

Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart

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Celebrating 50 Years in Zambia, Marian Shrine, Lusaka October 10—12th

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Press Release: **PRESS RELEASE: GOLDEN JUBILEE OF THE PIONEER
ASSOCIATION IN ZAMBIA 1958—2008**

The Pioneer Total Abstinence Association (PTAA) of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is celebrating 50 years of service to the people of Zambia.

Founded originally in Ireland in 1898, the Association, which is now international, was started in Zambia by Father Bernard Collins SJ and a few friends in Chikuni (near Monze) in 1958. These friends included Petro Chiinza, Petro Mbandela, Johanice Micheelo and Veronica Nakantu (who is still alive). There are some others who were present at the first meeting in 1958 and who joined the Association in the early 1960's and two in 1962.

In 1960, Fr Collins was missioned to Chivuna Parish and his place as Parish Priest of Chikuni was taken by Fr Joseph Conway SJ who was there from 1960—1973. Fr Conway appreciated the value of the PTAA in the promotion of strong family life and, as well as promoting the Pioneers in Chikuni Parish, he was the Diocesan Director of the Association from the time the Diocese of Monze was created in 1962. In 1973 Fr Conway was appointed as secretary to the Bishop of Monze a post, which helped him to further develop the Association. He held this post until December 1980.

The PTAA spread slowly to other parts of Zambia. As early as 1976 the famous Father Joseph Gamache M. Afr had published a large book in Bemba called "Imisango Ine Iya Kuwamy" which included a section on the Pioneers.

By 1978 there were over 4,000 members in the country. In 1978 the Catholic Bishops of Zambia, in agreement with the Central Council of the PTAA in Ireland set up a National Office asked the Provincial of the Jesuits to nominate a priest who take on this work. The late Father Robert Kelly SJ was approved by the Zambia Episcopal Conference and was appointed as the first National Director of the PTAA in Zambia that same year. Under Fr Kelly's Pioneers books and pamphlets began to appear in English and in several Zambian languages especially in Bemba, Lozi, Nyanja and Tonga.

In 1995 Father Paddy Joyce SJ replaced Fr Kelly, after 17 very active years of promotion of the PTAA all around Zambia. The Central Council amended the constitutions of the PTAA in 2003 so that the priest appointed is now known as the National Spiritual Director for each country's National Executive Pioneer Council. The National Spiritual Director of the PTAA in

Zambia from 1995 until he died in July 2007 was Fr Joyce. Fr Tom McGivern SJ, a life-long member of the Pioneer was acting National Spiritual Director until Fr Charles Searson SJ was appointed to the post in July 2008.

By 2008, 50 years after the Association began in Chikuni, there are now approximately 35,000 members in all 10 Dioceses of Zambia. Three of the Zambian Bishops are members of the Association. They are Bishop Paul Duffy OMI (Diocese of Mongu), Bishop Raymond Mpezele (Diocese of Livingstone), Bishop Noel O'Regan SMA (Diocese of Ndola).

The PTAA is truly national in reach. As well as the Jesuits mentioned above there have been and there still are 100's of Priests (both from the Dioceses and the Religious Congregations) Religious Sisters and Religious Brothers working alongside the lay members as Spiritual Directors at the Centre, Deanery and Diocesan levels. The PTAA is truly a movement of the whole Zambian Church.

The primary aim of the Association is the promotion of sobriety and temperance. Motivated by the love of God made visible in the Heart of his Son and filled with concern for family members and friends who drink alcohol excessively the PTAA members undertake three commitments: to abstain from all alcoholic drink, to pray twice a day for those who are excessive in their use of alcohol and to wear the Pioneer badge as a public sign of their commitment.

In addition Pioneers have always taken an active interest in promoting sobriety in the country, which means developing a culture in which alcohol is used with wisdom and moderation.

As well as their own regular prayers and meetings, they act locally by visiting schools and colleges, giving talks and leading discussions on this crucial topic. Some of those who hear the message seek to join the Association firstly as Probationary members and then after a year's probation as Life members. Others hear the message and are invited to review the way they use alcohol.

Pioneers also network with other groups, which deal with this issue such as Serenity House, which is a Centre that provides counselling to those in difficulty and training to those who would like to work with them. We also commend Alcoholics Anonymous - A.A. which are self help groups for people who have difficulties with alcohol.

The PTAA wishes to bring the burning issue of alcohol abuse to regional and national attention by means of its members scattered throughout the country through dialogue with relevant Ministries of the Government such as Education, Health and Justice and public bodies such as the Education section of the Drug Enforcement Commission, the Mental Health Workers who have graduated from the new course at Chainama College of Health Education and members of the drinks industry. We are also willing to co-operate with other Faith Based Organisations and N.G.O.'s whose work touches on this same issue. We feel that the issue of alcohol abuse in Zambia needs to be "main-streamed" into every part of our national agenda as it touches so deeply all of our lives not least the issues of HIV and AIDS and gender violence.

While a number of different interventions are possible our starting point is always the Heart of Jesus who burns with love for all his people and especially for those who experience problems due to over consumption of alcohol either by themselves or by their family members or neighbours.

After 50 years of service to the people of Zambia the Pioneers of the Sacred Heart of Jesus look back at many achievements since that small group began in Chikuni even before the birth of the Republic.

Perhaps more importantly the PTAA looks forward to the next 50 years and hopes to make its contribution to the well being of the nation, knowing that “Zambia sober, will be Zambia free!”

For further information about the work of the Pioneers in Zambia, about the Golden Jubilee Celebrations and for people to be interviewed either in English or in any of the Zambian languages contact one of the following in your local area or the National PTAA office.

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Monze:	Paul Shakambwa	0979-45 59 89
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Signed By:

Fr. Charlie Searson SJ
National Chaplain
Pioneer Total Abstinence Association

NB. Digital pictures are available of Veronica Nakantu (one of the 1st members in Chikuni 50 years and who is still alive) are available as well as other pictures illustrating the work of the PTAA. Make a request from the National Office.