

MISSION *matters*



Mr Tony Woods (1944-2023)

The focus of this newsletter is Mr Tony Woods, a lay missionary, who dedicated his life to missionary work, primarily in Kenya.

Robert Anthony Woods, or Tony, as he was more commonly known, was born on 13th April 1944 in Doon, Co Limerick. Having completed secondary education, Tony studied for his BA degree at University College Dublin. Graduating at the age of 21, Tony went to Cameroon where he taught for two and a half years, before moving to Kenya in 1968. Tony lived in Kenya for the next fifty five years, the first thirty-two of which he spent in Kitui diocese.

Continued on page 3

Dear Friend,

I am writing to thank you once again for your continued support of our work, which is deeply appreciated.

Missio Ireland is an organisation that is driven to promote and support the life giving work of our overseas missionaries. It is a privilege for me to work with Missio Ireland, the Holy Father's official charity for overseas mission. Having given many years as a missionary, I am only too aware of the needs of the people I worked with.

It is very reassuring for me to know that even today, Ireland continues to stay true to its proud missionary legacy by supporting missionaries overseas. Missio Ireland can only continue to serve those in need, in some of the most inaccessible areas of the world because of your ongoing support and prayers. You make so much possible and for this, I sincerely thank you.

In this issue, we share the life story of the late Tony Woods. He is representative of many lay people who dedicate their lives to living the gospel among the poor and the marginalised of our world today.

You are allowing the Church to thrive overseas by helping local communities to build schools, clinics, parish halls, churches and chapels.



You are preparing the future leaders of our Church by supporting the training of sisters, priests, religious brothers and catechists. Your support also protects vulnerable children by supporting programmes that offer them safe shelter, healthcare as well as hope for the future.

I am not long back from Rome, where I attended the international meeting of Missio once again this year. This is a meeting where all National Directors gather to discuss funding for missionary projects abroad. The Pope had an audience with all National Directors who were present at this meeting. Each of us also had an opportunity to meet him individually.

I extend a very special thank you to our donors and supporters, whose generosity makes so much possible.

Fr. Michael Kelly

Missio Ireland National Director

For three decades, Tony taught and was Headmaster at St Charles Lwanga Secondary School in Kitui where he dedicated his life to generations of students, many of whom ended up in prominent positions in government, military and judiciary life. His monthly salary for all those years went into helping students, ensuring that needy students remained in school even when their fees were long overdue. In all those years, Tony never owned a house or bought a car for himself. This selfless devotion to duty and service to humanity culminated in Tony donating his entire pension, on his retirement, to the school in order to build staff quarters.

Following his retirement from teaching, Tony worked with the Mercy Sisters as Administrator of their hospital in Mutomo until 2000. He then moved to Turkana in north west Kenya, where he spent the next 23 years. In 2002, Tony was appointed Chancellor of the Diocese of Lodwar by Bishop Patrick Harrington SMA. Tony held this role until his death, being one of very few lay Chancellors in the world. As Chancellor, Tony had responsibility for diocesan legal issues and diocesan property. He oversaw the Social Ministry function within the Diocese which, among other things, involved supporting the education of children with visual and hearing impairments. For many years Tony also oversaw the Famine Relief department at the Diocese.



In his work in the dioceses of Kitui and Lodwar, Tony worked very closely with many priests and religious. Tony was a particularly close friend to many Irish missionary congregations: St Patrick's Missionary Society, Ursuline Sisters and the Mercy Sisters among others. Tony was also a much loved and respected member of the Volunteer Missionary Movement (VMM).

From June 2022, Tony's health began to deteriorate and he travelled to Ireland where he underwent some medical treatment before returning to Kenya in December 2022. He was admitted to ICU at Eldoret Hospital on 24th May 2023 and sadly passed away the next day, on the 25th May. His life was one of great sacrifices, founded on a deep passion for service to humanity. He is hugely missed by family members, relatives, those with whom he worked, his former students, colleagues and wide circle of friends.

MISSIONARIES KILLED IN 2023



The Vatican's *Fides News Agency* publishes an annual list of Catholic missionaries who are killed each year for bearing witness to their faith. 20 missionaries met violent deaths around the world in 2023, two more than in 2022. The Pontifical Mission Societies reported that one bishop, eight priests, two men religious, one seminarian, one novice and seven lay people were killed. This year, Fr William Banda, a member of St Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegan Fathers) was shot dead while preparing for morning Mass on the 13th March 2024 at the Cathedral Church of Tzaneen Diocese, South Africa. Fr William was ordained in 2016.

AFRICA

NIGERIA

Fr Isaac Achi died in an arson attack on his parish, in the State of Niger, carried out by an armed group.

Fr Charles Onomhoale Igechi was shot dead by armed men, in Edo State.

Seminarian **Na'aman Danlami**, was burned alive in an attack by bandits on the parish where he served in the State of Kaduna.

Benedictine novice **Godwin Eze**, was kidnapped from the monastery in Eruku, Kwara State, and murdered.

BURKINA FASO

Fr Jacques Yaro Zerbo, 67, was killed by unidentified armed men, in the Boucle du Mouhoun region, on his way to carry out pastoral activities.

Br Moses Simukonde Sens, was killed by a stray bullet near a military checkpoint in the capital, Ouagadougou.

TANZANIA

Fr Pamphili Nada died while being taken to hospital after suffering an attack in his parish, in the Arusha region.

CAMEROON

Br Cyprian Ngeh was attacked and stabbed to death in the street in Bamenda.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Fr Léopold Feyen was stabbed to death in his parish in Kinshasa.

AMERICAS

MEXICO

Fr Juan Angulo Fonseca was shot dead in the state of Jalisco.

Fr Javier García Villafaña was killed on the road between Cuitzeo and Huandacareo, on his way to celebrate Mass.

Gertrudis Cruz de Jesús and **Gliserina Cruz Merino**, young catechists, were killed in an ambush on their way to a Eucharistic procession in the state of Oaxaca.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Bishop David O'Connell, Auxiliary Bishop of Los Angeles, died after being shot multiple times at his home.

Fr Stephen Gutsell died following a knife attack in the rectory of the church in Fort Cahloun, Nebraska.

ASIA

PHILIPPINES

Junrey Barbante and **Janine Arenas**, Catholic students and volunteers from the university chaplaincy community, were among victims of the bombing during Mass in the State University of Mindanao, in the province of Lanao del Sur.

MIDDLE EAST

PALESTINE

Samar Kamal Anton, and her mother, **Nahida Khalil Anton**, were killed by Israeli army snipers as they walked to the Convent of the Sisters of Mother Theresa, in Gaza. Nahida was shot first. Samar was killed as she tried to carry her mother to safety.

EUROPE

SPAIN

Diego Valencia, layman, sacristan of the parish of Nuestra Senora de La Palma, in Algeciras, Cadiz, was killed by a young Moroccan armed with a machete. Several others were injured in the attack.

All information is supplied by *Fides*, the Vatican based news agency of Missio, and by Vatican news.

Your support makes the work of missionaries possible

Missio Ireland is the Holy Father's official charity for overseas mission and missionaries. Each member of the Church family, regardless of location or background, can do their part in helping and celebrating the work of missionaries.

The spiritual and financial support you offer plays an enormous part in giving missionaries courage, so that they can keep loving, serving, and sharing and sharing God's love, mercy and peace with others.

To make a donation simply complete the form and return it to **Missio Ireland**, 64 Lower Rathmines Road, Dublin D06 N2H1. Alternatively, you can also offer a donation by calling:

 **01 497 2035**

or online at:

 **www.missio.ie**

Thank you for all you make possible. We want to keep you up to date on how you are helping missionaries change lives. If you would prefer not to receive updates please call 01 497 2035 or email info@missio.ie and we will amend your contact preferences.



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