

## Editorial

*God of our ancestors, Lord of mercy... your great power is always at your service, and who can withstand the might of your arm? The whole world, for you, can no more than tip a balance, like a drop of morning dew falling on the ground. Yet you are merciful to all, because you are almighty, you overlook people's sins, so that they can repent. Yes, you love everything that exists, and nothing that you have made disgusts you, since, if you had hated something, you would not have made it. And how could a thing subsist, had you not willed it? Or how be preserved, if not called forth by you? No, you spare all, since all is yours, Lord, lover of life! (Wis 9:1; 11:21–12:2).*

Dear Readers,

We present to you issue number 20 of *Africa Tomorrow* at a particularly sad and distressing moment in August, 2019, when the death toll from a serious accident near the Msamvu bus station on the 10<sup>th</sup> of this month continues to increase. Does the scene at the accident not brutally contradict our belief that our almighty God is a merciful Lord and Lover of Life? How can our brothers and sisters writhing in pain from the burns visited upon them by a vigorously raging fire provoked by an entirely unanticipated explosion... how can the unfriendly darkness in the souls of our brothers and sisters who feel trapped in their loneliness as they lie dying... how does an event such as the one that happened in Morogoro sustain our faith in a God who loves us mightily and has already prepared a place for each and every one of us where we can be at home with him who is our Creator and with each other in a milieu full of peace and abiding joy?

Those whose wounds have not allowed them to linger on earth together with those survivors whose injuries have left scars that will not go away are people whom God created in his image and likeness. They are people that God has wished to live and to love with the joyful anticipation of an eternity that would give perpetuity to their life, to their love and to their joy. God's plan has

been to give them an eternal fullness that goes well beyond what any of us can ask, desire or imagine.

For those who are deceased, their entrance into their Creator's merciful embrace has surely been a painful one: because of their wounds, they have been helplessly carried along the current of a stream that has rushed its way into eternity. It has also been an unexpected shock for everyone close to them and for everyone touched by their plight who have chosen to remain compassionately attentive to their need for a companion, for a friend, for a sister, for a brother at the final moment of earthly life.

An event like that of 10<sup>th</sup> August wakes us up to our need to live as compassionate human beings. Who is going to wake us up? There is a young woman from within the JUCo family that alerts us to our need to be attentive to those who live day in and day out swimming helplessly in the loathsome waters of disappointment, discouragement, loneliness and despair. I am referring to a student who has graced us with a book, written in Kiswahili, that is catching the attention of persons from all walks of life here in Tanzania. And who is the author of the book? None other than our own gracious and profoundly sensitive sociology student who is finishing her preparations for her BA: Jacquelin Osmond.

Her brief commentary that one finds on the back cover of her book *Usilie Doreen Tutakusaidia* seems to give a fairly adequate insight into the book's core content. By means of an English translation, thoughtfully composed by another JUCo student, Br. John Charles, OCD, we can let Jacquelin speak:

**“Usilie Doreen Tutakusaidia” [“Don’t Cry, Doreen, We Will Help You”]** is the title of a real life story that unveils joy clouded by the sadness occasioned by a great pain in Doreen's heart. The pain that wells up within her comes from rejection after rejection, disrespect and abandonment by her relatives. Doreen suffers all these like thorns piercing her heart. She despairs to the extent of losing hope completely; but God comes to her assistance through people of good will when they say to her, “Don’t cry, Doreen, we will help you.” She now believes that “when God says yes, there is no one to say no”...

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For those who read the book, there are several poignant passages that bring people into the mystery of God's unusual freedom that allows someone to suffer; yet it is a freedom pregnant with mercy that surprises the person in pain and releases into the wounded heart a new and unexpected joy. In Jacquelin's words, "When the child reaches this stage [of suffering, sadness, disappointment, hatred], she feels loneliness, distress and despair. Then God comes to the aid of the child and manifests his glory. He is God yesterday, today and forever, the God who gives us true happiness and wipes away our tears at his own proper time" (from the Introduction, transl. by Br. J. Charles).

God himself reveals his mercy "at his own proper time". Fr. Leonce Rambau, CSSp, has selected a passage from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans that unveils the depth and breadth of God's mercy. The proper time for revealing his mercy and wiping away our tears has arrived. Here is a selection from the passage, Romans 3:21-26, about which Rambau writes:

But now the **righteousness of God** has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, **the righteousness of God** through faith of Jesus Christ for **ALL** who believe. For there is no distinction; since **ALL** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are **justified** by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as an expiation by his blood, by virtue of his own faith...

The "faith of Jesus": Jesus, our Lord and our God, is faithful precisely at the moment he suffers loneliness, discouragement, abandonment, a thirst to love the unloved and the unwanted, a thirst to pour forth mercy into the hearts, the souls and the lives of those who suffer an unexpected and oh, so bitter, pain.

This is Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, who lives with the eternal disposition of obedience to the Father's will. In this obedience, in this fidelity, Jesus reveals who he is as God. The crowds who disdained Jesus and mocked him by saying, "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross," were not knowing what they were doing. Jesus manifests his divinity, his oneness with the Father, when he remains on the cross. This is the Father's will, that he give up his life as a gift of the greatest love in order to rescue the humiliated, to open the eyes of those made blind by their

fear of suffering and by their attachment to self-indulgent desires, to redeem the children from their feelings of isolation and their experience of rejection, and to save all those who sadly have become masters of betrayal, deception, treachery and suspicion.

Jesus reveals that the divine thing to do is not to come down from the cross, but rather to accept the vinegar of the disdainers and to die a death by thirst in a heart-to-heart solidarity with the Doreens of this world who live their humanity to the fullest when they place their lives with unmitigated trust in God even and especially at their most bitter moment of agony.

In Jesus God loves with the power and will to redeem. The grace of redemption is what the missionaries intended to bring to Tanzania when they first arrived. Br. Bernardino Ligomeka, OFMCap, provides us with a special insight into the 150 years of evangelization in the country of Tanzania by noting that the solemn words of Jesus about the Last Judgment in Matthew 25:31-46 became a guiding force in the Church life of Tanzania from the beginning. Ligomeka specifies the fact that both missionaries coming from other countries and the African priests, Sisters and Brothers who continue to evangelize do not hesitate to labour zealously – in spite of grave economic and social obstacles to their efforts – to put into action the seven corporal works of mercy and the seven spiritual works of mercy.

These are the works that honour the love that Jesus proclaimed as blessed in his declarations about the Last Judgment that typify the one who evangelizes. First, the Corporal Works of Mercy: (1) to feed the hungry; (2) to give drink to the thirsty; (3) to clothe the naked; (4) to shelter the homeless; (5) to visit the sick; (6) to visit the imprisoned; and (7) to bury the dead. The Spiritual Works of Mercy have their own perceptible impact on the work of evangelization: (1) to counsel the doubtful; (2) to instruct the ignorant; (3) to admonish the sinner; (4) to comfort the sorrowful; (5) to forgive all injuries; (6) to bear wrongs patiently; and (7) to pray for the living and the dead.

One cannot help but notice the affinity between these Works of Mercy and the energies of love that certain individuals of benevolent will channelled towards Doreen in her moments of

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great distress. I am referring to the love that invigorates the despondent soul with a new and lively hope.

Raniya Mohammed and Fr. John Gibson, OCD, bring forth an article about self-image and self-concept that they composed with the help of the responses they received on a detailed questionnaire that was filled out by JUCo's social psychology students – indeed it was the very same group that participated in Richard and Gibson's research on internet involvement (see the most recent issue, no. 19, of *Africa Tomorrow*). Mohammed and Gibson subscribe to Michael Polanyi's suggestion for scientists to refrain from arbitrarily reconfiguring the data to fit their hypotheses. They allow the data to remain in place to guide them to new scientific insights. Perhaps more importantly, Mohammed and Gibson take to heart Polanyi's insistence that not only hypotheses but also convictions should guide the data collection and analyses. The conviction they bring to their research is this:

A person cannot develop a positive self-concept or grow through interpersonal relationships with a positive self-image if they ignore God's Will for their lives. They must recognize the fact that their Creator has a special plan for their lives, a plan that requires an attitude of respect, reverence and obedience.

The more secularist models of social scientific research often neglect this conviction and so try to design parameters for self-concept and self-image that omit the Will of the eternally gracious One who indeed gives us a self.

Father Thomas Marwa Monchena, ALCP/OSS, presents an exposition of Plato's notion of *paideia* that propels society towards the conviction that an educational system suitable for the human person is one that cultivates the freedom that comes to blossom with a curriculum that is integral and holistic, one that focuses on the intellectual, spiritual, ethical, physical and social maturity of the person. Plato's notion of education precludes the rat race for high exam scores, an accumulation of academic and professional credentials, and the increasing ability to manipulate and manoeuvre one's way through the technological market. Plato intends that the person be self-reliant enough that he or she can help others to learn both in theory and practice what self-reliance really is. Self-reliance without a sense of solidarity with one's family, culture,

nation, or world is meaningless. When self-reliance and solidarity join together, persons become human enough to accept each other as brothers and sisters – not competitive rivals.

In Stefan Amsterdamski, Grzegorz Trela offers us an example of an academician who grounded his curriculum in his philosophy of freedom and authenticity. Amsterdamski suffered reprisal after reprisal for his continuing participation in academic programs that allowed especially doctoral students to engender notions and strategies that would give their native country of Poland and their professional faculty of philosophy a moral and intellectual backbone that would give people enduring hope. His decision to stay within a world of conflict when he could have escaped mirrors the heroic willingness of his contemporary, a man of great moral integrity, Cardinal Francis Arinze of the Catholic Church. Cardinal Arinze's noble behaviour during the Biafra conflict of his native Nigeria gave hope and purpose to all the peoples of that vast region.

For his entire life Arinze was a man who exemplified the meaning of intersubjectivity and solidarity to an extraordinary degree. Thomas Joseph frames his notion of intersubjectivity within the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Joseph draws for us a sober, realistic picture of what happens in our interpersonal relationships when we refuse to give priority to the Other as someone who deserves our welcome, our respect, our honesty and our trust. When I offer my personal world to the Other, I enter into an asymmetrical relationship with the Other that allows the Other to become a source of life, love, reverence and joy for me. We grow together in trust and in trustworthiness.

This is the trust that Prosper Ngowi emphasizes in Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). When local government authorities and private enterprises that are usually profit-oriented make contractual arrangements that derive from interpersonal dispositions of trust and trustworthiness, the public benefits, the local government authority benefits and the private enterprise benefits. Helping each other becomes ethically prior to using the other for one's own vested self-interest. This gives the nation a heart capable of sustaining the lives of all within God's loving will.

*The Editor*