

FRONTLINE REPORT



Society of African Missions
American Province

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Life in the Diocese of Lodwar, Kenya

Jesus said “and you will be my witnesses....to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Bishop Patrick J. Harrington, S.M.A., is a former Superior General for the Society of African Missions. He is one of 5 S.M.A. Bishops in Africa. Since his Episcopal Ordination on March 20, 2000, he became the **Bishop of Lodwar**. As chief shepherd he takes responsibility in faith and love for his flock and shares fully in the joys and sorrows of the people in the Diocese of Lodwar.

Fr. Don Bosco Mawdsley, S.M.A., is serving in the Diocese as Bishop’s Secretary. He shares the following:

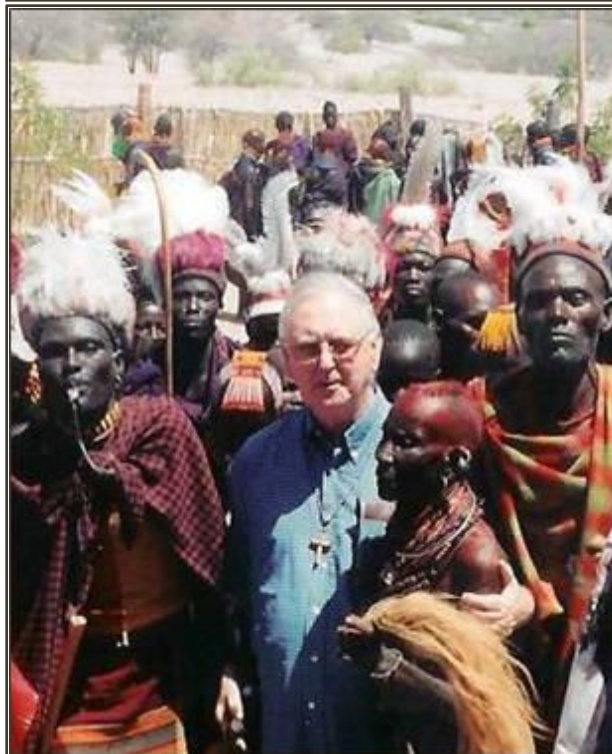
The **Diocese of Lodwar** is located in the northwest of Kenya in the Turkana District. This area is hot, dry and dusty for most of the year. Rainfall is erratic and unreliable and famine is a constant threat. Many deaths occur due to raids (attacks from feuding groups) and droughts which lead to famine. When there is a lack of water and grazing ground for the livestock, these nomadic people must lead their animals to good green pastures, and often travel far from home to find it.

The District covers an area of 30,000 square miles with a



Above: Turkana land—a harsh, arid desert.

Below: **Bishop Patrick Harrington, S.M.A., Bishop of Lodwar**, shares in the life of his flock.



population of 515,420 and shares international boundaries with Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda. Kakuma, a well known town in the Diocese, is home to a large refugee camp, which provides shelter for over 80,000 refugees who have fled from civil strife and violence in their home countries. In this desert town, the refugees begin to rebuild their lives.

Despite the harsh and unforgiving environment, the Diocese is blossoming with many vibrant parishes, ministries and services. There are 60,097 Catholics being served in 23 parishes and 363 out-stations. The Diocese has 57 priests (10 diocesan), 47 religious Sisters and 7 religious Brothers. The liturgies are alive with faith and joyful song, lifting everyone’s heart, mind and spirit to God—who cares for all people, and loves them so much, He sent His Son to share in our humanity, that He might bring us to God.

The Diocese is involved in a person’s life from their birth to the grave, offering services for all aspects of life—spiritual and physical. There

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are 2 Health Centers, 1 Hospital, 19 Dispensaries, 3 Children Centers, 4 Homes for people with disabilities, 186 Nurseries, 86 Primary Schools, and 6 Secondary Schools in the Diocese. Education for the students is essential for a better future, providing hope and possibilities.

With rampant poverty and a hostile environment to contend with, most people in the region are in dire need of the services and ministries the Diocese provides. The needs are so great and it is a struggle to survive, yet the gratitude, joy and hope of the people are refreshing—like an oasis in the desert.



Above: (Top Photo) Notice the lava heaps (hills) in the background of above photo, while a herdsman tends his flock.

A loving Grandmother feeds her grandchild.

Left and Below: Scenes from a vibrant Church.



Lodwar Diocese Mission Statement

We are the community of God's people in the Catholic Diocese of Lodwar, united by the Holy Spirit, who proclaim with joy the Resurrection of Christ and dedicate our lives in Christian service to all, especially to those most in need.

Forgiveness—A New Year's Resolution by Fr. Daniel Lynch, S.M.A.

St. John of the Cross, a 15th century Carmelite mystic, is well known for his introduction of the “ominous” spiritual concept, **the dark night of the soul**. However, as Gerald May, M.D. tells us in his work entitled *The Dark Night of the Soul*, “the dark night is a profoundly good thing. It is an ongoing spiritual process in which we are liberated from attachments and compulsions and empowered to live and love more fully.”

Love is central to an understanding of the spirituality of St. John of the Cross. It is love which is the basis for understanding the dark night of the soul. May adds, “This deepening of love is the real purpose of the dark night of the soul. The dark night helps us become who we are created to be: lovers of God and one another.”

Unfortunately, we are all bound to some extent by “attachments and compulsions” and we need “liberation” from the things that bind us. We need to experience a dark night in order to become “empowered to live and love more fully.”

The **inability to forgive** is one example of an attachment that can bind us. Lack of forgiveness may constrict our life. When we can't let go and forgive, we become victims to whomever it was that wronged us.

Robert Enright, an expert on
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Sharing Christ's Life By Our Actions

by Seminarian Anthony Olaniyan, S.M.A.

Anthony Olaniyan, S.M.A. is a Nigerian Seminarian presently doing his studies in Nairobi, Kenya. He shares the following story which made a big impression on him and continues to inspire him in his priestly calling. This took place in October 2005 at Perere, in the northern part of the Republic of Benin.

We had just finished Mass and were making some minor repairs to the solar connection in the house. Satisfied that we had the connections correct and returning to our daily activities we were soon alerted to the presence of a visitor. This man was bringing us a message from one family in a nearby village. He relayed his message and then asked us to follow him. Little did we know that we were later to play the roles of an ambulance driver and an undertaker. As we entered a compound, an odious smell greeted us. It was repulsive and I wanted to run away, but we had a mission to fulfill, we have been called to serve the most abandoned. We came to a little hut where an old man lay sprawled on a bamboo bed. My Canadian parish priest, Fr. Francois Chapdelaine, leaned closer to this man to listen to his inaudible sputters in the local language—Bariba. Thirty minutes in that hut seemed like an eternity and most torturous, as close an experience to hell as I would care to have.

This poor man had a black patch on his left cheek extending to his jaw. The patch was perforated at his jaw so that you could see his teeth from



Above: Anthony Olaniyan, S.M.A.

outside. It was a sickening sight to view. It was then that I understood that the origin of the smell was the liquid oozing from the wound. He had not eaten in a while and was greatly emaciated. With the help of some kind villagers, we placed him in the car and drove to the nearest hospital at Nikki, some 21 miles away on a very rough road.

As we arrived at the hospital, some workers grudgingly helped us carry the old man. A minor operation was performed and the man's dead skin was cleared away leaving a hollowed jaw. The staff in the hospital then quarantined the old man. By the following day, maggots had invaded the opening in the jaw and the disease had spread to his chest. Whatever had caused the cancerous sore was now eating away at the skin on his abdomen. It seemed that any part the liquid-from-the-wound touched became affected. It was truly a horrendous sight to behold.

The bizarre nature of the disease made some villagers surmise that it was the consequence of his offense against the gods. It seemed that

there were so many patients at the hospital that our old man was left unattended after his quarantine. I was nauseous and angry. Fr. Francois suggested we seek help from the Carmelite Sisters nearby, whose basic ministry was with orphaned children. One Spanish Sister offered to look into the old man's case since she was a doctor herself. The sisters agreed to give a room outside the orphanage for our dying man. Fr. Francois traveled some 60 Miles on motorcycle to Parakou in order to get some of the prescribed medicines. Father also administered the Sacrament of the Sick and in spite of all the attention he was now receiving he passed at exactly 1 a.m. on the third day. It was a great relief to see him now at peace.

This experience has been a real source of encouragement and inspiration to me in my vocation. Fr. Francois certainly went the extra mile. The old man might have been left at home to die without any human dignity, because no one would pay his medical bills, or have so much love at heart to brave responsibility for a sick old man with an unknown disease. It struck me that it was a *bature* (white man) who came to his aid.

Now I see more meaning in my vocation to a missionary life. It is a life-giving call, which does not necessarily mean, for me, making people Christian, but sharing with our brothers and sisters the life of Christ. We brought the old man home and buried him that same day in accordance with the Bariba custom.

Forgiveness—A New Year's Resolution

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forgiveness, writes in *Exploring Forgiveness* that for those who can't forgive, "embittered, tormented, enslaved by the past, their quality of life is diminished." Those of us who can't forgive are pursued by "death-dealing spirits," and they will "take our lives..."

Robert Enright offers a good definition of **forgiveness** which contains within it the secret of this virtue. He says that forgiveness is the "**willingness to abandon one's right to resentment, negative judgment, and indifferent behavior** toward one who unjustly injures us, while **fostering the undeserved qualities of compassion, generosity and even love...**" Of course, this may take time and not be achieved without great pain and difficulties.

At the same time, Walter Dickey, also in *Exploring Forgiveness*, says that forgiveness

is **not "forgetting; it is not condoning or pardoning; it is not indifference or a diminishment of anger; it is not inconsistent with punishment** [by proper authorities]; **it does not wipe out the wrong or deny it."**

To be unforgiving, like any attachment or compulsion that binds us, is not easy to let go of. Gerald May writes, "We cannot achieve our own liberation or fulfillment; we would not even know where to begin," adding, "but neither does God reach down from the sky and manipulate us like puppets." Rather, we are reminded by May that in letting go of any attachment, including not forgiving, "the dark night is neither accomplished on our own nor worked within us by God alone." Instead, "it is a mystical co-participation between God and person with God as the center of the human soul. It can be no other way."

Ordained for a Life of Service!



Above: Fr. Dermot Roache, S.M.A. ordained December 29, 2007.

The S.M.A. American Province is proud to announce the Priestly Ordination of **Fr. Dermot Roache, S.M.A.** Please join with us in praying for God's abundant blessings on Fr. Roache in his missionary life as he exercises his priestly ministry in love and service to those he is sent to. Congratulations, Fr. Dermot!



Thanks to All Benefactors!

A heartfelt thanks comes from the Hope for Life Project in Accra, Ghana to all our benefactors. Your recent donations have made it possible to continue offering the services of the Bethany House to our Hope for Life members. Bethany offers hospitality, warm meals, fellowship and a place for members to recover following surgery. There are over 400 HFL members (people with disabilities) in the Program.

HFL Staff