

Rundbrief aus Mthatha – Mai 2019

Circular letter 01/2019

Dear Confreres

1.1 Introduction

Greetings and peace of the Risen Lord to you all! After the shock and sad news of the tragic death of our dear Confrere Fr George Kageche Mukua, CMM in the plane crash, I pray that we have now emerged from the Easter celebrations consoled and healed by our faith in the Resurrection, and that Fr George has been granted eternal life promised to him and to all of us by our Saviour. From that sad event we also learn that, death is a reality of life and that sometimes it comes when we least expect it, hence the Lord's advice for us to stand ready at all times. Let us continue to pray for the soul of Fr George to find peace in the Lord and for his family in Kenya to be consoled and healed by the Risen Lord.

The objective of this letter is to update and share with you information relating to any developments that have occurred after our Regional Assembly on 1st February 2019. To that end, allow me, on behalf of the leadership team of our Region to sincerely thank each one of you Confreres for attending the Assembly and robustly engaging with the issues that affect us. Know that such commitment from your part is highly appreciated by the leadership team, and we encourage you to maintain that spirit of collaboration and unity. There are a few issues from the Assembly that needed a follow up, and I share these hereafter.

2.1 Directory

The Directory was revised and approved by the General Government in Rome. However, at the Regional Assembly some Confreres raised concerns in relation to some points, and it was resolved that the Zone Chairpersons should go back to their zones to iron out issues of contention with their members. In March 2019, the Regional leadership had a combined meeting with the chairpersons of the zones to make a follow-up on the issues raised and map out a way forward. After studying the contentious clause we came to the understanding that it had been likely misinterpreted or misread by the concerned Confrere(s), and we therefore, resolved to adopt the approved version of the Directory as a final copy and get it printed out. You will soon receive a printed copy of the Directory for use in our Region.

2.2 Integrity in Ministry

You will recall that Fr Thomas Wao, CMM presented a draft document on integrity in ministry, and we had a long discussion on it. Fr Thomas was made aware that the document is supposed to be premised on the already existing "Code of Conduct" document for the whole Congregation and that it is essential that it should speak to our South African context. We therefore, resolved that the zones should study the draft document together with the "Code of Conduct" document for the Congregation and send their comments to Fr Thomas. To this end, I would like to appeal to the Chairpersons of the zones to ensure that their respective zones do meet and discuss these issues, and thereafter send the comments to Fr Thomas.

2.3 Social Project –St Joseph’s Campaign

The development team presented a draft project proposal for the St Joseph Campaign Social Project from Switzerland. The development team had been tasked by the Regional Assembly to prepare the project proposal. It was given a go ahead and has since been submitted to Switzerland, with the approval of the GG.

2.4 Poultry project

The Regional Assembly officially adopted the poultry project which had been run and managed by Bro Bernard Isanda, CMM as the income generating project for the Region. So far, the project has been expanded to increase the capacity and include piggery. I can report to you Confreres that at this juncture, the project is doing well and we hope it will continue to expand and make a difference to the Region. I would like to thank Bro Bernard as the Project Manager for his expertise and hard-work and the development team for monitoring and evaluating the projects.

2.5 Expansion to other Dioceses

The issue of expanding or accepting invitations from other Dioceses was again discussed in the context of the resolutions of the Council of the Congregation (2018) which took a stand to consolidate our own institutions and communities as opposed to over stretching ourselves. In this respect, although the Regional Assembly showed explicit preference for our continued presence in the archdiocese of Cape Town, the Regional Leadership team, in consultation with the General Government, has taken a decision to withdraw from the archdiocese of Cape Town. This decision was informed by the reality of the shortage of personnel in our Region and the fact that we could not leave Fr Francis Ngadi, CMM to remain in Cape Town alone after successfully completing his studies. We have had very cordial discussions with the archbishop regarding our decision, and he understands very well our concern. We have not burnt our bridges and should the situation improve in the future, the archbishop has assured us that we shall be welcomed. Accordingly, Fr Francis Ngadi has planned to conclude his pastoral engagement in the archdiocese by the end of June 2019. Meanwhile, although not officially concluded, negotiations for another Parish where Fr Francis will be assigned are under way with the Diocese of PE. It is my hope that this will be concluded soon and favourably.

2.6 Workshops at Abbot Francis Home

At the Assembly I gave an update on the issue of the works that the late Bro Stephan used to manage on behalf of the Diocese. The original vision of the workshops was to train the local people in various skills and also do building projects and maintenance of the Church buildings within the Diocese of Mthatha. Without getting into details which are already to you, let me inform you that Bishop Sithembele Sipuka, the Bishop of Mthatha Diocese has officially handed the workshops back to the CPS with whom the Diocese had an original agreement or written contract. In his letter, the Bishop expresses his wish that the vision of training the local people in development skills be continued preferably by the Missionaries of Mariannahill. We shall soon begin the negotiation process with the CPS and we shall update you accordingly so that every Confrere knows what is happening.

2.7 CMM Associates

I take this opportunity to inform you that Bishop Sithembele Sipuka has officially given us permission to establish CMM associates in the Diocese of Mthatha. In his letter to me, he clearly states that the process of establishing CMM associates in the Diocese should begin with immediate effect in those Parishes where our Confreres work. They can then expand to other parishes with time. To this end, the Regional leadership has asked Fr Mafu Ponya,

CMM and Rev. Deacon Taelo Letlotlo, CMM to promote and establish CMM associates in the Diocese of Mthatha. I thank the two Confreres for accepting this task and as the leadership team we assure them of our support. Fr Nicholas Leaka, CMM will do the same work in the Diocese of Port Elizabeth (PE) once Bishop Vincent Zungu gives us a go ahead. In principle Bishop Zungu has no objection to the idea, however, other stakeholders need to be consulted before any work could start.

2.8 Launch of 110 Death Anniversary of Abbot Francis

The launch took place during the celebration of the annual pilgrimage on 18th May 2019 at Emmaus. It was well attended. The Bishop of Umzimkhulu diocese blessed special candles and a cross which will be used by both the CMM and CPS for prayer during the year of the 110 Anniversary. The leaders of the Units were commissioned to take the burning candle which symbolise Christ to our communities. Each community has been asked to pray the nine days novena of Abbot Francis and thereafter pass the candle to another community to do the same. For us this will begin at Abbot Francis Home and from there it will be passed on to all the Parishes where our Confreres work. Dear Confreres, you are encouraged to pray the nine days novena of Abbot Francis together with the lay people of your Parish. From Mthatha Diocese, the candle will be handed over to the Confreres in PE diocese to also pray the nine days novena of Abbot Francis. Please use this time to also explain and promote Abbot Francis amongst the faithful. The cross will also be passed from one community of CPS and CMM to another until the conclusion of the 110 Death Anniversary next year in May 2020. The Emmaus Heritage Team in collaboration with those responsible for promoting Abbot Francis will accompany the cross to conduct prayer services and workshops on Abbot Francis.

3.1 Bedford Cemetery Project

This cemetery belongs to the Holy Cross Sisters who no longer work in Mthatha Diocese. The Holy Cross Sisters were kind enough to allow us to bury our departed Confreres in their cemetery, and indeed a good number of our departed Confreres are buried there, and the last one to be buried there was Fr Michael Riedner. Unfortunately, the cemetery has not been maintained for a very long time. As a result, it is in a sorry state. We have agreed with the Sisters to fence up the cemetery and make sure it is maintained and kept in a decent state. We have developed a project proposal and presented it to the Finance Commission for consideration, and the Sisters are also considering the quotations submitted to them. We are hoping that this project will be successful.

4.1 Community Recollection Day

As the Regional leadership team, we have resolved to have a recollection day for our Region on 2nd September 2019. I kindly appeal to all of you Confreres to mark this date on your calendar so that we can spend the day together in prayer and recollection.

5.1 Candidacy programme

The candidacy programme for this year has officially started with five new candidates (3 from Lesotho and 2 South Africans). Two of those from Lesotho have already done their philosophical studies. Two of our candidates studying in East Africa (i.e Emmanuel Sandile Nyoka and Sibusiso Hlophe) are home for holidays. They will come back to the Region end of June and they will be doing pastoral work until the end of the school holidays. Refiloe will not return to East Africa due to the complications he experienced when trying to renew his study visa. He will continue his studies at St Joseph's Theological Institute-Cedara. In the meantime, he is already doing pastoral work under the mentorship of Fr Faustin. CMM at Cwele Mission.

6.1 Home Leave

Deacon Innocent Jedegwa, CMM will be going on home leave in Malawi from the 25th May 2019 and return on 1st August 2019. We wish him a restful and joyful time with his family and relatives in Malawi. Fr Raphael Arop, CMM is leaving for home leave in Uganda on 25th May 2019. After his holidays he will fly to Rome to attend a programme which begins in September 2019 and end in May 2020. We wish Fr Raphael a joyful and fruitful time at home with his family and friends. Fr John Chikadi, CMM will also be leaving for his sabbatical at the Oblate School of Theology in Texas-USA in August 2019. This programme was offered and is being funded by the GG. We wish Fr Chikadi well as he embarks of this path of renewal.

7.1 Graduations

We congratulate the following Confreres for their academic achievements. We hope their qualifications will enable them to be more effective and productive in their various ministries;

Fr John Chikadi, CMM graduated with a PhD in Theology (Ministerial Studies) from the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Fr Francis Ngadi, CMM graduated with an Honours in Psychology from the University of Cape Town.

Deacon Taele Letlotlo, CMM graduated with an Honours in Theology from St Joseph's Theological Institute-Cedara.

Fr. Joel Bokoyo, CMM graduated with a BA in Philosophy from St Joseph's Theological Institute-Cedara.

8.1 Conclusion

In conclusion let me convey my deepest condolences to Fr Mafu Ponya, CMM who lost his niece a few weeks ago and Fr Nicholas Leaka, CMM who lost his grandmother also last week. Let us continue to pray for these confreres and their families, and ask God to be their healer and Comforter. Let us also remember in our daily prayers the sick: Fr Cas Paulsen, CMM and the father of Deacon Taele Letlotlo, CMM who suffered a stroke just a few days ago. Dear Confreres, the 26th July is one of the principal feast days of our Congregation. It is important that we celebrate it together and renew our commitment to the Congregation and the Church together.

I once again appeal for donations (food, drinks etc.) to enable us to celebrate this feast successfully. A few Confreres donated generously towards the 2nd of February 2019, and I believe we can still do it even more this time. Together we stand! May the Risen Lord bless and continue to guide you in your ministry, his ministry. Thank You!

And May Mary our Mother continue to intercede for each one of us.

Fr Gideon Sibanda, CMM

(Regional Superior)