

White Fathers - White Sisters



Issue No. 381 April-May 2005

Editor, Illustrations and Lay-out: Bill Turnbull W.F.

Contents	page
Editorial	3
The Spiritual Dimension of Interreligious Dialogue	
By Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald W.F.	4
Communion and Solidarity Between Africa and Europe	
The Bishops of SECAM and CCEE	12
Millennium Development Goals Reminder	14
Some Statistics of World Religions	16
A Journey of Faiths	
By Sr. Marie Cloutier W.S.	18
Bro. George Ascott W.F. RIP.	25
Fr. Thomas McIlveney W.F. RIP.	27
Obituary List	30

Photograph Credits & Captions

'Comboni Press' photographic agency, Rome: pages 1, 5.

White Fathers - pages 21, 26, & 27.

White Sisters - pages 19, 20, 22, and 23.

M-Af-Namur - pages 7, 9, 11, 13, & 15.

Consolata Missionaries

Front Cover: A Sudanese refugee at St. Joseph's school, in the Maadi quarter of Cairo.

Back Cover: the Consolata Missionaries

EDITORIAL

We were putting this issue of the magazine together when the earthquake and tsunami hit so many countries around the Indian Ocean. The echoes were felt throughout the whole world as the number of the dead rose and their nationalities became known. The devastation affected different cultures and faiths so this issue, with the theme of interreligious dialogue, is most fitting at yet another time of global questioning.

The Tsunami showed us all that nature draws people together and that we have a great deal in common, despite our different cultures or religions. This point is brought out in the two main articles of this issue - **The Spiritual Dimension of Interreligious Dialogue**, by Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald W.F., and **A Journey of Faiths**, by Sr. Marie Cloutier W.S. We hear how White Fathers and White Sisters are involved in Interreligious dialogue.

We also give thanks for the lives of two White Fathers who died recently - **Bro. George Ascott** and **Fr. Thomas McIlveney** - who both served the Church and the peoples of Africa for many years. We can read their appreciation at the end of the magazine, from page 25 onwards.

A reminder, from the last issue, that 2005 is a crucial years for Africa in the Britain when the Government have made the concerns of the continent a priority. Please try and follow events through the media and organizations such as **CAFOD** at http://www.cafod.org.uk/get_involved/campaigning

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

We would like to apologise for problems caused when people write with a change of address. Due to the print schedule it is often not possible for the alterations to take effect with the next issue. The dates for receiving address changes are similar to those for names to be included in the Obituary List on page 31.

suttonlink@dial.pipex.com <http://www.thewhitefathers.org.uk> wfscotland@care4free.net

WHITE FATHERS

Registered Charity No. 233302

ENGLAND AND WALES
129 Lichfield Road,
Sutton Coldfield,
West Midlands, B74 2SA
Tel: 0121 308 0226
Fax: 0121 323 2476
suttonlink@dial.pipex.com

SCOTLAND
9 Milrig Road,
Rutherglen,
Glasgow, G73 2NG
Tel: 0141 613 0209
Fax: 0141 647 5321
wfscotland@care4free.net

WHITE SISTERS

Registered Charity No. 228983

**ENGLAND, WALES AND
SCOTLAND**
5 Charlbury Grove, Ealing,
London, W5 2DY
Tel: 020 8998 5014

REPRODUCING 'WHITE FATHERS - WHITE SISTERS' MATERIAL

Articles from White Father and White Sister sources may be freely reproduced if due credits are given to 'White Fathers - White Sisters'. We would appreciate a copy of what is produced for our records. The sources of other material is given at the bottom of the appropriate page and it is recommended that they be contacted before use. The sources of the photographs are given above, on this page. Unfortunately it is impossible to lend these pictures but if they are from 'M-Af-Namur' then more information about may be obtained from: Photos Service, Missionnaires d'Afrique, Chaussée de Dinant 111, B-5000 Namur, Belgium. - mafoto@skynet.be Any further enquiries concerning the magazine should be addressed to:

The Editor, The White Fathers, 129, Lichfield Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, England. B74 2SA.

To Help Our Missionary Work Please Remember Us In Your Will

Where there's a will, there's a way

White Fathers

"I give to the **Society of Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers)** the sum of free of duty, and I declare that the receipt of the Father Provincial of the Society in Great Britain, who now resides at 42 Stormont Road, Highgate, London, N6 4NP, shall be a good discharge."

White Fathers' Registered Charity No. 233302

White Sisters

"I give to the **Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa (White Sisters)** the sum of free of duty, and I declare that the receipt of the Sister Provincial of the Congregation in Great Britain, who now resides at 5 Charlbury Grove, Ealing, London, W5 9PZ, shall be a good discharge."

White Sisters' Registered Charity No. 228983



The Spiritual Dimension of Interreligious Dialogue

By Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald W.F. *

INTRODUCTION

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to return to Brentwood and give a lecture in the series organized every year by the Brentwood Religious Education Service. The last time, in 2001, I spoke about *Living the Faith in a Pluralistic World*. It gave me the occasion to stress the importance of interreligious relations in today's world. This evening I have been asked to address a more specific topic, namely the spiritual dimension of interreligious dialogue. There are two aspects of this question which I would like to treat. The first is to talk about spirituality as a particular theme of interreligious dialogue. The second is to examine the spiritual motivations that bring Christians, and particularly Catholics, to engage in interreligious dialogue, and that sustain them in this dialogue.

In *Dialogue and Proclamation*, the document published in 1991 by the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, together with the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, dialogue is described in the following way:

All positive and constructive interreligious relations with individuals and communities of other faiths which are directed at mutual understanding and enrichment, in obedience to truth and respect for freedom. It includes both the witness and exploration of respective religious convictions. (DP 9).

Foot Note and Abbreviations: * Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald is the President of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue (PCID) of the Holy See. DP = Dialogue and Proclamation is a joint Document of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and the Congregation for Evangelization of Peoples (Rome, 19 May 1991; OR. 21 June, 1991). This was on the occasion of it being twenty-five years since the declaration of *Nostra Aetate* during the Second Vatican Council. NA = *Nostra Aetate* is the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions proclaimed by His Holiness Pope Paul VI on October 28, 1965. Also see the statistics on pages 16 and 17

This definition indicates the matter, or content, of interreligious dialogue, namely relations; the purpose of these relations, to understand one another and to enrich one another; and also the essential conditions for achieving this purpose, truth and freedom. By putting side by side witness and exploration, it is suggested that being rooted in one's own faith is not incompatible with openness to the values enshrined in the faith of the other.

THE DIALOGUE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

This openness to values is particularly verifiable in that form of relations which is known as the dialogue of religious experience. Of this the same document says:

(It is) where persons, rooted in their own religious traditions, share their spiritual riches, for instance with regard to prayer and contemplation, faith and ways of searching for God or for the Absolute. (DP 42).

Let me try to give some examples of what such sharing could be.

ATTENDING THE WORSHIP OF ANOTHER COMMUNITY

Presence at the worship of another community can be a powerful experience. Attending the Friday prayer in a mosque, if one is invited, can be very enlightening. The Muslim community performing its ritual prayer, *salât*, can create a strong impression. The usually sober decoration of the mosque can be seen to help concentration.

The rite gives a sense of unity, as all face in the same direction and prostrate at the same time. Appreciation for the equal dignity of each person is noticeable, for no special attention is given to rank. The lines are formed as people arrive. It is true that some observers may find the segregation of the sexes strange, and perhaps even an offense against the dignity of women, but their Muslim friends would be able to explain the reasons for this separation.

Similarly the deep silence when Buddhist monks are meditating together is very impressive, just as someone witnessing Hindus offering *puja* may be struck by their evident devotion. The way Sikhs venerate their scripture, the *Adi Granth*, is highly instructive. Not only are there places where the scripture is chanted continuously, but the Holy Book is treated as a person, representing as it does the Guru ever present in the community.

In what way would the Christian liturgy impress people of other religions? There could be many striking features: the fact that whole families come to worship together; the use of lighted candles, of incense; the music; the

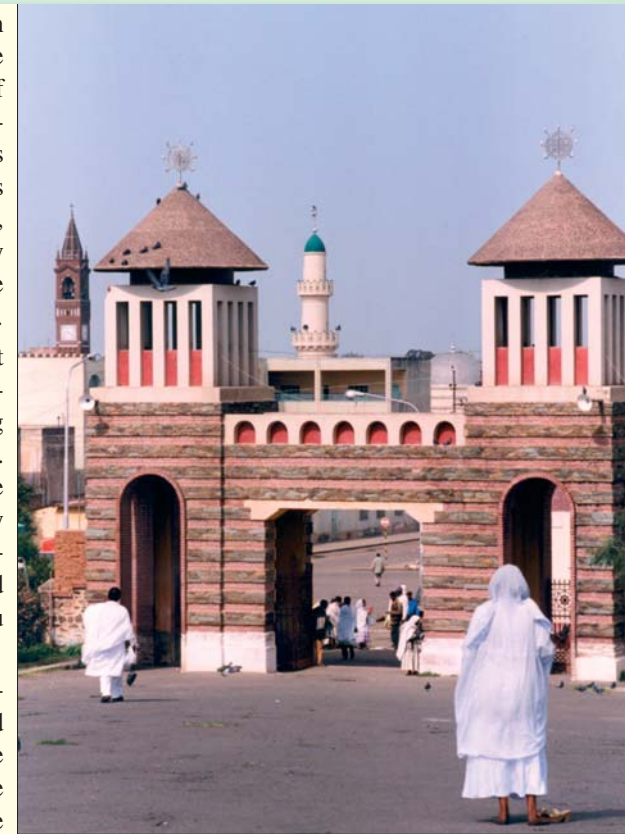
richness of the readings; the way the concerns of the moment are made present through the prayers of the faithful. We celebrate the liturgy to give glory to God, not in order to impress others, but we could ask ourselves whether our celebrations would have a positive effect on those who are not of our faith.

These impressions gained from the worship of another community may remain within the hearts of the beholders, but they will surely be consolidated if they are shared. So worship and prayer, including the silence that it involves, can become the topic of a spiritual exchange.

PRAYING TOGETHER

There are also occasions when people of different religions come together to pray. These

Picture above: Asmara, Eritrea, the front gate of the Orthodox Cathedral, with the bell tower of the Catholic Cathedral and a minaret in the background



can be uplifting experiences, though sometimes they can be embarrassing or painful. It is perhaps good to distinguish between informal and formal prayer. By informal prayer I mean those times when the idea of praying comes spontaneously. It may be on the occasion of a visit to a sick person, or it may be before taking a meal together. Usually when there is a relationship of trust such a joining in prayer creates no difficulty. Matters become more difficult when we move to formal prayer. This can sometimes take place on civic occasions, such as Commonwealth Day, or at the time of disasters or wars. At such times there is often a deep felt need for people of different religious communities to unite before God in prayer. When the United Nations declared 1986 to be a Year

of Peace, Pope John Paul II felt that one of the contributions the Catholic Church could make would be to bring people together to pray for peace. Thus came about the historic gathering in Assisi on 27 October 1987. Similarly, as a response to the horrendous events of the 11th. September 2001, John Paul II invited representatives of Christian Churches and communities and of other religions to come yet again to Assisi to pray and also to pledge themselves to work on behalf of peace.

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, together with the corresponding office in the World Council of Churches, examined this theme of interreligious prayer (cf. *Pro Dialogo* 98 (1998)). It is delicate, because we know that there is profound truth in the saying *Lex orandi lex credendi*. Care must be taken that the faith is not compromised. The joint study distinguished between two ways of conducting interreligious prayer services: multi-religious prayer and united or integrative interreligious prayer. In the first way, which was that followed in Assisi, the representatives of different religious traditions are invited to offer prayers successively, each group according to its own tradition, while the others unite with them in their hearts. It can be said that there is truly prayer, and a prayer of the whole assembly, but no one is obliged to join in something which would offend his or her religious feelings. In the second way an order of prayer is prepared in which everyone is expected to join, singing hymns, repeating invocations, reciting formal prayers together. It is obvious that it may be difficult to find formulae with which all agree. So while the factor of unity is stressed, at least outwardly, there may well be the risk of reducing the prayer to a lowest common denominator and losing the specific fragrance of each tradition. Sometimes the best solution for creating a sense of unity is to use symbolic gestures. For instance, in Assisi 2002 each official representative was

given a lighted lamp and each brought forward the lamp at the appointed time, so creating a larger light. The light of peace was being carried to the world. Nor should one forget the power of silence. We may remember that for Prophet Elijah God was not in the earthquake or the tempest, but was in the sound of the small still breeze.

JOINT STUDY OF SPIRITUAL TEXTS

The dialogue of religious experience is not confined to attending one another's worship or taking part in interreligious gatherings for prayer. It may take the form of sitting in meditation together. The physical posture may be exactly the same, the silence of each one equally profound, yet the explanation for what is happening to each one, whether Buddhist, Christian or Hindu, will most likely be radically different. Yet such a difference does not take away the value of the experience.

It may be possible to explore the difference further by studying together the spiritual texts of different religions. A seminar in Rome some years ago examined the theme of holiness in Islam and Christianity. Not only was the theoretical concept of holiness according to each religion presented, but also the practical ways that spiritual leaders have taught and the concrete examples of holy people. A group of Christians in Algeria have formed the *Ribât al-Salâm*, the Bond of Peace, a movement which concentrates on reflecting on spiritual themes in both Islam and Christianity. The meetings were centred on the Trappist monastery of Notre Dame de l'Atlas, at Tibhirine. Until seven of the monks were kidnapped and then assassinated, the group had met with some Muslims from a local sufi group to reflect with them on the same themes and to pray with them. Another example of reflections of someone who is not a Christian on Christian scriptures is the book *The Good Heart* (Boston, Wisdom Publications,

1996) where the Dalai Lama gives a Buddhist perspective on the teachings of Jesus. Some Buddhists in the United States were invited to comment on the Rule of Saint Benedict and their interesting reflections were collected in a small book entitled *Benedict's Dharma* (New York, Riverhead Books, 2000).

Such exchanges can help to give an appreciation for the respective contexts of the experience. For the Christian who enters into such an exchange with an open mind and a listening heart, the result will most often be a new understanding not only of the riches of another spiritual tradition but also a renewed appreciation of the distinctive character of the Christian faith.

SPIRITUAL MOTIVATIONS FOR INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

In this type of contact the spiritual dimension is very evident, since it constitutes the very matter of the exchange, yet all other interreligious relations need to be motivated spiritually if they are to be genuine and fruitful. It is time to turn then to the reasons Christians have for entering into dialogue with people of other faith communities.

THE BLESSED TRINITY

Christians may find this motivation first of all in their contemplation of the Blessed Trinity. We could say that the Trinity provides us with a model for all our relations, and thus also for interreligious relations, for in this mystery we derive some inkling of the life of communion and interchange that exists in God. The three Divine Persons remain distinct, the identity of



each preserved without any overlapping, and yet there is perfect unity. ^[101] This can inspire us in our search for unity while respecting the identity of our partners in dialogue, recognizing all the time, of course, how far we are from the perfection of the Trinity.

Thus the Blessed Trinity as a whole may inspire us, but we can also derive inspiration from considering the role that is attributed to each divine Person.

“In God, the Father, we contemplate a pervasive love unlimited by space and time. (DM 22)” These words of an earlier document, *The Attitude of the Catholic Church toward the Followers of Other Religions: reflections and orientations on dialogue and mission* (1984), are extremely important. They mean that when we meet with people of other religions we are able to discern in them what God has been doing

Picture above: the 'Temple of Heavenly Peace', in the 'Forbidden City', Beijing, China.

in them in the past and is doing now. No one is excluded from God's love. We can see that in God we have a Father who is the origin of all and who is, indeed, the final goal of all.

In the Son we see not only the reflection of the Father, but also the Word made flesh, God who has come to share in our humanity. It is the Catholic belief that, through the Incarnation, the Son of God has come into contact with every single member of the human race. This means that we are able to meet Christ in the other, to whatever religion that other may belong. Moreover Christ has died and is risen from the dead to offer his life for every human being.

In the action of the Holy Spirit we contemplate God's boundless activity. The Spirit animates the Church, but is also active outside the visible boundaries of the Church. The Spirit is at work in the depths of the hearts of individual people, but also in the traditions, customs and rites of peoples. Whatever is true, good and beautiful in the different religious traditions can be attributed to the influence of the Holy Spirit. This too is important for dialogue, for it means that Christians do not go to meet their brothers and sisters belonging to other religious traditions as if they, the Christians, had everything, while the others had nothing. There can be a true encounter in the Spirit, and it is this that produces the enrichment mentioned as one of the goals of interreligious relations.

Foot Note 01: In a meditation I tried to convey this truth in somewhat jocular terms:

We have, as Christians, one perfect model of unity, the Trinity. Strange paradox.

Can you imagine the Son going off on his own, following his whims and fancies, intent only on doing *his own thing*?

This Son will leave the glory that is his and take the station of a servant, or less

Because he is *sent*.

He does this of his own accord, but only because his will is in perfect harmony

With that of his Father.

Do you think the Spirit will have fun and games, romping as the wind does with the autumn leaves, to no apparent purpose?

The Spirit of truth inspires and prompts the listening heart, yet when it speaks, it speaks not of itself

But only says what it has learnt.

What of the Father? Is he the jealous guardian of his own authority?

Then would the unity exclude communion and be self-destroyed.

The answer Jesus hints at in a line:

'All that the Father has is mine', from '*Catalysts*' by Rene Dionne and Michael Fitzgerald, Dublin, Missionaries of Africa, 1998, p.146)

CHRIST AS MODEL

The Christian is baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity but through baptism is incorporated into Christ. It is through Christ that we go to the Father, and through the Risen Lord that we receive the Spirit. Christ is at the centre of the Christian life. Paul tells us that our minds should be conformed to that of Jesus Christ. This holds good for interreligious relations, as for any other aspect of life. We draw inspiration from contemplating the life of Jesus.

Of course, Jesus was not engaged in interreligious dialogue in any formal way. Yet he did live in a pluralistic world, and we can observe the way he relates to people of traditions other than his own. We see his capacity for wonder at the faith of others, even of a Roman centurion. We find him impressed by the perseverance of the Syrophenician woman, pleading on behalf of her daughter, forcing him, as it were, to go beyond the bounds he had set for his mission. We can notice how he engages in conversation with the Samaritan woman and gradually leads her, through dialogue, to a higher plane. Jesus gives us in these episodes and others an example of openness and respect and at the same time of commitment to the truth.

Even more radical is the *kenosis* of Jesus, his self-emptying, as a model for our relations with others. Jesus did not deny his nature as Son of God, but he did not cling to the glory that was

his due. He did not stand on dignity. He humbled himself, taking the nature of a slave, becoming obedient even to death on the cross. For this he was glorified. Should not the Christian encountering someone belonging to another religion have the same attitude? There should be no question of giving up one's own identity, but neither should the Christian display any feeling of superiority. There needs to be a basic attitude of humility and a

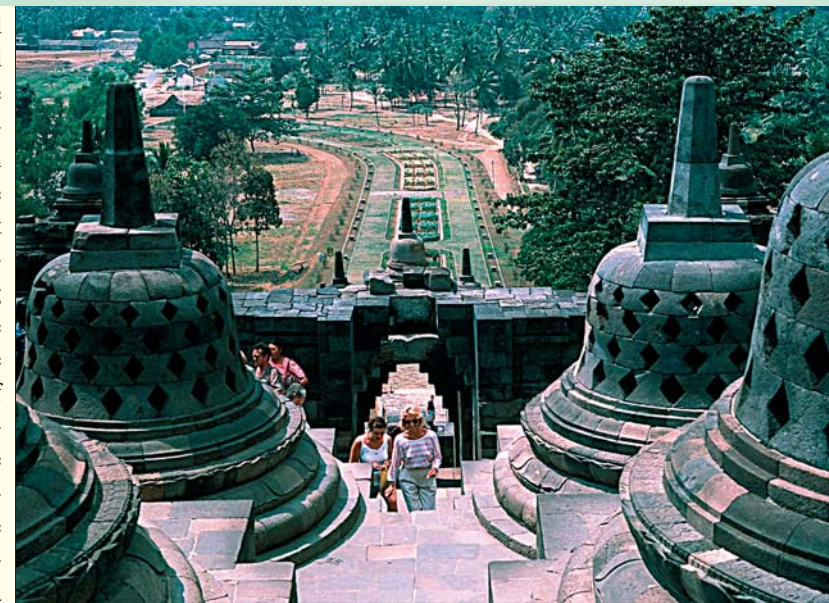
willingness to be at the service of the other. In other words, one could say that in order to build up a genuine relationship with a person of another religious tradition there is need of a continuous conversion.

HOSPITALITY

One of the practical ways in which this attitude of humble service can be expressed is through hospitality. This is something which is found in all cultures and in all religions. From the Christian point of view it is well described in the Rule of St Benedict:

Guests arriving at the monastery should be welcomed as Christ, for he will say one day "I asked for hospitality, and you received me" (*Rule* ch. 53).

In other words, to receive a stranger, one who is different, is but the outward expression of an inner welcome that springs from faith. Moreover it could be added that hospitality is not confined to the material welcome, but can also include entertaining ideas expressed by others. One could note too that hospitality does not



Picture above: view from the top of the Borodubdur, the Buddhist shrine of Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia

mean just passively waiting for someone to come. It involves, of course, adequate preparation in order to be able to receive the guest properly, but it can also include a readiness to go out to meet the other. We have the example of Abraham receiving the three strangers. The Genesis account emphasises his ardour: "(Abraham) ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them, and bowed to the ground" (Gn 18:2).

Pierre de B ethune, a Benedictine monk who is the Secretary General of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, has developed this theme in an inspiring little book *Par la foi et l'hospitalit e* (Publications de Saint Andr e, Cahiers de Clerlande n 4, 1997). He makes it clear that there are rules governing the behaviour of both host and guest. The host has to pay attention to the guest and his specific needs. Moreover true hospitality requires humility of the host, for no one will feel at home if they are immediately dominated, if they have to suffer a verbal attack, or if they are made to feel inferior. The guest can expect to be welcomed as he or she is, but cannot demand to share the intimacy of the home. It will be

readily understood how these ideas can be understood in the context of a religious encounter. A welcome into a place of worship, especially when worship is in progress, does not necessarily extend to the inner sanctuary, much less to participation in the worship.

THE PLACE OF THE CROSS

It should not be thought that for dialogue to be successful one has to look at other religions through rose-tinted spectacles. On the contrary, genuine dialogue demands a respect for the truth. There must be a readiness to appreciate all that is good in another tradition, but also an awareness of its shadows, just as there must be a willingness to acknowledge the weaknesses in one's own tradition. The reality of sin has to be accepted. Arrogance, self-sufficiency, suspicion, intolerance can prevent a true meeting of minds and hearts from taking place. There may well be setbacks after what seemed promising developments. The cross will never be absent from dialogue. [02]

We should remember that we are engaged in a dialogue of salvation which God has initiated with humankind. We know that humans fail, and that these failures, the burdens of the past, are an obstacle to a true meeting of minds and hearts. The Declaration of Vatican II on the relations of the Church with other religions, *Nostra Aetate*, when speaking about relations with Muslims, has this to say:

Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. This sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding (NA 3).

The Crusades were obviously in mind when this text was written, but the problems are not

confined to Christian-Muslim relations. Christians in Asia, for instance, face difficulties in their relations with fellow citizens of other religions on account of the perceived link between Christianity and colonialism.

Is it really possible to forget the past? Pope John Paul II has suggested that what is really needed is a re-reading of history, preferably together, so that it may be possible to come to a healing of memories. This was the motivation for the ceremony in St Peter's Basilica during the Holy Year in order to ask pardon of God for wrongs done in the past. Pardon, though figuring strongly in the scriptures of the religions of the Abrahamic tradition, is a notably difficult virtue to practise, and perhaps even more difficult to share. Nevertheless to strive for truth and reconciliation is a goal to be pursued and can be a means to true spiritual progress.

PERSEVERANCE

It is evident that there will need to be a strong motivation to persevere in dialogue despite the difficulties. It is good to remember here the teaching of the document *Dialogue and Proclamation*:

It must be remembered that the Church's commitment to dialogue is not dependent on success in achieving mutual understanding and enrichment; rather it flows from God's initiative in entering into dialogue with humankind and from the example of Jesus Christ whose life, death and resurrection gave to that dialogue its ultimate expression (DP 53).

A CONTEMPLATIVE BASIS FOR DISCERNMENT

Dialogue therefore requires a constant exercise of the gift of discernment. In this connection one can see the importance of a contemplative spirit, one which is able to discern and respond

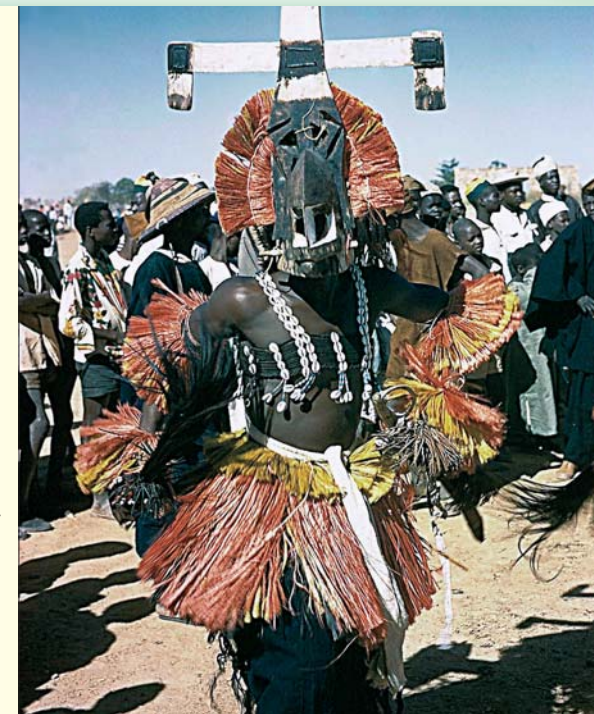
to the presence of the Spirit in others. Perhaps, in this regard, a threefold pattern of action may prove to be useful: recognition, reflection, response. The recognition of God's gift and presence in the other can lead to a deep encounter. Reflection helps to put the encounter in its true context, seeing its place in the personal journey of both the one encountered and oneself. This will normally lead to a response which may entail a change of attitude, or an offering of service, or a desire for collaboration.

The required contemplative attitude supposes a life of prayer. Our own dialogue with God will prepare us for dialogue with others. We know that for our relationship with God to grow we need to undergo a continuous process of conversion. Similarly our relations with others, including people of other faith communities, have continuously to be purified. We have to make sure that we are not using people for our own ends. Our purpose should not be "to spoil the Egyptians", to get as much as we can from the others, but rather to "preserve and encourage the spiritual and moral truths found among non-Christians" (NA 2) and to share spiritual riches. We have to be ready both to give and receive. Our relations should be grounded in humility, following the teaching of Paul to the Philippians: "Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves" (Phil 2:3).

THE COMMUNITY DIMENSION

So far everything has been put in individual terms, as if interreligious dialogue were always an encounter between two persons. This hardly conforms to reality, for people do not live as individuals. The believer always forms part of a community. This, as we are well aware, can constitute an advantage. The community provides solidity. It can ensure continuity for initiatives that have been undertaken. But belonging to a community can also be a drawback.

Picture above: A Dogon dancer part of the traditional beliefs in the Sangha region of Mali. The masks represent animals, spirits or ancestors.



The community can act as a break and can sometimes even stifle initiatives. There is therefore need for much patience. Those who are engaged in dialogue need to make sure that they do not leave their respective communities behind. There must be a constant concern to bring the community along the path of dialogue.

Interreligious dialogue is part of the evangelizing mission of the Church. It is indeed an activity of the Church. It is one of the ways in which the Church shows that it is always on pilgrimage, its members striving towards perfection and encouraging others along the way. Thus it can be said:

The foundation of the Church's commitment to dialogue is not merely anthropological but primarily theological. God, in an age-long dialogue, has offered and continues to offer salvation to humankind. In faithfulness to the divine initiative, the Church too must enter into a dialogue of salvation with all men and women (DP 38).

Foot Note 02: A painting in the meeting room of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue represents Paul VI welcoming religious leaders, both of other Christian Churches and communities, and of other religious traditions. The scene is set in St Peter's Square, since the Bernini Colonnade forms the backdrop. Paul VI has his arms raised in a gesture which could be interpreted as one of welcome or one of prayer. His figure casts a shadow and, with the arms outstretched, this shadow is in the form of a cross. The artist obviously wanted to represent the presence of the cross in dialogue.

Communion and Solidarity Between Africa and Europe

THE MESSAGE OF THE SYMPOSIUM

CHRIST CALLS UPON US - CHRIST SENDS US OUR MEETING OF BISHOPS: AN HISTORIC EVENT ^[01]

The Symposium of the Bishops' Conferences of Africa and Madagascar (SECAM) and the Council of the European Bishops' Conferences (CCEE) under the auspices of the Congregation for the Evangelisation of Peoples with the cooperation of a number of Catholic development agencies, have organized a symposium bringing together 50 bishops from Africa and 50 bishops from Europe. The meeting was held in Rome from November 10 - 13, 2004 to discuss the theme 'Community and Solidarity between Africa and Europe'.

This meeting took place in a spirit of prayer, mutual listening, true respect for one another, in a true sacramental brotherhood in Christ who calls and sends us to give witness to our own particular Churches.

In a spirit of respectful sharing, thoughtful and without complacency, we heard and discussed input from many participants. We showed our 'care of all the Churches' (2 Cor: 11-28). We have much to give to and receive from each other through the sharing of joy, the communication of faith, the missionary drive and action to transform our societies in a globalised world which is in search of meaning and of the most fundamental values, which are often denied or despised.

As bishops, servants of hope, we desire to reflect together on our common responsibility to build

Note 01: It would be no exaggeration to say that this is an historic gathering. This represents the first time that the African and European Bishops' Conferences have organised such a meeting. This assembly also represents a prophetic sign whereby the Lord opens hearts and awakens consciences, inspired by a profound and reciprocal willingness to give and receive between the bishops of Africa and Europe. We must now look for the best ways of continuing together the work already begun: the Bishops will set up think-tanks to carry it forward together.

The statement has been provided by: the Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) Issue No. 378 b, Monday, November 22, 2004: cisa@wananchi.com

fairer relationships among our countries and to strengthen exchanges between the local churches of our two continents.

As we end our assembly, we address this message to you the faithful of our local churches on the two continents, and to you, men and women of good will. This message conveys our findings and convictions; it commits us to intensifying our collaboration in the future, and to uniting our efforts in support of one other in the task awaiting us.

LIVING COMMUNION AND SOLIDARITY BETWEEN AFRICA AND EUROPE . . .

Our meeting will allow us to gain a new appreciation of our histories and our mutual relationships, founded upon truthfulness and benevolence, recognising the gifts received on both sides. We share a common heritage and vision of humankind that reveals the face of Christ.

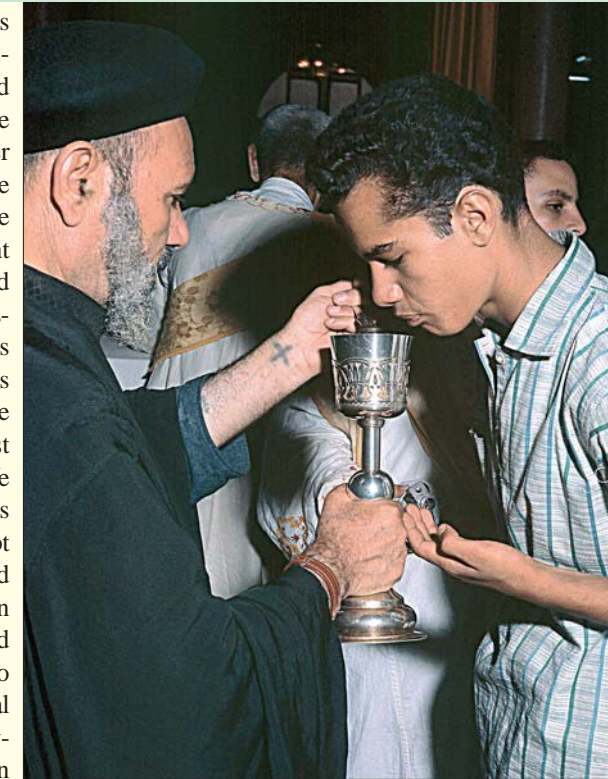
. . . IN A CHURCH PRESENT IN THE HEART OF THE WORLD

History has marked the relations between Africa and Europe, between our peoples, countries and institutions, sometimes with serious damage to human dignity. Today unemployment, exclusion, the crushing burden of debt, corruption, exploitation of people, the pillaging of natural resources, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the lack of access to healthcare as well as illiteracy are all challenges that must be tackled. They cause us pain, too, and we express our solidarity with all those who are victims of these problems.

These evils demand vigilant attention by us and by governments and international institutions. We call upon the African Union and the European Union to set themselves the target of eradicating the tragedy of hunger during the next decade. We also remind the rich countries of their undertaking to devote 0.7% of their GNP to public development aid. Five countries have already achieved this - so it is possible. It is more than a question of charity, it is a question of keeping one's word and of justice. Charity presupposes justice. We consider that honouring the Millennium Development Goals is the best opportunity for ending poverty in Africa. We shall untiringly challenge our governments and the European Union on the need for debt cancellation and fair trade regulations, and to create a globalisation which has a human face. Faced with situations of violence and injustice, our local churches are anxious to commit themselves at the very heart of social exclusion and conflict. We will work everywhere for justice and peace, for reconciliation and in the defence of human rights. The dignity of the human person and the needs of peoples will remain more than ever central to our common responsibility. Christians participate in decision-making in the fields of economics and politics; we wish to be by their side, in the light of the Church's social doctrine, which we must promote more than ever in our respective local churches, our countries and continents.

. . . IN A CHURCH WHICH CARRIES HOPE, LIVING PROCLAMATION AND DIALOGUE

We give thanks for the exchange of personnel, priests, members of religious orders and lay people doing mission work on our two continents. In the life of our local churches, we must today more than ever support the giving and receiving of the faith. We need to



provide reciprocal support in training those who work for the Gospel. We encourage the laity on the two continents, especially the young, to give witness to their faith and an account of their hope, and to promote concrete gestures of sharing and solidarity within a balanced partnership. In this way they will respond to the pastoral needs of the mission of the Church and to the urgent call for integral human development. On our two continents we are called to dialogue with other religions in different contexts, and particularly with Islam. We must reconcile the necessary respect owed to religious freedom with esteem for others, and, in the spirit of cooperation to which Vatican II (*Nostra Aetate* 3) invites us, gently but clearly affirm our faith in Christ and our Christian tradition. This dialogue ought to give the right to reciprocity.

Picture above: Distributing Holy Communion in the Copt Orthodox church of St. George, Cairo. Note the tattoo on the priest's arm many Egyptian Christians in wear such a tattoo.

White Fathers - White Sisters April-May 2005

... CHURCH ATTENTIVE TO THE PROMOTION OF VALUES AND TO BUILDING A COMMON FUTURE

The many causes of death in Africa and in Europe urge us to promote the “culture of life”. We do have common values: the primacy of God, of transcendence, the meaning of life, the communitarian dimension of the individual (“No man is an island”), the family as the foundation of society but which we see gravely injured today and which calls for special pastoral attention.

We state firmly that Europe needs Africa and that Africa needs Europe and that Europe and Africa together have a service to render to the world. We invite the Catholics of our countries to enter into renewed relationships, in a spirit of communion, and to work together because the future of one group depends on the future of the other.

DUC IN ALTUM! “PUT OUT INTO DEEP WATER!”
(LUKE 5:4)

We, bishops of Africa and Europe, together with you, our dear faithful in Christ, respond to the call of the Holy Father at the beginning of this millennium, for a “*more inventive charity*” (*Novo Millennio ineunte n° 50*), and so:

We kindle the flame of charitable sharing at the fire of Christian love; and We work for the coming of a new world-order, fervently building a civilisation of love.

Faithful people, Christians of Africa and Europe together with your bishops and in particular you, the young people, the future of our continents, be aware that you are the “*people of the promise*”. You are the Church, the family of God, committed throughout history to follow its Saviour and animated by the force of the Holy Spirit, servants of hope, watchers of daybreak, who are ready to tackle the challenges of the “*signs of the times*”.

By proposing to the Universal Church a year especially dedicated to the Eucharist, the Holy Father has issued a new challenge. The Eucharist is what builds the Church, our community and our ecclesial unity, which find in it their “*source and summit*”. We are also invited by John Paul II to commit ourselves to follow the road of solidarity, for “*the Eucharist is not simply an expression of community in church life; it is also a project of solidarity for all of humankind*” (*Mane nobiscum, Domine, 27*).

Our earth groans under its burdens and is waiting. The faithful God has put his hope in us. Christ walks with us. The Spirit gives us strength. May Mary, Mother of the Church, acclaimed in song in all our languages, accompany us on the road of communion and solidarity between Africa and Europe!

Rome, 13th November 2004, the 1650th. anniversary of the birth of St Augustine (African and European bishop).

(MDG). The Goals are as follows:-

- 1 - Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

- 2 - Achieve universal primary education
 - Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling
- 3 - Promote gender equality and empower women
 - Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015
- 4 - Reduce child mortality
 - Reduce by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five
- 5 - Improve maternal health
 - Reduce by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio
- 6 - Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
 - Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
 - Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
- 7 - Ensure environmental sustainability
 - Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes; reverse loss of environmental resources
 - Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water
 - Achieve significant improvement in lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, by 2020
- 8 - Develop a global partnership for development
 - Develop further an open trading and financial system that is rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory. Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction - nationally and internationally



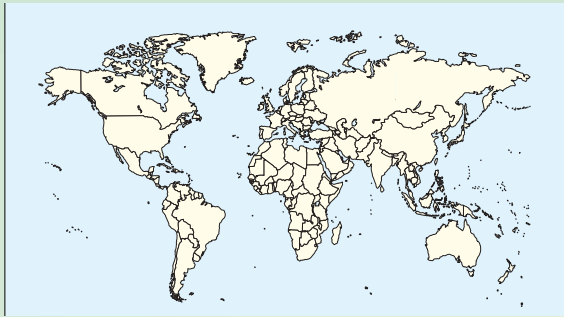
- Address the least developed countries’ special needs. This includes tariff- and quota-free access for their exports; enhanced debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries; cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction
- Address the special needs of landlocked and small island developing States
- Deal comprehensively with developing countries’ debt problems through national and international measures to make debt sustainable in the long term
- In cooperation with the developing countries, develop decent and productive work for youth
- In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
- In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies - especially information and communications technologies.

Picture above: Fès City gate and distant view of the minarets.

Millennium Development Goals Reminder

Probably at the time you are reading this the British Government will have published the ‘*Commission on Africa*’ report. The following is a reminder of what 191 countries, members of the United Nations, have pledged to meet these goals by 2015 in what are known as the eight UN Millennium Development Goals

Source: The UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) at <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>



PANORAMA OF RELIGIONS IN THE WORLD

	1990	2000	2003	2025 (forecast)
World Population	5,266,442,000	6,055,049,000	6,278,519,000	7,823,703,000
All Christians	1,747,462,000	1,999,564,000	2,076,629,000	2,616,670,000
Roman Catholics	929,455,000	1,057,328,000	1,097,328,000	1,361,965,000
Protestants	296,339,000	342,002,000	* 351,362,000	468,633,000
Orthodox	203,766,000	215,129,000	* 217,371,000	252,716,000
Anglicans	68,196,000	79,650,000	* 81,799,000	113,746,000
All-Non Christians	3,518,980,000	4,055,485,000	4,201,890,000	5,207,033,000
Muslims	962,356,000	1,188,243,000	1,265,230,000	1,784,876,000
Hindus	685,999,000	811,336,000	849,339,000	1,049,231,000
Buddhists	323,107,000	359,982,000	418,345,000	418,345,000
Sikhs	19,332,000	23,258,000	24,569,000	31,378,000
Jews	14,189,000	14,763,000	14,789,000	16,053,000
Tribal Religions	200,035,000	228,367,000	237,286,000	277,247,000
New Religions	92,396,000	102,356,000	105,256,000	114,720,000
Atheists	145,719,000	150,090,000	151,162,000	159,544,000
No Religion	707,118,000	768,159,000	786,731,000	875,121,000

* information concerning Anglicans/Protestants/Orthodoxes taken from:
'International Bulletin of Missionary Research'

Source: 'Agenzia Fides', Palazzo 'de Propaganda Fide' - 00120 - Città del Vaticano
Tel. +39-06-69880115 - Fax. +39-06-69880107 - e-mail: fides@fides.va 31/12/2003

CATHOLIC AND WORLD POPULATION 2002

Continent	Total Population	Variations [1]	Total Catholics	Variations [1]
Africa	830,516,000	+ 21,411,000	137,428,000	+ 1,768,000
America	857,783,000	+ 15,629,000	534,339,000	+ 6,236,000
Asia	3,800,110,000	+ 52,371,000	110,234,000	+ 2,066,000
Europe	702,083,000	-32,000	279,915,000	- 674,000
Oceania	31,402,000	+ 325,000	8,399,000	+ 79,000
World	6,221,894,000	+ 89,704,000	1,070,315,000	+ 9,475,000

Note 1: Variations are the differences between 2001 and 2002. Source: Fides Service statistics of the Catholic Church taken from the Church's Annual Book of Statistics (valid to 31 December 2002).

Some Statistics of World Religions

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AFRICA 2002

	Total	Variations		Total	Variations
Population	830,516,000	+ 21,411,000	Diocesan Priests	18,872	+ 1,290
Catholics	137,428,000	+ 1,768,000	Religious Priests	10,402	- 4
Persons per priest	28,370	- 539	Major Seminarians	22,210	+ 1,216
Catholics per priest	4,694	- 153	Minor Seminarians	44,238	- 1,132

Institutions	Hospitals	Dispensaries	Leprosy Centres	Homes (for old & disabled)	Orphanages	Infant Care Centres
	964	5,018	270	655	791	2,036

Source: Fides Service statistics of the Catholic Church in the world taken from the Church's Annual Book of Statistics (valid to 31 December 2002).

THE UNITED KINGDOM POPULATION: BY RELIGION, APRIL 2001

	England & Wales [1]		Scotland [2]		Northern Ireland [3]		United Kingdom	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Christian	37,338,486	71.7	3,294,545	[6] 64.9	1,446,386	[6] 85.9	42,079,417	71.6
Roman Catholic	[5]	-	803,732	15.9	678,462	40.3	n/a	n/a
Other Christian	[5]	-	344,562	6.8	102,221	6.1	n/a	n/a
Church of Scotland	[5]	-	2,146,251	42.2	[5]	-	n/a	n/a
Presbyterian Church in Ireland	[5]	-	-	-	348,742	20.7	n/a	n/a
Church of Ireland	[5]	-	-	-	257,788	15.3	n/a	n/a
Methodist Church in Ireland	[5]	-	[5]	-	59,173	3.5	n/a	n/a
Buddhist	144,453	0.3	6,830	0.1	533	-	151,816	0.3
Hindu	552,421	1.1	5,564	0.1	825	-	558,810	1.0
Jewish	259,927	0.5	6,448	0.1	365	-	266,740	0.5
Muslim	1,546,626	3.0	42,557	0.8	1,943	-	1,591,126	2.7
Sikh	329,358	0.6	6,572	0.1	219	-	336,149	0.6
Other religion	150,720	0.3	26,974	0.5	1,143	-	178,837	0.3
All religions	403,21,991	77.5	3,389,490	67.0	1,451,414	86.1	45,162,895	76.8
No religion	7,709,267	14.8	1,394,460	27.5	45,909	[6] 2.7	9,104,000	15.5
Not stated	4,010,658	7.7	278,061	5.5	187,944	[6] 11.2	4,289,000	7.3
All no religion/not stated [4]	11,719,925	[6] 22.5	1,672,521	[6] 33.0	233,853	[6] 13.9	13,626,299	23.2
Base	52,041,916	100	5,062,011	100	1,685,267	100	58,789,194	100

Notes: The questions asked in the Census were as follows: 1 "What is your religion?". 2 "What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?". 3 "Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion?" If yes, "What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?". 4 Includes 233853 cases in Northern Ireland where data is only available as a combined category.

5 Answer category not provided as a tick-box option in this country. 6 n/a, calculated at SuttonLink.

In 2004 the number of Catholics in England and Wales was estimated to be 4,105,635 (Source: The Catholic Directory, 2005).

Source: From Tables 2 and 3 of 'The UK population: by religion, April 2001', the Census, April 2001, Office for National Statistics

A Journey of Faiths

By Sr. Marie Cloutier W.S.

Reaching out to those of different faiths is vital today for us as White Fathers and White Sisters. It has been an essential part of our history since our foundation in 1868 and 1869 respectively. Cardinal Lavigerie our founder had a prophetic vision inspired by St. Paul who challenged us to be 'all to all' to celebrate differences. This was further confirmed by the Document from the Vatican Council II concerning relations with Non Christians. In the light of 9/11 and recent events as the war in Iraq, the Middle East together with the unrest in India and Malaysia as well as on our own shores this focus has never been so relevant. Unfortunately often the world's media beams in on the negative and sensational stories creating fear and isolation. This fear often causes a violent reaction and instills a focus of fear which is exaggerated

and often unfounded. When we look deeper we can see, each in our own way, how we can reach out and walk together on our journeys to God. It challenges us in this country to do the same as we are doing Africa. In a world which is slowly becoming in reality a global village we are called to go beyond the known and secure to experience the mystery of a new journey of faith to build a new world community remembering the words of Saint-Exupery in the 'The Little Prince' 'The essential is invisible to the eye, only the heart sees rightly'. Meet some of our Sisters involved in this process.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN NORTH AFRICA?

A CALL TO THE MUSLIM WORLD

Sr. Lucy Provost is a White Sister - a lawyer born and working in Algeria. She has been

involved with the editing of a book concerning the status of women according to the code of the Algerian Family. She shares her experience, her vision and the driving force of her life.

At the moment I am giving time to writing a books as requested by Bishop Tessier on "The situation of Women according to the code of the Algerian Family". I touch on that which touches women. I present different proposals in answer to three questions: Where does it come from? What does it contain? Where are we going or where should we be going?

Algeria is a country which is somewhat open to the differences that we Christians represent. Let me give you one example: in a little mountain village, a European lady, widow of an Algerian, began to practice religion again in her old age. As she was blind, she was not able to read, so her Muslim daughter read a passage of the Bible to her everyday. When she died the daughter organized a Christian burial. Everyone in the village helped to prepare it. The Imam went

to express his condolences and to offer a prayer to God for the deceased. At the cemetery, the Gospel was read. "There was such a recollected spirit that I had goose pimples", said a Muslim who was present and he added: "That is how we should live in mutual respect".

Some years ago the seasons of Ramadan and Christmas coincided. The Mayor's Office displayed coloured lights to illumine the little church just as it did the mosque and each year the international Radio station of Algeria broadcasts the Mass on Christmas morning, after the Protestant service. Many Muslims went to visit their Christian neighbours and shared a festive meal with them as a way of saying they respected them and that they do not share the vision of those who, in Algeria today, kill their brothers and sisters and pretend to be doing it in the name of God.

Our Community has been living in Hussein Dey, for some thirty years, in a small building where four other Algerian families are living. We often met and the area is very friendly.

For almost twenty years I have been working with our Sisters at the Diocesan Centre of Studies which is to establish a bridge between cultures, that of Algerian and foreigners, whom we represent. That is done through different activities: teaching of Arabic; running a Research Library, and another for University students. Four White Sisters are involved in this work together with other Priests, Brother and Sisters together with lay men and women. This provides for diverse contacts and forms, more particularly with women who are professors at the Algerian University. This presence enables me at times to give assistance to students who are doing studies on women and issues pertaining to women, to participant in seminars or to present my findings on the rights of women and their children. I particularly appreciate the reflection and sharing group



Picture above: Sr. Lucy creates dialogue through teaching

The White Fathers' Web Site (UK): <http://www.thewhitefathers.org.uk>
 The White Fathers' Magazine and Information England and Wales: suttonlink@dial.pipex.com
 The White Fathers' Promotion Centre Scotland: wfsotland@care4free.net

Change of Address and New Readers

If you are about to move, or have moved, and would still like to receive the magazine please fill in the form below and return it. Also if you know of anyone who would like to receive the magazine then please fill in their name below and send it to:
 'White Fathers - White Sisters' 129, Lichfield Road, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands, B74 2SA.

Your Name

Old Address:

Post Code

New Address:

Post Code

suttonlink@dial.pipex.com

wfsotland@care4free.net



where, with other women we challenge what each one produces according to her speciality whether it be sociology, psychology, law, and history among others. It is a great source of enrichment and gives a more relevant publication. I am also responsible at times for the ongoing formation of Christians studying Islamology, either in Algeria or Rome at the Pontifical Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies where I have been teaching since 1982.

I have always felt a deep calling within me to work among Muslims through encounters with the other who is different cherishing the desire to be a "sacrament of presence" that of Jesus, in a world which recognises Jesus as a prophet who is totally submissive (Muslim means to be submissive)

For several years we have been living with violence. We speak of 'culture shocks'. "As Christians, we are always called to a dialogue between cultures in order to have a civilisation of love and peace", as Pope John-Paul II has repeated so often. We have to continue to dialogue in a context openness conviction. We are, I believe, challenged to deepen our convictions

to reach out to those different from ourselves.

The first conviction is that God does not reserve his salvation to Christians only. His wish is that all may be saved. This is what is shown by Jesus in the Gospels. It is also shown by the spiritual lives of so many non Christians, especially Muslims. The quality of their human relationships are a call to a conversion of heart and a deepening of one's own faith. God is far greater than our understanding.

A second conviction is that the respect for what is different is cultivated not only in meeting others but understanding their point of view.

Religious pluralism is part of God's design. As one theologian explains, a concrete and thoughtful dialogue, not system to system but person to person allows us to discover a great richness as well as productive. That is why we should welcome this with joy. This makes the beginning of the Letter to the Hebrews especially meaningful 'In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke through his Son' - Hebrews 1:1-3. The Koran has a passage on this issue which can also inspire us: 'If God had wished, he would have made of you a single community. But he wants to test you in what he gives you. Try to surpass each other by your good works. It is to God that you will all return' - Koran 5,48.

In looking at things in this way, we leave behind the era of 'coexistence' between religion and enter into the 'revolution of dialogue' which will change at least two images; that which we have of the religion of the other and also that we have of our own.

The fact of having been born and having lived in Algeria, in a rural world of poor Algerians, and of being able to speak the language and being part of the culture, of having done all my studies in secular institutes, with persons of all beliefs ... all this has been a great help. The distress of so many people touches me deeply. I know I must work with the Algerian women who are searching for ways to shake the yokes which weigh so heavily.

Algeria is a very special mission. Unlike other parts of Africa we don't have many baptisms. But the Kingdom is growing and Kingdom values are surely being lived. We can see this and rejoice in it. It was so evident especially during the crisis and especially at the time of the assassination of our brother and sisters between 1994-1996, and in particular of the White Fathers at Tizi-Ouzou. Archbishop Tessier said of them 'Martyrs of fidelity towards a people who are not Christian'.

THE CHURCH OF ENCOUNTER

Sr. Lucette Guy is a White Sister based in Oran Algeria. For ten years she has worked as part of a Team in a University Library.

For a number of years the Church of North Africa has described itself as the 'Church of Meeting'. More recently, that Church has spoken of its situation as 'on the roads of Galilee' or 'on the way to the Galilee of nations'. Yes, we are walking alongside the people of Algeria.

Personally, for many years I have found myself at ease on these roads of Galilee, in dialogue with life whether through professional involvement or through friendly relations formed since the war of liberation more than forty-five years ago. At Tizi Ouzou, my activities over eighteen years working with young people and at the worker's hostel helped to deepen this experience. I having remained in contact with many of these young people. Now many are

married and have grown up children and some even see their grandchildren starting their own families.

For ten years I have worked at the University Library. My manager is a young Algerian woman. We form a team along with five young academics one of whom wrote, "The library is a place of meetings where human relations are woven. Our collaboration is excellent, open, full of questioning and sharing of life: secrets burst out - religion, customs, culture - all in complete simplicity and respect".

THROUGH OTHER EYES

Sr. Lucette asked her manager Leila a young Muslim woman to share on how she feels about dialogue with other faiths.

"Everyday I meet people of different cultures, nationalities and languages and from different political, historical and social backgrounds. That doesn't change at all my way of seeing life in a positive light. The experience of difference is not linked to any one community because it



Picture above: the four White Fathers who were murdered at Tizi-Ouzou in December, 1994. Clockwise from the bottom left they are: Frs. Alain Dieulangard, Charles Deckers, Jean Chevillard, and Christian Chessel



exists among Algerians also, it seems to me, the very breathe I breathe.

“For more than ten years I have been working in an economic and social research centre. The Centre which houses the library has been a Church since 1843 and is called ‘**The Holy Spirit**’. Religious services are held here still. That makes me very proud, to see Christians able to worship in freedom.

Every Wednesday evening there is a Mass when the Centre closes. Before going home I listen to the music of the Spanish Marist Brother who lives over the Centre. At these moments I tell myself. “At last I am living in a normal world”. But there are still the Jews, who do not yet have the same opportunities in Algeria, and the same is true of the other Arab countries.

The Centre which I manage is called ‘**CDES SOPHIA**’. It is a place of meeting for the different intellectual and social contexts.

My multi-disciplinary team itself exemplifies that difference. We try to be of service to all. In matters to do with religion I reckon I have an opportunity that others don’t have. All religions are bearers of humanity. I have never

believed that one religion possesses a better spirit than the another. The chance of meeting people of different faiths benefits me enormously. The friendships I have formed would never have seen the light of day if I worked in another place. If some day I have to leave to work in another place it will have to be for another which offers even more in terms of difference. I could not survive in a place where everyone thought the same way.

Many conflicts are not settled easily especially conflicts of

history. We cannot bandage the wounds of the past, nor those of the present, without the efforts of all parties concerned, whatever their differences. As for conflicts of the present, a little wisdom doesn’t do any harm, which is why we have chosen ‘**SOPHIA**’ which means ‘**Wisdom**’ as the name of our Centre. If I am outraged in the face of so much war, bloodshed, hatred and lack of understanding, it is not because I want to change the world- on my own I could never achieve that. I would be even less able to do so working only with people like me when the situation is so complex. The job I do allows, albeit in a small way compared with the great efforts of the Non-Governmental Organisations and other humanitarian agencies, to say “no” to war, hatred and death. That is the least I can do”.

WHAT’S HAPPENING IN EAST AFRICA? UNITED RELIGIONS - A PARALLEL TO THE UNITED NATIONS?

Sr. Marie Cloutier is a White Sister now based in Nairobi, Kenya. She has ministered in Uganda for many years and been involved in reaching out to those of other faiths. Now in Kenya Sr. Marie together with Sr. Silvia Palomo and Sr. Margret Derek is engaged with the United

Religions Initiative. Sr. Marie shares with us the vision and progress of this new initiative in Kenya.

“I was involved in Inter-Faith Dialogue in Uganda for some years. Recently I have been appointed to Nairobi Kenya to continue the Inter-Faith Relations Ministry. I didn’t know at first where to begin and then I discovered the United Religions Initiative.

The founder of the **United Religion Initiative (URI)** is Bill Swing. His motto is ‘**A rising tide lifts all ships**’. More than one million people are involved so far in more than sixty countries, in the six continents; eighty-eight faith traditions and denominations networking ... What a rising tide!

This is **URI - United Religions Initiatives** - a vision which emerged in 1995, out of an interfaith service held in San Francisco to commemorate the 50th. anniversary of the United Nations.

The former UN Secretary General, Bhoutros Bhoutros Gali had asked Bill Swing, an Episcopal Bishop, to form a committee and plan the religious component of the jubilee celebration. Swing managed to involve twenty-six faith traditions in the service that took place at Grace Cathedral.

He had questions as to the outcome of all this. “**What is the real impact of the UN, of so many Peace Talks? Political efforts at peace-seeking are often thwarted by other political forces ...**” Swing realized that the nations had met together for fifty years but the religions had not.

“**I woke up the next morning**” said Swing “**ready to devote the**

rest of my life to being a catalyst for the creation of a ‘united religions’ that would be a parallel to the United Nations”.

Swing left his work and travelled to meet the Pope, the Dalai Lama, the Chief Rabbi in Jerusalem and several other religious leaders. It quickly dawned on him that “**if there is ever to be peace among religions, it would have to start at the grass root level**”.

He gathered fifty people who shared his vision, to discuss alternatives and the **URI** was born. Its tidal power resides not in hierarchical structures but in **Cooperation Circles** initiated at grass root level throughout the world. Each Circle has autonomy in undertaking local initiatives especially in areas of Aids, environment and all issues relating to faith related questions to implement the **URI**’s purpose:

“The purpose of the United Religions Initiatives is to promote enduring, daily interfaith cooperation, to end religious motivated violence and create cultures of peace, justice and healing for the Earth and all living beings”.

Each Circle must include at least seven people representing at least three religions. By the end of 2004, Bishop Swing expects there will





level. Sr. Silvia and Sr. Margret have set up a **Cooperation Circle (C.C.)** in their area. They have chosen as their focus as **Prayer for Peace**.

Sr. Marie continues “I am leading a C.C. of fifteen members – Muslims, Baha’i and Christians. We have met four times so far and have lived a long discernment exercise before finalising our choice of an activity ... While investigating, visiting hospitals and people in the slums, involving ourselves, reporting, sharing, we all believed that we were already fulfilling the **purpose of URI** – in a nutshell: **peace among religions as a way to peace in the world**. We have experienced among us respectful listening, openness, much interest and keenness.

Our choice: to visit the elderly, often lonely and neglected people in the nearby slum area. A concrete plan of action will be spelt out in the near future”.

URI leads to new contacts! The **Sikh community** is celebrating this year, the 400th anniversary of their Holy Scriptures, the **Sri Guru Granth Sahib**. Srs. Silvia, Margret and Marie were invited to one of their temples to celebrate with them. We were told that no other religion has such respect for its Holy Book! And Sikhism, with its inclusive, universal outlook is **the** religion for today! Others say the same ... In his address on spirituality, the key speaker had some moving words: “In every breath, remember your Lord; dwell in Him; He is within!” “It’s like the Gospel of John, I felt in my heart” ... reflects Sr. Marie. “What next? I am making friends with various people: Abdi, member of our C.C. - is promising to take me to a “bigger mosque in the capital where women can attend”. Also, a Sikh lady and her daughter took me to their home for a prayer meeting: every Monday afternoon thirty women or so gather and chant

their Holy Scriptures, in Punjabi. They sit in the lotus position and with covered heads, for an hour and a half they are taken in prayer. On my cushion, I reflected and prayed the Rosary, with a lovely kind of psalmody background. Then some ladies stayed for a tea break which turned out to be a very friendly encounter.”

A new world is growing, a vision of people of faith coming together to live that faith in many different ways. They celebrate the differences but with a focused vision moving from Babel

DID YOU KNOW THAT THE WHITE SISTERS (MSOLA) HAVE A WEB SITE?

If you are interested to know more about the **White Sisters (MSOLA)** the web site shares our origins in the last century and our responses to today’s challenges in an ever changing **Africa**. Ever to our founder Cardinal Lavigerie’s challenge ‘**to be nothing but Apostles**’ and to be ‘**all to all**’ following the words of St. Paul. Why not have a look? You could be surprised and challenged too.

You can find us at <http://www.smnda.org> or just www.smnda.org

Remember to help ‘Make Poverty History’ - see CAFOD’s campaign at http://www.cafod.org.uk/get_involved/campaigning/make_poverty_history

Bro. George Ascott W.F. RIP.

Bro. George Ascott W.F. RIP.
26/04/1227 - 01/10/2004

Francis Edward Ascott and his wife Catherine had five children. Peter was the elder brother and is presently living down in Cornwall. The other four children all entered religious life. Margaret Mary was a member of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. She worked as a missionary in Uganda. Bro. George was able to visit her from time to time when he was working in Bukoba Diocese. She died in 2000. Mary Bruno is a member of the Servants of Mary. The other brother, Bruno, was a Carthusian monk. He died in 2001 in France. Clearly there was a deep religious influence at work in the Ascott family. They maintained a warm contact among themselves.

Bro. George himself was born on the 26th. April 1927. He received a good Catholic secondary education at John Fisher School, Purley. After his schooling he went to work in the office of a firm of Surveyors and Auctioneers. He then did his National Service from 1945-48 where, again, he was employed mainly in office work with the Royal Engineers. After that Bro. George went in to farm work. In 1957 he applied to join the White Fathers as a brother.

The reports from his time of training in St Boswells and Monteviot recognise a man of experience and maturity. Although he was older than most of his companions, he easily adapted to community life. He had already acquired the convictions of a spiritual life. Being of an independent frame of mind he could find obedience difficult but he developed an obser-

be four hundred active Cooperation Circles worldwide.

“I have begun setting up a Circle here in Nairobi, South B, Kenya with the help of an Anglican lady. The **URI** has a solid branch in Kenya and an active executive committee with whom I keep in touch” says Sr. Marie.

“Religions are often accused of divisiveness ... The **URI** wishes to forget the past and to “**lift ships together in its rising tide**”.

Sr. Margret Derek, Sr. Silvia Palomo and I have become members of the ‘**Chapter**’ (a kind of enlarged executive) of the **URI-Kenya** which meets once a month. There, we encounter believers of Sikhism, Islam, Buddhism, Baha’i, and some Christians”.

URI grows through local, inter-faith branches, called **Cooperation Circles**, active at grassroots



vance of the rule which was exemplary. He could react quickly when annoyed but had great self-control. He was quick to ask for forgiveness when he thought he might have hurt someone's feelings. His sense of humour and the love of playing with words were apparent even at that

manding job but less regimented than a school regime. Bro. George had more time to relax and enjoy a good beer and a pipe. Bro. George loved to talk and tell a good story and draw upon his endless supply of jokes. There was a good spirit in the community even when Bro. George repeated a hairy old joke for the umpteenth time. His health was good but there was a persistent cough. At this time too he had to be treated for skin cancer.

When he came back to Tanzania in 1994 he was appointed as bursar of Atiman House in Dar es Salaam and asked to look after the visa office and relations with the Immigration Authorities. Bro. George's office training and his concern for precision stood him in good stead for this service to which he gave himself whole heartedly. It began to become more apparent that there was something wrong with Bro. George's throat and chest. Examinations in Muhimbili Hospital revealed that he had cancer of the vocal chords. He was admitted one evening for a biopsy the next day. The procedure demands the patient fast from the evening before. Bro. George was all ready to go to theatre the next day when the bombing of the American Embassy in Dar took place. All non-essential operations were cancelled until further notice because of the bombing and Bro. George had to return to Atiman House where he was finally able to have something to eat! He followed a course of radiology at Ocean Road Hospital in Dar. However, he was looking much more tired than he had ever been. He was reluctantly considering giving up smoking, which he finally did in 1998, though he continued to enjoy his glass of Guinness. The fund of jokes and stories never dried up much to the consternation of some.

Bro. George loved Tanzania and the work he was doing. It was with a heavy heart and no small degree of sadness that he agreed to retire back to the U.K. He settled in to the routine

of Corfton Road, our house in Ealing for the elderly. The community used to take it in turns to take the dog for its daily walk and Bro. George soon found out which pubs in the locality allowed dogs in! He always remained a community man and a man of prayer.

On August 17th. 2004 Bro. George was diagnosed with lung cancer which had also spread to the liver. It was noticeable how he weakened by the day, though without ever complaining. Only in the last few days did he take to his bed.

May he rest in peace

Those caring for Bro. George had arranged for him to go into a hospice for a little bit of respite care. The confreres were with Bro. George on the eve of his proposed departure for the hospice. There seemed to be no immediate cause for alarm. Bro. George was still telling his jokes but somehow never managed to get to the punch lines. The next morning his condition had deteriorated. The ambulance came in the morning to take him to the hospital but he died on the way 1st. October 2004 on the feast of St. Theresa, patroness of missionaries.

Fr. Thomas McIlveney W.F. RIP.

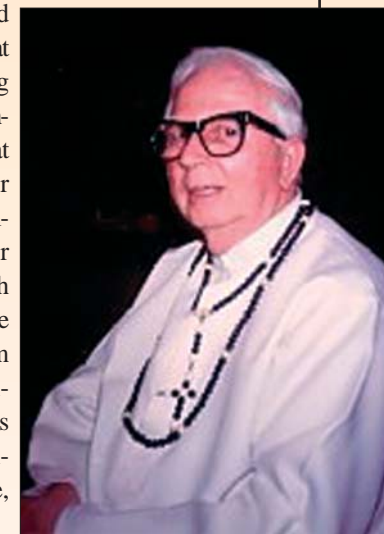
Fr. Thomas McIlveney W.F. RIP.
14/06/1914 - 30/08/2004

Born in 1914 Fr. Tommy completed his secondary schooling in his home town of Dumbarton before joining the White Fathers. He came from a close loving family who gave him all possible support in his missionary calling. After initial formation he was sent to North Africa and made his novitiate at Maison Carree in Carthage where he was ordained priest in 1941. During this time he had shown himself to be a man of sound spiritual qualities, intelligent and gentle in character.

After his ordination he returned to the province where he remained for three years helping out at the promotion centre and the parish of Heston. In 1944 he received his appointment to Tanzania and the diocese of Bukoba where he was to remain until 1980. Fr. Tommy spoke little of these long years spent in Tanzania. One gets the impression that he was happy and content to be left alone to get on with the work entrusted to him. Initially this was pastoral ministry for a few years but soon, like many native English

speakers at that time, he found himself assigned to teaching duties.

From 1948 until his retirement in 1980 Fr. Tommy faithfully taught; English, Geography, and anything else asked of him; at Rubya seminary. Many of those young men he taught went on to become priests and bishops and while Fr. Tommy could not tell you how many diocesan priests who he had taught he took great pride in counting the number of bishops who had sat at his feet. In later years a good number of his former pupils kept in touch with him and those of us who met them heard them testify to Fr. Tommy's good solid teaching, sound advice, and discipline!



Picture above: Fr. Thomas McIlveney W.F.

time. He was also gifted with a very retentive memory.

In 1959 Bro. George took his first temporary oath and became Provincial Secretary for a year or so while doing Social Studies at Claver House. He left for Tanganyika, as it was then known, in 1961. Initially he worked at mastering Swahili and helping out with office work. He took his final oath in 1965. Bro. George had been asked to go into teaching in 1964 and from then onwards until 1981, he taught English, Maths or Geography in both Rubya seminary and Katoke.

Bro. George undertook an upgrading course at London University and was much appreciated as a teacher. There are many students who have passed through those seminaries who remember the painstaking efforts that Bro. George took and the meticulous care he spent on making sure that they received a solid intellectual foundation. Many of them are in positions of responsibility in the Tanzania of today and remember Bro. George with affection and gratitude.

The next step in Bro. George's missionary journey took him into the field of finances. He went to Kigoma as assistant Treasurer. It was a de-

Even in his retirement years Fr. Tommy was always on time for meals, meetings and other community activities and did not tolerate easily those who were late. Testimony is also given by his ex-pupils to his faithfulness to his spiritual exercises which proved a great example to them. And again in his years of retirement he was faithful to community prayer and the days of recollection, even when his health was failing. His home leaves were always spent with his family in Dumbarton and after the death of his parents with his sisters of whom he was very fond.

Often, it seems, the provincial did not know Fr. Tommy had been home. He came and went quietly, unobtrusively and it was remarked at his funeral, he might have made a good secret agent! In retirement when he did speak of these long years of teaching; unromantic and mundane; Fr. Tommy did so without any resentment and it is evident that he appreciated and valued the contribution he had been privileged to make to the growth of the church in Tanzania. This quite in accord with the spirit and instructions of Cardinal Lavigerie.

This long career came to a sudden end in 1980 when he returned home on sick leave and was advised not to return. Fr. Tommy accepted this unquestioningly as God's will and after a long rest with his family he took up residence in Rutherglen. At the beginning he found it difficult to settle into the rhythm of life there but being a man of routine he eventually established his own programme. Once a week, faithful as clockwork, he left the house and took the train to visit his sisters in Dumbarton. Always the same time; the same train; the same lunch together; and back at the same time. These visits were important to him and his sisters and when he could no longer visit they came regularly to see him.

In the community Fr. Tommy readily accepted to render small services; looking after the library and the sacristy. His lack of pastoral experience left him with little confidence, however, to become involved in the outside activities of the community such as missionary appeals or helping in the local parishes. Nonetheless Fr. Tommy was content with his family visits, his reading, his classical music and his television programmes. As he grew older his health deteriorated and he often fell or suffered small strokes but with amazing regularity and rapidity he bounced back and was soon at table again with his mischievous smile, wicked sense of humour and on time!

Happily Fr. Tommy was well enough to be present at the funerals of his two sisters whose passing marked him deeply. In June he celebrated his ninetieth birthday with a party for his nieces and their families and members of the community. Ever his "own man" he left the party when he was ready.

Shortly afterwards a more serious fall left him weak and badly bruised. On the advice of the doctors he was admitted to the hospital where he was to remain until his death. At times he seemed to get stronger and enjoyed watching the football and the Olympics and even spoke of coming home but in his heart knew it was not to be. He joyfully received the Sacrament of the Sick first with members of his community and again the day before he died in the presence of his family. Conscious to the end he received the news of Fr Tod O'Donnell's death with a nod and smile and one got the impression that he knew his own death was imminent. He died peacefully in his sleep just six hours later.

Fr. Tommy's funeral Mass was attended by members of his family, confreres, and many of the local community. He is buried in the community plot in Rutherglen.

May he rest in peace



Gift Aid Declaration

The White Fathers

(Missionaries of Africa)

Registered Charity No. 233302

in England and Wales

129 Lichfield Road,
Sutton Coldfield,
West Midlands, B74 2SA
Tel: 0121 308 0226
Fax: 0121 323 2476
suttonlink@dial.pipex.com

in Scotland

9 Milrig Road,
Rutherglen,
Glasgow, G73 2NG
Tel: 0141 613 0209
Fax: 0141 647 5321
wfscotland@care4free.net

The White Sisters

(Missionary Sisters of
Our Lady of Africa)

Registered Charity No. 228983
in England, Wales and Scotland

5 Charlbury Grove
Ealing,
London,
W5 2DY
Tel: 020 8997 7912

Please fill in this Gift Aid Declaration and send it to the appropriate address.

Details of the Donor:

Title Forenames Surname

Address

Postcode

I wish The White Fathers / White Sisters to treat: *

- the enclosed donation of £ as a Gift Aid contribution
- the donations I make from the date of this Declaration until I notify you otherwise as Gift Aid donations

Signature: Date of Declaration/...../.....

If you would like to make donations by a Standing Order, please tick here and we will send you the appropriate forms.

* Please tick or delete as appropriate

Please Note

1. You must be paying an amount of income tax or capital gains tax equal to the amount that we will reclaim on your donation in the tax year.
2. This declaration may be cancelled at any time by notifying us in writing.
3. Please notify us if your circumstances change, i.e. you are no longer a tax payer, or if you should change your name or address while this declaration is still in force.
4. If you pay tax at the higher rate you can claim further tax relief in your Self Assessment tax return.
5. If you are unsure whether your donations qualify for Gift Aid tax relief, please contact us, or you can ask your local tax office for leaflet IR 65 Gift Aid



Let Us Pray

*For the following
who have died recently:*

Mr J Aiken, 18 Aysgarth Avenue,
Grangetown, Sunderland.

Jemima Barker, 12 Arthur Street, Glasgow.

Mr Richard Bell-Syer, 7 Helyer's Green,
Littlehampton, W.Sussex.

Mrs M Berry, 5 Warwick Drive, Burnley, Lancs.

Maria M Morjan Bongo, Khartoum, Sudan.

Mrs Mary Agnes Bowen, Frinton on Sea,
Essex.

Mr Jim Bowers, 4 Alder Dale,
Wolverhampton.

Mr John Thomas Brewer, 13 Thornton Street,
Dulwich, Australia.

Mr J Buckley, 18 Langley Road,
Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

Patrick Byrne, 7 Moulin Circus, Cardonald,
Glasgow.

Mrs Mary Cadle, Courtland Avenue, Coundon,
Coventry.

Mr James Cameron & Mrs Catherine Cameron,
116 Monkland Avenue, Kirkintilloch,
Glasgow.

Mrs Alice Agnes Cheal.

Mr William Connelly, 34 Marlepark, Ayr.

Mrs Coyne, 481 Stanhope Road,
South Shields, Tyne & Wear.

Mr Czorny, Sheffield.

Mrs M Davies, Braithwell Road, Maltby,
Rotherham, S.Yorks.

Mrs Maureen Dawson, 84 Montrose Crescent,
Hamilton, Lanarkshire.

Miss Margaret Fitzsimmons, 6 Park Avenue,
East Calder, West Lothian.

Mr Richard Flynn, 21 Courtfield, Ormskirk,
Lancs.

Mr Austin Gilligan, 26 Drummond Crescent,
South Shields, Tyne & Wear.

Miss Elizabeth Goggins, 19 Allinson Close,
Goodwood, Leicester.

Helen Graham, 29a Thornhill, Johnstone,
Renfrewshire.

His Hon. G Harkins, 34 Wyncote Court,
Newcastle Upon Tyne.

Mr Patrick Harrigan, 32 Westfield Road,
Leicester.

Mr Harrison, 19 Tudor Croft, Preston.

Mr T J Hawley, 13 Middleton Road, Streetly,
Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.

Miss Margaret Heneghan, 13 Greenacre
Place, Bannockburn.

Mrs M Hunter, 5 Bede Close, Newcastle
Upon Tyne.

Mrs Veronica Mary Hyland, 43 Foley Road
East, Streetly, Sutton Coldfield,
West Midlands.

Mrs Maureen Kelly, 50 Westburn Crescent,
Rutherglen, Glasgow.

Mrs T Kelly, 31 Old Inverkip Road,
Greenock, Renfrewshire.

Mrs K Lane, 72 Lansbury Road, Enfield,
Middlesex.

Jack Leonard, 41 Roxburgh Gardens,
Regent Street, Grennock.

Mrs Anne Margaret Lindley, 151 Lonsdale
Drive, Rainham, Kent.

Mrs Mary Lochery, Manchester. (Sister of
Father John O'Donohue W.F.)

Mr John Bernard Loughlin, Wigan Road,
Chorley, Lancs.

Mr Peter MacKinnon, 120 Craigie Drive,
West Ferry, Dundee.

Miss Ellen McCartney, 8 Broomlands Drive,
Irvine, Ayrshire.

Mr Patrick McMahan, 25 Law Drive,
Newarthill, Motherwell.

Father John McNulty W.F. Rutherglen
Community.

Philomena Medina, Vancouver.

Mr F Morgan, 22 Fairfax Close,
Ampleforth, York.

Mr John Mullen. (Brother of
Bro. Joe Mullen W.F.)

Peter Pow, 1 Preston Terrace, Linlithgow.

Mrs Rose Purcell, Hesketh Bank, Preston,
Lancs.

Mrs Dorothy Reid, Harrow Drive,
Blackburn, Lancs.

Helen Robinson, Chestnut Crescent, Denny,
Stirlingshire.

Mr Joe Ruane, Warren Point, Co.Down.

Mr Francis K Routledge, Bondwood Farm,
Burton on Trent.

Dame Edith Street, St Mary's Abbey
(Abbess 1982-1994), Colwich, Stafford.

Father Geoff Sweeney W.F. Rutherglen
Community.

Mrs Constance Threlfall, 53 Dowry Street,
Accrington, Lancs.

Mrs Jean Welsh, 5 Rannoch Green, East
Kilbride, Glasgow.

Mary Frances Wilson, 46 Station Road,
Dalbeattie.

Paul Wiseman (Former White Father
Student at Broome Hall).

† THE OBITUARY LISTS †

Please note that the latest dates for receiving names to be included
in the Obituary List are as follows:

Issue No.	Months	Latest Date
382	June-July 2005	11th. March, 2005
383	Aug.-Sept., 2005	14th. May, 2005
384	Oct.-Nov., 2005	14th. July, 2005
385	Dec.-Jan., 2006	14th. September, 2005
386	Feb.-March., 2006	14th. November, 2005

We hope that we will be able to keep to these dates. On occasions, due to technical reasons in the production of the magazine, we may have to close the Obituary List a day or two early. If this does happen please accept our apologies and be assured that we will certainly include all the names received in the next issue.

Calendar Note: there is a mistake in this year's Calendar. **Mission Sunday** is marked as being the 17th. October. It should be the **24th. October**. We are sorry for any inconvenience caused by this.

*“Come, you whom my Father has blessed,
take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you
since the foundation of the world”. (Mt. 25.34)*

May they rest in peace

The White Sisters

URGENT HELP NEEDED TO CHANGE A TEAR INTO A SMILE

The White Sisters need your prayer and financial aid “to make Africa smile”
and “make poverty history”



How? Through

- reaching out to those of other faiths
- our ministry to women
- self-help projects
- developing leadership programmes
- forming Small Christian Communities.
- education and care of HIV/AIDS sufferers and their children.
- our care and compassion for the Street Children
- through radio, books and TV

Your support can ‘give Life to the full’ as
John 10:10 tells us.

We thank you, as through **YOUR SUPPORT** you are present with us in
Africa creating a network where Christ is truly alive!

YOUR HELP HAS NEVER BEEN MORE NEEDED

Each donation will be acknowledged. No amount is too little.

Donations and enquiries should be addressed to

THE WHITE SISTERS

5 Charlbury Grove, Ealing,
London, W5 2DY

Thank you for your generosity.

Registered Charity No. 228983
