



E-BULLETIN #78

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 147

time out with Connie Maina

'For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord. Plans for good and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.'

Jeremiah 29.11



CONNIE Maina has endured heartbreaking loss, ostracism, brutality, and the upheaval of leaving her African homeland to live in Australia. But through it all, her faith in God has been unshakeable. 'I know that in everything I do and everywhere I go, God has planned it for me,' Connie said.

Connie was born in Kenya, into a family of six children. She completed her first degree, a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology) in Kenya and a Masters in communication in Scotland.

As a young woman, Connie received sponsorship from the Rockefeller Foundation to take part in a development and cultural program in the United States, where she developed skills in fundraising that, at the time, was very new to Kenya. 'I joined the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), a conservation organisation that was then raising funds for wildlife and nature conservation. At that time, Kenya was experiencing a lot of wildlife poaching. We had lost 85 per cent of rhinos, and almost 75 per cent of elephants in a period of 10 years,' Connie said.

Connie left the WWF to help establish the Kenya Wildlife Service, a state organisation that manages and conserves wildlife, national parks, reserves and marine parks. 'The then-director, a renowned conservationist, Dr Richard Leakey, requested the WWF regional representative to release me to help in public relations and fundraising. We did many fundraising strategies and events, with the climax being a \$143 million funding for the wildlife sector, raised by a consortium of donors, led by the World Bank. This changed the entire sector to date,' she said.

In 1988, Connie married Maina Keengwe. Maina was the Kenyan regional director for Intermediate Technology Development Group, a UK-based non-profit organisation and a budding politician. They were married for 11 years and had three children, Michael, now 24, Rose, 22, and Stephanie, 15.

In 1999, Connie's life took a dramatic and heartbreaking turn.

‘My husband was murdered in cold blood in front of me and my children,’ Connie said. ‘Just two weeks before he was murdered, he told me, “Honey, I have a present for us.” I said, “What is it?” He came home with a brand new four-wheel drive. We had just finished educating some of his siblings and he felt he needed to give his family a treat with such a car. I said to him, “You shouldn’t have bought this car. It is going to mean death”.’

Maina and Connie were travelling home in separate cars. When Maina arrived home, the watchman opened the security gate to let him in, but carjackers intercepted him at the gate. He jumped out of the car, but was shot by the carjackers, who stole the vehicle. Following Maina’s murder, Connie and her children were ostracised by his family. ‘When my husband died, the family threw me out with three children. They didn’t help me. It happens in Africa when you lose your husband,’ Connie said. ‘The only support I had was from my family, especially my father.’

In the aftermath of Maina’s death, Connie had two questions for God.

‘The first thing I asked God was, “where were you?” The second question was, “God, what will I do with these children?” After that, I turned to God entirely. I decided the best thing I could do was just hold on to my God. ‘I would say what I am is because of my God. I’m very strong in my faith. As I say always, my faith can move mountains. I don’t know who people turn to when they don’t have faith in God.’

To this day, Connie is unsure if the carjacking was opportunistic or politically motivated. ‘I hired a private investigator because I really wanted to know if it was just an accident or if it was anything political,’ she said. ‘Unfortunately, just before I got the result, about 20 people came to my house and they ransacked the entire place when I was at home with my children and my nanny. They took away documents, our passports, money and personal belongings. ‘They asked me to cooperate, which I did. I gave them everything that I had, anything valuable in the house they took. At the end, they said they wanted to rape me. ‘I told them there was no way they were going to rape me. I’d rather they killed me than raped me. So I knelt down and started praying. I prayed loud and they told me to keep quiet. They asked me if I was a Christian. I said, “yes, I am a very committed Christian” and they cannot touch my body because it is a temple of the Lord.

‘When I opened my eyes, there was not one person in the room.’ The thugs left Connie alone, but when they finished ransacking the house, they locked her, her children and their nanny in the servants’ quarters and they left.

This traumatic experience spurred Connie to leave Kenya. She applied to RMIT to study for an Master of Business Administration in management and was accepted. She arrived in Melbourne with three children in 2001. Not wanting to be seen as a victim, Connie did not tell anyone about the ransacking or Maina’s murder. ‘I didn’t seek asylum or any help. Out of my job, I had managed to save some money and that’s what we lived on here,’ Connie said. ‘It surprised me that in the midst of everything that I was going through, I did very well in my MBA because most of my results were high distinctions.’

In 2004, Connie decided to return to Kenya to seek closure over her husband’s death. Her son remained in Melbourne while Connie returned to Kenya with Rose and Stephanie. Rose later returned to Melbourne on her own to attend university, leaving Connie and Stephanie in Nairobi.

In 2010, at the request of Stephanie, Connie reunited with her husband’s family. ‘When I went back to his family, they were very positive. They received me very well and I’m glad I did go back because if I had stayed here, I would still feel that I needed to close up this.’

Connie made the decision to come back to Melbourne to give her children the chance to be together. ‘It was a very difficult decision because I was then working for the National Museums of Kenya. I was the director of development and corporate affairs, which was a key position, managing 46 national museums and heritage

sites, travelling all over the world. ‘One thing I knew was that when I came here, I wouldn’t get such a job. For me, it wasn’t about the job. It was about getting my family together.’ Maina was a Rotarian, and Connie joined Rotary after his death as a way of continuing his work in social justice. ‘When I was in Kenya, we had some collaboration with the Rotary Club of Essendon, so I came here knowing people from the Rotary Club of Essendon. They made my comeback very smooth and gave me a lot of support.’

Connie is now a member of the Essendon club and, through Rotary, she has been able to support widowed mothers and children in Kenya who have also been the victims of violence. ‘If I could just do something for one or two children, just to make sure that they are comfortable, that would be wonderful.’

In November 2011, Connie began working at the Archdiocese of Melbourne’s newly formed Development Office on a 12-month position as a coordinator of grants and projects. In January this year, Connie secured a permanent position with the Development Office as a parish development officer, running stewardship programs (formerly known as thanksgiving).

‘I’ve had really trying times in my life but God has a plan for each one of us. That’s one thing I believe,’ Connie said. ‘I believe sometimes God allows us to go through trials in life to make us strong. Not to destroy us.’

KAIROS
18.07.13

item 148

PERPETUAL CONSECRATION, DIACONATE and PRIESTLY ORDINATION
in
HOLY TRINITY REGION of CAMEROON/NIGERIA

June 2013 marked another historical event in the life and history of the Pallottine Society at large and the Holy Trinity Region – Cameroon/Nigeria – in particular. On these days God in his infinite goodness sent more laborers in to his vineyard.



on the 29 Jun **Priestly Ordination** happened for the following:

Abraham Bienvenu OLAMA MBIDA sac
Albert ESSOMBA FOUA sac
Albert Patrick ZOLO sac

Barthélemy Claude NDJENGUE ODI sac
Serge Didier MBIA sac

and **Diaconate** for the following

Daniel Eric MEBARA sac (Cameroun)
Stéphane MODEGOAN NDJEMBIE sac (Cameroun)

Joseph Séraphin EDZOA TOLO sac(Cameroun)
Billy Remondière MBODA sac (Cameroun)

the previous day another 5 candidates made their **Perpetual Consecration**:

Roland Anselme NGOK sac
Daniel Éric MEBARA sac
Billy Remondière MBODA sac

Stéphane MODEGOAN NDJEMBIE sac
Joseph Séraphin EDZOA TOLO sac

We thank the formators who accompanied them up to this stage. We also thank God and pray that the Good Lord who started this good work in them will see it to the end.

In his homily the Regional, Fr Bruno Ateba [third from right] spoke of the exigencies of the "*Sequela Christi*" [the commitment to follow Christ] which is the challenge taken up by all consecrated people. He invited them to become true apostles of unity and reconciliation, men of God in a world in crisis, builders of bridges among Pallottine communities in Africa.

Bishop Victor Tonye Bakot, President at the celebration, first expressed his gratitude with a congratulatory message to the candidates, for their "fiat" and their availability. He then reminded the new deacons and priests that the priesthood is a life of humble service in the church of Jesus, and not a road to social status. He invited everyone to be a witness of Christ and a true collaborator of the Bishops. Following the example of Saints Peter and Paul, they are called to be witnesses of the power of the Gospel in their lives with love and enthusiasm, humility and simplicity.

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John Ndiri sac [CN] – Rome – ITALY
10.07.13

sac asia oceania e-bulletin

you commented...

on #77 what a timely article on the pope's visit to that island. It could so easily be Christmas Island [off Australia's coastline - Ed]!! And what are we doing!

CS 21.07.13