

EDITORIAL

La Salette

VISION & MISSION



By Fr. Thomas Velloppallil, ms

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Dear Co-missioners,

Tanzania is a sovereign state in eastern Africa. The countries that border Tanzania are: Kenya and Uganda to the north; Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the west; Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique to the south; and the Indian ocean to the east. The capital city is Dodoma and the largest city is Dar es Salaam. The national language is Swahili and the official language is English. It has a population that is estimated close to 67 million, composed of several ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Predominant religions are Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and traditional beliefs. Approximately 68% of Tanzania's 67 million people live below the poverty line. Only 20 % of Tanzanians have access to electricity and less have access to clean water. Almost 70% of the poor population live in rural areas involved in farming. Lack of agricultural technology, droughts and floods severely endanger the living standards of most of the population and create huge increases in unemployment, hunger, malnutrition, starvation and various diseases. I was privileged to visit Tanzania for the first time from April 3rd through the 12th of 2018. If more interested you are welcome to read the full version of my report from our website: LSMC.ORG



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Tanzania is an incredible place where the streets come to life-young men walking with trays of peanuts and candy, cars beeping their horns and weaving through the traffic. It's a place where you can smell the goat being barbecued. Order a portion if you dare – that steak will never taste the same again. It is a place where the women dress wrapped in the brightest fabrics, tailored perfectly to their curves. They have some of the whitest and brightest smiles in the world. It is a place where the kids are full of laughter and smiles. Life is not rosey but sparkles in their eyes will tell you different. Kids are full of love and spirit. They are taught to respect their families and communities and respect their elders. It is a place where Swahili is the tongue of the streets. It is a place where the food is hearty and simple. It is a place where people greet one another by saying “Cristu.” In response they will say “ituminiletu” which means Christ is our hope. They always say “Asante”- thank you to show how grateful they are.

The first La Salette mission in Tanzania was established on July 16, 2016, with the arrival of the first 3 missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette, Fr. Manuel dela Cruz, MS, Fr. Dileesh Porianvelil, MS and Fr. Aldrin H. Cenizal, MS. They were accompanied by the Superior General Fr. Silvano Marisa, MS, Vicar General Fr. Adilson Schio, MS and Fr. Rosanno Soriano, MS, Superior of the Philippine Province. The Our Lady of La Salette Parish- Rutete (parish-designate) is in Bukoba Catholic Diocese in the Kagera Region of Tanzania. The parish center is situated in the village of Rutete, Bukoba Rural with two outer



stations (Kahyoro and Rwizi). The parish is composed of less than 1000 Catholic families or around 5000 Catholics from 15 villages. The area is predominantly Catholic with other Christian denominations and Islamics composing the other members of the community. The population is mainly dependent on agriculture and livestock farming as a source of income. They grow bananas, coffee, root crops, ground nuts, beans, and vegetables to sell. At the parish they raise pigs, chickens, rabbits, ducks, goats and cows almost all of which were donated by the parishioners. For the first year the parishioners fetched water from far away to supply water for the missionaries until they were able to make a bore well on the property. The missionaries felt so humbled and connected to them by this service and ever so grateful.

On Holy Thursday I was invited to accompany Fr. Dileesh for the service in Rwizi mission chapel which consists of two villages. There was no more room in the small chapel made out of mud walls that seemed to be on the brink of collapsing. They sit on a mud floor with hay spread on it. They always choose 12 men for the washing of the feet. Their collection was about \$10. After communion I was introduced and welcomed to the community. People representing each community and village, stood up to offer gifts for me, their guest. There were sugarcanes, bottles of honey, peanuts and eggs. Included in the many gifts was a live chicken. I was more than touched by their warm hospitality and generous giving from what they have. Not a single person missed saying “karibu” which means “welcome”. On Good Friday I was invited to join at the main mission which consists of 10 villages. After the Stations of the Cross around the Church, the passion readings were fully sung. By the time the veneration of the cross began there were at least 500 people in the church. Children gathered around the sanctuary for the entire service. During the veneration of the cross people lined up to genuflect three times before they kissed the cross.



On Holy Saturday we visited a few sick people in their homes. It took us through rough roads with rocks and mud holes and sometimes thick grass to the point of not recognizing where the road was leading us. Upon arrival in a home they will bring out a mat to lay on the floor in the living room where they receive you. You are out of luck if you are looking for chairs to sit on. Our missionaries do this on a regular basis as they drive to each village and spend the whole day visiting sometimes as many as 15 to 20 sick people. There are times they have to leave the vehicle or the motor cycle on the road and walk miles and miles to their homes due to bad road conditions. The difference is that they do this with great joy with no hesitation to smell like the sheep in doing so. For the Holy Vigil, I joined Fr. Aldrin at their second mission in Kahyoro, which consists of three villages. The church was overflowing with people who walked miles in the evening to come to the top of the hill where the church is located. I was amazed at the active participation. Easter Sunday Mass was 3 hours. The choir and hundreds of people joined the priests just outside the sacristy in a procession with singing and dancing, clapping hands and howling. On Easter Monday they had a full church with standing room only. The deacon Revocatus Mwemezi is assigned to our parish for his deaconate ministry and preached a homily that lasted for at least 20 minutes. It was never boring for the people as he engaged them throughout the homily and used this moment to teach and catechize them.

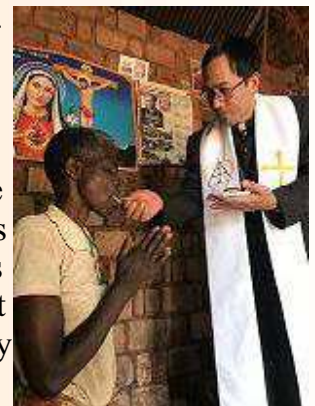
Fr. Manuel Dela Cruz, MS, born June 10, 1957, 16th of 17 children, professed vows 1 May 1986, ordained April 21, 1990. He served in parishes in the Philippines and Hawaii, as formator for novices and postulants and also as a provincial superior. He writes, "I volunteered to go to Tanzania because I wanted to experience the privilege Jesus described when he said: 'Whatever you did to the least of my brethren, you did it for me. Life in the missions is not easy. There is a new culture and language, inadequate basic needs, poor facilities, and dusty roads. But the people are exceptionally loving and friendly. I know that we can make a difference in the lives of our least fortunate brothers and sisters in Africa. I thanked God for the many supporters who continue to pray and assist us in ministering to the people of God in Tanzania.'" Fr. Manny serves as superior and pastor.



Fr. Dileesh Porianvelil, MS was born on November 7, 1983. He says, "The desire to become a priest and a missionary was in my mind from my childhood onwards and I started first step by joining the La Salette seminary in Mysore, India. The inspiration to become a missionary came from some of the biblical movies, the stories of early Christians and saints." After his Theological studies in St. Francis College in Andhra he was ordained to the priesthood on January 15, 2013. After serving in India for three years, the decision was made by the Superior General and his council in Rome to start a new mission in Tanzania, Fr. Dileesh without any hesitation decided to join Frs. Manny and Aldrin from the Philippines and they arrived together in Rutete, in the Catholic diocese of Bukoba, Tanzania on July 16, 2016. Rev. Dileesh serves as treasurer.



Fr. Aldrin wrote: I am Fr. Aldrin Hernandez Cenizal, MS, the first born of the three sons of Apolonio and Erlinda Cenizal. My two brothers, Denev and Denald, are married. We are a family of rice farmers in Amaya, Tanza, Cavite, Philippines. I was born on February 20, 1980. In June 2008, at the age of 28, I joined the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette- Philippine Province as aspirant after finishing a college degree and working for 7 years in a publishing company. I was ordained as priest on April 29, 2016. Less than 3 months after my ordination, I was sent to Tanzania as my first assignment to start the new La Salette community together with Frs. Manny and Dileesh.



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