



Laudate



Message from the Minister General

'My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless, and prepare you for the Day of Christ, when you will reach the perfect goodness which Christ Jesus produces in us for the glory and praise of God.' Phil (1:9-11)

We are at that time of year again when the focus shifts to the humanity of Jesus, when God chooses to demonstrate His love, mercy and compassion for us humans by becoming a vulnerable little baby to show how much we and all creation are valued by an all caring, loving Creator. The inspiration and leadership of Pope Francis is challenging us to be men and women of integrity by being true to our charism of *'living the Gospel way of life'*. His emphasis is on joy, because there's a tendency in our contemporary world to feel tired, sad and depressed. Family life and Community life, work, studies are perceived to be a burden. The media focus on everything that is not working and creates a greater sense of hopelessness and dependency. The world is looking for satisfaction in shopping, fancy goods, sport, drink, casual relationships and accumulating wealth.

As people of faith we have one true reason to be joyful: Jesus was born, he died but rose again and He is alive, He continues to live in and through us and He is our hope. Our response to the call of God in our lives demands conversion and the first requirement for conversion is prayer – listening to God in order to sense the pulse of the Holy Spirit. The second is going out to the poor, to the peripheries of which Pope Francis speaks. It is going to the peripheries to make the so called poor become the centre and to learn from the marginalised the real values of the Gospel – joy, peace, forgiveness, truth, justice and love.

The mission of the Franciscan Brothers is *to empower the marginalised in their struggles to liberate themselves and to care for the earth*. As we come close to celebrating the Bicentennial of our foundation in Ireland in 1820 we recognise the rich patrimony that supports us in our ministries. We continue to work in Ireland, through the example of our own lives and in a spirit of partnership with institutions we formerly managed and with the local church. In California we are directly involved in education, diocesan administration and in charitable works. In East Africa, the Region where the future of our Institute lies, our ministries focus on the marginalised. From September 2018 the Bishop of Nakuru has licenced Baraka Agriculture College and its assets to the Franciscan Brothers in

perpetuity. This means that the Brothers will have full governance and management control of Baraka for as long as they continue to work in the Diocese of Nakuru.

In East Africa the Brothers now have two Agriculture Colleges – Baraka in Kenya and Adraa in Uganda - that focus on promoting sustainable livelihoods for small scale farmers and rural youth in one of the most underdeveloped regions of planet earth. They do this through capacity and capability building people by educating, training and by providing extension programmes that are based on sustainable agriculture - the concept and the strategy. In addition the Brothers, Co-workers and Volunteers facilitate high quality

affordable secondary school education through St. Francis Secondary School in Lare, Kenya.

Other Brothers work in government and non-government secondary and primary schools. Formation of new members and the on-going formation of professed members, co-workers and local people is a priority.

Volunteers in East Africa, such as Sarah Oates, Brigid Ryan and Tim Fallon play critical roles in promoting the mission of the Brothers. Sarah, after five years working in Adraa, has taken on the responsibility of Franciscan Brothers Miseen Cara Mission Development Officer (MDO).

She plays a critical role in capacity and capability building our Brothers and Co-workers in addition to handling all aspects of communication with Miseen Cara, our most important funding and learning Partner in East Africa.

Brigid Ryan spends blocks of seven weeks a few times per year in Adraa. During these sessions her focus is on developing curricula and delivering the training to groups of 24 students by way of six week courses for persons interested in using the local hospitality sector – cafes, hoteli, value addition to local products – to contribute to each making a decent living in their own community. She also plays the very important role of empowering local staff to take over the work she is doing.

Tim Fallon, from Tuam, Co. Galway is an accountant with over twenty years' experience working in a multi-national company in Dublin. Tim, through Viatores Christi, has volunteered for one year and he will be based in Baraka. He will work with our accountant, James Mwaniki Njugi, in developing policies and systems for efficient financial and asset management and train accountants and bursars in all our ministries and communities. The aim is to have systems and processes in place that are workable, efficient, transparent and accountable.

We are very grateful to Sarah, Brigid and Tim and to the local people who volunteer their time, energy and skills and for their wonderful contribution in promoting the values and





Adraa Agricultural College Students in the field

mission of the Franciscan Brothers. We are still reaping the benefits of the work done (including the introduction of handball to West Nile!) by Martin Mulkerrins and Eilish Ownes during their short stay with us at the end of 2017.

Sympathy and Empathy: *'Death is only part of the process of living. If the Communion of Saints has become real for us, then every funeral is a celebration of eternal life. Death is not an occasion only for sorrow, but an occasion of rejoicing that our friends or relatives have moved to a deeper level of union and that we will be with them again.'*

I pray that the above sentiments of Cistercian Monk, Thomas Keating (1923-2018), will console and comfort those who lost loved in this transition to a deeper union with God in the course of 2018. We remember in a special way Br. Kevin Bourke who died on March 2nd; also the family members of our Brothers: Paulinus Horkan, Boniface Kyalo, Duncan Maina and Gerald Kamau as well Kiltegan priests, Frs. Derry Buckley Stan Connolly and Pat O'Brien. As we remember them, we keep in mind the family members or friends of our readers whose death we may not have learned of. We also pray for the families, friends and colleagues of all our deceased.

We were also privileged and happy to host the parish priest of Kilcloon, Co. Meath, Fr. Stan Deegan, for a week in September. Fr. Stan spent three days in Kenya and the remainder of his stay in Uganda and he was a wonderful person to have for the short visit.

In October we had Mickey Griffith and his wife Melissa for two weeks. Mickey is a past student of Mountbellew, who together with Alan and Tony, celebrated the golden jubilee of their Mountbellew 1968/69 course in July. He is a former employee of Teagasc, based in Athlery. Melissa is a former farm home adviser and teacher and her skills and experience were of great benefit to the staff and students of Baraka and Adraa.

Many thanks/Asante sana/Awadifo/Mile buiochas:

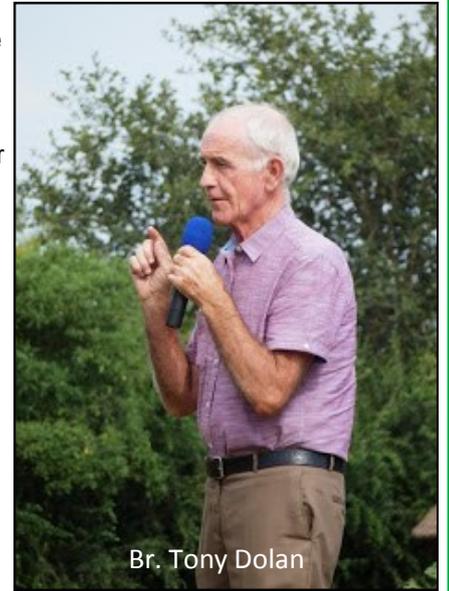
We are most grateful to all who support our mission in East Africa and elsewhere. Our Brothers in Ireland and California; agencies such as Mísean Cara and Irish Aid; Misereor, Caritas Austria, Sign of Hope/BMZ, Manos Unidas, Brighter Communities Worldwide, New York Cavan Association, Gorta/SHA, Trocaire, Mountbellew PPU, Combined Services, Electric Aid, Br. Denis Lawlor's Family, Viatores Christi, Columban Missionary Society (Dalgan Park, Navan), Kilmore Apostolic Works, families, friends in Loughrea, Mountbellew/Moylough, Ballyjamesduff, Clara, Clifden, Currandulla, Greystones, Banagher, Dublin, Aghnasheelin, Ballinamore, Barna, Kilcloon, Drogheda, Terminfeckin, Kenya, Uganda, California and Britain. We are also grateful for the support we get from the dioceses of Meath, Tuam, Los Angeles, Nebbi, Nakuru and from many religious institutes. We also wish to acknowledge the wonderful support of countless individuals who contribute so generously to the support of our mission.

A special word to thanks to the New York Cavan Association and to the many others of that great city and country for their wonderful support of the mission of the Franciscan Brothers over the past fifty years. Through Clement Brady and before him Laurence Grimes and others the people of New York and from other parts of the USA have

been most generous in supporting the work of the Brothers – in Ireland in earlier times and more recently in East Africa. We remember them in our prayers and ask our all loving, caring Creator reward them with peace and joy in their lives and for those that have died eternal happiness in our heavenly home.

Also words of thanks to Brian Johnson, who most week-ends, promotes the work of missionaries in general and the Franciscan Brothers in particular in different parishes throughout Ireland. In

2018 Brian is working in the western part of Dublin Diocese. The response of the people of Dublin to Brian proves that it is not only rural people who are concerned with creating a fairer world. The people of Dublin have also been extraordinarily generous in supporting the charitable works of the Brothers in East Africa.



Br. Tony Dolan



We also acknowledge Alphonsus Gavigan, Vincent Flynn, Brigid Ryan and her family and friends and others for their work and commitment in preparing Containers to transport goods for the support of the Brothers' mission in Uganda. It is unfortunate that the Containers have not yet left Mountbellew. This is due to the delay in getting the designated agents of the Uganda Government to clear the goods prior to departure. These agents are based in England and France and despite Vincent Flynn's best efforts it has been problematic getting them to come to Mountbellew to clear the containers for shipping. We realise this is very frustrating, especially for Alphonsus, who put so much energy, skills and creativity into to preparing the goods. Please God this will be all put right in early 2019.

Many thanks to Sean Conway and secretary Colette Kelly for their tireless work on behalf of all of us. We also thank our Brothers in Ireland, and in a special way our Mountbellew Community, for their brotherly love, concern and hospitality.

Christmas wish:

To use the words of St. Paul from his letter to the Philippians quoted above, my prayer for each of you this Christmas *'is that your love for each other may increase more and more and that you never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best.'*

Br. Tony Dolan
Minister General

Holy Hill – Gerald Smith

Truly I have set my soul in silence and peace Psalm 131

When I told one of my nieces that I was going to spend the month of April this year in a hermitage called Holy Hill, Sligo as part of my mini sabbatical she exclaimed in disbelief “Holy Hell! What do you want to do that for?” It was a good oxymoronic question to which I had no direct answer. All I knew was that I needed to get away and leave the smart phone, the laptop, the radio and the newspaper behind and enter into complete silence and solitude. Another person said that I would not last it! I did and it was one of the best things I have ever done. It was an excellent way to practice presence. I brought a few books with me: Henri Nouwen’s *Sabbatical Journey: A Dairy of His Final Year*; *God in All Things* by Gerard W. Hughes and *Finding God in All things* By Brian Grogan SJ.

April is the month of spring which was bursting into bloom and the countryside was awakening with new life. I too hoped for a new awakening or some kind insight..

Holy Hill is nestled beneath the Ox Mountains. It offers a quiet and beautiful setting where one can enjoy a retreat of silence, solitude and beauty.

While on retreat there, I had the freedom to plan my day around my own needs. I had the opportunity to choose to use the library, which is well stocked with books, recorded talks, and lectures. I spent a good deal of the month there.

I went for walks in the surrounding countryside. There are some beautiful walks through the Ox Mountains. It was on one such walk that I heard the cuckoo for the first time in many years. I stood for a long while to listen to its warbling as it flitted through the mountain forest. “The cuckoo comes in April, she sings her song in May and in June she changes her tune and in July flies away” back to tropical Africa! To be followed later by her fledglings.

I also took many walks on the sea shore at Dunmorán strand which is 3 miles away. As one Trip Adviser blogger put it: “No amenities. No hucksters. No ice cream. Simply the best damn beach in Ireland.”

Simple food was provided which I prepared myself. It was simple fare which was suitable for one trying to lose weight. I along with the other retreatants were invited to join the Carmelite community on Sundays to share a meal and conversation. This gives one an opportunity to meet the wide variety of people who visit Holy Hill. Retreatants had the opportunity, if they so wished, to join the community for communal prayer.

During all my walks, my reading and my simple cooking I



Holy Hill Hermitage



tried to practice presence. The month at Holy Hill gave me the time and place that seemed to make it easier to be aware of God’s presence. God in all things: the call of the cuckoo, the blackbird building her nest in the hedge over the Ardnaglass river that gurgled its way past my hermitage.

As I get older I am convinced that mindful awareness is a deeper kind of prayer than all the words I can come up with to say to God—who knows what is in my heart far better than I do anyway. This is not to say that we do not need the discipline of more formal prayer.

The Spiritual master, Francois Fenelon, a French bishop in the late 18th century put it well: “keep your prayers simple; make them heart-prayers. Pray what you feel, what you love, not what you think, not just what you have reasoned out....All your well crafted plans will probably be spoiled. Give lots of space to quiet and soul deep thinking and journeying. You will need to come into a deep silence with your entire self-body mind and spirit-silent, quiet, and restful before God. You will need to say no to the internal self-inflated voices. Fall in love with humility and being obscure, unnoticed. Be ok with being feeble and broken. Be ok with death that will come to your self-constructed spirituality. It does not seem right, but as you begin to come to terms with all the questions you DON’T have answers for, truth will find a way to you.” (*Let God: The transforming Wisdom of Francois Fenelon*. Winn Collier, Paraclete Press, Brewster MA, 2007. P.68-69)

And now at the turn of the year as I walk the leafy walks of Karen, Nairobi I hear the voice of God in the birdsong and the gentle breeze that rustles in the bottle brush trees. I see His Face in everyone I meet!

Bits and Pieces — Brian Johnson

Greetings of peace and love to all. Wishing each one of you the Joys and Blessings of Christmas and health and prosperity in the year to come.

My greetings come from the cottage, An Bealach, where I have been living for the past ten years. It is a beautiful and quiet place surrounded by ditches and apple trees and lots of wild life. What a wonderful opportunity and blessing I have been given by the Congregation to spend time in prayer, meditation and solitude when I am not engaged in the work of Mission Appeal/Awareness. We are told that a combination of the active and contemplative life is the ideal. It gives me a chance to “Be still and know....”. Prayer and silence is not always about the search for God. Some contemplatives tell us that our first steps into the contemplative life is a search for the truth within. A self examination. We are told that an unexamined life is a wasted life. That we can not know the Christ until we get know ourselves. Cassian, one of the early Fathers of the Church and a great contemplative, calls contemplation the greatest of all prayer as it leads to intimacy with Christ. Even the

religions of the East tell us that the only way to “Enlightenment” is through silence and contemplation. For us Christians, Enlightenment is a gift from God. Christ has told us to “go into the inner room and when you have shut the door, pray to the Father.....”. This is the time of intimacy that Jesus talks about in the Gospels. But of course this prayer must be continuous in some form. Whether we have a Rosary beads or a jembe in our hands, God should be in our heart. It is the admonition of St Paul... “to keep praying to the Spirit on every possible occasion”. And when we can not pray Paul tells us that the “Spirit will pray in us”. All we have to do is try.

This all is the work of a lifetime and it's wonderful to be given the opportunity to put a foot on the bottom rung of the ladder!!

Mission Appeal/Awareness

Mission appeal/awareness is also known as the “Co-ordinated Parish Promotions Programme”. It involves various Catholic groups, religious and lay, visiting parishes and churches throughout the country speaking on mission and the role that all Christians have in trying to secure a better and sustainable life for people in poverty and war-torn areas. People forgotten by most of the world. I always appreciate this opportunity to write a note on my parish visits. It's also a chance for me to thank all of you for your wonderful support. Without your encouragement and prayers the fruits of the journey would be few. Your prayers and support are life-giving.



This year the Franciscan Brothers were assigned some parishes in the Dublin Archdiocese. My journey took me through the inner city and the suburbs. From poor areas to the more affluent ones. Everywhere I was welcomed with “open arms”. Priests and parishioners made me most welcome. The promises of prayer and support is a testimony to the concern people have for the many who live in poverty and abject conditions. It is also a great affirmation to the Brothers that have dedicated their lives to improving the lives of others.

People were eager to hear about the work the Brothers do in Kenya and Uganda. This was especially true since the visit of our Pope Francis to Ireland. During the Pope's visit, on this the Year of the Family, he emphasised the need to tend to families torn apart by famine, poverty and conflict. He noted the great need and importance for family prayer. The need to bring hope to those bereft of hope is an important part of the mission of the Franciscan Brothers. Prayer goes where we can't go and prayer does things we can't do.! Prayer must be an integral part

of our work, if not failure is guaranteed.

St. Francis' School Scholarship Programme

It is with great pride that we can again announce the huge benefits of the Scholarship Programme at St Francis Secondary School, Lare, Kenya. The school is in a poor, remote rural area where families struggle to make ends meet and education is not a priority. For many this is their lifeline out of abject poverty.



This programme was set up several years ago in response to the inability of very poor children from the Lare area to attend Secondary School. At that time all secondary schools were fee paying. Many of the brightest children had to forego an education. It was probably the young girls that suffered most as their chance of ever going to secondary school was slim. Our Scholarship programme has changed all of that. Not only has it changed the lives of the youth of Lare but it has transformed the school itself into an award winning and model Secondary School. A school where girls are given the same opportunity as boys. St. Francis School was named the Number One Rural Day School in Kenya. This can only be achieved by the generosity of you our sponsors and the hard work of students, staff and administration.



The recipients of the scholarships are most appreciative of the chance given to them. They know that if it were not for the generosity of the sponsors their chance of getting a secondary school education would not be possible. Their application and hours of study would be the envy of many schools here in Ireland. The fruits can be seen in the results of the State Exam, the KCSE (Leaving Cert). Over ninety percent of the graduates go on to third level. This could not be possible without our most generous sponsors. Thank you all so very much. You, our wonderful sponsors have taken a generation and lifted them to a place where once they could only dream about.

We must also thank Maura Flannery who looks after and co-ordinates the programme. Maura has visited Kenya and St Francis' School and has seen the need for this wonderful programme. She is continually on the look out for potential sponsors and donors. We are most appreciative of the time

and effort Maura puts into the programme. Finally, a special word of thanks must also go to Jim Ryan of Glenn Wood Factory, Tullamore for outfitting the Wood Workshop in Adraa, Uganda.

Mile buiochas na asante sana.

Lare Dairy Goat Scheme

This was a scheme set up several years ago to improve the local breed of goats and to help families with some sustainable income.

When it started several pedigree dairy goats were bought. These goats were given to families that had been selected and trained in the care of goats. Each family that received a goat had to attend a training course. Unlike the native goats these goats were corralled and not allowed to roam free. This prevented much sickness, disease and poor breeding. A pedigree buck was also purchased to ensure thorough breeding. On the birth a new goat the community decides who is to receive the new arrival. If it is a buck, it is raised and sold with the funds going back into the scheme.

The scheme has been a tremendous success. The committee inspects all pens and oversees all activities. The wonderful thing about this project is that it is self-perpetuating. This project was funded by several of you and you'll be happy to know it still going strong. From an acorn to an oak!! Thank you.

Alternate Initiate Rite for Girls

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as it is commonly called has been in the news here in Ireland and the UK. It is a common practice among many of the tribes in Africa. It is an Initiation into Womanhood for your girls and is practiced where Brothers work and live.



Implements used by some tribes in Kenya

In the early 2000s, the Brothers after much discussion with the local leaders and women of the area decided that some other form of Initiation was needed. The traditional form was barbaric and led to some deaths and many mutilations. Even though there is now a ban on FGM in Kenya it is still widely practiced.

Through your great generosity the Brothers facilitate the programme by providing accommodation, food and "teachers". Last year we had about one hundred and forty young girls participate in the programme. The number increases year by year. Lives are saved and the health of these young girls is safeguarded. We are most grateful to all our donors.

A National Truck Run for the Brothers

What is a truck run you might ask? I also asked the same question last January when John Tierney, the owner of Tierney Inter-

national Logistics came to me after a Mission Awareness/Appeal in a church in Donegal. He suggested that the work of the Franciscan Brothers in Uganda and Kenya be included as one of the charities that would benefit from a Truck Run. The idea was fascinating. After a two minute explanation I was on board. How could I not join the good works of a fellow Offalyman!. John has his main depot, not far from Birr in Co. Offaly. When I asked what I could do he told me he and his daughter Jennifer would do all. It was just for me to show-up and send the convoy on its way with a blessing and a prayer. The day of The Run was May Bank Holiday weekend.

The Barak Obama Plaza off the M7 in Moneygall, Co Offaly was the main assembly point for the Midlands convoy and the terminus for all. The trucks drove into Barak Obama Plaza and were ready to roll by 1pm. Over one hundred trucks of all shapes, sizes and colours lined up to "convoy". Drivers and their families gathered around as we prayed, blessed them and sent them on their way. On route our convoy was joined by a convoy from Tipperary and a convoy from the Galway Plaza at Loughrea. What a sight to behold on the Motorway. Trucks as far as the eye could see. Three hours later two hundred and fifty trucks rolled into Barak Obama Plaza. There were flashing lights, booming horns and music to welcome the truckers home. Refreshments were available for all during which time I got a chance to thank the truckers and their families.



A special word of thanks to John and his daughter, Jennifer for their unselfish and tremendous kindness and generosity. They both saw it as a labour of love to assist in the work that the Brothers do among the forgotten poor of East Africa. We ask the Lord to bless and reward John and Jennifer. Asantini sana

(franciscanbrian@yahoo.com)

A Trucker's Prayer

Br. Brian Johnson

Lord, bless my rig as I drive
along
In hail 'n storm and shine.
May I greet my fellow drivers
Always, with a smile.

Bless my hands, my heart, my
eyes, my feet
Bless all the drivers that I meet.
May my rig that's big and strong
Never come to any wrong.

May all my journeys begin and
end
With You beside me as my
Friend.

Lord, guide me on the Motor Ways
And on the country roads.
Keep me working all the time,
When empty, give me loads.

Bless my family while I'm away
Keep them safe and well.
Protect them from all hurt and harm
In You, I trust they'll dwell.

When my trucking days are over
And your "horn blast" calls me
home,
You'll make my rig and engine shine
On the highway to your throne.

News From Clifden James Mungovan/Vivian Cotter

The opening of the new Community School in Clifden in September marked the end of a long campaign, launched in 1995 by the then Principal, Br. James Mungovan. James put much time and effort into negotiations with politicians and government department officials, meeting many obstacles along the way with lots of broken promises – much of this attributed lack of available funding. As often is the case, he did not see his dream come through during his tenure as principal. However, the ground work done over the years eventually became a reality. The school, constructed at a cost of eight million euro, was opened officially by Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar on September 5th, 2018.

Br. James, in his speech on the day, spoke of the struggle to get the project off the ground and paid tribute to all who worked tirelessly to bring it to fruition. He also paid tribute to our Brothers who were part of the school's journey from the beginning. He gave special mention to his predecessor as Principal, the late Brother Killian Kearney "who for years travelled north and south Connemara bringing pupils to and from the school". Some of our East African Brothers and colleagues will remember Killian who, after his time in Clifden, spent a number of years at St. Josephs, in Baraka.



Br. James Mungovan

The first effort at providing second level education in Clifden was a "Classical school" operated by the Franciscan Brothers in the late 1880s/1890s. The land on which the current school stands was purchased by Br. John Edwards, described as "a man of progress and vision", with a view to providing a hostel to accommodate pupils of the Classical school. That school failed to develop for reasons related to the circumstances of the day.

The trustees or patrons of the current School, which formally came into existence in 1973, are the Franciscan Brothers, the Sisters of Mercy - the operators of two former local secondary schools



found in the 1940s – one for boys and one for girls, and the Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB), who joined with them in 1973 in the provision of a Community School on the site. In the case of the Sisters of Mercy, their school began as a "secondary top" that became a separate school in 1950. Br. Urban Boyle and Br. Fridolin McCusker began a secondary school for boys in 1946 that transferred to the current site about 1954. The new school building opened for classes in October 2017 and the old school has been demolished.



An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar

The trustees, also known as the school patrons, appoint the Board of Management (BOM) for the school, while the Minister and the Dept. of Education and Science are the owners. The primary role of the trustees, as set in the Deed of Trust for Community Schools, relates to their responsibility for the characteristic spirit of the school and the appointment of the BOM.

The current religious trustees (Franciscan Brothers/Sisters of Mercy) of the school, while continuing as trustees, have formally ceded the operational aspects of that role for a period of three years to "CEIST" - an Irish Schools Trust, for logistical reasons. The Trust provides a new moral and legal trustee framework enabling its schools to continue to offer post-primary Catholic education – in the context of a school faith community - as an integral part of the Irish school system. Its brief is to promote the Gospel 'fullness of life.'

For many years, Br. Vivian Cotter has faithfully and consciously represented the Brothers on the Board of Management of the school. For the next three years, his place will be filled by CEIST. Much thanks must go to Br. Vivian for his long service.

The journey and the process from the 1880s to today was a slow one with a few serious stops and starts. The opening of this new school with its promise marks a new beginning that with the help of God will yield "good fruit."

Br. Vivian, who spent his entire teaching life in Clifden Community School – retiring in 2008, still lives in the community with Br. Kenneth Coyne. They both play the 'odd' game of golf but are 'slowing down' (according to Vivian!) Br. James Mungovan, also a member of the community, has been spending much of his time in Mountbellew since his illness last year and, we're happy to report, is well on the road to full recovery. At the moment James is organizing work to be carried on the Clifden house which is to commence in the new year.

Br. Vivian Cotter



Br. Vivian Cotter

Caring for our Common Home

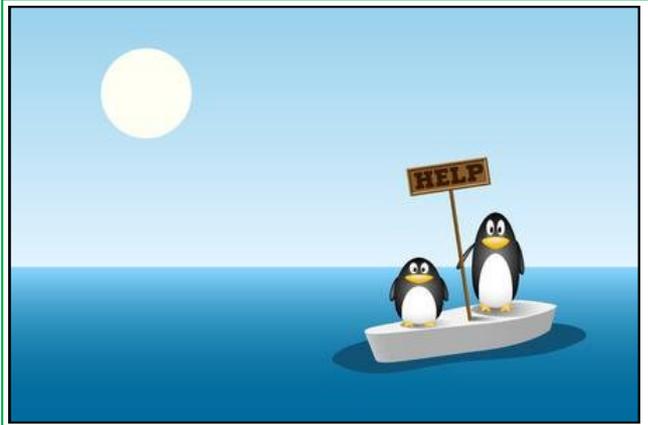
Peter Roddy

Over the past few months we have been hearing many stories in the media around climate change and the concerns for the future unless we take some drastic action NOW. We are being reminded that we are the first generation to fully understand climate change and the last generation to be able to do something about it. Of course this is of particular relevance to us as Franciscans because our father St. Francis of Assisi is the first among environmentalists. Francis saw all as sacred and treated all of creation as sacred.

As I write this at the end of November, in the background I hear a woman on the radio complaining of having spent over €6,500 for a trip with her grandchildren to Lapland (Santa Clause Village in Finland) but now there is no snow! She is wondering if she has a right to a refund! Clearly a first world problem, but no snow in Lapland is yet another indication of the impact of climate change on our planet. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) just concluded (October 2018) reminds us there is no hiding or denying it anymore. We are, through our carbon-emitting actions, changing and damaging our Earth. We have, according to this report, just 12 years left to limit the catastrophe by keeping the average global post-industrial temperature increase to 1.5C. But to achieve this would require existing commitments to be "increased around fivefold". (UNEP emissions gap report 2018) Even half a degree beyond this level will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people. We have plundered our planet almost to the point of no return and to get things back on track we must take drastic measures.



We are not just becoming awareness of this crises in 2018. It was this that prompted Pope Francis in June 2015 to release **Laudato Si'**, his encyclical on "care for our common home" or how we as humans are in relationship with our environment. He is addressing "every person living on this planet" and appealing directly to everyone, "to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home" (LS 3).



"LAUDATO SI', mi" Signore" – All praise be you, my Lord – the words of the much loved Canticum of Francis of Assisi. Pope Francis chose this title because he sees St. Francis as the "example par excellence of care for the vulnerable and of an integral ecology lived out joyfully and authentically" (LS 10). Francis of Assisi, the first environmentalist, speaks of everything as Brother and Sister with whom we share all of creation. "Praise be to you, my Lord, through our Sister, Mother Earth, who sustains and governs us, and who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs". In LS 77 Pope Francis writes: "even the fleeting life of the least of beings is the object of his love, and in its few seconds of existence, God enfolds it with his affection" and "The entire material universe speaks of God's love, his boundless affection for us. Soil, water, mountains: everything is, as it were, a caress of God" (LS 84) Can you get any more Franciscan than that? As Christians, especially, we come out of a belief (Genesis 1) that our needs (and wants) as humans are at the centre of everything and that all creation is there to be exploited for our own profit and gain. We live in a world where individual desires collide with the collective good.

In *Laudato Si'* Pope Francis says: "In God's loving plan, every creature has its own value and significance" (LS 76) We are now being challenged to see all of nature as a gift of the Creator that should be protected and respected because of its own intrinsic value and not simply so that it is used and exploited by us humans. Pope Francis is aware of the disconnect that exists in our world and that care for one another and creation includes understanding that "everything is connected" and that environmental issues are inseparable from social and economic concerns. "A sense of deep communion with the rest of nature cannot be real if our hearts lack tenderness, compassion and concern for our fellow human beings. It is no coincidence that, in the canticum in which Saint Francis praises God for his creatures, he goes on to say: "Praised be you my Lord, through those who give pardon for your love". Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society". (LS 91)

As our Brothers in East Africa witness first hand - it is the people who have done least to cause climate change who are being the worst affected. All of the countries in that region and throughout much of our so called 'third world' are disproportionately



impacted by Climate Change. As a result of excessive use of natural resources by wealthy nations, the poorest experience pollution, drought and hunger.

We in Ireland have nothing to cheer about in this regard. Our Taoiseach (Prime Minister), speaking in the European Parliament early this year referred to Ireland as being “a laggard” in relation to climate Change. Our country has been singled out as the worst performing country in Europe for taking concrete action to tackle climate change and continues to seek exemption from meeting targets. (Irish Media Reports) On average, we are individually responsible for 17.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. The figure for Zambia is one tonne and for Malawi it's 0.7 tonnes! We have much to do here.

Laudato Si contains something for everyone. As mentioned at the outset, it appeals directly to each of us: “to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home” (LS 3). The choices we all make as individuals affect the levels of pollution in the air we breathe which have an impact on people's health and life expectancy. What are some of the practical things we can do?

- ◆ Reduce, reuse, recycle ... (which bin is the fuller – the one for recycling or the one destined for landfill?)
- ◆ Don't buy into the 'single-use' mentality (coffee cups, plastic bags ..)
- ◆ Turn off appliances you aren't using at the wall
- ◆ Walk more, cycle, or use public transport (and fly less!)
- ◆ Buy locally sourced and seasonal food, (without all the plastic wrapping)
- ◆ Turn the thermostat down a notch or two
- ◆ Examine your own carbon footprint – (Lots of calculators on the WWW for this) – you might be in for a surprise!
- ◆ Contact your local politicians and ask what they are doing about climate change. “...leaders of the world, you must lead, the continuation of our civilisations and the natural world upon which we depend are in your hands.” (Richard Attenborough COP24(12 '18)

- ◆ And the most challenging one – Listen to the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor that we hear, see and read about daily and consider what one thing you can do in response! “*There is a nobility in the duty to care for creation through little daily actions.*”— (LS 211)

“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children” (Wendell Berry?) What will you say to your children and your grandchildren (grandnieces/nephews) when they ask what you did in the war against climate change?

May we be inspired to work harder and more creatively in bringing the Good News of the Gospel to all creation through the inspiration of Laudato Si'.

Adraa Agricultural College Uganda

Dear Friends,

The year is almost coming to an end and we at Adraa Agriculture College (AAC) department of Education and Training must admit that this has been quite an eventful year. This year cannot go unmentioned as it has been the busiest since we began. This was mainly because of the residential trainings of 1134 students (females 331 and 803 males). Of 1134, 438 were refugees from South Sudan and 696 were host communities. Many of the women came with their babies who were well cared for in the college crèche while the mothers attend class. The residential trainings have been made possible due to support of Caritas Belgium, Caritas Austria, Caritas Uganda, Caritas Arua, Caritas Luxemburg, GLRA, DCA, CEFORD, Friends of Franciscan Brothers and the Franciscan Brothers. Additionally, this year's College Open Learning Day was successfully hosted with over 1300 participants. This function was made successful as a result of cooperation the College received from all stakeholders in West Nile Subregion including the local communities, media houses, NGOs and the Local governments.



Successful accomplishment of those activities were due to a lot of extra hours and team spirit shown by the staff of AAC. We are sincerely indebted to AAC staff for their invaluable commitment to their work. This is something that we celebrate about the AAC team. And above all we are extremely thankful for all our partners (BMZ, SoH, ZOA/ICCO, CEFORD/ZOYEI, CENTENARY BANK, SHA, CARITAS-NEBBI, CARITAS – ARUA, CARITAS – BELGIUM, EYE OPENER WORKS, EDUKANS, Franciscan Brothers, Baraka Agricultural College, Misesan Cara, Misereor, Brighter Communities Worldwide and Trocaire/Biodiversity International, among others) for helping us realize our goal for human



capacity and capability building in contributing towards achieving the sustainable development goals.

Besides the above activities, AAC has had the privilege of hosting the then Irish Ambassador to Uganda His Excellence Finbar O'Brien, Hon. Grace Kuicwiny, the State Minister for Northern Uganda represented the Head of State, His Excellence Yuwari Kaguta Museveni during the College Open Learning Day held in September 2018.

Due to the growth of AAC and increasing demand for tailor made skills trainings, it's highly necessary for the College, through its partners and friends to get a new class-room block, a library, computer lab and another hostel in the near future so that students have adequate facilities for learning.

We wish each of you a Happy Festive Season, and many blessings in 2019.

Sincerely,
Lagu Charles,
Principal, Adraa Agriculture College,
P.O BOX 135, Nebbi (Uganda)

Training in Adraa, another Day, another Story

Brigid Ryan

Today, teaching our 24 students how to make "Leitrim Boxty" (we called it "Irish Pancakes") in the Catering classroom here in Adraa Northern Uganda, a very pleasant face appeared outside the door. I knew the face, but from where? Alice, a wonderful co-educator working with me at the time asked "Brigit this is Peig (not her real name), do you not remember her?"

My goodness how could I forget! This time last year she was one of our first groups of students. She was older than most of her colleagues. She told me at the beginning of the course that she had 3 boys. Peig was only 30, but looked older. Later as she got confident and felt secure here in the College, she told me one evening that she had not told me the full story, that yes she had 3 boys but was living with a very violent man and she spent a lot of the time hiding up in the trees from him, especially when he was drinking. He beat her regularly, one evening she could not take anymore and she confronted him. He told her to go back home to her parents and leave the two bigger boys with him and only take the young boy who she was still breast feeding. She headed by foot for her old family home, several miles away. Her parents

were struggling to survive, she felt terrible bringing another two mouths to feed. She had very few options. She went home and tried her best to eke out a livelihood for her parents and her boy and herself. For three years, she worked in the fields, planting Cassava, Millet and Ground Nuts, harvesting when the crops were ready, selling in the local markets what extra they had, buying cooking oil and the bare minimum from the little she earned.

She heard an ad on the local radio, stating that a Catering and Sustainable Livelihoods course was starting in Adraa Agriculture College; interviews were taking place that week in her local town. With real encouragement from a good friend she very reluctantly went to the interview fearing that she was too old! What a Wonderful excitement on her when she was accepted!



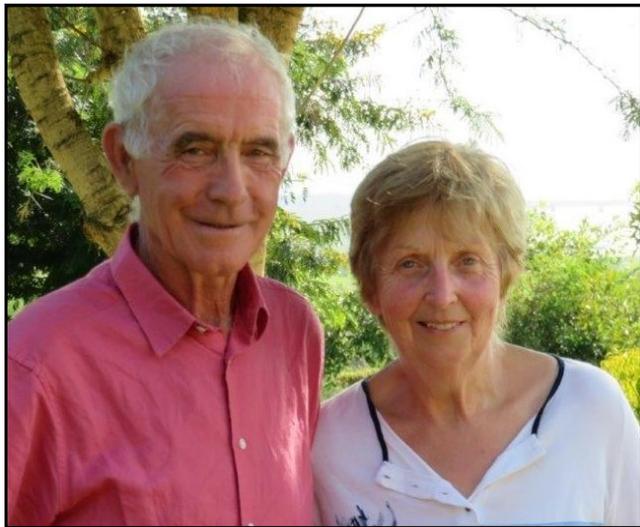
She was an excellent student, wanted so much to learn from practical experience, ready to do anything you asked her to do. At the end of the six week course the students are given a little start-up package, the equivalent of €25, just to test the skills they have acquired. Quite a few students opted to make and sell in their local markets, twice or three times a week, Chapatis and Mandazis (mini doughnuts). Peig tried to make and sell, but in her market there was little demand for her products. Most times she brought home a lot of the food, the family eats it for their main meal, but she was out of pocket, each time. Her little money soon ran out.

She headed off and looked for work in a local, well known eating house, leaving her now four year old boy with her parents. Peig was welcomed by the owner, the cook, and he said yes she could work but he had little to offer her in payment. She worked hard for several weeks; he supplied a resting place for her to stay. After two months work, she observed that business in the eating house had improved; she approached him for some remuneration. He told her she was being trained!



Peig once again headed for home with nothing. A fellow student, who was looking for trained staff, rang her and offered her a job in her new little establishment. Again she was given accommodation, but also offered her a chance of cooking two days and any profit she made she could keep. We visited her in August, she seemed happy, the place was very busy.

I returned late October 2018 for Training in Catering and Hospitality course here in the College. On the second market research trip, we brought the class of 24 students to a trading centre, for them to observe the happenings in a different area than their home. As the little eating house was nearby we decided to bring the students there for a glass of juice. I called 30 mins beforehand



Brigid Ryan with Br. Tony Dolan

to give an order. Much to my surprise Peig was not there, a very young girl was in charge and she stated that the owner was gone to the market to buy supplies. The owner arrived very soon, said yes she would be happy to get something small ready for us, which she did. Our class students were thrilled to sit and chat and share from her, the experience she gained in the business. I asked where Peig was, and the owner said she was gone home to harvest her crops!

Move on now to today. Here was Peig outside the classroom door. Once again she was coming to Adraa for a purpose. She had heard an ad on Radio Piada stating that the College was looking for Catering staff. She has come to leave in her application. Thankfully she decided to come and say hello. By sheer coincidence we had invited two of her class to come and chat to this present group as motivation speakers, sharing their challenges and successes. Here was a third person. Peig looked well, we followed procedure, welcomed her into the class. Each student introduced themselves and thanked her for coming. She spoke to the class for 10-15 mins, was very honest about her challenges and shared a lot with us. She asked if they had any questions, one student stood up and welcomed her. She went on to say, that she was running a small business close to where Peig was working. She admired how hard she worked; she was in awe of her professional appearance and wished she could get a chance to do some training. She heard the advertisements on the radio for this present course and decided she had to do the interview. It's a small, small world but isn't it wonderful that our past students are ambassadors for the College.

This training course will conclude next weekend, 24 happy students, some married, some single, 16 women and 6 men, 22 Ugandans, 2 Sudanese, all of various ages, varied educational standards, yet all so eager to use the practical skills they have learnt here in College, in their own homes, to make hopefully a real

difference to their livelihoods.

I feel so privileged to work here in Adraa, West Nile with the Franciscan Brothers. The people of West Nile have stolen my heart or at least have made a huge impact on it. May I thank you the reader for taking the time to read this. Many thanks to all of you at home in Ireland, who have helped me with financial contributions, moral and physical support, which really has made this course possible.

My own loved ones I cannot forget, without whose love and generosity these trips would not be possible.

Mile buichous,

Brigid

CELEBRATIONS OF FRANCISCAN BROTHERS STAGES OF FORMATION Bernard Kariuki

In a speech to formators of consecrated men and women in April, 2015, Pope Francis said; *“Consecrated life is beautiful. It is one of the most precious treasures of the Church, rooted in the vocation of baptism. And therefore it is beautiful to be formators, because it is a privilege to participate in the work of the Father who forms the heart of the Son in those whom the Spirit has called. At times this service can be felt as a burden, as if it takes us away from something more important. But this is a lie, a temptation. The mission is important, but it is also important to form those for the mission, form the passion of proclamation, the passion for going wherever, in every periphery, to tell everyone about the love of Jesus Christ, especially to those far from the Church, to the little ones, and to the poor, and let ourselves be evangelized by them. All this requires a solid base, a Christian structure of one’s personality that today families rarely know how to give. And this increases your responsibility.”*

The Church calls for ongoing formation of Religious from the time they aspire to join a religious institute to the time of perpetual vows and beyond, so that through their whole life they deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ, grow in virtue, and integrate this growth into their apostolic service to God’s people,



Br. Brian Chesoni made his first profession on September 8th in Baraka

For the Franciscan Brothers, the beginning and continuation of such a journey of formation was actualized on 8th of September 2018, the feast of The Nativity of B.V Mary, when young men in different stages of formation took bold steps to commit themselves to follow Christ more closely in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.

On this occasion, officiated by our Mister General, Bro Tony Dolan, eight young men were

received as postulants, three to the novitiate, one made his first vows and nine others renewed their commitment to live the evangelical counsels of poverty, religious obedience and consecrated celibacy. As a family of the Franciscan Brotherhood, we were encouraged by the boldness of their willingness to be molded into our way of life so that they may become instruments of evangelization and of service to the less privileged in our society, especially the rural poor.

We wish to thank and appreciate the families of these our Brothers for allowing them discern the calling to serve the Lord as Franciscan Brothers. St. Francis, in the prayer for peace, reminds us that *'it is in giving that we receive...'* You have given our Brotherhood your sons; the Lord promises you a *'hundred fold here on earth and eternal life in heaven.'* (Mk. 10:30)

We invite many young men to come and join our mission, so that we partner in bringing the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ to humanity.

To our spiritual and financial benefactors; who support us in this great ministry of forming our future Brothers, 'Asanteni Sana.' Thank you very much. We highly appreciate the sacrifices you make to enable us achieve such a noble mission.

Wishing all of you a blessed Christmas and happy New Year, full of God's love.

(Br. Bernard Kariuki is the Franciscan Brothers' Director of Formation and is Director of Novices at the Novitiate in MOLO, Kenya)

Final Professions:

Three of our Brothers, Gerald Kariuki Kamau, Peter Mokaya Tabichi and Albanus Kioko Mutuku made their Perpetual Profession of Vows on 6th December in the presence of their families and friends. Fr. Stephen Nyamweya represented Bishop Maurice Muhatia Makumba, Bishop of Nakuru, at this joyful and very colourful ceremony which took place on the grounds of Baraka Agriculture College.

Br. Gerald Kamau

Having and acquired a bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Kenyatta University, Br. Gerald Kamau worked as a farmer, businessman, teacher and computer technologist before coming to the Franciscan Brothers in late 2008.

As an aspirant in Lare, he says "he was friendly to the goats, sheep, cattle, dogs, cats, chicken and plants" (a requirement for anyone aspiring to be a Franciscan!) Shortly after his first profes-



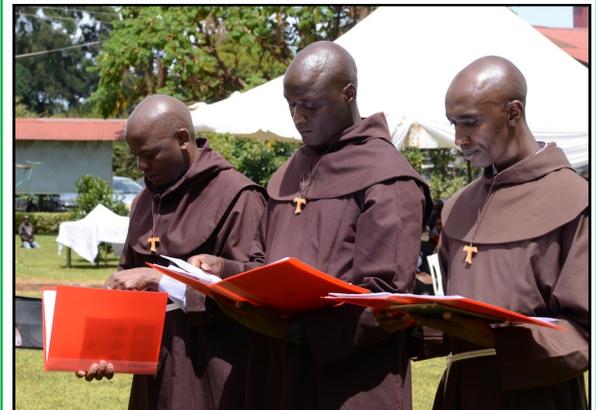
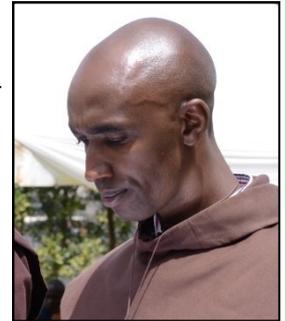
sion he joined the community in Adraa, Uganda and taught Swahili and Science at Offaka Secondary School. Following this he returned to Kenya to do a degree in Education at Marist International University, Nairobi, specializing in Science and Mathematics. Currently he is the dean of studies at St. Francis Secondary – Lare and teaches Biology, Chemistry and Computers.



Cutting the Cake

Br. Albanus Kioko

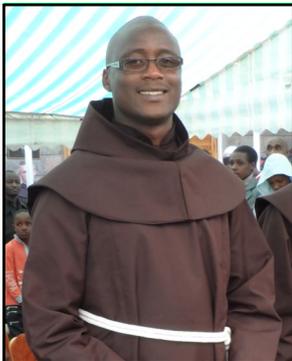
The fifth born of a family of seven boys and one girl, Albanus hails from Machakos, Kenya. He came to the Franciscan Brothers in 2010 having completed a diploma in Marketing at Machakos. Technical Institute. Following his first profession in 2013 he attended Baraka Agricultural College where he earned a certificate in Agriculture and Rural Development. He has lived and worked in our Communities in Uganda and Kenya as gardener and farmer. At present he is pursuing a BSc in Business Administration/Human Resources at St. Paul University, Nakuru.



Brs. Gerald, Peter and Albanus Profess their vows

BR. PETER MOKAYA TABICHI

Peter Mokaya Tabichi is the fifth born in a family of seven from from Kisii, Kenya. On completion of secondary in his native Kisii, he attended EGERTON UNIVERSITY from where graduated in 2006 with a B.Ed in Science and Mathematics. It was while in Egerton that Peter first came in contact with the Franciscan Brothers when he came to St. Francis Secondary School, Lare to do his teaching practice. After his first profession in September 2012 he was assigned to Adraa Community (Uganda) where he taught

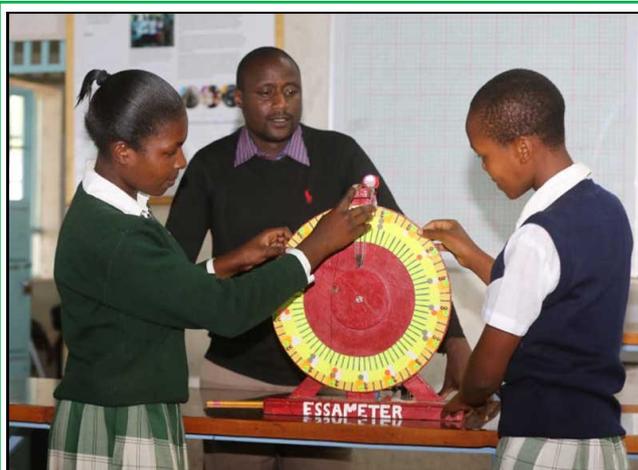


at Offaka Secondary School. On his return to Kenya the following year he took up a teaching role at St. Francis, Lare. In 2016 he joined the teaching staff of KERIKO Secondary School located close to our Community in Lare. You can read below of his great work at Keriko school

Br. Peter Mokaya shares his experience of teaching in a poorly resourced Secondary Government Secondary School in Lare

I was raised up in a remote village, in a family of humble background. I lost my mother at the age of eleven. We were brought up by our dad, who would look after everything, including preparing meals, educating us and most importantly instilling moral and Christian values in us. This tough experience taught me how to tackle various challenges of life. Joining religious brotherhood was a great turning point in my life. It has given me a chance to get closer to our Creator through our way of life of prayer and giving service to God's people. Currently, I am a classroom teacher at Keriko Mixed Day Secondary School situated in Pwani Village, Lare Ward, Nakuru County. The poorly resourced school is populated by students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Students who score high marks from the local primary schools look for boarding and performing secondary schools which are far from their homes. Our school ends up getting students with low entry marks and with low self-esteem. The main objective of many students is just to have a secondary school certificate. The school is double streamed without library, staffroom, kitchen, dining hall and adequate classrooms. Food insecurity is a big challenge for most households. Taking supper or breakfast at home is by chance. In many cases, students have to rely on the porridge (for breakfast) and a combination of boiled beans and maize (for lunch) provided by our school administration. 30% of the students are either orphans or are brought up by single parents. Indiscipline cases, drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, early school dropout, early marriages and cases of suicide, have been very common. Students have to walk for long distances (3 - 7 km) on poor roads. Accessing quality health and banking services is a big challenge since the school is in a remote location. Internet connectivity is poor – we have to buy data bundles and use tethering method to access the internet. The school enrolment is over 400, yet the student-teacher ratio is 58:1. Our school cannot afford to pay the Board of Management teachers the same way Teachers Service Commission does and therefore such teachers keep searching for greener pastures elsewhere, much to the detriment of students. When I started working there, I requested my fellow Franciscan

Brothers to assist in equipping the school laboratory. The school got a donation of apparatus worthy Ksh. 500,000 (US\$ 5000). Secondly since our school principal had appointed me to be in charge of many clubs such as science club, I did my level best to work on the self-esteem of the students. Moreover, I introduced the Talent Nurturing Club with the aim of identifying and strengthening the talents of the students such as drawing, carving and painting. Through great assistance from our school administration, I managed to strengthen the school Science Club.



Keriko secondary school students Esther Amimo (left) and Salome Njeri with their teacher Br. Peter Mokaya presenting their winning Maths project.

Under proper mentorship, the students designed good research plans which eventually turned out to be very good projects. 60% of the projects qualified for national competition. At the national level, our school emerged the best in public schools category. Mathematical Science team qualified to participate at the INTEL International Science and Engineering Fair 2019 in Arizona. This achievement has led to the improvement in students' self-esteem and discipline. Due to public recognition, the school enrollment has increased from two hundred in 2015 to four hundred this year. Local leaders have shown interest in assisting the school through provision of basic amenities. This year, we had twenty six students joining universities and colleges.



Currently, I integrate ICT in 80% of my lessons which makes the lessons very interesting. I also assist and encourage my fellow teachers to incorporate ICT in teaching. This achievement has been recognized by The Teachers Service Commission of Kenya (TSC), The Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (GEMASTEIA), The National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI), The Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) and the local media. Our students have been able to generate electricity from local plant extracts. The whole country is optimistic that the students will emerge as winners in the upcoming INTEL International Science and Engineering Fair competition.

Since our students come from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, I collaborated with our school administration to introduce the Peace Club with the aim of enhancing peace and unity in the school. During the club meetings, members carry out different

activities such as debates, tree planting and games. These meetings are normally conducted at a place called Wangari Maathai Peace Corner. Some of the topics discussed include negative ethnicity, climate change mitigation, deforestation, conflict, gender-based violence, and how to curb them in school and community. This has helped the students in appreciating, the world around them, and each other's ethnic background and culture. We encourage students to spread the same message to their families. In conclusion, each and every one of was created for a purpose. If we discover why God created us, we will be the happiest people and the whole creation of God will benefit from us in so many positive ways.

In his circular in May 2018 Br. Tony Dolan wrote:

Congratulations to Br. Peter Mokaya, his students and staff in Keriko Secondary School on the wonderful achievement in winning the major prize for the second year running in what is the 'Young Scientist of Year' competition for secondary schools in Kenya. .

Peter has been teaching there for the past three years and he is the mentor and inspiration behind the success of the students. Yesterday's (Saturday) edition of Standard Newspaper has a 2/3 page feature on the school under the heading: "**Village Day School Beats Giants at Global Science Fair.**"

We are very proud of Peter and his school. The achievements show how the charism, vision and mission of the Franciscan Brothers can be effectively promoted in some of the most marginalised communities in East Africa by working through the Government systems and without having the headaches and responsibilities which owning our own schools entail.

Br. Pius Muasa has recently begun Doctoral Studies in Nairobi. Here he reflects on his work as a counsellor and some of the issues faced by those with whom he comes in contact.

Unlike the past, the modern world is faced with a lot challenges which has negatively impacted on peoples' well-being. These cover a broad spectrum, from war to poverty to pollution and the accompanying problems that these

bring. Depression and drug dependency has become widespread among both adults and youth. Many have lost their way.

For humanity to cope with these modern challenges there is an urgent need for mental health professional such as counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists among others to provide counselling services that will enable people to find meaning in their daily struggles. From my experience as a counselling psychologist working with both youth and adults and including some Catholic Religious men and women, I have learned that almost everybody needs counselling services



regardless of their state or position in life. As a Franciscan Brother, I have experienced joy and happiness in working with diverse clients in enhancing their well-being. After completing my master's degree, I got an opportunity of teaching whereby I am involved in the training of counselling psychologists who desire to be wounded healers to others.

Apart from teaching, I also engage in other services such as taking counselling psychology students through personal therapy for their personal and professional development. Likewise, I do counselling with Catholic Religious men and women at Marist International University College and the Institute of Catechetics and Pastoral Ministry (Chemichemi ya Uzima). I run programmes in Franciscanism for a variety of Franciscan groups in both initial and ongoing formation.

In the recent time, I have developed interest in research with an aim of carrying out empirical research work that will promote the well-being of people. To accomplish this, the Franciscan Brothers African Region has given me an opportunity to pursue a doctorate degree in counselling psychology at Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) Nairobi. For my doctoral thesis, I want to test the effectiveness of forgiveness intervention on reducing minority stressors such as internalized homophobia, depression and stress among the minority population.

I am especially grateful to our Brothers in Ireland and California, benefactors, core-workers and all the people of good will who have supported our mission in Eastern African Region and make it possible for me to continue my studies. May almighty God bless you abundantly and bring you happiness during this season of Christmas and in the New Year.

WE LIVE FOR OTHERS

Antony Kamindo writes from Adraa , Uganda

Our brotherhood finds a meaning as far as we give support and encouragement for others by bestowing wisdom and opportunity to them for a better life. At Adraa Agriculture College we are basically that whereby everyone matters even complete strangers who have needs we can address.



We have recognized our own insignificance and barred the ego from indulgence in fantasies about centrality and permanency. Birth and death are just movements of a door and what matters is what a person does during the life. We join our bereaved brothers and sisters especially co-workers who have been hard hit by the loss of relatives and friends

this year. We are together in mind, heart, cash and kind.

We do all that is possible with a smile and a good word as our founder St. Francis of Assisi urged us to work as exemplars and use words only when necessary. Our small efforts in ordinary ways has far reaching effects in collaboration with all the partners. May the Lord who waters the wayside flower grant success to the works of our hands.

In Search for my Father's Birth Place

Gerald Smith

It is said in psychology that a child needs a father's significant role up until he or she is at least 12 years of age. When a father is absent from a child's early life it is as if the child misses a strong steady hand on the back. A strong steady presence! A father's absence may have a lifelong impact on the child as he or she goes forward in life.

My father died when I was four and a few months. I don't remember him and therefore I cannot put a face on him. All I have is a photo of him on his memorial card but no memories of him!

Over the years and more so recently I often wondered about what his life was like and how and why he was born in Scotland? This I learned much in life and sadly when one is young one rarely asks relevant questions of the older generation until it is too late!



Gerald with Sr. Faith outside St Canitius and Nicholas church where his father was christened

Why was he and his brother Cornelius (Nelius) born in Scotland? Where were they born? Why were the two of them sent home to Ireland when they were still children?

To make a long story short an opportunity arose during my mini sabbatical (March to August 2018) to visit Scotland and at least be able to understand why my father was born there and to see where he was born and baptized. With the collaboration of two of my nieces and an invitation from the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Glasgow I arrived at Glasgow airport on 9th of May 2018 to be met by Sisters Faith, Fran and Eleanor who turned out to be my wonderful hosts, among others, for the next 6 days at 99 Sarcean Street, Glasgow. Sister Faith, a Kenyan Sister, I had known from her visits to our community in Nairobi.

Just prior to my going to Scotland I learned from our family historian and niece, Georgina who through her research was able to furnish me with the place where he was born. I had no idea where it was so I passed the information on to Sr Anne Mary who generously the next day after my arrival took Sr. Faith and myself to the village where he was born in Uphall.

It is a swiftly growing village in a conurbation with Broxburn to the east. It is about 30 miles from Glasgow. Until the second half of the 19th century, both Uphall and Broxburn were small rural communities. The discovery and exploitation of local oil shale triggered massive growth as many people moved to the area to gain employment in the oil shale mines and associated oil works. Surrounding villages expanded rapidly as rows of miners' cottages were erected to accommodate the influx of people, most of whom came - in search of money - from Ireland and the Highlands of Scotland. This growth continued until the oil industry went into terminal decline in the 1920s.

It was the discovery of oil shale and associated oil works that led my grandparents to Uphall/Broxburn in search for a better life and it was there that my father was born and christened.

It was a wonderful opportunity for me to see the place where he was born and the reason he was born there.

Sadly, as of now I really don't know what happened to my grandparents or why my father and his brother were sent home to their cousins in Lackenduff, Ballyjamesduff, Ireland. I guess that is another story!

After that great day of visiting Uphall/Broxburn and the surrounding areas the next days were filled with visiting the wonderful historical and scenic sights of Scotland thanks to a very helpful and knowledgeable tour guide Sr. Faith Keitany. I would also like at this juncture to thank the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception for their generosity and hospitality in hosting me. Asanteni sana!

Now that I know a little bit about where my father was born I can now visit his grave where he has lain since 1951, I can pray and wonder how his life and mine was impacted by the absence of our fathers in early childhood. I will leave that to the recording angel.!

The Year in Lare Baptist Sugrue

With January came the beginning of a new school year, with smaller numbers doing the entrance test for St. Francis Secondary. We had the usual requests at the door from parents for support with school fees. On 13th the Community joined a crowd of 30,000 at the Golden Jubilee Mass for celebrating Nakuru Catholic Diocese fifty years. Later in the month we celebrated an anniversary Mass for our late Brother, Larry Timmons and James Kimanu who died tragically in our compound in years ago. A Golf and Bowls competition in Br. Larry memory (He was a keen golfer) continued to draw big crowds at Njoro Golf Club in February. Br. Tony presented prizes to the winners.



Br. Baptist Sugrue

March saw the resignation John Njoroge as principal of St Francis Secondary School. He was replaced by Victor Momanyi in April with James Kihara appointed as deputy principal. In April also came the sad news of the death of Sr. Delphine Njeri of the Little Sisters of St. Francis. A friend of the Brothers, Delphine was a former headmistress, novice mistress and leader of the Sisters. A number of the Brothers attended her funeral in Bahati.

In May we had visit from Bros. Tony and Pius. Tony gave a talk to the staff of St. Francis and Mtakatifu Clara Centre while Pius spend a day with the students discussing various aspects of life. Later in the month Bishop Maurice Muthatia celebrated the annual Thanksgiving Mass at the school. Although some distance from us, the area was shocked with the news that 48 people were killed in a dam burst on May 12th. The burst dam, owned by a prominent large-scale irrigation farmer, washed away most structures in its way covering a three mile radius. A number of suspects, including the dam owner, were attested.

On June 1st Madaraka day- Br. Gerald Kamau joined Lare community having completed his studies in Nairobi. (Madraka is the Swahili word for 'power' and Madraka Day is a public holiday that commemorates the day that Kenya took power when it attained internal self-rule in 1963). Later in the month on the 24th we had 24 hours of



Br Leonard Conway (right) with Br. Gerald Smith and Bernard Kariuki during their visit to St. Francis Prep, New York in 2017

non-stop rain – a very rare occurrence in Lare! We had a number of visitors from Brooklyn, NY visiting St. Francis School where they interacted with Staff and Students. There has been a long standing friendship between our school and St. Francis Prep. Among those who visited were Br. Leonard Conway and his friend Alan. Br. Leonard, who is President of St. Francis Prep, along with staff and students continue to give great encouragement and practical support to St. Francis Secondary School, as they have been doing years. One of the outcomes of this relationship

is a visit each year of dentists and medical doctors from New York to Lare. The charity which is registered in New York is called 'Tomorrow's Smile Today' and is the inspiration of past students of St. Francis Prep. In August nine dentists and doctors came to Lare for five days. During their visit, which is the third year which they have come, they provided dental and medical services free of charge to the geographical community of Lare. They work in conjunction with the Nakuru County medical services at the Government Health Centre in Lare. They are also prepared to look into the possibility of providing a similar outreach to the people in the surrounding communities of Adraa, Uganda where they will be welcomed by our Brothers.

August saw a lot of coming and going with Br. Baptist leaving for Ireland on the 1st and a new group of Postulants arriving in on 19th. Br. Paul joined the community on a three-month community experience and the Lare garden & poultry improved immensely under his expertise!

On the 8th September we joined the rest of the Brothers in Molo for Reception of Habit and Profession of vows ceremonies. We got a new thatched roof on our Chapel in October as well as other major repairs carried out. A big thank you to Br. Matthew Nychoti & the Regional Council. On October 19th we travelled to Nairobi for the Graduation of our community member, Br. Gerald Kamau. Afterwards, the Brothers were joined by Br. Gerald's family members and co-workers, where all enjoyed a fine repast.

On December 6th, we travelled to Baraka to celebrate with our Community members Peter and Gerald who, along with Albanus, professed their perpetual vows.

Le gach dea-ghui i gcoir na Nollag & siochan chuig an domhan le haghaidh ne h Aith bliana.

Sabbatical Peter Roddy

I had the privilege of spending 10 great weeks this Autumn at An Tairseach in Wicklow Town (the sunny south east of



Ireland) on a sabbatical programme with eighteen others for different corners of the globe. An Tairseach means 'Threshold' in Irish and suggests our being 'in-between' in understanding our place in the world. The aim of the course is to "explore spirituality in the context of an evolving universe, an endangered earth in the Christian tradition" A strong emphasis of the programme is that the planet does not belong to us as humans (as we have assumed) and it provided an opportunity to reflect on the interconnectedness of all creation and our place within this.



Morning reflection in the Cosmic Garden

The Ecology Centre and Organic Farm was set up in the 1990s by the Dominican Sisters and is still run and managed by them. Input is provided by the An Tairseach staff as well as visiting lecturers and explores such themes as the new cosmic story and its implications for understanding our place in the Universe as well as the theological implications of this new understanding.

The programme is varied and makes space for such things as art, dance, ritual, prayer, field trips to many of Wicklow's Estates/ forests parks and sacred places such as Glendalough and, of



Celebrating Eucharist with Fr. Michael Rodgers SPS on Beach at Britas Bay in November

course, ample time alone as well as social opportunities!

I must say my time at An Tairseach far exceeded my expectations with the treasure of presentations, experiences and opportunities to explore deeply a new way of understanding a spirituality which is preaching and promoting the Gospel in light of the new Cosmic Story.

The Sabbatical programme is run in Spring and Autumn— I unreservedly recommend it! (www.antairseach.ie)

Franciscan Brothers 1820-2020

Planning is already under way for our Bicentennial Celebration in 2020. This will be an opportunity for the Brothers to give thanks for the past 200 years and honour those who carried the mantle in difficult times. Celebrations are likely to be held during the summer of 2020—July/August. So mark you calendars! In his poem below, Br. Seamus O'Callaghan remembers those 'brave pioneers'.

200 Hundred Years Later

A poem by Seamus O'Callaghan

*They've disappeared but surely left their mark
On generations that have gone before,
To many lives brought light, dispelled the dark
Of ignorance for generations borne*

*They heard the call like Patrick long ago,
Like Abraham or Moses, or like Saul.
But what the future held they did not know –
A misty road where they stand of fall*

*In famine times they fed the hungry poor
A taught the little ones to read and write,
Their influence in darkest times endured,
To set the poor free was their delight*

*They buried those who died with dignity,
The broken hearted did their best console,
Brought ease to victims of calamity,
To lighten pain and suffering was their goal*

*And when the call to foreign lands rang out
Brave pioneers prepared to give their life,
Sailed from their home, God leading they'd no doubt
To face a world was torn apart with strife*

*While martyrdom for most, for one' twas red:
It broke our hearts but filled us with such pride,
That for the rights of man his blood he shed,
In heaven now with God he doth abide*

*The seeds for generations yet in store
Were sown by men of vision and foresight:
One door shut will ope' another door,
And so, a new dawn carries forth the light*

*Death comes to every creature here below
No longer needed faith, remains but love.
Our legacy to men we do not know,
We'll leave in the hands of one above*



SWAN'S CALL

Conal Thomas and Charles Conway

He looks so tall some way from me
 Yet beckons us – I'll have to see
 Another standing there as well
 Now wonder what they have to tell.

Brown figures two, one bent so low.
 I'll walk erect, to them I'll go
 What that might be in hand I ask
 *Festina lente, beware too fast!

There figures two without a stir
 Look there so clear – no more a blur
 Must call my mate to come as well
 This is for real - no *Aoife's spell.

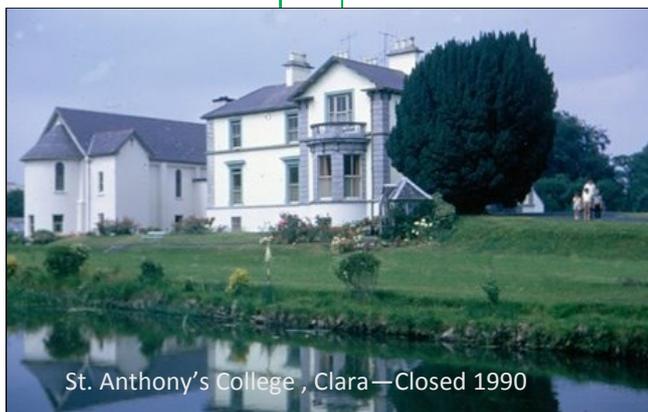
I eat some bread from hand held out
 And tell my *Clann to have no doubt
 Be back tomorrow if you don't mind
 Though Givers Two we may not find.

(Rhyming couplets by "The Swan" with assistance from Br. Charles Conway)

*The Swan's guide:

Festina lente - make haste slowly.
 Aoife - Second wife of King Lir who cast a spell on his children.
 Clann - Offspring. (See Clann Lir)

As we are in remembrance mode, it is fitting that the beautiful scene above should be highlighted. This event took place in 1989, almost thirty years ago at St. Anthony's, Clara where the late Br. Sylvester Carney and Br. Charles Conway can be seen feeding the swans.



St. Anthony's College, Clara—Closed 1990

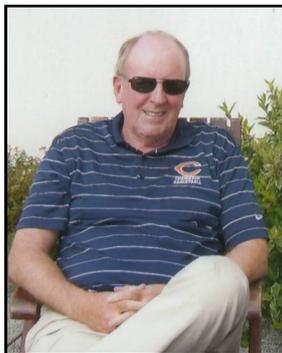
Frequently, swans were observed swimming majestically along the nearby river Brosna, sometimes in pairs or proudly showing the glories of the surrounding countryside to their offspring. These birds are wild and as a rule quite wary of humans. However the good Brothers induced them with morsels of bread to come up on the river bank and after some hours and days of coaxing (some might say bribing) to cross the lawn towards the Yew trees adjacent to the front door.

When asked what thoughts might be evoked by reflection on this picture, Br. Charles Conway stated that it could be compared to a subject curtsying before a royal visitor - a representative of the Children of Lir. There are signs of great respect and dignity about the whole scene. The word mutuality comes to mind when one asks who is the provider and who is the receiver. Silence, beauty, graciousness, mindfulness, giving and receiving, patience, and equality are other terms evoked.

Is goire cabhair Dé ná an doras.

Aspects of what it means to be a Franciscan Brother comes in a variety of ways!

Brother Tom Fahy is Principal of Chaminade High School in West Hills (Los Angeles), California. In his 'blog' in mid November he shared his thoughts on two major catastrophes that had just happened in the vicinity of his school, how this impacted on the school community and how that community, in turn, reached out to those in their time of need.



When a double dose of trauma hits a community, people's resilience is pushed to the extreme. Such was the situation last week when the suburban areas approximately 35 miles north of Los Angeles experienced a shooting massacre and Armageddon like wildfires. The shooting at Borderline Bar and Grill, a night club in Thousand Oaks, came first with multiple deaths. Before the residents could even begin to process that horror, the mother of wildfires overwhelmed the area.

Borderline can be seen from the 101 Freeway and is approximately ten miles from Chaminade, where I am principal. Wednesday, the night of the shooting, I was staying at our residence in Oxnard. Awake at 4:30 AM, I checked the news on my phone as usual and could barely assimilate the headlines that a mass shooting had taken place in the safest city in America – coincidentally one that I would drive by on my way to Chaminade for school.

Choppers in the sky were my first sign of a media frenzy and the scope of the problem began to sink in. On getting to school, I prepared a prayer and some consoling words to open the school day, went to morning-prayer, and waited for the day to unfold. At 11:20 AM, exactly twelve hours after the shooting, we ceremoniously lowered the US flag to half-staff and had a few moments of prayer and reflection by the flag pole. Waiting for the names of those killed to emerge is like a death watch, worrying that someone connected to the school would be a victim. As the morning turned into afternoon, we learned what was expected – the victims were mostly university students from local colleges, along with Borderline staff, and a Ventura County Sheriff who was the first responder. Fortunately, we had no "close-in" victims. Whew, a sigh of relief!

With everyone preoccupied with the mass shooting, in all honesty, the wind-driven Woolsey fire snuck up on us Thursday afternoon. These particular winds, with their own catch name, the Santa Anas, are nasty, capricious beasts that blow westwards this time every year. Everyone hates these winds and no wonder! Packing a hard punch with the added attraction of wind induced dry skin and allergies, what's to like? Out by Chaminade, these



.....I have many more Thanksgiving Day memories and I look forward to Thursday this year but not with the same carefree attitude of fifty years ago. The local fires and shooting have tempered my spirit. Today I spoke to a mom at my school who is the aunt of Kristina Morisset, a cashier at Borderline who was killed in the Thousand Oaks massacre. Immediately after that, CSI TV director, Jeff Hunt came to see me to say how thankful he was that Chaminade had given his family of four children a home after his family lost their's in the fires. He told me that he received thousands of texts saying, "Let me know if I can help." But, he said, "Brother Tom, you didn't say that. You said I am going to help you Jeff, and you did it." It felt good to be on the giving end after fifty years of receiving from others.

winds have blown now for a week but this year they are way more than irritating. There is such an unbelievable amount of fuel, i.e., super dry trees and brush, to consume. The fire this time is voracious, with a gluttonous appetite, devouring everything in its path, including the beautiful homes of several of our Chaminade families. I met with one of my evacuees this morning and I asked him for one word to describe his feelings. He said, "homesick." Wow, how personal is that. Also, this morning a mom wrote this to us, including a comment about her son, Jack:

"We live in The Oaks of Calabasas along with many other Chaminade families. After 5 days of evacuation, we returned home yesterday. Our home and belongings are completely fine, although Phos-Chek (fire retardant foam) remnants and burned patches remain all around. It's been an incredibly trying time for many. Unfortunately, a member of our church community, Noel Sparks, was killed at Borderline the day before the fires erupted. Our church has been unable to hold memorial services so we've really had no closure. Jack has been extremely stressed and understandably so I wonder if a quick mental health check and discussion with someone would be valuable. I want to note that the Thorpe family took us in without any hesitation. My parents were visiting from Minnesota along with our cat. They graciously accepted all six of us plus our pet for three nights before we moved to a hotel. We are forever grateful. Thank you for your concern."

In trying to give you a sense of how a double dose of human tragedy plays out and the way unfinished grieving troubles the soul, I feel the poignancy of this mom's words convey the essential message. She is living on the human side of a world-wide media event and she has learned the power of family spirit and blessing of neighborliness.



Later in November, just before the Thanksgiving Holiday, Tom wrote of his memories of Thanksgiving from the time he went to California in the late 1960s and how this one is different:

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A thought from Fred Aikobua



Peace Prayer

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, Where there is hatred, let me sow love; Where there is injury, pardon; Where there is doubt, faith; Where there is despair, hope; Where there is darkness, light; Where there is sadness, joy; O Divine

Master, Grant that I may not so much seek To be consoled as to console; To be understood as to understand; To be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life'

The peace **Prayer of St Francis** of Assisi is a perfect prayer for one seeking to live in peace and joy. As Christians, the scripture encourages us to "let our light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:16). The prayer of St. Francis reminds us just how we can do that! This is such an encouraging and uplifting prayer that teaches us how we can live like Jesus Christ and serve those around us, putting their needs first. Let this be our prayer as we celebrate this special Feast of Christmas.

Br. Kevin Bourke RIP

Br. Kevin Bourke went to his eternal rest on March 2nd and was buried in the Brothers' cemetery, Mountbellew following requiem mass in St. Mary's Parish Church. Br. Kevin died at Queen of Peace nursing home, Knock where he had spent his final years.

Kevin, a native of Ballintubber, Co. Mayo, – had completed his Inter Cert at De La Salle Secondary School Castlebar before going to St. Anthony's Clara in 1951. He made his first profession on October 4th 1952 and his final profession in 1955.

Prior to going for teacher training Kevin taught in Clara and Kilkerrin national schools.. On completion of his teaching training at De La Salle College, Waterford in 1958 he taught in Cummer national school for one year. In 1959 he was assigned to Granlahan Community where he taught in the national school for the next seven years. From Granlahan Kevin went to Clara where he was to spend the following sixteen years teaching in Scoil Naoimh Phronsias. Among his pupils during that time was our former Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Brian Cowan.



Having to leave teaching on health grounds, Kevin took up gardening in Mountbellew, and later in Kilkerrin and Clifden. He was a keen gardener and was a good warrant to have colourful displays of flowers at the schools in which he taught. Our sympathies go to his sister Josephine, his brothers Peter and John and his extended family. We are indebted to the management and staff of Queen of Peace Nursing, Knock who took such good care of Kevin during his final years.

Ar dheis De go raibh a anam dhilis

Nakuru Diocese Celebrates Golden Jubilee

When the Franciscan Brothers arrived in Nakuru in 1976, the Diocese was in its infancy, having been established in 1968 from the Dioceses of Kisumu, Eldoret and Nairobi. The new diocese was entrusted to St. Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegens) who were instrumental in our Brothers going there. The diocese of Kericho, established in 1995, was severed from Nakuru. Nakuru diocese now includes Nakuru and Baringo Counties.



In January 2018 the Diocese celebrated its Golden Jubilee with much fanfare and gratitude for the growth it has seen over the past fifty years. Today the diocese has fifty parishes and over 100 diocesan priests as well as 30 congregations of Religious women and men doing a variety of works. The diocese covers an area of over 18,000 sq kms with about 500,000 Catholics out of a total population of 2.3 million.

Mt. Clara Mwangaza Resource and Development Centre, Lare Duncan Maina

Mt. Clara Mwangaza Resource and Development Centre's Vision is to contribute to the achievement of the Vision 2030 and the millennium development goals. We do this by providing knowledge and skills to enhance sustainable livelihoods in partnership with relevant stakeholders. The Centre is led towards achievement of its mission by the words of Psalms 119: 105, A lamp for my steps. The Franciscan Brothers continued to provide organizational leadership under Br. Duncan Maina. Mr. Godfrey Nyagori a long time serving manager provided the day to day management of the Centre till the time of his departure in June 2018. Mr. Josephat Mbui took over the management of the Centre in September 2018. We want to wish Godfrey well in his new appointment at MESPT

The year started well with enrolment of students both for tailoring and dressmaking as well as carpentry and joinery courses. The students have been going through theoretical and practical training and we are happy that by the time they leave our Centre they will be able to start small businesses at home or at the local shopping centres. Farmers and development groups (Women, Youth,



Self Help, and CBOs) were facilitated to build their capacities by the Centre or through its partners in areas of livestock production, health, and value addition of farm produce, resource mobilization and general group development.

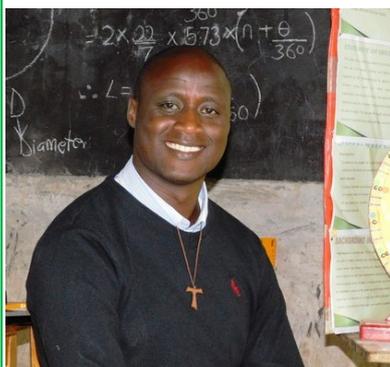


The demonstration farm continues providing practical skills in sustainable agriculture while at the same time giving an opportunity to farmers and the community of Lare to use the farm and the Centre for their own development. The farm is undergoing tremendous improvement to be able to respond to development challenges in Lare and neighbouring wards. A new apiary and local poultry unit have been put up to enhance sustainable agriculture technologies at the farm. The new livestock unit put in place with the aid of funding from WOTRO is undergoing renovations and will soon be stocked with Ayrshire cows. Silage and slurry pits will be constructed to help in fodder conservation and farm waste management. To improve energy at the farm, the bio-gas unit is being renovated. In addition to providing clean energy it will help in demonstrating to farmers and members of the community how to innovatively and sustainably use farm waste.

(Br. Duncan Maina is pursuing a degree in Agricultural Education and Extension at nearby Egerton University)

Global Teacher of Year

You may have read of the success story of Keriko Secondary School students under the guidance of their teacher Br. Peter Mokaya Tabichi, on pages 13 & 14. Just before Christmas we learned that Br. Peter had been short listed for the 2019 Global Teacher of Year.



From the thousands of teachers that have been nominated world wide, Peter is among the 50 teachers short listed for the 2019 Prize.

The Global Teacher Prize serves to underline the importance of educa-

tors and the fact that, throughout the world, their efforts deserve to be recognised and celebrated. It seeks to acknowledge the impacts of the very best teachers – not only on their students but on the communities around them.

If awarded the Global Teacher Prize, Peter has indicated he will use the money to promote and expand the Talent Nurturing Club, the Science Club and Inter-School Science Project Competitions. He will also invest in a school computer lab with better Internet connectivity. In the community, he plans to start an agricultural project that focuses on promotion of kitchen gardens and production of drought tolerant crops; he will also identify a few bright and needy students within the community to ensure that they get the support they need to pursue quality further education. (from Global Teacher Prize website)

We wish Peter well in the next stage which will reduce the numbers from 50 down to 10. He has had five video linked interviews by panels of educationalists from around the world and these sessions will get more intense as the short listing continues.

www.globalteacherprize.org/finalists/2019-finalists/

We remember two of our Brothers who will not be spending this Christmas with their Communities. Br. Edmund Farrell and Br. Hyacinth Kennedy, due to ill health, are in Flannery Nursing Home, Abbyknockmoy, Co. Galway. We also remember our Brothers, family members and friends who may be facing health challenges at this time and we pray that this special time of Advent and Christmas will bring healing and blessings their way.

Franciscan Brothers' Website

www.franciscan-brothers.com (active/under construction) will replace www.franciscanbrothers.ie in 2019

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A sincere word of thanks to all who contributed articles/photos for this issue of 'Laudate'.

Nollaig Shona Dhíobh go léir