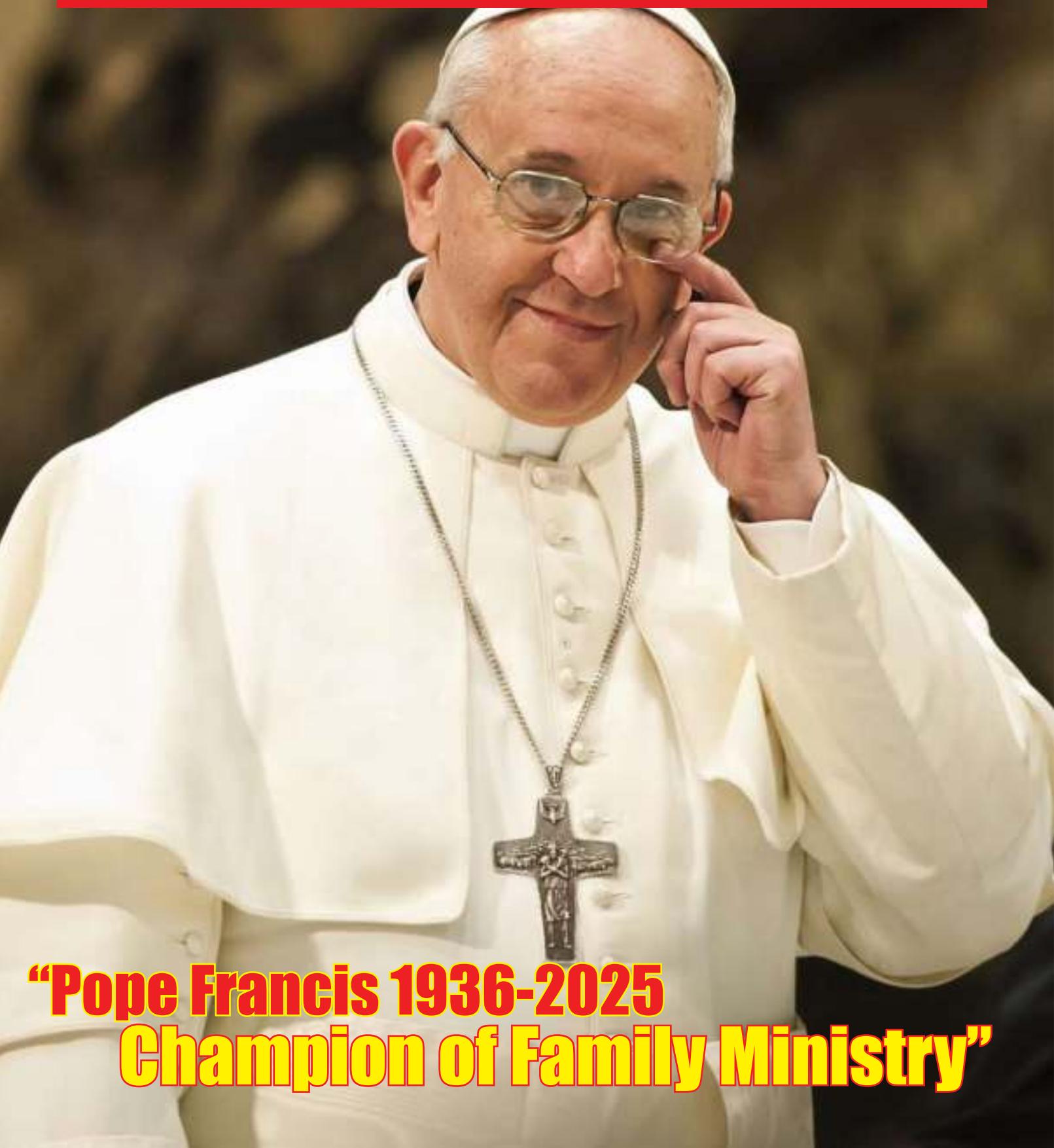


NEW PEOPLE

No. 216 May – June 2025

The African Church open to the World



**“Pope Francis 1936-2025
Champion of Family Ministry”**



“The Joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church.”

(Excerpt from Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, of the Holy Father Francis, to Bishops, Priests and Deacons, Consecrated Persons, Christian Married Couples and all the Lay Faithful, On Love in the Family)

Editorial

Let's End the Culture of Silence at Home

NEW PEOPLE



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It is beyond reasonable doubt that the family, as we have come to know and experience it, has undergone significant changes, and these changes show no sign of slowing down. Even the very definition of family seems increasingly complex and contested. Is it still a unit of husband, wife, and children? Or has it expanded to include cohabiting partners, and same-sex unions,

Alongside this evolving definition is a transformation in how children are raised, especially in urban settings. There is a growing awareness of minors' rights and safety, prompting deeper questions that may have been unthinkable just 20 or 30 years ago. Today, in many urban areas across Africa, children are more inquisitive, more vocal, and more likely to question the world around them. This is in stark contrast to many rural areas, where the culture of silence still prevails.

Yet, despite these changing dynamics, the family remains as Pope Francis beautifully describes in *Amoris Laetitia*, "an expression of God's love and a path to holiness." The family is the first place where social norms, and faith are taught. It is little wonder the Catholic Church refers to it as the "domestic church," where parents serve as the first catechists. It is meant to be a haven of love, mercy, companionship, solidarity, and forgiveness.

These values, universal as they are, take on a particular emphasis in the African context, where the traditional model of the family (husband, wife, and children) is still deeply cherished. Children are seen as blessings, and they are meant to be protected, nurtured, and raised in a morally grounded environment. However, recent developments have cast a disturbing shadow over this ideal.

A recent report by UNICEF revealed that up to 45% of nearly 10,000 sexual violence cases reported in

the Democratic Republic of Congo's conflict zones in just January and February 2025 involved children. The situation is equally alarming in other parts of Africa. In Kenya, a young girl was killed for refusing to marry a 50-year-old man. In another incident, a father allegedly beheaded his two children, aged 2 and 7. In Zambia, a 37-year-old man sexually abused and impregnated his 17-year-old biological daughter.

What makes these cases even more harrowing is that, aside from those occurring in war zones, most of them took place within family settings, the very place where children are supposed to feel safest. These are just the reported cases; countless others remain hidden, unreported, or deliberately covered up.

This begs the question: Are our children safe in our homes? Are they safe when those entrusted to protect and guide them, parents and guardians, become predators, wolves in sheep's clothing? Are our families becoming unsafe spaces for our children?

Some NGOs have stepped up their campaigns against the sexual abuse of minors, calling for stiffer penalties and stronger legal action. While litigations are essential and welcome, experience and data suggest that it is not a complete solution. Many perpetrators have been jailed, and cases continue to clog the courts, yet the problem persists.

Therefore, we must go beyond legal remedies and urgently address the culture of silence that pervades many families. Especially concerning is the norm that prevents children from speaking up particularly against elders or family members. We must challenge the belief that questioning an adult, even a biological parent, is disrespectful. Children need to know that it is okay to speak out, and that reporting abuse is not a betrayal, but an act of courage and self-preservation.

Fr. Christopher Silwembe, Mccj

Dialogue

Amoris Lætitia: A Cornerstone of Pope Francis'

Pastoral Vision for the Family

Amoris Lætitia (The Joy of Love) offers a profound and timely exploration of the Christian vision of family life, love, and marriage in the modern world. Drawing from the deliberations of the Synods on the Family (2014 and 2015), Pope Francis addresses the many challenges confronting families today, ranging from individualism and economic hardship to cultural shifts and moral confusion. Yet, amid these difficulties, he affirms that the desire to form loving, faithful, and stable families remains deeply rooted in the hearts of many. Therefore, Francis offers not only theological insight but also a practical roadmap for how the Church can walk with families in their real-life situations. Among its key themes are:

The Beauty and Sanctity of Marriage and Family

In *Amoris Lætitia*, Pope Francis reaffirms the Church's belief that marriage and family life are not only foundational to human society but also sacred reflections of God's own love. Far from being an outdated ideal, the family is a dynamic and living vocation, a privileged place where love is nurtured and holiness is cultivated through everyday acts of care, sacrifice, and fidelity. The Holy Father calls married couples to see their union not just as a personal commitment but as a divine calling, through which God's love is made visible in the world.

A Deep Biblical Grounding

Francis begins *Amoris Lætitia* by placing family life squarely within the story of salvation. Drawing richly from Scripture, especially Psalm 128, he celebrates the joy, fruitfulness, and blessing that family brings. He highlights how the Bible is full of real families, complete with their joys,

struggles, and failures, reminding us that family life has always been part of God's plan. The Holy Family of Nazareth stands as a model, not of perfection, but of trust, humility, and faith amidst trials.

A Candid Recognition of Complex Realities Facing Families Today

One of the most striking aspects of *Amoris Lætitia* is its honesty in addressing the real situations that many families face; divorce, cohabitation, migration, poverty, disability, and the rise of ideologies that challenge traditional understandings of marriage and identity. Francis does not dismiss these issues, nor does he respond with rigid rules. Instead, he listens and invites the Church to do the same. He calls for a compassionate realism that engages with families as they are, not as we wish they were.

A Pastoral Approach Rooted in Mercy, Discernment, and Accompaniment

Central to *Amoris Lætitia* is Pope Francis' call for a pastoral style modelled on the mercy of Christ. Rather than approaching wounded families with condemnation, the Church is invited to be a "field hospital" tending to wounds, listening without judgment, and walking patiently with those who struggle. Discernment becomes a key pastoral tool, allowing ministers to accompany individuals and families in concrete situations, helping them grow step by step toward the fullness of God's plan. This approach challenges the Church to avoid a one-size-fits-all mentality and instead embrace the complexity of human life.

A Renewed Respect for the Role of Conscience in Difficult Situations

In situations of moral and pastoral

Prayer Intentions

May

For working conditions.

Let us pray that through work, each person might find fulfilment, families might be sustained in dignity, and that society might be humanized.

June

That the world might grow in compassion.

Let us pray that each one of us might find consolation in a personal relationship with Jesus, and from his hearts, learn to have compassion on the world.

complexity, *Amoris Lætitia* emphasizes the vital role of conscience. *Amoris Lætitia* reminds us that conscience is not merely a personal opinion or loophole, but a sacred space where individuals encounter God's voice and respond in freedom and responsibility. Particularly in irregular or difficult family circumstances, the Church must form consciences rather than replace them. This renewed emphasis empowers individuals to make mature, prayerful decisions in dialogue with God and guided by pastoral support.

The importance of cultural sensitivity and discernment

At its heart, *Amoris Lætitia* emphasizes that the family is not just a private institution but a "domestic church"; a vital space where faith is nurtured, love is practiced, and human dignity is formed. Pope Francis calls on the Church to protect, accompany, and empower families, recognizing that when families flourish, so does society and the Church.

As such, *Amoris Lætitia* remains a cornerstone of Pope Francis' magisterium and a guiding document for anyone engaged in family ministry. He will certainly be remembered as champion of family ministry.

CONTENTS

NEW PEOPLE

No. 216 May– June 2025

REGULARS

3 EDITORIAL

4 DIALOGUE

6 CHURCH BEAT

A Harsh Yet Beautiful Land

32 OUR EARTH

Failing Families
By Peter Knox, SJ

36 VOCATION STORY

By Deacon Hendreson
Harold Masanjala, Mccj

COLUMNS

9 TALKING
ENTREPRENEURSHIP
By Fr. Wilfred Suman, SJ

11 FAITH AND POLITICS:
By Odomaro Mubangizi, SJ

30 VATICAN II SERIES
By Fr James H. Kroeger, M.M

34 FAMILY AND MISSION
By Tom & Lynette Lichuma

35 THROUGH A
WOMAN'S LENSES
By Maximilia Muninzwa

Challenges Facing Families Today

14 Interview with Mr/Mrs Banda
by *Fr. Christopher Silwembe, Mccj*

18 Broken Homes and Lawlessness
by *Patrick Mwamba Salubusa*

22 Marriage and its Realities in Parish Ministry
by *Fr. Teddy Kalibuku, Mccj*

25 WorldWide Marriage Encounter
by *Kennedy and Victoria Kapampa*



A Harsh Yet Beautiful Land

The Comboni Lay Missionaries in Kitelakapel, West Pokot (Kenya), serve in a harsh yet beautiful region marked by limited resources, and deep cultural traditions. Their work focuses on education, healthcare, pastoral outreach, and community empowerment especially supporting youth, women, and people with disabilities. Despite many challenges, they continue to build hope, foster dignity, while trusting in God's providence and the power of solidarity.

By Linda Micheletti

The sun stands still over the dry, thorny plains of Kitelakapel, a remote area nestled in the heart of West Pokot, Kenya. This is a land of contrasts harsh, yet strikingly beautiful. Here, goats and cows roam freely on dusty paths, sharing the roads with a few scattered passers-by. Life moves slowly, rhythmically, under the blazing sun. Every now and then, two people meet under the thin shade of an acacia tree, exchanging a friendly "Poghisio-nyi?" a Pokot greeting meaning "Hi" or "How are you?" It's a small sign of community and connection amid the challenges of this rugged terrain.

Thank God that March and April bring with them the region's only rainy season; a season of renewal, where the parched earth drinks deeply and the land momentarily blooms. People quickly seize the opportunity to farm, grow maize, beans, and vegetables, and gather food supplies that will hopefully sustain them through the long dry months ahead.

Our Mission: Walking with the People of Kitelakapel

If you continue up the road from the local center, you'll find the home of the Comboni Lay Missionaries, a small but vibrant community living and working among the Pokot people. What brings us here? Quite simply: love and vocation. We are here to live out the vision of Saint Daniel Comboni, who dreamed of a missionary family; consecrated and lay, reaching the most remote and neglected places of the world.

While cities like Nairobi boast robot waiters and smart technology, places like Kitelakapel remain far behind, struggling even to access clean water and basic healthcare. But we have been welcomed here with open arms, and this land, once unfamiliar, has become our home.

Our current community is made up of Marzena Gibek from Poland, a physiotherapist; Pius Oyoma from Uganda, a teacher and pastoral worker; and Linda Micheletti

from Italy, also involved in education and youth ministry. Recently, we were joined by Belinda Awino, a lay missionary from Kenya, preparing for her mission in Peru. Others will be joining us soon, from both Kenya and Poland, bringing new energy and gifts to this mission.

We arrived in Kitelakapel in October 2022, and since then, we've dedicated ourselves to serving in the fields of education, healthcare, pastoral ministry, and community empowerment.

Challenges on the Ground: Life at the Margins

The challenges here are many and deeply rooted. Clean water is scarce, health services are insufficient, and hunger is a daily reality for many. Malnutrition among children is widespread, and job opportunities are almost non-existent. Sadly, what is not lacking is the easy availability of cheap alcohol and drugs, which only worsens the cycle of poverty and despair.

Education remains a relatively new value among the Pokot community. Many families practice polygamy, and early marriages especially for girls are still common. These realities lead to school dropouts and a high rate of teenage pregnancies. Many children are sent away to boarding schools from a very young age, separating them from their families and cultural roots.

Without adequate support, these students face immense challenges: peer pressure, gender inequality, body image issues, emotional isolation, and sexual exploitation. Girls often seek financial help from older boys or men in exchange for favours, simply to afford basic school supplies or hygiene products.

Culturally, the use of physical punishment remains widespread by parents, teachers, and even spouses. This fosters fear and silence, especially among children and women. Confidence and self-expression are rare, and the role of women in leadership and community decisions is still minimal. In addition, the area suffers from high rates of addiction, HIV, and other sexually transmitted infections, which go largely untreated due to stigma and a lack of resources.



What We Do: A Mission of Service, Hope, and Healing

In response to these complex realities, our work takes many forms, guided by a simple goal: to serve, to accompany, and to empower.

Education: Building Character and Confidence

Pius and Linda focus on Life Skills education in three local secondary schools: St. Bakhita (Kacheliba), Holy Trinity (Serewo), and St. Paul's (Kitelakapel). These are schools for both boys and girls, and the Life Skills curriculum addresses vital themes: personal development, emotional management, conflict resolution, sexuality, relationships, addictions, peer pressure, self-esteem, and goal setting.

We aim to help these students discover who they are, who they want to be, and how to live with purpose and dignity. We believe education must go beyond academics, it must form strong, conscious individuals ready to lead and thrive, even in the face of adversity.

Healthcare: Serving the Body and Soul

Marzena, a dedicated physiotherapist, works with children recovering from disabilities or injuries, but her work quickly expanded. Today, she is one of the most trusted health workers in the area. People come to her with a wide range of medical needs—from back pain to emergencies. She also assists pregnant women at the Kacheliba dispensary and runs developmental activities for children at the Kitelakapel nursery every week.

Pastoral Work: Sharing Faith and Building Community

Our pastoral ministry is both diverse and vibrant. We teach catechism and Sunday school, lead YCS (Young Christian Students) groups in the schools, and offer pastoral programs for primary school students. We also support parish life through workshops, liturgical animation, choir, and meetings with various church groups (CMA, CWA, SCCs).

On weekends, our mission compound comes alive with the laughter and energy of children playing games and simply enjoying the joy of being together in a safe space.





Empowering the Community: Local Solutions, Lasting Change

We are especially proud of two community-driven projects: Reusable Sanitary Pads Workshop. We have started a tailoring initiative where women learn to sew reusable sanitary pads. This not only helps address menstrual hygiene challenges, but also creates a source of income for the women involved. It also ensures girls can attend school regularly, even during their periods.

Kitelakapel CBO (Community-Based Organization)

We have launched a community savings group, a sacco-style structure, bringing together women and men to support one another through micro-business ventures, savings, and cooperative development. It is a small but powerful step toward economic self-reliance.

We Have Dreams and they are Many!

We dream of building a multi-purpose community hall in our compound; a space where we can host life skills workshops, computer classes, a small library for children and youth, adult training sessions, and tutoring programs for struggling students. We would also love to include some guest rooms for visitors and future volunteers.

In the health sector, we hope, one day, to expand into more structured care. Perhaps a small dispensary, a mobile clinic for remote villages, or even a center for children with disabilities. We know it is a big dream, but we trust in God's providence and the power of community.

We are Grateful

Thank you for journeying with us through this story. As evening falls in Kitelakapel, the sounds of life shift. Goats return home. Children's voices echo from huts as they prepare for the night. Lights flicker in the school, where boys study long into the evening. A motorbike hum by and from a distant home, laughter and music rise, perhaps a celebration. Girls twirl in their traditional lorwa skirts under the stars. And above it all, a sky full of stars blankets this land, reminding us that even in the most forgotten places, God is here, tender and present. The "most abandoned" by society are, indeed, the most beloved by Him.

Contact and Support

Would you like to connect with us or support our mission in Kitelakapel? We would love to hear from you!

Contact Information:

Phone / WhatsApp:
+254 722 791544 (Mukami,
CLM Kenya Coordinator)
Email: clmkitelakapel@gmail.com
Facebook: Comboni Lay
Missionaries Kenya

To Support Our Work:

You can donate through the following Paybill:

- Paybill: 413 6003
- Account: donation

(Please specify if your support is for the CLM in general or the Kitelakapel community specifically.)

Dates to Remember

MAY

- 1 Labour's Day.
- 3 World Press Freedom Day.
- 5 Death of Walter Sisulu, a historical figure in the fight against apartheid in South Africa (2004).
- 8 World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day.
- 10 Nelson Mandela becomes the first black President of South Africa.
- 11 Death of Jamaican musician Bob Marley, 'the King of reggae'.
- 15 International Day of Families.
- First multiparty elections in Malawi (1994).
- 24 Independence of Eritrea (1991).
- 25 Africa Day.

JUNE

- 1 Global Day of Parents.
- 3 Saints Charles Lwanga, Kizito, Mulumba and 19 Uganda companions testify their faith with their blood (1886).
- 4 International Day of Innocent.
- 5 World Environment Day.
- 6 Malawi Republic Day.
- 9 Uganda National Heroes' Day.
- 12 World Day against Child Work.
- 13 International Albinism Awareness Day
- 14 Malawi Freedom Day.
- 16 African Child Day.
- 17 World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought.
- 20 World Refugee Day.
- 25 Independence of Mozambique (1975).
- 26 International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

By Wilfred Sumaní, SJ.



Embedding Your Product In Popular Culture



If you walk into a movie theatre, you are likely to see movie enthusiasts snacking on popcorn while their eyes feast on the silver screen. Indeed, in contemporary society, there seems to be a close connection between cinema and popcorn consumption. But have you ever wondered how this association came about?

In his 1999 publication titled *Popped Culture: A Social History of Popcorn in America*, Andrew F. Smith tracks the history of popcorn culture in America. Long story short, popcorn started off as a low-cost snack for the masses, who would buy it on the streets and sneak it into movie theatres. Later, theatre owners discovered the



business potential of popcorn and started selling it at the concession stands outside the cinema hall.

Smith reports that, during the Great Depression (mid-1930s), movie theatres which did not serve popcorn struggled to remain afloat, while those that offered the snack prospered. By 1945, cinema and popcorn had become inextricably bound to each other. And the story continues till today, even after the invention of movie streaming platforms such as Netflix. In 2024, the global market value of popcorn was estimated at US\$6.5 billion. The story of popcorn is an illustration of the power of embedding a product in popular culture. Culturally embedded products have a guaranteed market because of their association with a particular cultural activity. Further, since culture is collective, the size of the market tends to be big. Understandably, many adverts try to create an overt nexus between a product and an activity. However, such efforts often appear a little contrived and can meet with indifference from the intended audience. More effective cultural embedment happens organically – almost imperceptibly – over a period of time, and are triggered by the community itself rather than the business. There are different levels of product-culture alignment. The first alignment is at the level of functionality. Here, the product is a necessary (even prescribed) component or ingredient of a cultural activity. This is the most effective

form of embedment. This level is common in religious practices.

The second level is that of complementarity. In this case, a product is consumed jointly with another. Reading and coffee drinking, for instance, can be conjoined. At this level, there is no necessary relationship between the product and the cultural activity – it is not impossible to read a book without drinking coffee.

The third alignment is at the level of symbolism. Here, the association between the product and the cultural activity is merely a matter of convention. An example is the use of gowns at graduation.

There are many strategies for turning a product into a cultural mainstay. The first strategy is selling the product where and when a targeted cultural activity is taking place. Over time, consumers will almost automatically associate the product with the event.

Another strategy involves using creative referencing, whereby the association between a particular product and a cultural event is alluded to in novels, non-fiction works, songs and films. In this case, the writer, actor or singer becomes a representative of the culture (cultural prototype) rather than a purveyor of the product. The effect is achieved faster with multi-genre referencing (e.g. music, novel and film), because it creates the perception of consensus.



Politics Begins at Home: Nurturing Civic Virtues in the Family

By Odomaro Mubangizi SJ

We have all heard the familiar saying: “Politics is a dirty game.” This perception, though widespread, distorts the true essence of politics; a noble calling and, indeed, a sacred duty. Unfortunately, this negative impression has been shaped by the disillusionment many decent citizens across the globe have experienced due to manipulation, election rigging, corruption, and political violence.

Yet, politics in its purest form, understood as the science and art of managing society for the common good, deserves not our contempt, but our engagement. In this reflection, I propose a different approach to the conversation on political participation. Rather than starting in the public square, I choose to begin where it all truly begins: in the family. The family, as the most basic and intimate unit of

society, and often referred to as the “domestic Church,” is where civic consciousness is first formed.

The common phrase, “Charity begins at home,” can be aptly paraphrased as “Politics begins at home.” It is within the family setting that civic virtues are first modelled, taught, and nurtured. Therefore, it is essential that parents see beyond material provision and recognize the immense responsibility they bear in deliberately instilling civic and political values in their children.

The Family as the Cradle of Society and the Seed-Bed of Political Life

Sociologists and anthropologists generally agree that society evolves from a basic unit: the family. The journey from family to nation begins when individuals, bound by

love or social contract, come together as spouses to raise children. Several families form a village, villages grow into communities, and communities organize into tribes or regions that eventually give birth to nations. While the specific historical timeline remains elusive, the fundamental truth remains: it all begins with family.

Philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes tried to explain the genesis of political communities by arguing that fear of chaos and violent death prompted humans to form states through a “social contract.” Hobbes envisioned early society as one of perpetual conflict, prompting people to surrender certain freedoms in exchange for peace and protection.

In many traditional societies, power and governance were clearly structured, usually patriarchal (in some cases matriarchal), where authority resided in the head of the household. Nonetheless, responsibilities, including child-rearing, were shared between partners. Children, in turn, enjoyed certain rights but were also expected to contribute to the welfare of the family and to obey household rules. Through this microcosm of power, rights, and duty, children learned the foundational principles of civic

life. They began to understand hierarchy, cooperation, justice, and accountability. This early training in leadership, responsibility, and dialogue prepared them for later participation in wider society be it in school, the church, or the political arena. Across cultures and religions, the family remains the bedrock where socialization occurs. It is here that young minds are prepared not only for communal life but also for national and global citizenship.

Culture as a Civic Educator: Passing on Virtues Through Family Traditions

Families are not only sociological entities; they are also deeply cultural institutions. The values, norms, and beliefs passed from one generation to the next shape the attitudes of children toward civic and political engagement. In Christian families, biblical narratives serve as moral compasses and leadership models. Stories such as Moses leading the Israelites from bondage, Joseph's rise from betrayal to saviour, and David's humble ascent to kingship are more than tales, they are archetypes of virtuous leadership, resilience, faith, and service to the common good.

These stories imprint lasting lessons on young minds, shaping their imagination and sense of purpose.

It is important, therefore, for every family to invest in a small home library filled with faith-building resources, especially the Bible. Tales such as Noah's Ark, Jonah in the belly of the fish, Samson's strength, or David's triumph over Goliath, are rich with symbolism and leadership lessons that shape children's ethical frameworks.

In addition to faith-based teachings, cultural stories and proverbs play a key role in moral formation. Families rooted in traditional heritage pass on civic virtues through folklore, riddles, songs, and oral traditions. For example, in warrior societies, stories of tribal heroes instil courage, loyalty, and a sense of duty. In communities shaped by indigenous spiritual practices, children are introduced to rites of passage and communal values such as harmony with nature, respect for elders, and communal responsibility. Taboos often serve as moral boundaries that reinforce safety and discipline. A common example is the taboo against talking while eating fish in communities that rely on fish as a staple meant to prevent choking, but wrapped in the spiritual narrative of warding off evil spirits. Such methods are both creative and effective in child rearing.

Here are some powerful proverbs from the Kiga people of Western Uganda, demonstrating key civic values: Akeizire kemerwa kapa ekemera amashuyu – “What has come should be endured; a cat endured mumps.” This encourages resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Ageitereine gata eigufwa – “Teeth that work together will break a bone.” A profound reminder of the power of unity and teamwork. Enkobe tecwa ogweihamba – “A monkey cannot preside over a case involving a forest.” This highlights the principle of





impartiality and justice. Ku oyehanga omutego, oyehanga n'okushura – “If you set a trap, you should check on it.” This proverb underlines responsibility and commitment. Nowawe takiri wawe, ameizi gakateka ekyenyanja – “Your friend is no longer your friend, water was used to cook fish.” A warning against betrayal and misplaced trust.

These proverbs reflect civic virtues essential for good citizenship, resilience, justice, teamwork, accountability, and discernment. Families that embed these lessons in daily life contribute to raising responsible, engaged citizens.

From the Hearth to the Nation: Families as Incubators of Public Virtue

Although families are often associated

with the private sphere, their influence inevitably spills over into the public domain. They are, in essence, the first schools of civic education. When families create spaces for children to speak their minds, debate issues, assume responsibilities, and collaborate in chores and projects, they are laying the groundwork for civic engagement. Children who grow up taking initiative, voicing opinions, and practicing leadership at home are more likely to carry those virtues into schools, churches, communities, and ultimately, into public service. On the contrary, children raised in overly rigid, authoritarian, or neglectful homes may struggle with self-expression, confidence, or even empathy qualities essential for ethical leadership.

We often observe young people who faithfully attend church but shy away

from public readings or leadership roles. This lack of confidence may be traced to missed opportunities for growth within their family environment. Similarly, some leaders exhibit dictatorial behaviour in public office, having learned those tendencies from autocratic parenting styles.

The family is where civic virtues or their opposites are first encountered. As we reflect on the role of family in cultivating political commitment and ethical citizenship, it is crucial to be intentional about the values we impart at home. It is not enough to lament corrupt leadership or disengaged citizens. We must take action, starting in our households by restoring the nobility of politics as a vocation to serve the common good.





On May 7th, 2025, Mr. Cosmas Banda and Mrs. Sarah Banda celebrated 20 years of marriage, a milestone they embraced with profound gratitude, humility, and a renewed sense of commitment. In a heartfelt interview with Fr. Christopher Silwembe, Director of New People Media, they reflected on their journey of more than 19 years together; an experience they deeply cherish and continue to nurture with love and faith.

Can you briefly share with us about yourselves?

We are Cosmas and Sarah Banda, affectionately known as "The Bandas." We are a married couple deeply rooted

in our Catholic faith and are proud parishioners of St. Kizito Catholic Church in George Compound, Lusaka, Zambia. Our faith is not just something we profess, but something we live each day especially

through our active involvement in the Marriage Encounter movement. In this ministry, we accompany other married couples especially the younger ones, helping them to navigate the joys and challenges

of married life through Catholic teaching, mutual sharing, and personal witness. We believe that marriage, when rooted in faith and love, becomes a true vocation, a path of holiness not only for the couple but for the entire family and community.

How did you meet?

Our story began in 1998, at the very parish we still call home; St. Kizito. At the time, I (Sarah) had just joined the parish and was still finding my footing. Cosmas, on the other hand, was already actively involved in parish activities and well-known, especially among the youth. He served as the youth chairman, a position of responsibility that naturally drew attention. Although I was not in any leadership role myself, I was invited to attend one of the youth council meetings, and from there I gradually became more involved in youth activities. That was the beginning of our friendship.

At the time, I was in Grade 9, and Cosmas was in Grade 12. As time passed, we began to grow closer. Cosmas expressed his interest in a relationship, but I initially declined—three times, in fact. I didn't feel ready for that kind of commitment. However, Cosmas was persistent in a respectful and genuine way. Eventually, in 2003, he proposed again, and I felt something shift in my heart. I accepted his proposal, and that's when our journey as a couple truly began. Two years later, in 2005, we were married at St. Kizito Parish, with our marriage blessed by Father Dawit, a dedicated Comboni Missionary priest. That day remains one of the most joyful and sacred moments of our lives.

How did you prepare for marriage?

Our path to marriage was paved with a blend of traditional and religious customs. In our culture,

the process begins with family discussions, especially regarding the dowry; commonly referred to as lobola. We remember how the initial dowry request seemed high, especially given our circumstances at the time, but looking back now, it was not unreasonable. It was simply a reflection of the value and seriousness placed on marriage by both families.

In addition to the cultural steps, we also took part in the Church's pre-marital counselling sessions. These were instrumental in shaping our understanding of the sacrament we were about to enter into. The sessions covered communication, family life, sexuality, finance, prayer, and more. We also received immense support from our friends and fellow parishioners who helped with everything from planning meetings to moral encouragement.

One traditional aspect that initially felt foreign was the confinement of the bride-to-be, where older women guide the woman on how to care for a home and husband. At first, it seemed outdated, but in the end, we saw its value, it offered wisdom that complemented our church teachings.

This year, on the 7th of May, we will celebrate 20 years of marriage. It's a milestone we approach with gratitude, humility, and renewed commitment.

How Has the Church supported your marriage journey?

The Church has been our anchor. The Marriage Encounter program, in particular, has offered us a space to grow, reflect, and support other couples. The teachings we received on communication, sexuality, prayer, and mutual respect have shaped our relationship deeply. Without that formation, we may have struggled even more in our early years. We encourage all couples preparing

for marriage to go through Church instruction. It's not just a requirement, it's a gift. It prepares you for the realities of marriage in ways that few other things can.

What challenges have you faced over the past 19 years as a Christian couple?

Our journey, like any marriage, has not been without trials. One of the most pressing challenges we faced was financial hardship. There were times when making ends meet was difficult. With both of us working long hours to support our household, we found ourselves increasingly drained and disconnected. The demands of work meant that we had very little quality time to share with each other or with our children. Even our prayer life suffered. We would return home so exhausted that all we could manage was a quick sign of the cross before falling asleep. Those moments felt dry and heavy.

We also experienced societal pressure, especially in the early years. After our wedding, we agreed to postpone starting a family so that Sarah could pursue her education. That decision, though mutual and intentional, was met with misunderstanding from others. There were whispers and harsh words, some even accused Sarah of being barren, not realizing the strength and purpose behind our decision. It was painful to hear, but we stood firm, supporting each other through it all.

How did you address these challenges?

We realized that if we didn't take deliberate steps, things wouldn't improve. So, we started a small business. This side business gave us some financial breathing room and allowed us to reduce our work hours, which in turn gave us more time together as a family. It was a risk, but

one that paid off in more than just money; it gave us the gift of time.

Spiritually, we reconnected with the Charismatic Renewal Movement, whose members had been reaching out to us. Their persistence and loving support helped us rekindle our spiritual life. We began to pray together again not just individually, but as a couple and with our children. We joined retreats and formation sessions, which helped us see our challenges not just as burdens, but as opportunities for growth and transformation.

How has social media affected your family life?

Technology has changed the way we communicate and spend time as a family both positively and negatively. After a long day at work, it's easy to find ourselves scrolling on our phones instead of engaging with each other. There were evenings when we would all be in the same room, yet

disconnected, each of us caught up in our screens. We realized this habit was affecting our relationship and how we interacted with our children.

But once we became aware of it, we took action. Now, we set boundaries around phone use, especially during meals and prayer time. These sacred moments are screen-free, and that has made a huge difference in how we bond. Our eldest daughter, who is in college, has modeled this well. She is intentional about putting her phone aside during family time, and that discipline has trickled down to her siblings.

How do you ensure your children grow up in the Catholic faith?

Our biggest desire as parents is to pass on the Catholic faith to our children. Faith is not just taught in words, but lived through daily habits and the environment we create at home. Our eldest daughter, now in college, has taken the faith to heart.

She attends St. Ignatius Church in Lusaka and is part of a Catholic student group at her university. It brings us great joy to see her making faith-based decisions on her own.

Our other daughters attend Catholic boarding schools, where they are immersed in faith-based education and spiritual formation. At home, we pray together regularly, attend Mass as a family, and participate in parish activities. These practices are simple, but they build a strong spiritual foundation.

Did you face any challenges raising the children?

Yes, of course especially with our only son. While our daughters have generally been focused and obedient, our son is more adventurous and playful. He is easily influenced by peers and sometimes resists correction. We're doing our best to monitor his growth, teach him discipline, and most importantly, love him through





the process. We believe that with time, prayer, and guidance, he will grow into a responsible young man.

What are your thoughts on the rise of “junkies” (unruly youth) in Lusaka?

The growing number of “junkies” in Lusaka is alarming, and we believe it reflects a breakdown in family life and values. Many parents are not closely monitoring their children’s education, friendships, or behavior. Sometimes we unknowingly encourage misbehavior like sending a child to buy alcohol or allowing them to dress or act inappropriately without correction.

Another issue is that our efforts to empower girls, though necessary, have often left boys behind. Young men need mentorship, education, and emotional support just as much

as girls do. If we fail to nurture our boys, we leave them vulnerable to destructive habits and peer pressure.

How do you handle conflict in your marriage?

We have learned that open, honest dialogue is the only way forward. When disagreements arise, we sit down face-to-face, discuss the issue calmly, and admit our mistakes. We have adopted many practical tools from the Marriage Encounter movement, including how to position ourselves physically and emotionally during difficult conversations. Sitting in a loving posture even when upset helps create a space of safety and understanding.

Forgiveness and tolerance are pillars in our marriage. We are different people, with different temperaments, and that’s okay. What matters is how

we bridge those differences with love. No one is perfect, and marriage is not about perfection, it is about commitment and the willingness to grow together.

Any words of encouragement to young couples?

Marriage is not just an emotional connection; it is a conscious decision to love, to serve, and to grow with another person. That decision needs to be renewed daily. Respect your spouse, honor the vows you made, and lean on God in all things. There will be storms, but don’t give up. Remember that marriage is a sacrament, a holy bond. Embrace the sacrifices, celebrate the joys, and never stop nurturing your love. With patience, prayer, and perseverance, you’ll find that love not only survives, it thrives.



Standing second from the right is Charles Kampamba, also known as Chao Mbape, who was named Player of the Tournament at the inaugural Anti-Junkie Football Tournament. He earned a scholarship to enroll at Great North Road Academy and, through the Football Association of Zambia (FAZ), secured a place on the Under-17 national team ”

BROKEN HOMES AND LAWLESSNESS: THE REAL CAUSE OF THE JUNKIE CRISIS

By Mr. Patrick Mwamba Salubusa

Comedian | Journalist | Local Councillor

I have walked the streets of George, Lima, Kapwepwe, and Mwembeshi Wards, in Matero

Constituency in Lusaka, Zambia, speaking to the young men and women society has labelled as

“junkies”(unruly youths) and I have seen their pain, their frustration, and their helplessness. It is easy to

blame the police for not arresting them or community leaders for failing to intervene. But we must ask ourselves - where do these junkies come from? Who raises them? Who watches them spiral into substance abuse before they take to the streets?

The truth is, the crisis of junkies is not just a policing issue - it is a parenting issue. By the time these young men and women become a menace in our communities, they were already a problem in their homes. The police and community

leaders are merely responding to the symptoms of a deeper disease - the breakdown of the family unit.

The Root Causes

In most cases, junkies are not raised in stable homes. Their backgrounds tell a story of brokenness, absent fathers, struggling single mothers, overwhelmed grandparents, or guardians too poor to provide both leadership and necessities. Many of these homes lack structure, discipline, and guidance, leaving the young ones vulnerable to bad influences.

Single-Parent Households Without a Strong Support System

There is no denying the strength of single mothers in our communities, but raising a child alone, especially a boy, is difficult. Many single mothers work long hours to make ends meet, leaving their children unattended. Others are emotionally exhausted and unable to provide the necessary discipline. Without strong male role models, boys look for guidance from their peers, who often introduce them to crime and drugs.

Overburdened Grandparents

Many homes housing junkies are run by grandparents who took in their grandchildren when their parents either died, abandoned them, or simply failed in their responsibilities. These elderly guardians do their best, but they lack the energy to discipline or monitor teenagers effectively. As a result, these boys and girls find themselves on the streets, exposed to substance abuse and criminal activities.

Fathers Who Are Present but Powerless

Not all junkies come from fatherless homes. Some live with their fathers, but these men are too broke, depressed, or disempowered to lead. A father who cannot provide financially often feels inadequate. In frustration, he withdraws emotionally, leaving the children to be raised by the streets. Without a strong father figure, boys become reckless and rebellious, seeking validation elsewhere.

Parents and Neighbours Who Choose Silence Over Action

One of the biggest contributors to





the junkie crisis is silence. Many parents and neighbours notice a child heading down the wrong path but say nothing. They see a young man using drugs, stealing, or associating with criminals, yet they turn a blind eye. By the time we see symptoms of junkie behaviour on the streets, the problem had already been detected in homes but ignored.

A Call to Action

The fight against the junkie

crisis must start at home. Instead of expecting the police and community leaders to clean up the mess, we must strengthen family structures and take responsibility for our children.

Fathers Must Step Up

A father is not just a provider of money; he is a provider of guidance. Even in financial hardship, a father can instil discipline and direction. It is time for fathers in our communities to take back

their role as leaders in their homes. Poverty should not be an excuse for neglecting one's children.

Single Mothers Need Strong Support Systems

Raising a child alone is difficult, and single mothers should not do it alone. We need mentorship programs where older men and responsible community members step in to guide fatherless boys. Churches and community groups must actively support single mothers by providing mentorship for their children.

Community Members Must Speak Up

If you see a neighbour's child going astray, do not keep quiet. Talk to the parents, involve community leaders, and take action before it is too late. Silence is what has allowed the junkie crisis to escalate. We need to return to the days when a child was raised by the whole community.

Responding to Junkies Through Talent Development

Recognizing that most junkies are simply young people who lost their way, my team and I have turned to talent identification, development and marketing as a tool for rehabilitation as we believe that the same energy and aggression junkies use on the streets can be channelled into something positive.

Football as a Tool for Rehabilitation

Through our community football programs called Anti-Junkie Football Initiative, we have collaborated very well with the Dr. Rozious Siatwambo Foundation to engage young boys who were

previously lost to drugs and crime. By coming up with football teams consisting of boys who have been involved in substance abuse and criminal activities, we have given them a sense of purpose, discipline, and teamwork. Football has taught them responsibility, respect, and the value of hard work and we are proud to announce that one of the boys, who was a junkie operating under the NBA junkie boys banner of Lilanda West compound is now part of the Zambia National Soccer Team's under 17 squad. Charles Kampamba, aka Chao Mbape, who even received a 100 percent scholarship courtesy of Great North Road Academy as his prize for the player of the Anti-Junkie Football Tournament last year, is now an example that sports can change the junkie crisis.

Success Stories from our Hub

One of our greatest success stories is that of Amos Katebe who was a junkie until he made a U-turn to concentrate on his artistic talent as a poet and actor and apart from being featured in my written and directed dramas and films, he also returned to school and today is the beneficiary of the government's Constituency Development Fund (CDF) as through my office he managed to get a Matero CDF sponsored bursary to undergo professional training in film and drama at Eden University in Lusaka. At our Komboni Talent Hub, located within Desai Compound, known for junkies called Chipandule Boys, Amos is in charge of Rehabilitation and Talent Development. His story is proof that junkies are not beyond



saving - they just need the right environment to thrive.

We cannot continue blaming the police and community leaders for a problem that starts in our homes as the real solution to the junkie crisis is strong families, present fathers, empowered single mothers, and a community that refuses to remain silent.

While my team and I continue to use talent as a way to rehabilitate junkies, the real fight must be won

at home as parents must step up, neighbours must speak up, and the community must come together. Only then can we break the cycle of broken homes and lawlessness.

The question remains: What role will you play in saving the next generation?

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Marriage and Its Realities in Parish Ministry

In this article, Fr. Kalibuku emphasizes the value of sacramental marriage as a God-centered union that strengthens families, fosters forgiveness, and provides stability amid modern challenges. The article calls for couples to rely on God, not just personal effort, to build lasting and faithful relationships.

By Fr. Kalibuku Teddy, Mccj

Working in parish ministry has given me a front-row seat to the diverse challenges that couples face today, especially regarding marriage. Among these challenges are couples who come forward

with great excitement to prepare for a white wedding, filled with dreams and high expectations, sometimes unaware of the deeper demands of the sacrament. Others approach the Church seeking to have their civil marriage

blessed, often after years of shared life and children, yearning to root their commitment in faith.

There are also those who, having hit a rough patch, are searching for reconciliation and a chance to rediscover the joy they once felt; the joy that inspired them to choose one another in the first place. Still others come burdened with pain, requesting an annulment as they seek healing, closure, and possibly a new beginning. All of these pastoral situations reflect the complex and evolving landscape of marriage and underscore how deeply the Church is called to walk alongside couples with compassion and clarity.

The Foundation and Challenge of Sacramental Marriage

These varied realities mentioned above underscore a central truth:

sacramental marriage is both foundational to society and profoundly demanding. Anthony Grugni, in his insightful work *Preparing for Marriage* (p. 17), affirms that “The impact of marriage on human life lies mainly in the fact that it is founded on love,” highlighting that love is not simply emotion but a unifying force that creates a new human reality; the couple.

In the Christian tradition, this love is not merely natural affection but is elevated by divine grace, becoming a channel of God’s presence in the couple’s life. Sacramental marriage, therefore, becomes a covenant where God’s strength empowers human love, especially when it is tested by trials or weariness. This divine companionship means that even when couples feel uncertain or

overwhelmed, they are not alone; their union is held by a God who remains faithful.

The Danger of Losing Sight of God

Yet, even with such grace available, many Christian families fall into the danger of side-lining God from their daily lives and decisions. In a world obsessed with speed, success, and independence, spiritual life often takes a back seat, and divine guidance is replaced with human logic and fleeting trends. This erosion of faith contributes to the increasing number of crises in marriages that once began with prayer and joy in church. As secular mindsets infiltrate even

Christian households, marriage starts to seem like a risky gamble rather than a sacred journey. The decline in spiritual practices like family prayer,





Mass attendance, and sacramental life, leaves marriages vulnerable to worldly pressures and emotional disconnection. Without God at the center, couples risk losing the very anchor that sustains their love through life's inevitable storms.

Faithfulness as a Reflection of God's Love

True and lasting fidelity in marriage is more than a moral achievement; it is a profound witness to God's own steadfast love. Youcat teaches that "Absolute fidelity in marriage is not so much a human achievement as it is a testimony to the faithfulness of God," reminding us that even when couples struggle, fail, or forget each other, God remains present. This divine fidelity should inspire couples to seek strength beyond themselves, especially when love feels strained or imperfect. Faithful spouses are not relying solely on compatibility or good communication—they are relying on grace, which restores, heals, and sustains. To marry in the Church is to declare, "We trust in God's power more than our own ability to love," allowing Him to transform even weakness into opportunity for growth and deeper union.

Sin and the Struggles Within Marriage

Many of the struggles in marriage stem not just from external pressures but from inner battles with sin and brokenness. Poor communication and self-centeredness often lead to misunderstandings, resentment, and distance between partners, while societal challenges such as financial instability, work stress, or family expectations only add to the strain. Youcat (p. 152) identifies these trials but stresses the deeper danger: "the decisive role is played by the reality of sin," which includes pride, infidelity, lust, jealousy, and a thirst for control. Sin disrupts the harmony of marriage and clouds the couple's ability to love sacrificially. Yet, the Gospel offers hope through forgiveness, a powerful medicine that brings renewal when freely given and humbly received. Sacramental marriage is a call to live out daily conversion, choosing love again and again, even when it is difficult. In this way, forgiveness becomes the bridge to healing and communion.

The Changing Society and Its Impact on Marriage

Our modern world is undergoing rapid and profound changes, and these shifts deeply impact how marriage is perceived, valued, and lived. As Anthony Grugni notes in *Preparing for Marriage* (p. 21), "under the influence of the current situation, the pattern of family life is also undergoing modification," and this is particularly evident in urban and industrial settings, though rural areas are not immune. These cultural changes include the redefinition of family, the normalization of divorce, and the rise of individualism, all of which challenge traditional Christian understandings of

marriage. In our consumer-driven world, even relationships are treated as disposable, to be discarded when inconvenient or unfulfilling. The Church, however, continues to proclaim that marriage is not a contract but a covenant; a reflection of the eternal love between Christ and his Church (*The Didache Bible*, p. 1629). This vision calls us to resist cultural pressures and to uphold the sacredness of lifelong commitment, even when it is countercultural.

The Fruits of Sacramental Marriage

When sacramental marriage is lived in faith and fidelity, it bears beautiful and lasting fruit for individuals, families, and communities.

First, it strengthens family bonds by grounding the relationship in trust, self-giving, and mutual commitment; qualities that create a stable home where children and parents thrive. Second, it promotes emotional and psychological well-being, offering spouses a safe space to share burdens, celebrate joys, and grow in personal maturity amid life's challenges. Third, sacramental marriage fosters a vibrant sense of community, as couples are encouraged to participate in parish life, engage in mutual support groups, and live out their vocation in solidarity with others. Finally, it provides a clear moral compass, teaching values like forgiveness, integrity, and respect, which guide families through moral dilemmas and foster an environment where virtues are cultivated. In a society increasingly marked by confusion and fragmentation, families rooted in the sacrament of marriage stand as beacons of hope and renewal.



World Wide Marriage Encounter: Strengthening Marriages, Enriching Families

By: Kennedy & Victoria Kapampa

What is World Wide Marriage Encounter?

World Wide Marriage Encounter (WWME) is a Catholic movement dedicated to strengthening the bond

of marriage as a lifelong, intimate, and responsible relationship. Rooted in the spousal love between Christ and the Church, the movement seeks to help couples live out their

vocation with joy, commitment, and deep faith.

Although WWME is a Catholic movement, membership is open to all

married Christian couples; Catholic and non-Catholic alike, as well as priests and religious. Membership is granted after completing the original Weekend Experience, a unique and transformative retreat. After this, participants are known as encountered couples, priests, or religious. The experience is generally open to those who have lived their vocation for at least three years.

World Wide Marriage Encounter is recognized as the first marriage enrichment program ever offered. Today, it is the largest pro-marriage organization in the world, active in nearly 100 countries.

The movement was founded in 1952 by Spanish diocesan priest Fr. Gabriel Calvo. By 1962, it had already reached 29 priests and 50 couples. In Zambia, WWME was introduced in 1981 in Ndola, Copperbelt Province, through

the late Bishop Dennis De Jong, who invited a South African couple to facilitate the first encounter. It later expanded to Lusaka in 1986.

Today, parishes such as St. Kizito and St. Andrew Kaggwa under the Archdiocese of Lusaka are blessed to have vibrant Marriage Encounter communities. Special thanks go to the Comboni Missionaries, Fr. Daniel Chisha and Fr. Teddy Kalibuku, for their unwavering support and leadership in promoting this life-changing ministry.

What do we do at the Parish Level?

As part of our commitment to building strong marriages and families, our Marriage Encounter groups engage in the following activities: Promote stable and joyful marriages as the foundation of strong families and “domestic churches.” Encourage daily dialogue between

couples to strengthen communication and avoid misunderstandings. Prepare couples seeking Church blessings for their marriages through guidance and formation.

We also offer counseling to couples facing marital challenges. Conduct talks and workshops on marriage and family life when invited. Take part in leadership roles at diocesan, parish, and Small Christian Community levels. Model healthy married life and support the vocations of marriage and holy orders through example and witness.

Vision and Mission

Our vision is to “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12) and the mission is to proclaim and live out the values of sacramental marriage and holy orders in the Church and the world.



**worldwide
marriage
encounter**



Our Core Values

To love one another unconditionally, as Christ loves His Church. To promote and practice daily dialogue as a lifestyle. To foster unity among encountered couples, priests, and religious. To journey with others who share our values and commitment. To care for the holistic well-being of our families physically, spiritually, and socially.

Common Marital Challenges We Encounter

In our counseling and support work, we frequently come across the following issues:

Married-Single Lifestyle: Couples who live under one roof but relate as though they are single, often due to fear of public shame, church roles, or shared assets. Lack of readiness

for marriage among young adults due to social pressure or unrealistic portrayals on social media.

Focusing on the Wedding, Not the Marriage: A lot of energy is spent on planning the wedding day, with little thought given to building a lifelong partnership. Breakdown in communication and failure to dialogue which more than not tends to lead to misunderstanding and resentment. Lack of quality time and busy schedules that prevent couples from spending meaningful time together.

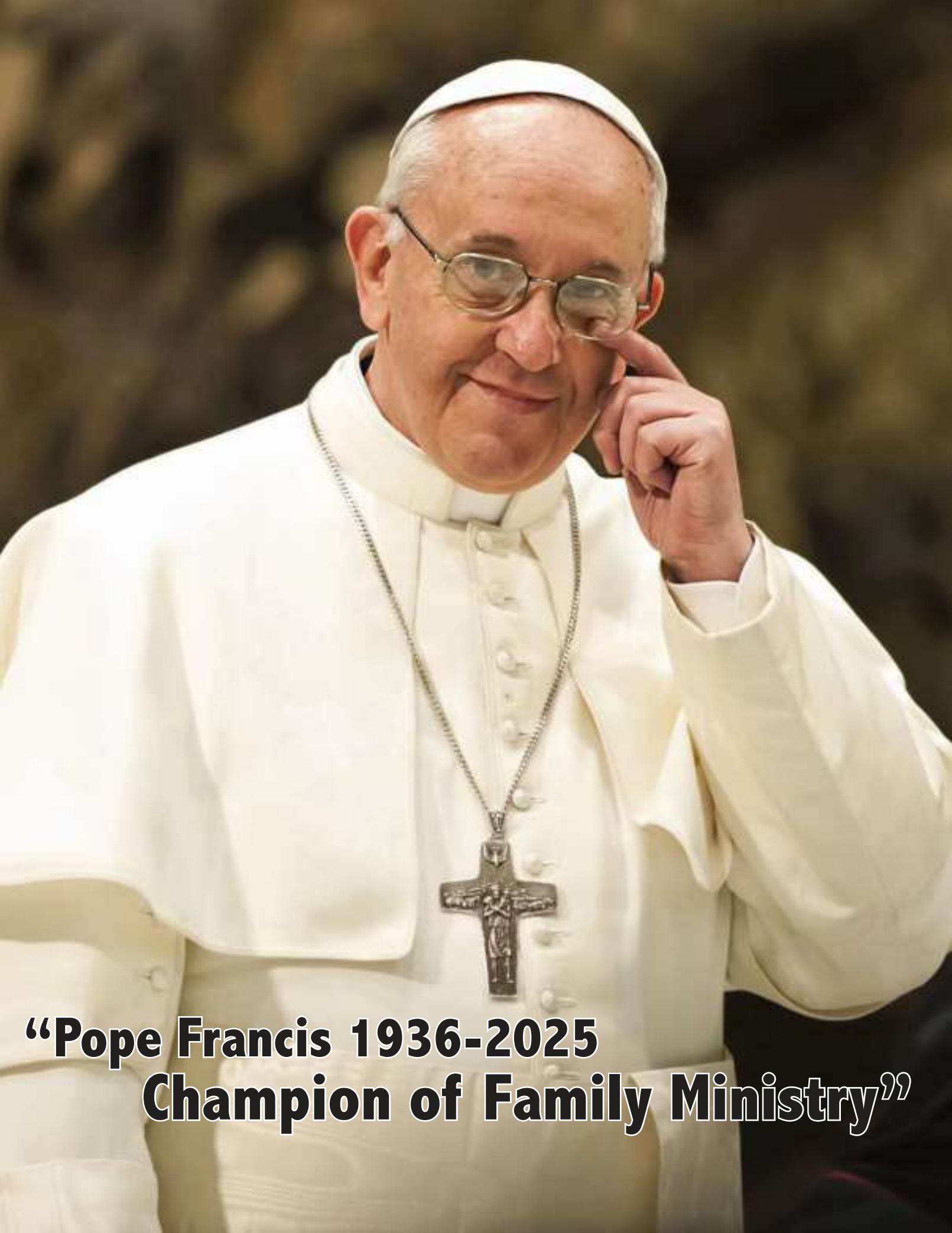
Substance Abuse and Infidelity: Alcohol and drug dependency is a growing concern among spouses. Trust is broken through emotional or physical unfaithfulness.

Challenges Faced by Marriage

Encounter as a Movement

While the movement is growing and impactful, we also face some internal challenges and these include, recruitment Constraints, in that some couples struggle to raise the required fees for the Weekend Experience. The shortage of priests who have completed the Encounter makes it difficult to expand pastoral support.

Despite the challenges we encounter, we firmly believe that with effort, commitment, and above all, prayer, couples can enjoy happy and holy marriages, aligned with God's plan. Marriage is a unique journey that demands understanding, trust, and perseverance. It is through love, mutual respect, and open communication that couples can build lasting, joyful unions.



**“Pope Francis 1936-2025
Champion of Family Ministry”**



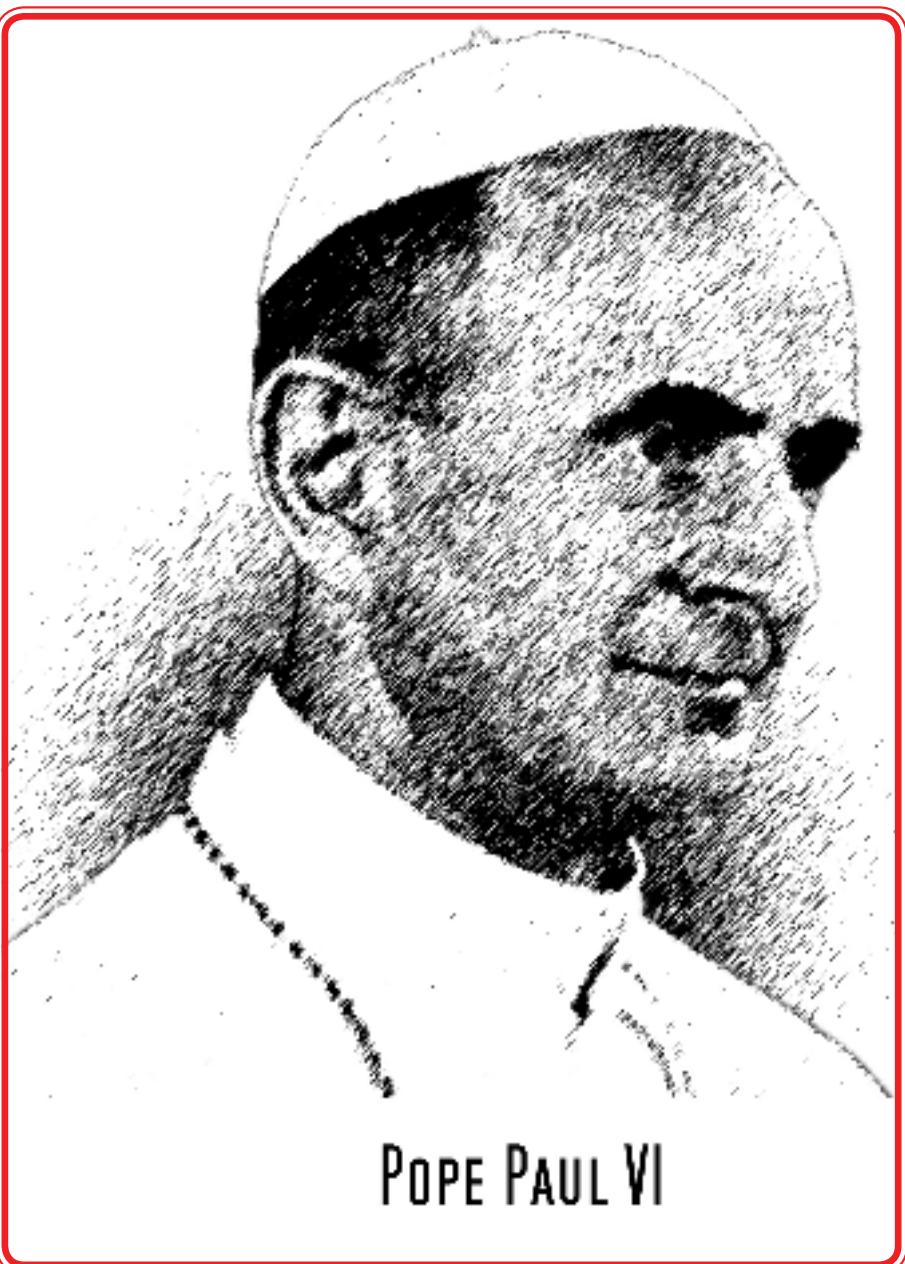
“The family is not the problem; it’s mostly the opportunity” (Amoris Laetitia, 7)

Paul VI: Missionary Pope of Vatican II

The entire Church rejoiced as Pope Francis canonized Blessed Paul VI on October 14, 2018. Recall that October is the “mission month” and it opens with the feast of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, patroness of mission. It was on World Mission Sunday in October 2014 that Paul VI (1963-1978) was beatified. The choice of these occasions is significant!

Missionary Initiatives. Aside from expressing his “core identity” with the chosen name “Paul,” Giovanni Montini accomplished much to bring the Gospel to contemporary humanity. Sharing John XXIII’s vision of Church renewal, Paul successfully concluded Vatican II and systematically implemented its missionary vision. In addition, Paul VI presented his “dialogical” vision of the Church in his first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam* (1964). He established the Vatican office, Secretariat for Non-Christians, on Pentecost Sunday 1964 [renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1988].

Paul, the missionary pope, initiated papal travels, literally covering the globe. His most extensive missionary journey from November 26 to December 5, 1970 brought him to Asia with visits to eight countries (Iran, Pakistan, Philippines, Samoa, Australia, Indonesia, Hong Kong,



and Sri Lanka). Earlier Paul VI had visited Bombay, India for the 1964 Eucharistic Congress.

Philippine Visit. While in Manila, he met with 180 Asian bishops, a pivotal event in the foundation of

the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC). Speaking from the heart, Paul VI said: "Here we are together at last. This meeting makes us very happy.... We have made the long journey from Rome to Manila. We have come to meet you, dear brothers, to know you better, to pay honor to this assembly of yours, to encourage your work, to sustain your resolves.

Paul VI continued: "The first thing that We would propose to you is this: let us make an effort to take as our guide the teaching of the recent Ecumenical Council [Vatican II]. This teaching sums up and ratifies the heritage of Catholic teaching and opens the way for a renewal of the Church according to the needs and possibilities of modern times."

Evangelii Nuntiandi. Pope Paul will always be remembered for his 1975 apostolic exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN), *Evangelization in the Modern World*. This beautiful document, as fresh today as when it was written, asserts that: (1) evangelization is the vocation proper to the Church; (2) the Church's mission continues the mission of Jesus; (3) evangelization is a multi-faceted reality; and, (4) evangelization includes a commitment to full human development and social justice.

Paul VI asserted: "We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church.... Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize" (EN 14). "For the Church, evangelizing means bringing the Good News into all strata of humanity" (EN 18).

Pope Francis draws extensively upon the missionary vision of Paul VI; he quotes EN thirteen times in *Evangelii Gaudium*. From his earliest days as pope, Francis regularly speaks of EN, noting that Paul's words "are as timely as if they had been written yesterday." He described EN as "the greatest pastoral document that has ever been written to this day."

Paul VI and Mary. Under the lead of Paul VI, Vatican II incorporated its teaching on Mary into its 1964 document on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*; this decision firmly anchors Marian theology within mainstream Church teaching. The eighth chapter of *Lumen Gentium* (nos. 52-68) bears the title: "The Role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, in the Mystery of Christ and the Church." This title presents a balanced, integrated Mariology, always linking Mary to Christ and the Church.

Shared Reflections. Popes Paul VI (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*) and Francis (*Evangelii Gaudium*) express several common perspectives. "Let us preserve the delightful and comforting joy

of evangelizing" (EN 80); "let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of the joy of evangelization" (EG 83). All Christians are challenged to be "evangelized evangelizers" (cf. EN 15) who are truly "missionary disciples" (EG 120). Christian spirituality must reflect "the fervor of the saints" (EN 80) and emerge from "a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ" (EG 3). Popes Paul and Francis are truly "kindred spirits."

Inspiring Quotes for Personal Prayer. "Modern people listen more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if they listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (EN 41). "No more war, war never again! Peace, it is peace which must guide the destinies of people and all humanity. If you want peace, work for justice" (United Nations Address: October 4, 1965).

Friends, be inspired by the "Vatican II spirit" and "missionary enthusiasm" of Saint Pope Paul VI. He was aflame with the fire of evangelization. Try to catch the same "Gospel Fire"!

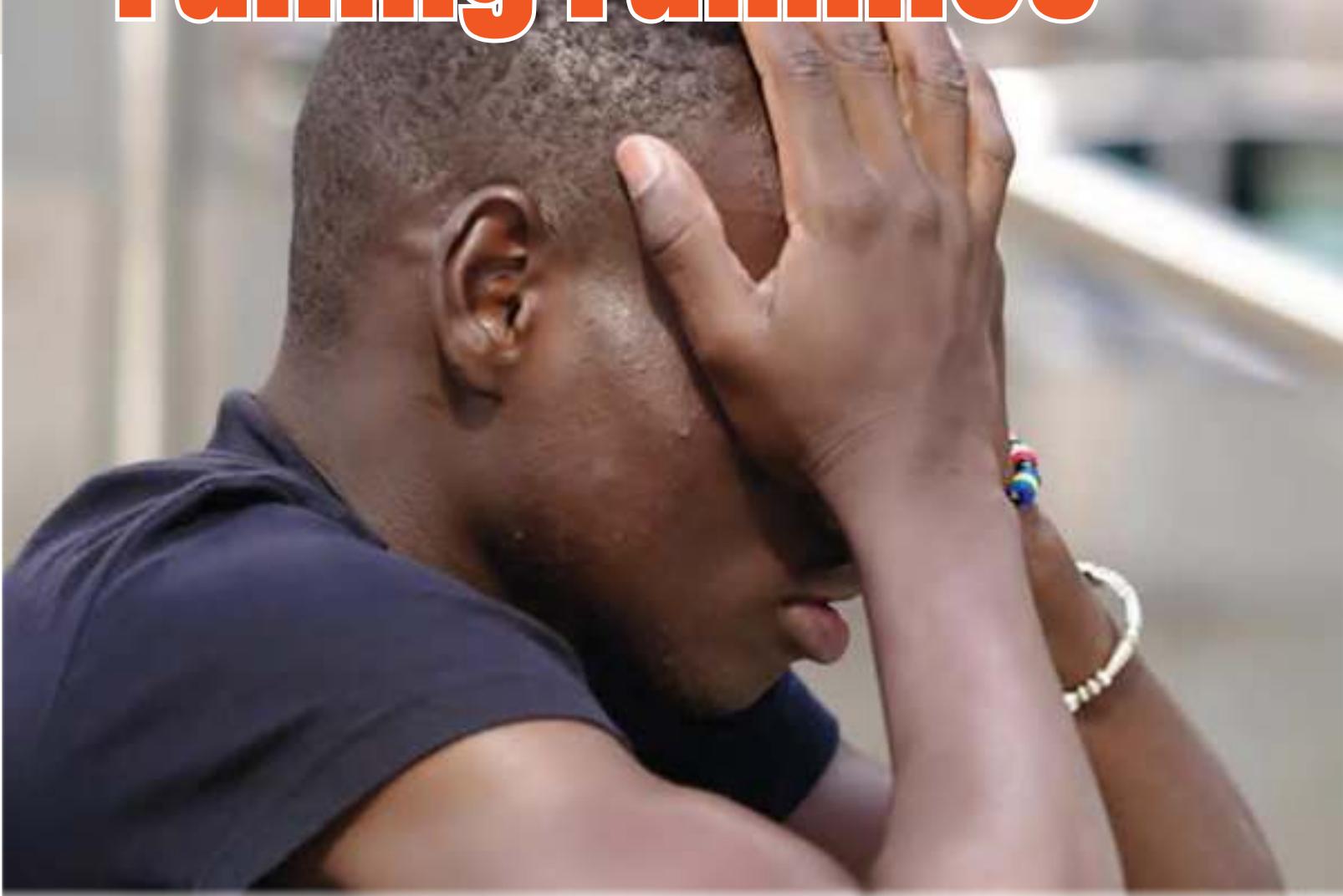


James H. Kroeger, MM, served mission in Asia for over five decades; recently he authored *Walking with Pope Francis; The Official Documents in Everyday Language* (Orbis Books – 2023) and *A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis* (Faith Alive Books, USA – 2024).

By Peter Knox, SJ



Failing Families



Blaming “the West”: A Familiar but Flawed Narrative

How often have we heard that the faults of the modern world come from “the West”? Failing families; ecological collapse; drug abuse; disrespect for our elders; disconnection from our ancestors; etc. Do we stop to ask ourselves WHERE this “West” is, or HOW it forces us as Africans to fall into its many traps? Maybe it is too simplistic to make an outright condemnation of everything that might be going wrong as caused by “the West.”

Does the West include many countries and civilizations

in the Eastern Hemisphere, for example? Maybe “the West” is a blanket term for the industrialized nations of the Northern Hemisphere, and Australia and New Zealand in the Southern Hemisphere. Maybe “the West” means all people with a European ancestry? Or does it also include Japanese and Philippinos and Latin Americans – in fact everybody who is not “African.”

The Modern Family in a Shifting World

It is true, that in countries of the industrialized North, families are generally much smaller than in Africa, nuclear rather than extended, with the older generation either

living on their own, or in retirement villages. The younger generations might have moved to the cities, in search of jobs and opportunities, and frequently people live alone, either because they cannot find a suitable soulmate, or because they find their needs for companionship met by pets, or virtual relationships over the internet. Many people have the economic means to support themselves and choose not to share their immediate living space with anyone else.

This individualism might be very lonely, or very satisfying. Some people might also have destructive habits like drug-taking or engaging in transactional sexual relationships. In times of crisis, these individuals have to depend on close friends or the state for support, because they are not intimately linked to members of their birth family.

Diverse family Structures and Pastoral Inclusion

Some families are reconstituted - with parents and children who have belonged to other families that might have broken down for various reasons. Some families have only one parent. Some families have no parents, and are cared for by the elder siblings. Some families have parents of the same gender with adopted children. And yet more and more people in all continents are living with all kinds of family lifestyles – whether compelled by economic circumstances, or out of choice for companionship. And they are happy with the choices they have made. It is like there is no longer a blueprint for what families should be like. In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis encourages the Church to give good pastoral care to all families no matter how they are constituted.

Beyond Cultural Romanticism and Western Blame

These are not ways of life that any traditional culture would recommend – African or otherwise. To say that this is the “Western” lifestyle is to demonstrate an ignorance that other cultures place equally high value on family and kinship ties as African cultures do. Whatever we mean by the term “Western,” it is not useful to seek the root of our troubles as though they were from outside our own cultures.

Traditional ways of life can never remain static. Cultures are dynamic. Cultures interact. Cultures adapt to new circumstances. Otherwise they die. The age of my grandparents is not my age – and I am very pleased about that. I do not listen to the music they listened to, or eat the same food, or teach the same ideas, or travel by horseback, or wear the same clothing, or go to Mass in

Latin, or expect the same from the generations that will follow me.

My grandparents grew up in villages in the mining boom in South Africa. The mines required larger and larger workforces, and so villages became towns, and then cities, along terrible racist lines. People came to work from all over the world and from many parts of the continent. Technology changed, and education had to keep up with the requirements of the world which was always becoming more modern. In the cities it was not possible to maintain large families, and so the average family size gradually shrunk. There are families on the poor margins of all towns, and some families have remained in rural areas, relying on the money earned by one parent working in the city. Without question, it is not easy to hold together a family in present economic circumstances.

At the moment, many families around the world are badly hit by the capricious withdrawal of foreign funding from some programmes on which we have come to depend. Long-term commitments had been made, which are now being cancelled at the stroke of a pen. Health, education and environmental services, social support for people with special needs, for women and children, for research and food security, as well as some government programmes, are all under threat.

However, until we stop blaming others for our challenges, we will never take a serious look at ourselves and see what the problems are at home, why our own conditions are so fragile, and so easily undermined by outside forces, and how we can address them using our own traditional resources. So long as we depend on others for our wellbeing, we will be vulnerable to their whims and fancies. We will suffer when narcissists come to power in the countries on which we are dependent, and they summarily cut off aid on which we are dependent.

The Power to Choose and the Wisdom to Discern

Quite often, we modify our lives to adopt their ways because we feel compelled to do so, rather than because we actually believe in the goodness of their ideas. If this is the case, we will always resent it, and never consider that our families might be in fact better off, more compassionate, more diverse, more open to people on the fringes of our society. There are some lessons we can learn from “the West,” but it is up to us to change voluntarily, rather than stagnate in a romanticized past in which everything was thought to be perfect.



The Family in the Light of the Jubilee Year of Hope

A Journey of Faith and Renewal

Pope Francis has declared 2025 a Jubilee Year with the theme "Pilgrims of Hope." This theme deeply resonates with the realities of families today faced with a myriad of challenges.

Modern families navigate countless challenges while holding onto their faith resilience and hope for better days ahead. As a reminder of the Holy Family of Nazareth of Jesus Mary and Joseph who endured trials with unwavering trust in God, today's families are called upon to walk their paths with hope.

The secular world recognizes that society is the basic unit of society, forming its fundamental unit. This acknowledgement underscores that a just and thriving world depends on the well-being of families. When families are nurtured well, they foster, hope, integrity, and good governance, thus, contributing to a more cohesive and just society. On the other hand, when families are threatened and weakened, the result is that the very foundation of society is also endangered.

The Church describes the family as the domestic Church and the primary school of faith whose teachers are the parents. Their primary role is to nurture and instil values into their

children for the betterment of society. Despite its vulnerability, the family remains the heart of both society and the Church.

Despite its vulnerabilities to attacks, the family continues to soldier on with God at the centre and support groups such as The Worldwide Marriage Encounter, and Couples for Christ, who work tirelessly to ensure that the institution of Marriage and family remains firmly grounded to counter attacks, the rapid influence of technology, internet and other social media platforms that work against the family. Properly instituted families continue to be the beacon of light and hope for both the Church and the world.

Marriage is a sacred union between a man and a woman established by God for companionship; addressing Adam's loneliness, intimacy; (deep connection, bone of my bones) and procreation (God blessed them and said "Be fruitful and multiply") When the sanctity of marriage is challenged, it is a direct attack on God.

The Word of God that established the institution of Marriage does not change with the times. Therefore, marriage also does not change with the times. Therefore, any culture, design, ideology, or theory that

seems to contradict the Word of God that established the institution of marriage works in vain because God is omnipotent.

This year's Jubilee theme is *Pilgrims of Hope. The theme seeks to strengthen our faith amid challenges, and that God remains at the centre of families. Hope is what drives our future as pilgrims of hope. We are accompanied by God himself through various ways, He has continued to support families throughout the ages despite the obstacles along the path.*

Hope transforms families from negativity to optimism. When hope is lost, our thoughts become clouded by negativity, negative self-talk, and a distorted perception of the reality of life, about ourselves, our families, and the world around us. We may develop a pessimistic outlook and struggle to see possibilities or solutions to the challenges that face our families today. However, with an optimistic mind, we trust that the future of families is bright and promising.

Quoting Pope Francis' February 2022 letter announcing the Jubilee Year 2025, he wrote, *"We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision"*

THE FAMILY IS UNDER SIEGE

By Maximillia Muninzwa



A World on fire, Family Under Siege

Truly, we are living in troubled times, where an awfully corrupt, convulsive, and catastrophic fire is ravaging the world at an unprecedented pace. This fire expresses itself in the erosion of values such as unrestrained moral permissiveness, compromise, relativism, serious crime and violence, and rampant materialism.

Shrewdly entwined within are the strong winds of irresponsible and perverse sexual behaviour, the gripping hands of drugs, and the alluring yet destructive influence of a media gone amok. Unfortunately, no matter its origins, this fire is aimed directly at destroying the very foundation of society and the cradle of humanity: the family unit. Once the bedrock of cultures, traditions and values, the family today faces an existential threat like never before.

Redefining Family and Losing Our Bearings

One of the clearest signs of this siege is the shifting definition of family and the devaluation of human values. Long-held descriptions of the family no longer hold as modern society continuously redefines its structure. The roles of fathers, mothers and children are also being reshaped at an alarming rate. Whilst we acknowledge that the evolution of families is a natural phenomenon, the new era has introduced a level of fluidity that often leaves confusion and uncertainty in its wake. In the name of progress, marriage is frequently portrayed as a scam, parenthood depicted as a trap, while "diversity and inclusivity" are aggressively promoted to justify all manner of reckless and perverse sex.

Commitment in Decline

In the quest for liberation and freedom, commitment and sacrifice are increasingly dismissed as outdated. Sadly, many world governments and even religious institutions have adopted these narratives, often driven by financial incentives rather than moral conviction. In such a hostile climate, those who choose to build and preserve strong families find themselves swimming against the tide. Though courageous, this is a lonely road for many.

Economic Pressure and Absentee Parenting

Another battleground in this siege is the economic

pressure that is forcing parents to work longer hours, leaving less time for home and family. This economic squeeze places immense stress on marriages and parenting, stripping the home of its essence – that is connection, presence and nurture. Moreover, technology and media play a significant role in further destabilising the family structure.

Technology: Friend or Foe?

Digital media and high-tech tools are other culprits that expose families – particularly children – to influences that are far beyond their understanding. The family's role as a buffer and moral compass is undercut when young minds turn to social media or anonymous online forums for answers to life's deepest questions.

My esteemed readers, there is a great deal at stake. Research has shown that when families weaken, the consequences ripple outward, leading to higher rates of mental health issues, increased crime rates, declining academic performance, and fractured communities. These signs are already evident in our communities today.

This evidence reinforces what common sense has long dictated: strong families are the foundation of strong societies. But this is not merely about preserving a structure; it is about preserving love, identity, and legacy. We first learn who we are within family. This is where we are loved unconditionally, not for what we do, but simply because we belong.

A Call to Action

If the family is under siege, then the mission of our time is to defend and rebuild it with intentionality. We must teach respect for human life and the value of commitment, restore honour to the role of marriage and parenthood, advocate for policies that support work-life balance, and create conducive spaces that foster authentic, meaningful conversations.

To echo the sentiments of Pope Francis, the world doesn't need perfect families, it needs families that are present, persistent, and grounded in love.

Parting shot? The family isn't just worth fighting for; it is worth everything. Let's rise to the challenge!

Vocation story



Deacon Hendreson Harold Masanjala, born in 1995 in Chiladzulu, Malawi, first sensed his vocation at the age of 10 while serving as an altar boy. Inspired by his parish priest and later by the Comboni Missionaries, he was deeply moved by their missionary zeal, especially the life and legacy of St. Daniel Comboni. He now shares his inspiring vocation journey, offering a personal reflection on how God has led him step by step into a life of mission and service.

By Deacon Hendreson Harold Masanjala, MCCJ

A Spark Ignited in Childhood

My name is Hendreson Harold Masanjala, born on 8th July 1995 in Chiladzulu District, Malawi. I come from a humble family of four children, and I am the second born. My upbringing was deeply rooted in the Catholic faith. My parents, though not wealthy, gave us the most precious inheritance; faith in God.

My vocation story began like a small flame, sparked when I was just 10 years old at Saint Anne's Parish in Namulenga, my home parish. I became an altar server and was immediately drawn to the reverence and mystery of the Mass. I was fascinated by the priests, their

calm presence, the power in their words, and their total dedication to God's people. One man in particular, Fr. Alfred Nsope, our parish priest at the time, stood out to me. His gentleness, his joyful service, and his pastoral closeness to the people deeply inspired me.

One Sunday, as I walked to church with my father, a question formed in my heart and spilled out of my mouth: "Dad, what should I do to become like Fr. Alfred Nsope?" My father chuckled warmly and said, "You need to work hard in school." His simple answer became a powerful motivator for me. From that moment, I began to carry this dream within me not fully understanding it, but sensing it was something sacred. That day marked the beginning of a lifelong journey.

A Life-Changing Encounter with the Comboni Missionaries

As I grew older, the desire to serve God did not fade, it deepened. When I was 15 years old, I encountered a Comboni Missionary for the first time, Fr. Mennas Mukaka, MCCJ. He visited our parish and spoke to a group of young people about the life of St. Daniel Comboni. What struck me most was the radical nature of Comboni's life: how he left everything behind, endured suffering and rejection, all for the sake of evangelizing Africa.

Fr. Mennas shared the Comboni charism, which emphasizes going where others do not go, especially to the most abandoned. Something clicked in me. I thought, "This is the

kind of life I want; to be a missionary like St. Daniel Comboni, a man who gave his whole life to bring the light of Christ to those in darkness."

A month later, I wrote a letter to Fr. Mennas, expressing my desire to join the Comboni Missionaries. He responded warmly, inviting me to the "Come and See" program in Lunzu, Blantyre. I attended seven sessions of the program. Each one opened my eyes and heart more to the beauty and depth of missionary life. Eventually, I was admitted into the pre-postulancy program in Lunzu for three months. I was nervous, but my heart was filled with peace and courage.

Formation: Growing in Faith and Mission

In August 2014, I began my Postulancy in Balaka, entering a new stage of my formation. I studied Philosophy for three years while engaging in pastoral work at

Mbera Parish. This time was crucial; it was not just about acquiring academic knowledge, but about forming the heart of a missionary.

During this period, I was introduced more deeply to Comboni spirituality, community life, and the meaning of the Cross in mission. The words of our founder (St Daniel Comboni) echoed in my soul: "I want my missionaries to be Holy and Capable." I realized that holiness wasn't about being perfect but about being rooted in prayer, humble in service, and deeply committed to God's mission.

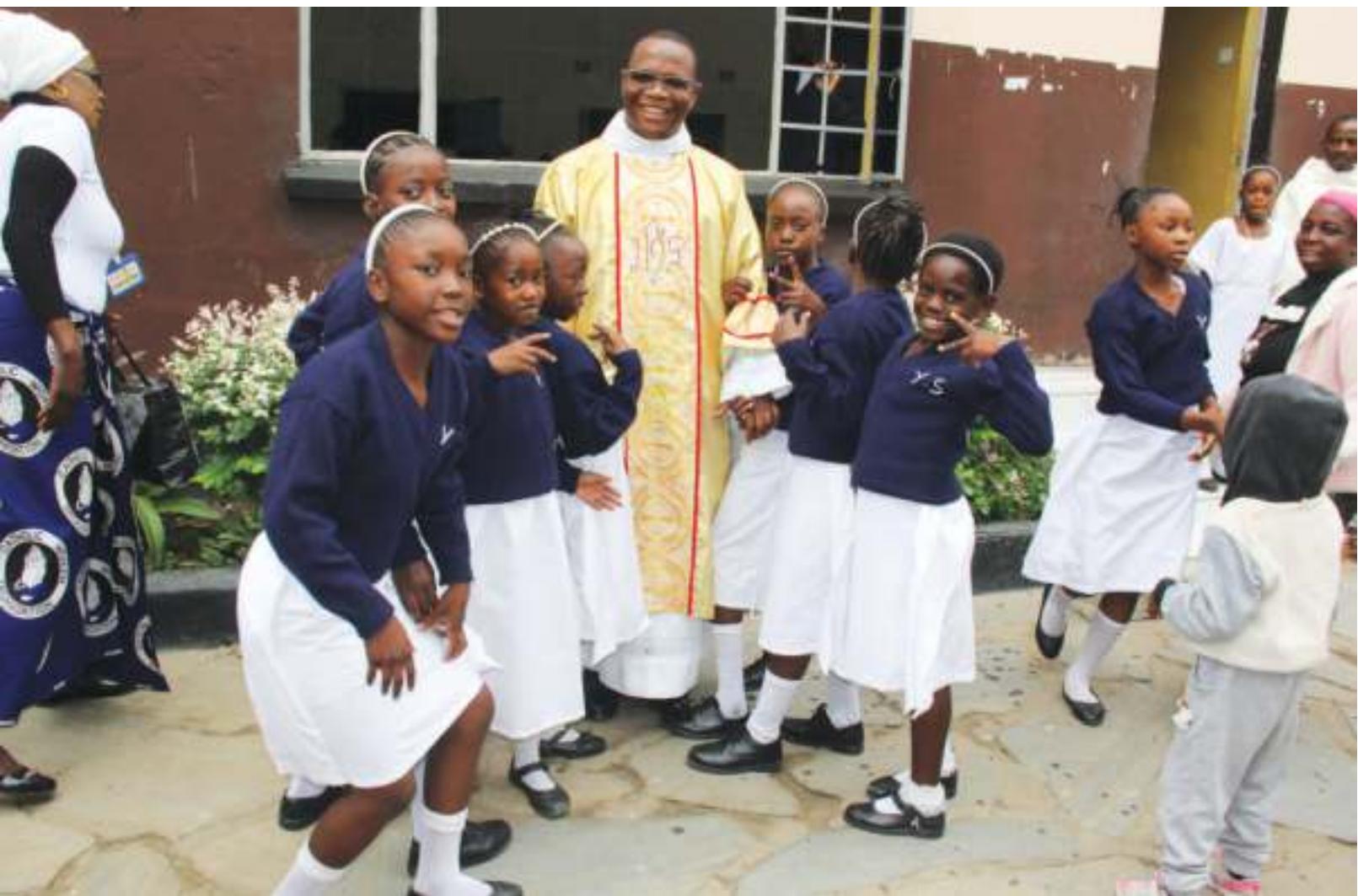
After my studies in Balaka, I was sent to the Novitiate in Bauleni, Lusaka, where I spent two years

in deeper spiritual formation. These were some of the most intense and beautiful years of my life. I learned the value of silence, daily prayer, discernment, and listening to the gentle voice of God. It was here that I truly began to embrace the missionary identity.

On 1st May 2019, I professed my first religious vows, a day that remains etched in my heart as a moment of deep joy and surrender. I then received my assignment to the Scholasticate in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, for Theological studies.

Missionary Zeal in Kinshasa and Beyond

Living in Kinshasa for four years was a transformative experience. I encountered the richness of the African Church in a new





context; diverse, alive, and full of challenges. Theology deepened my understanding of the Gospel, but it was the encounters with people especially the poor, the sick, and the youth that brought that theology to life.

In the midst of daily struggles; language barriers, cultural differences, moments of loneliness, God was always present. I learned to rely on him more, to serve with humility, and to remain faithful even when things felt difficult. The Comboni mission spirit became more than an idea, it became my way of life.

Upon completing my studies, I was assigned back to Malawi-Zambia province to begin my missionary service. I served at St. Kizito Parish in Lusaka, working with youth, small Christian communities, and the poor. It was here that I realized how sweet it is to serve the Lord among His people.

On 24th August 2024, I made my final vows, committing my life forever to God in the Comboni family. Two months later, on 26th October 2024, I was ordained a deacon by His Lordship George Zumaire Lungu,

bishop of Chipata Diocese, Zambia. Currently, I continue to serve at St. Kizito Parish, preparing for the next step in my journey.

A Vocation Lived as a Gift and a Mission

Looking back over the twelve years of my formation, I see how God has patiently shaped me through people, experiences, challenges, and deep moments of grace. My vocation started as a whisper in the Church and has grown into a living testimony of God's faithfulness.

When I first told my mother I wanted to become a priest, she said, "My son, you cannot manage." But with hope and trust in God, I said, "Let me go and try. If I fail, thanks be to God. If I make it, thanks be to God too." That simple faith has carried me until today. The Comboni formation has taught me that vocation is not just a personal choice, it is a divine invitation that calls for a daily commitment yes, often in silence, often in struggle, but always with joy and love.

Today, I say with conviction: "I am happy to be a Comboni Missionary. I am happy to follow in the footsteps of our beloved founder, St. Daniel Comboni." If I had a thousand lives, I would give them all for the evangelization of the poor and the abandoned.

An Invitation to Come and See

To every young person discerning their vocation, I say: "Come and see" (John 1:39). God is still calling. He calls ordinary people like you and me to do extraordinary things through His grace. Let us walk together in faith, joy, and mission. The harvest is plenty, but the laborers are few. Will you be one of them?

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JUBILEE 2025

CALENDAR OF MAJOR EVENTS

DECEMBER 2024

24 December

Opening of the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica



Photo: Vatican Media

JANUARY 2025

24-26 January

Jubilee of the World of Communications

FEBRUARY 2025

8-9 February

Jubilee of Armed Forces, Police and Security Personnel

15-18 February

Jubilee of Artists

21-23 February

Jubilee of Deacons

MARCH 2025

8-9 March

Jubilee of the World of Volunteering

28 March

24 Hours for the Lord

28-30 March

Jubilee of the Missionaries of Mercy

APRIL 2025

5-6 April

Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers

25-27 April

Jubilee of Teenagers

28-29 April

Jubilee of People with Disabilities

MAY 2025

1-4 May

Jubilee of Workers

4-5 May

Jubilee of Entrepreneurs

10-11 May

Jubilee of Marching Bands

12-14 May

Jubilee of the Eastern Churches

16-18 May

Jubilee of Confraternities

30 May - 1 June

Jubilee of Families, Children, Grandparents and the Elderly



JUNE 2025

7-8 June

Jubilee of Ecclesial Movements, Associations and New Communities

9 June

Jubilee of the Holy See

14-15 June

Jubilee of Sport

20-22 June

Jubilee of Governments

23-24 June

Jubilee of Seminarians

25 June

Jubilee of Bishops

25-27 June

Jubilee of Priests

JULY 2025

28 July - 3 August

Jubilee of Youth

SEPTEMBER 2025

15 September

Jubilee of Consolation

20 September

Jubilee of Justice

26-28 September

Jubilee of Catechists

OCTOBER 2025

4-5 October

Jubilee of the Missions

4-5 October

Jubilee of Migrants

8-9 October

Jubilee of Consecrated Life

11-12 October

Jubilee of Marian Spirituality

31 October - 2 November

Jubilee of the World of Education



NOVEMBER 2025

16 November

Jubilee of the Poor

22-23 November

Jubilee of Choirs

DECEMBER 2025

14 December

Jubilee of Prisoners

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