



Mariannahill Zimbabwe

Congregation of the Missionaries of Mariannahill

Region of Zimbabwe

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Mary's Pilgrimage of Hope

Dear confreres and friends of Mariannahill in Zimbabwe, we celebrated last Sunday the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Feastday of our CMM parish in Gwanda. Since over a decade this solemnity is now celebrated by the whole archdiocese of Bulawayo at our other parish, Our Lady of Fatima, Pumula South. Following the ancient tradition of celebrating some great feasts for a week as an octave, the celebration of the Assumption ends on 22 August with the memorial of Our Lady, Mother and Queen, the 5th decade of the glorious mysteries.



The solemnity of the Assumption reminds us how God will bring His good work to completion in our lives just as he did for Mary, by bringing us to share in the risen life of Christ. As Missionaries of Mariannahill, as sons of Mary, our longing for the completion of God's good work in our lives and ministries ought to be our daily prayer just as Abbot Francis prayed everyday with his "Oh you saints of God..." As the most perfect of Christ's disciples and worthy of imitation (*Marialis Cultus*, 35), we look up to our Mother Mary with even greater devotion as Mariannahillers, asking for her maternal intercession for our congregation and its mission in Zimbabwe.

As we prayerfully anticipate the 2025 jubilee for consecrated life with the theme "Pilgrims of Hope" - which the major superiors in Zimbabwe (CMRS) have also adopted for their diamond jubilee on 31 August 2024 - we can also look to our Mother Mary and find inspiration from her "pilgrimage of hope". In the Catechism theological hope is when "we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit."

The maturity and depth of Our Lady's hope can be appreciated in some of the following events that were part of her earthly pilgrimage: When Mary says "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your will." These words are one of the signs of the active presence of hope in Mary's life. These were deliberate words of setting herself apart for the sacred will and work of the Lord in her life. These are words which we also say through different other expressions in our congregation when we are consecrated to the Lord through our vows. As Missionaries of Mariannahill we say "I pledge to cooperate to

the best of my ability, in the missionary task of this congregation, trusting in the strength of the Holy Spirit, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the assistance of my confreres.”

We appreciate the example of Mary’s pilgrimage of hope in these other events: her visitation to Elizabeth and her Magnificat - Mary is joyful at the news about Elizabeth. Her hope, her trust in God’s promises is seen in how she is happy for Elizabeth, she rejoices with her, is charitable to her through this visit to assist her. Her Magnificat is full of expressions of hope, her trust in God’s promises - the lifting up of the lowly, the help to Israel his servant, God being merciful to past and future generations etc. Also at the wedding of Cana, at the foot of the cross when Jesus gives his mother to John, in the upper room at Pentecost where Mary was present with the disciples, we encounter in all these events and experiences our Mother Mary in her pilgrimage of hope. She puts a lot of trust in God’s promises in her life and she remembers the promises of God to her at the Annunciation, she remembers her words “i am the handmaid of the Lord”, and despite the various experiences she had which i have enumerated, she seems steadfast, solid, optimistic, positive, confident, and anticipative, in waiting on the Lord’s promises. Her anticipation and hope is rewarded as we celebrate her Assumption.

There are many signs which point to the deficit of hope nowadays: the international geopolitical situation and rise in violent conflicts, nationalism, anti-immigration, and our own Zimbabwean struggles with the economy, drought, corruption, unemployment, emigration, destabilization of the social fabric, and rise in drug and substance abuse etc. There is a real thirst for hope within us and around us, a thirst for those who promote hope, and a thirst for those who show it through the example of their lives. As Mariannahillers our mission is the mission of the Church and at this point in time the Holy Father is asking us to be pilgrims of hope in the above situations and in those we encounter daily. During this year, 2024, as we prepare for the jubilee, Pope Francis is asking us to make it a year of prayer. There is a free downloadable resource to help us with this titled “teach us to pray” on the Jubilee 2025 website.

May Mary our Mother, through the example of her own pilgrimage of hope, through her assumption and glory in heaven, intercede for us to be good and faithful ambassadors of hope in our CMM communities and in our ministries.

“Those who Hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on eagles wings; they will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint” (Isaiah 40:31).



News from the Unit of Zimbabwe

Initial Formation

Aspirancy to Candidacy

This year our Unit was blessed with the arrival of three young men who joined the aspirancy program at the HOF in February: Bhekinkosi Masuku from St. Bernard's Parish (Archdiocese of Bulawayo), Gailord Mawuto from St. Joseph's Hama Mission (Gweru Diocese) and Joseph Paradza from Bindura (Archdiocese of Harare). They have now begun their candidacy in Harare, studying philosophy at Arrupe Jesuit University.

Candidacy to Postulancy

We congratulate our five candidates who completed their candidacy in Harare and also graduated at Arrupe Jesuit University in May. Tawanda Pemhiwa, Mitchel Nyoni, Patron Tsaurai, Martin Zakaria, and Terrence Watsika are now at the HOF in Bulawayo for their postulancy until January 2025.

Formation to Brotherhood

Br. Thabiso Ngwenya who professed on the 2nd of February 2024 is now back in our Unit. He started his professional training as a teacher with Lupane State University and is currently staying at Our Lady of Fatima parish, Pumula South, doing his teaching practice at St. Bernard's High School, Pumula.

Preparation for Perpetual Profession Program 2024

This year's edition of the PPPP was hosted by our Unit in June and July. 13 participants from various African Units were in attendance. Thank you to the Queenspark community for hosting this program and helping with all the logistics. Thank you also to the missions and parishes who hosted our brothers for pastoral and community experience over the weekends, and also to many of you confreres who came to Queenspark to greet and meet our guests.

On-going Formation

The General Chapter of 2022 makes ongoing formation a priority for everyone. To this end our Unit has been sending our confreres for various programs since 2023: Fr. Kevin Madzivanyika attended a spiritual direction and retreat giving course through the Conference of Major Superiors of Zimbabwe (CMRS) at Wadzanai, Harare; Fr. Louis Chileshe and Fr. Tichaona Makore finished the first part of a formator's course at St. Joseph's Theological Institute in July; Fr. George Vurayayi is attending a sabbatical program at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila.

Our retired confreres

At our Mission House in Queenspark we have two retired confreres: Fr. Antonius Janssen (85), and Br. Roland Altmannsperger (83). Both of our confreres have between them over 100 years missionary experience in Zimbabwe and they are a good connection and heritage for us on our past, present, and future in this Unit as we look forward to 130 years presence of Mariannahill in Zimbabwe in 2026 since 1896. Fr. Antonius has nurse aids to assist him with his daily life. Let us keep both of our confreres in our prayers.

Karlen Center

Through the initiative of the St. Joseph's campaign from our Swiss confreres the Unit of Zimbabwe has now begun a new ministry aimed at addressing numerous social difficulties that our people are facing including healing of memories, conflict resolution, psychosocial support to vulnerable groups, gender based violence, drug and substance abuse, and community development among others. This Center is dedicated to our late confrere archbishop Henry Karlen who was a champion of human rights and social issues as bishop of Bulawayo, especially during the Gukurahundi years and when Mission stations were under attack. We are very grateful for the support to this new ministry from our Swiss confreres and benefactors.

Since June our initial focus has been on the youth on drug and substance abuse challenges and the participation in these workshops has been overwhelming and encouraging as it is facilitated by our confreres and partners through the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace ministry which we run for the archdiocese of Bulawayo. Before the end of the year we will have the official opening of the Center, the full team in place, and a quarterly newsletter will be sent out from August to give updates on the activities of this ministry.

St. Theresa, Fort Rixon

St. Theresa Mission in Fort Rixon is our most remote place of ministry and yet it is a very important ministry to the resettled villagers, communal farmers, and gold and lithium miners. At this Mission we have a primary school with just over 100 learners; most of them walk for almost 20km to and from the school. The school is an important ministry to the community and after installing a new solar power system to provide power and light for the teachers and learners, we are now increasing the accommodation for the teachers, improving the toilets for the learners, setting up a play center, a computer lab, and if funds permit a low-cost boarding facility which will hopefully help increase the academic performance at this school where many learners don't go beyond primary education. Since the second term of 2024 we also introduced a nutrition and feeding scheme program for all the learners – this means all the children have free lunch and this has boosted their morale and that of the teachers since many of the children come from poor subsistence farmers and “gold panners.”

At Fort Rixon we also run a mobile health clinic which helps to bring the medical practitioners closer to the community. This means our confrere on the ground fetches the nurses from the nearest hospital over 40km away, and the nurses then attend to the local people. This is a critical ministry which can mean life and death for some vulnerable group of people who cannot travel to the far hospitals and clinics. Our hope is to have a permanent health center or clinic at the mission to cater for the needs of the community. We are grateful to various donors who make our ministry at Fort Rixon possible.

St. Augustine's College, Bulawayo

At the invitation of the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishop's Conference (ZCBC) our community at Queenspark has a new ministry at the newly established catholic college (formerly the national philosophy seminary) as chaplains and with Br. Gugulethu Ndlovu as a fulltime teacher. This is an important ministry to the youth of our diocese and the city of Bulawayo, and we are grateful for this ministry which is closer to our mission house.

“Tell them we are grateful”- Bishop Raphael Ncube

On the 3rd of August the diocese of Hwange held the centenary celebrations of its cathedral, St. Ignatius Cathedral. At this event Bishop Raphael Ncube who stayed at our generalate and wrote his doctorate on Abbot Francis Pfanner asked me to tell our confreres that the diocese is grateful for the missionary work done in his diocese by our confreres since 1932 when we took over from the Jesuits. The faithful and priests of Hwange still speak of the work of Br. Ägidius “Thandabantu” Pfister, Fr. Waldemar, Fr. Odilo and others.

Ordinations to Priesthood

Since 2023 we have been blessed with three priestly ordinations in our Unit: Fr. Patrick Mpofu in July 2023 (assigned at Our Lady of the Assumption parish, Gwanda, Archdiocese of Bulawayo), Fr. Tatenda Kakwedza in November 2023 (assigned at St. Mary’s Parish, Archdiocese of Dar es salaam, East Africa Unit), and recently Fr. Martin Tapera on 27 July 2024 from Mariannahill Province (currently assigned at Immaculate Conception Parish, Ingwavuma Vicariate). We thank God for the gift of our new priests who will serve our congregation and the Church.

Annual Retreat

As indicated some months ago our annual retreat will run from 1 to 7 September 2024 at Bethany House, Masvingo.

New Unit members

We welcome Fr. Daniel Moris Msuya who is now a member of our Unit since his arrival in April 2024. He is stationed at Queenspark setting up the archives in the new visitors and archive building. Fr. John Chikadi is also transferred to our Unit once he receives his residence permit. Welcome to Zimbabwe brothers.

CMRS Diamond Jubilee (1964-2024)

The conference of major religious superiors in Zimbabwe (CMRS) celebrates 60 years this year since its foundation in 1964. On the 31st of August there will be a celebration from 8am, starting with a short symbolic walk or “pilgrimage”, followed by a talk on “pilgrims of hope” at 9am, and Holy Mass with the new Nuncio, bishops, religious, priests and laity at 11am at Regina Mundi High School, Gweru, ending with lunch at 13pm. We are all invited to this national event which promotes our cooperation and solidarity with various religious institutes in Zimbabwe. Transport will be available from Queenspark to Gweru on Saturday morning and the departure time will be advised by the local superior.

On holiday

We welcome our confreres from other Units who are on home leave: Fr. Regis Mushunje, Br. Hansel Jaison, Fr. Martin Tapera, and Fr. Innocent Shava.

In your prayers please remember:

The intentions of our Unit, Congregation, and country; The Council of the Congregation in October; The father of Fr. Joseph Hungwe who is not well; the mother of Fr. Roy Chimbindi who is not well; all relatives of confreres who are not well or in different forms of distress;

our retired or sick confreres; our confreres going through difficult times; our candidates and aspirants in formation.

Unit Mobile Number

Please be advised of the new Unit cellphone number to be used for all official communications: +263 71 768 0964

Wishing you God's blessings in your ministries,

Fr. Stuart Vukayi CMM
Regional Superior