Societe des Missions Africaines

S.M.A.

Society of African Missions

S.M.A. Vocation Office

Priests, Associate Priests, and Lay Missionaries

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Update From Tanzania

*Here is an update we received from **Fr. Daniel Lee, S.M.A. Associate Priest** who is serving in Tanzania. He writes:*

Greetings to all S.M.A. Fathers, Brothers and Sisters. I greet you with a warm heart from my mission in Tanzania. Nowadays, in Tanzania we have a severe dry season from April up to now. There has been no rain at all. People are struggling to find enough water and food for their families and their cattle. The rain-water tank at the rectory in now empty and I too must go in search of water from another town. The wind blows strongly with a lot of dust. Yes, this is the drought in Tanzania. Despite this, I am find and becoming more and more familiar with a missionary's life.

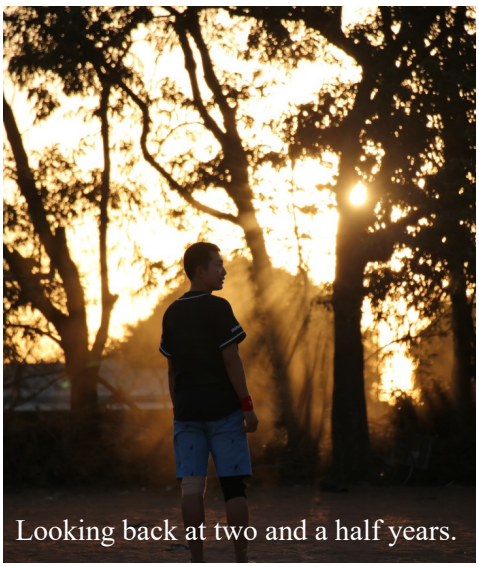
When I joined S.M.A. (June, 2015), I was the only Korean S.M.A. Associate priest. On June 21st, **Fr. Francis Kim, S.M.A. Associate Priest** and **Paul Song, S.M.A. Lay Missionary,** came to Tanzania to join in the Mission work. They stayed with me at my mission place for the first month and now they are in Kiswahili Language School for four months. I am so happy to welcome them to Tanzania. I hope more Korean priests will join S.M.A. and we can work together in the missions. The needs are great. (Actually, two more Korean priests are interested in serving in the African Missions—one of the priests has already visited me in my mission twice.)

In Korea, we have many priest vocations. There are approximately 1000 priests in the Archdiocese of Seoul. This is a great blessing from God. We continue to pray for vocations (in the US, Europe and other parts of the world) to the priesthood and missionary life.

The missionary life in Africa has been a big challenge for me. I miss my family and friends and I am sometimes tired with the rough local food, hot weather and speaking Kiswahili. Every two months I visit 31 different villages (outstations). From time to time I have had Malaria and other tropical medical problems. This can make me exhausted, especially with home concerns, when my older brother underwent major surgery in South Korea. But, I am an S.M.A. missionary in Tanzania. What can I do for him? Just pray for him and ask all my friends to pray for him. Fortunately, my brother's surgery was successful and he is recovering well. Thanks be to God.

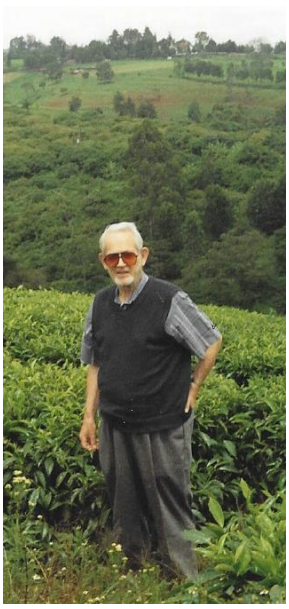
I have worked in Tanzania for two and a half years now. Next month, I am scheduled to have a three month break home in my country. I am looking forward to seeing my family and friends. It really is time for a break. During my holiday, I will reflect back on my missionary service and experiences in Tanzania. I know that a holiday will be good for me to rest, reflect, pray and gain a new energy for my missionary work.

Please pray for me and for all missionaries in Africa. Thank you!



Looking back at two and a half years.

Above: (L-R) **Michael Bova, S.M.A. Seminarian** and **Fr. Al Cooney, S.M.A.** *Right:* Fr. Al visiting one of the Parishes in Matara, Kenya, where many farmers worked growing and harvesting tea—one of Kenya's important exports. Fr. Al served for 3 years in the Kenyan missions.



Above: Fr. Al Cooney, S.M.A. administering the sacrament of matrimony to a couple in Cape Palmas, Liberia.

Answering the Call by Fr. Al Cooney, S.M.A.

This is just a short reflection on the motives and experiences I had on my journey to becoming a priest. Recently, I celebrated 62 years of priesthood.

Looking back on my initial thought of becoming a priest, the possibility of succeeding in my quest seemed quite remote. However, the desire to do so was very strong. So with much prayer and the will to overcome the many obstacles that confronted me, I was able to carry on the struggle.

One of the obstacles that stood in my way of being accepted in a Seminary in Ireland in the early forties was my age. I was close to my 21st Birthday. In those days, that was past the acceptable age in most seminaries. So I kept up the prayer and the search until I finally was accepted in a Seminary.

Perseverance won the day!

However, I wasn't out of the woods yet! After working for six years in a large business establishment and having become accustomed to that kind of lifestyle, it was quite difficult to adjust to this new way of *Seminary Life* with so many restrictions on my freedom of movement and habits like smoking. Then I had to spend hours sitting in a classroom and associating and studying with the other students—the majority being much younger. This was another real test that I faced. But again, with the grace and strength derived from participation in daily Mass and other religious services and prayer, I was able to cope.

After many years in the Seminary, I experienced a setback. Due to a painful health problem, I reluctantly had to leave. As a result of this I felt very depressed that I would not achieve my great desire to become a priest. I am convinced though that God had other plans for me. After some time, an unforeseen opportunity came about when I was introduced to a priest of the American Province of the Society of African Missions (S.M.A.). He was seeking vocations for his Province. When we discussed my situation and he discovered that I was anxious to continue my studies for the priesthood even if it meant going to the United States to do so, he accepted me as a candidate for the US Province.

I came to the States by ship in 1949 together with a number of other candidates. Leaving parents and family and coming to a foreign land required a great deal of faith and courage to adjust to a whole new environment and a way of life at the Seminary. It took a lot of time and patience for me to settle in.

Once again I felt confident that with strength and perseverance derived from daily Mass and other scheduled prayer times and spiritual direction, that I would succeed. And so it happened. I successfully completed the required courses of study and all other requirements and was approved by my S.M.A. Religious Superior for Ordination as a priest of the Society of African Missions. I was ordained on February 5, 1956 in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, DC.

Deo Gratias!

Fr. Albert Cooney, S.M.A.