



AFRICAN MISSIONARY

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Fr Malachy Flanagan the SMA Provincial Leader meets Pope Leo XVI at the Vatican © Vat Media

PEACE BE WITH YOU ALL

Pope Leo XVI's papacy begins in a time of many wars and when International divisions and tensions are growing. Adherence to humanitarian and Christian values respecting human dignity, truth, justice, and equality are in decline. In this situation the opening words, spoken from the balcony of St Peter's Basilica by Robert Prevost, now Pope Leo XIV, were:

"Peace be with you all! Dear brothers and sisters, these are the first words spoken by the risen Christ, the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for God's flock....I would like this greeting of peace to resound in your hearts.... Peace be with you!"

He then continued by repeating words spoken last Easter by his predecessor, the late Pope Francis:

"God loves us, God loves you all, and evil will not prevail! All of us are in God's hands. So, let us move forward, without fear, together, hand in hand with God and with one another! We are followers of Christ. Christ goes before us. The world needs his light. Humanity needs him as the bridge that can lead us to God and his love. Help us, one and all, to build bridges through dialogue and encounter, joining together as one people, always at peace."

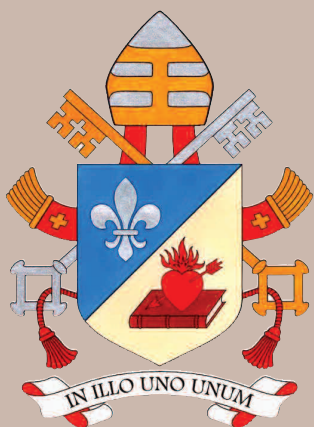
Pope Leo XIV also emphasised that the Church needs to be **constantly moving** forward, "a Church that always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close, above all, to those who are suffering."

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These words of Pope Leo XVI are guidance for us all. They call us to - *"move forward without fear" – "to build bridges" – to be people who bring peace and who work for peace – "in your families, among all people, wherever they may be, in every nation and throughout the world"*.

This inaugural message from St Peter's Square reflects this urgent need of our time. It is a call to us,

and to all believers, to be counter-witnesses to the violence, greed, lack of truth and self-centeredness we see around us.

Let peace begin with us. Let the choices we make each day be choices for truth, for tolerance, for compassion – all the things that build peace. Let our lives and actions show love and care for others and for God's creation. Peace is the fruit of loving one another, of doing God's will in our lives. Peace is at the core of the Christ's message and at the heart of Christian mission.

We are reminded each time we go to Mass that we are entrusted with this mission, when, at the end of the liturgy, we are called to give Christian example and witness in our homes, communities or wherever we are. **Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord.**

A Brief Biography of Pope Leo XIV

Robert Prevost was born on September 14, 1955, in Chicago, Illinois, to Louis Marius Prevost, of French and Italian descent, and Mildred Martínez, of Spanish descent. He has two brothers, Louis Martín and John Joseph.

He studied at the Minor Seminary of the Augustinian Fathers and then at Villanova University in Pennsylvania, where, in 1977, he earned a Degree in Mathematics and also studied Philosophy.

In the same year, he entered the Augustinian Novitiate in Saint Louis. Following studies in Chicago and Rome he was ordained a priest on June 19, 1982.

After completing doctoral studies, he was sent as a missionary to Peru in 1985 and served there in various pastoral, teaching and leadership roles. In 1999 he was elected Provincial Prior in the Augustinian Province in Chicago and later he served two terms as Prior General of the Augustinian Order.

In 2014 Pope Francis made him a bishop, appointing him Apostolic Administrator of the Peruvian Diocese of Chiclayo. He later served as vice-president of the Peruvian Episcopal Conference, as a member of the Congregation for the Clergy, and was also as a member of the Congregation of Bishops.

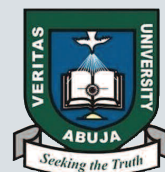
On January 30, 2023, Pope Francis called him to Rome as Prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops and President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America, promoting him to the rank of Archbishop. Later the same year he was made Cardinal. During the Conclave following the death of Pope Francis in May 2025 he was elected Pope and the name he chose was Leo XIV.

*Holy Spirit, once again You have spoken.
Through the voices of human beings
You have chosen Pope Leo XIV to guide us.
We pray that You will guide him.
Help him in his service to You, the Church, and the world.
Help him offer a beacon of love
To those searching for hope
Amidst the chaos of our changing planet.
In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.*

(Source: Laudato Si Movement)
(Prayer with Papal Crest Photo)



Pope Leo XVI addresses people gathered in St Peter's Square after his election on the 8th May 2025 ©Vat Media



MISSIONARY SOLIDARITY AND COLLABORATION IN VERITAS UNIVERSITY ABUJA

By Sr Kathleen McGarvey OLA



Sr Kathleen with University Students.

I write from my office in Veritas University Abuja, in North Central Nigeria. Here I have a number of responsibilities, all of them both life-giving and time-consuming. I lecture in both the Faculty of Theology and the Department of Peace and Conflict Studies. I also serve as Deputy Dean of Student Affairs, accompanying students and hostel administrators in issues concerning hostel life, and also as Director of Advancement and International Collaboration.

After over ten years in leadership in Ireland, to return to Africa on mission was my dream and I thank God to have been able to do that in September last year. For myself, the opportunity to serve here in Veritas University is a gift for which I am deeply grateful. I recognise that my presence here, and my love and respect for the people and culture, is seen as a form of solidarity which is greatly appreciated. I continue to be shown a sincere welcome and huge support.

I seek to show my solidarity through my lectures and relationship with students and staff, or through my efforts as Director of Development and International Collaboration. The primary function of this Office is to serve as a link between the University and other institutions globally. It seeks to forge collaborative partnerships which will advance the university's mission on a global scale, and will permit the development of the university in terms of infrastructure, research, and capacity building of both students and staff.

Nigeria is a beautiful country, rich in its cultural and religious diversity, alive with the vibrancy and faith of its people, and endowed with so much natural beauty and God-given resources. However, its resources are neither equitably distributed nor honestly managed. Insecurity is part of daily life with the ongoing threat of terrorist or criminal attacks and of kidnapping. The Naira has devalued and the majority of the population suffer great economic poverty and hardship. Religion and ethnicity too often become reasons, exploited by leaders, for conflict and violence. Seventy percent of Nigeria's population is under the age of thirty, and unemployment is one of the country's most pressing issues. Many, if not most, graduates dream of leaving Nigeria to find work abroad. Others, although highly intelligent and qualified, must look for alternative ways of trying to make ends meet. Unfortunately, some become easy fodder for both terrorism and criminal activities.

In Nigeria today, as indeed throughout Africa, there is a growing recognition that Africa must, and wants to, take control of its own future; African solutions must be found for Africa's problems.

Thus, there is need to educate and form young people to find these solutions. The Church in Africa also recognises its responsibility not just to be an instrument of peace, justice and reconciliation in Africa, but also to be the spiritual lung (Africae Munus, Pope Benedict XVI, 13 & 117) which offers faith and hope to a world that seems to have lost its moral compass.

By 2050 one-third of the world's population will be African; thus Africa will be a significant workforce for the global economy, including in Europe. This presents an opportunity for the Church in Nigeria, to positively drive economic growth, human security, and integral development. This requires strategic investments in education, skills, and integral human formation.

The Church in Nigeria is aware of the need to invest in the formation of the young people of this country, and it is for that reason that Veritas University was established in 2008.

Through this university, the Church aims to promote authentic human and cultural development, and to champion the cause of justice and uprightness in society. The vision of the University is to evolve "an academic culture of excellence that will make the University rank among the best in the world, modelling itself on the great Catholic universities the world over".



Sr Kathleen at University cultural event

The University aims to provide students with an integral and holistic formation that combines academic and professional training with physical, moral, spiritual, social and cultural formation that has Catholic Social Teaching at its core. As of today, the University has ten faculties as well as a College of Medicine and a College of Post-Graduate Studies, approximately forty departments, 7,000 students and 700 staff. All students must live on campus. The building of hostels, office blocks, lecture halls, and other

necessary infrastructure is ongoing as the university continues to grow year by year.

Through success in international and Pan-African events and competitions Veritas University has shown that it is now a rising force in Africa's intellectual, technological and innovative achievements in areas such as Health, Education, Agriculture, Security, and Energy. Despite these impressive accomplishments, the University faces considerable challenges. One is, of course, the growing insecurity in Abuja and across Nigeria. Electricity supply and poor Internet access are also problems. Addressing these requires funding. Part of my role as Director of Development and International Collaboration is to find partnerships and resources that address these problems, and so to enable our students and staff to develop their potential and be the lung they can and must be for a better world. Discussions towards partnerships and cooperation have begun with St Louis University Missouri, and Albany State University in Georgia, USA, and also with University College Cork in Ireland.

Personally, I am inspired by the words of Mother Teresa of Calcutta who is quoted as having said "I can do things you cannot; you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things". That for me sums up the spirit and goal of collaboration. Also, the words of Pope Francis who said in Fratelli Tutti (127): "For a real and lasting peace will only be possible 'on the basis of a global ethic of solidarity and cooperation in the service of a future shaped by interdependence and shared responsibility in the whole human family'".

The SMA Dromantine Summer Camps: *A time of Fun, Faith and Friendship* by Fr Anthony Kelly SMA



The SMA Summer Camp has, with the exception of a few years during the Covid-19 pandemic, been running since 1969. This year, as usual, it was booked out. A total of 535 young people attended five weeks of the SMA Dromantine Summer Camps: three weeks for girls and two for boys. The camps were run by 190 trained volunteers called "Students" and "Managers". The young people attending the Camps are called "Players". Frs Anthony Kelly SMA was Camp Director and he was ably assisted by Fr Christopher Emokhare SMA.

Every Friday afternoon during prize-giving, at the end of another week of Camp, I feel exhausted. Just part of the aging process I guess!!! But by 5 PM I feel refreshed and renewed. What makes the difference? The closing Family Mass. It is so wonderful to observe the parents come to see their sons and daughters participate in the Celebration of the Eucharist. It is a celebration and thanksgiving for a week of fun and games, and it takes me back briefly to my time in

Africa, where every Mass was a joyful celebration with song and dance and Thanksgiving for The Lord's gifts. Here in Dromantine, in the SMA chapel, throughout the week, we hear boys and girls sing and cheer with that



same joy and enthusiasm. Our masses go on for a full hour with nobody feeling bored or wanting to be anywhere else. After Mass the delighted parents come to shake hands and mingle with the students, managers and concelebrating priests. One can see in their faces their appreciation, and how pleased they are to witness their teenage children celebrate and enjoy their Faith.

I have, at various times, been involved in running the camp since 1990. In some ways it has not changed, but in other ways, like so many other aspects of life, it has become much more complicated and more difficult to organise.

What remains the Same: The camp itself and its daily schedule has changed very little with the usual Morning Prayer and Breakfast to begin the day at 9 a.m. Sport, Housework and talent practice fill the schedule until 11.30, when all the players managers and students gather in the chapel for choir practice, followed by Mass at 12 noon. There we have the same hymns we sang in the 1990's such as the old favourite 'His banner over me is love'. The afternoon is filled with activities around the tennis court, handball alley, basketball court and, recently introduced, volleyball court. All this takes us up to Evening





Prayer at 5.30. During tea and other meals there is usually a lot of good-humoured banter between the different tables and teams. After tea at 6, we have more sport in the big pitches or preparation for Thursday night's talent show. Some nights we have entertainment consisting of a quiz, or dancing, or karaoke. Wednesday night has individual talent while Thursday has the team talent competition.

Every day we have a different theme for Mass. Friendship on Monday, Mission on Tuesday, Care for Creation on Thursday, with Family being the theme for Friday. In addition, we have a Taize prayer service on Wednesday when we all gather around the cross for a time of silent prayer. Every evening we have a different theme for Evening Prayer and sometimes we have a guest speaker, for example, to help teenagers cope with their anxieties.

What has Changed: The biggest changes and challenges, in comparison to the early years of the Summer Camps, have come about due to compliance, safeguarding and health and safety regulations. No one is allowed to attend Camp as a helper without having completed safeguarding training as well as registering with Access Northern Ireland to show that they have no criminal record.

Attending the required training is time consuming and challenging as many of those who volunteer to help are busy with studying for exams or summer jobs, and it's difficult for them to get time off to attend the training days which must be done annually.

Camp 2025 got off to a great start. It began earlier than usual with an extra week for girls, in addition to the usual two weeks for girls and two for boys. The weather was brilliant all through and we had a great team of helpers. Their generosity in giving their time to training, planning and running the camps must be acknowledged and praised. I am very grateful to the Dromantine community and its leader and



staff for continuing to offer their generosity and warm hospitality. I am grateful to the members of the community who have offered their support by leading the daily Mass and preaching on one of the camp themes. Fr Christopher has been a great boost to camp with his sharing of his experiences and teaching new songs, and I feel confident he is the man to take over from me, so that camp can continue for another 50 years. I end here with a note received from one of the 14-year-old players on week one of Girls SMA Camp 2025

Dear Fr Anthony,

"Thank you so much for looking after us and for the fantastic week at Dromantine. Thank you for the fun and entertaining masses and recalling your time away on Mission and in Galway during Tuesdays evening prayers. Lastly, I would like to thank you for being such a great help and influence at camp, guiding us through camp as our special friend. Yours. Up Galway!!!"



MY FIRST YEAR OF PRIESTLY ORDINATION

In this reflection Fr Moses Katabawa, a Zambian SMA missionary, looks back on this first year as a priest, and expresses his gratitude to the many people, including members of the Family Vocations Community (FVC), who have helped and supported him. Fr Moses is 36 years old. He was Ordained on the 17th of August 2024 and is working in Zambia with Fr Martin O'Farrell SMA in Divine Mercy Parish, Ndola.



Fr Moses during a First Holy Communions Mass in Divine Mercy Parish Ndola

As I reflect on my first year as a priest, my heart is filled with gratitude, first to God for His grace, and also to all of you, who have supported me through your prayers, generosity, and encouragement. The last year has been a journey of grace, humility, and spiritual growth. I came into ministry after being ordained, knowing that being a priest requires complete self-giving and daily purpose renewal.

Moments of Joy and Fulfilment: The celebration of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist and Reconciliation, have been some of the year's most joyous events. It has been exciting and humbling to stand at the altar and offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There have also been moments of great joy at baptisms, the blessing of marriages, visiting the sick and elderly. Such are moments where heaven profoundly affects the earth.

Pastoral Challenges and Growth: Alongside the happy moments came difficulties – guiding bereaved families, negotiating parish dynamics, or resolving spiritual difficulties. There have been challenging moments, difficult conversations, pastoral responsibilities, and the weight of spiritual leadership. All these have taught me to rely on God's grace rather than on my own strength.

I have found that one of the priest's most effective tools is listening. Accompanying people through their struggles, sharing in their celebrations, and simply being present has been a rewarding experience.

Community and Brotherhood: I am grateful for the fraternity I experienced among my fellow priests and the support of the lay faithful. Sharing experiences, praying together, and receiving encouragement has helped me to remain grounded, especially during low moments.

Personal Prayer and Interior Life: Perhaps the greatest realization during the past year was the importance of maintaining a strong personal prayer life. Amid the hustle and bustle of the parish, it has become clear to me that, without daily communion with Christ in prayer, my ministry would lose its depth. Silence before the Blessed Sacrament has become my strength.

Looking Forward: As I reflect on this first year, I am filled with hope. Priesthood is service, a journey and not a destination. I pray that, in the years ahead, I may grow in holiness, humility, and love.

Your support has played a pivotal role in making this possible. The formation I received, the vestments I wear, the books that continue to nourish my faith—all were made possible through your generous hands. Please know that I carry you with me each time I approach the altar. You are remembered in my prayers and in my Masses.

We ask you to remember Fr Moses in your prayers. Let us pray that he, and all young and newly ordained SMA Missionaries, may experience fulfilment, peace and joy in their pastoral and missionary work. AMEN

SMA Ordinations 2025

This summer eight new SMA Priests were Ordained, two from The Central African Republic, two from Tanzania, two from Ivory Coast and one each from Zambia and Kenya.

In addition, twenty-one young men, studying in SMA Seminaries in Nairobi, Kenya, Ibadan, Nigeria and in Ebimpe, Ivory Coast became Deacons and will, with God's help, be Ordained Priests in 2026.



Fr. Mijoni Nkhoma, SMA, District of Zambia, Ordained August 2025

A TIME OF CHANGE IN THE SMA



The new SMA General Council and Assembly delegates meet Pope Leo XIV in the Vatican. ©Vat Media

The summer of 2025 was a time of change within the SMA, both internationally and here in Ireland. New leadership teams were elected at the 22nd General Assembly of the Society of African Missions, which took place in Rome during May, and later at the Irish Provincial Assembly, held in the SMA Retreat and Conference Centre in Dromantine, Newry, Co Down in July.

In Rome, fifty-five delegates, representing SMA Provinces and Districts around the world, gathered to plan the future direction of the SMA's mission over the next six years. The Assembly also elected a new Superior General and Council. Fr P. François Marie Herve du Penhoat (France) is now Superior General. Fr Damian Bresnahan (Ireland) is Vicar General and Frs Didier Lawson Eloï (Togo) and Fr. James Kulwa Shimbala (Tanzania) are General Councillors.

During the final week of the General Assembly the newly elected Superior General and his Council, along with the delegates, were received at a special audience by Pope Leo XIV in the Vatican.

During his address to them Pope Leo XIV said that the SMA is "a sign of the missionary spirit which is at the very heart of the Church's life....Dear brothers, the history of your Institute bears witness to this. Fidelity to your mission, by which your communities have over time surmounted countless difficulties ... has enabled you to grow and even draw from adversity the inspiration to set out for new apostolic horizons in African and other parts of the world." Recalling the words of the SMA founder, the Venerable Bishop Melchior de Marion Brésillac, the Pope encouraged the SMA Fathers to embrace "the folly of the Cross" with sincerity and peace and to "be men filled with Christ, free of attachments, proclaiming the Gospel with one heart and one hope."

In July, members of the SMA Irish Province met in Dromantine for the Irish Provincial Assembly. During this two-week meeting, discussions took place and decisions were made concerning the work and direction of the Irish Province in the coming years.

Fr Malachy Flanagan was re-elected for a second term as Provincial Leader and three new Councillors were elected to assist him. They are Fr Paddy O'Rourke, who will serve as Vice Provincial Leader, and Frs Alphonse Sekongo and John Kilcoyne, Provincial Councillors.

We ask you to please pray that God may guide both the International and Irish SMA Leadership teams in the coming years.



The new Irish Province Leadership Team: Frs Paddy O'Rourke, Vice Provincial Leader, Malachy Flanagan, Provincial Leader, and Councillors John Kilcoyne and Alphonse Sekongo.

ORDER CARDS ONLINE

Sharing in the Masses and prayers of the members of the Society of African Missions (SMA) is a meaningful way to remember a deceased loved one, to celebrate an occasion or to let family or friends know that they are in your thoughts and prayers.

You can now order cards for various occasions via the SMA website
www.sma.ie

Individual and packs of 10 Christmas Cards available.

Cards can also be ordered by phoning the SMA House nearest to you – see telephone numbers on the bottom of this page.



REMEMBER THE MISSIONS IN YOUR WILL

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

For more information contact the SMA or OLA House nearest to you.



Eternal rest grant unto them O Lord

**Please pray for our OLA and SMA missionaries,
and our deceased supporters.**

Fr Desmond (Des) Smith (Cork City)) served in Nigeria and Ireland and died on 9 May 2025, aged 81 years.

Fr Michael Igoe, Glasson, Athlone, Co Westmeath, served in Nigeria, Zambia and Ireland and died on 2nd July 2025 aged 93 years.

Lord God, welcome our deceased supporters, benefactors and missionaries into the peace of your Kingdom. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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