



Brothers of Immaculate Conception

(Brothers FIC – Malawi)

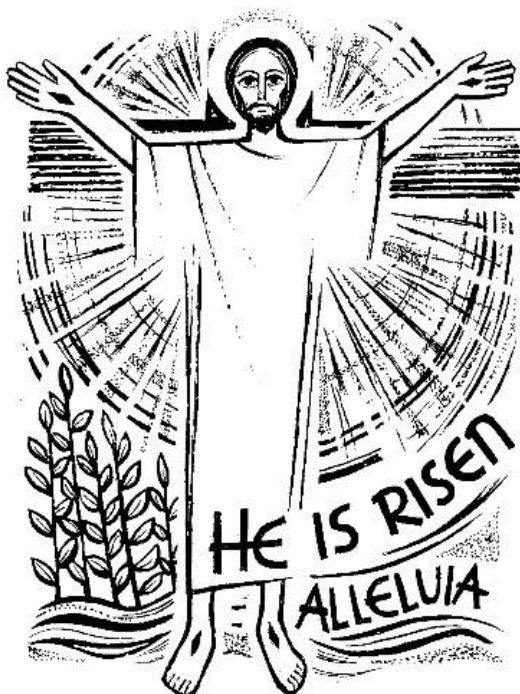
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2024 FIRST PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER



Dear Fellow Brothers and Friends,

In this Easter Season, we would request that individually, we take ample time off our ever-busy life to reflect that we were created freely out of God's love. An amazing love that filled us with light, love and life.

However, humanity sinned, and we keep on sinning. In our disobedience, we knowingly separated ourselves from the Father's love causing everyone to fall into darkness and bringing about our death. In his tender love and mercy, God sent his Son to save us, to die for us, to forgive us, to heal us, to love us the way no one else could.

Jesus, taking on our human condition, brings light to our darkness and life to our deadness. He makes us a new creation in the Father's love. This is the true cause for our joy and the reason for our gladness for this Easter Season.

We rejoice for we have been reunited to the love of the Father, through the saving work of his Son, in the grace and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. By sharing in the Passion and Death of our Lord, we share in his Resurrection. We rise with him in newness of life. Through Jesus, we have become beloved children of God, a new creation, children of the light, children of eternal happiness and peace. Our challenge now is to stay close to Jesus so the darkness does not creep back into our lives. We do this by continuing to walk with Christ and making fasting, prayer and almsgiving part of our daily routine, part of our daily life. We fast from those things that pull us away from God and pull us back into darkness; back into the empty tomb.

We dedicate more quiet time to prayer in order to remain intimately present to the Lord to share our thoughts, feelings and concerns with him. We continue to give ourselves to the Lord in

loving obedience to him and in loving ministry to those in need. We continue to walk with our Risen Lord and allow him to be the food that feeds and sustains us, the nourishment for our journey back home. Nourished by Christ through these gifts, we can respond as the Disciples did when they saw the empty tomb: they believed, they shared, they loved as Christ loved them. So let us rejoice and be glad, for we have been enlightened by Christ. Let us continue to keep the Passion of Christ alive in our hearts and remember all that the Father has done to resurrect us to eternal life simply because he loves us.

TRANSFERS AND APPOINTMENTS 2023

In the context of religious life, transfers and appointments of brothers are not merely administrative decisions; they are deeply rooted in the spiritual journey and communal living that define the essence of consecrated life.

Transfers for religious brothers often signify a call to embrace change and new challenges in our service to God and the community. It is an opportunity for personal growth and spiritual renewal, if we accept them as such and trust in the divine providence and discernment of our superiors.

Appointments in religious orders can include roles such as community leaders, teachers, or other positions that contribute to the mission of the congregation. These roles are accepted as a form of service, and brothers take on these responsibilities with humility, and dedication.

Obedience is a fundamental vow in religious life, and it plays a crucial role in transfers and appointments. Brothers submit to the decisions of their superiors, who discern these matters through prayers and consultation, seeking the

good of the individual and the community and the province.

The community plays a supportive role in the transition process, offering encouragement and assistance to the brother who is transferring and assuming a new appointment. This communal aspect, reinforces the bond among members and our shared commitment to our religious calling.

The Provincial Council, Brothers FIC Malawi, during its November 2023 meeting, released a list of transfers and assignments for brothers to various communities and schools: Brothers Bonaventure Kasiya and Gasper Kalisto, were transferred to Mitengo Community and appointed as instructors of Mitengo Technical College. Brother Mike Mbato, transferred to Mzedi Community and assigned to St. Patrick's Secondary School as a member of the teaching staff.

The three newly professed brothers were also assigned to various communities; Brother Emmanuel Tambala appointed to Maryview community and helps as a pre-school teacher and boarding master at Maryview school for the Deaf. Brother Charles Doviko, moved to Mzedi community from Maryview and works as librarian at St. Louis Community Day Secondary School. Brother Amos Kamwendo became a member of Bethel Community and assists with bursarship work at St. Patrick's Secondary School.

Transfers and appointments in religious life, are moments of grace, that invite us to deepen our commitment to God and the congregation and to continue to serve my congregation and God with renewed zeal. If we are to benefit and grow in our spiritual life, they are to be embraced with faith, knowing that each step taken is part of a

large divine plan for one's life and the lives of those we serve.

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY 2023

“FIC Journey to Spiritual enrichment” is one of the resolutions of the General Chapter 2006. Previously, the spiritual exercises were also done with the GC initiative, but the current one was borne in 2006. It is a program of spiritual exercise for spiritual growth and deepening of its participants. During the 2023 Spiritual Journey, the participants from the FIC Provinces (Malawi, Chile, Ghana, Indonesia, and The Netherlands) gathered together in The Netherlands for four weeks program, starting from 1st to 21st October.

The main content of OASIS 2023 :1. Sharing of who am I as a Human and Christian, 2. Identity and mission of the Religious Brothers in the church, 3. Dealing with stress, 4. Growth towards psychological and Spiritual maturity, 5.

pilgrimage to FIC historical places and cemetery , 6. Prayer life and community life, 8. The developing of charism, 9. The identity of FIC according to our founders, 10. Mary immaculate conception source of joy, 11. Called and sent to be bearer of good news in joyful life and apostolic life, 12. The style of leadership of our founders, 13. Mary a source of inspiration and connection, 14. Our call and mission to live the Spirituality of the congregation. All this goal setting was concluded with writing a covenant and the profession of it in the presence of all participants and General superior, Br. Augustine Kubdaar.

Besides receiving some inputs, participants spent most of the time doing reflection individually as well as in groups and in various ways. Once a week each participant got an opportunity to share his experiences with the staff members for further deepening and internationalisation. On

some evenings, during recreation, there was cultural celebration in which participants had cultural performances from each province and these were joyful evenings.

For a change, a “one-day outing” was organized to visit places of attraction around the sea from South to North of the Maastricht town, through the water transport. It was a wonderful and relaxing day for almost all participants, staff members and some of the brothers and associate members from the Netherlands.

This coming together (OASIS 2023) provides participants with opportunities to experience more tangibly the international character of the congregation and the differences that are there among us as provinces and individual members. The pilgrimage to the FIC historical places in Maastricht, where “everything” about congregation was born or started and getting

physically in touch with them was a special experience for the participants. The physical presence at the FIC place of origin brought to the participants closer connection with the spirit of Mgr. Louis Rutten and Brother Bernardus Hoecken, founders of the congregation. This experience was further deepened by the exercises of having mental/spiritual and or written dialogue with the Founders.

It was observed that OASIS 2023 had been a wonderful and beneficial experience for the brothers who participated in it. It is hoped that it has contributed to the growth and deepening of our joy, love, happiness, and peace in our life as persons, as followers of Jesus Christ and as members of FIC Malawi.

A TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEY OF CULTURE, EDUCATION AND GROWTH; BRO. LAWRENCE NKONDE IN RETROSPECTION



I am filled with immense joy and gratitude as I reflect on my experience of studying in Ghana. As a Malawian FIC Brother I was given a wonderful opportunity by the FIC Malawi Provincial Council to pursue my Technical Education studies in Construction Technology and Estate Management.

Today, I am delighted to share with you my experiences and the profound impact this opportunity has had on me so far.

Studying in Ghana has been a transformative journey, both academically and culturally. The

knowledge and skills I have gained during my three-year Higher National Diploma course has greatly equipped me to contribute meaningfully to our congregation's work of forming the youth through Education in the technical field and construction.

The exposure to Ghana's Technical Education and construction industry, with its unique practices and techniques, has broadened my perspective and enriched my understanding of the field. I am excited to bring this knowledge back to Malawi and apply it to our projects; train more youths ensuring that we continue to build with excellence on the firm foundation laid by our Founders Msgr. Louis and Brother Bernadus.

I believe this will not only enhance the quality of our work but also contribute more to the growth and development of our Province. I am grateful for the support and encouragement of both the

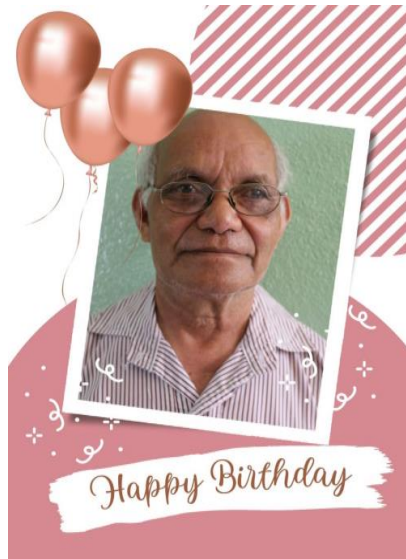
Ghana and the Malawi Provinces of the FIC Congregation, who have stood by me every step of the way.

Currently I am pursuing my degree program at Dr. Hilla Limann University still in Ghana. With determination and hard work, I am on track to complete it early next year.

In conclusion, studying in Ghana has been a blessing beyond measure, and I feel highly honored.

May God continue to guide and bless our congregation as we strive to make a positive impact in the lives of others and especially the poor.

A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION- 75 YEARS OF BRO IVO HEATUBUN



It is good to be thankful for what you have in life and what you have accomplished. However, we should always open our eyes to the larger picture. If we are to appreciate the fruits of life, we must first appreciate the tree that bears the fruit: birth itself.

Birth is our beginning. It is a window to the chance of a lifetime, the chance to fulfil our

unique mission. So, a birthday is a momentous occasion, to be commemorated just as a nation commemorates its birth or as an organization celebrates its foundation. It is a chance to remember the day that a major event occurred, to celebrate and give thanks and reflect upon how well we are fulfilling our calling.

This year 2024, precisely on 28 January, Malawi Province had a privilege to celebrate the life of Bro. Ivo, one of our senior brothers. Currently, he is the oldest brother in the province. This birthday was not just like any other birthdays we always have, but it was a special birthday. Why special? Well, the psalmist says it all “*Our lifetime is seventy years or eighty if we are strong. But the years are full of hard work and pain. They pass quickly, and then we are gone*”. The psalmist knew the struggles that we face once we are born. Therefore, for one to reach seventy years it means he has encountered a lot

of things, hence such birthdays are considered as special.

This special birthday celebration took place in Maryview community, where currently Bro. Ivo is living. The event started with well wishes to bro. Ivo and the cutting of cake. All brothers were present, some priests, religious sisters around Maryview community, and heads of our institutions, were invited for a meal and drinks, to thank God for the life of this brother and the works he does for the province and his fellow brothers.

Time itself is spiral, something special happens on our birthday each year. The same energy that God invested in us at birth is present once again. It is our duty to be receptive to that force. When Bro Ivo was asked to say something on this special day, he said he could spend the whole day telling stories on how he has journeyed so far. In

summary he said, he is grateful to God for keeping him healthy and sound till this day. As he is growing older, he feels that he needs more prayers and asked brothers to always pray for him. He concluded by saying that, the only important and valuable gift we can give him is always our prayers.

There is no better way to celebrate a birthday than to commit a special act of goodness. It is easy enough to say we are thankful; it is far better to show it by doing a kind deed, something that we did not do yesterday. Not because someone is forcing us, not because someone suggests it, but simply because our inner goodness, our soul, want to express its thanks for being born and alive.

Such an act of kindness gives God great pleasure, because He sees that the child in whom He invested, the particular child he wanted to be

born on a particular day, is living up to its potential. We hope this special birthday celebration, will inspire many young people to avoid risks or life styles that may shorten their life span and to lead a life worthy of God. We wish Bro Ivo many happy returns and success as he continues serving in God's vineyard.



*The provincial superior helping Bro. Ivo in
cutting the cake*

THE PROVINCIAL CHAPTER MALAWI 2024 - PHASE ONE



*Fr. Jester Banda (OCD), a facilitator of the
provincial chapter-Malawi*

A religious Chapter is considered as the highest meeting of every Congregation in the Catholic Church. Chapters can be at different levels. For instance, at international level it is known as General chapter, at Provincial level, it is called Provincial chapter. The Constitution of FIC Brothers, especially on the congregational statutes (Provinces and Communities, Number

43) explains how the chapter is important. The Provincial chapter determines the way in which the new Provincial Council is to be constituted and to function. The provincial council implements suggestions and proposals of the chapter participants for a given period of time. The previous Provincial chapter was conducted in 2018, after a period of six years it is now time again to reflect and plan by strengthening our relationship with God, committing ourselves to the Gospel values, love one another more dearly and preserving the heritage of our founders.

Malawi Province decided to conduct Provincial Chapter 2024 in three phases. Phase one was set from 22nd - 25th of February. The theme guiding the chapter is **Transformation and Growth of the Malawi Province in the Spirit of our Founders**. The theme encompasses all the areas of religious life, which is transformation and growth in spiritual life, religious values, social,

physical, and mental capacities to a degree which Jesus Christ is inviting us to. Fr Jester Banda (OCD), who was chosen as a facilitator, reflecting on this theme he emphasized on the readings from Mark 6:30-32 and Luke 2:17-20 respectively. Jesus called his disciples to a quiet place after they had worked a lot in the apostolates assigned to them. It is also proper for us after a long time of work, in service of the province, to go to a quiet place to reflect on all the dealings we were assigned to. In other words, to have time and give account on the journey we were sent to embark on, in the tenure of 2018-2024 Provincial chapter. At the same time creating a room for transformation and growth to take place in our hearts.

As we start another journey from this year 2024, we hope to have transformed lives and growth with Mary as our model; and in spirit of our founders too. This process is paramount as

highlighted in article 42 of the FIC Constitutions. It is the time of discernment of what God asks of us. We do this as part of embracing our mission and ministry, while bearing in mind of our shortcomings too. In our shortcomings, we seek God's love and grace through prayer and to be guided towards a positive transformation and growth.

Transformation and growth to take its course, requires forgiveness. The forgiveness of the self and the forgiveness of each other, most importantly, the forgiveness of our Heavenly Father. Free mind and free heart are the most suitable and conducive environment for transformation and growth. We need to make peace with our own self by accepting what is already done. We should make efforts in making reconciliation with others too. With the words of Pope, Francis, "*we should embrace our past with*

love and gratitude, the present with joy and happiness, and the future with faith and hope”.

We are grateful to God for we have started on a good note. We are hoping the same in the second and the last phase of our Provincial Chapter. We pray that we should always be docile to the Holy Spirit and allow God's Holy will be done. We also pray and wish well for our brothers (Bro. Sitima, Bro. Mwachande and Bro. Nkonde) who will represent Malawi province as General chapter delegates (in Ghana) in the coming month of August, 2024.

We hope to see the transformation and the growth we need, not only as Malawi Province but also in the whole congregation, in all aspects of religious life. May our aspirations bring positive impact in the world and the people we serve.



A group photo of chapter participants on the last day of the provincial chapter at FIC cottage in Mangochi.

SUBMERSIBLE PUMP REPLACEMENT AT MITENGO TECHNICAL COLLEGE

On 8th April 2023, we received a message from Mitengo Technical College informing us that thieves had stolen the submersible pump at the college. The college relies on the pump as the main source of water for the college students and staff. It has been a challenge for the college and

the staff to run without water for almost a year now.

From the time the pump was stolen, students from the college have been fetching water from the nearby borehole at Mitengo Primary School. The college has been contributing money to the primary school every month for their students to be allowed to use the borehole. The Provincial Council tried to respond to the need of rehabilitating the well for the college and replace the pump through Mr. Phungwabu, borehole driller. Unfortunately, this man has disappeared for almost six months now. The matter has been reported to police and meanwhile the Provincial Council has taken steps to get a new borehole. We are informed the Malawi Revenue Authority (MRA) has also been looking for the same man after he swindled some cash meant for boreholes for the organization.

THE REFORESTATION PROJECT AND “LAUDATO SI” WORK IN MZEDI AND PART OF MARYVIEW

During the month of February 2024, we sold some pine and gum trees from our forests in Mzedi and Maryview to timber millers. This led to clearing of the whole forest to pave way for new plants. Addressing to the environmental challenges in the area and promoting the spirit of “Laudato Si”, we decided to restore the forest by replanting trees. The project is not only contributing to the restoration of the environmental degradation, but also empowering the students of St Louis Community Day Secondary School to actively take part in the reforestation exercises, but also to develop the spirit of caring and ownership of the environment and build a sustainable future as they take part in the process of planting.

More than two thousand gum and pine trees have been planted, and our target is to plant to a million plus tree seedlings before the end of rainy season. We are grateful to the brothers who are taking part in this project, and in a special way to the St Louis Head teacher, for taking the initiative to encourage and engage his students in the afforestation project.

LENTEN SOLIDALITY 2024

The FIC congregation charism places emphasis on being our brother's and/or sister's keeper and especially for those that are in dire need of the necessities of life. The Lenten season can be meaningless if we are not closer to the needy. These are people whom we know cannot afford to sustain themselves and we have a responsibility to help them where possible.

As a congregation of Brothers of the Immaculate Conception, apart from all what we do, every

Lenten Season allows us to share more the blessings God has endowed us with, with the needy from the villages surrounding our communities. Article 40, of FIC Constitutions explicitly articulates the need for doing this. As brothers FIC, we are encouraged that when we fast, we reserve/ renounce some comforts for the sake of those who do not have. The same renunciation is done in all other aspects, At the end of the season, a community takes all that had not been used and share that with the needy during the Easter Celebration. This is what we call Lenten solidarity.

Apart from each community taking part in Lenten solidarity, the Provincial Council of Malawi also takes part in support for the idea. In this year`s Lenten solidarity, they supported every community with money to a tune of Three hundred thousand Malawian Kwacha (MK300,000/ 163.44 Euros.) So, this is added to

what the community had reserved and is shared with the needy. This helps the communities to reach out to many people. In making sure that the support reaches the intended recipients, each community should identify the needy by themselves. These could be, the sick, the needy elderly and those who are in dire need. Each community member is supposed to take part in this exercise. In one way or the other. In the end a community must account for everything to the Provincial Bursar and the PCM.

RESIDENTIAL ASPIRANCY

On 1st, November 2023, Malawi province through its formation house in Mzedi received five young men to start their formation journey. These are; Garnet Liphavah, a trained primary school teacher, Yohane Mphero, Malawi School certificate of Education (MSCE) holder, Steven Mandebvu, Malawi School certificate of Education (MSCE) school leaver, Alfred

Kholowa, trained Primary teacher, Lucius Lawrence Zakeyo, Malawi School certificate of education (MSCE) graduate.



As stated in the Malawi Provincial statutes number 7.2, the aspirancy is the first stage of the formation in the congregation of the Brothers of the Immaculate Conception (FIC). The stage is called the residential aspirancy because the aspirants reside in the formation house and it takes a year or so, depending on how the candidate has lived this period. Those that are accepted to continue, they travel to Ghana for

further stages of their formation. During this period, the young men are enriched with the knowledge of the congregation through the subjects offered. These include the History of the congregation, English for communication, Prayer life, Liturgy, *Laudato Si*, Christian psychology, vocation discernment, Mariology, and Computer studies. Some FIC brothers and lay people teach these courses.

While in Mzedi, the young men are given the chance to express themselves through various activities like hobbies. Assigned to some responsibilities inside and outside the Formation House. This helps them to learn how to conduct and perform some tasks in community

CELEBRATING ST. PATRICK`S DAY

St. Patrick was a British saint but became famous in Ireland, where he served as a bishop. His feast is commemorated by the church on 17th March

every year. He is the patron saint of one of the FIC Secondary schools in Mzedi. As part of paying homage to their patron, St. Patrick's national secondary school celebrates the feast every year. The celebration for 2024 was honored by the presence of the Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa of the Archdiocese of Blantyre, the Parish Priest of Mzedi parish Fr. Alfred Msope, the FIC Provincial superior's delegation Br. Moses Mgunda, the Education Manager for Chiradzulu District, the alumni and the local chiefs around the school.



The day started with the Eucharistic Celebration which was presided over by the Archbishop. In

his homily, he emphasized on the life and the personality of St. Patrick. He asked the staff and students to take the good examples of their patron saint. *“Though he was in prison for six years, St. Patrick had in his mind that one day he will be out. He continued being good by being a prayerful person”* he said.

Later on in the afternoon, after the health break, the day continued with the speeches and activities. The students spiced the event with the activities like poems, songs and cultural dances (gule wankulu in particular). The principal of the school, Mr. Aleke Mtungama, commended all the stakeholders for the good work which is being done at the school. In his speech, Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa thanked the brothers FIC for the support they give to the school, and the good relationship the is there with the diocese. He also thanked the staff for the commendable job which is being done and that

the school has over the years performed well on national examinations in the country at both Junior Certificate(JC) and Malawi School Certificate of Education(MSCE), examinations. He therefore, asked all the stakeholders of the school to continue working hand in hand for the betterment of the school and education in Malawi.

On behalf of the Provincial Superior, Br. Mgunda urged the students to maintain the good discipline of the school. He as well commended the hardworking spirit among both the teaching and non-teaching staff at the school. The chief alumni inspired the students to work hard and that the school has the capacity to take them very far. He gave them examples of those that have walked on the corridors of the school that are doing well today. He concluded his speech by urging them to continue this legacy. The day ended with some refreshments provided by the

school at the community of the brothers. People had time to interact and students had time to meet the alumni for some inquiries. St Patrick`s National Secondary School, *Lux in Tenebris* (Light in the darkness.)

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