

CELEBRATING THE SEASON OF CREATION (2021) IN ZAMBIA

IBVM sisters in Zambia recently became the Managing Agent for a new College of Nursing & Midwifery in Lukulu, in the Western Province of Zambia. The Sisters have had a presence in this remote corner of Zambia since 2006 where they have been involved in development work in the areas of Education and Health. It is thus a fitting tribute that they have been asked by the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Mongu to manage and run this new College of Nursing & Midwifery which bridges both the Education and Health sectors. It is the first tertiary institution in the area which offers Diploma level education and will give opportunity and hope to young people in this underdeveloped area of the country who have been deprived of access to such post-school training facilities over the years. It will also strengthen the primary health care services in the area by training local young people who are used to living in such a remote area and the challenging conditions which this entails. Currently, the Ministry of Health is challenged by staff retention, which in turn has a negative impact on health service delivery, because people deployed from elsewhere fail to adjust to the remote rural way of living and immediately request transfer to more urban centers once deployed. It is hoped that the young people from the area, being close to family and used to the harshness of the environment, will more readily serve as nurses in the local community once trained.

The College which has been developed on the site of the old Mission Hospital in Lukulu welcomed its first intake of sixty (60) students on the 23rd August 2021. It was too premature to consider the celebration of the Season of Creation beginning just one week later on the 1st September 2021, due to the logistics of welcoming students for the first time and getting them settled into the routine of college life. However, it was considered worthwhile to do so on the 5th October, just one day after the official closure of the Season on the 4th October at our weekly celebration of the Eucharist on Campus as this presented a good opportunity to make the students aware of our need to care for creation and our local and global environment. It was an apt to celebrate such an event under the shade of a big tree in the middle of the student campus, and four indigenous trees were planted elsewhere around campus after the celebration of Mass.





Creating awareness of the Season of Creation as a time of grace when the Church, in ecumenical dialogue, offers an opportunity to humanity to renew its relationship with the Creator and with creation, through celebration, conversion and commitment together. It was important to introduce this to our students at the beginning of their college lives. It is something that, many in their struggle for mere survival, perhaps through cutting firewood for the immediate needs of cooking and warmth in winter, may not be aware of the bigger picture, or depletion of their own resources in the long term. Though a Catholic College of learning, the institution has many other denominations within its student body and so it was also important to introduce the ecumenical aspect of the Season of Creation.

Following the celebration of Mass, four trees were planted around the College Campus.



Above (Left) the Priest and Deacon plant a tree and (Right) the Principal Tutor

Below (Left) the College Administrator and (Right) Student representatives plant trees



The staff and students fully entered into the celebration of creation and planting of the trees amidst much joy, singing and dancing. It was a joyful and memorable day, set in the outdoor surroundings of our campus and brought home the significance and importance of caring for creation. This aspect will be further emphasized through the fact that the students have been assigned responsibility to water and care for the newly planted trees. In addition to the trees being planted I believe something even more important was planted in the minds and hearts of the students and staff on this day of Celebration of the Season of Creation, which hopefully will be nurtured through similar ongoing activities into the future.

Pat Hanvey IBVM.