especially affects young people. The new government came to power in August 2021 aiming to increase employment, raising high hopes that have so far been dashed. *"Unfortunately, not only has the situation not changed but on the contrary the level of poverty continues to rise,"* underlines the Archbishop.

The prices of basic necessities, including food, are high, largely due to the increase in fuel costs caused by the war in Europe. Fortunately, a large part of the population still lives in rural areas and can cultivate the land to get

something to eat. Life in the city is harder because if you don't have a job you depend on someone else to survive. The most difficult situation is that of the inhabitants of the shanty towns (townships) of the cities.

From a Church perspective, the Church in Zambia today is largely run by Zambian clergy. *"And even when the parishes are in the hands of religious congregations, the religious who attend them are mostly Zambians. The percentage of foreign missionaries in our country is very small, compared to the local clergy".*

Society of African Missions (SMA)

Blackrock Road, Cork, T12 TD54, Ireland • Tel: 021 429 2871
Email: publications@sma.ie • www.sma.ie • RCN 20006211
CHY 4696 (Republic) NIC 100816 (Northern Ireland)

OLA Sisters Provincialate

Ardfoyle Convent, Ballintemple, Cork, Ireland
Email: prov@ardfoyle.com • www.olaireland.ie • RCN 20004576
CHY 3625 (Republic) XN 47533 (Northern Ireland)



Fr Tom Casey (Emly, Co Tipperary) recording one of his Sunday sermons for the SMA website

Fr Tom Casey founded the Ndola Media Centre. With the assistance of locally-trained Zambians, the Media Centre helps spread the Gospel through social media as well as through the radio and TV programmes they produce and are used by many local radio and TV stations. Fr Tom also provides a weekly sermon for the Irish Province website (www.sma.ie).

You can access the SMA Media Centre on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/smamediacentrendola> or just type SMA Media Centre Ndola into your web browser and you'll find it there.

Bishop Noel O'Regan SMA (Cork City) served as Bishop of Solwezi and later as Bishop of Ndola from 1995 to 2010.

The growth of the SMA in Zambia has been a gift of God which will be celebrated this December at the SMA District House in Ndola. May the Church in Zambia continue to flourish and may our SMA missionaries continue to play their part on proclaiming Christ to the nations.

With thanks to FIDES (www.fides.org/en) for the quotations from Archbishop Chama and Bishop Kasonde.

"Our Church was founded by missionaries partly European and partly American," adds the Bishop of Solwezi, Most Rev Charles Kasonde. *"We are grateful to the White Fathers and the missionaries of other congregations in Ireland, Great Britain and other countries. These missionaries instilled in us the missionary spirit and now we have become a Church that sends missionaries abroad, to Europe, America and other areas, including our own country."*

The first two SMA priests (Fr Michael Igoe, from Co Westmeath and the late Fr Sexton Doran from Co Down), arrived in Zambia fifty years ago, on 17th January, 1973. They had already been missionaries in Nigeria for many years. They began their pastoral work in Francisdale Mission, on the outskirts of Ndola, the second-largest city in Zambia. Many more Irish and Dutch SMAs followed as well as 'Fidei Donum' (a gift of faith) priests from Limerick and Tuam dioceses.

Fifty years on, all has changed. The early missionaries were all Irish; today we are six Irish SMAs in a group of twenty-one coming from Zambia, Ghana, Ireland, Kenya, Togo and the USA. We work in Lusaka Archdiocese, Kabwe, Ndola and Solwezi dioceses, most involved in parish work as well as providing primary health care, primary and secondary education, care of orphans and street-children etc. We also had two missions in the Diocese of Livingstone for several years.

True to the aim of our Founder (to found a local clergy) several SMAs have served on the staff of St Augustine's Major seminary at Mpima, over the past 50 years.

We have 22 Zambian priests in the Society – most of them serving in eight other African countries. A number of Zambian SMAs are serving at home: the District Leader is Fr Ignatius Malwa SMA, and some others are involved in training our fifteen Zambian seminarians as well as working in city and rural parishes. There are six Irish SMAs on mission in Zambia.





FARMING AS PREACHING: DOMINICAN SISTERS CARING FOR THE EARTH

Sr Faustina Jimoh, OP, the Eco-Farm Manager in Edumo, Kogi State, Nigeria, describes one way to 'preach the Gospel.'

Our preaching charism as Dominicans calls us to find our pulpit in a variety of places and ways, seeing what God is doing in our universe and actively sharing the fruits of our contemplation with others. We live out our charism in Edumo through our care for the earth. Our ecological farm was established in 2013 on a five-hectare piece of land in Edumo, in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria. Its ultimate aim is to contribute to the worldwide efforts towards food production while at the same time promoting the care of the earth which is our common home. Our objectives are to:

- Model and promote organic farming which is mutually beneficial to people and to the earth.
- Provide an environment for demonstrating new ideas in agriculture for the benefit of local farmers in view of increasing food production as well as its quality.
- Provide opportunity for skill acquisition by initiating projects such as baking, sewing, etc, in view of improving the economic condition especially of local women and youths.
- Establish a microfinance / cooperative scheme to give local farmers the opportunity to access soft loans for agricultural purposes.
- Create employment opportunity especially for women and youths who will be engaged in the daily running of the farm / centre.
- Provide a serene and conducive environment for rest, relaxation, and contemplation of God in creation respecting our Dominican charism of preaching.
- Generate some income to support our Congregation in her work of evangelization.

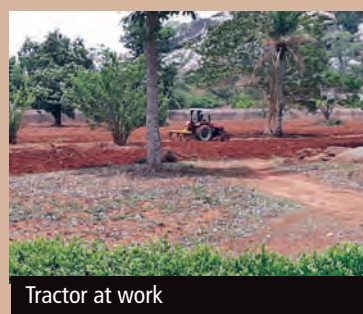
Since 2013, we have cultivated crops like maize, millet, yams, potatoes, cassava, beans, soy beans, groundnuts (peanuts), bambara nuts, beniseed (sesame), and different local vegetables. We have also invested in animal husbandry, i.e. pigs, goats, rabbits, as well as poultry and bee keeping. The waste from the animals and poultry is used to manure our crops while some of the crops are used to feed the animals. We have been able to provide employment to some young people in the local community so as to help them find a means of livelihood while also growing their own crops. However, being a small-scale project we have been unable to achieve all our goals due to many financial challenges

we face. Each unit of the farm demands financial attention for better yield. For instance, the crop unit requires a tractor for cultivation and some other gardening tools; the piggery needs constant repairs or expansion due to the destructive nature of the pigs and also their ability to farrow a good number of piglets at the same time; the poultry requiring feed in large quantities, etc. These needs are difficult to meet without assistance from non-Dominican and local resources.



Thresher machine

Up to now, we had a tractor. But we had to rent the plough, ridger, thresher etc. so that our tractor had work to do.



Tractor at work

Otherwise, our option was to till the field manually – some bit by ourselves and, for the most part, by hired labourers which is very expensive. This process of waiting to rent equipment was always very frustrating as there are only three

places in the area where they could be rented. It meant having to queue behind many other farmers who depended on these same resources for their farms too. The result of this long wait is that very often we are not able to meet up with planting our crops early enough before the rainy season ends.

Thankfully through the assistance of the SMA we got a grant to buy some of the necessary machinery. We were elated! In fact, we broke into singing and dancing when the implements finally arrived on 7 April 2023. It was an answer to eight years of praying and hoping for a miracle. And so, our miracle came! No more waiting long weeks and months to plough our field, no more manual cultivation except for areas that are too rocky for the tractor to plough, no more delaying and missing the rainy season! Thanks to the assistance of the SMA, we now have our own plough, ridger, thresher, and tipping trailer. We cannot thank our benefactors enough for this great generosity. Not only can we now plough our field in good time, we can also hire our implements out to other local farmers who are equally in great need as we were.

This support encourages us in our Dominican preaching mission through our care for the earth. Indeed, through this project, we feel connected with our donors in our common mission as baptized Christians, carrying the Good News everywhere we go. And so, right here on this holy ground of the Dominican Sisters Eco Farm in Kabba, we feel the collaboration of others.

From all of us at the Dominican Sisters Eco Farm, we say: THANK YOU, dear friends. GO RAIBH MÍLE MAITH AGAIBH.



Thresher, trailer and ridger with the community tractor.

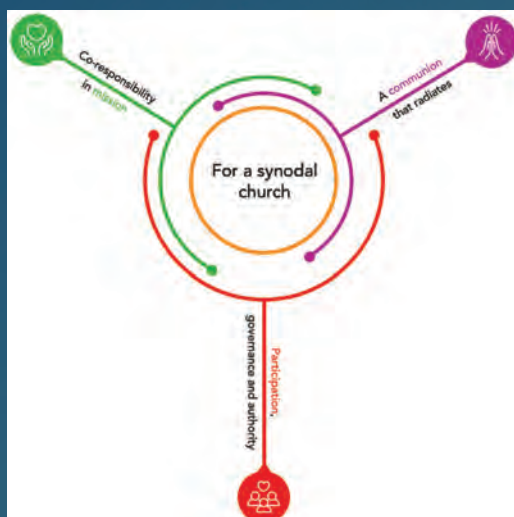


Introduction

Pope Francis has convened a two-part Synod meeting in Rome from 4 to 29 October 2023 and October 2024. The meetings will discuss how we can develop a Synodal model of Church. Synodality, an unusual word, refers to the participation and collaboration by all the members of the Church in the service of the mission entrusted to it by Christ. Among the 400 participants will be bishops from every part of the world, representatives of men and women religious, and over 70 lay women and men. For the first time, all participants will have voting rights. The Vatican Audience Hall has been modified so that there can be discussion in small groups. This represents a significant break with the usual format of previous Synods.

The Task of the Assembly

The Assembly will reflect on, discern, and harvest the fruits of the synodal journey launched by Pope Francis in October 2021 – a journey involving the Church at every level (local, national, continental) in a listening and discerning process aimed at renewing its energies in the service of mission. Following this, the Rome Synod Secretariat presented a 60-page Working



Towards a Sy

Document, outlining the questions to be addressed and the procedures to be adopted by the Assembly. This lengthy document strives to reflect the mood of Catholics throughout the world and to respect the great diversity of views expressed in the many documents the Secretariat received. It includes the concerns of those who want to see a radical reform of the Church's governing structures. It acknowledges the desire of the majority of the faithful for a more inclusive Church, greater acceptance of marginalised groups, and more involvement of lay women and men not only in the mission of the Church but also in its decision-making processes.

The Working Document

The Working Document begins by reflecting on the significance of the synodal journey so far and on what is meant by a Synodal Church. It highlights the positive impact of the synodal process, while also acknowledging that it has given rise to some fears and tensions. However, it adds, that the appropriate response to such concerns is to engage in ongoing discernment, for 'only in this way can these tensions become sources of energy and not lapse into destructive polarizations'. In taking this approach, the document is reflecting the mind of Pope Francis who wants the members of the Church to express their views honestly and bring them out into the open. This was the way the early Church dealt with conflicts in its midst, and it is only way consistent with the message and spirit of the Gospel.

The goal of the synodal process, the document says, is to create 'a Church of sisters and brothers in Christ who listen to one another and who, in so doing, are gradually transformed by the Spirit. A synodal Church, is one marked by a willingness to listen, encounter, and dialogue, and by the humility to ask forgiveness for faults. It is a Church that celebrates unity in diversity and welcomes all people, while not shying away from speaking the truth in love.

The Major Themes of the Assembly

The Working Document focuses on the three major themes that have emerged from the synodal process thus far: Communion, Mission, and Participation. For each of these themes, it proposes Worksheets with questions for the assembly participants.

A Communion that Radiates

Under this heading, the key issue for the participants to address is how the Church can be more fully 'a sign and instrument of union with God and of the union of all humanity'. More specifically, the Assembly is challenged to envisage ways to help the Church become a more welcoming community for migrants, people with disabilities, the elderly, and

ynodal Church

especially those who have been hurt by it and feel unwelcome. The document also highlights the desire of the non-Western Churches to have their distinctive traditions recognised, and their voices heard.

Co-Responsibility in Mission

Under this heading, the key question to be addressed is how the Church can better share the gifts and tasks of members in the service of the gospel and thus become more effective in proclaiming the Gospel and accompanying people in today's digital environment. The document underlines the need to overcome clericalism and invites the Assembly to reflect on the interrelatedness of baptismal ministry and ordained ministry, and elaborate its implications for lay involvement in ministry.

The role of women in the Church is highlighted as a dominant concern. The Assembly is asked to consider how the existing contribution of women to the Church's mission could be more fully acknowledged and supported. The Assembly is challenged to envisage ways of according women greater prominence in Church governance and ministry, and to consider the question of their ordination as Deacons.

Participation and Governance

Under this heading, the document focuses on the processes, structures and institutions needed in a missionary synodal Church. It begins by pointing out that all authority in the Church proceeds from Christ and is guided by the Holy Spirit. The Church is, at one and the same time, synodal and hierarchical.

The ministry and authority of bishops is properly realised through the practice of synodality (working together with one another and with the lay faithful), which brings into unity the diverse gifts, charisms, ministries and vocations of the members of the Church. In the light of these principles, the Synodal Assembly is invited to reflect on how the Church's decision-making processes could be re-imagined so that they are more participatory, providing spaces for listening and community discernment.

Conclusion

The Working Document for the Assembly on Synodality provides hopeful signs that the Church is serious about trying to become more open and inclusive.

For the first time in the history of Church Synods, lay men and women will participate with the right to vote. The Audience Hall, the venue for the Assembly, will provide ample opportunity for exchanges in small groups, conversations that should promote an active listening to what the Spirit is saying to the Church at this time. We have reason to be confident, then, that the upcoming Assembly will 'be marked by humble listening, courageous speech and lively hope' and continue to accompany it with our prayers.

Michael McCabe SMA

Prayer for the 2023 Synod

*We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.*

*With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.*

*We are your beloved children:
may our journey together
be marked by humble listening,
courageous speech, and lively hope.*

*Let us find in You our unity
as we seek to do what is right.*

*All this we ask of You, who are at work
in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father
and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.*



ONLINE DONATIONS

You may send money, at no additional cost, for our Missionary Work, Family Vocations Community (FVC), Mission Association Cards etc. using our **Donate Online** facility on the www.sma.ie homepage.

Remember the Missions in your Will

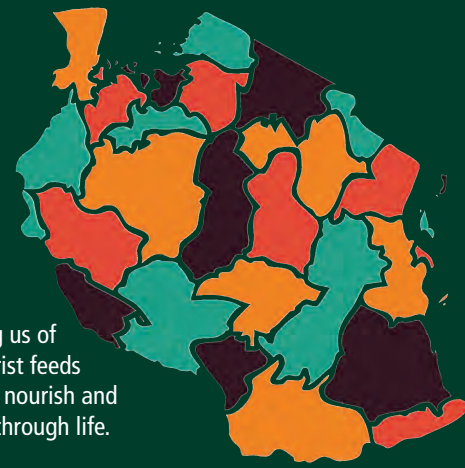
By remembering the SMA and OLA in your Will you can help the work of mission to continue after you.

I leave the sum of €
to the Society of African Missions, Blackrock
Road, Cork, for the purpose of the African
Missions.

or

I leave the sum of €
to the Provincial Superior for the time being of
the Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Apostles,
Ardfoyle Convent, Ballintemple, Cork, for the
purpose of the OLA Sisters.

OLA TANZANIA REJOICES



OLA Superior General, Sr Mary T Barron, Bishop Sangu, Sr Donatha Urassa OLA and Sr Kathleen McGarvey, OLA Provincial Superior, Ireland

The Catholic Church celebrated 150 years in Tanzania in 2018. There are 34 dioceses in a country of some 67 million people, 30% of whom are Catholic. The OLA presence in this East African country can be traced back to the late Fr Dick Kelleher, SMA, who it was said, "wore out the Ardfoye Convent avenue with his frequent visits to the Sisters asking them to come to Tanzania." The eventual OLA response saw Sr Mairéad Hickey and the late Sr Deana Donohue (RIP) arriving in Mwanza, Tanzania in 1991. The late Sr Sally Forde OLA (RIP) arrived the following year. They established the first OLA nursery and primary schools in Mwamapalala and Bugisi. As the OLA group grew so too has the number of schools and clinics. Today, they are also running a secondary school near Dar es Salaam, the capital. They also run two large 70-bed Health Centres (including maternity wards) to care for the people in the rural areas of Bugisi and Mwamapalala.

Courageously committed to God's Reign of Peace and Justice the OLA Sisters invited Tanzanian women to consider a religious vocation in their missionary Congregation. In 2012, Donatha Paul Urassa began her journey of formation in the OLA. On 18 February last, Sister Donatha made her Final Profession as an OLA Sister. The following is an edited report of that blessed day.

All roads led to Mwamapalala as, for the first time, the villagers witnessed the Final Vows of a religious Sister. Sr Donatha began her training (both academic and pastoral) in Tanzania and then in Nigeria and Ghana before returning home to complete her studies. It was a beautiful day as we walked down to the church to witness the final vows of Sr Donatha. The church was filled with people from far and near, including Sr Donatha's family. Bishop Liberatus Sangu of Shinyanga Diocese officiated at the Mass and Final Vows ceremony. Many SMA priests came from their own parishes to pray with us and celebrate.

During the Mass, the OLA Superior General, Sr Mary T Barron OLA (from Donegal) received Sr Donatha's Vows and welcomed her as the first Finally-Professed OLA Sister from Tanzania. The Bible was carried to the Altar at the start of the Prayers of the Faithful and, in those prayers, "we prayed that through the Good News, the unevangelized would be evangelized, the suffering would find relief, and the Church would continue to be inspired in fulfilling the great commission" (go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News). Other symbols used at the Mass included salt (indicating that we make a difference in people's lives), a lighted candle (may our light shine for others to see), sandals (we are all missionaries by virtue of our baptism) and ash/dust as

symbols of life and death. Finally, bread and wine, to be consecrated at the Mass, was brought to the altar reminding us of God's love for us and how Christ feeds us with his Body and Blood to nourish and strengthen us on our journey through life.

After the Mass, there was a social gathering with friends and family. Entertainment was provided by our students from the Bugisi Vocational Training Centre and those attending the OLA English Medium School. There were many words of congratulations and advice for Sr Donatha. Her family brought the traditional 'cake' of the Chagga tribe to their daughter. The Chagga people come from the area around Mount Kilimanjaro in northern Tanzania though many have migrated to other parts of the world. They were among the first to embrace Christianity and therefore education.

Sr Donatha is completing her studies in Pharmacy and we wish her "every blessing on this great step. May her journey onwards be grace-filled for her and for all those to whom she will be sent."

For more information about the OLA Sisters go to www.olaireland.ie or email them at info@olaireland.ie

With thanks to Sr Patience Ezimigbo, OLA, (from Nigeria) for the information about the Profession used in this article.

Two Irish SMA priests (Fr Dan Cashman and the late Fr Richard Kelleher) were the first SMA members to go to Tanzania, arriving there in October 1986. Nearly forty years later, the SMA Tanzania District, of 12 different nationalities, is led by Fr John Kilcoyne SMA (from Castlebar, Co Mayo). The Deputy Leader is Tanzanian SMA, Fr James Shimbala.

We have 22 SMA priests, 4 lay missionary Associates and 2 Religious Associates on mission in Tanzania. Our lay Associates come from Netherlands and Poland. Both Religious Associates are Loreto Sisters from Poland who are involved with the Tanga Community, a centre caring for albino children and young adults. This Centre is under the leadership of Fr Janusz Machota SMA (from Poland).

Thanks be to God, we also have eight Tanzanian SMA priests, serving in five African countries. We have 28 seminarians studying in our Formation Houses in Tanzania, International Spiritual Year Centre in Benin Republic and at the SMA House of Studies in Nairobi, Kenya. Four of them are in parishes on a one year pastoral training program.

The growth of the OLA Sisters and the SMA in Africa has been a gift of God but it was not achieved without the prayers and financial help of our Irish supporters. May God, through the intercession of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, the Little Flower, Patroness of the Missions, bless them all.



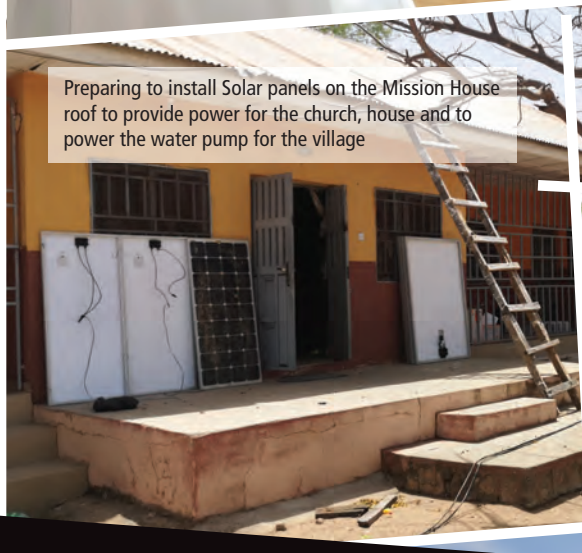
Fr Sam Ebute, SMA (Parish Priest), with his catechist, Emmanuel, preparing children and young adults for sacraments



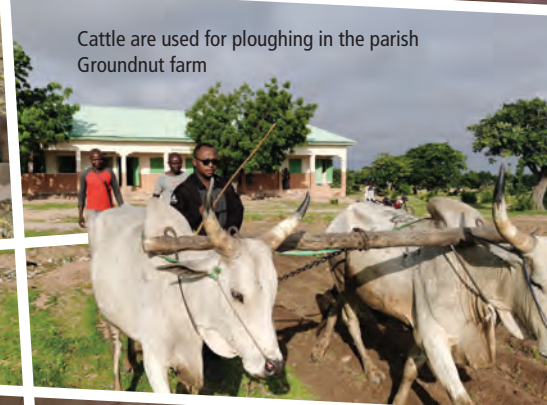
Village women waiting to sell their groundnuts which supports the parish funds



Market in Billiri parish

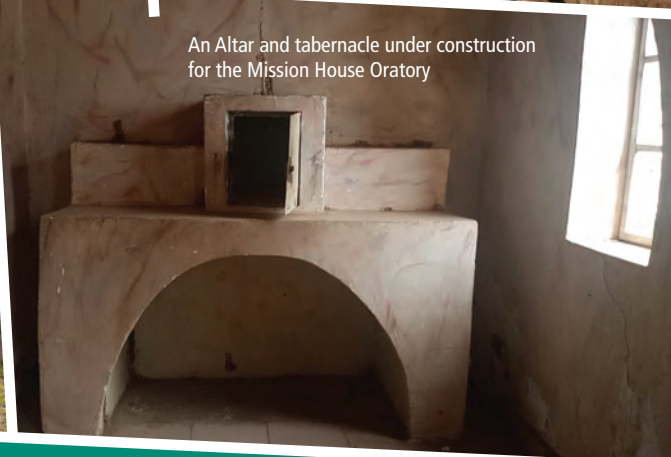


Preparing to install Solar panels on the Mission House roof to provide power for the church, house and to power the water pump for the village



Cattle are used for ploughing in the parish Groundnut farm

St Andrew's Parish, Billiri, Bauchi Diocese, Nigeria.



An Altar and tabernacle under construction for the Mission House Oratory

African Missions (SMA)
Blackrock Road. T12 TD54
Cork
021 429 2871
sma.blackrock@sma.ie

African Missions (SMA)
Wilton. T12 KR23
Cork
021 454 1069
sma.wilton@sma.ie

African Missions (SMA)
Dromantine BT34 1RH
Newry
028 3082 1224
sma.dromantine@sma.ie

African Missions (SMA)
Cloonbigeen, Claregalway
Co. Galway H91 YK64
091 798 880
sma.claregalway@sma.ie

African Missions (SMA)
81 Ranelagh Road. D06 WT10
Dublin 6
01 496 8162
sma.dublin@sma.ie



SMA ORDINATIONS - 2023



Fr. Abel Atikassou, SMA
Republic of Benin



Fr. Achille Houmouvi, SMA
Republic of Benin



Fr. Hospice Yehouenou, SMA
Republic of Benin



Fr. Atta Serge Pacome Bini, SMA
Cote D'Ivoire



Fr. Emmanuel Dahlin, SMA
Cote D'Ivoire



Fr. Vincent Sanogo, SMA
Cote D'Ivoire



Fr. Joakim Kipkirui, SMA
Kenya



Fr. Justin Dzikonou, SMA
Togo



Fr. Jean-Paul Lawson, SMA
Togo



Ordination Day at the Holy Family SMA Parish, Abuja, Nigeria.



Fr. Samuel Hagan, SMA
Ghana



Fr. Robert Denkwap, SMA
Nigeria



Fr. Zachariah Yohanna, SMA
Nigeria



Fr. Alexander Abah, SMA
Nigeria



Fr. Joseph Vijaya, Nayak SMA
Indian Province



Fr. John Xavier Chinnappan, SMA
Indian Province



Fr. Biswajit Amburji, Nayak, SMA
Indian Province



Fr. Sylvester Seni Mahega, SMA
Tanzania



Fr. Lambert Kette, SMA
Province of Central Africa Republic

IN THANKING GOD FOR OUR NEW SMA MISSIONARY PRIESTS WE ALSO THANK OUR SMA SPONSORS WHOSE PRAYERS AND SUPPORT HAS SEEN THEM REACH THEIR ORDINATION DAY