

One Heart, One Spirit

CONGREGATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Newsletter for the Province of the United States



VOLUME NO. XL, No. 1

January-February 2012

As many of you already know, the 20th General Chapter of the Spiritan Congregation will be celebrated in Bagamoyo, Tanzania from 24 June to 22 July 2012. This is a very important time in the life of the Congregation and many important issues and goals will be discussed and decided upon. In addition, elections for a new Superior General and six new Assistants will be held. There has been a great deal of time and preparation involved in the planning and execution of this endeavor. It is now a time of grace and blessing as well. You are invited to join us in the following prayer for the success of our Spiritan Chapter. Your prayers are much appreciated.

PRAYER FOR 2012 GENERAL CHAPTER

Father, in times past you sent the Spirit of your Son upon our founding fathers, Claude Poullart des Places and Francis Libermann.

Thanks to them and to generations of Spiritans, our Congregation has not ceased to dedicate itself to the evangelization of the poor.

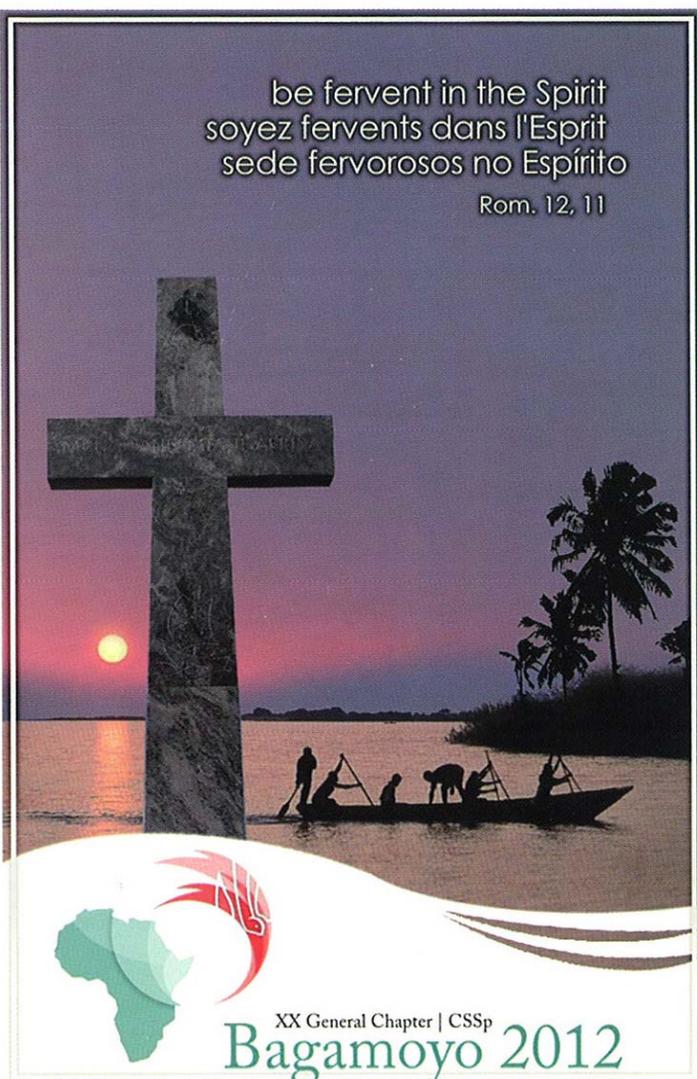
As we prepare ourselves to celebrate our XXth general Chapter, at Bagamoyo, we ask you to spread your Spirit anew on the whole Congregation.

May your Spirit gather us as one big family, to better hear the calls of our time!

May we be given a new fervour to deepen in your Church, our missionary consecration and witness!

Following Mary's example, by the power of the Spirit, may we continue to give birth to your Son for your glory and the life of this world that you created and liberated.

Amen!



In Remembrance...

At Peace at Last

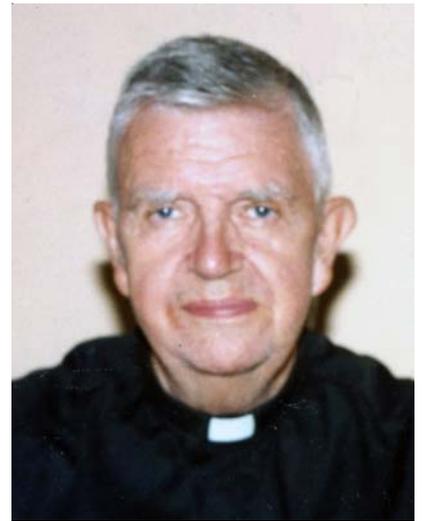
May He support us all the day long, till the shades lengthen and the evening comes and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in His mercy, may He give us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last.

~ John Henry Newman

Adios, Padre Sharkey

Fr. J. Kelly

When we went to see Fr. Tom Sharkey at the Golden Living Center on January 14th, we found him quietly lying on his bed with his mouth wide open as his body struggled to get air into his lungs. He had already received the last sacraments, so I said the accompanying prayers. Just as they mentioned "giving rest to these tired bones", Fr. Tom passed away.



*Fr. Thomas P. Sharkey
Apr. 16, 1924 - Jan. 14, 2012*

There were good reasons why Fr. Tom's bones were tired. After he finished high school and two years of normal college studies at Cornwells Heights near Philadelphia, he and I spent a year in the Novitiate at Ridgefield amid the rolling hills of Connecticut and took our religious vows on the day after the original VJ Day. We then went to Ferndale in Norwalk near the Long Island Sound where we did six more years of studying philosophy, theology and other subjects needed for the priesthood which we received in 1950.

After another year of studies, we made our Apostolic Consecration and received our appointments. After all those years together, we were separated - Fr. Tom was assigned to Puerto Rico and I to East Africa. We did not come back together again until we retired at Libermann Hall in Bethel Park over 50 years later.

Fr. Tom's first appointment in Puerto Rico was to San Felipe. There, he ministered to the people in the town and to the poverty-stricken people in numerous "barrios" - mission stations that were reached on foot or by horseback. For the next 47 years, he was assigned to various parishes in Puerto Rico and once to the Propagation of the Faith Office on the island, but amid all this he singled out the apostolic groups as the work that caught his special attention. They were not the political *communitas de bas* groups that sprung up in South America, but spiritual groups quite like the thousands of small christian communities that evolved in Eastern Africa. This meant the two of us were giving emphasis to similar work but on different continents. These small communities proved to be one of the best means for the inculturation of christianity at the grass roots level.

Fr. Tom has left all these people he worked with and us, too, but he has not been forgotten by any of us and he still loves us all. Hopefully he is already in heaven pleading for us all before the throne of our Father.

Retraction: There was a typo error in the obituary for **Fr. George F. Healy, C.S.Sp.**, written by Fr. Michael T. White, C.S.Sp., that was printed in the Nov-Dec 2011 issue of the Newsletter. The following paragraph lists the corrected dates for Fr. Healy's appointment to Virgen del Carmen, El Coto, Arecibo. [It should have read (1966-67) instead of (1956-67) as it appeared in the article.] I apologize for any inconvenience.

Fr. Healy received his first appointment to the Spiritan missions in Puerto Rico where he served in the parishes of San Felipe, Arecibo (1954-56), San Juan Bautista, Orocovas (1956-62), Dorado, Arecibo (1962-65), and Virgen del Carmen, El Coto, Arecibo (1966-67) prior to returning to the mainland in 1968. He briefly served as associate pastor at Holy Ghost Church in New Orleans, LA and then St. John's Church in Tucson, AZ. In 1969 he became one of the first vocation directors of the newly established Western Province of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit. He gave generously of his time and energy to this important project while he was based at the Spiritan parishes of St. Catherine of Alexandria in Riverside, CA and Our Lady of Guadalupe in Bakersfield, CA. During this time he was very involved in the Cursillo, Marriage Encounter and the Christian Family movements of the post-Vatican II Church.

The Thomas Merton Center first opened its doors on March 12, 1972. They are celebrating their 40th anniversary throughout 2012 by holding special events and also by featuring an article in their newsletter each month written by a member who has been a part of their history. The reflection reprinted below with permission was provided for January's "New People" and was written by Fr. Bill Headley, CSSp.

We Are Singing Here, Also

**Bill Headley, CSSp*

"The Center has re-invented itself throughout our history, taking on new projects...." (Molly Rush)

In the mid-1990s, I was recycled as a Spiritan – a priest member of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit – back to Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, PA. I had recently come from an assignment at the Spiritan general headquarters in Rome, where I served as the Community's Justice and Peace Coordinator.

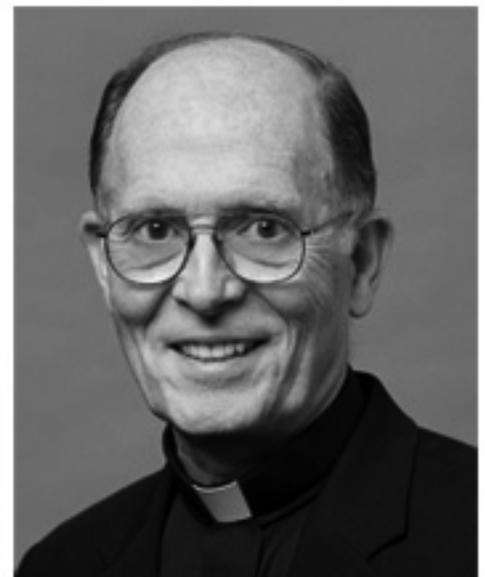
Toward the end of my ministry in Rome, the concerns coming from Spiritans in the field, particularly Africa, were increasing about conflict and violence. Intra-state and identity conflicts were occurring with increasing frequency and would later take tragic expression in the Burundi and Rwanda genocides.

My task at Duquesne was to set up a concentration in conflict resolution within an already established Master's program. It was clear that this initiative would not survive, if it was locked away in an academic ivory tower. I knew that I needed practical peacebuilders as partners. I found them at the Thomas Merton Center.

The Merton Center in a loose but very real sense adopted our academic program as a "project." The MA students and I were welcomed at Merton Center's meeting. We learned and grew from individual Mertonians and their justice and peace activities. Haiti was a hot issue at the time and we worked on it together. When we wanted to host the Dalai Lama in Pittsburgh or invite African bishop peacebuilders to campus, Molly Rush was there to lend her good sense of what works and what doesn't.

It was a great and formative time for me and those associated with the program at Duquesne. The Merton Center and its supporters were a real assist. I feel privileged to sing "Happy Birthday" on the occasion of your 40th birthday. Keep the flame of Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation burning brightly. I and others take strength, courage and hope from you.

**Fr. Bill Headley, CSSp left Duquesne (2000) to serve on Catholic Relief Services' executive board with responsibilities in policy and peacebuilding. In 2007, Bill became the founding Dean of the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, University of San Diego. He joined colleagues of the Catholic Peacebuilding Network recently (2010) in the publication of Peacebuilding: Catholic Theology, Ethics, and Praxis.*



William R. Headley, C.S.Sp., Ph.D.

Homily for Father John R. Weber, C.S.Sp.

- Fr. John Skaj, C.S.Sp.

The Beatitudes read in the gospel at Father John Weber's funeral Mass were most appropriate at the time, for they fittingly apply to a person who has been most sincere in his love of God, and in his lifetime has faithfully served God.

Beatitudes mean happiness.

How can we be happy at a funeral? Is it wrong to grieve? We do know that grieving is not out of place at a funeral. Even as Jesus was about to raise Lazarus from the dead, He wept. Besides our whole human nature shutters at death, especially as we face the death of a loved one. Every fiber of our being tells us that such sorrow is in tune with God. Jesus calls the people who en flesh these beatitudes "blessed" or "happy".

They are blessed because God has blessed them with divine grace, enabling them to live these Beatitudes. They are happy because they had the joy of living with and for God in the various events of their lives.

And this is what the reign of God is all about.

Some may think that they can be happy only if they win the lottery, or have a successful career, or become famous. Most people will never reach such peaks of human happiness. But like Father Weber, all people can experience the reign of God by devoting their energies to the honor of God and the good of their neighbor.

That is why we can rejoice even in the midst of sorrow.

We rejoice with Father John as we recall how he put the Beatitudes into practice, and most of the time not even knowing he was doing so. We rejoice, too, that he is experiencing in a new way the Beatitudes of life with God. The reign of God has now come to fulfillment for him.

If he could, he would tell us that he is happy, and that all that we learned about the Beatitudes are true. As we celebrate this Mass, we rejoice that Father Weber lives with and in God forever.

Father Weber was a dedicated priest and religious.

I came to know him when he joined our class for the Novitiate year in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

He had already completed his college work and philosophy studies at Duquesne University, and was therefore two years ahead of us academically. Having completed the Novitiate year, and making his first vows with us, he went straight into theology, while we went into philosophy. He was ordained two years ahead of us. He always considered us his classmates and we considered him a member of our class.

Father Weber was a most kind individual.

He was deeply religious and very devout. I never heard him speak unkindly about anyone. He would discuss situations one may be involved in and talk about them objectively, but I never heard him speak unkindly in his discussion about any matter.

If an unkindness was issued against him, he never was unkind in return. He always acted as if it never happened. He never held anything against anyone.

He was most obedient, and accepted assignments without question. Having earned two master degrees, he taught in three of our high schools, was a parochial vicar in four of our parishes, pastor in two of them, was the Director of our collegiate seminarians and Vocation Director.

He had very poor eyesight, yet that never interfered in anything he undertook.

He was an avid reader, enjoyed movies and loved to do puzzles and play chess. I would marvel at how he did those puzzles. Two of the most complicated ones were the 3-D one of Venice, which was displayed at the entrance to the chapel, and the battery-powered clock hanging outside his room in the hallway, all this in spite of poor eyesight.



*Rev. John R. Weber, C.S.Sp.
Nov. 9, 1935 - Jan. 1, 2012*

(continued on next page)

Homily for Father John R. Weber, C.S.Sp. (continued)

Father John was enjoyable to have in community. If one undertook a card game with him, or any game for that matter, he was determined to win. He was sharp, and could leave the loser not knowing what happened to him. He not only had a good sense of humor, he could laugh at himself.

The one great delight in life he had, one that we all share actually, was food. Whenever he would give traveling directions to someone, invariably the reference places as to what street to turn onto or the corner where one was to turn would have an eating establishment on it. He only had to be stationed in a new assignment a short time and he would know where all the good eating places were.

We all share the happiness that Father John was able to celebrate his 50th anniversary as a priest.

Several of the priests went over to the nursing home with our activities director with a big cake to celebrate the occasion.

The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that Father had some premonition that he was going to die.

He made several allusions to it. The dangers of it coming were more internal, which he could feel. One could not tell externally that there was anything seriously wrong. He always seemed to recover and was back here with us. Just before Christmas he was back with us, and he seemed to be working feverishly to get all his Christmas cards out. Shortly after, he was back to the hospital.

He was back at the hospital a short time when he called here. He wanted to be anointed. I had someone take me down because I did not know how to get to the hospital. We sweated it out in rush hour traffic to get there. When we got there he was sitting up eating dinner. He knew something was not right. Though he could eat, he was having trouble, and he knew not to wait around. Every day got progressively worse. The Fathers, and Pat - a friend from a former parish - would see him daily.

He made it through the year, and on New Year's morning 2012, he passed away at 6:50 AM.

Our faith tells us that Father Weber is still living.

We can take comfort and consolation knowing this. It is a fact.

His body is lifeless, but the real Father Weber is in a better world.

His soul we can help and do help by this funeral Mass and service.

He knows what is going on. He knows our sadness. He knows that only God can help us at this time.

He knows we pray for him.

All of this is helpful to him, and it is also healing and consoling for us who are sad at this time.

Today as we pay final tribute to Father Weber, we give thanks to God for this life that was, and is, and shall continue to be. Father Weber is now in his eternal home, that home that awaits each one of us. He is now united to God, the God whose love only can fulfill every desire and craving of the human heart. He will experience a happiness he can never lose, and shall be absorbed in the possession of the Greatest Love that exists, of which the keenest human love is but a shadow.

“Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” “I say unto thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise.”

May Father John be part of the company of the Saints, and may the God of all consolation keep him in His peace.

Blessed be now and forever the most Holy Name of God.

Please join us in praying for our dearly departed Spiritans

A Gentle Reminder...

*Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord ~
 Rest of the body,
 free from all weariness, sickness and pain;
 Rest of the mind,
 free from all anxiety, fear and insecurity;
 Rest of the heart, lost in total and unchangeable love.*

Fr. John Weber, CSSp, Jan. 1
 (see Obituary on p. 4)

Fr. Thomas Sharkey, CSSp, Jan. 14
 (see Obituary on p. 2)

The following items are due to Brother Michael Suazo at the Provincialate Office by March 16, 2012:

- Completed response forms for those who **are** attending the Provincial Chapter at Duquesne University on June 4-9, 2012. Please indicate on the form any special needs you might have in the spaces provided.
- **First Consultative Ballot** listing your nominations (as many as 5) for the office of Provincial, using the form supplied in the Jan. 19, 2012 letter from Brother Michael.

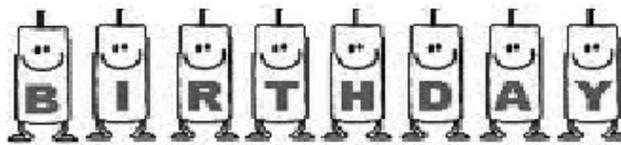
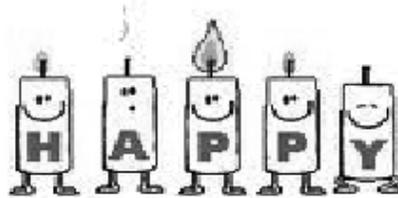
Thanks in advance for your timely cooperation in this matter!

Membership Directories

Please update your Membership Directory with this change:

Pg. C-10: new email address for Fr. Pierre L. Deglaire - duglare@gmail.com

Pg. C-32 & D-7: new address for Fr. Francis Wright - St. Mary Church, 70-31 48th Ave., Woodside NY 11377, cell: 215-900-2500, email: franciswwright@hotmail.com



March

February

- 03 Fr. Philip D. Evanstock
- 06 Fr. Benoit K. Mukamba
- 08 Fr. Martin T. Vu
- 12 Fr. Timothy J. Hickey
- 16 Fr. Anthony J. Gittins
- 22 Fr. Geo. J. Spangenberg
- 25 Fr. Joseph A. Seiter
- 26 Fr. James P. McCloskey

- 03 Fr. Neil T. McQuillan
- 04 Fr. Huy Q. Dinh
- 07 Fr. Ralph J. Poirier
- 13 Fr. Evod Shao
- 14 Fr. Casimir Nyaki
- 19 Fr. Joseph L. Deniger
- 21 Fr. Joseph Q. Nguyen
- 22 Fr. John J. Costello
- 27 Fr. Joseph L. Nguyen
- 29 Fr. Sean P. Kealy

April

- 01 Fr. William R. Headley
- 09 Fr. John Fogarty
- 11 Fr. Daniel S. Sormani
- 20 Fr. Andrew H. Do
- 21 Fr. Richard J. LeClair
- 23 Fr. Ned Marchessault
- 29 Fr. Adrien T. Hebert

Brother Joe Cannon recently did a reflection with the students at Holy Ghost Prep School about hockey and spirituality. These are his thoughts.

The Spirituality of Hockey

Bro. Joe Cannon, CSSp

Novice Hockey Chaplain

The Doctors of the Church teach us the necessity and grace of temperance in the healthy development of our spiritual life. To become truly one with Christ, to dig deep into that reality of our spiritual soul, we need to control and moderate the desires we have at the core of our being. Through such acts we come to more clearly see the beauty of the gift of life and the oneness we share with all of creation. Rarely in the modern world, the world of “Just do it,” do such profound sentiments fall on fertile ground. Usually the value of controlling and holding back our more base desires is seen as unneeded and unwanted. To quote South Park, “I can do what I want,” and that tends to be our motto.

I first must say, although I have become a die-hard Ghost fan, I know next to nothing about the sport of hockey. You can't entirely blame me for this blatant oversight in my personal knowledge. Being from the West Coast, sunny San Diego, before last year the closest I ever came to hockey was the ice cubes in my Coke while I laid out at the beach. The first hockey game I ever saw was last year at Grundy, when some of the freshmen asked if I would come and watch the JV game. I was hesitant to say the least. In San Diego to claim one is a hockey fan is like claiming membership in Al-Qaida, to claim affinity to the antithesis of what we Californians see as our core values of being laid back and relaxed (not to mention warm). For most of my life I had always seen hockey as the red-neck sport of the East Coast and saw no need to embrace this part of North East culture.

When I finally gathered the courage to attend my first game, the first thing I was to behold opening the doors entering the rink at Grundy was Spina skating at full speed toward a player from the opposing team. And then, right in front of me, with full force, he slammed the dude against the glass like a rag doll. “What in hell's name are you doing!” ran through my head. Spina recovered quickly, got the puck, left the other guy laid out on the ice, and skated away. “I'm gonna have a talk with that boy tomorrow. He has some anger issues he needs to work out.”

As I found my seat, tried to warm up, and the game continued I realized this radical, uncontrolled, flagrantly brutal action was just part of the game. It was exciting, fast, and fully physical. It was a blast! I have gone to every game I can make since and have enjoyed all the games, whether we win or lose. It is thrilling to bundle up and see such dedicated athletes compete full force in a game they love.

Last week I attended one of the varsity team's away games in Jersey. I am not entirely sure what sparked the need for the team to have new throwback jerseys, but they were playing in all their glory on the ice sporting new shirts. What struck me most, emblazoned on the front, was a fleur-de-lis, or French tri-fold. It is quite striking compared to the familiar intertwined “H” and “G” of the team's normal shirt. As my mind wandered I was reminded of Ghost's restored chapel's ceiling and the fleurs-de-lis and stars recently added there. That is when it hit me, the spirituality of hockey, the link between the seemingly rough and violent sport and the lessons of the Doctors of the Church.

(continued next page)



The Spirituality of Hockey - (continued)

Although I am still learning the sport, I do know the physicality of hockey and the drive it invokes in its advocates. There on the ice, wrapped in pads and helmets, swinging large sticks and tossing around a hard plastic puck, are young men striving to win a very physical game. At times players cannot stop quick enough to keep from plowing into other players (as Spina had on my first day). Nor is their aim for the puck always sure and they end up smacking an opponent. On occasion you can hear the banter from the ice through the cracks in the glass, enough to curl the hair of a sailor. But that is it! To take offense of every slight, real or supposed, and then to lose control only means you will lose the game. Often I have observed kids lose their temper and then you see the arm come up, and the fist go down on the fully padded head of their adversary. In all of this there is a consequence, the penalty box. Being there hurts you and it hurts the team. It is best to be temperate in your actions, control those emotions, keep a cool head on yourself. What a truly wonderful way to learn such a value, to learn how to embrace the virtue. No Church Doctor can be as clear to a young man as a hockey coach and referee can be. There are rewards to temperance and value in its practice and I respect those padded young men who are able to do it on the ice.

At any Catholic high school, or any family, often there is a tension between academics, athletics, and spirituality. We often become very myopic in whatever area we focus, and we lose sight of how valuable all areas of our life can be to our development. Hockey may not be a perfect sport, nor should it be the solitary focus of a person's life, but its practice can deepen the values needed to be a complete spiritual human person. And that is what we are about here at Ghost, to form young men into complete human persons. Sometimes, just sometimes, the Doctors of the Church can come to life on the cold ice of a hockey rink.

In this issue...

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Olbalbal Diary January 2012 Vol. 1, #2

Life-giving Salt

Traveling down Ngorongoro Mountain to Olbalbal, I came upon Olendoiyе waiting by the side of the road for a lift. He, his wife Nasha, Seina his daughter of ten years and four-year old son Lekosan were returning from their “boma” in the highlands of Ngorongoro near the crater rim to their temporary cattle camp in the Olbalbal area. Olendoiyе told me that large numbers of Maasai, while leaving a skeleton crew, mostly old people, at the main village in the high country, trek their herds out onto the plains for three or four months during the rainy season. He explained that in the Ngorongoro highlands salt is scarce, and without salt the cattle will become sick, no matter how good the grass is. In the high country, the cattle must be driven into Ngorongoro crater to lick the dried salt on the shores of the salt lake and then driven back out the same day. This is a difficult trip of many miles for cattle and herdsman since Conservation does not allow the cattle to stay overnight on the crater floor. Down at Olbalbal and at other places out on the savanna, salt licks are plentiful and constitute a major reason that many Maasai, who normally live in the highlands, choose to spend the wet season out on the plains. Olendoiyе told me that also, tick-borne diseases are much less of a problem in the low country. This elder had first driven his cattle down to Olbalbal, built a thorn bush “boma” and then left the herd in the hands of a younger brother. He had then returned to Olairobi in the high country and was now returning with his two young children and their mother to join the cattle herd below where there would be plenty salt for the cattle and milk for the children.



Individual / or / Community

Preparing for my work of evangelization at Olbalbal, I've been looking back at the work done by our “founding fathers” here in Maasai country. One of these, Fr. Vincent Donovan, gave us one of the key premises on which to build our work of establishing the church in Maasai country. In his letter of April 1969 published in *Missionary Letters of Vincent Donovan*, edited by J. Bowen, Vince writes:

“... I do not think it is fair to a person to approach him or her on behalf of Christianity outside of and apart from his or her community. If you should succeed in “converting” an individual apart from his community, what you have succeeded in doing is separating him from his community, making him forever an outcast, an outsider to the structure of the tribal community. And this thing that made him an outsider — Christianity — will be abhorrent to the community. You have probably cut off forever the possibility of bringing Christianity to that community. As for him, poor man (or imagine if he is a child), he has two bleak choices: either to struggle and fight against the structure of the tribal community as an outcast, or to give up the Christianity in which he might well even believe. Historically, he has most often chosen the latter course”. This is one of the insights that Vince offered his fellow Spiritan Missionaries over forty years ago. Since that time in Maasai country, we have done our best to implement his approach and I will do so in my work at Olbalbal.



Afterbirth Trouble

Making my way along the foot of Ngorongoro Mountain and some few miles out on the plains, I came across a line of six- or seven-foot high poles set about fifty feet from each other. Each pole had a shred of old gunnysack or cloth tied to the top. These are to deflect the wildebeest herds so that the migratory herds of gnus don't move into the grazing of the Maasai herds.

Every year, at the beginning of the long rains, wildebeest in their thousands migrate from the Western Serengeti to the East to Ngorongoro. Early on, in the wet, they drop many hundreds of calves and of course leave the “afterbirths” lying on the ground. Maasai cattle just love those tasty morsels and swallow them



down whenever they come across one. Herein lies the problem and the reason for the line of flapping cloth. Maasai say that the afterbirths of the wildebeest make their cattle sick and can even cause death. The hope is that the waving, fluttering strips will turn those birthing gnus back out onto the plains. Most years and in most places, the Maasai simply move out of the path of the wildebeest during calving season.

Murder

Maasai market days are great fun. People get together with relatives and friends not seen for weeks, necessities like beads for making jewelry, cloth for wearing, and basic foodstuffs are bought and sold. The cattle market is where people find corn, their staple diet, since there is never enough milk to satisfy hungry stomachs. Tea, sugar, cooking oil, salt and other necessities are also available, and oh yes, and cattle, goats and sheep are bought and sold too.

But the cattle market at Esere, some eight miles to the West of Endulen, was anything but ordinary and fun on that day just a week ago. Two Irak "julusi" stock traders had trekked their herd of four cows and twenty goats from Mang'loa below the rift wall up onto the highlands near Endulen to sell them to Maasai at the Esere cattle market. It was a sunny, beautiful day when a small group of Maasai "julusi", after some offers and counter-offers, agreed to buy the cattle for a good price. The Maasai, not surprisingly, suggested that they move off to a nearby dry river bottom for the exchange of cash. This is common practice and regularly done to avoid paying the government tax on livestock sales.

Off they went to the agreed place by the riverbed to hand over the payment. The Irak never returned to the market and the Maasai haven't been seen since. The two Irak "julusi" were found with their throats slit from ear to ear and various other deep slashes on their bodies. Within hours a large number of Irak warriors appeared prepared to do battle with the Maasai. This made possible by the recent cell phone explosion. And, Maasai warriors in their hundreds had gathered also. Fortunately, the police also have cell phones and they too arrived in force. It ended up a standoff with the police promising an investigation. The killers had disappeared and the cattle and goats with them. In the past, the incident would have resulted in all out war between the Irak and Maasai, now there would be an investigation. As of yesterday, the 6th of January, nothing more has been heard of murderers or of the promised investigation.



Maasai in Custody

There have been suspect arrests in the Cattle Market Slaying of last Friday. Two Maasai warriors were captured just short of the Kenyan border. The police tracked them North across the Serengeti Plains. The culprits had been just about to cross into Kenya and disappear with the goats and cattle somewhere into Kenya Maasai country. Yesterday, prior to the daring daylight capture by the police, a great crowd of Irak warriors had gathered for revenge. They vowed to kill the first four Maasai that they found, slitting their throats, as had been done to their friends. The arrests seem to have scotched that plan and the Irak warriors have dispersed.



The Maasai traditionally pass back and forth across the border without difficulty. There are no checkpoints in the bush and the people of Maa (Maasai) extend out from both sides of the border for hundreds of miles.

Lender Car

Looks like I'll be getting the use of a car beginning sometime next week. It will be far from new, about 17 years old I am told, and recently in a fairly serious accident. The Spiritans, my missionary organization, have agreed to lend me the Toyota Land Cruiser till my own vehicle is granted and arrives from Japan. I will have to find the funds for the repairs. My own vehicle, after it is granted by the funding agency in Germany, will probably take till the end of the year to arrive. Having the "lender" car will make the difference between getting out and doing the work and waiting around day-to-day to use a car normally needed at Ngorongoro mission.



Note: The thumbnail shows the kind of car, not the actual car, I'm getting.

Week on Kilimanjaro

This week Tanzanian Spiritans are here at Maua, the Capuchin Sisters House, high on Mount Kilimanjaro. It is a time to take stock both personally and as Spiritan family. Tony Gittins, who teaches mission studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, is giving us two talks a day and the rest of the time is for good food, good talk and hopefully some fruitful reflection. For many years now, the snow grows less on the peak of Kilimanjaro. Years ago it hid the rocky summit and now is reduced to some anemic fingers of the white stuff. Some experts tell us that it will be totally gone by 2020.



What Some will do to Please a Cow

This morning, traveling down Mount Kilimanjaro heading back to Maasai country, we passed numerous women making the ten- or fifteen-mile

trek down the mountain. On asking where they were all going, I was told that they were on their way to cut grass for their family cows.



I discover that there is no more grazing land left on Mount Kilimanjaro, not an inch. Over the

last fifty years the Chagga people have become so numerous and the land divided and re-divided among their children and children's children, that there is no land for further farming, not even a

square foot for cattle to graze. A unique solution has been found and one that is very hard on the women of Kilimanjaro. A household may have a cow or two cows, but these are kept in a shed next to the Chagga's home. Each morning, someone, the lady of the house or an older daughter, never a man, must go down to the grass land many miles distant to cut fodder for the family cow. Sometimes, if finances allow, she will buy a bundle of grass. Some people make their living cutting and selling bundles of grass to women from the mountainside. Then, usually in the late afternoon, the women will climb the ten or fifteen miles back to the homestead of her family on the mountain. She carries the thirty- or forty-pound bundle of grass on her head.

Wow! It blows my mind! As someone from the savanna, where grass is usually in plenty, it is hard to take in what these women go through to obtain two or three day's fodder for a cow.



First Day and Scared

Fabi Meing'oru started school this weekend. Since I was on retreat on Kilimanjaro, I arranged for her aunt to accompany her from her village at Endulen at Ngorongoro to St. Joseph Secondary School here in Arusha. Today, I went to see how she is doing. I guess it is to be expected that she is a little frightened. For the first time in her life, she is far from the cattle camp of her family and hundreds of miles from home. She knows no one in the school. There are two or three other Maasai girls, but from other parts of Maasai country. Right now I am feeling badly for her as she struggles with loneliness and the strangeness of a new place and being plopped down in the midst of many hundreds of strange girls from all over Tanzania. In time, she'll get used to the place, make friends and eventually feel totally at home, but the first weeks will be difficult.



She speaks Swahili well, of course, having just finished seven years of primary school. But, it is a second language and not the familiar Maasai that she is used to speaking every day with her family and friends.

To stay home at Endulen would mean little hope of good secondary education. St. Joseph's is run by sisters and has a great reputation and track record. I feel very lucky to have gotten her an opportunity to take the entrance exam. And she did very well on the various written tests.



Two boys, One Pair of Shoes

Kangai and Lemayani came to me at Endulen Mission in 1998. They were unique in that each had only one leg, Kangai, the right one and Lemayani, the left leg. They came to me at about the age of six or seven right from Endulen Hospital, where they had their legs amputated. A cow had fallen on Kangai, broken his leg and caused a gaping wound that was not treated. The family was very poor and not having the resources to pay hospital expenses, hoped that it would heal itself and by applying the traditional remedy of plastering cow dung on the open sore. It didn't heal and gangrene set in. Finally, when he was running a high fever and in danger of dying, they took him to the hospital. The doctor saved Kangai's life but not his leg.

Lemayani fell from a tree and got poked in the leg by a sharp stick. The wound festered and as in the case of Kangai, the family did not have the money for hospital care. They left it, hoping the wound would heal. As in the case of Kangai, it did not heal and when the leg turned black they took him to the hospital where the doctor cut off the leg.

The families of the two boys requested that Kangai and Lemayani stay at the mission and attend the local primary school. The Maasai bomas of Kangai and Lemayani are within the Conservation area of Ngorongoro and about fifty miles apart and a considerable distance into the bush. They are no relation to each other. Over the years I've saved a considerable amount of money on socks and shoes. Since the boys take the same size, one pair of socks and a single pair of shoes does for both. Kangai is the athlete of the two. As you see in the pictures, he plays football using his stick as a second leg. In fact, having only one leg did not slow him down at all. He was one of our best footballers and much sought after when players were chosen for teams. Lemayani is the intellectual one and has done very well at his studies. They have both graduated secondary school now and are looking to continue their education.



Wonderful News

Just a few hours ago I received a letter from the Kindermissionswerk foundation in Aachen Germany. They write: "We are pleased to inform you that our grant allocation commission sanctioned the funds for the purchase of a vehicle for Olbalbal Mission, Archdiocese of Arusha, Tanzania."

The car will be a long wheel base Toyota Land cruiser hardtop, the model especially built for bush conditions. One interesting aspect of this particular model is that Toyota has retained the pre-computerized version of mostly everything. This means the car can be maintained and repaired by the ordinary mechanic here in East Africa. Different from cars in the states and Europe, it does not have to be hooked up to a computer to diagnose problems. The car will now be ordered from Toyota in Japan and I should have it by the end of the year.

Heart Breaking

These days, many Maasai girls are coming to ask for help with school fees for secondary school. They come most often with their mothers. It is heart-breaking to see the happiness in the eyes of the mothers at their daughters' being "chosen" by the government to go on with their studies in high school. The parents come with high hopes that education will enable their child to find a good job later on and help the family to have a better life. In most cases it is a forlorn hope. The schools are hopelessly poor. There are few books and few teachers. The teachers that are stationed in the schools are often reluctant to live and teach in the bush. Unless the child is exceptionally bright and takes advantage of every tidbit of available resource, he or she will leave after four years of secondary school with nothing. I do help each family that comes to me, at least a little. But, I do so for the sake of showing some solidarity with the parents, knowing that, in most cases, it is a useless gesture. I prefer to look for one or two primary school graduates each year that are clever and have done really well in grade school. I send the one or two to a good school that has books, good teachers and other resources. This is what I have done in the case of Fabi Meing'oru, whom I wrote about a few days ago. In this way, I am hoping that the funds people entrust to me for the education of Maasai girls will have some positive impact, both for the individual student and for the Maasai.

Moved In!

Just moved into my place at Olbalbal. Twenty seven Maasai elders, warriors and women welcomed me with tea, helped me move my stuff in, scrubbed the two rooms, and sat with me most of the afternoon. They also found a mosquito net for me and helped me put it up. We are in the midst of the rains here and there is plenty of water around and so mosquitoes. They also cleared lots of rocks from around the house so that I can park close to the door. They are so friendly and welcoming that it is embarrassing. I am determined to live up to the warmth of their greeting.

Small Boy Lost and Alone

At dawn this morning the cries of the women could be heard lamenting the loss of a herds boy six year old. During the night a small child was taken and eaten by a leopard.

At various times during the year warriors take the bulk of the cattle to places where there is better grazing. Here at Olbalbal, while there is still plenty of standing water, the rains have slackened and the grass is short. -Nearby villages have joined together in sending cattle off with a band of warriors. They drove the cattle some twenty miles distant to take advantage of some good grazing. As is normal, the young men took some small children with them to herd the calves near their temporary makeshift "boma."

Yesterday evening, on the return of the calves to the encampment, one small boy was missing. The warriors lost no time backtracking the herd of calves and then followed the meandering tracks of the lost boy. They found what was left of him in the branches of an Acacia tree, clearly the work of a leopard. The boy had somehow become separated from his companions and the calves. Lost and alone, he was easy prey for the leopard. At dawn this morning news reached the home villages at Olbalbal.

Solar, Kilimanjaro Coffee and a Hot Shower

My electricity system here is severely limited. The small (10-inch screen) ACER computer that I use has a 12-volt adapter, thereby bypassing the need for an inverter. My iPhone that is also a "hotspot" using the app "MyWi" also uses at 12-volt adapter as does my LED light that I use to cook and to read at night. That is my complete electricity system. I'll use it in this way for a while to see if the 60-watt fold up panel is maintaining a good charge on the 100AH battery. If things continue to go well, I'll add a couple more LED lights. Each of the five lights that I brought back with me from the states has 30 LED bulbs. They are great lights. Another part of my life here is a hot shower every morning. With water heated on the small kerosene stove, I fill a bucket with an attached shower head and hang it from the ceiling. Also, with a hand coffee grinder and the best beans from Kilimanjaro, I use my French press to have great cup of coffee every morning. Life is good at Olbalbal.

Oloicura's Dilemma

Oloicura has signed on with me here at Olbalbal to watch the place when I am out in the villages and when I go overnight to the main mission on the crater rim. Yesterday, he came with a big problem. He needs to get his wife and three children back. Years ago, Oloicura went to the village of a local elder and undertook to herd his cattle for years, about ten. The elder on his side agreed to give Oloicura his daughter in marriage. This is a common way for a Maasai man to marry, if he doesn't have cattle to give his prospective father-in-law. Oloicura shepherded the old man's herd for some years and then was given one of the family's daughters for his wife. Oloicura continued to live with his father-in-law and to herd his cattle. The old man also gave Oloicura sufficient cattle for the house of his daughter. Three children came along and everything was going well. Then things went very bad very fast. Oloicura got into an argument with his mother-in-law. The disagreement escalated to name calling and some very serious accusations and nasty language. The mother-in-law, in a fit of rage went to her husband and demanded that he take his daughter back, together with the children, and chase Oloicura away. To maintain peace in the family he agreed to do as his wife wanted. This is where the situation stands and now Oloicura wants me to act in the name of his father who is very old and lives far away. He wants me to go with him to ask forgiveness and get his family back. He figures that my position as the padre here in Olbalbal might prompt his mother-in-law to accept his apologies. Another bizarre factor in the mix is that both he and his mother-in-law are members of the small group of fifteen that lead the singing in our Christian community here. I've asked around and a couple of the leading elders of the area tell me that there is no way that Oloicura's mother-in-law is going to relent. Her feelings run too deep.

Visit to Family of Lost Boy

Above I spoke of a young boy that became lost while herding the young animals and was found to have been attacked and eaten by a leopard. Yesterday, I went with two elders and five women to visit the family at their village some five miles from the mission. Since the mother of the lost child is a Christian, we started our visit with some traditional Maasai prayers that I also took my turn in leading. Then with "engare pus", water mixed with a little milk, we blessed the parent's house, all the houses in the boma and the cattle enclosure. After the prayers and blessings, I read the account of the raising of Lazarus from John's gospel.

Then, everyone gathered under a shade tree for gourds of fresh milk, heavily sweetened tea, and corn porridge. Now was the time when each visitor would have the opportunity to say a word or two to the parents of the dead child. The words of people untouched by Christianity were in stark contrast to the Christians'. The ones working out of pure tradition said that we need to get by what happened. We need to forget this terrible thing and take care of the living children. If we get bogged down in grief, it will be harmful to our families and villages. The Christians were very tentative in talking about life after death. They said things like: The bible tells us that Jesus raised Lazarus after a number of days in the grave. Jesus promised life without end to those who follow him. They were very cautious and were not making any definitive statements about life after death. I was encouraged by their words, feeling that they were a reflection of their young Christianity.

The beliefs of the Maasai are based on their long experience of the world around them. What they understand of death and so many other things comes from their experience of these things over many hundreds of years. I think that when we present them with a faith that sometimes contradicts their long-held traditions, we do so with great care and deep respect. After all, their understanding of the world and the ways they've worked out for surviving in it have worked well up to now.

Till next month,
Ned