



# Spiritan Foundation of Ethiopia



## 1972 — 2012 Spiritans in Ethiopia for Forty Years

2012 marks the 40th anniversary of our presence in Ethiopia. In that time over fifty Spiritans have laboured here: 33 priests and three Brothers have spent varying lengths of time and 16 students did their Pastoral Experience Program here. Five of these students have been reappointed here. Thirteen of those who served here rest in the Lord. The photo on the right shows our present members with colleagues at a Strategic Planning workshop last February.

But there was an earlier Spiritan presence here during and after the WW II when five Spiritans came from East Africa to replace Italian missionaries who had been interned. They were quite an international and diverse group.

They were led by **Fr Kevin Devenish** who was the first Trinidadian to be ordained Spiritan. He did his formation in Ireland. Appointed to East Africa in 1934 he ministered in Mombasa and Waa. In 1939 he was the first



Fr Shorty Watkins and Fr Kevin Devenish, Harar, SE Ethiopia, 1943

headmaster of St Mary's School in Nairobi. In Ethiopia he was made pro-vicar apostolic of Addis Ababa, a position he held from 1943 till 1947. After this he ministered back home in Trinidad till his death in 1974.

**Fr Colman Watkins**, who preferred to be known by his nickname 'Shorty', was an orphan from Philadelphia, USA. Ordained in 1936, he began his mission-



ary life in the Vicariate of Zanzibar where he worked for 50 years, as well as the four he spent in Ethiopia from 1943 to 1947.

**Fr Joseph Fitzsimmons** was born in Liverpool in 1909. He did his formation in France, his PEP in Haiti and was ordained in Kilema, Tanzania, by Bishop Joseph Byrne of Moshi. He died back in England in 1974. We know nothing yet of his time in Ethiopia.

**Fr James Grennan** from Ireland began his missionary work, principally as a teacher, on the Island of Zanzibar. He worked in the seminary in Harar, Ethiopia, from 1943 to 1946. After returning to Kenya he worked in various missions, finishing in the Cathedral in Mombasa. He died at the age of seventy in the Mater Hospital in Nairobi on November 8, 1972, the year the new Spiritan mission in Ethiopia was established.

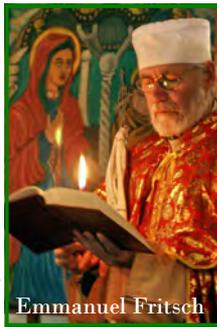
**Fr Jim Giltinan** was first appointed to the Vicariate of Southern Nigeria in 1933. Due to WWII he was reappointed to the Vicariate of Zanzibar. He worked in Ethiopia from 1943 to 1944 and then returned to Kenya where he worked in several missions. From 1977 he worked in a semi-retired capacity at Kallmoni and Kiteta. After an active 20 years of retirement in Ireland he died on February 4, 2002, aged 93.

So as we look back in gratitude for forty years of ministry in Ethiopia we look forward, confident that the Spirit who comes to us at Pentecost, will continue to lead us forward in the years to come.

*Martin Kelly CSSp*

A Survey in Sudan, 12-20 February 2011 - Emmanuel Fritsch CSSp

Because my research on the Ethiopian liturgy demands an awareness of the larger context I asked the director of the French Centre for Ethiopian Studies that a journey be organised. The idea was accepted because colleagues working in history and art history are in the same situation. We formed a group of six and were generously welcomed and assisted by Claude Rilly, head of the French Unit at the Service of Sudanese Antiquities, National Museum, Khartoum. The journey took place in February 2011.



Emmanuel Fritsch

My delayed departure caused by a visa problem forced me to join my colleagues after a journey by bus which was the closest I got to daily life of in Sudan. After tedious formalities, I was driven through Khartoum to the town of Umdurman, on the west bank of the Nile, just after the joining of the White Nile, rising in Lake Victoria, with the Blue Nile from Lake Tana in Ethiopia. Among the comments heard on the way, it was feared that after the independence of the South, the Christian population of Khartoum would dwindle, the churches would become empty and the already rather radical form of Islam would become even more so in a monolithic society. In the middle of a huge market, I was guided to a bus and left there with my suitcase, after having been introduced to the conductor. Easy and quiet people, I thought, until this man came to me, pointing to another bus which had had its engine running for a while. He explained that he was the driver, going to Debba, my destination, some three hours ahead of the bus on which I had booked a seat. After negotiations and assistance of a shop keeper who had some English and who told me about Ethiopian girls serving tea in the shops around, I retrieved both money and luggage and settled deep in the bus, so as not to be easily noticed at check points since I had only a fax of my travel permit, the original being with my companions. Helpfully, heavy curtains were drawn on all sides. This also made it possible to watch videos, especially a very long one of *menzuma*, popular Islamic singing and dancing. At a stop the driver invited me to share his meal of lentils and bread, until he asked me to leave him as he kneeled to pray. He had been at the service of a Saudi prince and had once stayed with him in a hotel on the Champs Elysées! We were driving at around 80 km per hour, sticking to the right. This highly disciplined driving is universal in Sudan, contrast-



ing with their former ways when new roads were constructed. My companions were waiting for me at the entrance to Debba and we easily reached Old Dongola over a bridge on the Nile which was to be inaugurated the following day by the Head of State.

Our mission focused on Christian sites but without missing outstanding Kushite monuments such as the temple of Soleb (ca. 1580 B.C.), the impressive Jebel Barkal, site of the ancient Napata, the pyramids there as well as at Kurru, Nuri and Meroë. One interesting thing is that we discovered that the notion of inculturation was applied before the letter in the context of the living of the Egyptian religion: the sun-god Amon is always represented as a ram – Kushites were pastoralists – and the offerings were of millet instead of wheat.

The main site was for me the first. At Old Dongola, Prof. Włodzimierz Godlewski, an archaeologist from Warsaw University, guided us through an ancient monastic complex dedicated to the Holy Trinity and several churches in and around a citadel above the Nile. We discussed especially a certain “cruciform church”. A kind of castle there happens to have been transformed into the first mosque in Sudan in 1418 A.D.



The sun god Amon

Ethiopia and Sudan have been connected during centuries in contrasting manners, and we generally have poor notions even about the identity of such lands. For example, the Acts of the Apostles reporting in Ch. 8 the baptism of Queen Qandaké’s Eunuch by deacon Philip, refers to him as to an Ethiopian. We know, however, that Qandaké was the title of the queen of the Kingdom of Kush, famous for its black Pharaohs. Pharaoh Taharka was the most famous one. From 690 to 664 BC he ruled from about present Khartoum to Mesopotamia. This kingdom of Kush is the place referred to in the Septuagint as Ethiopia! Its last capital, the famous Meroë, was destroyed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D. by none other than Aizanas, king of the Aksumites in Northern Ethiopia. Significant advances in the understanding of their language have been made by Claude Rilly, the scholar responsible for the French archaeological centre who welcomed our group to Khartoum, but remains largely mysterious. Related to it is the language of the Surma, beyond South Omo, where our mission of Dimeka is located.

Destroyed, Kush was invaded by the pastoralists from the Noba Mountains, looking for water. They took over the control of the Nile area and became known as the Nubians. They developed the three kingdoms of Nobadia, Makuria and Alwa, to which famous 6<sup>th</sup> cent. Byzantine Empress Theodora and Emperor Justinian sent competing missions of evangelisation, respectively Monophysite and Chalcedonian in doctrine.

After the Arab take-over of Egypt in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, this Church became dependant on the Apostolic See of Alexandria but preserved its Byzantine character. Betrayed by a 14<sup>th</sup> century ambitious would-be Christian king who gained support

from Muslim Egypt, the Christians were soon in trouble but travellers still found Christians there in the 17<sup>th</sup> cent. Today the cross is still painted on a number of Muslim houses for protection!



Eusthatewos was a 14<sup>th</sup> cent. Ethiopian monk who insisted that the biblical Saturday rest be observed as tradition had kept it. But, curiously, he was opposed by the Egyptian bishops who had forgotten that this had also been the case in Egypt, until the Muslims imposed Friday as the day of rest. Persecuted, he travelled through Nubia, where he was welcome, and on as far as Armenia. Around the same time, Ethiopian painters, probably trained in Nubia, decorated in the Nubian style the magnificent church of Maryam Qorqor in the heights of East Tigray. On my part, I am proposing the hypothesis that certain liturgical texts of Byzantine origin, which happen to have made their way into the Ethiopian rite, came through Nubia.

The following are reflections from Denis Mugalula and Jude Kiggala of the Foundation of Uganda, sharing their thoughts on two years of PEP in Ethiopia. We thank them both for their marvellous youthful contribution to the Foundation during their time with us. and wish them every blessing and grace as they continue their formation in Nairobi.

**A SECOND SOUL!**

It has been a great moment for me since the day of my first profession. What has made the time so significant in my life are the two experiences I held in the past two years: one being religious life experience and the second being Pastoral experience. We had our first profession on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2010. A week after, I and Denis Mugalula received our PEP appointment letters to Ethiopia. In preparation to come to Ethiopia, I did quite a number of things, including a driving course, researching information about Ethiopia, processing travel documents and other related things.



Jude Kiggala

On August 31, 2010 we arrived in Ethiopia. We were given a warm welcome by the confreres in Addis Ababa. After some time, we went south where we were destined to do our PEP. While south, we visited all the missions in Borana, namely: Dhoqqolle, Dubluq, Yabello and Dhadiim. We also went to Arba Minch for a meeting.

In November that same year, we came back to Addis Ababa to start our Oromo language course. The course was nice and

precious! For me, it was such a praise-worthy course because through it I did not only study Oromo but it also sharpened my mind and created readiness in me to learn any other local language of the people anywhere in the world, bearing in mind that self-expression must pass into communication for its fulfillment. I think the Growing Participatory Approach is one of the most recent and effective approaches to learning a new language. The language course really empowered us to learn the language very fast and I assure you we never had big challenges in communicating with the people in Borana.

To have another language is to possess a second soul! The language I studied became for me a strong tool in studying the culture especially of the Borana people. This also tremendously helped me to venture into the pastoral history and activities in Borana, specifically in Dhadiim. I was able to read the available Borana pastoral, missiological and also secular literature that has been written, especially by our confreres. It is really true that the individual's whole experience is built upon the plan of his language.

The language was a good tool for me to socialise with people both in and outside church. Like other people elsewhere in the world many Ethiopian people feel so good when a foreigner communicates with them in their language, even if one makes mistakes here and there. They are always eager to socialise with a foreigner, correct his errors and encourage him to learn more. The confreres too, both in Borana and Addis Ababa helped us a lot to learn more about Ethiopia and the cultures of the people. Those in Addis took us to many of the famous and historical places. In Borana, we even attended cultural celebrations: for example, *Gubbisa* (the name-giving ceremony) and *Gadamoji* (the retirement ceremony), an event that comes once in eight years. I hereby too, thank the Foundation superior for his all-round support. I can't forget the tools of work he offered to me, including books.

The Apostolic Community (my confreres Frs Boniface and Anthony and Sisters of Charity Annie, Sherly, Anilla and Tresa) of Dhadiim too got it well that I am growing to serve and I am serving to grow. In this, they accorded me all that I needed to go through my PEP well. This showed itself through moral support, advice, encouragement. In order to grow, I needed their service and company. I too, had to serve so as to grow, in order to serve better in future. With this in mind, during the course of two years, I saw myself in most of the experiences of the mission set by them and others my own initiatives.

My last word is of thanksgiving to all who have contributed to my stay in Ethiopia. I start by all the members of the Ethiopian Foundation especially my Dhadiim community members and our fellow religious with whom we share the mission, namely the Sisters of Charity. I am grateful to Fr. Iede de Lange who accompanied me on my journey. I am also grateful to the entire college of Hawassa Vicariate administration. During my early days in Dhadiim, I challenged the Borana people that they don't pray. They have really disproved me in the second half of my stay in Dadhim. I congratulate them. At the end, they demonstrated their spiritual abilities to me by their thunderous prayers for me, to savour the Lord's goodness in the life after PEP. I firmly count on their prayers, for God cannot deny us any good if his children (the Ethiopians.....Psalm 87:4) ask him.

*Jude Thaddeus Kiggala CSSp.*

**SOMETHING UNIQUE**

Fortunately, I had heard about the Ethiopian mission in the earlier years of my formation. Furthermore, in a spirit of preparing us for Mission, our Director of Novices had talked to some of us saying, "You may end up going to Ethiopia, will you be able to go?" All this led to preconceptions of a unique mission. Therefore, when I arrived in Ethiopia, there wasn't much difficulty in embracing the unique culture, food, languages, terrain, and pastoral situation. I visited most of the missions on my arrival, but there was hardly any communication with the local people, hence this impairment was solved by sending me to the language school. The school used the *Growth Participatory Approach of Language* teaching, which has helped me to integrate into the social milieu, thereby aiding my knowledge of the important places in Ethiopia, the most important aspects of the Ethiopian national culture, religious celebrations, history and the *celebration of the Liturgy in the Ethiopian rite*.



Denis Mugalula

During the school period, the Foundation also gave a day's presentation on the history of the Spiritans and their missions in Ethiopia. These presentations exhibited the two rich dimensions of the Spiritan presence in Ethiopia as: *Ecumenism and Development on one side* (Gamo Gofa), and *First Evangelisation and Education on the other side* (Borana). Spiritans in Gamo Gofa mainly engage in Ecumenical work with the Orthodox Church and in Integrated Community-based Development programmes, while in Borana we do first Evangelization and education. Spiritan centres are always situated next to the schools and from these Spiritans reach out to the villages.

I was appointed to Borana in Yabello Parish. Here, our experience involved attending to the Parish situation, a Students' Hostel, and a Computer School, plus a Primary School and three out-stations. Our work was mainly administrative and pastoral. Therefore, I used to be involved in all the liturgical activities at the Parish, evangelisation in the out-stations, English at the Hostel, and participated in the whole experience of the Yabello mission. Fr. Iede de Lange and I made up the Spiritan community, and in this community, we have enjoyed

mutual understanding and sharing of responsibilities in accordance with our capacities. Aided by Fr. Iede's guidance and my observation in the first year, my second year meant co-responsibility with my elder confrere. This observation and involvement in the different aspects also paved ways to build relationships with the local people, thereby ensuring trust, which consequently led to a favourable atmosphere in which we could easily improve our spiritual and material lives, even by introducing new things. Our Christian community mainly constituted the zealous and cheerful youths, who tended to lack social activities in their life. Being involved with them would be unthinkable without being involved at the level of interpersonal and human relationships.

My reception in the Foundation implied my being a fellow colleague, who shared responsibilities and being treated in the same way as the other Foundation members. This catalysed my sense of belonging to the group, and I greatly felt like a fellow contributor to the work, the wellbeing, and the progress of the Foundation. Furthermore, my participation in the Foundation meetings, the Foundation Chapter and its preparations plus the participation in the Foundation Strategic Planning Workshop and its preparations was a great treasure, so significant for my awareness of a wide range of things.

Regarding the Borana and their culture, I have enjoyed quite a good experience of their life. Having been here for the festive season that only takes place after eight years (*Gadamoji*, a transition period to eldership) I had a great opportunity of participating in most of the rites of passage in the Borana culture, for all other rites happen before the climax of the Gadamoji rite. Others included the *Gubbissa*, a name-giving ceremony for the first born son, and *Fuudha*, a marriage ceremony. All these portrayed great loyalty and conservativeness to the culture.

Living with the Spiritans in Ethiopia for me was like going to the lab in order to find out the real essence of the Spiritan Life and Mission, for without much serious observation, one can immediately notice the real Spiritan Charism and life breathing in all the Spiritan Missions in Ethiopia. The major problem of the Spiritans is lack of personnel, hence this is a clear invitation for me to come back, given the difficulties in the languages and the uniqueness of the Ethiopian culture, religious and historical background.

Denis Mugalula CSSp

**PENTECOST 2012**



We wish you all the gifts of the Holy Spirit — wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and the fear of the Lord.

*And it shall come to pass afterward  
That I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh;  
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
Your old men shall dream dreams,  
Your young men shall see visions.  
And also on my menservants  
and on my maidservants  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.  
(Joel 2:28-29).*

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