

Dear friends of Africa

June 2018

About once a week I visit our Parochial school which lies about two miles from our Secondary School Mazinde Juu . I am no longer the Pastor of the parish as of the past two years but I still keep charge of the parochial school. The school buildings are rather recent structures but the original building was a church made with sun dried bricks. Time did its work to fulfill the description of the 80 years old building as shabby to say the least. There were no structural cracks but the layers of whitewash which had flaked off in patches added to the decrepit and derelict looks of the chapel. After moving into our new Parish church dedicated to St. Benedict the old church, rapidly saw a downward trend to destitution. I made some effort to refurbish a section of the building but my haphazard efforts mainly accentuated the drably condition of the rest of the building. So now we are engaged in a total refurbishing of the church. Grand pictures will soon follow. Half of the building will serve as a dining room for the school lunch program and the remaining half will become the school library. The present library is better described as a hallway and the children pack themselves sardine wise on the floor, even the kindergarten children pouring, over picture books .With the present day infatuation with TV and smart phones one wonders whether books will and their libraries that house them will eventually be relegated to the status of museum pieces. I have vivid boyhood memories coming home from grammar school of late afternoons and always finding my mother sitting in our living room with a nursing baby on one arm and a book in the other hand. The aroma of a delicious supper was already percolating in the kitchen with a large kettle of stew steaming away on the gas stone. With 14 children our mother was a mistress of multi management and still got though at least two books a week and in her retirement a book a day. A devoted grandson Jack, by name bought his grandmother a lovely color TV for which mother was duly thankful and it sat in a comer of her sitting room where it stood without ever being turned on. Her rigidity in avoiding the TV began however to waver when one of the other grandchildren introduced her to one of the serial murder mystery shows. But books were over her mainstay in occupying her spare time. I have a treasured photo of my mother sitting in her favorite chair with a book in her hands and her cat

Pal at her feet. This picture has its place of prominence on my desk.



Some time ago a young first year student come during evening study crying. As she was trying to tell me her problem one of the Sister matrons came by and noticing the tearful little soul there in the office said to me, “You don’t need to worry about her father she’s just homesick.” Having suffered the torments of homesickness in the minor Seminary I knew only too well the agony the little girl was going through. So I readily told the good sister that there were cures for malaria and even leprosy but

there was not yet a remedy for homesickness. So Sister left us and when I turned to our little

visitor I asked, "So what's the story?" And she replied "I miss my Mom." So I handed her the picture of my mother and said very simply, 'I miss my mom too.'" As she examined the photo I asked if she wanted to go home and she shook her head 'no' so I gave her my phone and told her to call her mother. Students are not allowed phones so the chance to use one legally is a choice privilege. But the tears stopped and her spirits picked up to bring forth some animated chatter and a laugh as well. She then inquired if I was going to call my mother but I told her that even the smart phones of today don't go that far. To which she replied simply, I'm sorry father. But the fever subsided and our little sufferer went back into the fray of the night study period. Yesterday the end of May was the departure day for the school for the terminal break. My dear friends as you live daily with 750 vibrant ambitious and intelligent teen agers you feel that the whole school vibrates with some sort of syncopated drum beat. But when they are gone you are left with emptiness like the black holes in the universe and ask "What do I do now?"

We are in a total effort program to provide at least 250 to 300 additional places to relieve the congestion in the present dormitories. The foundations at this moment are being poured the roof, God willing will be up on top by December this year. I am personally determined to see this accomplished. It is rather presumptuous to expect the Lord to supply what you have planned for without prior consultation but my experience to date is that presumption also works. I am reminded of the story our Superior General told of a dear friend of his .The Father Abbot went to visit a former classmate in Vienna the home of Freud and mental regenerations. As the Abbot Jeremias came to the Doctor's office he noticed a horseshoe over the door way of the practice of his psychiatrist friend. He directly enquired if his friend if he really believed in the magic of a horseshoe. The noted Doctor smiled and replied "Of course not". Then why do you keep that horseshoe over your front door asked Jeremias , and the reply came just as forthrightly, "because it works". And so dear readers we leave you this month with profound gratitude for your support of our work and your prayers that the Good Lord will continue his Grace that we fulfill what has designated for us to do, because His graces always work too.

Sincerely Father Damian