

HOLY CROSS MISSION CENTER NEWSLETTER

E-mail: hcmc@nd.edu

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HOLY CROSS NEWS FROM ASIA, AFRICA, LATIN AMERICA, HAITI, MEXICO

1. **KENYA: Relief and Reconciliation Efforts Define Ministry at Holy Cross Parish**
For more than four months following the Kenyan elections held on December 27, the Holy Cross religious ministering in Dandora, a multi-ethnic housing area for more than 250,000 mostly poor people on the outskirts of Nairobi, sought to offer compassion and promote peace in the midst of politically-inspired ethnic violence. In an Easter message, *Fr. Simon Mwangi*, associate pastor in Dandora, wrote of witnessing his own Christians taking up crude weapons against each other, of helplessly watching as unruly youth burned two cars in front of the Holy Cross residence, and of finding the body of a man hacked to death nearby. Neighbors' houses were burned and people locked themselves in their homes or ran away in fear. When the post-election violence subsided, the outlawed Mungiki sect, which had long held mafia-like control on transportation in and out of Dandora, instigated a new wave of shooting, teargas and fires in a battle with police, with three people killed just near the Holy Cross residence. During all this time Holy Cross Parish became the main relief center for the hungry, sick, jobless and fearful people. With the help of many benefactors, including a large number of Holy Cross parishes, schools and individuals, and battling their own fears, the pastor *Fr. Andrew Massawe* and staff organized the regular distribution of food (4-5 tons of corn flour weekly) to thousands of displaced people. With that same help and with the teachers cooperating by accepting half-salary, he was also able to keep the parish school open, accepting all children regardless of their ability to pay. Andrew reports that

four parish children were killed in the riots and 20% of the parishioners have been displaced to unknown locations. Of the 101 school children whose families fled the area, only 10 had returned to Dandora by the end of April. With relative calm and “guarded hope” returning to the parish, the pastoral task has turned to reconciliation. Fr. Mwangi has written that his religious calling has enabled him to “foster dialogue with people despite many obstacles” and to speak painful truth regarding the need for forgiveness. “I hope the Kenyan community has learned a lot,” he says, “One cannot live without a neighbor.” Among the 1500 killed in the January-February violence were a niece of **Sr. Jacinta Mueni Munyao** and a cousin of **Sr. Beatrice Wangatia**, both Sisters of the Holy Cross. Among the 300,000 in camps for the displaced was Fr. Mwangi’s aunt.

2. ASIA: New Holy Cross Schools in India and Bangladesh

Four new schools sponsored by Holy Cross have opened in Asia in recent months and a fifth is on the way. On January 14 Holy Cross School in Aizawl, the capital of the Lushai Hills (State of Mizoram) in northeast India was inaugurated by Dr. Lalzama, Mizoram Minister for Higher and Technical Education and blessed by **Most Rev. Stephen Rotluanga, CSC**, bishop of Aizawl Diocese. The school is run by the Brothers of the Holy Cross Vicariate of India and their superior, **Br. John Britto**, opened the brothers’ residence there and gave thanks for all who have made this expansion of the brothers’ ministry possible. Holy Cross brothers and priests also serve in two other schools and two parishes in this diocese. On January 19 Holy Cross opened Notre Dame Junior School in St. Joseph Parish Srimangal, Bangladesh, with **Fr. Bakul Rozario**, Vice Principal of Notre Dame College in Dhaka as chief guest at the inaugural ceremony. The new school will serve the tribal people who live in the tea gardens and villages of the parish. The parish pastoral plan calls for an emphasis on quality education along with formation in faith and human values at the school. At present there are 40 students in classes 4-6. **Fr. Michael Sarkar** is acting headmaster and **Sr. Joanna Gomes** teaches at the school. At Kumarghat, one of the oldest missions in Tripura, northeast India, Holy Cross English Medium School opened its doors on February 4. The school has begun in a humble way with just 36 students in kindergarten and class1, but rapid growth is expected. In June, the new Notre Dame of Holy Cross School under the direction of the Brothers’ Vicariate began with classes Kindergarten through Standard IV on the property of Moreau House, Gundukalloor in the Diocese of Salem, Tamil Nadu, South India. Finally, at the request of the bishop of Dindigul Diocese in Tamil Nadu, South India, Holy Cross plans to start an English medium school at its parish of Ariyanellure in the next academic year. The foundation stone for the school was laid and blessed on February 20. **Fr. Justin Diraviam** is in charge of the construction and starting of the school.

3. LATIN AMERICA: Leadership Council Lays Foundation for Collaboration

A recent decision for an exchange of personnel between the Districts of Peru and Chile is one concrete result of foundations laid at the meeting of the Latin American Leadership Council held in Port-au-Prince, Haiti last November. **Fr. Gerry Papen** of the District of Chile will go to Tacna, Peru to work with the Holy Cross team at Mary, Mother of the Poor Parish, and **Fr. Alfredo Hernandez** of the District of Peru will go to Santiago, Chile to assist in the pastoral programs of the Holy Cross-run Andacollo School. All the superiors of the Latin American and Caribbean region – **Fr. Laudeni Barbosa** and **Br. Sergio Stolf** (Brazil), and **Frs. Mike DeLaney** (Chile), **Roberto Baker** (Peru) and **Rodolphe Arty** (Haiti) – have agreed on actions to strengthen relationships and communication across their districts/province. They hope these efforts will lead to increased collaboration and interdependency for the sake of the mission. The actions include:

(1) A common directory of CSCs in Latin America and Caribbean; (2) A sharing of all calendars with important dates and celebrations and all significant pastoral letters written by the superiors to their religious; (3) Communication with one another as a Leadership Council four times a year through the internet in addition to an annual meeting; (4) A meeting for the directors of formation in Chile, Peru, Brazil and Haiti, along with the directors of novices in Peru (joint novitiate), Brazil and Haiti; and (5) A period of pastoral immersion in another district/province of the region by all in initial formation. The superiors' also discussed the final document of the Latin American Bishops' Conference meeting held in Aparecida, Brazil and explored how they might deepen in their areas both the commitment to be missionary disciples emphasized in that document and the missionary zeal of Moreau in this time of renewal and thanksgiving for his beatification.

4. EAST AFRICA: Uganda Martyrs University Receives Holy Cross Support

A 2006 District of East Africa chapter decision listed Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) in Nkozi, Uganda as one of the priorities when considering mission expansion. Recognizing the “potential that this endeavor provides to the District in terms of future impact on the growth of Church, government and society” in Uganda, the chapter encouraged pursuit of a Holy Cross commitment there. Two experienced educators from the Indiana Province – *Frs. David Burrell* and *Claude Pomerleau* – have now been assigned to the District in support of this priority, a response to requests received for a Holy Cross presence and service at UMU. Burrell has been appointed as professor in the Institute of Ethics and Development Studies at the university and Pomerleau will join the faculty there in August. While pleased with this development and supportive of it, *Fr. James Burasa*, District Superior, has recently written a paper to place this initiative in the context of the other higher education commitments of the district – at Queen of Apostles Philosophical Centre for Religious in Jinja, Uganda (PCJ) and at Tangaza College in Nairobi, Kenya. Holy Cross is a founding congregation of both of these institutions and the candidates and professed religious in formation for Holy Cross are educated in them. Tangaza in particular has been without a Holy Cross contribution to faculty since the tragic death of *Fr. Jim Karaffa* in 2002. The need to prepare district members for teaching and administrative service at these two schools along with the hope to provide on-going faculty support to UMU will be a major agenda item in the January 2009 district chapter. In a development separate from this new Holy Cross commitment at UMU, the University of Notre Dame (Indiana USA) and UMU have signed a Memorandum of Understanding outlining hopes for future collaboration as well.

5. NORTH EAST INDIA: New Initiative of Evangelization through the Media

Fr. John Pau Khaw Chin has been appointed the first Director of Holy Cross Media Ministry in North East India and will be headquartered at the Association for Social and Human Advancement (ASHA) in Agartala. Fr. John has just graduated from the Asian Academy of Film and Television with diplomas in film production, direction, TV journalism, video editing and sound recording. He has also completed a certificate course in Social Change through Visual Media in Delhi. The goals of this new initiative include using the media to make Christ known and inculcate Gospel values in society, to re-evangelize and strengthen the faith among the Christians of northeast India, to establish peaceful and loving families through the promotion of family prayer, to prepare youth to face the challenges of the media world, and to promote and develop the rich cultural heritage present in the region. This new province ministry takes inspiration from that of *Fr. Steve Gibson* in the USA who has pioneered media work within the congregation. Fr. Steve directed the annual retreat of the Province of North East India in January and while there visited most of the Holy

Cross works in India, recording video material for congregational use and assisting to edit some productions in the local languages there.

6. NEWS BRIEFS: Uganda, Philippines, Bangladesh, Canada

***Uganda:** On March 15 Holy Cross Lake View Secondary School in Bugembe, Jinja, celebrated its fifteen birthday. Though young, the school has gained a solid reputation for excellence in the education of both mind and heart. Bishop Joseph Willigers of Jinja presided at the Eucharist of Thanksgiving; **Fr. James Burasa** and **Br. Alan Harrod** offered reflections on students who have grown in wonderful ways; **Br. John Flood** is the present headmaster.

***Philippines:** On July 1 **Fr. Roque D'Costa** of the Province of South India began ministry as Director of the new Holy Cross foundation in Manila and as chaplain to the Family Rosary Ministry in that country. Funding for the purchase of a Holy Cross house in Manila is being provided by Holy Cross Family Ministry, and the provinces in Bangladesh and India and the Vicariate of India have worked with HCFM in planning for this new venture. The house will provide office space for Family Rosary in Manila and residence for CSC priests and brothers who come to Manila for study and pastoral renewal programs. Fr. D'Costa has most recently served as rector of the major seminary in Pune, India, and as Formation Coordinator there.

***Bangladesh:** The cause for the canonization of **Br. Flavian Laplante, CSC** has been officially introduced through the Diocese of Chittagong and the Holy Cross Bishop there, **Patrick D'Rozario**. Br. Flavian, born in 1907 at *St. Louis de Bonsecours* in the valley of Yamaska, Canada, pronounced first vows in 1924 and finals in 1928. From 1932 to his death in 1981 Br. Flavian served in Bengal, first in schools, then among the downtrodden Hindu fishermen of the Bay of Bengal and their families, and finally, from 1976, as the "hermit of Diang" in the ashram he founded and which continues today in his spirit.

***Canada:** **Fr. Pierre Labine** of the Canadian Province has for years been organizing free eye care clinics among the less fortunate in many parts of the world through *Voluntarios de Santa Cruz*, a non-profit organization of optical professionals and volunteers working in cooperation with Holy Cross. Fr. Labine puts together teams of optometrists, optometrists-in-training and other volunteers and links them with host organizations that make arrangements for the clinics in areas of need. He also solicits glasses and eye care supplies for use on these missions. More than 4,200 persons took advantage of services offered at a mission to La Barca in Mexico last November; during 6 ½ days in May at Tiznit, Morocco over 5,020 patients, mostly children and teenagers from schools, were assisted; this July another volunteer group is in Ecuador.

7. CELEBRATING SERVICE, CALL AND COMMITMENT

***Fr. Laurent Lecavalier** of the Canadian Province died in Montreal on January 11 at the age of 83. From 1952 until he was elected to the General Council in 1974, Fr. Lecavalier served in what is today Bangladesh – in parishes, as novice director, and for 13 years as superior of the District of Chittagong. After six years in Rome, he asked to return to Bangladesh, certain that it was easier to find someone to be a member of the General Council than to find a missionary for Bangladesh! He ministered at the cathedral in Chittagong until 1983 when he returned to Canada. In 1996 the Archbishop of Montreal named him chaplain to the Bangladeshi community in Montreal.

***Rev. Bertram (Alexander Gomes) Nelson** of the Sacred Heart of Jesus Province, died on May 3 in Chittagong, Bangladesh, just short of his 74th birthday. Father Nelson had suffered a debilitating stroke some years ago and had been living in residence at the Cathedral Parish in Chittagong. Fr. Nelson joined Holy Cross in East Bengal, India in

1953, did theological studies in Rome and was ordained in 1963. He served in various parishes in the Diocese of Chittagong, most notably among the tribal people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. He is remembered for his pastoral commitment, and for the patient, persevering and cheerful spirit with which he bore the limitations and suffering due to the stroke.

*On June 3 **Br. Brian (Joseph) Lyon** of the Midwest (USA) Province died at the age of 90. For 43 years, from 1945 to 1988, Br. Brian served as a missionary educator in India and East Pakistan/Bangladesh. Known by many as “that kind and gentle man,” he taught in high schools in Dhaka, served as Headmaster of schools in Toomiliah, Haluaghat, Nagari, Biroidakuni, and Bandura, and was director of the brothers’ juniorate formation program in Nagari. At Br. Brian’s funeral, his provincial **Br. Robert Fillmore** spoke of the lasting impact of mission on his life: “He could talk about dying with no apparent anxiety and with a faith-filled resignation. I am confident the people of Bangladesh and India had a profound influence on how Brian accepted and lived his life.”

*On January 6 **Br. Cesar Ramos de Sousa** of the District of Brazil (Southwest Province) made perpetual profession of vows at Holy Cross Novitiate, Santarem.

***Br. Alfred Lalbiakthanga** of the Vicariate of India pronounced his perpetual vows on January 15 in his home parish of Sihpar, in the State of Mizoram, Northeast India. **Bishop Stephen Rotluanga** presided at the profession Eucharist. It is reported that 2 bulls, 6 pigs, many chicks and 4 goats were the “martyrs of the day!”

*Five Holy Cross Brothers made first profession on February 2nd at the novitiate in Sagardi, Barisal, Bangladesh. They are **Brs. Francis Sweeden Purification** and **Joy Xavier Pereira** from Nagari Parish, **Brs. Sonet Francis Rozario** and **Bhubon Benjamin Costa** from Tumilia Parish, and **Br. Protim Xavier Palma** from Mausaid Parish. **Br. Stephen Binoy Gomes**, provincial of the St. Joseph Province, received their vows.

***Shitol H. Rozario** was ordained to the diaconate on February 8 at Holy Spirit Chapel, Banani, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The new deacon was one of 17 seminarians from different dioceses and religious congregations ordained that day by Bishop Gervase Rozario. The new Holy Cross deacon is from Mathbari Parish.

***Arockia Sunil J., Dominic George M., Askok Vino L.** and **Biju Lawrence Moolakkara** of the Province of South India and **Bobby John Thelliyankal** and **Sijomon Joseph Pyanpillil** of the North East India Province were ordained Deacons by Rt. Rev. Valarian D’Souza, Bishop of Pune on February 9.

*On February 23 **Jose Carlos da Silva** of the *District du Bresil* (CP) made his final profession and on March 9 he was ordained a deacon. The new deacon is very active in vocation promotion for the district.

*Novices **Bikash Bernard Costa, Sattya Richard Purification,** and **Ringku Hubert Costa** of St. Joseph Province and **Paskal Babu Sarkar** of Sacred Heart of Jesus Province made first profession on May 9 at Sagardi, Barisal, Bangladesh. **Fr. Edmond Cruze** was the main celebrant of the Mass of Profession and received the vows of the seminarian; **Br. Stephen Binoy Gomes**, provincial of St. Joseph Province, gave the homily and received the vows of the brothers.

*On July 12 seven novices at Holy Cross Novitiate, Saaka, Fort Portal, Uganda and six at Blessed Brother Andre Novitiate in Adisadel, Cape Coast, Ghana made their first profession of vows. The newly professed in Ghana are: **Brs. Pius Maison, George Depaaya** and **Aristide Biney** of the District of West Africa; and **Br. Christopher Nganzi** and seminarians **Alex Okidi** and **Gerald Joseph Muwonge** of East Africa. Professed in East Africa are **Br. Joseph Mutabingwa** and

seminarians *Francis Mukasa, Rogers Kakeeto, John Mwesige, Noah Wasswa, Patrick Mugabo* and *Peter Walukagga*.

**Brs. Gianaldo Rodrigues* and *Ronaldo Almeida*, members of the District of Brazil, made their final profession of vows in Holy Cross on July 13, the opening day of the District's chapter.

CURRENT ISSUES OF CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN AREAS OF HOLY CROSS INTERNATIONAL MISSION

A. KENYA: Church Apology: "We Failed the Love Test"

The Catholic Church in Kenya has admitted that the post-election crisis in which over 1500 people were killed and 300,000 displaced from their homes would have turned out differently had its 8-million strong adherents heeded Jesus' law of love. In his homily at a special Mass held at Holy Family Basilica Nairobi to pray for forgiveness and ask God's favor upon the coalition government that has finally begun to function, Bishop Philip Sulumeti, vice chairman of the Kenya Episcopal Conference (KEC), spoke strongly: "Do not point (an accusing finger) at politics; point at yourself! ... We did not listen to the voice of the shepherd ... We sinned by failing to love one another." Protestant and evangelical leaders have also acknowledged failure of their churches, pointing out that the voice of their pastors was "swallowed up by the cacophony of other vested interests." In an op-ed piece circulated by CISA (Catholic Information Service for Africa), Henry Makori, a respected Catholic journalist in Kenya, wrote that "For Christians, the nation's majority, this is a most appropriate time for soul-searching ... Houses of prayer fill up every Sunday (or Saturday). Yet ... Christians turned on their neighbours with demonic barbarity. They killed, maimed, looted, raped, torched and evicted. They fuelled hate through telephone and email messages, called others names, laughed at their ethnicity ..." Makori emphasized the need for a more transformative evangelization and greater church involvement in civic education. He also expressed the fear that Kenyans will now opt for superficial calm and order, lacking the courage to confront historical injustices at the root of the political crisis, injustices like unjust land distribution and the exclusion of entire parts of Kenya from national development. In May, the KEC announced a six-month program to promote sustainable peace and justice countrywide. Included in the program are the establishment of peace and justice centers in areas most hit by the chaos and an education effort directed at parishes and youth on politics and civic education.

B. HAITI, AFRICA, ASIA: Hunger Increases for Many

The World Food Program calls it a "silent tsunami." Experts generally agree that an extra 100 million people who previously did not require help can now not afford to buy minimum quantities of food for themselves and their families. World Bank President Robert Zoellick has said the surging costs could mean "seven lost years" in the fight against worldwide poverty. "While many are worrying about filling their gas tanks, many others around the world are struggling to fill their stomachs, and it is getting more and more difficult every day," Zoellick said. Soaring prices have also threatened anti-poverty and health improvement initiatives in the world's poorest nations. Food riots destabilized Haiti in April; hunger has increased in Bangladesh due to an almost 50% rise in the price of rice; and in July UN relief agencies warned that 14 million people in the horn of Africa, including Kenya, are in urgent need of food aid.