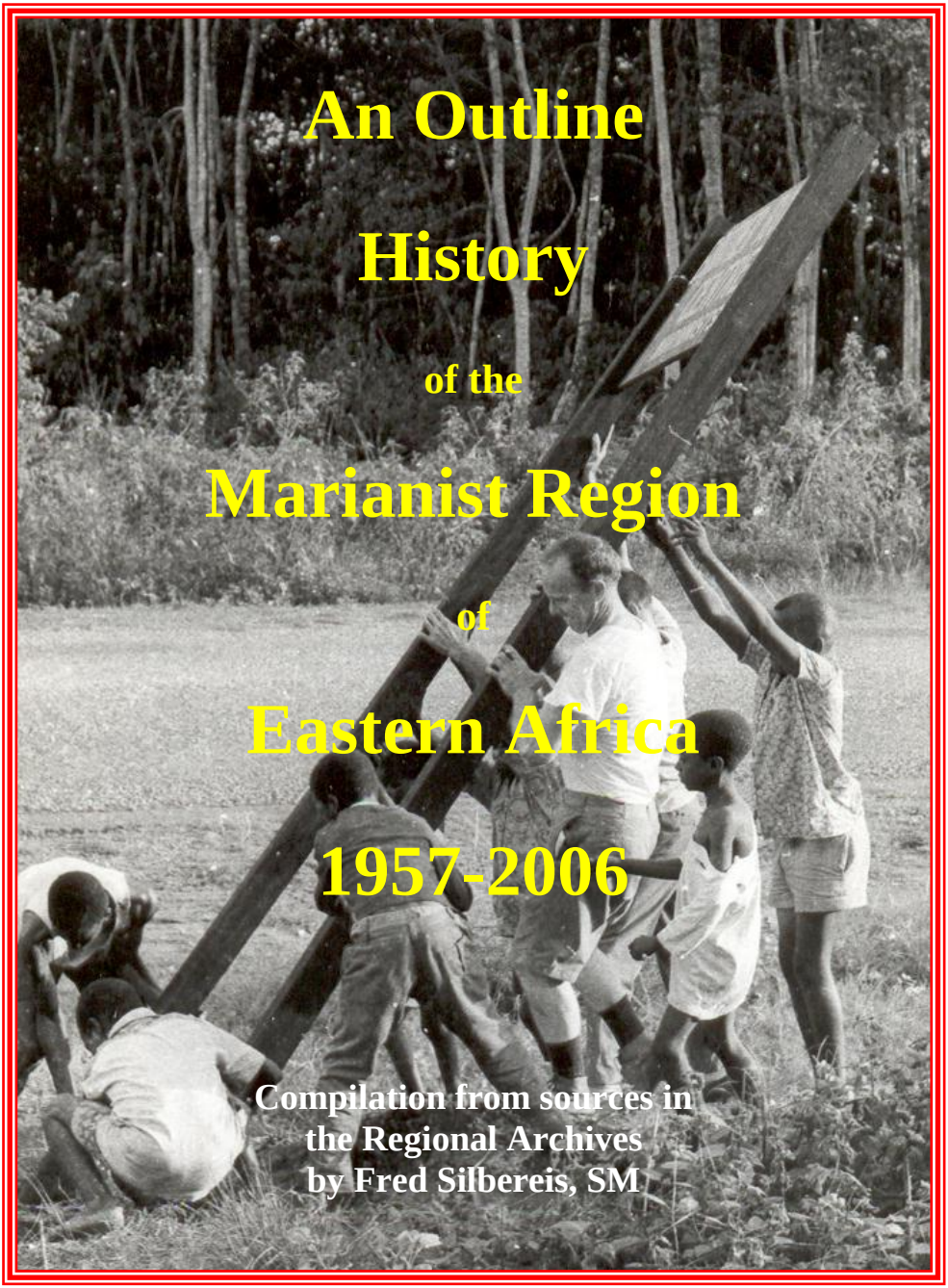
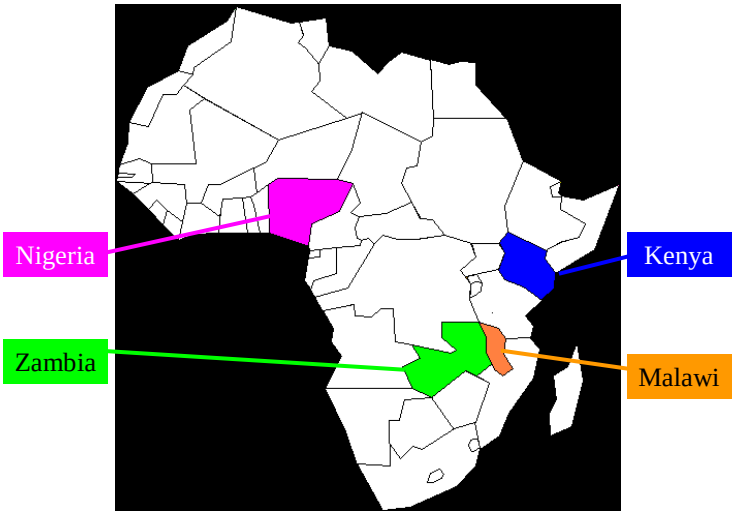


An Outline History of the Marianist Region of Eastern Africa 1957-2006

Compilation from sources in the Regional Archives
by Fred Silbereis, SM



Countries of the Region of Eastern Africa

Nigeria–1957-1985
Malaŵi–from 1960
Kenya–from 1961
Zambia–from 1965

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COVER PHOTO: Brother Tom Bruner, Father Tom Niemira (mostly hidden) and others erecting a sign on the road in front of the newly-named Brother Roman Centre at Ekpoma, Nigeria—perhaps a symbol of Marianist efforts to implant itself on the continent.

Introduction

The Marianist Region of Eastern Africa has been an experience of the Developing World not available to most of us. Those who have never lived in Africa may be tempted to believe, as I did before I went there, that Africa is mostly a land of deserts with their scorpions, and of jungles with their snakes, and above all of endless warfare, famine, and drought. Who would ever want to go there from the "more-favored" parts of the world?

Yes, the places where the Marianists have worked in Africa have indeed seen some of these things, but they have seen a lot more: They have seen land that is so fertile that in the rainy season even fence posts can be found putting out new shoots; they have seen mountains, oceans, lakes, forests, waterfalls—all scenic, and often graced with attractive wildlife of the kind that attracts tourists from all over the world.

But they have also seen what tourists don't normally see: a people who are truly hospitable; a people who are in touch with the land; a people who are openly religious, both firm and pious in their faith. Religion is not a taboo subject in Africa, something avoided in polite conversation; rather, it is a central part of their lives and something that can be discussed easily. The people of Africa have not (yet, at least) swallowed the secular-atheistic attitude of their richer neighbors. They have

maintained a genuine interest in the things of the spirit, the things of God.

At the same time, most of the people of Africa remain poor by US or European standards. There is a lot of talent in Africa, but not a whole lot of opportunity to develop it. The missionary with only mediocre talents can often find good use for them, whereas at home he or she would always find people who could do things better. And these small talents can be quickly learned and surpassed by Africans who take an interest.

Africa could become a wealthy, happy place. The resources are there. The people are there. The willingness is there. The innate talents are there. What is lacking? What prevents a lot of progress? It is opportunity, good governance, good teaching, and encouragement (probably above all), and what we call empowerment.

The Marianists came to Africa from the United States as teachers, and for many years this was their main focus. They set up model schools, which became famous in their countries for various achievements because of the dedication of the brothers to teaching well, to introducing new ideas and activities, and to giving encouragement and motivation.

At the same time, the Marianists ran into many problems, and did not always find ways to deal well with them. One such problem was that of personnel. The great exodus of the ’60s and ’70s hit the missionary effort very hard, so by the early ’80s the Marianists in Africa had to swallow hard and consider the sad need of consolidation and the consequent withdrawal from some of our works. In 1985, the last Marianists left Nigeria, and in the ’90s there was some speculation we might also have to withdraw as well from Malaŵi. At the time of our

withdrawal from Nigeria, Marianist houses in that country had dwindled to two, with only two or three men in each, and with little sign of getting new members from among the Nigerian population. Our presence in Malaŵi had once been in five places, but by the 1990s it had been reduced to a community with only a few members (four, for example, in 1992). It seemed such a shame to come to this situation, after such an energetic, idealistic, and fruitful beginning in those two countries in the 1960s.

But in the late ’90s, things began to turn around, especially as recruitment and perseverance in Kenya began to improve. Young Brothers were sent to Malaŵi—and to Zambia—just in time to renew hope and reinvigorate efforts there, particularly in recruitment.

Of course, personnel problems were not the only ones met by the Marianists in Africa. In Nigeria, the brothers lived through a civil war in the mid-sixties, which resulted in the death of Brother Roman Wicinski and did considerable damage to one of our schools. At one point around 1979, Zambia suffered sporadic attacks from Southern Rhodesia when the latter declared independence from the UK. In the 1980s some of our land in Ekpoma, Nigeria, was seized by the town for use by its local secondary school. Our school at Karonga, Malaŵi, became nearly impossible to reach when the only connecting road fell into nearly total ruin, and the area was named “the land of splendid isolation” by one of our members who worked there. In two cases, national governments ordered the removal of a Marianist school headmaster: Brother Carmine Annunziata in Zambia in 1971 and Brother Vincent Rathbun in Malaŵi in 1973. In all of the countries where we worked, government policies, especially with regard to education, created difficulties.

In the 1980s, several Marianists in Kenya began initiatives that eventually resulted in nonschool projects targeted specifically at some of the poorest of the people. In 2000, this wave reached Malaŵi as well. By 2006 (when this was written) the Marianists had the following communities and works in the Region of Eastern Africa:

- Aspirancy house in Nairobi, Kenya.
- Novitiate in Limuru, Kenya.
- Scholasticate in Nairobi.
- Maria House, a branch of the IMANI project in Nairobi.
- Chaminade Training Centre, a branch of IMANI.
- Job Creation Programme, a branch of IMANI in Nairobi.
- Davis House community in Nairobi.
- Marianist Development Project in Mombasa, Kenya.
- Bakhita Formation Centre in Kitale, Kenya.
- Chaminade High School in Karonga, Malaŵi.
- MIRACLE Centre in Karonga, Malaŵi.
- Matero Boys' High School in Lusaka, Zambia.
- Faustino House, a formation house in Lusaka, Zambia (in preparation).

As the number of foreign missionaries available to work in Africa declined, and as a growing number of African Marianists persevered in their vocation, the process of "Africanization" was pursued. By 2006, the Mombasa community and the aspirancy program consisted only of African Marianists, and several other communities only had one expatriate member each. African Marianists were also in charge of the scholasticate program, the IMANI network of projects, and of the Marianist Development Project in

Mombasa. At the same time, the Regional Council membership was all African, except for the Regional Superior himself.

1. The Beginning

Nigeria: Asaba

Invitations to the Marianists to come to Africa were extended to the Cincinnati Province as far back as 1944, according to remarks made by Father James M. Darby in his circular letter of December 8, 1959. But plans to implement this call were begun only after Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Fidei Donum* (April 1957). Father John Elbert, the Provincial Superior then, prodded by the Superior General, set out on a tour to West Africa and to Nigeria in particular. As a result, the Province agreed to staff a five-year-old high school called St. Patrick's College, situated on an 86-acre plot in the town of Asaba, Nigeria.

William Anderson

At a ceremony on September 24, 1957, Father Elbert commissioned three missionary pioneers for this venture: Father William Anderson, Brother Bernard Jansen, and Brother Raymond Streiff. They traveled to Nigeria aboard the *African Glen*, a cargo ship, and reached Nigeria on October 30, after stopping along the way at five other West African ports. Travelling by car from Lagos, they eventually reached their destination on November 4.

St. Patrick's College at the time had some 360 students, about two-thirds of whom were boarders. There were three Irish SMA Fathers and 15 African teachers on staff. Father Anderson was designated the new headmaster at the school and set out to "learn the ropes" immediately, because the SMA Fathers were eager to move on to other work. He and the other

Marianists had to learn quickly to adapt themselves to various features of living and working in another culture.

No director of the community had been named, but this was settled early in 1958 when Father Joseph Bruder arrived and was given this position. Not long after, a strange illness struck Father William Anderson, and he was advised to return as soon as possible to the United States. In response to this event, Father John Harrington volunteered to replace him and was assigned to Asaba in short order. Along with him, Brothers William Callahan and John O'Connor joined the fledgling community.

A change of Provincial brought even more Marianists to Africa in the 1960s, including one from the St. Louis Province and one from the Province of Italy.

James Darby

In the middle '60s, plans were laid and an all-purpose assembly hall, named Chaminade Hall, was constructed in Asaba, under the supervision of Brother Raymond Streiff. The Provincial, Father James M. Darby, was present for the official opening. There were other construction projects as well, including a Marianist residence and a laboratory building.

MALAŴI: Nkhata Bay

Vincent Rathbun

Meanwhile, the Society had been busy setting up other missions in Africa. On January 28, 1960, Father Darby commissioned Brother Vincent Rathbun to go to Malaŵi to direct a new Marianist community at Limphasa (Nkhata Bay) and to take over the high school there. He named

Brothers Thomas Brunner and Charles Gropp to accompany him. After travelling by a roundabout route, they finally arrived at Nkhata Bay in early May.

Upon arrival, they began at once to work on improvements. Brother Thomas began surveying for new buildings, while the others worked on learning the language and on recruiting students. Classes began soon after (August 1960); by 1961, three more Marianists—George Dury, Jim Imhof, and Michael Cain—had joined the community.

Kenya: Mang'u

Things were moving along with great energy. This was at the same time as the arrival of two Marianists in Kenya. On January 13, 1961, Brothers Frank Russell and Francis Mullan arrived in the latter country to work at Holy Ghost College in the village of Mang'u. Brother Charles Barnett arrived four days later.

This was a prized school organized and run by the Holy Ghost Fathers; they had managed the school in Mang'u for 21 years by the time the Marianists arrived. It was an agonizing decision to hand it over, and the Marianists appreciated that. Brother Frank Russell, the new headmaster, did much to improve the school. He built a new library and a recreation hall, installed fluorescent lights in all classrooms, redecorated the dining hall, and built a new basketball court and interested the boys in the game.

The Marianists came with plenty of ideas, but they soon realized that the British type of education current in Kenya had important differences from that operating in their home country. The work of the Holy Ghost Fathers at Mang'u had

been of a very high standard within the British context. They, therefore, decided to take over where the Holy Ghost Fathers had left off and to build on the firm foundation made during the 21 years they had managed the school. While pursuing this policy, the brothers introduced such innovations as they thought would enrich the system and add a new dimension to the school. They placed great emphasis on the practical teaching of science, which quickly established a scientific tradition at the school. They established separate laboratory instruction in chemistry, physics, and biology . . . their aim being to help meet the current demand for qualified African technicians and agriculturists in Kenya.

The Marianists were keenly aware of the fact that the Holy Ghost Fathers turned over to them their best school, and they were determined to live up to the trust thus placed in them.

Before long, the Marianists at Mang'u were joined by more of their brothers, including Frank Mullan, Michael Stimac, and John O'Connor. Brother Michael introduced new science activities at the school, including electronics and even an air program, begun in 1962 and lasting up to around 1974 in one form or another.

George Dury

MALAŴI: Karonga

In mid-1961, assistant Provincial Brother John Darby came to Malaŵi to visit the community at Nkhata Bay. The local ordinary, Bishop Jobidan, had requested the Marianists to assume responsibility for the development of Karonga Secondary School as well, and Brother John was taken to see it. At first he was not enthusiastic, but after the

visit he completely changed his mind and began to make plans for this new undertaking.

Around October, 15, 1962, Brother George Dury moved from Nkhata Bay to Karonga, where at first he stayed with the White Fathers or in a room at the school. This was very temporary. The White Fathers already had acquired land for a new school, the space near the parish not being adequate, and Brother George later wrote home about how stunned he was to be shown 85 acres of bush. So much needed to be done!

After some negotiations and clever explaining, Brother George managed to convince the local people that the school should be renamed, as well as relocated, and thus he called it Chaminade Secondary School.

One of the first things to be done was construction; in early 1963, Brother Dave Schmitz was sent to Karonga to begin the work.

In May, 1963, only about four months after opening Chaminade High School at Karonga, Brother George Dury also set up a museum at the school, to preserve various items of Malaŵian culture.

Kenya: Aquinas

Paul Hoffer

In late January 1963, the announcement was made through the Marianists in Dayton, Ohio, that the Marianists had agreed to take over the administration of a newly-founded school in Nairobi. It was called St. Thomas Secondary School, later changed to Aquinas High School. Two Marianists, originally at Mang'u, formed

the first Marianist contingent at Aquinas: Brother John O'Connor and Father Eldon G. Reichert.

Not long after, the Superior General, Father Paul Joseph Hoffer, arrived to make an official visitation. He spent parts of February and March at the Marianist communities. He had received requests to send Marianists to various places in East Africa, but he had decided to stay in Nairobi for the time being.

Nigeria: Fugar

On October 8, 1963, the Provincial Superior, Father James Darby, and Brother Callahan, superior at Asaba, along with Father John Lyons, SMA, visited St. John's Grammar School, Fugar. Three days later in Rome, Bishop Kelly, with Father Darby and Superior General Father Paul Hoffer, agreed on the Marianists coming to Fugar. Father Hoffer, in the name of the Society of Mary, officially accepted the administration of this new establishment on December 15, 1963.

Brother Raymond Streiff, a pioneer of Asaba, was the first Marianist assigned to the St. John's compound. He arrived on January 8, 1964. The first weeks were spent in getting the necessary supplies, everything from books to beds, for the school population. Students arrived for the new school year quite slowly during January. The expected number, close to one hundred, eventually turned up after about two weeks.

Good news came on March 3, 1964, when the second Marianist assigned to Fugar finally arrived. This was Brother Joseph Bischoff, who had already spent some years at the Society's school at Nkhata Bay, Malawi. The staff for the time being was now complete.

Nigeria: First Marianist Candidate

Sylvanus Onyedika

In December of 1962, meanwhile, the brothers in Nigeria began to see signs of success in their initial recruitment efforts, when the first Nigerian aspirant, Sylvanus Onyedika, was officially accepted. For his novitiate, he was sent to the United States, where he made his first profession of vows at Marcy, NY, on 22 August 1964. He then spent some time at the scholasticate at Dayton, and elsewhere in the United States, before returning to Nigeria. He left the SM in 1975.

Nigeria: Ekpoma

Roman Wicinski

Not long after the opening of the community at Fugar in September 1964, land at Ekpoma, Nigeria, was leased to the Diocese of Benin City and was turned over to the Marianists for use as a postulate. The two Marianists who were the main foundation of this effort were Brothers Roman Wicinski and Thomas Brunner. The former took care of the postulate program, and the latter put his construction skills to good use. Entrance examinations were announced, and some 175 young men sat for them in August 1964—even though the lease had not yet been signed. About 45 of the boys then appeared for a three-day orientation program in September, and the number was further reduced.

Meanwhile Brother Thomas Brunner went to work. By November 7 bush had been cleared, a road into the new compound had been formed, and piped water was ready. Also

nearing completion were two one-story buildings: one was for postulant quarters, the other was for the Marianist residence.

Eventually, by March 1965, twenty-one young men reported to the postulate. In May, Brother Gerald Schnepp, General Head of Temporalities, visited to have a firsthand look, and in October Father Robert Hertweck arrived as chaplain and teacher.

Construction moved forward greatly during 1966: a dormitory, classrooms, an ablution block, an extension to the SM residence, and a shed to house a generator.

Kenya: UMATT

Meanwhile, in Kenya, things were happening as well. In 1963 the first recorded day of recollection was held for vocation prospects. In 1964, new buildings and sports facilities were added at Aquinas, and a Sodality was started. Also in that year, the Marianist residence was substantially enlarged.

In April 1965, a plane was acquired for the air program and earmarked for Mang'u. It arrived in Nairobi, Kenya, on June 10. This event could be described as the birth of UMATT—"United Missionary Air Training and Transport." Several Marianists used this and other planes for transporting personnel and goods to remote areas. The program was expensive in both money and personnel, however, and was hard to maintain. It reached Malaŵi in 1970 (called Mission Air), but died around 1972-73 after a crash in Malaŵi and after several Marianist pilots left the SM.

Malaŵi: Mzuzu

In 1966, the Marianists were induced to build and staff the Mzuzu Technical School in Mzuzu, Malaŵi. Put that way, it sounds simple, but what actually happened was that Brother John Bertone was sent there alone, to build the 17 buildings that had been planned. Brother John, daunted by the magnitude of the assignment, traveled there via Italy, where he met Padre Pio and asked for his counsel. Padre Pio told him that since it was an obedience, God would help him, so Brother John continued on to Mzuzu and completed this assignment by 1969, assisted by Brother Robert Bulanda.

By 1967, Brother Charles Wolan was sent to Mzuzu to become principal of the college (in place of Brother Bertone). By 1971, the college had its full complement of students: 40 each year. But then Brother Bertone became seriously ill and was sent to a hospital in England. His kidneys had failed. He died there on December 16, and his body was returned to America where he was buried with his brothers in Dayton.

In that same year, 1971, due to personnel pressure, the Marianists left both Mzuzu and Nkhata Bay, remaining in Malaŵi only in Karonga.

Zambia: Matero Boys' Secondary

The Marianists were invited to Zambia in 1965 to teach at a Catholic secondary school, and on July 27, Brother Carmine Annunziata arrived from the US to help supervise construction of a school in the Matero area of Lusaka, about 3 miles north of the center of the city.

By January of 1966, although construction continued, the school opened with three classes of form one (eighth grade) at the local parish. By the end of the year, though, most of the construction was completed, and things could be moved to the school site, including residences for the brothers and the other teachers.

Carmine Annunziata

By January of 1967, Brothers Jim Fitzgibbons, Brian Lane, Frank Mullan, and Raymond Gohring, and Father James Imhof had arrived to lend a hand. Each successive year, another form (grade) was added until grades 8 to 12 were in operation.

The school was officially opened on March 27, 1968, by the president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda.

In the next couple of years, Father Tony Jansen arrived and began teaching religious education, and Brother Frank Annunziata came onto the scene as well, to teach physics. Basketball and volleyball were introduced in 1969, and the Cambridge exams were taken at Matero for the first time in 1970.

That same year saw the arrival of Brother Skip Matthews, whose focus was mainly his involvement with hospital work.

In 1970, Matero Boys' Secondary were the national volleyball champions.

2. Difficult Times

Nigeria: The Woes of War

In April of 1967, the first set of Marianist novices began their novitiate program by making the usual promises. A couple of months later, the new chapel at Ekpoma was officially opened and blessed by Bishop Patrick J. Kelley. Things were looking promising, but then everything was thrown into confusion by the outbreak of war. In August, troops of the breakaway country of Biafra invaded the area of Nigeria where Ekpoma lies and upset the lives of many. At least three of the Marianists left the country for a while, and the novitiate was transferred for a month to Asaba (September 11 to October 5). But then Asaba, too, found itself in the midst of battle, and St. Patrick's College was the scene of much gunfire (October 4-8), until the Biafrans were driven across the river. The community had to move elsewhere, by military order, on October 6. The school then became for a while a military camp for the federal troops.

On their return, the Brothers found extensive damage, some from the fighting and some from the occupying troops. Brother Tom Wesselkamper estimated that the death toll in Asaba was around 2,000. In addition, most of the buildings needed repair. It was impossible to estimate when the college could operate fully once again.

But in fact, despite the difficulties, the college did reopen on February 1, 1968.

Nigeria: Ups and Downs

Ekpoma, too, suffered from war. When the difficulties with Biafra broke out, some of the postulants and novices at Ekpoma decided to go home for the duration, fearing that sooner or later all traffic and trade links between the eastern and western parts of Nigeria would be severed.

In August and early September of 1967, battles raged as the federal troops drove the Biafrans back to the east. On September 9-10, retreating Biafran troops made brief and orderly use of the empty buildings of the postulate. As federal troops grew nearer, the Marianist community decided to move temporarily to Asaba, except for Brothers Roman Wicinski and Richard Olsen, who stayed behind. The others returned on October 5 when the fighting made staying in Asaba untenable.

Damage at Ekpoma turned out to be minimal—a few holes in the chapel roof—and school was able to resume on October 16, although none of the postulants from the war zone were able to be present.

The next year started out well, with a second set of novices beginning their program on April 5, and with the celebration of first vows by two young Nigerians, Anthony Aroboi and Emmanuel Osafile. But then another tragedy struck the community.

As mentioned above, St. Patrick's College at Asaba was reopened on February 1, 1968, with three Marianists: Brothers Roman Wicinski and Guiseppe Ginevri and Father Thomas Niemira. The latter two had left Nigeria earlier and were now back. However, this was not to last long.

On April 16, 1968, Brother Roman Wicinski died some 14 miles from Asaba, at Ogwashi-Uku, while he was going to Benin City for a headmasters' workshop. The remaining Marianists were obliged to leave Asaba a few days later, never officially to return. Their talents were expended at the two other Marianist communities in the country.

Accurate details surrounding Brother Wicinski's death are unclear. His body was found behind the post office at Ogwashi-Uku by federal soldiers on the afternoon of April 16, 1968. He had been handcuffed and shot at least two times, apparently at close range; the handcuffs were later taken to the Generalate of the Society of Mary in Rome. The corpse was taken to Asaba, first to the mission and then to St. Patrick's. A makeshift coffin was made and transported to Ekpoma, supported by a small motorcade of priests of the diocese, on the afternoon of April 17.

On April 21, Mr. Raymond Wach arrived on the scene and conducted an official investigation of the incidents surrounding Brother Roman's death, on behalf of the American Embassy in Lagos.

One theory (there are others) was that a raid was in progress at a nearby prison where Biafran prisoners were kept by the federal army when Brother Roman reached the post office. Perhaps he somehow got caught up in the military action surrounding that raid.

The civil war in Nigeria raged on until January 1970.

Brothers Festus Evbuomwan and Anthony Aroboi

But now that the war was no longer endangering Marianists and their works, progress was again possible. There was need for some kind of scholasticate experience for the newly professed, and a program for them was set up in Fugar in September of 1968. Half a year later, another novice, Festus Evbuomwan, made his first profession and joined them.

But then word came from the Provincial Administration on August 13 that the Marianists had decided to close (temporarily) all of the Marianist programs—postulate and novitiate—at Ekpoma and to move everything to Fugar. This was a major six-month undertaking, but it was completed by January 10, 1970. For a while, Fugar was the only Marianist community in the country.

Zambia: Brother Carmine Sacked

In 1971, the school at Matero Boys' was moving along nicely when suddenly a complication arose. A boy was sent to the school in February by someone in the government. The boy was well over age, and Brother Carmine held to the rule in existence at the time that a boy accepted in form 1 should not be older than 17. He sent the boy away. A dispute arose, and Brother Carmine was notified that he was fired as head. After some discussion among government officials, the Catholic Secretariat, and the Marianist superior in Rome, it was determined that Brother Carmine could remain until the end of the school term. At that time, he quietly left the country, and Brother Frank Annunziata became headmaster.

Kenya: Various Changes

John Schneider

The Marianists had agreed to take responsibility for Mang'u High School with the understanding that it was to be expanded by adding a "higher school." But its location at Mang'u village did not allow enough space for this. In November 1968, Brother John Schneider, the headmaster, announced plans at an awards ceremony attended by the president of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, to relocate the school away from the village of Mang'u to a more spacious site near the larger town of Thika. This took time to implement; however, the cornerstone for the new school was laid more than two years later (March 27, 1971), and the community moved into its new residence the next month.

Meanwhile, more space had been needed by the community at Aquinas High School, too, so a second residence building was completed in 1969, which contained a more spacious chapel and facilities for conducting an aspirancy program for a small number of applicants.

This was a time, too, for changing of headmasters. Mang'u received its first lay headmaster in 1970 in the person of Raphael Njoroge. Aquinas' new head, Brother Charles Opferman, took over in 1971. That same year, by the way, Aquinas High School's basketball team set a national scoring record.

Edward Klements

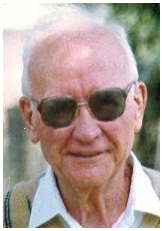
The unfortunate and untimely death of Father Edward Klements, SM, of the Mang'u community, occurred on May 12, 1972. His family had a history of weak blood vessels and

aneurysms. He now suffered an aneurysm of the aorta in the approximate area of the diaphragm, which resulted in blood pouring out into the lower abdominal cavity. By the time he could be taken to the hospital, about 23 miles away, there was no hope. A funeral Mass was held in the new Mang'u library, which was turned into a temporary chapel; his body was taken back to the United States for burial. This was only six months after the death of Brother John Bertone, mentioned above.

From 1972 to 1974 there was a Saturday-Sunday glider program on the new Mang'u site. Eventually a kind of Thika Town Flying Club got under way. This novel innovation afforded glider rides for any interested participant who had the courage and daring for this sort of sport. This latest program was an outgrowth of the original Mang'u High School Air Program for students, but it now involved any would-be flying enthusiast, with the aid of an experienced pilot.

MALAŴI

Several notable events occurred in 1973 in Malaŵi. In that year, Chaminade Karonga was the national champion in drama, under drama coach Brother Norb Sturm. That same year, the Mission Air program ended, when a plane crashed on Likoma Island. No one was hurt.


Norb Sturm

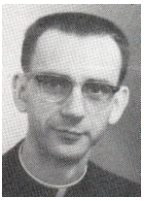
The community was shocked, though, in April. Brother Vincent Rathbun had arrived in Malaŵi in April 1960. In 1972 he took part with two fellow religious from America in extensive planning for the future of the Marianists in Malaŵi. On April 3, 1973, he flew to Nairobi for a concluding meeting with fellow Marianists on these issues. And during a meeting on the sixth he received a phone call from Father

O'Leary in Malaŵi, who informed him that he had been declared a prohibited immigrant by the Banda government.

The reason for this seems to have been twofold. One cause seems to have been an incident where one of the students of the school had misbehaved at a youth rally the previous Sunday, and the government was not happy about how Brother Vincent handled it. This was made worse because in fact the students had arrived at the rally late—an offense to the organizers.

With Vinnie gone, there were only two brothers left at Nkhata Bay, Father Charles Bergedick and Brother Ben Jansen. Brother John Gilfether had already arranged to move (in July 1973) to Kachebere to teach in the diocesan seminary. At first, Father Charles assumed responsibility as headmaster, but he moved to Mzuzu Technical at the end of 1973. Brother Stan Zubek went to Nkhata Bay at that point to become headmaster, but he stayed only until 1976. Meanwhile, the brothers closed the community at Mzuzu at the end of 1974, and three of the brothers went from there to Nkhata Bay for a year or two. Eventually, only Brother Bernard Jansen remained as the last brother in Banga. In 1977 he moved to Karonga, and the Marianist community at Chaminade Mission became the only one remaining in Malaŵi.

Nigeria: New Efforts



Thomas Niemira

When the Marianists left Ekpoma for Fugar in January 1970, it was not known how long they would be gone. The diocese took over the place and set up a number of its own programs there.

But in December 1972 Father Thomas Niemira returned and set to work organizing spiritual

renewal programs on the compound. At the same time, the place was renamed the Brother Roman Centre.

A few months later, a meeting of the Marianists working in Nigeria established recruitment of indigenous Marianists as the main objective of the Society of Mary in Nigeria.

During this period, things prospered at St. John's, Fugar. The regrouping of forces, as a result of the events in 1968 and '69 brought with it much progress at the school, and academic results were quite impressive. However, there were two lingering problems that sapped the energy of those who lived there.

One was uncertainty about the principal's post. The government had announced its intention to "Nigerianize" that post at St. John's; although it had agreed to the appointment of Brother Michael Cain as principal in 1970, there was no way to know how long that would last.

The second problem was the matter of residence visas. The last one received had been given to Brother Cain in August 1967, and the government was not ready to give any more. Even visitors' visas were not granted for a while.

These things created a hopeless and demoralizing situation, and action needed to be taken. As a step, in March 1971, the community at Fugar decided to close down the formation programs conducted there.

The Provincialate also took action by sending Brother James Vorndran and Mr. Raymond Wach to Nigeria to work on a solution. Their efforts took time, but by 1974 a free flow of

fresh personnel obtained residence visas. The question of the principal's post was settled a year earlier.

Stephen Tutas

Even the General Administration got involved. The Superior General, Father Stephen Tutas, and Brother Gerald Schnepp, General Head of Temporalities, visited Nigeria. They gave encouragement to the Society's future in Nigeria, but this would involve an eventual withdrawal from Fugar and a new start at Ekpoma.

The final chapter on Nigerianization of the administration at St. John's, and the departure of the Marianists from there, came in 1973. James Onyedome was the eventual appointee of the government. He was worked in to his new position by the last Marianist to be principal at Fugar, Brother Michael Cain.

July 1973 was the month when it was thought best for the Marianists to withdraw from Fugar. Brothers John Saurine and Michael Cain had gone on home visit at that time, and Father Niemira had gone already to Ekpoma on December 10, 1972. Brother David Conrad joined him there after he had recovered from an illness which for a time necessitated a sick leave in America. Brothers Aroboi and Evbuomwan continued their educational pursuits in Ibadan.

A happier consequence of the visit of the Superior General, though, was the decision to reestablish a novitiate program at Ekpoma, while continuing with the short-term renewal programs already being offered there. After some problems with obtaining visas, two Kenyan novices arrived at Ekpoma on January 20, 1975, to begin their novitiate.

Nigeria: Ibadan

As early as 1962, some Marianists were looking at establishing a community farther west in Nigeria. By 1968-69, it was thought even imperative to start a Marianist establishment for scholastics in Ibadan, a large metropolitan city. Ibadan seemed ideal for many reasons: it offered the advantages of a university, a major seminary for future Marianist priest-candidates, a national pastoral institute for religious renewal, a national formation centre for post-novitiate training, a practical experience in a joint religious-community setting, and so on.

John Saurine

Furtherance of this goal came into reality as a result of the March 1973 visitation of the Superior General, of Marianist planning sessions in May 1973, and of the withdrawal from Fugar in July. Brother John Saurine was dispatched to Ibadan, where he began to look for a rented house to serve as a residence. By January 1974, he had succeeded in getting a place and making it ready. He and the two scholastics, Brothers Anthony Aroboi and Festus Evbuomwan, moved in promptly. A month later, those same two brothers made their profession of perpetual vows at Ekpoma. The date was February 3, 1974.

3. The African Area/Region

Thomas Stanley

With growing development of Marianist involvement in English-speaking Africa, a new administrative officer was eventually created, called the African Area Coordinator. This administrative office would be under the direction of and accountable to both of the sponsoring Provinces (New York and Cincinnati); his jurisdiction included the four countries of Kenya, Zambia, Malaŵi, and Nigeria. The first African Area Coordinator was Father Thomas Stanley, who arrived in Nairobi on June 9, 1974. Before long he had appointed a council of five members.

Father Tom Stanley was named superior for all communities sponsored by the Cincinnati Province on March 1, 1974. The New York Province agreed to include the Lusaka community in December; thus a joint Area was set up at that time.

The Area Council had its first meetings from December 28, 1974, to January 2, 1975. There were two delegates from Nigeria, one from Zambia, and one from Kenya, along with the Area Coordinator. The delegate from Malaŵi was unable to attend because the government of Malaŵi refused permission to leave the country.

The first session of the African Area Council ended after five days of meetings. They dealt with a long list of topics, including: a) the role of the Area Coordinator; b) the role of the Area Council; c) financial arrangements; d) formation issues, including the matter of the novitiate (It would remain at Ekpoma, if possible, but alternate locations were to be looked into in case visa problems made Ekpoma impractical.); e) and items to bring to the General Administration concerning the

General Chapter. In addition, it was decided to withdraw from Nkhata Bay Secondary School, a sad decision that took two more years to finally implement.

The formation of an Area structure marked a major change in the outlook of the Marianists in Nigeria, Malaŵi, Kenya, and Zambia; while some found the change difficult, others welcomed it. Father Tom Stanley remarked in *African Area Newsletter* (Jan. 1, 1975) that "the chief interest of the Area members is in what the Area is going to become, and not in what it has been." "There is a minimum of entrenched vested interests," he added, and "the members have a sense of contributing to the good things happening in it." He commended the fact that "the Area has initiated a sound and effective program for the recruitment and development of new African members."

This last statement expresses in a simple way what some saw as a profound change in outlook for the Marianist missionaries. In the beginning, the primary focus had been to organize and run excellent schools. Now the Area was, while not abandoning that ideal, also putting its energy into what was later to be called *implantation*. In fact, a few years later, in August of 1979, the whole General Administration came to Africa. From August 27-30, they met at Lusaka, Zambia, with the Provincial Superiors of the two sponsoring Provinces and with the members of the Area Council. The outcome was a new policy statement, referred to as the "Lusaka Declaration," which listed implantation as the number one priority in the Area.

Moving Forward

The years following the establishment of the Area structure were relatively uneventful for a while. The novitiate program at Ekpoma was reestablished, with Father Tom Niemira (until July 1976), Father Robert Hertweck, and then Father Gerald Bettice serving as novice masters. Additional novices arrived, largely from Kenya. The Marianists at Ibadan moved their residence to the Loyola College compound. Chaminade High School Karonga took top national honors in drama competition under Brother Norb Sturm. A new education policy in Zambia put into question the status of Matero Boys' High School. The last Marianist left Nkhata Bay in 1977, leaving Karonga as the only SM community in Malaŵi. Brother Vincent Rathbun became the second Area Coordinator in July 1977. In December the Marianists officially withdrew from Ibadan.

In April of 1977, the SM lost another of its members in Africa, when Brother Michael Cain died in an automobile accident near Ekpoma. The *African Area Newsletter* tells the story:

> Brother Michael D. Cain, age 41, died at in an auto accident near Benin City, not far from the entrance to the Brother Roman Centre. At the time of his death he was the Nigerian representative on the African Area Council, director of the community at Brother Roman Centre, and had just completed a history-making term as the Society's first brother novice master. [Father] Bob Hertweck wrote about the details: It was just after dark. A lorry had parked to fix a tire. It was jacked up and standing half on

> the highway and half off. As is unfortunately the case with so many lorries in Nigeria, it had no tail lights or reflectors to warn approaching cars of its presence, nor were any warning flares or lanterns set out. Mike, Stan Zubek, and Jerry Bettice were traveling together from Fugar to Ekpoma. Jerry was evidently driving, Stan was in the middle, and Mike was sitting against the righthand door. Bright headlights of an approaching car blinded our men just enough to make the dangerously parked lorry invisible. The righthand side of their car slammed into the lorry and was thrown across the road to the left shoulder. Mike was killed, and the other two Brothers were hospitalized for a while. Mike was buried at Ekpoma on April 30.

The following year, 1978, saw Zambia occasionally attacked by bombers, due to the troubles in neighboring Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Meanwhile, in Kenya, a new community was opened on the western side of Nairobi, on Gitanga Road. In Rome, two new popes were elected within the space of two months. And in what seemed a small thing but which would grow to something big, a few of the Marianists first began to involve themselves in the affairs of a slum called Kinyago.

Nigeria: Benin City

In Nigeria, the Marianists were now all consolidated at Ekpoma, and there were some who wished to explore the possibility of serving the diocese of Benin City in other ways. This possibility increased with the arrival in December 1978 of two new Marianists at Ekpoma.

At a meeting at the office of Bishop Ekpu on February 16, 1979, a team of five brothers met with the bishop and two of his associates and presented themselves as desirous of further service. The bishop in response offered two possibilities: the spiritual year program for diocesan seminarians, already scheduled to be held at the Brother Roman Centre, or the minor seminary at Benin City.

Robert Hertweck

The community chose the latter option, and the proposal was approved by the Area Superior, Brother Vincent, in May. By August 26, Father Robert Hertweck and Brother Tom Oldenski were residing at the seminary, with school opening on September 7. In the following year, the community was reinforced by the arrival of additional Marianists, but late in 1980 Brother Tom Oldenski was forced to leave Nigeria because of an accident.

The community continued to do good work at Benin City, despite decreasing numbers, until the Marianists were withdrawn from Nigeria in 1985.

Region

While this was happening, Brother Vincent Rathbun developed a disease that slowly incapacitated him, and in April 1979 he resigned his position as Area Coordinator. He was replaced by Brother Joseph Davis four months later (at the time of the Lusaka meeting that produced the “Lusaka Declaration”).

Joseph Davis

In the next year, International Marian Seminars were held, through the efforts of some Marianists, in both Kenya and Zambia.

In Ekpoma, a disagreement developed over land. The Marianists had developed only a part of their large compound, and the townspeople decided to claim some of it for a school of their own. They seized and bulldozed a section of the property and did some collateral damage. A new agreement had to be worked out, and eventually the issue was settled amicably.

In 1981, the community at Aquinas was divided into two, one in each of the two buildings. One was to focus on aspirancy, and the other on post-novitiate formation. By then, Marianist participation at Aquinas High School was minimal.

Recruitment and formation efforts got a big boost in the Region late in 1981, when Brother Stanley Zubek moved from Kenya—where he was running the aspirancy program—to Zambia and was given recruitment as his work priority. He accomplished a lot by working together with vocation directors of other congregations and was instrumental in setting up various activities and structures.

On the last day of that year, an important document, the *African Area Charter*, was approved. This document essentially gave more responsibility and autonomy to the Marianists working within the Area.

The year 1982 began with the fifth Marianist death within the Area, that of Brother Vincent Rathbun. His health had deteriorated so much that he spent a lot of his time simply resting. He died in his sleep during a daytime nap and was

buried at St. Austin's parish in Nairobi. Brother Joseph Davis gave an impressive eulogy.

KENYA: Some New Ministries

At this time, things were stirring in Kenya. At the end of 1981, Brother Ken Thompson left the Area to go to Japan, spelling the end of the Marianist presence at Mang'u High School. Only Father Robert Ouellette of the Canadian Province remained, and he was withdrawn in July 1982.

Fred Silbereis

Late in 1981, Brother Fred Silbereis arrived, intending, ironically, to join the community at Mang'u. But the headmaster insisted that there was no opening for another Marianist teacher, and after a few months he found a position on the teaching staff at Kenyatta University College (at that time essentially a teacher training college for high school-level teachers). He spent four years there, three of them as the only Marianist on campus, and he became fully involved in many aspects of campus ministry. He also became associated with the newly opened Catholic Youth Centre in Nairobi, and for some years he was a frequent presence there for various programs, including the annual Youth Challenge Week, which typically drew about 1,500 youth for a week of spiritual activities and challenges.

In May of 1982, the first monthly meeting of what was eventually to become the MLC in Kenya was held. Eighteen lay people attended.

That same year, Brother Joseph Davis, while Area Coordinator, also began to work with refugees in Nairobi and soon found

himself deeply involved. The refugees had so many needs, and Brother Joe kept looking for ways to meet them. By 1983 he was providing lodging for some of them. But despite his many efforts, funding remained a serious problem, and debts accumulated. His program, MRAP (Marianist Refugee Assistance Programme), was closed because of those debts in 1987, when the archdiocese took over some elements of it.

MALAŴI: Reforestation Project

In 1983, Brother George Dury launched the Chaminade forest project in Karonga. He had noted that the area around Karonga was badly depleted of trees, perhaps partly because of the climate, but also to a large extent by the cutting of trees for firewood for cooking. He planted thousands of tree seedlings on the school campus, assigned students to water individual plots, and gave gifts as incentives. He also spoke with neighbors and tried to convince them to plant trees as well. After some time, he diversified and set out to convince people to use more efficient methods of cooking, using cheap-but-effective wood burning stoves. He was not especially successful in this last endeavor, however, because he was swimming upstream against strong traditions.

Kenya: Lots of Variety

With few exceptions, for the next several years, almost all of the notable events seemed to focus on Kenya.

Early in the year, a spiritual formation program for diocesan Brothers congregations was organized at the aspirancy house by Brother John Gilfether. The program was meant to upgrade some of the candidates accepted by diocesan congregations, candidates with a very minimal educational preparation. While

well intended, it ran into too many problems, and ended in less than a year, when Brother John returned to the United States.
On August 1, 1982, an attempted coup by the Air Force in Kenya created havoc for a while, but there was no real damage to programs or property.

Later that year, three more Marianists arrived to bolster the communities in Nigeria, and the men there organized a celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the arrival on the first Marianists in Nigeria.

Timothy Clarke

Back in Kenya, the SM briefly reentered the Aquinas High School teaching staff when Brother Timothy Clarke signed on in November. But he lasted at the school only six months before returning to the United States.

Brothers Peter Daino and Brother Tim Phillips teamed up to work on projects at the Kinyago slum area 1983. Their Ushindi project (youth business opportunities) was a success, and they began to work on plans for a trade school as well.

In October, an associate degree program was begun at the scholasticate at Makadara (the site of Aquinas High School, and now the location of the Area Offices, the aspirancy program, and the scholasticate), in connection with the University of Dayton. It began with three students and three professors: Brothers Paul Boeckerman, Lawrence Cada, and Frank Damm.

Nigeria: The End

Back in 1981, the Area Council at the April meeting received a proposal to “temporarily” withdraw from Nigeria due to

various problems experienced there. The Council rejected the proposal.

Now in December 1983, the issue recurred and was discussed again, but this time the withdrawal was not to be merely temporary. A proposal was drawn up and presented to the Area Chapter of 1984, where the Chapter—agonizing over the question—finally voted for withdrawal. By that time there were only two or three men at Ekpoma, and the same at Benin City. The decision hit them hard, and some opted to return to the United States rather than to move to other communities within the Region. The property at Ekpoma reverted to the diocese, although some of the furnishings and books were packed and shipped to Nairobi. The graves of Brothers Roman Wicinski and Michael Cain remained at Ekpoma. The last Marianists left Nigeria in July 1985.

Zambia: Changes of Headmaster

Frank Annunziata

Late in 1983, Brother Frank Annunziata, who had been headmaster at Matero Boys' High School since Brother Carmine was removed in 1971, announced that he was resigning. Within a short time, Brother Richard Olsen was appointed to the post. It was a problem time for any head, and he did find it difficult. The financial situation in Zambia was not good. Teachers went on strike over pay in February, although some expatriates remained in class along with a few devoted local teachers. Hard financial decisions had to be made, which sometimes annoyed the teachers. Toward the end of 1985, he in turn resigned, and Brother Frank was reinstated in the office.

Kenya: Things Keep Moving

The year 1984 saw the installation of the first African Marianist as the director of a community when Brother Titus Mwariga was made director at Makadara. By then the two communities in two separate buildings were reunited.

In 1985, Brother Joseph Davis, through his MRAP program, opened a second lodging place for refugees and named it Zaragosa Centre.

Around this same time, the Gitanga Road property, which was rented out to a few Maryknoll priests, was reclaimed and became the site of the novitiate, which was operating in Makadara alongside the aspirancy since the SM left Ekpoma. This move to Gitanga Road was only temporary, however, and in the following year another reshuffle took place—the novitiate and scholasticate programs exchanged locations. The novitiate went back to Makadara.

At the end of the year, the people living in the Kinyago slum, mostly squatters, were forced to relocate. Marianist projects among them of course moved as well, and it was around this time that they came to be named collectively as IMANI: "Incentive from the Marianists to Assist the Needy to be Independent."

Frank Damm

On May 4, 1986, Brother Joseph Davis' term as Regional Superior (the name was changed from "Area" to "Region" on March 9, 1985) ended, and Brother Frank Damm was appointed to the position. Changes quickly followed. In less than a year, the following would be noted: The community at Kenyatta University, which had grown to three

members, was closed. Brother Fred Silbereis was appointed full-time vocation director for Kenya (and Uganda, sporadically). The novitiate moved back to Makadara. A new community opened in Nairobi, called the Sunrise Community, for men not involved in the formation programs at the other two houses. The refugee assistance program MRAP was brought to an end. The IMANI project acquired a house in the Eastleigh district of Nairobi and moved in, naming it Maria House.

It was at this time that IMANI was designated as an official ministry of the Region. Soon after, it grew to have three divisions: Maria House, mainly focusing on young unwed mothers in the slums; Chaminade Training Centre, a trade school in another slum (opened in 1988); and the Job Creation Program. Brother Tim Phillips was put in charge of IMANI, and Brother Julius Abugah headed CTC.

Malaŵi: Storm Damage

In 1989, a violent storm swept through Karonga and did great damage. At Chaminade High School, eight school buildings were damaged, as well as the Marianist residence and a water tower. (Repairs cost US $40,000)

Zambia: The Good and the Bad

Lawrence Susu Zulu professed first vows in 1989, and Brother Patrick Chilaisha made his perpetual profession in 1990 (both men are from Zambia). Brother Patrick subsequently became the school bursar.

Meanwhile, in early 1989, Brother Frank Annunziata again stepped down from the position of headmaster, and a layman,

Chifumu Chipeta, was named to the post. But he did not stay long; he resigned in December.

In February 1990, a cholera outbreak closed the school for a couple of weeks. It was closed again in June when the price of cornmeal was raised (i.e., government subsidies reduced), and food riots broke out in the centre of Lusaka.

In September, George Solami was named headmaster, and the school was back on course.

The Marianists had a hard year in Zambia in 1991. Almost simultaneously in June, all three Zambian professed Marianists in Lusaka left the Society.

At the same time—perhaps related to their leaving—Brother Stanley Zubek, who was doing recruitment, decided to leave Lusaka and to return home to the United States. This was only a couple of months after he was named the first manager of the newly-established school managing board. A reason he later cited for leaving was that during the year before, half of the promising vocation contacts had tested positive for HIV.

By 1993, the school was experiencing critical water and power shortages. The headmaster, Solami, was reassigned, and Brother Carmine Annunziata was called upon to return as headmaster.

Malaŵi

The first recorded meeting of what was to become a Marianist Lay Community in Malaŵi took place in Karonga in January 1992. But the MLC actually was established there only in May 1995, when Father Richard Loehrlein held *The Pearl of Great Price*, a retreat that introduced the Marianist charism to four

interested men, one of whom was J. R. Banda, the headmaster. Growth was slow, but they were patient.

Richard Loehrlein

In April, Brother George Dury, who began feeling the serious effects of aging, decided not to burden the Region with caring for him and elected to leave the Region. He had been serving in Malaŵi for 30 years.

For some time, there had been discussion about the need for a general meeting of all of the Marianists in the Region. With some help from the General Administration, such a meeting was organized and held in Nairobi from December 27, 1993, to January 1, 1994. One of the things decided at this assembly, called CANA, was that the SM should leave Malaŵi after another five years. This was a blow to the men working there, but instead of discouraging them it seemed to give them new energy. Not only did the MLC get a boost, as mentioned above, but also Father Richard organized a staff development day at Chaminade, at which he presented to the staff the Five Characteristics of Marianist Education. This was so well received that other schools made inquiries about it, and the five principles even became an official part of diocesan education policy.

Region

Backing up a few years: In 1990, the Regional Council decided it would be advantageous to begin working on local financial support for Marianist projects. At the same time it was felt necessary to put some more formal order into attempts to arrange for help from granting agencies abroad. Thus was born the MARO office, with Brother Peter Daino in charge.

MARO's mission was outlined at the time as:

A. Develop Fiscal Resources
- Liaise with clients and develop a fundraising plan
- Develop project proposals for donor agencies
- Develop appeals to parishes and individuals
- Assist with the reporting needed for donor agencies
- Track donor behavior and upgrade donor participation.

B. Develop Human Resources
- Liaise with clients and develop a human resource plan
- Upgrade staff leadership skills
- Develop an evaluation process.

In May 1990, word was received that Brother Joseph Davis, former Regional Superior, had been ordained and was to join other Marianists in service at a parish in the Diocese of Cleveland. However, this was a short-lived experience, as he died of inoperable cancer in mid-1992.

In June 1991, the General Chapter called for more emphasis among the Marianists on the development of Marianist Lay Communities. In the following year, the Region sent delegates to an international gathering of lay Marianists in Santiago, Chile.

Martin Solma

Early in 1992, Brother Frank Damm, his second term as Regional Superior having ended, was replaced by Father Martin Solma. One of the more noticeable things that Father Martin did early on was the construction of a new novitiate at a site near Limuru, Kenya. The program was moved to the new site on May 21, 1994, just days before construction

was completed.

Not long after, Father Martin organized another successful enterprise: the Marianist Leadership Assembly, which took place at Karen, near Nairobi, and opened on July 9, 1994. Delegates who had never before visited Africa were delighted to find that their fears of being inundated by snakes and scorpions were totally unfounded.

Late that year, construction of a new school chapel at Matero Boys' began.

4. New Expansion

It would be difficult to settle on an exact date, but at some point around this time, things began to look more optimistic. The Region had reached a low point in terms of membership in 1988 and now it was on its way back up, due to successful recruitment efforts especially in Kenya. The new novitiate had been built to accommodate a possible nine new novices each year, and the scholasticate was expanded once and needed even more space.

Peter Daino

The MLC was beginning to show signs of growth as well. In 1995, Brother Hugh Bihl, who had extensive experience with the MLC in the US before coming to the Region, was named coordinator of lay community development for the Region. His hope was not only to animate the growth of the MLC, but also to prepare a few of the African Marianists specifically for that aspect of the Marianist mission in the Region.

Hugh Bihl

In Kenya, Brother Anthony Mwangi's celebration of perpetual vows was held in December at the new novitiate with a colorful ceremony.

Likewise in 1995, two Malaŵian brothers completed their studies and were assigned to Karonga, bolstering that community's morale.

Malaŵi: New Ventures

Meanwhile, Brother Peter Daino and others were interested in developing something similar to IMANI in rural Malaŵi near Karonga, and he and Father Charles Stander were sent there in March 1996 to do a feasibility study. The result of this study was that a trade school was to be established on an undeveloped piece of the Chaminade compound. This, however, took until 1999 to accomplish.

Thus, things were looking up in Malaŵi, despite the earlier decision to withdraw from Karonga in a few years. So Father Martin made plans to open a new community in the country, based largely on the three professed Malaŵian brothers. Unexpectedly, all three of them left the SM, and the plans were in ruins. After some thought, plans were adjusted, and the new community was organized when Brothers Fred Silbereis and Timothy Mazundah were dispatched to the town of Mzuzu to set up house in mid-1997. They were joined after about a month by Brother Hugh Bihl, who was named director.

Three months later, these plans were disrupted again when the Regional Chapter, in response to a plea from the Karonga community, reversed its earlier decision and decided to support the SM presence at Chaminade for as long as possible. This resulted in the closure of the new Mzuzu community after less than a year of existence.

Kenya: Two New Projects

New ventures were not confined to Malaŵi, of course. On January 1, 1997, the Marianists officially took responsibility for Our Lady of Nazareth Primary School, located in the Mukuru slum, quite near to IMANI's Chaminade Training

Centre and the recently established parish. It had been founded by the Sisters of Mercy, but they decided to hand it over to the Marianists at this time. Father Martin took personal interest in this school and went to work immediately to find ways to improve it.

Also in Kenya, a new project was set up at Mombasa: a trade school on the edge of town similar to IMANI's CTC in Nairobi. It came to be known simply as the Marianist Development Project, or MDP. It was founded by Brother Peter Daino and Brother Julius Abugah, and the first students began their courses in April 1998. They could choose from carpentry, catering, hairdressing, or metalwork. They also took courses in basic business knowledge, self-awareness, and Gospel living. Graduates have been welcomed back and can rent space in the workshops on a daily basis. They work on their own projects until they find employment or open a shop of their own. Once the project was going well, management of it was transferred to Brother Paul Kageche.

Region

The Region sent two representatives to the International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities' convocation that was held in Lliria, Spain, in 1997.

This same year CHARISM—a joint Africa-India program for ongoing formation for junior professed members—was founded, and the first CHARISM program occurred in Nairobi from May 17 to June 10.

And of course, 1997 was a time of important changes in the home Provinces, as the process of restructuring and forming a single Province of the United States began.

In 1998, a Marianist lay community was established for the youth, under Peter Kasanda, in Karonga. Mr. Chiwowa, who had taught at Chaminade for some time and was an active MLC member, moved to Nkhata Bay Secondary School to become headmaster, where he soon established a second Marianist lay community.

In March, 1998, Father Solma's two terms as Regional Superior ended, and Brother Frank Annunziata took over.

His brother, Carmine, who had resumed the position of headmaster at Lusaka, resigned. His second tenure in the position lasted for five years. (Brother Carmine moved into the arena of development work for the school.) The deputy headmaster, Stephen Ziwa, took over on September 1.

Malaŵi: Miracle Centre

A new trade school was established in Karonga in 1999 with Brother Peter Daino in charge. It reached full bloom a year later. Its program included training in tailoring, catering, and carpentry, as well as other courses for personal growth in maturity, self-reliance, and spirituality. It was the only technical school in all of Malaŵi that accepted students who had not completed secondary school. A large part of its student body had been orphaned when AIDS took their parents from them. Brother Peter gave it the name "Miracle," and indeed it has been that for many of those helped.

Miracle's first graduation took place in October 2002, with forty-two completing the three-year course.

The International Organization of Marianist Lay Communities was officially recognized in 2000 by the Church's Pontifical Council for the Laity as "an international private association of the faithful." The following year, several MLC members from the Region attended the third International Convocation of the MLC.

Kenya: Kitale

As is well known, there was war in southern Sudan for many years. Despite all the hardships, there were several dioceses in southern Sudan that did whatever was possible to evangelize the people and to help them—including providing some measure of educational opportunity and health care.

One of the dioceses, that of Rumbek, was led by Bishop Caesar Mazzolari, who established a junior seminary (high school). Because of insecurity in Sudan, he built it in Kenya, near the town of Kitale, and obtained the services of some local religious priests to administer it. But before long, he was dissatisfied and looked for a congregation focused on schoolwork to take it over. The one he found was the Society of Mary. In early 2002, Brother Frank Annunziata, as Regional Superior, sent Brother Fred Silbereis to Kitale to "have a look," and soon after he sent him back to begin the Marianist involvement at the seminary. Within a week of his arrival he was named rector.

The going was tough. Many of the students were older than traditional high school students, having served in the Sudan People's Liberation Army for a few years before coming to Kitale. All of them were traumatized by the war and as a result tended to be rather violent.

After a few months, Brother Fred was joined by Brothers Stephen Wanyoike and Gabriel Mbugua (and briefly by Brother Timothy Mazundah), and things began to turn around. Bishop Mazzolari visited the seminary and mentioned soon after his arrival that the school "seemed different somehow."

In October 2002, Brother Stanley Zubek, on the strength of his experience as headmaster at Nkhata Bay earlier on and having agreed to return to the Region for a while, was posted to Kitale to relieve Brother Fred as rector. Additional Marianists were posted to the seminary; by August of 2003 Brother Fred was recalled to Nairobi to resume vocation work.

Stanley Zubek

Region: Looking to the Future

In 2003, the second assembly of the Region's membership gathered at Nairobi for CANA II. It largely recognized and consolidated the trends that were being experienced, and it began the process of preparing for the next ten years or so.

Having completed two terms as Regional Superior, Brother Frank Annunziata stepped down from that responsibility in March 2004, and Father Martin Solma was appointed in his place. A few months later, the Region hosted an international conference for Marianist formators that lasted several weeks.

And then in 2005, there were four noteworthy events:

1) Brother Gabriel Kirangah was ordained on October 27, 2005, the first Marianist priest to come from the Region.

Gabriel Kirangah

2) The MLC formed a council, including members from all three countries of the Region, and installed officers at a ceremony in Nairobi on October 29.
3) During November, the Regional Administration decided on the purchase of property in Lusaka, with the intention of setting up a new formation house there. Renovation and expansion of the existing building began in 2006.

4) The Regional Chapter set in motion a series of discussions and consultations concerning the prospect of the Region becoming an autonomous unit in the Society of Mary within the next ten years or so.

This is where our account ends. What will come next? The African members of the Region are eager to move ahead. The handover to them is nearly completed. The spirit is one of optimism. There will be serious challenges, such as the issue of financial sustainability, but solutions will undoubtedly be found with time and through the providence of God. By the year 2007, when the Region celebrates 50 years of Marianist presence in Africa, surely there will be much reason to be optimistic.