

CARMELETTER

APRIL | 2026



EDITORIAL DESK

It has been a long while since *Carmeletter* last found its way into the hands of our readers. The silence between the last issue and this one has not been empty; rather, it has been filled with events that have profoundly shaped our lives, our Communities, and our faith. Many of these moments have left an indelible mark on our world and on the Carmelite family.

Among the most defining experiences of recent years has been the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a period that tested humanity in ways few could have imagined. For many, faith itself seemed to be shaken. Yet, even in the midst of fear and loss, the enduring hope and love for God remained a guiding light. That hope sustained the Carmelite spirit. It reminded us that our journey is always one of trust in God's providence, even when the path ahead is unclear.

Despite the trials of the past years, we have also witnessed remarkable signs of grace and growth within the Commissariat. We give thanks to God for the qualitative and quantitative growth experienced through Religious Professions and Priestly Ordinations. Each vocation is a sign of life and renewal, a testimony that the Carmelite charism continues to inspire hearts to seek God in prayer, fraternity, and service.

Alongside these blessings have come important transitions in our life and ministry. One significant moment was the withdrawal from St Agnes Parish. While such changes can be accompanied by nostalgia and even a sense of loss, they also invite us to rediscover our mission and to open ourselves to new possibilities. In the same spirit of renewal, we celebrate the permanent formation of the St Alois Community, which now stands as a sign of

continuity and commitment to Carmelite life in our Commissariat. Another development has been the movement from the old administrative Priory at number 9, 3rd Street Mutare to 3 Fairbridge Park Mutare. Places carry memories, and the Priory has long been part of the history of the Commissariat. Formation, the heart of every religious family, has also seen an important change with the transfer of the novitiate from Kriste Mambo to Prophet Elijah.

Perhaps the most significant moment we are living through today is the celebration of the Oak Jubilee Year. This jubilee invites us to look back with gratitude at our humble beginnings in 1946, when the Carmelite presence in Zimbabwe first took root. We remember the efforts of the first three Carmelites who travelled by sea to come and plant the seed of Carmel in Zimbabwe. We remember their struggles to learn the local language and acclimatise to the weather and other local conditions. We are grateful for their zeal, resilience and determined determination to build Carmel here in Zimbabwe. We are what we are today because of their missionary yes, like Mary's yes which has established many ministries in Zimbabwe.

The symbol of the oak tree beautifully captures the meaning of this jubilee. In human experience, the oak is associated with strength, durability, and reliability. Its wood has long been used to craft furniture and barrels that endure the passage of time. The oak stands firm through seasons of wind and storm, its deep roots anchoring it securely in the earth.

This symbolism resonates deeply with the Carmelite vocation. Like the oak, the Carmelite life is rooted deeply in God. Our strength comes not from ourselves but from a life grounded in prayer, contemplation,

and fidelity to our charism. In the Scriptures, the imagery of strong and enduring trees often reflects the steadfastness of those who trust in the Lord. The oak thus becomes a fitting symbol of stability, endurance, and spiritual resilience. With this symbol, we reflect on our past with grateful hearts to our first Carmelite missionaries who came from Ireland and landed in Zimbabwe, then Rhodesia in November 1946. We look to the future with confidence, faith and hope because our roots have sunk deep in Zimbabwe, giving stability to our zeal for the Lord. Since Carmel is one, this unity was expressed through the combined efforts from Friars from England, the United States of America and Australia to water the seed of Carmel in Zimbabwe.

Over the years, the Carmelite presence has weathered many seasons moments of flourishing as well as periods of challenge. Yet, like the oak, the Community continues to stand firm, nourished by faith and sustained by hope. The Oak Jubilee is therefore not only a celebration of the past but also a moment to look forward. Its branches reach toward the future, reminding us that the mission of Carmel continues to grow and expand.

May this new issue of *Carmeletter* serve as both a reflection and an inspiration an opportunity to remember where we have come from and to imagine where God is leading us. Like the oak tree that symbolizes this jubilee, may our roots remain deep in faith, our trunk strong in commitment, and our branches open to the promise of the future. With gratitude for the past and hope for the years ahead, we entrust this journey to God, who continues to guide the Carmelite family with unfailing love.



COMMISSARY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Shelton Zimondi, O. Carm

2026 is a special year for Carmel in Zimbabwe because we celebrate 80 years of Carmelite presence under the theme: "Rooted in Faith, growing in hope: 80 Years of Carmelite Presence in Zimbabwe". This Oak Jubilee milestone indeed reflects the image of the oak tree which symbolises strength and nurtures wildlife. In the natural world, the strength of a tree is rarely determined by its height or the span of its branches. Instead, its survival depends on what remains unseen: the depth of its roots. Our lives follow a similar biological logic. To reach toward the light of a better tomorrow, we must first be firmly anchored in something deeper than the shifting soil of circumstance.

Celebrating this milestone, we acknowledge the efforts of the first three Carmelites, Donal Lamont, Anselm Corbett and Luke Flynn who traversed land and sea in 1946 to plant the seed of Carmel in Zimbabwe. Carmel is now fully established in Zimbabwe. We have the roots of our faith, of our charism and our work over 80 years which have nourished the life of Carmel in Zimbabwe. Because of these deep 80-year-old roots, Carmel has a firm and stable foundation, which continues to be nourished from this rich heritage. These roots are visible in the various ministries, branches of this oak tree, in which the Carmelites in Zimbabwe are involved, including the salvation of people through the celebration of sacraments, their integral human development, our

work of administration and formation, spiritual direction and retreat facilitation among many others. These, individually and collectively, ensure the continued growth of Carmel in Zimbabwe.

Having firm roots also implies a deliberate choice to stay grounded especially when crisis close in, when the dark night is near, standing firm on the bedrock of our faith. The Carmelite Rule number 18 speaks of trial and persecution for those who live devotedly to Christ. As Carmelites we have faced these in the past and we will continue facing them. Examples include the many friars who were persecuted during the liberation war period. Our response to such challenges is faith, our informed faith, which in Zimbabwe has been tried and tested and proven to work. Being rooted in faith does not mean storms will not come. In these storms, faith becomes the quiet confidence that the ground is firm under our feet, and that the faith we have of our roots, charism and spirituality, are stronger than any storm hitting us.

Our jubilee calls us to reflect on our past and to look to the future with hope and confidence. Our hope is informed by our history, our past, and our faith. Hope is our compass for the future. We learn, we apply what we learn and we make the necessary corrections. The Church has recently closed its jubilee year, under the theme "spes non confundit, hope does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). This hope does not disappoint because "God's love

has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us" (Rom 5:1-2.5). In paragraph one, the document continues "hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring". For us as Zimbabwean Carmelites, hope does not disappoint because we are surrounded by God's love.

During this Carmelite jubilee year, we are reminded that our faith and hope are not separate stages; they are a continuous loop. The deeper your roots of faith go, the higher your branches of hope can reach without toppling. Conversely, the more you grow in hope, the more you realize how necessary your foundation of faith truly is. Our faith is strengthened and our hope is renewed through our Rule, especially number six and number 10, which emphasize the importance of the cell whose purpose is meditation on the law of the Lord. In addition, faith and hope find meaning in number 14 of our Rule, where we are called to have an oratory in the midst of our cells, where we celebrate Mass and prayer in common every day. This tradition fed our Brothers since time immemorial and it fed those who came with Carmel to Zimbabwe in 1946, with faith and hope in the future. We can also be fed in this way and look forward to celebrating another milestone jubilee twenty years from now.



ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF YOUR OAK JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS

His Excellency, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Retired Colonel Christian M. Katsande
Zimbabwe's accredited Ambassador to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland

It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me and my wife to join you today as we celebrate Mass to mark the 80th Anniversary of the Carmelite Order in Zimbabwe. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Carmelite community for the kind invitation to participate in this Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving, marking eight decades of faithful service.

This anniversary is not only a celebration of years, but also a celebration of faith, courage, and dedication. The Carmelite missionaries who came to Zimbabwe many years ago brought with them not only their religious vocation but also a deep commitment to serve the people of Zimbabwe. Through their work in parishes, schools, and communities, they helped to nurture spiritual growth, promote education, and provide hope in times of great challenge.

Faith has always been a powerful force in shaping societies. It inspires compassion, strengthens communities, and gives people the courage to stand for justice and dignity. The work of the Carmelite missionaries reminds us of how faith, when lived with conviction, can transform lives and contribute to the building of a more just and humane society.

We remember with respect one of the early Carmelite missionaries to set foot in Zimbabwe, Father Donal Lamont, who later became the Bishop of the Diocese of Mutare. Bishop Lamont was not only



a man of deep faith, but also a man of great courage. At a time when many remained silent, he spoke out against the injustices and oppression faced by the people under the Rhodesian regime; He became a household name.

Through his writings, including his pastoral letter "Purchased People," and later in his famous "Speech from the Dock," Bishop Lamont gave voice to the moral responsibility of the Church to stand with the oppressed. His principled stand ultimately led to his deportation from the country. Yet his courage and moral clarity inspired many and contributed to the growing spirit of justice and liberation that eventually saw Rhodesia transform into the independent nation of Zimbabwe.

Today, as we give thanks for 80 years of Carmelite presence in Zimbabwe, we honour, and indeed pay tribute, to the legacy of those missionaries who served with humility and conviction. Their faith, sacrifice, and commitment continue to

inspire generations and remind us that the work of building peace, justice, and human dignity is never complete.

When, a few years ago, I presented my Letters of Credence to His Excellency President Michael D. Higgins and extended very warm greetings and best wishes for the welfare and prosperity of the Government and people of Ireland from His Excellency the President Dr. E.D. Mnangagwa, I committed to devote time to expand and deepen the very strong and traditional historical ties for the mutual benefit of our peoples. I wish to commend Fellow Zimbabweans working and living here for their sterling contributions to the socio-economic well-being of Ireland.

May this anniversary renew the mission of the Carmelite Order and strengthen its continued service to the people of Zimbabwe and beyond.

On behalf of His Excellency, the President Dr. E.D. Mnangagwa and the people of Zimbabwe, I say, Makorokoto! Amhlope! Congratulations! to the Carmelite community on this remarkable milestone, and may the Lord Almighty continue to bless your mission in the years to come.

Thank you.



HOMILY

Mass for the 80th Anniversary of Carmel's Presence in Zimbabwe

Fr Simon Nolan, Prior Provincial, Irish Province of Carmelites

It is a grace to gather here today in this Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, to give thanks to God for eighty years of Carmelite presence in Zimbabwe. But the Gospel we have just heard invites us to begin not simply with history, but with the heart.

We are brought to the tomb of Lazarus—a place of grief, loss, and what seems like an ending. And there, Jesus does something unexpected. He does not stand at a distance. He weeps. He calls. And he brings forth life where no one thought life was still possible.

That is where Christian hope always begins: not in strength, but in trust; not in certainty, but in hearing the voice of Christ who calls us by name. And in that light, what we celebrate today is not simply eighty years of work or achievement. It is a story of life called forth—again and again—by the Lord who speaks into what is fragile or uncertain and makes it new. The story of Carmel in Zimbabwe is a story of faith received, lived, and handed on; a story of people who trusted that the Lord who calls is also the Lord who gives life.

That story began in 1946, when three Irish Carmelites—Donal Lamont, Anselm Corbett, and Luke Flynn—arrived in what was then Southern Rhodesia at the invitation of Bishop Aston Chichester. Anselm Corbett remembered that their train pulled into what was then Salisbury at seven o'clock on a November morning, and later recalled that first Christmas in language both simple and moving: 'we felt lonely.' There is something deeply true in that. The works of God often begin not in strength, but in smallness and vulnerability—not in Jerusalem, but in Bethlehem. They began by learning the



language, living among the people, and allowing Carmel to take root in a new soil. Missions such as Triashill, St Kilian's, and St Barbara's followed, and over time the work grew across Manicaland and beyond. What began in fragility was sustained by hope, and slowly became something living and enduring.

The Gospel reminds us that Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Mission, then, is never simply a task; it is a relationship. The Carmelites did not come simply to build structures, but to share life: to walk with people, to bless marriages, bury the dead, teach the young, care for the sick, and listen to the deepest hopes and struggles of the communities they served. That is why the story endured.

We are blessed today by the presence of members of the Zimbabwean community here in Ireland, together with their priests, Fr Francis and Fr John. What we celebrate belongs not only to Carmel, but to the wider Church in Zimbabwe—a faith received as gift, made fruitful in its own soil, and now, in God's providence, shared again with the wider Church. In that spirit, we say with joy: Makorokoto to you all. We also acknowledge with gratitude those Carmelites here present, and perhaps joining online, who at different times—whether for many years or for a short while—gave of themselves in service in Zimbabwe.

This story, too, was never carried by one group alone. The Carmelites in Manicaland were already building on the work of the Jesuits and the Mariannhill Missionaries. We remember with gratitude the contribution of the St Elias Province of New York, the Australian Carmelites, and friars from many countries who served in Zimbabwe. We

acknowledge the support of the Spiritans, priests from Killaloe, and St Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegan). And we give thanks for the many congregations of women religious—Dominican and Precious Blood Sisters, Sisters of Charity, Marymount Sisters, the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Franciscan Missionaries for Africa, the Little Company of Mary, the Presentation Sisters—whose faithful service in schools, clinics and communities shaped the life of the Church in countless ways. Whenever God does something lasting, it is through many hands, many hearts, and many quiet acts of hope.

We are especially honoured today by the presence of those who carry this story forward: Fr Simplisio, Fr Shelton, and members of the Zimbabwean Commissary Council—Fr Aldrine, Fr Constantine, and Fr Paul. Your presence is a sign that this is not only a story of the past, but a living reality.

The Carmelite story in Zimbabwe has known both growth and challenge, but always a closeness to the people. In that journey, Bishop Donal Lamont stands out. As Prefect Apostolic and later Bishop of Umtali, he helped build the local Church, fostered local vocations, founded the Handmaids of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and spoke with courage for justice and human dignity. He understood that to preach Christ is to stand where Christ stands: with the people, especially in times of trial. We also give thanks for the ministry of Bishop Paul Horan, current Irish Carmelite Bishop of Mutare, whose leadership continues this living tradition, and whose establishment of the enclosed Carmelite nuns at the Monastery of the Holy Family, Weirmouth, Mutare, has been



transformative for the diocese and for the Church in Zimbabwe.

Today, that same story has come full circle. The gift once given by Irish Carmelites to Zimbabwe has, in God's providence, returned as a gift to the Church in Ireland. We see it in the ministry of Zimbabwean Carmelites among us: Fr Philemon in Kinsale, Fr Jimmy here at Whitefriar Street, and Fr Vitalis in Gort Muire. Their presence is a sign that what is given in faith is never lost, but bears fruit beyond what we can see.

On a recent visit to Zimbabwe, just over a week ago, I was at Evening Prayer at Mount Carmel Student House in Chisipite, in Harare. As the light faded outside, it began to shine through the stained-glass windows of the oratory—windows that had their own quiet journey. They had been made in Ireland, in the studios of Joshua Clarke, father of the well-known Harry Clarke, originally for the Presentation Convent in Maynooth. They were later restored by Ken Ryan of Abbey Stained

Glass Studios, and eventually brought to Zimbabwe by the late Fr Jim Doyle. And there, in that small chapel in Harare, the Irish glass caught the light of that place.

It struck me then that this, in its own way, is the story we are celebrating. Light passing through glass, its colours carried across generations—something made in one place, finding a home in another, and becoming luminous again in a different light. The glass does not hold the light; it receives it and lets it shine through. And so it is with faith, with mission, with Carmel itself. What was handed on was never meant to be kept, but to be received anew, to be made radiant again in another place.

Each November, the members of the Zimbabwean Commissariat gather at Triashill and at Kriste Mambo, to remember in prayer those Carmelites who served in Zimbabwe and who now rest in that soil. I have had the privilege of being present for that quiet and moving remembrance.

And alongside those graves stands a Wall of Remembrance, bearing the

names of those who gave their lives in the same mission, but who were laid to rest elsewhere—in Ireland and in other places. They too are held within that same act of memory and gratitude.

Together, wherever they lie, these Carmelites remain part of one living story—a witness handed on—which continues to shape and sustain the faith, the vocation, and the hope of Carmelites in Zimbabwe and in Ireland today.

And so we return to the Gospel. When Jesus calls Lazarus, he calls him out of the tomb into life. That same voice is still at work—calling his Church, calling each one of us, beyond what confines us, into the life he alone can give. And this is the deeper meaning of what we celebrate today: not only eighty years past, but a life still being called forth. If we listen, that life will continue—in us, here in Ireland and in Zimbabwe. And may Mary, Our Lady of Mount Carmel, walk with us, so that what has been given in faith may come to fullness in her Son. Amen.





MY FORMATION JOURNEY: FROM 8 JULY 2015 TO 5 JULY 2025

Lloyd H. Champiruka, O. Carm

After a long season of discernment – a wrestling within the heart – I felt called to take a step toward the ascent of Mount Carmel. On the 8th of July, 2015, I entered the Postulancy, thus beginning a journey both tender and trying. Leaving behind the familiar rhythms of ordinary life, I embraced the simplicity, silence, and surrender of religious life. It was as though I stepped into a desert, not of barrenness, but of divine invitation – a place where joy and struggle mingled like wind and flame.

The desert was real. The path was narrow. And yet, my heart was stirred by the realization that I had begun the very journey it had long desired. There were days when clarity fled, when the weight of commitment pressed heavily upon me, and I questioned the turn I had taken. But over time, grace unfolded quietly. I began to see not a mistake, but a refining fire – a season of transformation. It was in those hidden moments that I began to understand, however imperfectly, what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

When the Postulancy gave way to the Novitiate, a new light dawned. Upon receiving the Carmelite habit, this sacred chapter taught me to walk more deeply into mystery. It was a time of learning – not only about the Rule, the charism, and the saints of Carmel – but about myself. I came face to face with my own limitations, my inner wounds, and also the strengths God had placed within me. It was a school of the heart.

Under the gentle gaze of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and the fiery spirit of the Prophet Elijah, I found companionship in the saints and strength in Community.

The rhythm of Novitiate life, with its community projects, youth ministry, and parish involvement, watered my spirit in the dryness of the journey. Slowly, I began to love my vocation more deeply, not just as a path I had chosen, but as a path that had chosen me.

Then came the day of my Simple Profession, clothed with the full Carmelite habit, the mantle of Carmel – a moment of joy born not from ease, but from perseverance, longing, and grace. It was the fruit of saying “yes” again and again, even when the road grew steep.

After Novitiate, I entered the world of academic life – a new kind of challenge. Balancing the demands of study with the life of the spirit was no easy task. My greatest struggle came with philosophy, especially questioning the existence or reality of God, coming from an innocent and pious newly professed Friar, I initially struggled with philosophy. As someone more inclined to mathematics than the humanities, I found myself lost amidst abstract arguments and unfamiliar ways of thinking. The first semester felt like a storm without a compass. When doubt enters, even through one small door, it seeks to unseat the whole foundation. And yet, through hard work and the support of my Brothers, I found my footing. Slowly, the unfamiliar terrain became walkable. I completed my BA Honours in Philosophy with peace and even joy.

What sustained me most during this period was an online course in Carmelite Studies – a river of refreshment flowing through the desert of academics. It reminded me why I had come, and to whom I belonged.

Thereafter, I began Theological studies – another adventure of the soul. These were years I will never regret. I found my footing and felt at ease. The quality of formation I received, the friendships forged at Holy Trinity College, the conversations shared over meals and prayer—all these nourished me deeply. When Holy Trinity College closed its doors, it felt like a loss, yet God opened another door through Chishawasha Seminary. There, too, I learned lessons essential for priestly life.

One of the unexpected blessings of this time was my work with the Carmelite Third Order in the Student House. It became for me a space of growth, rediscovery, and a deeper rooting in Carmel. It was there that I realized not only was I being formed, but I was also beginning to offer something of myself to others.

As I neared the end of my theological studies, I was gifted with a spiritual month in Ireland under the guidance of Br. Pat Mullins, O.Carm. It was one of the most transformative seasons of my journey. More than a retreat, it was a prophetic unfolding – like Samuel being awakened in the night, or Mary resting in the home of Elizabeth. The Brothers in Ireland received me with kindness and wisdom. Their prayers, their conversations, even their gentle challenges became the threads that wove my heart closer to God.

And so, on the 5th of July 2025, I made my Final Profession – my solemn “yes” to the journey that began a decade earlier. A yes refined by deserts and oases, by doubt and discovery, by the silent work of grace and the faithful presence of many.

I give thanks to God, the Divine Companion of my every step. I thank my formators – those who guided me with love, challenge, and patient wisdom. I thank my Brothers in Carmel, my friends, and my family, whose support was a quiet strength in moments of weariness. May the Lord bless them all for their generosity.

As I now step into the mystery of ongoing formation, I ask for the continued intercession of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. May she who pondered all things in her heart accompany me, that I may remain faithful, fervent, and ever open to the shaping hand of God.





THE MISSIONARY STORY AS AN 'EVOLVING STORY'

John McGrath, O.Carm

There were several attempts made to evangelize an area in Africa now known as 'Zimbabwe', dating back to the sixteenth century. It was during 1879 when a more successful attempt was made by Catholic Missionaries who entered 'Zimbabwe' from South Africa and not from Mozambique as in previous attempts. The original Zambezi Mission of the Catholic Church, which included part of 'Zambia', was entrusted to the Jesuits by Rome on the 7th of February 1879. In time, the 'Zambezi Mission Area' was divided and ministered to by different Missionary groups from different Countries.

The first Missionaries (Trappist Monks) came to Manicaland during the year 1896. The first Mass/Eucharist was celebrated at Changunda's Kraal Village during 1896. There is an engraving into a rock marking the place where the first Mass was said, the site is along the Triashill Mission - Saint Barbara's Mission road. For about the first fifty years, the Missionary Story was shared between the Trappists Monks, the Mariannhill Missionaries, the Jesuit Missionaries, the Precious Blood Sisters, the Dominican Sisters, the LCBL Sisters, the Trinity Sisters and the Faithful of that time. The Jesuits took over the Triashill Mission area and its dependent station of Saint Barbara's Area during 1929 and ministered in the area until 1948.

The Carmelites came to Manicaland during 1946 and after two years of learning the language and familiarizing themselves with local culture and customs, they began ministering closely with the Jesuits. More and more Carmelites came to 'Zimbabwe' from 1946 onwards and ministered in Manicaland and Mashonaland. By 1971 there were about sixty Carmelites in 'Zimbabwe'.

The Church by its very nature is 'missionary'. In the summary of his Thesis 'The History of the Catholic Church in Rhodesia to 1960', submitted during 1974, Rev M. A. G. Davies, CFC wrote: "The Christian Church is a Missionary Church because of the command of her Founder, Christ. The aim of the Missionary is to establish a fully viable local Church ministered to by an indigenous clergy".

J. McGrath, O.Carm included in 'Mavambo', 2016: "The aim of all Missionary

work is to establish and build up the local Church, that the local Church be self-reliant, that the Hierarchy, Clergy, Religious, Lay-leaders and Faithful take care of the Pastoral, Educational, Health Care, Administrative and Social needs of the people at any given time. There are fewer and fewer Missionary personnel now in ministry in our Country due to their age and health conditions. We thank God for all that has been achieved by the Missionaries over the last Century or so, we now rejoice with the ever increasing number of Local Bishops, Clergy, Religious, Lay-leaders and Faithful now present in Ministry in the Church in Zimbabwe".

With the ever increasing number of Local Clergy and Religious now present in Ministry in the Church in Zimbabwe, all Missionary Personnel and Missionary Congregations can be proud of their achievements made through the Spirit of God in the Church in Zimbabwe. All Missionaries rejoice on the occasion of Priestly Ordination of the Local Clergy and on the occasion of the Religious Profession of the Sisters and Brothers in Local and Missionary Congregations. The Diocese of Mutare and all Missionary personnel in the Diocese are proud of the ever increasing number of Diocesan Clergy, Religious Clergy, Religious Brothers and Sisters who have made their commitment to the Priesthood and in the Religious Life either in Local Congregations or in Missionary Congregations. During 2015, Pope Francis addressed Missionaries of that time and stated: 'Look at the past with gratitude, live in the present with passion, and embrace the future with hope'.

When one speaks of 'Creation' one may wish to describe it in the following terms: 'The Universe's own story suggests that God Co-creates with the evolutionary process from within the Universe and not as a Supreme Being affecting it from outside'. Some people like to describe 'Creation' as a 'thing' while other prefer to describe it as a 'Story', an evolving Story. The 'Story' began in the distant past, has evolved into the present and will continue evolving into the future.

The Missionary Story had a beginning, has evolved in time, into our own time and will continue into the future. Some

Missionary Areas/Traditions date back to the early centuries while the Missionary Journey in Africa dates back to more recent centuries. All the Countries in Africa were colonized in recent centuries while again all the Countries in Africa were de-colonized in the last century. There are early historical records and accounts of experiences available in Church Archives, the Jesuit and Dominican Sisters Archives in Harare and in the National Archives in Zimbabwe. Guided and Blessed by the Holy Spirit, we are today very aware of the ever changing conditions of the 'Missionary Story' in the distant and recent past, in the reality of the present and life into the future.

Missionaries are people who are 'Sent' and people who are 'Received'. This 'Collection' includes accounts of Catholic Missionary Activity (16th Century) in the area of present day Zimbabwe. Towards the end of the 19th Century, more successful efforts were made by the Jesuits, Dominican Sisters, the Trappists, Mariannhill Missionaries and Precious Blood Sisters from South Africa. There is also other documentation of other Denominations beginning mission activities during the 19th Century in Africa. Missionaries were then sent from Countries in the 'Global North' to Countries in the 'Global South'. Taking present day Zimbabwe as an example, the English and German Jesuits, Dominican Sisters from Germany, the Bethlehem Missionaries from Switzerland, Precious Blood Sisters from Germany and South Africa, Spanish Missionaries, Presentation Sisters, Carmelite and Franciscan Friars from Ireland, Marist Brothers from Canada, RSHM Sisters from the USA, Sisters from the Netherlands, other members of Sister's Congregations, Lay Associates and Lay Volunteers, all came from the 'Global North'.

The Catholic Church in Manicaland had its beginnings dating back to 1895 and the Carmelites in Zimbabwe had its beginnings dating back to 1946. Zimbabwe as we are aware is part of the 'Global South' and we are part of the great 'Missionary Story' of the 'Global South'. The Diocese of Mutare and the Carmelites in Zimbabwe are part of the 'Missionary Story' of the 'Global South'. The legacy of the Missionary lives

on in the 'Global South', our Sisters and Brothers continue the legacy with the same core values of justice, respect, integrity, compassion, commitment, service and love.

On looking back in time, (late 19th and early 20th Centuries) and what it was all like then!! The terrain of present day Zimbabwe and what it was all like then!! Everything was all very important for the people of that time, just as everything was important for people in the following decades and again, everything is important for the present generation and will be for future generations. The difficult experiences, challenges and the length of the journey which the Jesuits and Dominican Sisters who came with the Pioneer Column during 1879 from South Africa to Mashonaland, (The greater area of the Shona speaking people in Zimbabwe) was important for the people of that time. The first Roman Catholic Mission to be opened in Zimbabwe was in Matabeleland, at Empandeni (1887), you can imagine the conditions then!! The journey from the Mariannhill Centre in Natal, South Africa to Triashill Mission in Manicaland and the difficulties experienced was important for the people of that time, lots has been written describing the length of the journey and the challenges experienced on the journey. Another example would be the bringing of building materials from Rusape Railway Station to Triashill Mission for the construction of the Church building at the Mission. All the materials were physically carried that long distance by the people of the Triashill area. From the descriptions above, the challenges and experiences were important for the people of that time.

The structures and the role of Missionaries has changed quite substantially in time but the basic values which motivates and inspires the Missionary has not. Initially, the Missionaries, lay Missionary Volunteers, Apostolic Workers were the early providers in Education, Health Care and Religious Education among the people in the developing world.

There has always been remarkable achievements in the missionary world because of the generous contributions of many loyal supporters of Missionaries towards the poor and marginalized in the 'Global South'. With the advent of Development Organizations and Groups, the many Humanitarian Activities and Aid received, the many efforts in Holistic Development, involvement by the United Nations and their Organizations and the World Bank, countries and people in the

'Global South' have greatly benefited from the generosity of such Organizations from the 'Global North'. Some 'Faith-inspired Organizations and Agencies' working in partnership and in solidarity with the many 'Missionary Movements' have also in their generosity helped their less fortunate Brothers and Sisters in so many ways.

The Missionary Movements worldwide, their Associates and Development Organizations have been most active in so many ways, to mention a few: Rural development projects - Income generating projects. - Provision of drinking water supplies. - Sanitation services. - Setting up of Nursing Schools. - Support of HIV infection and control of diseases. - Provision of transport and aiding in the construction of many physical buildings. - Setting up Social Services, helping and empowering the poor and the vulnerable through education and skills to sustain themselves with dignity and to eliminate dependency wherever possible.

The work of Advocacy has been loud and clear in many respects of the Missionary Journey: Advocating for Human Rights and Social Justice. Peace-building. Climate Change, protection of nature and the environment of God's Creation, Ecological integrity. Gender equality, the welfare of women in developing countries. Protecting the girl child and protecting them from early marriages. Providing Education facilities for so many children and adults. Promoting an awareness of the dangers of female genital mutilation. Centres of caring for pregnant women and girls and child-birth services. - Awareness of the vulnerability of women and girls and human trafficking. People living in absolute poverty stricken areas. Overcoming Poverty with Justice.

In our present day Ministry, local and indigenous Clergy, Religious and Lay Associates who have been inspired by Missionary Personnel and Ministry in the past are now ministering with Diocesan and Religious Authorities. They are now carrying forward the legacy of the Missionaries in poor and deprived communities, during natural disasters or emergencies and at times they are the first responders.

Parish twinning arrangements can be an innovative model of partnership and support for all. People can continue to build on the Legacy of the past, they can continue their material support and prayerful encouragement. They can be proud of past involvement and generous contributions. Twinning is becoming a new human bridge between Parishes in

the 'Global North' and the 'Global South'. Lay Missionary Volunteers can continue to share in the great work of development and in the work of the Church.

Bishops, Clergy, Religious and Faithful People of the 'Missionary Story' have witnessed and continue to witness to the 'Evolving Story' of their Ministry. The conditions for preaching the Christian Faith have changed enormously in the past one hundred years and cultural changes have been profound and rapid. In particular we are conscious of some of the aspects of the 'Evolving Story' in Zimbabwe at any given time, to mention a few: - The Teaching methods, Catechism, and the Sharing of the Word. - Our attitude towards Cultural Diversity and Change, Cultural Diversity experienced by local people and Missionary personnel. - The various 'physical buildings' required. - The Pastoral approach. - Approaches to Education and Health Care. - Liturgical Celebrations. - Vocations and Formation Ministries. - The War experiences in Zimbabwe. - Political developments. - We are now very conscious of the remarkable increase in the numbers of the indigenous Clergy and Religious and the role of our Faithful People in the Church of today in the 'Global South'. The 'Journey Continues', the journey and story continues to evolve.

The dream of every missionary is, in time, to 'move on' to 'move over', move over so that the local people take on ownership and responsibility in all aspects of Church Life. There are of course some Missionaries, though fewer and fewer who are still active, others who work alongside and others who are in a supportive role of the local Clergy, Religious and Faithful. It is true that the lives of Missionaries, because of their many experiences, ministries and commitments have been truly enriched themselves and they are indeed Sons and Daughters of the One whom they came to serve.

The 'Story' continues, there are now Clergy, Religious and Faithful who are committed in their own countries and are prepared to become missionaries in other countries. What were Missionary 'Receiving' Countries are now Missionary 'Sending' Countries themselves. The 'Story' has not concluded, but a different and exciting new chapter has and continues to emerge. Matt Moran includes in his publication that 'A vibrant new movement continues the 'Missionary Story'.



THE DIOCESE OF MUTARE AND THE CARMELITES IN ZIMBABWE

John McGrath, O.Carm

The Establishments

Many Church related Developments took place in Manicaland, in the Eastern Area of present day Zimbabwe during the early 20th Century by the Trappist Monks, the Mariannahill Missionaries, the Dominican Sisters and the Precious Blood Sisters. The Carmelites came during 1946 and began their Ministry in Manicaland during 1948. Sisters from many Congregations around the world came to the area of Manicaland from 1949 onwards and served in many Schools, Hospitals and other Social Services. Many Mission and Parish Foundations and other developments, such as hospitals and schools followed from 1951 to 1971. The Carmelites found the people of Manicaland friendly, polite and most willing to listen to the message of Christ, a message of love and forgiveness, a message of freedom from fear and evil. The War of Liberation was fought during the 1970s with Independence during 1980. During the War Years and before the War Years, Bishop Lamont was an outspoken man, a resolute opponent of social and political discrimination in the Country. After the War of Liberation, during the 1980s, Mission restoration began because of the severe damage to buildings and infrastructure which had taken place during the war. Carmelite Formation in Zimbabwe began during the middle of the 1980s, firstly in the Bvumba area outside Mutare and then at Kriste Mambo.

The Apostolic Prefecture of Umtali/Mutare was erected by the Holy See during 1953 and Donal Lamont, O.Carm was appointed its Vicar Apostolic. He set about establishing the structures which the new Prefecture would need and his fellow Carmelites became key to this work. Four years later the Prefecture became a Diocese with Bishop Lamont as its first Bishop with a growing number of Carmelites from Ireland, England, Australia and from the USA, all in varied ministries in the Diocese of Umtali/Mutare.

Most of the establishments in this article are in Mutare Diocese since the Carmelites were entrusted with that part of the country. A few other places were

also established in the Archdiocese of Harare. Carmelites have since given most of the establishments to the dioceses for the growth of the local Church. Below are some of the establishments started by the Carmelites in the two dioceses they serve, Mutare and Harare. It might not be exhaustive list but it captures most of the established places over the years.

- 1896 is quite significant because the First Mass in the Triashill Mission Area was celebrated around the Changunda Area.
- 1898/1899. The Catholic Church in Umtali/Mutare Town.

During their early years, the Trappist and Mariannahill Missionaries had a 'holding site' for building materials at the present Saint Joseph's Church and School area in Rusape. They probably had some accommodation there also.

- 1910. First Mass. In the Saint Barbara's Mission Area. From Triashill Mission.
- 1910. The Sisters of the Precious Blood. Triashill Mission. The first religious group of Sisters in area.
- 1913. Developments began at Saint Barbara's Mission.
- 1913. Saint Benedict's Mission was established.
- 1923. The Church of the Holy Rosary in Umtali/Mutare Town. (Church Blessed, 1926)
- 1923. The Holy Trinity Sisters. Saint Barbara's Mission and Triashill Mission.
- 1926. Dominican Sisters in Umtali/Mutare
- 1925. St Killian's Mission
- 1927. Saint Robert's Centre in Umtali/Mutare. (Church and Hall. Blessed 1930). (Paulington Area of Mutare today).
- 1932. LCBL Sisters at Triashill Mission.
- 1937. Saint Dominic's School in Umtali/Mutare.
- 1945. Mount Melleray Mission. Dominican Sisters at Mount Melleray.
- 1947. Presentation Sisters at Mount Melleray Mission.

The Carmelites came to Manicaland in 1946 and after two years of learning the

local Shona language and familiarizing themselves with local culture and customs, they began ministering closely with the Jesuits. More and more Carmelites came to 'Zimbabwe' from 1946 onwards and ministered in Manicaland and Mashonaland. By 1971 there were about sixty Carmelites in 'Zimbabwe'. From 1951 onwards, the 'Ecclesiastical area entrusted to the Carmelites' began to expand and many new Mission Foundations were started.

(Detailed information on the following Foundations is contained in 'Mavambo' (The Beginnings), Pages 52 to 95) and in the Publication, 'The Catholic Church in Manicaland 1896 – 1996. Prefecture of Umtali, 1953 and Diocese of Umtali, 1957.

- 1951. Saint Anna, Wengesi. Around the Masvingo/Chimanmani Junction. Which was discontinued in 1955.
- 1952. Saint Simon Stock, Rusape. A Primary School named Saint Joseph's Rusape was built in 1963.
- 1953. Avila Mission, Katerere was established.
- 1954. 'Drumfad', The Bishop's Residence in Umtali/Mutare.
- 1954. The Carmelite Priory, Mutare. Third Street Mutare. The administration of the Commissariat was conducted from here till a new establishment in 2022.
- 1955. Regina Coeli Mission, Nyamaropa.
- 1955. The Catholic Hall, beside the Carmelite Priory, Third Street, Mutare.
- 1956. Saint Therese Mission, Chiduku.
- 1958. The Carmelite Priory, Hatfield, Harare.
- 1958. Saint Joseph's Mission, Sakubva, Mutare. (SCMM Sisters, the TB Hospital was the first construction at the future Mission. The Carmelites ministered at Saint Robert's Church and resided at the Carmelite Priory in town.
- 1959. The Foundation of the Carmelite Sisters in the Diocese of Mutare. (HLMC). The Carmelite Sisters in the Diocese of Mutare were Founded during 1959, their First Professions were at Saint Benedict's Mission during 1961.
- 1959. Saint Andrew's Mission,

Marange.

- 1959. Saint Columba's Mission, Honde Valley.
- 1961. Saint Peter's Mission, Checheche, Chisumbanje.
- 1962. Saint Charles Lwanga Junior Seminary, Chimanmani for the formation of the local clergy.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Carmelite policy was to help establish a local Diocesan Clergy in the Diocese of Mutare before opening a Carmelite Novitiate. Under Bishop Lamont, the Carmelites staffed and taught at the minor Seminary in Chimanmani from around 1962.

- 1962. Saint Patrick's Mission, Nyanyadzi.
- 1964. Carmel College, Mutare.
- 1964. Kriste Mambo Secondary School along the Rusape/Nyanga Road. (SCMM Sisters, The Netherlands)
- 1969. Saint Michael's Mission, Tanda.
- 1971. The Blessing of the Most Holy Trinity Cathedral, Mutare. 11.07.71 (Diocese of Mutare)
- 1976. Saint Martin's Hall/Church in Florida in Umtali/Mutare Town. Served by the Cathedral Clergy from the Carmelite Priory in Umtali/Mutare.

War of liberation started in the 70s

During conversations with Fr. Martin O'Regan O.Carm over the last few years (2020 and 2022), he often stated that he and so many of our brothers in Rhodesia, during the liberation war were lucky to survive. It was the grace of God that we never lost anyone due to shootings etc. Often the 'Freedom Fighters' were intoxicated or suffered from other substance use, eg, dagga. He had a good understanding with the local leader of the 'Freedom Fighters' (Batahana) and relied on him for control of the Fighters. On one occasion, one of the 'Freedom Fighters', acting alone, came to Regina Coeli Mission demanding to talk to all the people on the Mission. Martin refused his request stating that it was the policy of 'Batahana' that such a request would not take place on the Mission. The Fighters were never treated at the Mission Hospital, as a record would have to be made of such treatments. Some Fighters were treated at the Father's House by the Sisters. It was always a high risk having the Fighters on the Mission as one never knew when the Security Forces or the Police would come and then a battle would ensue. It

eventually happened during 1977 which resulted in the withdrawal of Martin and the Franciscan Sisters from Regina Coeli Mission. However, 'Zimbabwe' recovered, and the Church grew steadily as we have experienced.

- 1981. Carmelite Sisters at Mount Carmel Centre. (Saint Dominic's School in Mutare).
- 1982. Bishop Alexio Muchabaiwa was consecrated Bishop of Mutare.
- 1983. Priests from the Killaloe Diocese in Ireland came to Minister in Mutare. (Ministry in the Diocese of Mutare, 1982 – 2004).
- 1984. Carmelite Sisters Novitiate. Rusape/Nyanga Road. (Was situated at Saint Benedict's Mission from 1959)
- 1984. Spiritans came to Minister in the Diocese of Mutare.
- 1985. Carmelite Pre-Novitiate at Kriste Mambo.

The Carmelite Commissary Provincial, Thomas Power was instrumental in inaugurating a Formation Structure for Zimbabweans wishing to join the Carmelite Order during 1982/83. A Pre-Novitiate was established in 1983 in the Bvumba Area outside Mutare. During 1985, the Pre-Novitiate was transferred to Kriste Mambo and the Carmelite Novitiate began at Kriste Mambo during 1986 with the approval of the Order in Rome. Constantine Masarira and Conrad Mutizamhepo were the first two Novices to begin at Kriste Mambo. A previous arrangement regarding Formation for Zimbabweans was made when Francis Cyprian Kennedy, Peter Claver Marimanzi, Francis Tandi and Raymond Maunde completed their Novitiates and Studies in Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s.

- 1986. Carmelite Pre-Novitiate and Novitiate at Kriste Mambo.
- 1986. Tongogara Centre. Saint Michaels. Middle Save.
- 1987. Mount Carmel Student Residence, 2, Ridgeway North, Chisipite, Harare.

In 1987, a residence for Carmelite Student Brothers in Philosophy and Theology was established at Mount Carmel, 2, Ridgeway North, Chisipite, Harare. The Brothers attended lectures at the Major Diocesan Seminary at Chishawasha. Later the Brothers studied Philosophy at Arrupe College/University and Theology at Holy Trinity College. Extra Student accommodation was constructed at

Mount Carmel Student Residence during 1998. After the closure of the Holy Trinity College in Harare during 2024, our Brothers returned to the National Seminary at Chishawasha, September 2024, to complete their Theological Studies.

- 1989. Saint James, Chipinge.
- 1989. Saint Patrick's Missionary Priests (Kiltegan) came to Minister in the Diocese of Mutare. (Ministry in the Diocese of Mutare, 1998 – 2008).
- 1998. New Wing at Mount Carmel Student Residence in Harare.
- 1999. Priests from the Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnois in Ireland came to Minister in Mutare. (Ministry in the Diocese of Mutare, 1999 – 2008)
- 2000. New Wing at the Carmelite Priory, Hatfield, Harare.
- 2001. Mount Carmel, Headlands.
- 2003. Death of Bishop Donal Lamont, O.Carm in Ireland.
- 2014. Prophet Elijah, Nyazura. Carmelite Pre-Novitiate.

From 1985/1986 to 2014, the Carmelite Pre-Novitiate and Novitiate was situated at Kriste Mambo. The Pre-Novitiate was transferred to Prophet Elijah in Nyazura during 2014. During 2022 the Carmelite Regional Novitiate (Novices from Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and Zimbabwe) was relocated to Nyazura and the Pre-Novitiate was transferred to Kriste Mambo.

- 2015. Carmelite Nuns, Weirmouth, Mutare.
- 2017. Death of Bishop Patrick Mutume in Mutare.
- 2019. Carmelite Holiday House in Nyanga Town.
- 2022. Carmelite Regional Novitiate at Nyazura.
- 2023. Our Lady of Mount Carmel Priory, Shelly Avenue, Fairbridge, Mutare.
- 2024. Death of Bishop Alexio Muchabaiwa in Mutare.
- 2025. Carmelite Community at Saint Alois, Chitungwiza. Saint Alois Catholic Centre was established during 1962 by the Jesuits. (The Carmelites, 1963 onwards).
- 2026. Carmelites, Eighty Years of Presence and Ministry in Zimbabwe.

To some the above are just dates or names of places but to us there are people attached to these dates and places. There are hours of hard work and sacrifices put in the development and growth of the local Church. During this jubilee year,

we remember all the people we worked with and we served, both living and dead. We remember not just dates, places and

events but also the smiles, commitment and sacrifices made by the Carmelites in establishing these places. To you may

they not be mere dates but history that that build the local Church.



EIGHTY YEARS OF CARMELITE PRESENCE IN ZIMBABWE: A REFLECTION

Conrad Mutizamhepo, O.Carm

Introduction

On October 25, 2025, at St Simon Stock Parish, Rusape, the Carmelite Provincial of the Province of the Immaculate Conception and St Patrick's which comprises of Carmelite houses in Ireland and Zimbabwe, Fr Simon Nolan, O. Carm., inaugurated the beginning of a year of celebrating eighty years of Carmelite presence in Zimbabwe. The Carmelite presence in Zimbabwe began with the arrival of the first three Carmelite missionaries in November 1946 consisting of Fr Donal Raymond Lamont, Fr Anselm Corbett and Fr Luke Flynn. They had made the long voyage to Southern Rhodesia in response to an invitation by the Bishop of Salisbury, Bishop Ashton Chichester SJ, to share in the evangelization effort especially in Manicaland. The arrival of the Carmelites eventually led to the Jesuits gradually pulling out of mission stations in Manicaland in order to concentrate on ministering in Salisbury, Gweru and Chinhoyi areas.

Bishop Chichester's invitation of the Carmelites must be read in the context of Pope Pius XI's *Rerum Ecclesiae*, a significant encyclical published in 1926, written to encourage the formation of indigenous young men to the priesthood and even their appointment to take up episcopal office. But, the situation in Rhodesia at the time was such that the Jesuits were stretched in supplying the evangelization needs of the expansive Zambezi Mission covering all of modern day Zimbabwe and parts of modern day Zambia.

In this reflection we will concentrate on the methodological approaches employed by the Carmelites, their continued development of the mission infrastructure when the Diocese of Umtali was created in 1957, the evangelical challenges they encountered, and the obstacles of living through the Rhodesian Bush War which resulted in majority rule in April 1980. We will also look at the post-independence war period and the commencement of the formation of indigenous young men in Carmelite life.

learning the Shona language and culture as well as adjusting to the English and German Jesuits' temperaments. Anselm Corbett and Luke Flynn recounted that their first Christmas in Rhodesia felt very lonely.² This was a sentiment that many a missionary felt over the years when they were posted to difficult-to-access remote mission outposts which they laboured to establish.

In August 1947 Anselm and Luke left Mhondoro for Triashill on an expeditionary trip and were picked up from Rusape train station by Bro Meyer, SJ. At Triashill, they were welcomed by other Jesuits, Fr Friedrich and Br Lisson and German Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood who after dinner offered them "the locally distilled schnapps" which was "an admirable nightcap".³ The pioneer Carmelites left Mhondoro for the last time on 12 December 1947 for Harare and got onto the train to Rusape where they were met by fellow Carmelites Raymond Lamont, Andy Wright, Bernard Clinch and Angelus Kinsella.

After some weeks of mentoring and collaboration with the Jesuits at Triashill Mission, Fr Corbett took charge of the mission during December 1947 before the last of the Jesuit superiors left on 27 December 1947. During the weeks of handover-take-over Fr Corbett wrote in his diary: "... during the ensuing weeks of 1947 I spent a great deal of my time with the outgoing Superior, Fr Friedrich, SJ., examining registers, account books and even rent books. We walked together to kraals of the Mission land and met headmen and other *vakuru*. We examined fields for the contour ridging that, by



Celts among the Shona Salisbury, the Carmelites were met at the railway

On arriving at the Salisbury train station in the Vicariate of Salisbury in 1946 the three Carmelites were welcomed by Fr Seed, SJ. In the following days Anselm Corbett and Luke Flynn were sent to St Michael's Mhondoro for orientation and cultural immersion. Fr Lamont remained with Bishop Chichester in Salisbury giving retreats and parish missions.¹ The orientation consisted of adapting to the tropical climatic conditions of heat and humidity,

1 Leo Gallagher, O. Carm., *The Catholic Church in Manicaland 1896-1996*, Harare: Kolbe Press Pvt Ltd, 1996, p.29. See also John McGrath, O. Carm., *Mavambo (The Beginnings): Celebrating 70 Years of Carmelite Presence in Zimbabwe*, Dublin: The Irish Province of Carmelites / Millbrook Press, 2016, p. 45.

2 Anselm Corbett, O. Carm., *Notes from a Diary: Selected Prose and Poetry*, Dublin: The Carmelite Order, 2003, 120.

3 Anselm Corbett, *Ibid.*, 157.

law, must assure soil conservation in the rainy season. We inspected the mission cattle, the milking sheds and the cattle-dip down in a valley behind the mission kopje..."⁴ Mundane as this might sound, early missionary ministry involved not only proclaiming the word of God but also ensuring the means of survival.

While the Carmelites inherited the eastern highlands of Rhodesia for their missionary work from the Jesuits, Marianhill missionaries had preceded them establishing Triashill which they had reached on the feast of Holy Trinity 1896. Marianhill missionaries – priests and brothers – opened other centres, some of which, became viable mission stations in the succeeding years such as St Barbara's Mutasa, St Benedict's Chiendambuya, St Kilian's Makoni. The Second World War presented the German Marianhill missionaries with difficulties as they were treated with suspicion by administrative officers of English extraction. In the end, in 1929 the Jesuits took over control of Triashill until 1948. During the Jesuit period many satellite schools and clinics were opened including the establishment of Mt Melleray.

The Carmelites took over Triashill from 1948, and continued to build on the efforts of both the Marianhill Missionaries and the Jesuits. The transfer of Jesuit run missions to Carmelites was completed in 1953. The process went relatively smoothly largely due to the friendship that had developed between Fr Donal Lamont and Bishop Aston Chichester. As more Irish Carmelites arrived annually, they took up administrative and pastoral responsibility of the established missions until the Prefecture of Umtali was created on 2 February 1953 under the leadership of Fr Donal Raymond Lamont. The Prefecture was raised to the status of a diocese on 1957 under the headship

of Bishop Donal Lamont. The Carmelites who evangelized in Manicaland were not only Celts; other Provinces sent some members, namely the United States of America Province of St Elias, the Australian Province, the British Province and the Dutch Province. From 1946 to 2001 a total of 83 non Zimbabwean Carmelites from overseas had ministered for varying lengths of time in Zimbabwe.

Methodological Approaches to Evangelization

The Irish Carmelites' missionary outreach to Rhodesia in 1946 was a bold evangelical venture for "a Religious Order that had no missionary tradition". Although lacking a missionary tradition, the majority of the Carmelites sent to Rhodesia learnt quickly from their Jesuit mentors and collaborators as well as imparted their own unique Carmelite charismatic traits that were received by the people of Manicaland. The Carmelite methodological approach to evangelization continued the evangelization techniques long employed by the Trappists and Jesuits before them consisting of construction of churches, schools, hospitals and accommodation facilities for personnel. This is captured clearly by Fr Michael Hender who wrote: "Spreading the Gospel of Christ meant establishing a Mission and this involved the construction of buildings such as a church, school and hospital, as well as accommodation for their personnel... Church, hospital and school – each demanded much time and toil: organising instructions in the faith and for the Sacraments at various venues; transporting the sick from hut to hospital day or night; building, maintaining and governing schools over a wide area on behalf of the Government..."⁵ Ministry for missionaries demanded a tremendous sense of selfless availability and dedication.

After the departure of the Jesuits, Carmelites continued to serve in the missions that had been established by the Trappists and Jesuits namely Triashill, St Barbara's, St Kilian's, Mount Melleray and the now the defunct St Robert's Mutare. When the Diocese of Umtali was established in 1957, the diocese experienced phenomenal growth which saw the erection of St Anna's, Wengezi (1951 but closed in 1955); St Simon Stock, Rusape (1952); St Teresa of Avila, Katerere (1953);

Carmelite Priory, Mutare (1954); Regina Coeli, Nyamaropa (1955); St Therese, Chiduku (1956); St Joseph's, Sakubva (1958); St Andrew's, Marange (1959); St Columba's, Honde Valley (1959); St Charles Lwanga (1959); St Peter's, Chisumbanje (1961); St Patrick's, Nyanyadzi (1962); Carmel College, Umtali (1964, sold to the government in 1981); St Michael's, Tanda (1969). Holy Trinity Cathedral, Mutare was built and blessed in 1971 which replaced the Holy Rosary church which had been built in 1923. St Martin's Florida was established in 1975. Evangelization in the Diocese was not only a Carmelite activity; it involved other Religious Congregations like Sisters of Charity from the Netherlands who established Kriste Mambo Secondary School in 1964 and St Joseph's Sakubva Primary and Secondary Schools (1967). The Marist Brothers established St Patrick's Secondary School, Nyanga (1959). In independent Zimbabwe more Religious Congregations were invited to minister in Mutare Diocese such as the the Holy Ghost Fathers (Spiritans) in 1983, priests from Killaloe diocese in Ireland (1983), and priests of St Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegan Fathers)(1989). The reasons for such invitations were principally two; first, the Carmelites could no longer provide needed missionary personnel, and second, the Diocese of Mutare had not generated enough local vocations to satisfy the needs of the Diocese. On the contrary, some Congregations left the Diocese such as the Presentations Sisters (1981) and the Dutch Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Mercy in 1993.

In the phenomenal expansion that followed the creation of Mutare Diocese, Carmelites employed the traditional methods of evangelization that combined preaching the gospel with social welfare activities such as promotion of access to education and its management, health care, spiritual-pastoral care and accompaniment of the converted, social reform and development as well as the courageous defence of indigenous people's rights to education, land and fair treatment before the law. In establishing missions, Carmelites stressed presence and building of friendly relationships with local chiefs and their people. The establishment of mission schools was one of the key strategies for two major reasons; first, literacy promoted access to reading the



⁴ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁵ *Carmelites in Zimbabwe 50 Years: A Souvenir of the Golden Jubilee of The Irish Carmelites in Zimbabwe 1946-1996*, p. 17.

Bible in the local indigenous dialects, and second, it was a broad facility to capture the young African children for Christ before African philosophy was deeply ingrained in them. Many missionaries before Carmelites arrived in Rhodesia, as the Carmelites themselves noticed, had observed that it was difficult to win over the majority of African men to Catholicism because they were unwilling to betray their cultural ancestral veneration which was interpreted by missionaries as incompatible with Catholic Christianity.

After the Second Vatican Council new evangelization approaches became stressed such as inculturation or contextualization, that is, attempting to adapt the Christian message to local cultures and not merely spreading European cultural norms as equivalent to authentic Christianity. One of the reasons why African Independent Churches arose was that mainline Churches failed to connect with the complex socio-spiritual realities of the African in ways that were continuous with African cosmology and existential challenges.

Also flowing from the Second Vatican Council was the strong emphasis on social justice and interfaith dialogue. Carmelites' presence among the people in urban centres and remote places allowed them to notice the injustices visited on the indigenous population. Coming from Ireland and its history of colonial occupation and struggle for independence, Irish Carmelites were more easily disposed to sympathizing with Africans in their lobbying for justice and eventual armed struggle when the white settler regime closed all avenues to meaningful negotiations. In the struggle between the minority government and the Tangwena people, for example, although the Church did not act with one voice, with some supporting the government stance while others were sympathetic to Chief Rekayi Tangwena in resisting the dispossession of ancestral lands for resettlement in Gokwe following the declaration that the Tangwena land was now European land under the Land Apportionment Act, and later, the Land Tenure Act of 1969. In 1969, the Smith regime declared a special proclamation to override the legal success of the Tangwena at the courts and declared them squatters with the consequence that police bulldozed villages, burnt crops and impounded over

500 cattle.⁶ An Anglican social worker whose citizenship was stripped because of his fellowship with the dispossessed, Guy Clutton-Brock, and some Catholic clergy offered some assistance to the Tangwena people through the Nyafaru Community development Company. The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace undertook the painstaking work of documenting wartime atrocities and criticizing government repression. With the Tangwena people resisting eviction, government abducted their children and placed them as refugees in the care of some missionaries at Triashill mission, St Barbara's and Visitation Makumbe and the Methodist Church's Epworth mission. The children seconded to Triashill and St Barbara's stayed there from 1972 to 1977. Frantic efforts were made to secretly contact their parents and eventual visitation of these children at Nyafaru Community Development Company premises, Nyanga. Arrangements were made to secure a meeting at Triashill mission between Bishop Lamont and Chief Rekayi Tangwena who the bishop gifted a pipe and some tobacco as a gesture of friendship.⁷ The ages of the children ranged from 4 to 14 years. Later some of the children were sent to Mt Melleray mission, St Mary's Magdalene and St Therese Chiduku. With priests facing threats and harassment from security forces children were surrendered to the Department of Social Welfare. However, because the Department of Social Welfare had no accommodation the children were taken to a Remand Home where they were kept until January 1980 being treated as prisoners.

To enable the implementation of the spiritual-pastoral care of the new converts and the building of mission



schools, health care centres, churches and provision of vehicles, missionaries worked in close collaboration with the Provincial administration in Ireland, St Elias Province, USA, the Carmelite Province of Australia and other generous benefactors and funding agencies like Misereor and Missio of Holland and Germany.

The Joys and Challenges in the Mission

For the many Carmelite missionaries who left their home countries - Ireland, the United States of America, Australia, Britain, the Netherlands, and Canada – for Southern Rhodesia, it was a veritable adventure. Many of the missionaries came with the enthusiasm of bearers of good tidings. Jesus' words, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10) inspired many. Missionaries indeed brought with them the message of Christ – a message of love and forgiveness, a message of freedom from fear and from evil. The proclamation of the Gospel of salvation came with the active commitment to banish disease and ignorance through establishment of health care centres and schools and the lobbying for the respect of the rights and dignity of indigenous people and communities. Missionaries everywhere were joyful to notice the friendly and cooperative dispositions of the people of Manicaland – the vaBarwe/ Sena, the Manyika, the Maungwe, the Bocha, and the Ndau. The peoples of the eastern highlands prized *hunhu*, a common Bantu philosophical concept that guided their manner of interaction with others and strangers that values essential human virtues such as the spirit of solidarity, compassion and dignity. Through the provision of the social services of schools and health care, missionaries grew to be appreciated as forces of good in the gradual transformation of communities by looking at the mission stations as centres of not only education but also development. Missionaries' exerted effort in introducing newer methods of agriculture and self-sustainability while at the same time being ecologically friendly. It can be said that Christian mission stations generally, and Catholic missions in particular, were seedbeds of educational enlightenment and social transformation.

6 C. Hazangwi, "A Short History of the Tangwena Children", C. Hazangwi was an ex-Tangwena child at St Barbara's Mission.

7 C. Hazangwi, "A Short History of the Tangwena Children". See also: M. Hender, O. Carm., "The Tangwena Story", in *Our 1970s in Zimbabwe*, Harare, 2011, 4-7.

The late Bishop of Mutare Diocese and successor of Bishop Donal Lamont, Bishop Alexio Churu Muchabaiwa, paid tribute to the many sacrifices made by missionaries when he wrote: "Our missionaries came to a culture not their own and often endured great hardships so that God's love for us in Christ would take root among us".⁸

Some of the challenges that missionaries encountered were the tropical climatic conditions, disease, the lack of proper road networks to service their areas of responsibility, the culture shock, the experiences of loneliness and having to endure many years before returning home for holidays. The tropical climatic conditions sapped the energy of many a missionary leaving them tired. Malaria and bilhazia were a constant threat to their health and wellbeing when they slept in huts when on visit to satellite schools and Mass centres. The rugged tracks for roads wrecked the backs of many with the effects catching up with many of the missionaries suffering from backaches in later years. Spreading the Gospel of Christ demanded time and toil involving "organizing instructions in the faith and for the Sacraments at various venues; transporting the sick from hut to hospital day and night; building, maintaining and governing schools over a wide area on behalf of the Government".⁹ Some missionaries learnt and had a good mastery of the Shona language and the dialects specific to certain areas, valuing as they did the importance of communicating with people in their own language. Such mastery of the local language offered them the facility to preach, teach and accompany people not as outsiders but as insiders. But there were some who found learning local languages tough-going. Those who could not master the language well collaborated with other evangelization agents, namely, local consecrated sisters, catechists and teachers who translated their messages.

One of the greatest Carmelite missionaries' challenges was the Rhodesia Bush War. Although the seeds of conflict were sown by the colonial project from the beginning, it was worsened by white settler intransigence and refusal to have a negotiated settlement particularly after Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration

of Independence on 11 November 1965 in an attempt to maintain white minority rule in defiance of the British government's demands for constitutional changes leading to African majority rule. Ian Smith was so defiant that he said: "I have not envisaged that the African majority rule would come in my lifetime, or even in a thousand years". Smith's justification was that UDI was declared to preserve justice, civilization, Christianity and defend the country and the world against communism. For many nationalists, the UDI was the spark that triggered the liberation struggle that only ended with the attainment of majority rule in 1980.

All missionaries who arrived to serve in Rhodesia were quick to notice racially discriminative laws which Africans endured in their own country. Discriminatory laws affected all aspects of life touching on access to ablution facilities, ownership of land, commerce, education and administration of justice. The Tangwena people's story was a case in point. In the name of the Gospel of Christ and promotion of human dignity, Bishop Lamont emerged as the Carmelite spokesperson. He was diligent in his analysis of the blatant inequalities in Rhodesia and resolute in his opposition and denunciation of racial, social and political discrimination. In 1959, Lamont issued his pastoral letter, *A Purchased People*, in which he asserted the necessity for the Church to speak through her bishops, and denounced the oppressive white minority rule in Southern Rhodesia challenging colonial legitimacy and advocating for justice and self-determination of black people, even before the Unilateral Declaration of Independence. *A Purchased People* was the first pastoral letter to address the evils of discrimination, segregation and denial of rights and freedoms penned by a bishop. After it, Bishop Lamont in collaboration with other Catholic Bishops, issued many other pastoral letters and pronouncements addressing issues like land, legislation, segregation and education. In his own personal capacity, Bishop Lamont continued to apply the pressure on the minority government by writing letters to the editor of the Rhodesian *Herald*

newspaper critical of the Smith regime. Furthermore, on 22 September 1976, Lamont delivered an unsworn statement to circumvent being cross-examination and incriminating personnel from his diocese. The statement was later published in book form under the title *Speech from the Dock*¹⁰ in which he traced his own personal history, the development of Umtali Diocese and Catholic Church teaching. He addressed the incident at Avila Mission which led to his trial and concluded by explaining his reasons for the diocesan directive to assist guerrillas and to refuse to report their presence to the Rhodesian authorities.

By the mid 1970s, the situation of insurgency intensified disrupting the smooth flow of life. Many school pupils absconded from school and fled to Mozambique to train as freedom fighters. Mission stations got entangled in the web of the guerrilla war. Carmelites tried to continue with their normal pastoral activities. In the distant outposts of the missions, Carmelites encountered freedom fighters who requested assistance. The response of Irish Carmelite missionaries was informed by the discerning opinions of Handmaid of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Sisters, founded by Bishop Lamont in 1959. The war years were filled with tension and danger with some Carmelites escaping death by a whisker. Fr Gerald Galvin and Fr Tom McLoughlin sustained bullet wounds while Fr Lawrence Lynch, Fr Martin O'Regan and Bishop Lamont were arrested, faced trial and got deported. Some Umtali Diocesan priests like Bishop Mutume, Fr Max Muzungu, Fr Alexander Sakarombe and Ignatius Mhonda together with some Carmelite Sisters were tortured, imprisoned and subjected to other forms of inhumane treatment that left them traumatized for alleged support of, and collaboration with the so called terrorists, that is, freedom fighters.

Most missions and churches were closed during the war period. In some areas, such as Ruda in Honde Valley, local people were herded into security fences known as "keeps" designed to detach them from supporting freedom fighters. Being true to one of the values of Carmelite life, namely, to live in the midst of the people,

8 M. Hender, *Carmelites in Zimbabwe 50 Years: A Souvenir of the Golden Jubilee of The Irish Carmelites in Zimbabwe 1946-1996*, p.7.

9 Ibid., p. 17.

10 Pastoral letters issued by the Rhodesia Catholic Bishops Conference included: *Peace through Justice* (1961); *Problems of our People* (1963); *Plea for Justice* (1965); *Pastoral Message* (1967); *A Call to Christians* (1969); *A Crisis of Conscience* (1970); *A Pastoral Message* (1973); *Reconciliation in Rhodesia* (1974); *Racial Discrimination* (1974); *Road to Peace* (1976); *United by Consent* (1977); *A Plea for Reconciliation* (1978); *Centenary of the Catholic Church* (1979), and *Welcome to Zimbabwe* (1980).

some Carmelites continued to live at their mission stations carrying out their spiritual and pastoral accompaniment of the faithful. Fr Michael Kenny remained at St Barbara's mission throughout the war. In a letter to Professor Terrence Ranger, Fr Kenny explained that his Irishness was a significant factor in remaining in place: "It is not simply a sense of solidarity with a pleasant people, but also a sense of justice, plus, in my own case, the fact that I was seeing with my own eyes what I had heard from my mother as a child".¹¹ Fr Joseph Neville also stayed through the war period at St Kilian's mission, Makoni. Bishop Lamont had issued an instruction that priests were to support all people who required their help without distinction. This included offering help to freedom fighters especially medical help. One reason why priests remained on missions through the wars years was that local people were on their side. On a number of times missionaries offered legal aid, food, clothing and medicines to needy people. Despite exercising prudence in dealing with both the security forces and freedom fighters, there were some casualties of significant church agents such as teachers as in the case of Mr Alfred Sambaza of St Barbara's, catechists Alois Dota of St Kilian's and Pius Mutizamhepo of Regina Coeli.

At the attainment of independence missionaries engaged in a fact finding mission to assess the state of missions. Some missions had been destroyed and needed reconstruction. Initially, the



prospects of continuing with missionary engagement were uncertain in light of the Marxist-Leninist political philosophy of the ZANU PF party. When the lay faithful saw government encouraging State-Church collaboration in the reconstruction effort through revival of social services, confidence in the church grew and many faithful returned to practising the faith.

Formation of Indigenous Carmelites

From the time of their arrival Carmelites did not actively promote vocations to the Carmelite religious life among indigenous young men. However, sensitive to the need to cultivate and nurture local vocations, Bishop Donal Lamont established St Charles Lwanga Minor Seminary in 1961 to get African men to begin their studies for the priesthood.¹² The Carmelite missionaries committed a lot of personnel and resources to this formation venture and out of the 170 candidates who passed through the institution 38 were ordained priests with one becoming a bishop.¹³ Two of St Charles Lwanga candidates later joined the Order of Carmelites.

The first Rhodesian-born to become a Carmelite was Fr Cyprian Francis Kennedy. Entering the Carmelite novitiate at Kinsale in 1948, he undertook university as well as priestly studies and got ordained in 1956. In the 1960s three other African men left for the Carmelite novitiate in Ireland. The first of the three Africans to become Carmelites were Fr Peter Claver, who was already a priest of the Archdiocese of Salisbury. The other two were Frank Tandi who was ordained to the priesthood in 1970 but later left the priesthood. The other one was Raymond Maunde, who was ordained to the priesthood in 1971.

With fewer Carmelite missionaries coming from Ireland because of declining vocation trends in the 1980s and the growing age profile of active ones, Carmelites began a more structured formation programme for indigenous young men who were considering the consecrated life in the Carmelite Order. Following a meeting

of Carmelites at St Charles Lwanga, Melsetter, they produced what they called the Melsetter Document.¹⁴

Although the Melsetter Document discussed the question of vocational recruitment to the Order, there were mixed reactions with some disapproving of the venture while others wished to share the riches of the Carmelite charism with the local church.¹⁵ It took the visionary enthusiasm of Fr Thomas Power to give "the initial impetus to the formation programme"¹⁶ when he became the Commissary Provincial at the Provincial Chapter of 1982. Having taken some period of studies in the United States of America, Fr Power returned to Zimbabwe keen to have indigenous young men sharing in the Brotherhood of the Carmelite Order and he established a formation programme, first at Vumba with Fr Paul Graham and Fr Ambrose Costello as formators. In 1985, the programme was moved to Kriste Mambo where many batches of pre-novices and novices were introduced to Carmelite religious life from 1985 to date. From 1986 to 2002, Fr Leo Gallagher accompanied the novices while Fr Sean Murphy was the first director of philosophy students at Nazareth House, Harare. In 2014, there was a separation of the pre-novitiate programme with the designation of the Prophet Elijah Priory, Nyazura as a pre-novitiate house and spirituality centre. Later, pre-novices moved back to Kriste Mambo formation house while the Prophet Elijah Priory was erected as the Novitiate House during 2022.

Carmelite formation passes through the stages of the pre-novitiate, the novitiate, and the period of simple profession. The pre-novitiate or postulancy is a period dedicated to cultivating self-knowledge and discernment of and purification of candidates' motivation in order to strengthen each one's response to the call of God. It also offers candidates the opportunity to live in community and to experience the call of God in a way that is free and objective. During the novitiate stage, candidates are initiated

11 Fr Michael Kenny in letter to Professor T. Ranger, quoted in Janice McLaughlin, *On the Frontline: Catholic Missions in Zimbabwe's Liberation War*, Harare: Baobab Books, 1996, 108.

12 Leo Gallagher, O. Carm., *The Catholic Church in Manicaland 1896-1996*, Harare: Kolbe Press, 1996, 61.

13 *Ibid.*, 64.

14 Carmelites met from 6-12 December 1981 for the Carmelite Spiritual Renewal Week to discuss on a number of topics: 1. Carmelite Living: 1.1. Prayer, 1.2. Fraternity, 1.3. Life Style, 1.4. Witness as Carmelites; 2. Apostolate, 3. Leadership: 3.1. Diocesan, 3.2. Carmelite, 3.3. Participation in decisions; 4. Personnel: 4.1. Teamwork among priests, 4.3. Use of Carmelite Personnel, 4.4. Recruitment / Vocations; 5. Irish Province: 5.1. Our Relationships as members of the Province; 5.2. Home Support; 6. Other

15 Carmelite Spiritual Renewal Week, Melsetter, 6-12 December 1981, note 4.4.

16 Leo Gallagher, *Ibid.*, 33.

into Carmelite life so that they learn to internalize, experience and identify themselves as Carmelites in light of the Carmelite charism, traditions and values. At the conclusion of the novitiate successful candidates make their first profession followed by taking up studies in philosophy and theology.

Initially philosophy and theology studies were done at the Regional Major Seminary of Saints Thomas More and John Fisher, Chishawasha. Later students pursuing philosophy were enrolled at Arrupe College (now Arrupe Jesuit University) and those undertaking theology studies were enrolled at Holy Trinity College. With the closure of Holy Trinity College in May 2024 due to falling enrolment, theology candidates have since returned to pursue studies at the Regional Major Seminary, Chishawasha. In order to maintain high standards of formation, indigenous friars have taken opportunities for further studies in diverse disciplines both locally and internationally. The areas of study have been diverse: formation, spirituality, pastoral care and leadership, moral theology, education, systematic theology, child and family studies, and project management.

Since the formation programme commenced in Zimbabwe, there has been a steady growth in the number of friars. A robust vocation promotion exercise was mounted which involved vocation promoters visiting schools, holding come-and-see opportunities and use of print and digital media platforms. To date there are 35 friars in solemn profession of whom 33 are ordained priests and 1 deacon. The increase in local vocations means that Carmel's mission to spread the message of the Kingdom of God can continue.

During 2004 Carmelites met at the former Diocesan Training Centre, Mutare, to discuss priorities for the foreseeable future and came up with a document referred to as *Policy Statement Agreed at the Zimbabwean Commissariat EGM*.¹⁷ The document stated that Carmelites would, henceforth commit themselves to three priority clusters, first, vocations, formation and Carmelite spirituality; second, communities, sharing ministry and

strategy for ministry; third, education. In line with the Policy Statement, Carmelites withdrew from certain missions and pastoral care activities in Regina Coeli mission, St Kilian's mission, Triashill, St Barbara's in Mutare Diocese and Seke Rural in the Archdiocese of Harare. Painful as the withdrawals were for both Carmelites who had worked in these places and the people who had been served by Carmelites, the Carmelites wanted to return to "live their life of allegiance to Christ through a commitment to seek the face of the living God (the contemplative dimension of life), through fraternity, and through service (*diakonia*) in the midst of the people".¹⁸

After 2004 Carmelites concentrated on serving the people of God in the missions and Carmelite houses comprising a minimum of three friars at the Priory Mutare, St Joseph's Sakubva, St Simon's Stock, Kriste Mambo High School and parish, Mount Carmel Students' House, St Joseph's Hatfield, St Agnes Zengeza and St Alois Hunyani. During 2015, the Prophet Elijah Priory was opened as a pre-novitiate house and spirituality centre. Much later, Carmelites pulled out of St Agnes Zengeza.

The major objective of this restructuring exercise envisaged by the Policy Statement was to "create supportive, praying communities with a healthy structure which will enable us to live our Carmelite life and accommodate the human needs of the brothers and the pastoral needs of our apostolates".¹⁹ The situation that existed after Zimbabwe became independent that some friars were living on their own at some missions was discontinued with friars committing to "creating communities in which there is a balance of age, culture and compatibility" characterized by respect for "the individual gifts of each brother and to promote full responsibility and participation by every brother in community and ministry".²⁰

While the number of Irish missionaries declined due to some of them returning to Ireland for medical care and some due to death, the indigenous Zimbabwean Carmelites took up leadership and administrative responsibilities for the

continued witnessing to Carmelite charism, values and traditions.

As we look ahead, Zimbabwean Carmel is rightly proud of the legacy of the Irish, American and Australian Carmelites. They left a legacy of selfless service to the upliftment of the people entrusted to their care through promotion of social services of education, access to health, spiritual accompaniment and pastoral care as well as prophetic courage to speak truth to power and where necessary exercised denunciation of racial discrimination, state brutality and injustice. Missionary Carmelites in Zimbabwe have been courageous men of God who left the comfort of living and serving among their own peoples to face loneliness, disease and in some cases premature death to transmit the Christian message of the Kingdom of God – a Kingdom of holiness, grace, justice, love and peace. They struggled to learn the languages and cultures of the people and through presence among the people they mastered the language, cultivated friendships which were the basis for collaboration in building church infrastructure that continue to be aesthetic spaces of worship and the formation of conscience, schools to drive out the darkness of ignorance and health centres to keep diseases at bay.

The new generation of Zimbabwean Carmelites are privileged to stand on the strong shoulders of our elder brothers. We owe them a debt of gratitude which is best expressed by our renewed commitment to embrace the Carmelite charism, spirituality, traditions and values of living a life of brotherhood, prayer in the midst of the people, a life of response to the needs of the local and universal church, a preferential service to the poor and marginalized, and a life of commitment to justice, peace and integrity of creation. The missionary Carmelites who served in Zimbabwe left us a standard to live by rooted in intimacy with Jesus Christ in prayer following the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the prophet Elijah, anchored in fraternal life in community and expressed through service in the midst of the people.

17 *Policy Statement Agreed at the Zimbabwean Commissariat E.G.M.*, Diocesan Training Centre, Mutare, 15-16 April 2004. The Policy Statement was a follow up to the Annual General Meeting of February 2004.

18 Constitutions of the Order of the Brothers of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel Approved by the General Chapter 1995, Rome, Middle Park, Victoria: Carmelite Communications, no. 14.

19 *Policy Statement Agreed at the Zimbabwean Commissariat E.G.M.*

20 *Policy Statement Agreed at the Zimbabwean Commissariat E.G.M.*



ST. SIMON STOCK PARISH

Paul M Charidza, O.Carm

The year 2025 has been one of abundant grace and spiritual growth for St. Simon Stock Parish, under the Diocese of Mutare. Guided by faith, unity and pastoral dedication, the parish community has continued to flourish through numerous liturgical, social and formative activities that strengthened both faith and fellowship among the faithful.

Below is a summary of the notable events and milestones that characterized the life of our parish during the year.

Diaconate Ordination of Br. E. Kapumha – 15 February

The parish joined in joyful celebration as Br. E. Kapumha, a son of the parish from St. Anthony of Padua Station, was ordained to the Sacred Order of Deacons at the Holy Trinity Cathedral, Mutare. The event filled the parish with great pride and thanksgiving, as we witnessed one of our own taking a significant step in his vocation to serve the Church.

St. Joseph's Day Celebrations – 16 March

The St. Joseph's Rusape Station hosted the annual celebration in honour of their patron saint. The event brought together all parish stations for Eucharistic celebration, fellowship and communal activities. It also served as a fundraising occasion to support parish projects and financial obligations. The celebration was marked by unity, joy and active participation from all corners of the parish.

Mother's Day Celebrations – 31 May

On this day, all women of the parish gathered at Sunset Breeze Resort, Rusape, for a special Mother's Day commemoration. The occasion provided a platform for reflection, recreation and mutual support among mothers. The event successfully promoted solidarity and inclusivity, reinforcing the role of women as pillars of faith and family within the parish.

Pentecostal Sunday Celebrations – 8 June

In an effort to enhance participation across all parish stations, Pentecostal Sunday was celebrated within eight parish clusters. This approach ensured that every

member could meaningfully partake in the solemnity of the day. The decentralized model was well received and is expected to be adopted for other major liturgical feasts in the future.

Father's Day Celebrations – 14 June

The men of the parish convened at St. Anthony of Padua Station for the annual Father's Day celebrations. The day's program included prayer, reflection and recreational activities designed to strengthen fraternity and spiritual growth among fathers. The event fostered unity and active involvement of men in parish life.

Silver Jubilee of Priestly Ordination – Rev. Fr. V. Benza – 26 July

The parish joined the wider diocesan community in celebrating Rev. Fr. V. Benza's 25th Anniversary of Priestly Ordination. The Thanksgiving Mass was held at his homestead in St. Barbara Mission, Kanganya Village. The milestone was a moment of deep gratitude for Fr. Benza's faithful service and enduring witness to the priestly vocation.

Inaugural Parish School of Catechism – 18–23 August

A significant achievement in the spiritual formation of the parish was the successful establishment of the St. Simon Stock Parish School of Catechism. The inaugural session took place at St. Joseph's Primary School, offering comprehensive catechetical classes in Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. Participants were drawn from all parish stations, marking a major step forward in deepening catechetical knowledge. The program will continue during subsequent school holidays.

Priestly Ordination of Rev. Fr. E. Kapumha – 30 August

Having earlier received the diaconate in February, Rev. Fr. E. Kapumha was ordained to the Sacred Priesthood at Kriste Mambo High School, Rusape, on 30 August 2025. The parish was represented in great numbers, giving thanks to God for blessing us with another priest from our midst. A Thanksgiving Mass was subsequently held on 31 August 2025 at his family homestead, which was graced

by parishioners and clergy alike.

Official Opening of the Parish Grotto – 7 September 2025

A momentous occasion in the spiritual life of the parish was the official opening and blessing of the Grotto at St. Simon Stock Parish, presided over by His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Paul Horan (O. Carm), Bishop of Mutare Diocese. The event was attended by representatives from all parish stations. Gratitude is extended to St. Joseph's Primary and High Schools for providing their buses to facilitate attendance by the faithful from outstations. The day will remain a cherished milestone in the parish's journey of faith.

Weekly Pilgrimage of Hope Program

The parish continues to conduct its Pilgrimage of Hope every Thursday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. This weekly spiritual exercise remains a vital aspect of the parish's pastoral life, offering a space for prayer, reflection and spiritual renewal among parishioners.

Oak Jubilee Launch – 25 October

On the 25th of October, the Commissariat launched its Oak Jubilee Year, under the theme "Rooted in Faith, Growing in Hope: 80 Years of Carmelite Presence in Zimbabwe" at the Parish. The event was graced by Bishop Paul Horan, O.Carm, the Bishop of Mutare Diocese and the Carmelite Provincial Fr Simon Nolan O.Carm. Our Sister Carmelite Parishes from the diocese of Mutare and the Archdiocese of Harare witnessed the occasion together with the rest of the Carmelite Family. The day's homily reflected on the sacrifices made by the first 3 Carmelite Missionaries who came to plant the seed of Carmel in Zimbabwe. They would be delighted to see how that seed has grown into a big tree, offering shade and shelter to people and birds of the air. The day was also occasioned by the diaconate ordination of Br Lloyd Champiruka O.Carm.

Sadly, the parish hosted a memorial mass for Fr Ambrose Costello O.Carm who passed on in Ireland, in November 2025. His last mission he served in Zimbabwe was St Simon. The event was attended by the Carmelite Family and Bishop Paul

Horan. Rest in peace Fr Ambrose Costello O.Carm (Chapungu).

Conclusion

The year 2025 has been one of blessings, spiritual enrichment and community growth

for St. Simon Stock Parish. We remain deeply grateful to God for His abundant grace and to all parishioners, clergy and pastoral leaders whose tireless efforts made these achievements possible.

As we move forward, may the Holy

Spirit continue to guide and strengthen our parish family in faith, service and unity — that we may truly live out our calling as one body in Christ.



ST. ALOIS HUNYANI COMMUNITY

Silvester Mubako, O. Carm

Chapters come and go; appoints and reappoints and leave a mark on Brothers. Each and every appointment brings different forms of memorable joys in it. 2024 Provincial Chapter witnessed the appointment of three brothers at a newly opened community of St. Alois Hunyani, namely Frs. Owen, Herbert and Silvester. Upon appointment at St Alois Community, the three Brothers could not occupy the new Community immediately. There were some renovations to be done to make the place more habitable, comfortable, prayerful and secure. In that vein, the Brothers had to execute their duties at St. Alois from afar: Fr. Owen was staying at Mt. Carmel Student House Chisipite, Frs. Ngoni and Silvester were staying in Hatfield Priory; a big thanks to the hosting Communities.

Meanwhile, construction of the carport started in September 2024 whilst renovations of the house mainly the touch ups on security and house fittings were still in progress. This took us some time until January 2025. During this period, to show their love and willingness of starting a new Community in Chitungwiza, the three Brothers would gather every month for a Community meeting; the venue being

their long-anticipated Community at St. Alois; specifically, in an-to-be sitting room which by that time was only occupied with donated sofas, a sign of our mendicant calling. Thanks to Holy Trinity College. These Community meetings were to map the way forward in terms of what needed to be done around the place and also strategizing on ministry.

Come January 2025, seems the new baby now had enough, not all, to accommodate the three Brothers. We always remember each time we received a phone call from the Commissary Provincial, Fr. Ezevia Murambiwa O.Carm, it was now on asking for the date we were to move in. He couldn't wait to see the new Community constituted. The Commissary Provincial would always ask. "When are you moving to St. Alois?". "This month I think" would be the reply. After realizing that perhaps the three Brothers are having the fear of the unknown of locating to Chitungwiza, one day he said "January has thirty-one days. On which of those days are you moving to Chitungwiza?" The three Brothers gathered for a meeting and finally agreed on the date to move to Chitungwiza, the 22nd of January 2025. The cells were now furnished; the sitting room now had a television set

and the big-many-shelved-empty kitchen was now furnished and without a cook. Thanks to the constant supply of funds by the Commissary Provincial and Council.

On the 22nd of January 2025, the "three musketeers" had their procession to the new Community. What a memorable day it was!!! The Commissary Provincial, and Fr. Constantine Masarira together with a few Parish executive members came to join us for supper on the day; perhaps to make sure that we were at the place for sure or safely. We are yet to hear about the motive from them. One thing we all remember is that on this day we didn't have any electricity outage; what a lovely welcome!! However, this was the day we noticed that the kitchen was empty; some had to eat supper without the sufficient cutlery. "Can I have a fork baba?". Fr Constantine asked. "I also don't know whether we have forks or not padre. We all arrived here today baba.", replied the Community 'bursar'. We recreated together this evening but knowing for sure that there is no running water in the house. Buckets were our favorite utensils in the Community; making sure that each has at least two. They were a substitute for the gym considering where we would get water. On the following day, the 23rd of January, we had our first Community Mass in our empty Chapel. God knows where the Prior had sourced the extra utensils and cloths for Mass. The Commissary Provincial was the main celebrant. In his homily he emphasized how it is important to live in the midst of the people of Chitungwiza and that as the pioneers we needed to transform the spiritual lives of the people of Chitungwiza and above all to make the community a home. From then on, we were getting used to the life in the new community. Noticing day by day what's needed in the house. Thanks to parish mai vakuru who helped us identify what was needed in the kitchen and where to buy



Blessing of St. Alois Community House by the Provincial: 01 June 2025

such. Thanks also to the parish as a whole who made sure that our life be comfortable through some donations like linen.

The first project was on making sure that we give each other an option of whether or not to gym by doing some plumbing. We made sure that water was now running in the house. Later on, we installed the 16 Kilovolt-Ampere (kva) solar system to cater for the electricity outages in the country as a whole. Before this, brothers



Community members: Frs. Owen Kudumba, Ngoni Nyamangwanda and Silvester Mubako
First Mass in the House: 23 January 2025

would use some very small solar lamps for prayers, meals, recreation and Masses in the morning. With the help of the solar system, now we don't even know whether there is power outage or not. We also went on to up our security around the Community houses. A 2,4 meters high perimeter wall was constructed spiked on top. And an electric-motor driven gate and intercom were installed. Now it is difficult to differentiate life in the leafy areas of Harare low density suburbs and our life here at St. Alois Hunyani. Apart from Parish ministry, there is also education ministry to be set. The social center building within the premises is under renovations to start an infant school called St. Titus Brandsma College. For all these projects, we would want to profoundly thank the Provincial, Fr. Simon Nolan O.Carm and the Provincial Council and the Commissary Provincial, Fr. Ezevia T. Murambiwa O.Carm and the

Commissary Council for availing the funds to make sure that the new Community has a comfortable, prayerful and secure environment. The Community was officially blessed by the Provincial on the 1st of June 2025 in the presence of a number of Brothers and the St. Alois Parishioners.

All brothers are welcome to visit St. Alois Community. It's a serene, tranquil, idyllic and calm environment which can provide you with a halcyon time. One simply needs to get to the beautiful sound of the taking-off and landing airplanes which always and at anytime of the day may remind you of where you are. The three Brothers are happy to be the pioneers of the new baby in the Province. It is always a privilege to be pioneers of a community for it gives the Brothers room for creativity and innovation within the bounds of our Carmelite charism of course.



PROPHET ELIJAH COMMUNITY

Lloyd H. Champiruka, O. Carm

The Prophet Elijah is Community is composed of nine Brothers: five novices and four solemnly professed friars, gathered from different lands yet formed into one heart and one spirit. Among the novices, two hail from Kenya – Samuel and Kelvin – while three are sons of Zimbabwe – Earnest, Laudare, and Talent. Like young shoots planted by running waters, these Brothers have taken root with remarkable grace in the soil of the Novitiate. Open, generous, and attentive to the whisper of God, they have embraced this new terrain of life with courage and hope.

True to its name, the Prophet Elijah Community bears the spirit of the man of fire, the prophet who stood in the presence of the living God and heard Him not in the earthquake or the storm, but in the sound of sheer silence (cf. 1 Kgs 19:12). In this spirit, the entire Community becomes "Eli" – a help and companion – especially to the novices, as they discern their call within the Carmelite way. While the Regional Novitiate remains the heart of the Community's mission, Prophet Elijah Community also caters for the spiritual growth of the Friars, laity, priests and religious in Zimbabwe through its retreat centre. In this way, it transmits its spirituality

to the local Church. In addition, it serves as the powerhouse of the Commissariat's projects. These works, though practical and demanding, are themselves expressions of contemplation made flesh, for Carmel teaches that prayer and work rise together like incense before God.

Carmelite spirituality has often been described as an ascent of the mountain. St John of the Cross speaks of the soul climbing the *Mount of Perfection*, shedding all that is not God, until it reaches transforming union. The Novitiate, then, is the season when the novices begin to learn – through lived experience – how to climb this mountain, which is Christ Himself. Yet this ascent is never solitary. It is a twofold journey: as the novices learn by doing, those who walk with them also continue their own ascent, seeking ever deeper union with God. In this way, the Prophet Elijah Community becomes both home and school – a place where hearts are formed for intimacy with God and availability to His people.

This formation is carefully nurtured through lessons offered by the solemnly professed Brothers – Simplisio, Wiseman, Underson, and Lloyd – who share not only knowledge but also the wisdom born of

lived fidelity. These lessons aim to shape the novices into true Carmelite Friars: men of fraternity, steeped in contemplation, and eager to serve the People of God. As St Teresa of Avila reminds us, *"The Lord does not look so much at the greatness of our works as at the love with which they are done."* Beyond the classroom, the novices engage fully in community projects and in welcoming and serving retreatants, learning that charity-hospitality is the true measure of contemplation.

Beyond the walls of the Community, the Friars joyfully extend their service to the wider Church, assisting at St Simon Stock Parish. In this, they live the Carmelite balance of solitude and service, contemplation and mission. As St Thérèse of the Child Jesus so beautifully expressed, *"In the heart of the Church, my Mother, I will be love."*

It is our fervent prayer that Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Star of the Sea and Mother of all Carmelites, and Prophet Elijah, our father and patron, may continue to guide and strengthen this Community. May they help us persevere in the ascent of the holy mountain, until the day we reach our true home – where the climb ends, and God is all in all.



ST JOSEPH HATFIELD

Alexio Makokowe, O.Carm

A New Chapter of Faith and Fellowship: Life at St. Joseph's Priory, Hatfield

Welcome to St. Joseph's Priory in Hatfield—a vibrant and welcoming community of four Carmelite friars, Alexio, Michael, Aldrine, John. Established in 2024, this new community is already a beacon of hospitality, prayer, and active ministry.

A Harbour of Hospitality

True to the Carmelite spirit, our doors are always open. We are a hub for both Carmelites and non-Carmelites, welcoming local and international guests. This spirit of welcome is rooted in our core values of "Ubuntu"—the African philosophy that emphasizes our shared humanity—and the timeless Carmelite charism of hospitality. We believe in building bridges, not walls.

Vibrant Life and Celebrations

Our days are structured around prayer and fellowship. We celebrate Daily Mass together and pray the Divine Office with the faithful. Each day concludes with community recreation, a time to share and relax. A weekly highlight is our Monday Evening Meal, where we host all the Carmelite brothers present in Harare, strengthening our wider fraternal bonds.

A Season of Growth and Achievement:

We were blessed to host three of our student Brothers for their Community immersion. Their names are Cyprian



Dziwema, Joseph Sami, and Christino Chiveza who are at different stages of Theology and Philosophy formation. Their energy, fresh perspectives, and deep theological discussions brought a renewed vitality to our community.

In a moment of great pride, Fr. Alexio Makokowe was recently appointed the Dean of the South East City Deanery in the Archdiocese of Harare. He now joins Fr. Aldrine Muchenje as the second Carmelite representative in the Archdiocesan Senate of Priests, amplifying our order's voice in the local church.

Pastoral Ministry

Our parish has three mass centres, St Joseph Hatfield, St Patrick Epworth and St Pius Manyame, which celebrate weekly masses. The life in the parish is punctuated by Small Christian Communities, adult and

youth guilds, and Choir sessions. These activities encourage solidarity and full participation of parishioners in the Parish.

Sunday Masses are continuously being celebrated in the Parish to bring the faithful closer to God.

Church projects

St Joseph Hatfield

The parish has a number of running projects. Firstly, it started the paving project at St Joseph's Hatfield to improve the Church yard and water drainage. In addition, the station upgraded the Church old billboard and make it more informative.

Church tiling at St Patricks Epworth

This project started in 2024 and it went on well. We managed to tile the whole church, 388 square meters have been tiled to date. The plan is to tile all other areas in the church that require tiling in order to ease the floor polish pressure on women/sections who keep our church clean. Bench clamping was done to protect the recently installed tiles and prevent breakage of tiles. Work still in progress.

On the 5th of April 2025 the Ground Breaking ceremony to construct the presbytery was done by the Parish Priest Fr Alexio Makokowe O. Carm. Materials were consulted by the committee Treasurer Mrs Mukanyaidze and works started in April and continued till the end of May where funds were exhausted. The project progress has been delayed due to lack of funds which is our biggest challenge. It is our hope that the project will resume soon.





ST JOSEPH SAKUBVA

Tafadzwa Muchabaiwa, O.Carm

St. Joseph Sakubva Mission continues to thrive as a hub of spiritual growth, community service, and development. Its recent achievements and ongoing initiatives reflect a commitment to spreading Catholic values while addressing the needs of its community.

Pastoral Developments

In the first half of 2025, the parish successfully organized retreats for both the youth and adults. These retreats have been instrumental in nurturing the spiritual growth and faith of the participants. The Ministry of Sacraments has also shown significant progress. In 2024, the parish was blessed by the presence of the Bishop of the Mutare Diocese, Rt. Rev. Paul Horan, who conferred the sacrament of confirmation. This visit was a moment of great spiritual renewal for the community. Additionally, there has been an outstanding increase in the participation of Small Christian Communities in parish activities, with a strong emphasis placed on section prayers. This has fostered unity, a sense of belonging, and deeper faith among the parishioners.

Development Projects

The parish has demonstrated a deep commitment to development through its four-year strategic plan, initiated in 2023, which is set to conclude in 2027.



The plan has already achieved significant milestones, including the repainting of the church and the installation of a solar system that powers both the church and the water borehole. These projects have improved the mission's sustainability and functionality. Looking ahead, the parish is focused on refurbishing the parish hall and renovating the old parish toilets, further

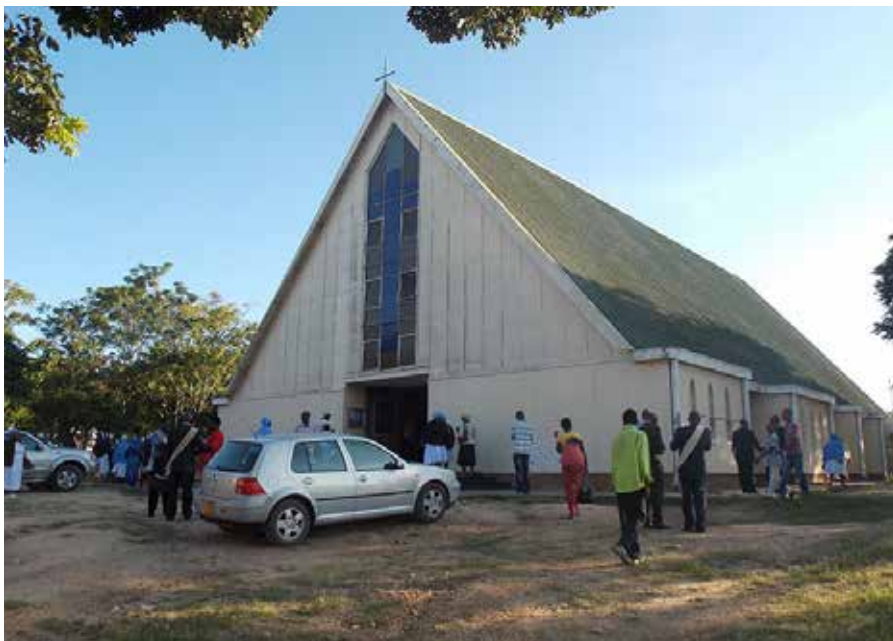
enhancing the physical infrastructure to better serve the community.

The Carmelite Community

At the heart of the mission is the Carmelite community, home to three priests: Fr. T. Muchabaiwa, Fr. L. Gutu, and Fr. M. Murungu. Their spiritual leadership and dedication have been crucial to the mission's success. Fr. C. Masarira, who resides at the Carmelite Priory in FairBridge Park, also provides valuable support to the parish.

Other Ministries

St. Joseph Sakubva is not only a center for worship but also a hub for education and healthcare. The mission hosts primary and high schools that incorporate Catholic Christian values into their curriculum, shaping learners both academically and spiritually. A hospital managed by the Dominican sisters provides essential healthcare services. Additionally, the Diocese of Mutare Community Care Program (DOMCCP) addresses social development issues. Recently, in early 2025, the mission welcomed Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCCJP), further broadening its scope of community service.





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