

# A Vision not actualised - A missed opportunity?



## **PIONEER FRANCISCAN (OFM) MISSIONARIES IN SOUTH AFRICA, C. 1932-1960**

*A STUDY OF THE FIRST GROUP OF THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR (FRANCISCANS)  
IN SOUTH AFRICA*

*Thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements of a PhD Degree in History  
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## **ABSTRACT**

In 1932, six Missionary Franciscan Friars from Bavaria came to South Africa at the invitation of Bishop Adalbero Michael Fleischer (1874-1963), a Mariannhill missionary in Natal. His vision was that they would establish a “Franciscan Family” there.

Despite this invitation, the Friars were not welcomed by the Mariannhill community and went on to found the Mount Currie Prefecture (Diocese of Kokstad) in 1935. There the Franciscans became involved in the life of the ordinary people, who were otherwise abandoned by the government. Among other activities, they provided schools and gardens, and embarked on skills development projects for the youth. The Holy Cross Sisters - whose arrival in 1926 pre-dated that of the Friars - played a crucial role in these developments. From 1952, their educational work would be supplemented by the medical work of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Sisters.

The arrival of Irish Franciscans (1946) and English Franciscans (1948) brought tensions and differing interpretations of the form that the vision should take. In addition, the Friars were men of their times and products of their particular backgrounds. For example, while some saw their African converts as equals, others were prejudiced against them. However, this thesis – the work of an “insider” to the faith and to the Order, argues that despite tensions and shortcomings, the settlement, and continuing presence, of the Franciscan Friars and Sisters in the Eastern Cape was an eventual realization of Bishop Fleischer’s vision, even though in a slightly different manner from the original ideal.

In the early nineteen sixties a new and powerful spirit invaded the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council took place from 1962 to 1965. It may be argued that, from that time onward, the Church has never been the same again. In accordance with this call and invitation of the Second Vatican Council for quite some time it has been my earnest desire to get down into a more in-depth study of the history of the Franciscans in South Africa than that provided by the two existing works on this topic.

It is my hope that this thesis will contribute to a soul-searching of the Franciscans as they continue to live and minister to the people of South Africa. This history will hopefully teach us to learn from and be inspired by the great and heroic deeds of our spiritual forebears – our Franciscan brothers and sisters – and also teach us to learn from their mistakes.

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<sup>1</sup> All illustrations from the personal collection of the author. Photographs were taken between 2010 and 2012.

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Map 1: South Africa<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup> South African Holidays, South Africa Large <http://www.southafricaholiday.org.uk/images/south-africa-map-large.jpg>

Map 2: The Eastern Cape<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Eastern Cape Tourism, Ecotourism, Map of the Eastern Cape: [http://www.ectourism.co.za/files/maps/eastern\\_cape.gif](http://www.ectourism.co.za/files/maps/eastern_cape.gif)

## **Introduction and Acknowledgements**

### **A VISION NOT ACTUALIZED – A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?<sup>1</sup>**

In 1932, six Missionary Franciscan Friars from Bavaria came to South Africa at the invitation of Bishop Adalbero Michael Fleischer (1874-1963), a Mariannhill missionary in Natal.<sup>2</sup> Despite this invitation, they were not welcomed by the Mariannhill community and went on to found the Mount Currie Prefecture (Diocese of Kokstad) in 1935. There the Franciscans became involved in the life of the ordinary people, who were otherwise abandoned by the government. Among other activities, they provided schools and gardens, and embarked on skills development projects for the youth.

In the early nineteen sixties a new and powerful spirit invaded the Catholic Church. What is known as the “Second Vatican Council” took place from 1962 to 1965. From that time onward, the Church has never been the same again. Indeed, as many analysts within and outside the Church point out, even today some people, and leaders in the Church included, have still not quite come to grips with the teachings and the spirit of the Council. In one of its calls the Council urged the entire Christian church to “return to the sources of Christianity”: the scriptures, liturgy, the apostolic way of receiving adults into the Church (RCIA, the Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults), and the list goes on. In conjunction with this call was the invitation also extended by the same Council to all the Religious Orders and Institutes of the Church to go back to the spirit of their founders. In fact, this invitation is two-fold, as we read in the particular document addressed to the Religious Institutes:

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<sup>1</sup> The title of this study refers to a vision of Bishop Adalbero Michael Fleischer, CMM (Mariannhill Missionary), who was the bishop of Mariannhill from 1922 to 1950. As part of this vision, in 1932, he invited the first group of Franciscan Friars from Bavaria, Germany, to his diocese where he wanted to establish a “Franciscan Family”. This could not be actualized in his own diocese, due to various factors that made it impossible for the Bavarian Franciscan Friars to settle there. As a result, the life and ministry of the Franciscan Friars flourished in another part of South Africa, what eventually became the “Kokstad diocese”. This thesis argues that the settlement of the Franciscan Friars in that area was an eventual realization of Bishop Fleischer’s vision, even though in a slightly different manner from the original ideal.

<sup>2</sup> Mariannhill had been part of the Natal Vicariate and became an independent Vicariate in 1921, with Bishop Adalbero Fleischer as its first bishop, in 1922. See Sister M. Adelgisa Hermann, *100 Years of Mariannhill Province – History of the Congregation of the Mariannhill Missionaries in the Province of Mariannhill, South Africa*, (Mariannhill, 1983).

The up-to-date renewal of the religious life comprises both a constant return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institutes, and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time.<sup>3</sup>

In accordance with this call and invitation of the Second Vatican Council for quite some time it has been my earnest desire to get down into a more in-depth study of the history of the Franciscans in South Africa than that provided by the two existing works on this topic. The first of these, “*Missionsgeschichte der Bayerischen Franziskaner in Sudafrika 1932-1962*”, is on the Bavarian Franciscan Missionaries in South Africa, written by Lukas Purstinger, OFM – one of the pioneers who came out to Mariannhill.<sup>4</sup> The second is my Master’s dissertation, written in Rome in 1995.<sup>5</sup> Both of these have a number of limitations.

Firstly, Purstinger’s work was written in German and so is not easily accessible to many readers in South Africa. Secondly, this is not a scholarly work, but is written from the personal point of view of one man; his position as one of the pioneer Bavarian missionaries made it difficult for him to distance himself from the processes in which he was an active participant and to offer critical analysis. Thirdly, his history does not focus on a particular area. The latter is a concern of the present project. I will explore the social impact of the Franciscan missionaries’ presence and ministry upon the communities in which they worked – particularly in the diocese of Kokstad where they eventually settled.

The first limitation of my own previous work was that I wrote it in Rome. I therefore, lacked adequate source material, in particular oral sources. Secondly, I tried to embrace the entire period of the Franciscans’ life and ministry in this country, from 1838 to 1994. It, therefore, lacked the focus and depth necessary for a comprehensive historical study. This study then looks at the history of those first Bavarian Franciscan missionaries from a

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<sup>3</sup> A. Flanary (ed.), *Vatican II (Second Vatican Council): The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents, Perfectae Caritatis*, (Minnesota, 1965), par. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Lucas Purstinger, OFM, *Missionsgeschichte der Franziskaner in Sudafrika 1932-1960*, (Nurnberg October 1966).

<sup>5</sup> V. Nogemane, OFM, “The Coming of the Franciscans to South Africa and the Establishment of the Vice-Province of Our Lady Queen of Peace in Southern Africa”, (*Dissertatio ad Licentiam*, “Antonianum”, Rome 1995).

critical perspective. At the same time, it must be made clear that I am an “insider”. I received my primary and secondary education in Catholic mission-schools of Swiss and German origin. Secondly, I am a Catholic priest and a Franciscan Friar. As such, I was formed in a particular manner, with a certain spirituality which will greatly influence my thinking and the way I see things. I also teach Franciscan spirituality to recruits to our Order. While I have not been anti-missionary in this study, my reading of critiques of mission history has been helpful in balancing my views and interpretation of events. I have found the work of authors such as Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport, Norman Etherington and Alan Kirkaldy particularly helpful. They have drawn my attention to issues such as the significant role played by women in missionary activity, and the manner in which the missionaries’ backgrounds, training and ideologies influenced the ways that they approached the people among whom they worked.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the Comaroff’s exploration of the early phases of what would become the “long conversation” between British Missionaries and the Southern Tswana has been useful in shaping my thinking.<sup>7</sup>

A shift has occurred in my topic, that is, in the focus I originally thought I would have in this research. The main shift took place in the fourth and the fifth chapters which are really the core of this study. I will not give a detailed description of that right now as it will be part of the brief presentation of all the various chapters of this research to be done later in this part of the study. However, I will indicate here and now that the shift I am referring to is on the whole socio-political and economic background to the life and work of the Franciscan missionaries (chapter four). Both my supervisor, Doctor Alan Kirkaldy, and the Head of Department, Professor Paul Maylam, persuaded me to do that. They realized that the research would be very much limited and incomplete without that aspect,

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<sup>6</sup> R. Elphick and R. Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*, (Cape Town 1997); N. Etherington, “Social Theory and the Study of Christian Missions in South Africa: A South African Case Study”, *Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (1977), pp. 31-40 & “Recent Trends in the Historiography of Christianity in Southern Africa”, *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (June 1996), pp. 201-219; A. Kirkaldy, “Capturing the Soul: Encounters between Berlin Missionaries and Tshivenda-Speakers in the Late Nineteenth Century”, (PhD Thesis, University of Cape Town, January 2002).

<sup>7</sup> J.L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (Chicago, 1991) and *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier* (Chicago, 1997).

the social background, as it would provide the necessary context for the Franciscan missionaries' life and ministry. I must admit that my initial reaction to that was one of unhappiness as I considered this to be delaying me in the completion of my study. However, I must also acknowledge that, as I continued my research in the particular area proposed to me, I became more and more interested and also realized how much this whole question of social context was not merely relevant but also necessary. I gained so much from it that I became much more confident and equipped in my specialization on the Franciscan missionaries. Now, I am truly grateful both to my Supervisor and the Head of Department for their challenge to me on the basis of their experience in the work they do. This has truly and profoundly enriched me.

In thanking my Supervisor and Head of Department I am bound to acknowledge the assistance offered me by many more other people. Professor Jeff Peires (until recently Head of the Cory Library) has been of greatest help with his amazing knowledge of the amaMpondo and amaXesibe history which has been central part of the whole study, providing the social context in chapter four. Professor Fred Hendricks (the Dean of Humanities) too offered me his valuable article on this area and chapter fourteen of their (Peires and Hendricks) co-authored book which was most helpful. Professor Lamla, retired professor of Walter Sisulu University, in Mthatha, was a great asset to me in his sharing and the interview seemed so short in that one hour. The Franciscan Order, both in South Africa and abroad – the founding Provinces that assisted me with the archival material, particular the Bavarian Province, in Munich, where I spent a month learning the German language and visited their archives – and the leadership of our Province, in South Africa, that allowed and assisted me with my research.

Thanks to Anselm Prior and Ms Moira Totill for their cooperation in consulting the Franciscan Provincial Archives at Santa Sophia, in Pretoria. Certain Friars of our Franciscan Province were also interviewed – Gerard O'Reilly, Liam MacDermott, Sakhephi Rogers Sihlobo and David Barnard – and I am grateful to them for their contribution. I so much enjoyed the fraternal sharings with Egbert "Jack" O'Dea, the senior Friar of the South African Province, who had so much to say and in a manner that

always made me to laugh about the many and various stories about the Friars of the early years in the country. Indeed, having come to South Africa, from Ireland in the early 1950s, he had plenty of experience on Franciscan life and the people.

Many thanks to Liam MacDermott who shared with me on the great Irish Friars who were working in the Vaal Triangle during hard times of apartheid in the early sixties, especially the brave and outspoken Flynn. I thank Desmond Cosmas, former Franciscan of the English Province in recalling to me the very trying times during the forced removals in the Kwazulu-Natal area where the Friars eventually put up a protest against the evil system and which cost them much in their daily lives and ministry.<sup>8</sup> Bonaventure Hinwood was most helpful, with his clear and precise mind, on the local Friars of which he was the very first. He showed much interest in my research and was most encouraging to me.

Thanks to the two Irish Friars in Zimbabwe, Juniper and Liam, who contributed especially to the details on the South African Friars who studied in Ireland and which details were sometimes unclear or forgotten about. My heartfelt gratitude goes out to my Franciscan brothers who are in high echelons of the Catholic Church in South Africa. His Eminence Wilfrid Fox Cardinal Napier was always welcoming and gave generously of his time in spite of his tight schedule – his familiarity with both the Bavarian and the Irish Friars, during his time in Kokstad where he later became bishop, was quite helpful to me. Archbishop William Slattery showed a great interest in the research right from the start, encouraging me and sharing some of the valuable resources like reading material, Kokstad diocesan archives and people who were of much help for useful information in my research.<sup>9</sup> Again, Bishop Emeritus Michael Paschal Rowland always welcomed me warmly in his former residence in Maria Ratschitz and was only glad to share with me whatever information he had on the Franciscan situation not just the English Friars but

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<sup>8</sup> As we will see in Chapter nine of this research, the English Friars suffered from the apartheid regime for their stance and action against the forced removals, some of them being deported to their overseas home countries.

<sup>9</sup> Archbishop William Slattery was the bishop of Kokstad from 1994 till he was appointed Archbishop of Kokstad in December 2010.

also those of other areas as he was once leader of the Franciscan Federation – embracing all the different groups – in South Africa.<sup>10</sup>

I thank the Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Cross in Belgravia, Johannesburg, for not only making their archives available to me but also for their interest in my research and encouraging me every time I went to visit them. Their archives were most helpful as they recorded much of the Franciscan activities which are not found in the archives of the Friars themselves. In a special way I would like to thank Sister Mechtildis Wilking who so often sat next to me and listened to me as I stumbled over my poor German, reading it and also translated some of the longer documents for me into English. I thank Sister Frances, the Provincial, for her support and offering me the book on the Holy Cross Sisters in Southern Africa which was most helpful for the second chapter of this research in particular.<sup>11</sup> I am most grateful to the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, especially those in Umzinto, the Provincial House, who were so hospitable to me whenever I went to visit them, supplying me with the necessary information, both their archives and orally, on the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary who are part of this research particularly in Kokstad diocese.

I cannot thank Sister Getsy Firmin enough for all she has been and has done for me, always available whenever I needed her computer expertise not only at the convent, in Umzinto, but also over the phone. Her advice and directions were always precise and so often took me by surprise when I just thought the difficulty was impossible to get over. Sr. Getsy also assisted me with the placement of pictures and maps in this study, plus making the text much more presentable for the university. The Nardini Sisters – Sr. Hiltrud, the General Superior, and Sr. Isentraud – were most supportive when I called for their assistance. I thank them sincerely. The Franciscan Sisters of Assisi, Daughters of St. Francis founded by Bishop Fleischer, were always welcoming to me when I went for interviews. Sr. Dominica Mkhize, the General Directress, was interviewed more than

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<sup>10</sup> Bishop Emeritus Michael Paschal Rowland was the bishop of Dundee diocese from 1983 until his retirement in 2006.

<sup>11</sup> The title of the book is *Wordless Witness: A History of the Holy Cross Sisters in Southern Africa 1883-1980*. Issued for the celebration of the Sisters' centenary in Southern Africa, it was written by Sr. L.M. McDonagh, (Mariannahill, 1983).

once and she has written a book on the Sisters of Assisi which includes Bishop Fleischer and so those interviews were very fruitful. Sr. Basil Nzimande, former General Directress, was equally helpful in providing me with the Chronicles of the Congregation. Sisters Mildred Madlala and Sylvia Nkomo were marvellous with their memories of the many stories about Bishop Fleischer, about Sr. Emiliana and Sr. Jucundis the founder and foundresses all of whom were personally known to these two Sisters.<sup>12</sup>

Bishop Pius Mlungisi Dlungwane, of Mariannahill, was always cooperative whenever I requested the use of the Diocesan Archives, thanks to him and to his priests and sisters working in his offices. Thanks to Fr. Henry Ratering who showed me support when I went to visit him, at the Mariannahill monastery, about my research project at the very start of it. My gratitude also goes to the many people I interviewed during this research, the list is found at the end of this work as part of the reference sources. Some of these people, in fact almost all of them, were interviewed more than once and this established a relationship with them. Thanks to Angela kaMajola Magudulela and Theresa Masithole Zikalala of Besters, Ladysmith, who both shared with me on the English Franciscans in that area. The people of eDutyini, Bizana, were always so hospitable that they came in numbers and some of them were coming to hear the great stories about their heroic missionaries who were not only the Franciscan Friars ministering there but also their own relatives who took up the faith and then assisted in passing it on to others. I also enjoyed the meals provided by that warm and enthusiastic community at the end of each session of interviews.

Some of the interviewees were more than generous with their time, taking me to meet people that I had never met before and sitting there with me, waiting until the interviews were over. I am thinking of people like Getrude Mngeyana of Flagstaff and Agnes Nomvete of Bizana. I thank Brian Gaybba, retired Theology lecturer at Rhodes University, who assisted me with the translation of Latin documents. How can I ever forget the Queen of eQawukeni - Lombekiso Sigcawu - for her generosity in sharing with

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<sup>12</sup> In fact, Sr. Sylvia Nkomo worked for Bishop Fleischer in his latter years, taking his meals to him in his house in Bulwer where he was “exiled” after his resignation and in his retirement years.

me and referring me to the Paramount Chief, Kumkani Mpondombini Sigcawu - Ah! Thandizulu! - and their daughter Princess Wezizwe, who were in Pretoria during the time of the interviews? They too were most helpful to me and referred me to people like Mbalekwa. *Khonjwayo – Gugulenyathi! Nakuni ke, zinkosi, maKhonjwayo akuthi, ndibulela ngokungazenzisiyo. Ninditsho ndayithanda imvelaphi yethu kwaye nam ndiyaligqithisela nakwabanye eli lifa. Nomakhala, Gugulenyathi, Nomantsikinyana, mfaz'onebele ngaphesheya komlambo!*<sup>13</sup> There are many others not mentioned here but, as already indicated above, they will be found in the list of interviews at the end of this study.

The source references are in the following order: the primary sources come first and are followed by the secondary sources. Again, the primary sources are listed according to their themes. For example, letters and documents dealing with a certain matter, (like the pastoral letters of Bishop Fleischer), or letters written by a particular person. The documents of the different overseas Franciscan Provinces are according to the order of the chapters dealing with them, with the Bavarian being the first, followed by those of the Irish Friars and, finally, those of the English Province. Concerning information between brackets, the place and date: of where and when the document was written applies to the Bavarian documents. For the Irish documents the place between brackets refers to where the document is found and that is the Franciscan Provincial Archives in Pretoria; the same applies to the English Friars' documents. Secondary sources are in alphabetical order, according to the family names of authors.

There is an abundance of documents, primary sources, available and that I consulted on the topic. So then, the research is based on written documents. At the same time, the many interviews conducted with various people that played a vital role in the unfolding of this history have hopefully contributed to making this research project lively and personal, rather than a dry and boring documentary. The interviews are arranged chronologically; that is, according to the dates of the interviews. Sixty interviews were

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<sup>13</sup> Praises of the amaKhonjwayo to whom I am very grateful – in the persons of Zidyokhweni and Chris Gwadiso - for the history and origins they shared with me during the interviews.

conducted between 25 January 2010 and 8 July 2012; twenty five of them were done in 2010, fourteen in 2011 and twenty one in 2012. Another very important aspect of the sources are the maps which obviously help in giving an indication of the places and areas where the Franciscans were present and working.

The Franciscan symbol on the front cover is the Franciscan logo – known as the “Tau” – which Francis himself used as his signature in the many letters and writings he produced and left us as a rich heritage, with a picture of Francis himself at the bottom of it.<sup>14</sup> Photographs are included in the chapters. There are three maps drawn by the leader of the Bavarian Friars himself, Lukas Purstinger, included in the text of this study. The South African map has been placed at the start of this project so as to highlight the presence and social impact of the missionaries of our study in this country. The Eastern Cape map which follows it enables the reader to locate places referred to in the text.

Before providing a brief summary of each of the chapters of the research, I would like to note that the project is divided into six parts. Chapters covering related themes are grouped together under these. The six parts are:

Part I: Background to the Franciscan presence and work in South Africa - chapter 1

Part II: A New Opening A New Challenge: Flagstaff Mission in the Kokstad Diocese - chapters 2 & 3

Part III: A Vision Not Actualized – A Missed Opportunity? – chapters 4 & 5

Part IV: Comparison between Mariannahill and Kokstad – chapter 6

Part V: Relations with other Entities (other Christian Churches and the State) – chapters 7 & 8

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<sup>14</sup> The “Tau” is taken from the scripture passages both of the Old and New Testament, the book of the prophet Ezekiel, chapter 9 and the last book of the Christian bible, Apocalypse or Revelation, chapter 7 in both of which refer to the signing - with a cross or a mark, or a seal - on the forehead of those who would be spared from the evil destruction that would come upon the world. Francis in his love for penitential life, according to the Gospel calling, and in his zeal to proclaim the Gospel message in order to save others, used the “Tau”, which is also a type of the cross, to sign his writings.

Part VI: A New Era – The Irish, English & Local Franciscans – chapters 9, 10 & 11.

I now turn to the individual chapters that make up this research, hoping that this will help the reader look forward to the actual work and urge him or her to go through each and every one of the chapters.

Chapter one is a background to the rest of the research, an important one too as it prepares the reader for the main part of the study. It is the story of the very first historically known Franciscan Friar in South Africa who came into the country in 1838, with the very first head of the Catholic Church, Bishop Patrick Raymond Griffith, who was appointed to Cape Town. Bishop Griffith himself was a Dominican Friar. Daniel Burke, the Franciscan Friar, arrived in South Africa almost a century before the Franciscan pioneer missionaries came into the country from Bavaria. And so, some of the questions we will be asking in this chapter are obviously about who Daniel Burke was and why he came to South Africa on his own; that is, without any community or at least one other Franciscan as that would be a normal requirement for a member of an Order like the Franciscans. Again, we will be asking whether or not there was any connection between these two Franciscan parties, Burke and the Bavarians; whether they were thinking of each other at all as they came into the country and ministered to the people. In other words, did Burke ever think of a future presence and work of Franciscans in this country, or was he just concerned about his own place and time? And the same applies to the Bavarian Franciscans who came later, did they know anything at all about Burke who had come to the country and worked in Grahamstown? Did they have any interest in knowing about him or what? One point is very clear though here, a point that links the two eras, and that is: between these two periods of history of the Franciscans in South Africa - Burke's and the Bavarians', and indeed any other period of time we will be dealing with – it is certain that the agents of history, the Franciscan Friars, were human beings with their strengths and limitations. That is a thread running throughout this entire research. We have to bear in mind too, in chapter one as in all the chapters, that all this background of the Franciscan presence and ministry was taking place within the Catholic Church and the society of South Africa that time.

This chapter will also take a close look at Bishop Adalbero Fleischer of Mariannhill who invited the first group of Bavarian Franciscan Friars into the country. We will find out who he was and why he would invite the Franciscan Friars, especially in the light of his being a Trappist and a Mariannhill Missionary and, therefore, not a member of the Franciscan Order. The vision that the Franciscans came to actualize in this country – the title of this research – centred around Fleischer.

Chapter two looks at the Flagstaff Mission situation which is the centre of this research's activities. Flagstaff is where Father Severin Neumeier, champion of Franciscan presence and ministry, will be based (chapter five). So, chapter two prepares for that central aspect of the research with a presentation of the Franciscan Holy Cross Sisters who gave the feminine side of the story, with a powerful impact on the social level of Franciscan ministry – Holy Cross Sisters being Franciscan too and working along with the Franciscan Friars when they arrived in the area and all the surroundings of Kokstad diocese. The Sisters went to Flagstaff in 1927 and the Friars went there in 1935.

Chapter three, then, deals with the coming of the Franciscan Friars to Flagstaff and the rest of the Mpondoland region where the main thrust of their ministry was taking place within the Kokstad diocese. We take a look at the pioneer Bavarian Franciscan missionaries and see how they finally settled in Kokstad, in 1935, after experiencing an unwelcoming attitude and reaction in Mariannhill. Here we find an indication already of how Bishop Fleischer's vision of a Franciscan family, in South Africa, would be fairly established in an area that was outside his original plan (Mariannhill diocese). Unfortunately, due to lack of more detailed archival documents on the individual six pioneer missionaries, the research in this part is limited. That would have been helpful in understanding their background, educational or professional, cultural, psychological and in other areas, as that would have influenced their manner of relating and working with the people of South Africa.

Chapter four makes a profound study of the social context – socio-political, cultural and economic – of Mpondoland, and other tribal groups closely linked with the story of our

topic, where the Franciscan life and ministry would unfold. This and the next chapter (five) is the core of our research and it is around them that all the other chapters evolve. As indicated above, there was a shift in my research, in its approach and structure, and that applied especially to this part, chapters four and five. In order to help appreciate that shift some more clarification has to be done here.

When I started with my research – mediate preparations were already in 2008 as I was planning to do it in 2009/2010 – I told myself that I was going to do the Franciscan history of South Africa. But then – when the immediate preparations began<sup>15</sup> - in approaching my Supervisor, Alan Kirkaldy, he told me the very first time we met that I would not be expected to do a history of the Church at Rhodes as that was not their interest and priority. He continued to say that the university would be interested in a Franciscan history only as far as it affected the society – the social impact of Franciscan ministry. Well, I went away with that happy enough but then as I thought about it I began to wonder what social projects the Franciscan Friars would have had in Mpondoland as I did not recall hearing of any.

I went ahead to start my interviews in Flagstaff, Mpondoland, and became quite interested when the response to my question about any project was positive – the interviewees told me of the schools, gardening and more other projects that the Bavarian Friars had, as we will see in chapter five. I walked out of that interview with some hope and just wished there was enough information to build a thesis around it. As I shared my thesis and my concern with some of the Friars they advised me to rather go either to Rome – our Franciscan university<sup>16</sup> – or to one of the other universities in South Africa,

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<sup>15</sup> It has always been my dream to pursue this research – from the time I completed my Master’s in Rome, in 1995 – and when I was finally free to start planning for it towards the end of 2008 I asked my superiors for permission to go to Austria and Germany where I would study German so that I could read the many documents of the Bavarian Franciscan missionaries that were in that language. I spent a month in Vienna, May 2009, and another one in Munich, June 2009. When I arrived in Grahamstown, where I was appointed in October 2009, I went to see the authorities of Rhodes University to enquire on the possibility of my research and I began to read many books as they had told me to do, for all the remaining months of that year.

<sup>16</sup> While I enjoyed my studies and research in Rome, on the history of the Franciscans in South Africa (Master’s) I also told myself from that time that it would be fruitful to do the PhD in another context

especially St. Augustine's the Catholic College in Johannesburg, as my research would be most welcome there. I realized the point but deep down I was telling myself that it would be great to do my research at Rhodes not only because I was there in Grahamstown that time and so it was so practical for me for the availability of libraries but also and perhaps mainly because it would be good for us Franciscans to study ourselves, our history, from another perspective and in another environment other than our Franciscan or Catholic one. And that is partly what has kept me going in this research and I am very happy to have made that decision.

So, then, this chapter four provides that perspective which might not have been possible in a Franciscan or Catholic university, at least not to the same extent that it has been at Rhodes where this aspect has been prioritized. And, as already mentioned, I am most grateful that I have learned so much in that sense, the socio-political context of Mpondoland. Chapter five, then, makes a detailed examination of the Franciscan life and ministry in Mpondoland with its surroundings and that is naturally in light of the previous chapter, the socio-political and economic background. Here is presented the implementation of Fleischer's vision with the social impact that it had on the people of Mpondoland and surroundings. Chapter six is a comparison of Mariannahill, where the Franciscan missionaries first arrived at the invitation of Bishop Fleischer, and Kokstad diocese where they later transferred after three years of struggling with being unwelcomed and all that it entailed.

Chapter seven takes a look at the relations that the Franciscans had with other religious movements, Christian denominations and African Independent (Initiated) Churches as the Franciscans are themselves a religious movement within the Catholic Church. Therefore, here we also make a brief study of the Catholic Church situation in Germany where the Franciscans came from. Chapter eight looks at the relations with the State, beginning again with Germany from which they (Franciscan missionaries) came and moving on to the South African socio-political situation. Germany in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s was

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other than in Europe or the West. And so by doing it here in South Africa I was only fulfilling that old wish and resolution which, I believe, gives a balance to my research project.

under Hitler and the Nazis, and South Africa was undergoing the development of segregationist attitudes and policies. Surely, these affected the Franciscan life and ministry in one way or the other. A question as to what would have been the missionaries' understanding and reaction is asked here.

Chapter nine goes on to another part of the research which is the Irish Franciscans in South Africa. At this stage of the thesis, then, in a way we part with the German missionaries though it is all one and unified work, under the same topic and is, therefore, certainly connected. Yes, this chapter is the first of three that deal with the other groups that make up Franciscan presence and ministry in South Africa – the Irish Franciscans, in chapter nine, the English Franciscans and the South African Franciscans in chapters ten and eleven respectively. Chapter nine shows how the Irish came to the rescue of the German Friars who, due to the Second World War, could not continue to supply their mission in Kokstad with resources both the staffing with personnel and the material aspect. The Irish Friars arrived in 1946, the War having ended the previous year, that same year again the Bavarian Friars had returned to their people from internment. One of the questions though is whether the Irish did continue the implementation of Bishop Fleischer's and the Bavarian Friars' vision, or they ended up creating their own vision. And even if they had their own vision, was it in accordance with the Franciscan charism and the Gospel values?

Chapter ten is on the English Franciscans who came out to work in an area that was completely different and quite distant from the Bavarian and the Irish Franciscans. Though far away, territorially and mentally – in Ermelo and Volksrust, which was southern part of the old Transvaal and northern Natal - they nonetheless worked hard among the people entrusted to them. Moreover, they kept their determination toward justice for the Blacks who were discriminated against by the White regime and the same sense of justice was directed towards the candidates of the Franciscan Order whom they received and formed or trained in this country. The English Friars then spearheaded the incorporation of Africans into the Order in South Africa, something that would have certainly pleased Bishop Fleischer who always had strong faith in the indigenous people.

And that leads to the final chapter, eleven, in which we take a brief but close look at the local candidates of the Franciscan Order. Who were they and what experiences did they encounter in joining the Order? One final observation that I consider vital to this research is that while the project is geared mainly toward the vision of Bishop Fleischer and the Franciscan Friars it also clearly highlights the crucial role played by the feminine dimension of the Franciscan Family, the Sisters who were always and everywhere working side by side with the Friars. Each of the three missionary groups had the Franciscan Sisters helping them and, indeed, the Sisters' involvement was invaluable. As indicated above, many of the sources for this study were found in Franciscan Sisters' archives. Bishop Fleischer too realized the important role of religious women and so he invited them to come to his diocese as we will see that most of the members of his "Franciscan corner" in Mariannhill diocese were women.

By way of concluding this introduction, then, I must point out that the scope of this research is, as far as the period is concerned, 1932-1960s and does not cover the events from the 1970s onward. Secondly, in the sense of its objective, the scope is the social impact of the Franciscan presence and ministry in South Africa, with particular focus on Mpondoland and its surroundings. So, the research does not concentrate on the internal life and activities of the Franciscan Order that happened especially due to the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. That time saw the *implantatio ordinis* and unification of the various Franciscan Entities within the country and that was the scope of my Master's dissertation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans".

# **PART I: BACKGROUND TO THE FRANCISCAN PRESENCE AND WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA**

## **Chapter 1**

### **Daniel Burke, Bishop Patrick Raymond Griffith and Bishop Adalbero Michael Fleischer**

#### **1.1. Early Catholic presence in South Africa**

The presence of the Catholic Church in South Africa goes back to the fifteenth century Portuguese exploration. Bartholomew Dias erected a *padrao* (cross) of St. Gregory near Algoa Bay, in 1487, and a small chapel – considered the first place of Christian worship in South Africa – was built in the present town of Mossel Bay, by Joao de Nova, in 1501.<sup>1</sup> In 1497 Vasco da Gama followed the route that had been taken by Dias and, after rounding the Cape, he went to India.<sup>2</sup> Another version to the above story is provided by Bernard Francis Doyle. He claimed that the Christian cross was first planted on the shores of Southern Africa by a Portuguese explorer, Diego Cao, who had been sent by King John II of Portugal, in 1485.<sup>3</sup> Doyle did acknowledge the role played by all the individuals mentioned above, with more details provided to their stories, including their setting up of the crosses.<sup>4</sup>

In 1546 and 1560 new missions were opened in west and east Africa by the Dominican and the Jesuit Orders, respectively. While there is no evidence of such an endeavour in South Africa, it is very improbable that the Portuguese did nothing regarding mission work there.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, pp. 42-48.

<sup>2</sup> Hazel Crampton, in her work, *The Sunburnt Queen*, puts Dias' arrival at the Cape in 1488; she does not refer to Da Gama's year of leaving the Cape for India, but then has 1498 as the year of his arrival there. See H. Crampton, *The Sunburnt Queen*, (Johannesburg, 2004), p. 326.

<sup>3</sup> B. Doyle, "Irish contribution to the Catholic Church in South Africa (1820-1900)", (PhD Thesis, University of Pretoria 1963), pp. 27-28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 27-29.

<sup>5</sup> W.E. Brown, *The Catholic Church in South Africa: From its origins to the present day*, (London 1960), p. 3.

So, then, long before the coming of any other Church, the Catholics had their stamp in South Africa. This reality was, arguably understandably, watered down by the Dutch Calvinist government of the seventeenth century. Having been in conflict with the Catholics in Europe, they did not want any demonstrations of Catholicism in the areas under their control. So, in 1660 and 1688 a French bishop and Jesuit priests, respectively, were forbidden to say Mass in Cape Town and Catholics were also not allowed to attend the celebrations.<sup>6</sup>

In spite of that, though, the few Catholics that were found in the Cape were determined to live their faith with enthusiasm. This was noticed by Jesuit Missionaries when they landed at Table Bay in 1685. When freedom of religion was introduced in Europe, as a result of the Enlightenment movement, the situation of Catholics in South Africa also improved. However, this did not last for long as the Cape was recaptured by the British, under Sir David Baird, in 1806. Baird was a Scots Presbyterian, with little sympathy for Catholics.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, although the Cape Colony was under the British, Cape Town was predominantly populated by the Dutch who were of the Dutch Reformed Church. As a result of all this, the Roman Catholic Dutch priests in South Africa were expelled, in 1806, and went back to Holland.<sup>8</sup> They reported to the Congregation for Propaganda that they had found about 1 100 Catholics at the Cape: 600 of whom were soldiers and 500 civilians.<sup>9</sup> This intolerance went on even up to the arrival of the very first resident Catholic bishop of the Cape, Patrick Griffith, in 1838.<sup>10</sup> He belonged to the Dominican Order and arrived in Cape Town on Easter Saturday. By that time, Catholics in his

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 4

<sup>7</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 45.

<sup>8</sup> This factor is also brought up by Joy Brain in her article entitled “Moving from the Margins to the Mainstream: The Roman Catholic Church” on the Catholic Church in South Africa [in Elphick & Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa*, pp. 195-210]. She starts by claiming that the Catholic Church before 1860 was very scarce and in the back seat, and that this was for two main reasons – a) the Dutch Reformed Church’s monopoly of faith or religion and, b) the Catholic Church’s disarray status in Europe in the eighteenth century which was the period of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Brain goes on to state that before 1795 Catholics in the Cape were forced to hide their faith by the law of the Dutch East India Company, and that the British too were not too friendly with the Catholics, expatriating the Army chaplains in 1806 and allowing them to come back to South Africa only in 1817. [Brain, “Moving from the Margins”, p. 195.]

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. See also Brown, *The Catholic Church*, prologue & pp. 1-6 and Cardinal McCann’s foreword to J. Brain (ed.), *The Cape Diary of Bishop Griffith 1837-1839*, Pub. Southern African Catholic Bishops’ Conference, (Mariannhill, 1988), p. viii.

Vicariate, which coincided with the Cape Colony, were about 3000.<sup>11</sup> According to Brown, the numbers of Catholics were 700 in 1839 and 2500 in 1841.<sup>12</sup> His appointment to Cape Town was a coincidence of two factors. First, the Catholics of the area had sent a request to Rome, through a priest, John Brady, who was on his way there from Mauritius. Their request was for them to be given their own chaplain as the Vicar Apostolic (bishop), who was by then based in Mauritius, had told them he had no priest to spare. Secondly, the British Governor of the Cape Colony was looking for Catholic chaplains in the army and had even started providing an annual stipend for that.<sup>13</sup>

### **Daniel Burke, OFM**

The bishop came with a Franciscan friar, Daniel Burke, who served as his companion<sup>14</sup> and, apparently, his secretary as well. Like the Bishop himself, he was from Ireland. According to Burke, they arrived in Cape Town on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April, Easter Saturday, 1838.<sup>15</sup>

According to Bartholomew Egan, an Irish Franciscan scholar, Burke volunteered for missionary work in South Africa.<sup>16</sup> Doyle concurred with that, stating that Burke was responding to Griffith's appeal made in the principal towns of Ireland where he was preaching, asking for help both in personnel and finances for his new mission territory.<sup>17</sup> Having become a Franciscan in 1809,<sup>18</sup> he was appointed Guardian in different Franciscan friaries and was elected Vicar-Provincial, in 1825. He was later appointed as Chaplain of the Mercy Sisters' convent by the archbishop of Dublin, Murray. He served

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<sup>11</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, pp. 42-48.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, *The Catholic Church*, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. See also Burke's letter, the only one we have, written from Grahamstown, to William O'Meara who was the Minister Provincial of the Franciscan Irish Province at the time and a close *friend* of Burke, [Daniel Burke to William O'Mera (Grahamstown, 21 February 1839)]; Doyle, "Irish Contribution", pp. 61-63.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, *The Catholic Church*, pp. 7-14, 17-18; P. Conlan, *The Missionary Work of the Irish Franciscans in South Africa*, (Dublin, 1996), p. 32; Doyle, "Irish Contribution", pp. 64-65.

<sup>15</sup> Burke to O'Mera (21 February 1839); Brain (ed.), *The Cape Diary*, pp. 96, 101; Conlan, *Missionary Work*, p. 32.

<sup>16</sup> B. Egan, "An Irish Franciscan Missionary in South Africa, in 1839", in Franciscan Province of Ireland, *Collectanea Hibernica*, No. 17 (1974/1975), p. 103.

<sup>17</sup> Doyle, "Irish Contribution", p. 64.

<sup>18</sup> Egan, "An Irish Franciscan", p. 103.

in this capacity from 1829 to 1837. Egan claims that Burke had, in fact, become a close friend of the Sisters' foundress, Catherine McAuley<sup>19</sup> and that could have contributed to the bishop's decision in this regard.

Burke left for South Africa, with Bishop Griffith, in January of 1838. According to Conlan there was another Dominican with them.<sup>20</sup> Doyle provided the name of this priest, he was Gerrge Corcoran.<sup>21</sup> On their arrival in Cape Town Burke, at the instruction of the bishop, arranged lodgings for all, at 38 Castle Street.<sup>22</sup>

### **Burke's letter**

The only letter we have from Burke is that to his friend William O'Meara – who at one time served as Minister Provincial of the Irish Province. We learn from this that he journeyed by ship from Ireland to England. The party then left Portsmouth on the 20<sup>th</sup> of January, arriving in Cape Town on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April. Burke remained in Cape Town from that time until June 24. He and Bishop Griffith then travelled, again by sea, to Port Elizabeth, the eastern part of the latter's new vicariate (diocese). The journey took eight or nine days.<sup>23</sup> From there they moved, by ox-wagon, via Uitenhage to Fort Beaufort, Headquarters of the 75<sup>th</sup> Regiment, sixty miles from Grahamstown. On the 7<sup>th</sup> August, the bishop returned to Cape Town, leaving a reluctant Burke behind to look after the Catholics in the Grahamstown area.<sup>24</sup> We also learn, from the same document, that the Cape Governor paid for the trip out to South Africa and also paid Burke's salary as Chaplain from the time of his arrival in South Africa, and not just from his being in Grahamstown.<sup>25</sup> At that time, Port Elizabeth was a small town of only 2000 inhabitants. The inland areas were characterized by farmlands.

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<sup>19</sup> Biographical notes in Brain (ed.), *The Cape Diary*, p. xi; Egan, "An Irish Franciscan", p. 103.

<sup>20</sup> Conlan, *Missionary Work*, p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> Doyle, "Irish Contribution", p. 64.

<sup>22</sup> Brain (ed.), *The Cape Diary*, p. 101; Brown, *The Catholic Church*, p. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Burke to O'Mera (21 February 1839); According to *The Cape Diary of Bishop Griffith*, the journey took place between 24 June and 2 July, p. 109. They sailed on the *Lord Saumarez*, a Jersey brig [W.H. Barnes, *Just Remembering – honouring the Priests and Brothers who have served the Catholic Church in the Eastern Cape since 1830*, (Port Elizabeth, 2009), p.41.]

<sup>24</sup> Burke to O'Mera (21 February 1839).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

A question arises as to why these two parted ways. Merely stating that it was for looking after the Catholic church of Grahamstown does not seem enough of an explanation. After all, the two were companions and Burke served as secretary of the bishop. As a result, one would presume the existence of a certain affinity between them. Before coming out to South Africa, they had spent time together in Dublin, preparing for the new adventure and Burke had arranged lodgings for the group on their arrival at the Cape. In Burke's letter to his friend William O'Meara, he refers to his relations with Bishop Griffith and his intentions in this regard. First of all, he himself states that the bishop left him out there in Grahamstown - he expresses a deep sense of loneliness and even some disappointment – indicating that this was a later development on the bishop's original plans. He then goes on to state that he would like to continue being on good terms with the bishop. Secondly, Burke seems to have believed that the bishop left him there due to his trust in him; he did not find it hard to ask him to do that favour as, seemingly, would have been the case with other priests. Brown paints a different picture of this situation. He shows that the two men were of different characters and apparently they did not complement each other. While Griffith had an outgoing personality, reaching out to people of all faiths and nationalities, including those who were originally against the Catholics,<sup>26</sup> Burke was a rather difficult personality. The bishop, in fact, entered some comment on Burke in his diary to the effect that he was not an easy man to travel with; he complained of discomfort of not shaving and wanted to change his shirts every day.<sup>27</sup> What a poor Franciscan!

Burke's letter, too, seems to support such a judgment of his character. Written to his friend, O'Meara, it naturally contains items of humour and joy. However, the letter also reflects a rather heavy and gloomy person. For instance, he is self-centred; he complains about horrible journeys from overseas to Cape Town and the one from Cape Town to Port Elizabeth; then, he questions why the bishop left him in Grahamstown; he refers to

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<sup>26</sup> Doyle indicates this element when he refers to Griffith's character in such terms: "charm and prudence", which won him the financial support toward his projects in Cape Town ["Irish Contribution", pp. 76 & 77].

<sup>27</sup> Brown, *The Catholic Church*, pp. 17-18; Brain (ed.), *The Cape Diary*, pp. 63, 130-131; Barnes, *Just Remembering*, p. 41.

the situation of the place where he is – Grahamstown - about the Catholics, lack of people to mix with, complains about his salary, issues that will be explored further in the paragraphs which follow.<sup>28</sup> In the letter he refers to death so often and, again, that has a negative tone for a man who is a priest and, even more so, a Franciscan, a follower of St. Francis who rejoiced at the approach of his own death, exclaiming to the doctor and his friars surrounding him, “Welcome, Sister Death!”<sup>29</sup> So, then, it would be quite probable that the bishop intentionally and diplomatically left his companion in a place far away from his headquarters, Cape Town, out of convenience; he was just not a helpful person to be with on his travels, especially at a time when the bishop was still studying and coming to terms with his new flock.

In Grahamstown, Father Burke was appointed Chaplain of the British Army and the Catholics in the area. He arrived there with the bishop on 13 July 1838 and a month later – 12 August - was installed as the first pastor of the town<sup>30</sup>. According to Burke, there were very few Catholics but among these were good and influential ones some of whom he befriended. Two of them were Lieutenant Donovan, an Irish man in the British Cape Mounted Riflemen, and Slater, an English Solicitor who was a married man though his wife was overseas. Burke states that he seldom met these two acquaintances, just when they went to Holy Mass on Sunday. When Slater was going overseas, to bring his wife out to South Africa, he hoped to give him some messages for his friends overseas and that he would also bring back some when he returned with his wife.<sup>31</sup> He frequently travelled on horseback on journeys of 70 to 150 miles trying to look after the spiritual

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<sup>28</sup> Burke to O’Mera (21 February 1839).

<sup>29</sup> Thomas of Celano, *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, Early Documents, Vol. 2, (New York, 1999) and other medieval biographers of Francis of Assisi; Francis of Assisi, *Canticle of Creatures*, Early Documents, Vol. 1, (New York, 1999).

<sup>30</sup> I. Laurenson. (comp.), “Necrology of the Franciscan Province in South Africa”, (Ladysmith, 2007). According to Burke’s letter, the bishop left him in Grahamstown on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August and not on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July. The 7<sup>th</sup> of August seems to be the correct date because it was on the way back from Fort Beaufort, and not on their way there, that the bishop left Burke in Grahamstown. Moreover, Burke’s records would be more reliable in this as he was personally involved; also read Brain (ed.), *The Cape Diary*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>31</sup> Burke to O’Mera (21 February 1839).

needs of his congregation who were scattered all over, and was commonly known to them as “Doctor”.<sup>32</sup>

His salary was one hundred pounds per annum but, again, Burke was already aiming to double that amount, planning for his pension in the latter years.<sup>33</sup> There are two points that he raised on how he was hoping to do that. Firstly, in spite of him missing his old friends and acquaintances overseas, he was going to stay in Grahamstown for at the seven years before he would go for his home leave - that was seemingly expected of all missionaries or military chaplains, that they stay for such a period of time before going overseas. Secondly, he was intending to work hard “so as to lay the foundation of a fair claim”. As the bishop was to send him a newly ordained priest, Father Murphy, from Ireland but ordained in Cape Town, he was worried about costs and how that would bear on his salary,<sup>34</sup> as if the loneliness he had just complained about had suddenly disappeared!

He did have another side though, a good and Franciscan dimension. As pointed out earlier on, in Ireland he had been in the leadership of the Franciscan Order. That is probably one of the reasons why Bishop Griffith took him along to his new Mission, to help him with his valuable experience. Again, when the Catholics of Grahamstown and surroundings were organizing a campaign, requesting support from the British government of the Cape Colony to build their church, he was fully behind it and even personally wrote letters to people overseas, asking his friend, Father O’Meara, to promote the campaign overseas. This campaign, in Grahamstown, was to be done by people of all racial groups and even parliamentarians who sympathized with the Catholic Church. On one of my visits to the Assumption Sisters in Grahamstown – the very first religious Sisters in South Africa who were brought by Bishop Devereux, the first bishop of the Eastern Cape Vicariate (1847) – we engaged in a conversation on the history of the

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<sup>32</sup> Laurenson. (comp.), “Necrology”, 8 April 1839.

<sup>33</sup> The necrology of the Franciscan Province in South Africa claims that Burke received “the princely sum of 60 Pounds per annum”. Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Burke to O’Mera (21 February 1839).

Catholic Church in the area.<sup>35</sup> Some interesting points on the history of the Church came up during our conversation. One of the points raised is linked precisely to the present topic of campaigning for a church building. And that is: the various Christian denominations who came with the Settlers in Grahamstown, from 1820 onwards, used to share church facilities. The building was in Chapel Street, off High Street, and now only a wall and a plaque are there.<sup>36</sup> So, Burke's campaign was for the building of a Catholic church which they needed at the time. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the campaign was also for the increment of the priest's salary and no wonder, then, considering what has been said about his personality, Burke would fully promote such a move.<sup>37</sup> It is very interesting that the Catholic church building began in July of 1839, only a few months after the death of Burke.<sup>38</sup> It was built by part of the British war machine, an Irish regiment, the 27<sup>th</sup> Inniskillings in gratefulness to their chaplain, Fr. Thomas Murphy who, as seen above, arrived in Burke's time and therefore took over at his death. The church was dedicated five years later, in 1844.<sup>39</sup> This was during one of Bishop Griffith's visits – probably his third – to the missions of his diocese.<sup>40</sup>

At this stage I would like to raise certain questions by which I hope to sum up the relationship of Bishop Griffith and Daniel Burke. First of all, one wonders if it was a

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<sup>35</sup> The Franciscan Friars are back in Grahamstown since 2007 – back after the very first Friar there, Daniel Burke – and they serve the four Catholic communities: St. Patrick's in town and used to be for whites (now quite multi-racial, St. Mary's which is the largest and mainly "Coloured", St. Peter Claver which is the second oldest church and is in the Black township (Fingo Village) and St. Joseph's, the youngest of all and is situated in Joza location. The Franciscans also serve Port Alfred with its surrounding communities (also four altogether) from Grahamstown. The Assumption Sisters are part of the church communities and have been serving the wider local communities mainly in the area of education. On that particular day I was with the Sisters, saying Holy Mass for them and then joined them for lunch (10 October 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Conversation with the Assumption Sisters, (Assumption Sisters Convent, Grahamstown, 10 October 2011).

<sup>37</sup> Doyle does not mention the multi-racial composition of the campaign, but refers to the fact that the Catholic congregation raised among other points the fact that their priest had to travel to far and wide areas of the parish, 170 miles, to reach some of his members, and that he had to serve some 800 military personnel as well. Read Doyle, "Irish Contribution", pp. 84 & 85.

<sup>38</sup> H. Glanville, *Growing in Faith: A Historical Sketch of the Diocese of Port Elizabeth 1847-2007*, (Port Elizabeth, 2007), p. 83.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> As has been seen, Bishop Griffith visited the Eastern Cape part of his diocese (Vicariate) for the first time the year of his arrival, in 1838, when he also left Burke in Grahamstown. After the building of new missions, the second being Port Elizabeth and the third George, he then made another visit in April 1842. So, the one of 1844 which included Grahamstown was the third. See Brain (ed.), *The Cape Diary*, p. 200.

love-hate relationship. They had known each other for years, in Ireland, and had worked together. This might have kept them close to each other. Secondly, it is a possibility, too, that Bishop Griffith did not really know Burke until they came out to South Africa. Perhaps he had admired him only from a distance and had never been so close to him before and it was only then that he discovered who he was and what type of character he had. Thirdly, as a result of the above, one wonders whether Griffith took Burke along to the eastern part of the Vicariate - Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, Fort Beaufort and Grahamstown – due to their friendship, or just because he was being careful not to be seen as discriminating against him as the only member in the group who was not a Dominican. Or whether, again, it was a calculated move on the part of the bishop to give himself enough time, and perhaps the last chance to his friend, before finally deciding to “dump” him in a remote part of the Vicariate, far away from his headquarters in Cape Town.

It was seemingly for these reasons, then, that the bishop kept his companion, secretary and friend at bay. In his letter, Burke referred to the fact that he was six hundred miles away from Cape Town. At the same time, the bishop continued to recognize and employ the great qualities for which he had brought him along to South Africa. For instance, he sent him a younger priest – Father Murphy – so that he would help him obtain the necessary experience. The two continued their good relationship from a distance. The bishop would forward messages sent via him to Burke, and in the only letter Burke wrote to his close dear friend, William O’Meara, he mentions this point. Again, as already noted, Burke considered the bishop a friend and wanted to keep things that way. Brown, however, in referring to the bishop’s plans for his new vicariate insisted that he would have hoped to do the same things in Grahamstown which he was doing in Cape Town but just did not have confidence in Fr. Burke and, therefore, would go there himself on an annual basis or send a delegate.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Brown, *The Catholic Church*, p. 34.

## “Sister Death”

A note found in a file of his friend, Father William Aloysius O’Meara, who was at one stage the Minister Provincial of the Irish Franciscans, states that Burke died suddenly on the night of the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 1839.<sup>42</sup> This was only six months after he had written the one and only letter to O’Meara and just over a year after his arrival in South Africa. And more curious perhaps is the fact that in his letter, to O’Meara and in which, as we saw earlier on, he mentioned so many people who had since died in Ireland, he also wrote, “My daily prayer is that we may never die until we meet again somewhere in this world.”<sup>43</sup> He was buried in a new cemetery that he had obtained just two days before and is the first recorded Franciscan Friar to have died in South Africa.<sup>44</sup> Still more curious though is the question of how he died. The *Grahamstown Journal* published the story, stating that he had been quite well the night before and that his death was a sudden event, with a tone of shock in it.<sup>45</sup> “The Rev. Gentleman retired to rest, to all appearance in his usual health...and was found dead by his servant.”<sup>46</sup>

In the conversation with the Assumption Sisters, referred to above, another interesting point that came up was precisely on the manner of Burke’s death. One of the Sisters remarked on the character of Fr. Murphy, how he was notorious for his behaviour, his not being such a kind and gentle character. I suddenly, and in fact even jokingly, responded by saying that in that case Murphy might have killed “our Franciscan brother!” All laughed at the table. The following day one of the Sisters came to show me a story in a book on the history of the Catholic priests of Port Elizabeth Diocese and a remark in the

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<sup>42</sup> According to the necrology of the Franciscan Province in South Africa, he died on the night of 8 April 1839. So, which of these two dates – 8 April, of the necrology, or 17 April of O’Meara – would be correct? The 8<sup>th</sup> of April cannot be correct because according to the date of the Burial Registration in the Grahamstown Tourism Centre he was buried on the 8<sup>th</sup> of April something that would not have been the practice of the time, i.e. to bury the person at night, especially a prominent person like a priest. According to *The Grahamstown Journal*, published on 11 April 1839, “Dr. Burke” died “on Monday night”. Was the Journal published on a weekly basis so that it took three days before it published Burke’s death? Even in that case, it would be unlikely that it should take so long to publish such an eminent person’s death, and judging by the words of the Journal it was a very sad incident for Grahamstown and the surroundings. O’Meara’s 17<sup>th</sup> cannot be correct either because the burial was on 8 April.

<sup>43</sup> Burke to O’Mera (21 February 1839).

<sup>44</sup> Laurenson. (comp.), “Necrology”, 8 April 1839.

<sup>45</sup> *The Grahamstown Journal*, 11 April 1839.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

same book on the death of Daniel Burke went like this: “A rumour among the Protestants was that Rev. Burke had been poisoned by Fr. Murphy!”<sup>47</sup> The *Grahamstown Journal* added the following detail on the cause of his death: “It is supposed that some internal rupture was the cause of the suddenness of his death.”<sup>48</sup> What would have led to the “internal rupture”, was it the poison? In other words, would there be some truth in the story that was seemingly making its rounds about Burke’s being poisoned? I do not think it would be easy to dig into this matter and I would not consider it that important for our subject at this point. What we know though is that at Burke’s funeral there was a large presence of representatives of the military officials: the Acting Lieutenant Governor, Col. Hare, C. B. & K. H., the Civil Commissioner, Martin West, Esq., Captain Amsinck, (in command,) and the Officers, with the men of Her Majesty’s 27<sup>th</sup> Regt., and other Military Gentlemen and Civilians, in addition to the members of his (Burke’s) congregation. And this seems to confirm his being appreciated for his services by many, the military and the civilians (congregation) as the *Journal* clearly suggested:

Dr. Burke was highly valued by his own flock, and much respected for his estimable qualities, by those whose religious opinions differed from his own.<sup>49</sup>

So, in spite of being quite a difficult person, Burke had his other side which made him appreciated by those he served and even by those of religious opinions that differed from his. In a way, then, he was truly a Franciscan: accessible to all. As has already been noted, Burke was instrumental in organizing a campaign for the building of a Catholic church in Grahamstown and this campaign brought people of various religious groups and different racial backgrounds together. This probably contributed to his fame and popularity. Part of Bishop Griffith’s vision was educating and bringing back to the Catholic fold those who were lapsed members, rather than the conversion of Protestants to the Catholic Church.<sup>50</sup> Burke who had come out with and was close to the bishop would have been aware of that. That was one of the reasons the bishop sent a resident priest to Grahamstown where there was a fair number of Catholics, the priority being to

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<sup>47</sup> Barnes, *Just Remembering*, p. 41.

<sup>48</sup> *The Grahamstown Journal*, 11 April 1839.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

<sup>50</sup> Brain (ed.), *The Cape Diary*, p.198.

open a mission there<sup>51</sup> and, as already seen above, Burke did go out on horseback to minister to the flock in the surrounding area beside those in Grahamstown. It has already been indicated that he was popularly known as “Doctor”. So, this popularity apparently followed him even to his death, as we saw the huge number of people present at his burial. On visiting the Grahamstown Tourism Centre I found some interesting details in the Roman Catholic Burial register. First of all, the format of the registration is according to certain particulars of the person (buried).<sup>52</sup> Daniel Burke is among those buried there. The format is as follows:

**Surname Christian Names Date of Burial Place of Burial Comment**

Burke	Rev. Daniel	8.4.1839	-----	Rev. R.C. Pastor of G'twn Died 1 yr after arriving in the Colony from Ireland
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There is no entry under place of burial because it was obvious that the people were buried in the Catholic Cemetery. Burke is on the second page of the records under the Roman Catholic Church section. The first page has 32 names; the second one has 36 names and Burke is number 26 on the same page. He is the first of two persons bearing such a surname, the other being Michael Burke who was a member of the Military (Hospital St. of CMR) and was buried on 28 October 1840. Another person who also died in 1839, on 26 January, was Mary Breen, daughter of a soldier of 27<sup>th</sup> Regiment. The registration was a bit confusing. That is, the way it is arranged. On the cover, the front part of the records, it stated: Catholic Private Cemetery Non-Municipal. The manager of the Tourism Centre told me that in those days people of different religions and denominations were buried separately. On the list of contents there were seven religious groups and the Roman Catholics were the second, after the Jews; the Methodists (Wesleyans) came third; Muslims were fourth; Anglicans fifth; Baptists sixth and Presbyterians seventh. Many, if not most, of the names of the Catholics were Irish. There are more details of interest for

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> R.M. Newell & F.H. Elliot (comps.), “Grahamstown Tourism register of Old Cemeteries, Book 2”, (Grahamstown, 30 September 1981).



Young Franciscan prospects (postulants) at Burke's grave. 2012



Franciscan Friars – Burke's grave



Catholic Church in Grahamstown which Burke campaigned for in 1838

us from the historical point of view. A certain Daniel Ronigan was buried on 8 November 1838 and the comment has this to say on him: “First to be interred in New R.C. burial ground and first Catholic ever interred by a priest at the grave in this part of the country”. This was at the time of Burke and so he must have been buried by him.

Another interesting note is as follows: Rosa (surname only and no first name provided), buried on 5 May 1859 and the comment goes: “A black woman received by Bishop Devereux into the Church.”<sup>53</sup> How many people were buried during Burke’s time of ministry? There might not seem so many but taking into consideration the fact that he did not live for long – just over a year in Grahamstown - there are quite a number of them. According to the records, there are five people buried during Burke’s time. The first was Daniel Ronigan, referred to above. The second one was Owen Dywer (buried on 1 December 1838); third was William Costelloe (29 December 1838) – both of these were soldiers of the 27<sup>th</sup> Regiment. The fourth person was Currin (surname) – two children whose names are not provided (1 December 1838), two infant children of Patrick Currin (27<sup>th</sup> Reg.). The last was Mary Breen (26 January 1839), child of a soldier (27<sup>th</sup> Reg.).

In general, it seems to have been a common practice that time not to give personal details of women, children and Blacks. They were not so important; it was a man’s world and White males were particularly the ones that counted more than any other category.

### **Burke’s Franciscan and missionary vision**

Two other questions still to be asked about Daniel Burke are on his ideas on a future Franciscan presence in this country and on the Church. Would he have thought at all about the possibility of a Franciscan entity in South Africa, like his Province of Ireland where he had been superior of different houses and even a Vicar Provincial? What about the local Church, particularly the indigenous people?

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<sup>53</sup> Aiden Devereux was the second bishop of South Africa, bishop of the newly created diocese of Eastern Cape. This was separated by Rome from the Cape Town Diocese at the request of Bishop Griffith as he felt the Cape Town Diocese was too extensive.

First of all, the Irish church: clergy and religious institutes – monks, friars, brothers, nuns – has always been strong in the mission aspect. For centuries, they have sent out hundreds and thousands of their men and women to evangelize other parts of the world. Now, while it is true that normally religious – monks, friars, brothers and sisters (nuns) – would go to missions in groups, as communities, it is also a fact that, for varying reasons, certain people among them have gone out on their own. For instance, a current leader of the respective religious institute might not have been too strict on that particular law; the institute might have been undergoing some difficulties of personnel; a certain member of a given institute might have been convinced of the need to, and so been given special permission to, go and start a new mission. Alternatively, a religious leader of a given institute might have let that particular member go in order to give breathing space to the community members.

In that same context, one would wonder why Daniel Burke, a member of a religious institute, would have come out to South Africa on his own, as the only Franciscan Friar. Franciscans have been a very influential religious group in the Church and the world in general, close to the people and strong in fraternal or community life. On the mission dimension too, Franciscans have taken a leading role. In fact, Francis of Assisi is recognized as the very first founder of a religious Order in the Catholic Church to have explicitly included the missionary aspect of the members' calling. Since Francis's time, the thirteenth century, Franciscans have gone out to open new missions and cities have mushroomed around their friaries, especially in European countries and the Americas. An example *par excellence* in this regard is San Francisco in the United States of America, a city that was named after St. Francis himself; there is also Los Angeles.<sup>54</sup> At the same time, Franciscans, too, human as they are, have had their own exceptional cases among their members in this regard. Burke was a leader in the Order, in his own Province, and

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<sup>54</sup> Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscans, is known to be the first founder of a Religious Order to include missions explicitly in a Rule for his followers. His two Rules, (written in 1221 and 1223, respectively), have each a chapter dedicated to the Missions (chapter 16 of the 1221 Rule, and chapter 12 of the 1223 Rule). The first five Missionaries Francis sent to Morocco, in 1219, were killed there in 1220, by the Muslims, and we are told that Francis rejoiced at hearing the news, saying that the Order had now true Friars Minor (Lesser Brothers).

one would have expected him to lead by example in maintaining that way of life, fraternal or community.

It is thus possible that Burke was permitted by the Franciscans of his Province to go on his own due to his rather difficult personality. The Irish Franciscans might have felt that he would be better off over there, especially in the unknown “dark continent” of Africa, something that was not quite uncommon in the Church in those days. Indeed, it is a known fact that the Church too – like the society of the time – would send problematic persons to the African missions: “anything will do in Africa!” was a mentality of those times.<sup>55</sup> As for his thoughts on the future Franciscan presence and ministry, there is no such evidence and his letter neither includes nor imply any such a vision on his part; his plans are something else: his salary, wishes of going back to see his friends and people after having spent some years in Africa, and so on.<sup>56</sup>

We also have to bear in mind the historical context here. As was indicated earlier on, the Dominicans and the Jesuits had started mission work in West and East Africa in the sixteenth century. In their voyages along the coast of Africa the Portuguese voyagers made their mark of Catholicism, including South Africa, long before any other religion. Mission activity came only in the nineteenth century when the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI’s) came to Natal in 1852 and the Mariannahill Trappists (Missionaries) in 1882. It was only eighty and fifty years later, respectively, when the Franciscan Missionaries appeared on the scene (1932). This was also almost a hundred years later after the arrival of the very first historically known Franciscan friar. When the two pioneering missionaries of South Africa came, the Oblates and the Mariannahillers, South Africa was a still a new soil for Catholic missions, having been dominated by Protestant missionaries some of whom were not keen at all to have Catholics in the same area, due to European experience of conflict between the two opposing religious camps. A similar

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<sup>55</sup> D. Bosch, in his book *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission* (New York, 1991) brings out this point very pertinently, making it clear that the Western World considered the so-called “Third World” as far behind and so, in a way, would not deserve any special treatment; the “First World” would look down upon the “Third World”. Due to its leading position in science and technology the Western World considers itself superior to all in sphere of life and the “Third World”, particularly Africa, would not have anything to offer to the Western World.

<sup>56</sup> Burke to O’Mera (21 February 1839).

answer applies to the local Church, i.e. his ministry to the local people. He limited himself only to the White community and had nothing to do with the Africans in the area. While one might be tempted to argue that he was appointed just to the 27<sup>th</sup> Regiment, the military men and their families, yet it is also true that he also ministered to the other surrounding people – he used to ride on horseback going out to areas outside the town – and in that he never turned to the Africans in the area. The truth of the matter is there were indigenous people in the area and some of them were the amaMfengu (Fingos) who came to settle in Grahamstown in 1820, the same year the European Settlers arrived there, and some of whom became the congregation of the Catholic Church when the Church was built in their part (Fingoland Village) by the Jesuits in 1895.<sup>57</sup> Burke again was just interested in his own Irish and White congregation, not making any effort of learning the language of the indigenous people. However, as has been pointed out earlier on, the Church in general focused on the European Settlers and if it touched the South African people, it was the whites followed by the “Coloureds”. The Africans, the Blacks, were the last on the list, if they appeared at all.

### **Bishop Griffith’s contribution in fighting the sad state of discrimination**

Up to now we have been studying Burke as the first Franciscan to arrive and work in South Africa. However, we also saw that Burke did not come on his own to this country and his mission was very much tied to that of Griffith who invited him out and appointed him to his ministry in Grahamstown. So, it is only just that we take a closer look – even though very brief - at the bishop’s thinking and vision. What contribution did he make in this area of the Church’s ministry, especially in the spirit of discrimination that prevailed? We have seen how Bishop Griffith had a great personality, open to and mixing with all and was himself approachable, reaching out to people within his Catholic flock and towards other denominations, and that he also received Black people into the Church. So, for him every person of whatever cultural, racial and religious group was important. This vision of his applied to the Catholic schools he established. The well-known Catholic historian, Joy Brain, who also edited Griffith’s Cape Diary, points out that the lack of

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<sup>57</sup> H. Glanville, *Growing in Faith*, p. 86.

funds which inhibited the bishop from establishing a school for Black children in the Cape was a constant regret for him. Brain refers to a letter Griffith wrote in this regard in 1839 and it reveals the deep resentment in his feelings about the situation in the country:

The Boorish Dutch will not allow the children of colour to be educated with them in the same schools...were a truly Christian institution established, whose members would receive the children with joy, educate them with feeling, teach them the true character of our Holy religion, that they are as dear and dearer even than the Whites, and this is in a poor school appropriated to themselves, they would soon know the true character of our Holy religion, and embrace and adhere to it cordially.<sup>58</sup>

It is true that the words of Griffith here reveal the superiority complex of the Catholic Church, but that has to be understood within their context. It was long before the Second Vatican Council, celebrated between 1962 and 1965, which taught the respect of all religions and even called for a spirit of dialogue – inter-religious dialogue – of all religious groups. Secondly, Griffith was using schools as a means of evangelizing non-Catholics. Again, this was the practice of the time, Churches saw education as a helpful tool in instilling their values to those who did not adhere to their faith and teaching. We will see this same practice with the Franciscan Friars and other religious institutes when they came to the missions in South Africa. Griffith is very clear though, whatever other motives might be attached to his words, that he did not approve of discrimination against other racial groups by the whites. The children of Blacks were to be taught the same values as the White children, they had equal dignity to their White counterparts. It was along these same feelings and thoughts that he hoped for the establishment of a Seminary for the training of Black priests.<sup>59</sup> In this way he was truly ahead of his times for this battle went on even in the 1880s and 1920s when two of the leaders of the Church in South Africa – Abbot Francis Pfanner and Bishop Adalbero Fleischer both of Mariannhill, Kwazulu-Natal – still had to fight for the training of the Blacks as priests and religious sisters and brothers. Abbot Pfanner sent the first Black candidates for the

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<sup>58</sup> Brain (ed.), *The Cape Diary*, p. 201.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

priesthood to Rome, beginning in 1887,<sup>60</sup> and Bishop Fleischer, in fact, became the first bishop to cater for the training of Black priests in Mariannhill, in 1924. Even when the National Seminary for the training of the Catholic Clergy in Southern Africa was established in Pretoria, 1946, it was only for the whites. So, Bishop Griffith was a man of vision in which he saw all as equals in the eyes of the Gospel he had come to preach and teach. The Church he was sent to establish in South Africa was to follow those values and lead by example in a country that already showed discrimination on racial grounds, a country that was later to legalize segregation along racial lines. At the same time, as we will see in the next section of this study, there are historians who question the Church's stance at that time on the state of Africans in the country, and that applies to most of the Christian Churches. Historians like Mostert and Peires claim that the Church leadership in general had a similar attitude to that of whites towards the people of colour. Since we will be taking a closer look at this in the next section I will not go into it here and now.

In 1851 Griffith returned to his home country for some time. He then suffered a stroke, in 1861, which left him paralysed, and he died in Cape Town in 1862.<sup>61</sup> This man of great vision and hard work laid the foundations of the Catholic Church even though he died without seeing part of his vision fulfilled.

## **1.2. Socio-political situation in South Africa**

By the mid-sixteen hundreds the Xhosa had overcome most of the Khoi in the Cape. Jan van Riebeeck was notified about this situation. The Xhosa would conquer and subdue the Khoi by making friends with some of their chiefdoms against their local rivals; they would give their girls to the Khoi for marriage and in turn expect help in times of war.<sup>62</sup> The final chiefdom of the Khoi to surrender to the Xhosa was in 1750 and that was the Khoi chieftainess Hoho to Rharhabe at the Amatola Mountains. The San would take advantage of this situation, stealing cattle and raiding the Khoi settlements as they were

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<sup>60</sup> G.S. Mukuka, *The Other Side of the Story: The Silent Experience of the Black Clergy in the Catholic Church in South Africa (1898-1976)*, (Pietermaritzburg, 2008), p. 47.

<sup>61</sup> Brain (ed.). *The Cape Diary*, p. 204.

<sup>62</sup> J.B. Peires, *The House of Phalo: A history of the Xhosa people in the days of their independence*, (Johannesburg, 1981), p. 22.

weakened by the battles with the Xhosa.<sup>63</sup> The Xhosa themselves were at times brutal with the San, but there were also friendly and peaceful relations between the two groups. For instance, the San would be used for rain-making; they were their trading partners and there were also intermarriages between them although these were rare.<sup>64</sup> Certain words in the Xhosa language were borrowed from the Khoi-san vocabulary and, again, they are evidence of existing relations between these groups.<sup>65</sup> In her research on the amaMpondo people Janet Kalis concurs with these observations about the Khoi-san. In the first place, she points out that these original inhabitants of Southern Africa were squeezed out by the flowing of the Bantu-speaking peoples from the north-eastern region of Africa, in the 1500s. The Khoi were often incorporated into these new arrivals but the San were frequently massacred. Only small numbers survived in more remote parts of Southern Africa.<sup>66</sup> Again, Kalis reiterates Peires' point about the influence of the Khoi languages on the Xhosa vocabulary, something that also attests to the closeness of the two groups – Xhosa and Khoi - to each other; there were intermarriages taking place.<sup>67</sup>

From the second half of the seventeenth century South Africa was governed by European nations, first the Dutch and then the British in 1795 and, again, in 1806. The particular area of South Africa we are dealing with is the Cape Colony which had a multi-racial population of Khoi-san,<sup>68</sup> Xhosa, Dutch, French Huguenots, German and British settlers of English, Scottish and Irish descent. This era was marked by conflicts and wars, especially between the indigenous peoples and the settlers. The report of the Churches of Southern Africa, issued in the 1980s, helps place this situation within a context when it stated the following:

Despite what many South Africans believe and are still taught, the first inhabitants of the country were black. Bantu-speaking peoples were settled in South Africa well over a thousand years before Jan Van

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>65</sup> Peires gives an example of the root-word “komo”, Xhosa for cattle, derived from the Khoi root- word “goma-“, p. 23.

<sup>66</sup> Janet Kalis, research on the amaMolo & abeLungu, (n.d.), p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Crampton refers to these terms “Khoi” and “San”, giving an explanation that can be useful. She points out that these were originally derogatory terms which over time have gained popularity so that they are more acceptable today than those that were used by the colonists (“Hottentots” and “Bushmen”) (*The Sunburnt Queen*, pp. 323-324).

Riebeeck arrived in the Cape of Good Hope. Remains of their Iron Age farming communities can still be seen in the Transvaal at Phalaborwa, Melville Koppies and Zeerust. In Natal such remains can be seen at Karridene, and in the Eastern Cape at Umazazana. When the first whites sailed round Africa in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, many if not most of today's Bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa were already settled in areas suited to herding and agriculture.<sup>69</sup>

The report then goes on to point out certain events which are important and significant in this discussion on the history of South Africa. Those can be summed up as follows: a) the presence of different "tribal" groups in various parts of the country before the coming of the whites – the Khoikhoi and the San in the Cape, the Zulus in the south-eastern part, the Xhosas in the south-eastern and central parts, i.e. eastern and central Cape, the Sotho in the Free State and Transvaal and the Ndebele further north; b) these peoples were mostly farming communities (agriculturalists and pastoralists); c) there were conflicts between these peoples and the white settlers who often not only ignored the rights but also took away the lands of the indigenous peoples, forcing them to be slaves.<sup>70</sup>

On the actual clashes between the settlers and the indigenous groups the report states:

The first war between the whites and the Khoi over land erupted in 1659, and there was violent conflict in every decade of the following century...by the mid-eighteenth century, the original trading relationship between the settlers and the Khoisan had become one of master and servant.<sup>71</sup>

Since this refers to the rest of South Africa, the conflicts in the entire region can generally be attributed to the economic control of, first the land and, later, with the discovery of diamonds and gold, it was for the control of these valuables, the latter two items found in Kimberley and Gauteng. The European settlers with their superior weapons and military skills eventually overcame the indigenous people who were, then, forced to be slaves of the whites and the relationship between the two groups generally became one of master and slave. Although apartheid was formally declared only in 1948, by the National Party

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<sup>69</sup> The South African Council of Churches and The Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, *Relocations: The Churches' report on forced removals in South Africa* (Randburg, 1984), p. 34.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

government of South Africa, it was long prevalent both in attitude and practice in the country.<sup>72</sup> The attitude of the settlers towards the indigenous people was generally very negative. The shipwrecked sailors who met the Thembu people in 1688 – in what used to be known as “the Transkei” area – described them as an “idle” people with “abominable and heathen customs”.<sup>73</sup> Meer adds to this description, “Such violent impressions were conjured to justify the exploitation and destruction of a proud people”.<sup>74</sup> In his autobiography Mandela himself refers to such wars and their effects on his ancestors and their descendants. He writes:

In 1937 when I was nineteen, I joined Justice at Healdtown, the Wesleyan College in Fort Beaufort, about 175 miles southwest of Umtata. In the nineteenth century, Fort Beaufort was one of a number of British outposts during the so-called Frontier Wars, in which a steady encroachment of white settlers systematically dispossessed the Xhosa tribes of their land. Over a century of conflict, many Xhosa warriors achieved fame for their bravery, men like Sandile, Makhanda and Maqoma, the last two of whom were imprisoned on Robben Island by the British authorities, where they died...Fort Beaufort was a white town where once only the Xhosa lived and farmed.<sup>75</sup>

### 1.3 Religious dimension

It is also an unfortunate historical fact that religion and politics frequently intermingled. Brown, in his history of the Catholic Church in South Africa, refers to such a reality. Firstly, he suggests that we should understand the various attitudes better by remembering that the national culture was integral part of each Protestant religion as it had developed historically. Calvinism was either Scottish or Dutch, Lutheranism German or Swedish, just as Anglicanism was English, and, unconsciously, they thought of Christianity as necessarily national.<sup>76</sup> This, following Brown’s argument, was the reason why Protestants, especially Calvinists, were against Catholic missionary work of converting the “natives.”<sup>77</sup> They did not like Bishop Griffith’s efforts at converting,

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<sup>72</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, chapter 1.

<sup>73</sup> F. Meer, *Nelson Mandela: A Biography* (Durban, 1988), p. 13.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> N. Mandela, *Long Walk To Freedom: the autobiography of Nelson Mandela*., (Randburg, 1994), p. 35.

<sup>76</sup> Brown, *The Catholic Church*, p. 197.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

baptizing and marrying “natives” at Fort Beaufort.<sup>78</sup> However, it is a known fact that this kind of attitude was not directed only to the Catholic missionaries. Early Protestant missionaries, of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, too, were frowned upon and opposed by people of European descent when they tried to reach out to the “natives.”<sup>79</sup> Moreover, according to Brown, Catholic Bishops Griffith and Ricards, and Father O’Haire all had some comments on the “coloured races”.<sup>80</sup> Brown argues that there was an expectation to find the “natives” degraded in morals.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, there was a mentality among Catholic missionaries, beginning with the early Portuguese and Spanish ones, that the natives would be assimilated into the white culture which, according to these missionaries, would make it easier for them to be evangelized.<sup>82</sup>

Although Brown upholds the positive general feeling of the Catholic Church authorities towards the “natives” it is nevertheless a proven reality that the negative element equally prevailed. Referring to Bishop Ricards’ book – bishop of Port Elizabeth between 1871 and 1893 - Brown continues to show the above argument, pointing out that the Xhosa arrived in the area (“Kaffraria”)<sup>83</sup> after the middle of the eighteenth century and exterminated the San and Khoi.<sup>84</sup> Then, the Dutch came, in 1783 at the Great Fish River, and met with the Xhosa coming from the north-east. Finally, the British claimed the area, imposing their system of rule to keep the natives under supervision. Wars followed in 1846, 1850 and 1877. The Churches, Catholic and Protestants, moved along the same line in their evangelization.<sup>85</sup> However, Brown’s claim has been debated and refuted by some historians who argue that such a stance is prejudiced against the indigenous peoples.<sup>86</sup> In the first place, these historians hold, the Bantu-speaking peoples of South-eastern Africa

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>79</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 35-37.

<sup>80</sup> Brown, *The Catholic Church*, p. 199.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 200.

<sup>83</sup> Crampton, *The Sunburnt Queen*, p. 323.

<sup>84</sup> Brown, *The Catholic Church*, p. 202.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 202-204.

<sup>86</sup> J.B. Peires, in his book *The House of Phalo* refers to John Henderson Soga’s book *The South-eastern Bantu*, written in the late 1920s, as being great on the one hand and yet, on the other hand, it is limited as Soga had no access to important documents of the period before 1850. Secondly, Peires states that the few books on the subject which Soga consulted were very prejudiced and negative on the so-called Bantu migrations (*The House of Phalo*, p. vii).

settled in the modern South Africa in the third or the fourth centuries, and even before that.<sup>87</sup> The frontier between white and black peoples at the eastern part of the Cape Colony gradually developed during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, with the white colonists moving towards the already-settled Bantu-speaking blacks in the area.<sup>88</sup> Mostert tells the story of the meeting between John Barrow, secretary of the first British governor in the Cape Colony, in 1797, and the Xhosa chief Ngqika. This was two years after the British had taken over the Cape from the Dutch.<sup>89</sup> Mostert goes on to observe that this meeting was the beginning of a new history, the involvement of the British with an independent black people in Africa who were free and able to defend their sovereignty, unlike the hard, brutal experience of West Africa with the slave traders.<sup>90</sup> These historians further refer to the friction and wars that followed the coming of the white settlers to the indigenous peoples' area. Within two years of the above-mentioned meeting, between the British and the Xhosa, the British started fighting with the Xhosa.<sup>91</sup> This was to continue for the next century, the wars between the Dutch and the Xhosa included.<sup>92</sup> On this question of tension and wars Peires holds that first of all, both the Colonists and the Africans were not to blame and again were both not inculpable.<sup>93</sup> They were both in need of grazing lands and of cattle both of which were enough excuse for the two sides to clash.<sup>94</sup> Secondly, the Boers were frightened of the huge numbers of the Xhosa warriors and this probably led them to over-react, either by running away or by provoking the other side unnecessarily.<sup>95</sup> Thirdly, the Xhosa were open to mixing with the different groups, the European settlers, just as they had done with the Khoi. That was not a problem for them, as long as the other would not interfere with their society by wanting to impose their way of life and practice. The Xhosa would work for the whites as long as they would pay them justly. In fact, even Colonists were happily surprised with the hospitality they were given when they found themselves among the Xhosa and yet

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<sup>87</sup> N. Mostert, *Frontiers: The Epic of South Africa's Creation and the Tragedy of the Xhosa People*, (New York, 1992), p. xvi.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, xxv.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, xxviii.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, xxix.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, xxix.

<sup>93</sup> Peires, *The House of Phalo*, p. 53.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

were often not aware of the lack of such on their part.<sup>96</sup> In the fourth place, on the question of wars, Peires points out that the defeat of the Xhosa by the whites was not only due to the more sophisticated weaponry but also due to the fact that the Xhosa were not really used to fighting cruelly. For them war was to subdue the other side and so settle matters. In that case, women and children would not be harmed. So, they were more shocked than anything else when the whites fought to kill and destroy.<sup>97</sup>

As for the missionaries to the Xhosa people there are a few points to note.<sup>98</sup> Firstly, there were secular reasons for the people to accept missionaries among them, just as there were secular motives in the missionaries coming to these people.<sup>99</sup> Secondly, it is not easy to know why some of the missionaries were successful and accepted with love while others were not. Political tendency of individual missionaries is not enough explanation for this. That is, stating that those who were siding with a political power were either accepted or rejected is not always satisfactory explanation.<sup>100</sup> However, the following seem to be some qualities expected in missionaries and were apparently causes of acceptance:

a) *Peace-making between colonists and the Xhosa.* For example, Shaw was acceptable among the Gqunukhwebe people as he played such a role after the 1818-1819 war.<sup>101</sup>

b) *Sincerity, simplicity and humility of the missionary - by living what he preached.* An example here is J.T. van der Kemp of the London Missionary Society-Congregationalists who was the first missionary to the Xhosa of the Eastern Cape, and he arrived there in 1799. He ate Xhosa people's food, lived in their rondavels, walked barefoot and without a hat on his head.<sup>102</sup> He was unlike most of the missionaries who combined "pastoral comfort with beneficial example and lived as Europeans a life as possible."<sup>103</sup>

c) To further emphasize the above, Peires continues to state that Van der Kemp, like Ntsikana, had had a mystical experience and so his Christianity was of a deep nature and

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., pp. 53-54.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. 74.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.; Elphick, R., "Introduction: Christianity in South African History", in R. Elphick & R. Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa. A political, social and cultural history*, (Cape Town & Oxford, 1997), p. 10.

<sup>101</sup> Peires, *The House of Phalo*, pp. 76-77.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

so he communicated faith rather than doctrine or “civilization” to the people which was different from other missionaries.<sup>104</sup>

To close this question of missionaries, an obvious cause for failure would be an extension of colonial powers, or at least what seemed to be so to the people. Such missionaries would propagate western civilization or even politics, and would be seen as spies which sometimes they were indeed.<sup>105</sup> The most common attitude of the Xhosa to the missionaries was being selective; they did not take everything from missionaries, but it was only in rare cases that they totally rejected everything that the missionaries taught. An example of the latter was Ngqika who rejected Williams.<sup>106</sup> And, of course, considering what we started with in this section – that religion and politics intermingled – it was only fair for the people to be selective.

I now turn to another era of this history of Franciscan presence and ministry in South Africa, one that would be in many ways quite different from the above. First of all, it was almost a century later. Secondly, the personalities involved were full of enthusiasm for the Franciscan ideals. Thirdly, partly due to the above points, the challenges of the church and society were different from those of Griffith and Burke. At the same time, we have to bear in mind that human beings are fundamentally the same throughout the ages – history repeats itself - and so, as we go on with the story of the Franciscan missionaries we should ask ourselves whether or not they were any different from those we have just seen in this section. And if so, how did they differ?

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Peires, *The House of Phalo*, p. 76. See also Elphick, “Introduction”, p. 4.

<sup>106</sup> Peires, *The House of Phalo*, p. 78.

#### **1.4. Bishop Adalbero Michael Fleischer**

In this section I would like to take a look at the man who was behind the Franciscan dream that is the thesis of this study. As has been noted above, he is the one who invited the Franciscan Friars, in 1932, to come live and work in his diocese of Mariannhill. Here I hope to look at his personal background so that we may better understand his vision and the Franciscan dream he had in mind when he asked for Bavarian Friars to come to South Africa. I must point out that I certainly do not intend to write a biography of Bishop Fleischer here; it has already been done by others.<sup>107</sup> What I hope to do here is just to take a brief look at some of a few important points in the life of this man that is central to the presence and ministry of the Franciscan Friars in this country. This will provide a background to our history of Franciscan life and work in South Africa.

#### **Early years in Germany**

Michael Adalbero Fleischer was born on 4 January 1874, in a small village of about 1500 inhabitants, known as Dettelback on Main.<sup>108</sup> He was the second eldest son of Adam and Lucretia Fleischer, a family of nine children. It was such a religious family that four of the sons became priests,<sup>109</sup> one being a Franciscan of the Bavarian Province of St. Anton – the Province that later (1932) sent missionaries to South Africa, to the diocese of Mariannhill where Adalbero Fleischer was by then bishop.<sup>110</sup> Having been ordained a priest in 1899, he was assigned to various positions in his diocese and these included parish work at Rimpar and hospital chaplaincy. During this time he was also involved in other ministries like looking after the boys in church and school, with great devotion to the elderly and the poor.

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<sup>107</sup> Stefan, B., *Michael Adalbero Fleischer 1874-1963, Missionsbischof in Sudafrika*, (Wurzburg, 1975).

<sup>108</sup> Sr. Dominic Mkhize, FSF, *75 Years of the Daughters of St. Francis of Assisi*, (Mariannhill, 1997), pp. 7-10; Hermann, *100 Years*, p. 44.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, p. 15.

## **Mariannahill Monastery and Rhodesia (Zimbabwe)**

In 1908 he finally decided to join the Trappist monks of Mariannahill monastery in South Africa which was a fulfilment of his long-desired wish to be a religious and a missionary.<sup>111</sup> The strict monastic life was not easy for Adalbero Fleischer, but he finally graduated as a young Trappist monk and was soon sent to a new mission in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), in Manicaland<sup>112</sup>; this was mainly due to his experience as a diocesan priest before joining the Trappists. In Triashill Mission he found other Mariannahill missionaries who helped him settle in the new situation so that he could take over when the parish priest and elderly missionary, Father Mayr, did not return to the mission of Zimbabwe after his home leave. Father Adalbero had already started to learn the local language there and quickly made progress in working together with the other missionary priests, brothers and sisters of his Order, serving the people and converting the people who had practices quite alien to a Christian way of life, like getting drunk, committing violence and taking young girls for marriage that would not last and were quite abusive.<sup>113</sup> The mission in Rhodesia was interrupted by the outbreak of the First World War when the German missionaries were interned. When they were allowed to go back after the War, Father Adalbero was most happy to return there, early in 1919.<sup>114</sup>

## **Superior of Mariannahill Congregation and first bishop of Mariannahill**

But his return to his favourite mission of Triashill, in Rhodesia, did not last for long. There were other developments in the Mariannahill monastery and the church there. First of all, the Trappists were in the process of transforming into a missionary Congregation instead of the monastic tradition. This was due to the difficult challenge when they came to live and work among the Zulus and they saw the urgent need of evangelizing the local people, and they were led in this by their leader himself, Abbot Francis Pfanner. As this was not in keeping with the Trappist rule of strict silence and contemplation, the superiors in Rome intervened and gave Mariannahill a choice between either continuing as

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<sup>111</sup> Mkhize, *75 Years*, pp. 11-13.

<sup>112</sup> Hermann, *100 Years*, p. 44.

<sup>113</sup> Mkhize, *75 Years*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15; Hermann, *100 Years*, pp. 44-45.



Mariannahill Monastery Gate



Old Bishop's House - Mariannahill



Cathedral - Mariannahill

Trappists or becoming a new missionary congregation. The monks, who had already begun settling and working hard in Mariannhill opted for missionary way of life. At their first Chapter (1920) towards this end, Adalbero Fleischer – to his great surprise and unwillingness – was chosen as the new superior to lead the young religious congregation. Another development at the time was the creation of new Vicariates (dioceses) from the huge Vicariate of Natal, and the new ones were: Mariannhill, Kokstad and Mzimkhulu. Adalbero was later (1922) also made the head of the new Mariannhill Vicariate and had to be in charge of both the Mariannhill congregation and the new Vicariate.<sup>115</sup>

He was consecrated as the first bishop of Mariannhill on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1922.<sup>116</sup> As bishop he continued to work even harder for the building up and the good of the church in Mariannhill.<sup>117</sup> The statistics in Mariannhill diocese when Fleischer was made bishop, in 1922, give a good idea of the situation at the time which when compared with the later development shows how much hard work he did. The statistics are as follows:

Number of priests – 52; only three of them were African

Number of brothers – 153

Number of Sisters (CPS, Mariannhill Congregation) – 294

Number of African (male)<sup>118</sup> teachers – 58

Number of African lady teachers – 97

Number of Catechists – 72

Number of African Catholics – 36 000

Number of Catechumens – 8 000

Number of missions (main stations) – 28

Number of mission-stations (outstations) – 198

Number of churches and chapels – 91

Number of teachers training colleges – 2

Number of schools – 113

Number of teacher candidates – 270

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<sup>115</sup> Hermann, *100 Years*, p. 42; Mkhize, *75 Years*, p. 16.

<sup>116</sup> Mkhize, *75 Years*, pp. 18-19; Barnabas, *Michael Adalbero Fleischer*, p. 26; Hermann, *100 Years*, pp. 42-44.

<sup>117</sup> Barnabas, *Michael Adalbero Fleischer*, p. 26.

<sup>118</sup> This – (male) - is my own addition.

Number of female pupils – 37  
Number of kindergartens – 119  
Number of hospitals and clinics – 27  
Number of dispensaries – 53  
Population of “pagans” – 1.5 million.<sup>119</sup>

The first figure, number of priests, is a good example of the profound transformation that has happened. At the time of Fleischer’s taking over the diocese of Mariannhill, there were only three African priests. They had been sent to Rome by Abbot Francis Pfanner, the founder of Mariannhill who, like Fleischer, had a powerful vision in evangelizing the indigenous people.<sup>120</sup> During and after the time of Bishop Fleischer, massive progress was made in this regard. Today the diocese of Mariannhill boasts of having the largest number of African priests, and probably religious sisters as well, in South Africa. Indeed, it would be considered by many as the “mother” of the Catholic Church in South Africa.

Sr. Adelgisa’s book on the history of the Missionaries of Mariannhill makes it clear that Bishop Fleischer was the original catalyst for these developments, which were continued by his successors. It also makes the case that there were three main foundations to this growth and development of the Church. The first of these was the arrival of other missionary groups, a development which – it will become clear – did not go without challenge, especially from the Mariannhill Missionaries. The second foundation was that of the indigenization of the church, a development which was in line with the universal thinking of the Catholic Church at the time. The third focus of growth and development was that of the social involvement and influence of the church in the wider society.<sup>121</sup>

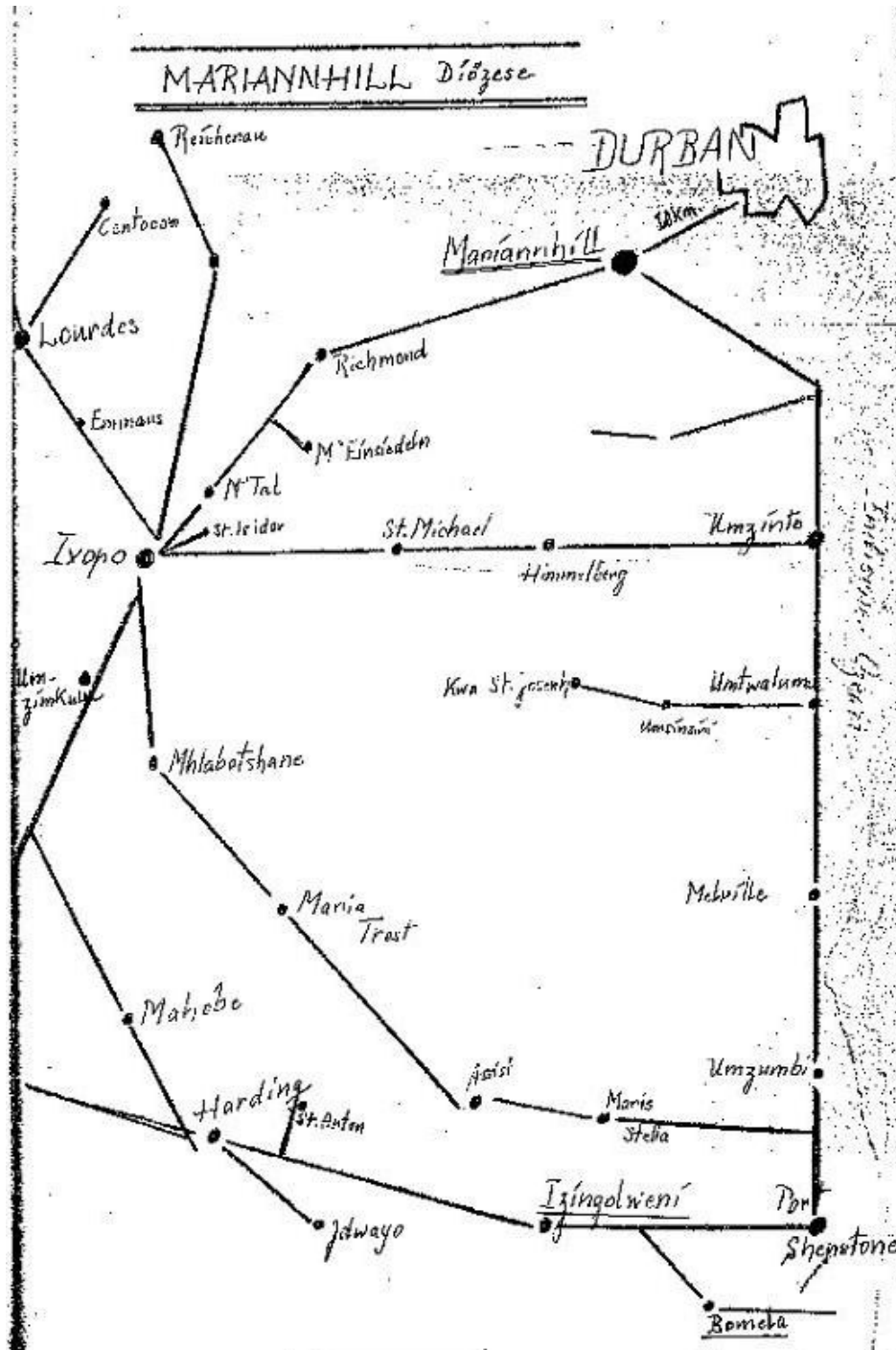
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<sup>119</sup> Mkhize, *75 Years*, p. 17; Hermann, *100 Years*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>120</sup> In fact, there were originally four indigenous priests that were sent to Rome for studies by Abbot Francis Pfanner and they were Edward Mueller Kece Mnganga (1872-1945); Alois Majonga Mncadi (1877-1933); Andreas Mdontswa Ngidi (1881-1951) and Julius uMkomazi Mbhele (179-1956). Today they are still celebrated by the Mariannhill diocese and the Catholic Church in Southern Africa as pioneers of the Black clergy. Mukuka deals with them in his book *The other side of the story*.

<sup>121</sup> It is particularly in chapters eleven and twelve of her book, *100 Years Mariannhill Province* that these areas are dealt with.

**Map 3:  
The Mariannhill Diocese in the 1930s by Lukas Purstinger OFM**



In addition to the pitiful lack of African clergy, the other aspects of the church which would be transformed by Fleischer and his successors are highlighted by the figures given above. At the time that he was consecrated as bishop, the 153 brothers and 294 sisters were all European (German or Austrian and some Dutch) Mariannahill Missionaries. Members of other missionary orders would only begin to arrive during his period of office and the indigenization of the church would begin to become a reality. However, on a more positive note, the other figures given either show the social involvement of the Mariannahill Missionaries – in areas of health and education - or the rapid growth of the church. An interesting figure here is that of female pupils, only thirty seven of them. Yet the number of African teachers, presumably male ones, is far less than that of female teachers. So, one would argue here that the church was promoting human and social development of all, of both male and female and if there was any difficulty on the part of the female upliftment, it would have been more from the cultural milieu of the people themselves. Girls were still considered as men's property and were to be employed in the family into which they married. Men were not so willing to educate girls as they would leave their families and join a new family through marriage.

### **The Franciscan Dream**

Marcel Dischl, in his book on the history of the Catholic Church in the Transkeian areas writes this about Bishop Fleischer:

The predilection for anything Franciscan remained with him and motivated many of his decisions...In 1932 he invited the strict Capuchin nuns of Pfaffenhofen/Kolbenz to his Vicarite...For more practical mission work he called the Sisters of Solanus (also Third Order of St. Francis)...he approached the Provincial of the Bavarian Franciscans.<sup>122</sup>

A few points need to be noted here. First of all, Marcel Dischl was a member of the same Congregation as Bishop Fleischer, a Mariannahill Missionary. At the time to which Dischl

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<sup>122</sup> M. Dischl, *Transkei for Christ: A history of the Catholic Church in the Transkeian Territories*, (Umtata 1982), p. 165.

is referring the Mariannahill Vicariate included the Transkeian territories as Mthatha and others were created independent dioceses only later.<sup>123</sup> So, he knew Fleischer well. Secondly, his comment on Fleischer gives a hint of a negative feeling that was held by, if not many of, the Missionaries of Mariannahill about his inclination towards the Franciscans. The Mariannahill Missionaries were not happy with this trend.<sup>124</sup> This will be examined more closely in the next section of this study. At the moment I would like to briefly show what Fleischer's affinity to the Franciscans actually involved. Again, as Dischl points out in the quotation above, Fleischer invited Franciscans into his Vicariate. In fact, there were more Franciscans in Mariannahill than those mentioned by Dischl; those mentioned in his book are probably only an example. The following is a complete list of the Franciscan groups that were in Mariannahill diocese:

- Daughters of St. Francis of Assisi (FSF, Latin),<sup>125</sup> whom he founded himself (1922)
- Familiars of St. Joseph (FFJ), male counterpart of the above, also founded by Fleischer in 1923<sup>126</sup>
- Franciscan Brothers of Waldbreitenbach, Germany (1931)<sup>127</sup>
- Capuchin Sisters of Pfaffenhofen/Kolbenz (1932)
- Franciscan Sisters of Solanus, of Landshut, Bavaria (1932)<sup>128</sup>
- Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans of Bavaria, 1932)
- Holy Cross Sisters (of Menzingen), or Altoeting Third Order of St. Francis<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Umtata (now Mthatha) was created a Vicariate on 31 May 1930 and Emmanuel Hanisch, Mariannahill Missionary was its first Vicar Apostolic till 1940. See Hermann, *100 Years*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>124</sup> Lucas Purstinger, in his history of the Bavarian Franciscans in South Africa, reflects this obvious sentiment of the Mariannahill Missionaries towards the situation. See Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 30-60.

<sup>125</sup> *Filiae Sancti Francisci de Assisi*. See Fleischer's Pastoral letter, 1922; Fleischer's letter to Polycarp Schmolli (Minister Provincial), (Munich 9 January 1932).

<sup>126</sup> Fleischer's Pastoral letter, 1923; also see letters of the Franciscan Friars and the Franciscan Solanus Sisters themselves, written from 1932 onward; Fleischer's letter to Polycarp Schmolli, 9 January 1932; Hermann, *100 Years*, p. 48.

<sup>127</sup> Fleischer's letter to Polycarp Schmolli, 9 January 1932.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*; Sr. M. Lydia Pollin (General Superior of the Solanus Sisters), Landshut, Germany, to Polycarp Schmolli (Minister Provincial), (Munich 1 May 1932); Sr. M. Adelgisa, CPS, p. 54.

<sup>129</sup> Fleischer's letter to Polycarp Schmolli, 9 January 1932. According to Sr. Mechtildis Wilking, a former Provincial Superior of these Sisters and presently stationed at the Holy Cross Sisters' Provincial House in Belgravia, Johannesburg, Altoeting was a base for missionary Sisters – were prepared over there – to Chile, Africa and Asia (India). Furthermore, the foundress of Altoeting was later sent to South Africa,

- There were also the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (FMM) in the Vicariate<sup>130</sup>
- Secular Franciscans (Third Order of St. Francis)<sup>131</sup>

From this list we can see that the Mariannahill Vicariate was very Franciscan and it is only natural that we want to know what was actually behind this situation, especially as the territory was run by Mariannahill Missionaries. The Franciscan presence and influence went further back than the year mentioned by Dischl (1932). What would have motivated Fleischer to have so many Franciscans in his diocese? As we can see, from the above groups of Franciscans, Fleischer had founded a local religious Congregation of women (Daughters of St. Francis) ten years before Dischl's year (1932). Again, in 1923 he founded a male counterpart of the Daughters of St. Francis, the "Franciscan Familiars of St. Joseph". Still more, Fleischer's Franciscan roots went further back than 1922 and 1923. As a youth, back in Germany, Fleischer had been a member of the Franciscan Family, the Secular Franciscans.<sup>132</sup> Secondly, he had a blood-brother who was a member of the Bavarian Province and was a Franciscan student for the priesthood. So then, Fleischer had personal motives for inviting the Franciscans to his diocese, he had a personal liking for them and his spirituality was very Franciscan. As a result of that, he founded local religious Congregations that were inspired by the Franciscan charism and spirituality. Those are, as indicated in the above list, the Daughters of St. Francis and the Familiars of St. Joseph. He officially announced this in his Pastoral letters to the Mariannahill diocese, stating his plans in this regard.<sup>133</sup> It is interesting to see that this was

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with the first Sisters to that country, and she assisted Abbot Pfanner in training the first Mariannahill Sisters. But when Pfanner asked her to become one of his Sisters (Precious Blood or Mariannahill Sisters) she decided against that, wanting to continue as a Holy Cross Sister and, consequently, withdrew her involvement from the Precious Blood Sisters. The next chapter will take a close look at these (Altoeting/Holy Cross) Sisters.

<sup>130</sup> Fleischer's letter to Polycarp Schmoll, 9 January 1932; L. Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 36. These Sisters will be covered in chapter 8 of this study. According to a letter written by Fr. Edward Mnganga, one of the first four Zulu priests in South Africa, they were the first Sisters to go to the African part of Zululand. Fr. Edward Mnganga, Ebuhleni Mission, Zululand, to Mother General (Foundress) of the FMM Sisters, Rome (FMM Provincial Archives Umzinto 28 June 1901). Their Provincial House is still in Umzinto, KZN.

<sup>131</sup> Fleischer's letter to Polycarp Schmoll, 9 January 1932.

<sup>132</sup> Hermann, *100 Years*, p. 54; Secular Franciscans are part of the entire Franciscan Family, an Order that was founded by St. Francis himself and its members live in their own families. See Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", p. 15.

<sup>133</sup> Bishop Adalbero Fleischer, Pastoral letters, Mariannahill Bishop's House Archives, 1922 and 1923.

right at the beginning of his episcopacy. This only confirms that Fleischer was always a Franciscan and he remained one, at least in heart, until he died.<sup>134</sup>

There are three other points that need to be raised at this stage in the light of what has been mentioned above. Firstly, Fleischer's invitation of the Franciscan Friars of Bavaria was also for practical motives. He needed priests in his diocese to fill up the areas that had no priests. He refers to this in his letter to the Bavarian Provincial in which he was asking for the Friars to come to his diocese.<sup>135</sup> The Mariannahill Vicariate was still young and there was shortage of clergy to serve the huge area satisfactorily and so he turned to his own, the Bavarians and the Franciscans.<sup>136</sup> This leads us to the second point that I would like to raise here and that is, the Franciscan aspect of his vision and plan. In looking for an Order to help him in his Vicariate, Fleischer could have gone for any other Order – i.e. as bishop he was free to invite any religious Order and so did not have to take the Franciscans - but he intentionally chose the Franciscans. This is stated clearly in that same letter just referred to above.<sup>137</sup> His preference for the Franciscans was due to the fact that there were already other Franciscan groups in the Vicariate of Mariannahill – most of which, as we saw above, had of course been brought there by himself - and he mentioned them individually.<sup>138</sup> My thesis of this research is precisely that of the Franciscan vision of this man: he wanted to have a Franciscan Family fully established in his diocese, “...*qua in Vicariatu jam floret satis vita franciscalis*”. And to complete the Family the Order of Friars Minor, the First Order of St. Francis, had to be present and even take a leading role.<sup>139</sup> In fact, the bishop had eight years earlier written to the Minister General of this Order, in Rome, requesting for the affiliation of his newly-

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<sup>134</sup> The interviews of the Franciscan Sisters of Assisi, one of his two local foundations, attest to this fact. He surrounded himself with them till the end.

<sup>135</sup> Fleischer's letter to Polycarp Schmoll, 9 January 1932. Schmoll signed the letter and forwarded a copy to the Franciscan Minister General in Rome. (Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 173-174.

<sup>136</sup> Sr. M. Adelgisa Hermann also refers to this factor of shortage of clergy in the diocese that was growing in the number of Christians. (Hermann, *100 Years*, p. 53.)

<sup>137</sup> “Ipsemet praefero Fratres Minores...”. Fleischer's letter to Polycarp Schmoll, 9 January 1932.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> In the universal Franciscan Family the Order of Friars Minor has always been seen to take a leading role, Francis himself having belonged to this section of the Franciscans and he personally promised, and bound his Friars, to take care of the other entities of the spiritual family he founded. See the ancient biographies of the saint, e.g. Thomas of Celano, St. Bonaventure, *The Legend of Three Companions*, etc.

founded indigenous Congregation of Sisters to the same.<sup>140</sup> The affiliation took place on the seventh of December 1925.<sup>141</sup> This was, as it were, the first part of the bishop's Franciscan vision and had now moved to the second level: bringing the Franciscan Order to his diocese.

So then, Fleischer's pastoral motives for inviting the Bavarian Franciscans was not just for the sake of filling mission-stations that were in need of priests. It was far more profound than that, it was for the completion of the Franciscan Family in South Africa, particularly in the Vicariate of Mariannhill where he was the head. The Franciscan Friars had to do some work in South Africa and so the pastoral element came in that sense. However, still further, within the Franciscan vision he identified more work to be done by the Franciscan Friars of Bavaria in his diocese, ministries that could be said to be more in keeping with the Franciscan charisma.<sup>142</sup>

1. The Franciscan Friars were to lead their life in their house which he was going to give them on their arrival.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Letter, Bishop Adalbero Fleischer, Mariannhill, Kwazulu-Natal, to Minister General, Rome, 2 February 1924.

<sup>141</sup> *Annuario Ordinis Fratrum Minorum*, ed. IV., 1968, Rome, 548, in Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", p. 9. .

<sup>142</sup> Central to the history of the Franciscan movement is the question and tension of the Franciscan vocation or calling. It is the question of identity: who and what is the Franciscan life and calling? As we will see in chapter five of this study, there developed two streams within the Order – one group advocated a return to the original ideals of the Founder (Francis) and his companions, which was a radical life of simplicity, poverty, itinerant preaching while the other group called for loyalty to the Church of Rome whose leadership wanted to employ the Franciscans in the pastoral activities of its institutions which also meant a development according to the (modern) times and education.

<sup>143</sup> Fleischer's letter to Polycarp Schmoll, 9 January 1932; General Secretary of the Franciscan Order, Rome, to Polycarp Schmoll (Min. Provincial), (Munich 29 February 1932). Central to the Franciscan way of life is to lead a life of brotherhood, family and over the centuries of Franciscan history there has been debates and tension over the question of balancing the Franciscan calling between "living as brothers, sisters and family" and working or doing – to be or/and to do. For Francis, the most important dimension seems to be the life – he opens his Rule this way, "The Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this...", so life and not work comes first. The female side of the Franciscan Family has the same, St. Clare, the first woman follower of St. Francis in religious life, wrote her Rule exactly according to the one of St. Francis's version for the Friars. See Rules of both St. Francis and St. Clare, chapter 1. Secondly, on the question of work Francis and Clare see it as "the grace", gift from God and so no one should boast that he or she is working better than others, but should be thankful to God and serve Him and others through work when one is working. Furthermore, when payment is not given for work the Friars have to go begging and not complain or claim that it is their right. So, again it shows how "being family" is still more important than doing. See the Rule, chapter 5.

2. The Franciscan Friars were to help with the spiritual direction of his new local foundations,<sup>144</sup> give them input and direction as they were still young in Franciscan life.
3. They were to work with the other Franciscan groups in his diocese.<sup>145</sup>
4. They were to give spiritual talks, conferences and retreats to the other religious brothers, sisters and priests in the Vicariate of Mariannhill.<sup>146</sup>
5. They were to teach in the clerical seminary that was based in the diocese of Mariannhill.<sup>147</sup>
6. They were to teach at the Latin school (Minor Seminary) for boys.<sup>148</sup>
7. They were to give spiritual input to the laity of the diocese.<sup>149</sup>
8. They were to help in pastoral work of the mission-stations.<sup>150</sup>

The third and final point I would like to raise here is that of Fleischer's commitment to the Church's indigenization. His Pastoral letters and the foundations of local religious men and women are a clear testimony to this. Sister Dominic Mkhize who produced a booklet on the Sisters of Assisi, the Daughters of St. Francis, that were founded by Fleischer and to which she herself belongs, mentions three points that were part of this ideal. Before going into these I would like to underline the fact that Dominica Mkhize wrote her book from interviews and information of the Sisters – all Daughters of St. Francis - who knew Fleischer, their founder, quite well and some of them worked closely with him or with their first General Superior, Sister Emiliana. Just to mention two of them: Sister Bernardette Sibeko who was a great translator (Zulu) of Franciscan books and documents. Another one was Sister Ursula Ndaba who looked after his meals when he was exiled in Pholela. So, Dominica's book carries much weight as – she told me

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<sup>144</sup> On the 2 February 1924 Fleischer wrote to the Minister General of the Franciscan Order (OFM) requesting for the affiliation of the Daughters of St. Francis (his newly founded Religious Congregation of Sisters) to the same Order of Friars Minor (OFM). Then, in his letter of 9 January 1932 he indicates the fact that the Franciscan Friars would be working with the same Sisters and other Franciscan groups in his diocese – naturally, the Friars were to help them spiritually.

<sup>145</sup> Fleischer' letter to Polycarp Schmoll , 9 January 1932.

<sup>146</sup> Fleischer's letter to Polycarp Schmoll (Min. Provincial), (Munich 16 March 1932).

<sup>147</sup> Carlo Salotti (Secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith), Rome, to Bonaventure Marrani (Minister General), (Rome 3 March 1932).

<sup>148</sup> Carlo Salotti to Bonaventure Marrani, 3 March 1932); Fleischer to Polycarp Schmoll, 16 March 1932.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans ", pp. 10-16.

herself during the interview – it is not from a Mariannhill Missionary or any other perspective but from the “Daughters of St. Francis” themselves.<sup>151</sup> Firstly, then, Dominica Mkhize claimed that Fleischer wanted to remind the people that they had been created by God and they were – body and soul – his holy temples. Therefore, people had to behave as God’s temples and his children, and not irresponsibly. Secondly, he believed that the African people were called by God to be priests and religious sisters and brothers so that they would spread this truth to others.<sup>152</sup> It was the indigenous boys and girls who were to do this far better than the missionaries since they knew the people and the culture well. Mkhize insisted that this was a very prophetic and courageous stance on Fleischer’s part since the White people in particular at that time were of the belief that Africans were not capable of doing anything worthwhile and this mentality was also within certain circles of the church where it was claimed that Africans could not live the religious and priestly life.<sup>153</sup> Thirdly, these local men and women who were called by God to do this important work had to collaborate with the priests. Indeed, going through the Pastoral letters of the bishop one cannot doubt the commitment he had to this ideal, and the trust he had in the indigenous people. He believed that God was calling the locals as much as he was calling the missionaries. Later in this study, in chapter three, we will see that the bishop, in fact, was implementing the Catholic Church’s teaching in this matter. Two Popes in particular, Benedict XV and Pius XI, led the Church’s thinking in this regard, producing two official letters that are still considered as prominent in the Church’s teaching on the indigenization of the Church (clergy).<sup>154</sup> It has already been noted above that the diocese of Mariannhill is considered by many as the “mother” of the local church in South Africa. They have the largest number of local Catholic clergy and a huge number of local religious sisters, particularly the foundation of Fleischer.

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<sup>151</sup> Sister M. Adelgisa Hermann’s book, *100 Years of Mariannhill*, is written by a Mariannhill Missionary (CPS – Congregation of the Precious Blood Sisters) which she is. She was a well-educated and well-expressed person, but still, being a Mariannhill Missionary Sisters, she would naturally be writing from a particular perspective on the Franciscan development in Mariannhill diocese.

<sup>152</sup> Fleischer to Minister General, 2 February 1924. In reading this letter one can sense that the bishop was truly convinced of the African people’s calling to the religious life. And due to this conviction the bishop then assures the Minister General...

<sup>153</sup> This is a central argument of Mukuka’s book *The Other Side of the Story*; also see later, in chapter 3 of this thesis, Gottschalk Kunsteiger’s letter, from Kwa-St. Joseph’s to Minister Provincial, Munich 1932 (Kunsteiger, Gottschalk, Kwa-St. Joseph’s, Hibberdene, Natal, to P. Schmoll (Minister Prov.), (4 December 1932).

<sup>154</sup> This is discussed especially in chapter 3 of this study.

Finally, in this section, I would like to strongly suggest that these three points I have just referred to, on Bishop Fleischer's Franciscan dream, are not to be seen in isolation from each other. In fact, as hinted above, they are very closely linked and should be taken together. Fleischer's commitment to indigenization, too, was born of his understanding and appreciation of the Franciscan spirituality. I believe that there are very few people who believe in and respect others as Francis of Assisi did. He saw God's image in the other no matter what sex, race, religion or creed and status or position one had. Fleischer was a man who was very Franciscan in spirit and his vision of a Franciscan Family in his diocese can be understood only in that context. And, again, it is in the same context that one can understand Dischl's words quoted at the start of the section above.

### **The Franciscan Friars' coming and the Mariannhill reaction**

As Bishop Fleischer had invited the Franciscan Friars from Bavaria, his request found favour with the Province of St. Anton, in Munich. The Minister Provincial at the time was Polycarp Schmoll and after some correspondence between himself, the Bishop and Rome – both the Minister General of the Franciscans and the respective Vatican officials – the Franciscans were sent to Mariannhill, South Africa.<sup>155</sup> This happened in 1932, the Friars left Germany in August and arrived on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September that year.<sup>156</sup>

However, on the very day of their arrival the bishop had to break to them the sad news: there was no house available for them in the diocese as he had promised when he was asking for them from Bavaria.<sup>157</sup> The agreement between the bishop and the leadership of the Franciscan Province in Bavaria had been that the Friars would have a place to stay, a house where they would lead their Franciscan life of prayer and sharing so that they would go out to evangelize from there. This was the normal way of living and ministering for religious communities. As Sister Adelgisa puts it, the Franciscan Friars “were

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<sup>155</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 9-16.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 16; Letters of Lucas Purstinger, 1932.

<sup>157</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 16-18.

urgently in need of a community house”.<sup>158</sup> The bishop had planned to give the Franciscans the house and mission of Maris Stella, a beautiful place near the coast, but the Mariannahill Missionaries refused to give that to any other religious group.<sup>159</sup> Some of the Mariannahill Missionaries suggested instead that the mission of Kevelaer<sup>160</sup> be freed for the Franciscans – a far cry compared to the mission of Maris Stella – but that too, for some reason, did not materialize. As a result of this situation and confusion the Friars were, then, sent to different places in the diocese of Mariannahill.<sup>161</sup>

After a few months of living in that situation, on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1933, the Friars were given a place, St. Boniface Mission, in Izingolweni, near Port Shepstone. In fact, 17 March was the day of official welcome for the Friars and the occasion was a great celebration. There were a good number of priests (Mariannahill Missionaries), the Mother General of the Daughters of St. Francis, Sr. Emiliana (from Assisi), many African people from walking distances of 35 km – from St. Anton, in Mahobe (Umzimkulu) – who put on a concert for the day.<sup>162</sup> The festive mood, however, did not last for very long as the Friars had to face the reality after that celebration. It was just not an easy situation.<sup>163</sup> It was too hot and dry for them to produce their own vegetables, their diet was poor; the state of the house was not good as the roof was leaking.<sup>164</sup> Reportedly, Lourdes Mission – the centre of the Mariannahill Missionaries in the area where some of the Friars had been placed by the bishop in order to be introduced to the South African situation – knew about the struggle in Izingolweni but did nothing to help.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Hermann, *100 Years*, p. 54.

<sup>159</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, p. 17.

<sup>160</sup> In Donnybrook, which is a rather isolated area and quite cold in winter. Kevelaer later developed into a pilgrimage centre of the diocese and thousands of Christians attend the annual event in August, 15<sup>th</sup> or the nearest weekend to this date which is the celebration of the Catholic belief of the Assumption of Mary into heaven.

<sup>161</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, p. 17.

<sup>162</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 44-45.

<sup>163</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 18-19; Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 44.

<sup>164</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 45-47; A letter written to “Rev. Mother General of the St. Peter Claver Sodality”, Rome, (no name attached to it but most probably written by Lucas Purstinger), Izingolweni, Port Shepstone, (Munich 8 February 1934).

<sup>165</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 47.



Ruins of first Franciscan House in South Africa- St. Boniface, Izingolweni (1933)



Maris Stella Mission – Franciscan Solanus Sisters (early 1930s)



Capuchin Poor Clare Monastery – Melville (1931)



Daughters of St. Francis – Generalate, Melville, Port Shepstone



Daughters of St. Francis Convent - Assisi, Port Shepstone (1920s)



Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Convent – Umzinto 1912

According to Purstinger's history, this was one of the two places the bishop had in mind for the Friars to settle at last, the first being the one he had wanted for them right from the start, i.e. Maris Stella, and the second being Izingolweni.<sup>166</sup> The reason for that was the closeness to the other Franciscan groups in the diocese so that the "Franciscan corner" could be safeguarded. Purstinger spells out in a more detailed manner the reasons for this move: 1. In the foreseeable future the Solanus Sisters were to take over Maris Stella Mission;<sup>167</sup> 2. Father Edmund – who was the Mariannahill Missionary in charge of Maris Stella – was already destined for another place; 3. The Franciscan Brothers were to remain there, in Maris Stella, and so it was only natural to place the Franciscan Friars (priests) there as well; 4. Assisi, the centre of the Daughters of St. Francis (founded by Bishop Fleischer), was near Maris Stella; 5. The bishop was expecting the Irish Dominican Sisters, to be placed in Port Shepstone, and the Friars would take care of them too; 6. The Franciscan Friars would also take care of the Capuchinesses in nearby Melville (Umzumbe); 7. There were also the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (Sisters), in Umzinto – also to be looked after by the Friars; 8. Finally, the Minister Provincial of the Franciscans, in Munich, had been told of the "Franciscan corner" and he was interested in it.<sup>168</sup>

However, the actual move on the side of the bishop was still not forthcoming. The Friars were becoming more and more frustrated with the situation. Why were they not being given their home, their final destination and area of work?<sup>169</sup> They then wrote a letter to the bishop, reflecting their plight and making their reasons clear as to why their request to him was to be taken urgently. Their concern was that they could not work in the Vicariate of Mariannahill without a centre and some clarity on financial status.<sup>170</sup> The points of their letter were as follows. 1. Their Franciscan Province's Mission Statutes required a "domus

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<sup>166</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 35-37.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>169</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 36-39; letter to "Rev. Mother General of St. Peter Claver Sodality", 8 February 1932); Letter, G. Kunsteiger, St. Stephen's, Umsinsini, Natal, to P. Schmoll (Prov.), (26 December 1934 - St. Stephen's day).

<sup>170</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 38.

regularis”;<sup>171</sup> 2. The Minister Provincial’s opinion on this matter – he was in agreement with the Missionaries;<sup>172</sup> 3. Situation of the Brothers in Maris Stella (was to be addressed); 4. Practicality of regular meetings; 5. The luggage of the Friars was still to be unpacked five months after their arrival in South Africa; 6. Where would the new-arrivals be placed (if the situation of the Friars was not yet sorted out)?<sup>173</sup> Lucas Purstinger, the regional superior, had his additional points on this matter, some of which were in accord with the bishop’s vision. He felt obliged to protect the Solanus Sisters and did not want them to be “used” by the Vicariate.<sup>174</sup> He wanted them to build their Mother House near the Friars. In fact, the bishop liked the idea and that was probably because it fitted in with his “Franciscan corner”. Again, Lucas felt that Port Shepstone and Harding should be handed over by the Mariannahill Missionaries to the Franciscans, the Friars and the Solanus Sisters. However, the Mariannahill Missionaries, Frs. Chrysostom and Raphael refused this and built a house in Izingolweni against the bishop’s permission.<sup>175</sup>

As for Maris Stella Mission, the Franciscans just had to forget about it as the Mariannahill Missionaries sent a brother of their Order to work on the farm and the Solanus Sisters – who had gone there in December 1933 – were no longer in charge of it.<sup>176</sup> On the question of finances, the bishop wanted the Friars to work for the Vicariate without any remuneration, claiming that they belonged to the Vicariate. This is not uncommon with bishops, they would obviously be happy to find any Order to foot the bill for their own projects in the diocese where they work. As an example of this, Lucas pointed out in his history, Guido Nurnberger who was teaching in the seminary was not paid anything.<sup>177</sup> Back at home, the Provincial expected the Missionaries to look after themselves from their work over there. Part of the financial struggle was due to the situation in Germany;

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid. It has been pointed out before that the Franciscan Friars came to Mariannahill with the agreement between Bishop Fleischer and the Bavarian Provincial that they would have a home, a “domus regularis”.

<sup>172</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 38.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 40-44.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Chronicles of the Daughters of St. Francis, (FSF General House, Umzumbe, December 1933); Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 48.

<sup>177</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 40-44; Guido Nurnberger, Izingolweni, to the Minister Provincial (Munich 2 September 1934).

that is, the time leading up to and the post-war period was certainly not easy for the European nations and more particularly so for Germany which was not only isolated and defeated by the allies but was also devastated. That was causing pressure on the German missionaries too as they could not obtain the support they had been given during normal times and which they needed so much.<sup>178</sup> So, to sum up Lucas' understanding of the situation: a) South Africa was accepted by the Bavarian Friars with the understanding that they would get all the necessary support from the bishop;<sup>179</sup> b) the Bavarian Mission in China should not suffer because of the South African one;<sup>180</sup> c) the Solanus Sisters – who had come out to the country with the Friars – were to be attached to them and be established near the Friars.<sup>181</sup> Lucas concluded this way: it was hard to build on such foundation, which was not solid at all, because the whole building would collapse.<sup>182</sup>

So then, the lot finally fell on Izingolweni. And one would still wonder whether it was for the same reasons raised earlier on as to why they were not given Maris Stella as it was closer to the “Franciscan corner” and was already far better established than Izingolweni. There at St. Boniface Mission, Izingolweni, the Friars had to live under those difficult conditions until the end of 1935 when Rome, realizing the situation and probably encouraged by Fleischer, opened the new Mission of Kokstad (Vicariate) and the Franciscans were transferred over there to be in charge of it.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Fleischer to Schmoll, 9 January 1932; Sigebald Kurz (Prefect Apostolic), Kokstad, to Minister Provincial (Bavaria), (Munich 9 January 1936); letter to “Mother General” St. Peter Claver Sodality Sisters, 8 February 1934); Fr. Winfred Hastreiter, R.M.M. (Mariannhill Missionaries), St. Mary's Seminary, Ixopo (KZN), to Lucas Purstinger (Regional Superior), (Munich 6 November 1934); Bertrand Buehler (Minister Provincial, Bavaria), Munich, to the Apostolic Delegate (Bloemfontein), (Munich 17 November 1936).

<sup>179</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 40-44.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*; letter to “Rev. Mother General” of St. Peter Claver Sodality Sisters, 8 February 1934. Various Franciscan Provinces had been sending missionaries to China over centuries, e.g. the Italian, Irish and German Provinces had long established missions in that country.

<sup>181</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 40-44. According to the Chronicles of the Daughters of St. Francis, in December 1933 the Solanus Sisters took over Maris Stella Mission from the Daughters of St. Francis Sisters (who had gone there in February 1933).

<sup>182</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 44.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-41; Holy Cross Sisters' chronicles, Holy Cross Archives, Belgravia, 13 April 1935 and “Flagstaff Diary” of the Holy Cross Sisters, Holy Cross Archives, Belgravia, 20 April 1935; Bishop Fleischer's Pastoral letter, Mariannhill Bishop's House Archives, 28 May 1935; Booklet on the “Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers”, 1935-1985.

To conclude this chapter, the reality is that there was a problem in the diocese of Mariannhill and that was due to the arrival of the new Order in the territory. Purstinger refers to the tension as “a two-front war” between the bishop and the Mariannhill Missionaries and, naturally, this affected the Friars immensely.<sup>184</sup> In fact, the Mariannhill Superior General even wrote a letter to the Franciscans informing them that the Mariannhill Vicariate was the territory of the Mariannhill Missionaries and, according to Purstinger, they were being advised to approach Propaganda Fide, in Rome, and ask for their own Mission territory outside Mariannhill.<sup>185</sup> However, we have three letters from the Superiors General of the Mariannhill Missionaries which were very friendly to the Franciscan Friars – one dealing directly with the Franciscan presence in Mariannhill<sup>186</sup> and the other two acknowledged the Franciscan Provincial’s letters of congratulations on the fiftieth anniversary of Mariannhill Missionaries in South Africa<sup>187</sup> – and all were sent to the Provincial in Munich. The only letter of the Mariannhill Superior General that sounded apprehensive of the situation of the Franciscan presence in Mariannhill did not contain such advice; it simply stated that the Mariannhill Missionaries were working in that Vicariate for fifty years and would be sending more missionaries to the same.<sup>188</sup> It is obvious, then, that the tension was in the Mariannhill Vicariate itself and not with the two centres of leadership of the two missionary groups in Germany. There is another letter that was written with a similar tone except that, for one, it was not from a Superior General and, secondly, it does express appreciation and love of the Franciscan Friars as well.<sup>189</sup> Whether one dwells on the situation in the Mariannhill territory or not, the truth is that this did affect the plans of Bishop Fleischer and his vision could not be actualized

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<sup>184</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> P. Hermann Arndt, RMM, (Superior General of Mariannhill Missionaries, Wuerzburg), to Franciscan Provincial (Munich 11 March 1932).

<sup>187</sup> Reginald Weinmann, RMM (Superior General of Mariannhill Missionaries, Wuerzburg), to Franciscan Provincial (Munich 24 January 1933); Reginald Weinmann, RMM (Superior Gen. of Mariannhill Missionaries, Wuerzburg), to Franciscan Provincial (Munich 14 April 1933).

<sup>188</sup> P. Jos. Rainar, Superior General of Mariannhill Missionaries, Cologne, (Munich 21 April 1932).

<sup>189</sup> Boehmer, Rafael, (Priest in charge of St. Patrick’s Mission, Kokstad), to Minister Provincial (Bavaria), (Munich 13 May 1935).

in that diocese.<sup>190</sup> Although Purstinger too criticized the bishop for not being committed to his original promises,<sup>191</sup> he also praised him for his vision and interest.<sup>192</sup>

### **The Female dimension in Fleischer's Franciscan Vision**

Before moving on to the next chapter I would like to briefly make certain additions that I consider important in assessing the female aspect of Fleischer's Franciscan vision. As already seen above, his Franciscan vision consisted mainly of Sisters, women who dedicated themselves to the service of God and the people, and they were both missionary and indigenous groups. We also saw the list of the Religious Franciscan Congregations involved in this. Later in this research it will be pointed out that the Franciscan Friars, most probably more than any other European missionary group in South Africa, always had some of their female counterparts, Franciscan Sisters, working with them.<sup>193</sup>

Starting with Franciscan Solanus Sisters who came out with the Bavarian Friars in 1932, we have already seen that they were close to the Friars all the time, with the Regional Superior of the Franciscans, Lucas Purstinger, wanting to make sure that they were well-looked after and protecting them from any form of exploitation by the Church officials. According to a letter written by their Superior General, Sister Lydia Pollin, in 1932, to the Minister Provincial of the Franciscan Friars in Munich, these Sisters were recommended to Bishop Fleischer by the Provincial himself who was Polycarp Schmoll that time.<sup>194</sup> In the letter Sister Lydia thanks the Provincial for the recommendation and for the opportunity of the new mission to South Africa for which the Sisters were thrilled. Only six of the Sisters in the Order, in Landshut, did not want to go and the rest were

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<sup>190</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 14-16.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>193</sup> Chapters 9 and 10, where we deal with the Irish and the English Friars respectively. The Franciscans are the largest spiritual family in the Catholic Church, constituting at least a quarter of a million in numbers. See Giacomo Bini's letter/booklet *The Order Today*, (Rome 2000). Bini is a former Minister General of the Franciscan Order (1997-2003) and he wrote the letter to the Franciscans for the celebration of the Third Millennium of Christianity which was celebrated universally by the Catholic Church.

<sup>194</sup> Sister Lydia Pollin to Minister Provincial, 1 May 1932.

prepared to be sent to the new mission. The list of names of the Sisters who would be pioneer missionaries of this Religious group was then provided. There were six of them, namely Sisters Antonia Kraus (Superior), Edeltrudis Karl, Helena Alterer, Plazida Rip, Kreszenzia Geissinger and Esther Schlecht. These were chosen by the leadership of the Order, according to their judgment, and so were to be the first to represent their Order in South Africa. Apparently the Minister Provincial himself went to meet the pioneer missionary Sisters in their mother house, Landshut, in Bavaria.<sup>195</sup> Again, the missionary Sisters spent some time in the Provincial House, St. Anne's, in Munich, where they would have joined the Friars and where a sending-off service was held in the Franciscan church, with the Minister Provincial preaching to the new missionaries before starting off their long journey to the unknown land of South Africa.<sup>196</sup>

Having arrived in the mission country, South Africa, the bond between the Friars and the Sisters continued quite well and perhaps even stronger as they were far away from their home country. In a letter Sister Antonia, the Regional Superior, wrote to the Minister Provincial in Bavaria, she expressed gratefulness and appreciation to the Friars both in Munich and in South Africa, for their care and protection all the time. The Sisters continued to correspond with the Franciscan Provincial in Munich and apparently when the Franciscan Regional Superior wrote to Munich he would enclose a letter from the Sisters, at least from time to time. As we saw above, these Sisters were sent together with some of the Friars to Lourdes Mission – a centre of the Mariannahill Missionaries, in Umzimkulu – when they first arrived in South Africa. This was to introduce them to mission life and that included the learning of the languages (English and Zulu). However, some of them were soon moved to other missions of the diocese of Mariannahill before they could learn the language which was a setback for them. Sr. Antonia pointed this out in a letter written to the Minister Provincial of Bavaria from St. Wendolins, towards the end of their arrival (1932). She identified some of the needs of the people in the area.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Sister Antonia Kraus (Regional Superior), St. Wendolin's Mission, Mariannahill, KZN, to Minister Provincial (Bavaria), (Munich 27 November 1932).

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

St. Wendolin's Mission was one-and-a half hour's walk from Mariannahill, which is apparently something they had to do quite often. There was plenty of poverty in the area, and it was crowded as people were flocking to the city (Durban) in search of jobs and better life.<sup>198</sup> These people – Africans – were neglected as there was a shortage of priests and missionaries in the diocese of Mariannahill that time.<sup>199</sup> However, according to Sister Antonia, there is another reason why the poor Africans were neglected, i.e. the church leaders – missionaries – were concentrating on the Europeans and the poor people around the large city of Durban were left out.<sup>200</sup> Sister Antonia seemingly had a soft spot for the poor, particularly the indigenous people. She regretted the fact that she and the other Sisters could not speak the language of the people – which would have been Zulu - something she certainly would have liked to do. They (Sisters) were not given much opportunity for that – and that was probably due to the urgent need of mission work which she pointed out to have been plenty. The Sisters were sent to the mission-station (St. Wendolin's) only eight weeks after their arrival.<sup>201</sup>

In another letter to the Minister Provincial in Bavaria, written two years after their arrival (1934) – by then she was in Maris Stella Mission - she expressed the Sisters' consistent belief in and liking for the indigenous people despite the continued difficulties encountered in the mission.<sup>202</sup> Part of the hardship experienced by the missionaries was drought and also the plague of locusts which attacked their farm, maize and vegetable garden. Such swarms were apparently widespread and not uncommon in those days. In the same letter, Sister Antonia pointed out the fact that Izingolweni and Umsinsini Missions – where the Friars and the Sisters were also stationed – were not spared from the plague. The plague was quite constant in the area<sup>203</sup> and was to be found even in

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.; Also read the letters of correspondence between the Fleischer and the Minister Provincial, and the Minister General (Rome), in which the Bishop was inviting the Franciscans to come to his diocese (1932), letters that were referred to in the above sections.

<sup>200</sup> Kraus to Minister Provincial (Bavaria), 27 November 1932.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Sister Antonia Kraus (Regional Superior), Maris Stella Mission, Port Shepstone, KZN, to Minister Provincial (Bavaria), (Munich 23 November 1934).

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

Mpondoland where the Franciscan Friars were to settle later on.<sup>204</sup> Again, just like the bishop of Mariannhill (Fleischer), Sister Antonia believed in the calling of the indigenous people - they were called to serve God and the people just their missionary counterparts. In fact, while she was aware of and understood the struggles of the indigenous people – their backgrounds were difficult – she admired their dedication, their good will and the sacrifices they had to make in order to follow their calling. The candidates’ background she was referring to here was most probably the little education the people had. As for the sacrifices the candidates had to make – the great cost they had to pay – in following the religious vocation she pointed out that most of them still had “heathen” parents who would not have understood the course their children were taking.<sup>205</sup> Still more powerful is the statement she wrote about the indigenous candidates when she concluded: “One can be edified by many [of the young women] which is not always the case with us.”<sup>206</sup> This is quite revolutionary, particularly when considering the fact that many missionaries had a negative attitude to the indigenous people and just did not believe that they would also be called to live as priests and religious like the Europeans.<sup>207</sup> It would be quite interesting to study the relationship between Bishop Fleischer and Sister Antonia as they seem to have had similar ideals. How much she was influenced by the bishop, one would wonder.

Relations between the Sisters of Solanus and the Friars continued even when the Friars later moved on to Kokstad area in 1935. However, the Solanus Sisters do not seem to have extended their numbers in a huge manner and so too their mission-stations were limited to a few places in Mariannhill diocese: Maris Stella, Umsinsini, Umhlabatshane, Harding and one or two other places. In Harding they staffed and ran a hospital at the

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<sup>204</sup> Severin Neumeier, Flagstaff, Eastern Cape (Pondoland), to Minister Provincial (Bavaria), (Munich 12 October 1932).

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Kraus to Minister Provincial, 27 November 1932

<sup>207</sup> We saw this when dealing with Bishop Fleischer’s determination to found local Religious Congregations – Franciscan groups of men: the Familiars of St. Joseph and the Daughters of St. Francis (Assisi Sisters). We will see again later, especially in chapter 3. For instance, Gottschalk Kunsteiger’s letter to the Minister Provincial, written at Kwa-St. Joseph’s where he was placed among the indigenous Brothers, Fleischer’s foundation.



St. Andrew's Hospital – Harding –(1944 – 1984 )  
Staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Solanus



The sisters trained local nurses

request of the local people.<sup>208</sup> They went there in 1944, with only two Sisters at first – Sr. Solana and Edeltrudis – and then with more others recruited from Germany. In that same hospital – St. Andrew’s – the Sisters trained local girls as nurses who were also employed there.<sup>209</sup> In 1970 the originally twelve-bed hospital was upgraded into a double-storey building that it still is to this day. In 1984, after forty years of wonderful service to the people, the Sisters had to pull out and hand over to the NPA (Natal Provincial Administration) as they were old and without local recruits to their way of life.<sup>210</sup> In the Kokstad area where the Friars moved later (1935), there was another group of Sisters which was quite extensive and also worked very closely with the Friars. Those are the Holy Cross Sisters who are also part of the extended Franciscan Family and who will be discussed in the next chapter.

In one of my visits to the Franciscan Missionary Sisters – the FMMS (Franciscan Missionaries of Mary) as they are commonly known - at their Provincial House in Umzinto I learnt that Fleischer asked these Franciscan Sisters to help with the training of the young women who intended joining his new foundation, the Daughters of St. Francis.<sup>211</sup> But the Sisters were not to take those girls into their own Congregation (FMMS); the bishop believed that Africans were to stand on their own and were equally capable of being evangelizers just like the white missionaries.<sup>212</sup> Well, that partly answered a question I had in my mind as to why the bishop did not place his new foundation under a Franciscan group of religious, and instead placed them under Mariannahill Sisters, the Precious Blood Congregation. At least he did involve a Franciscan group in forming the young Congregation. However, my question was still not totally answered: why did he give the young foundation a group of Sisters with another spirituality, the Mariannahill Missionary Sisters, to look after them? If Fleischer was so zealous for the Franciscan family, the Franciscan charisma, then why did he not place his newly founded Congregation of Sisters under the leadership of the Franciscan

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<sup>208</sup> Website of St. Andrew’s Hospital, Harding (Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa) at <http://www.kznhealth.gov.za/standrewshospital.htm> .

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Visit to the Provincial House of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Umzinto, 11 October 2010.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

Missionaries of Mary who are an older Congregation, with much experience in the Church and with the Franciscan spirituality? Could it be perhaps that he was afraid of losing the indigenous young women to the other Franciscan group, the FMMS, as he wanted to keep them as a separate local foundation? The thing is, he could have thought that the Mariannahill Congregation, the Precious Blood Sisters, were not Franciscan and so there would have been less temptation for the girls to move over to them when they were being formed as Franciscans.

In one of my other visits to Umzinto the Sisters told me that Park Rynie Convent was particularly set aside for that very project of training the indigenous Congregation of Bishop Fleischer.<sup>213</sup> However, that still does not seem to satisfactorily provide an answer to the question raised. For me, the answer seemed to lie in the fact that the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary were a French-speaking and not a German-speaking group. As we will see in the next chapter, Bishop Jolivet too, of Durban, had preferred the French-speaking Holy Family Sisters to the Holy Cross who were German-speaking. So, it was not an unknown practice among church leaders of the time. The Sisters in Umzinto referred to a letter that was written by Fr. Edward Mnganga, one of the first four Zulu priests of Mariannahill, who in fact invited the Franciscan Missionaries to Mariannahill Vicariate after meeting their foundress, Blessed Mary of the Passion in Rome, when he was there for his studies.<sup>214</sup> In that particular letter, the Sisters claimed, Fr. Mnganga seemingly expressed confidence in, and implicitly a preference for, German-speaking priests and Sisters in the training of the newly-founded Congregation of indigenous girls (Fleischer's Daughters of St. Francis).<sup>215</sup> That was probably due to his first experience with European missionaries, i.e. the German-speaking Mariannahill Missionaries were the first European missionaries he had ever met. So, then, this tells us that Fleischer was just as human, something that we will see as we progress with this study – the men and women of this history were human, with ordinary limitations and failures. The question then is: was Fleischer's and the Franciscan Friars' vision a totally missed opportunity or

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<sup>213</sup> That was 11 September 2012.

<sup>214</sup> Fr. Edward Mnganga, Ebuhleni Mission, Zululand, to Mother Mary of the Passion (Foundress & Mother General of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary), Rome, (FMM Provincial Archives Umzinto 28 June 1901); Mukuka, *The Other Side*, pp.46-50.

<sup>215</sup> Visit to the Provincial House of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Umzinto, 11 October 2010.

not? In other words, was the Franciscan dream shattered for ever or was there still some hope of it being realized somehow and in some other place? I hope to try and answer that question in the remainder of this thesis, particularly in chapters two, three, four and five.

## **PART II: A NEW OPENING – A NEW CHALLENGE: FLAGSTAFF MISSION IN KOKSTAD DIOCESE**

### **Chapter 2 Prior to the Franciscan Friars**

In this chapter I undertake a brief study of the Holy Cross Sisters as this helps us have a better idea of their life and ministry among the people with whom they lived and worked. In doing so, I explore their family, social, educational, professional and religious training back in Switzerland where they originated from. This is because the more we know the background, the better we will understand them and their judgment and dealings with the people they ministered to and interacted with. We will also look at the kind of relationship that would have existed between the Holy Cross Sisters and the Franciscans when the latter came. That will be in chapter three of this part (II) of the present study. In this section of the study I rely very much on Sister McDonagh who was one of the Holy Cross Sisters and who wrote her book – *Wordless Witness* - on the Holy Cross Sisters in Southern Africa.<sup>1</sup>

#### **2.1. Opening of the Mission (Flagstaff) – Oblates and Mariannahill Missionaries**

Flagstaff is the principal town of the magisterial district of Flagstaff in the east Pondoland region of the Eastern Cape Province, what used to be known as “Transkei”.<sup>2</sup> This town got its name through a practice of a certain Mr. Zachariah Bowles who, having opened a trading store there, in 1877, would put up a white flag every Sunday, on a flagstaff he had built himself, as a signal for the people that the shop was closed.<sup>3</sup> This place was served first by OMI (Oblates Missionary) priests from Kokstad and, then, later by the Mariannahill Missionaries who started to serve it from Lourdes and eventually settled in

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<sup>1</sup> Already referred to in chapter 1 of this study.

<sup>2</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 152.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, See also Archives of the Holy Cross Sisters, Provincial House, Belgravia, on the Kokstad diocese. Marcel Dischl claims that there were two traders – Bowles and Owen – who opened the store. He also states that they had obtained the store as a grant from Mpondo Chief Mqikela. (Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 267.

the area.<sup>4</sup> In 1916 a small church was built<sup>5</sup> and was demolished in 1958 as a new church, built by Brother Dositheus, one of the first Franciscans in the new Prefecture Apostolic, replaced it.<sup>6</sup> The first resident priest in Flagstaff went there in 1927.<sup>7</sup> The church itself, a small building, had been built through Mr. Henry Gallagher, a trader, and Mr. Caine, a shopkeeper. According to Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana, who knew the early priests in Flagstaff and particularly the Franciscans, the Catholic Mission there was obtained mainly through the request of Mr. Caine who used to go with his family to Kokstad to attend Holy Mass on Sundays. According to their story, Mr. Caine personally went to Lourdes Mission, a centre of the Mariannahill Missionaries at the time, (part of the Umzimkulu diocese today), and he bought the land for the church in Flagstaff which cost merely twenty pounds.<sup>8</sup> The bishop of Mariannahill then sent brothers (Mariannahill Missionaries) who went there and fenced off the land.<sup>9</sup> The Holy Cross Sisters' Archives claim that the attainment of Flagstaff Mission was through a financial contribution made by the Catholic soldiers and other people in the area.<sup>10</sup> It was probably a combination of the two. That is, both the two ladies' version and the Sisters' Archives are correct in the sense that the Catholic soldiers probably contributed, as they did in other places too, and the other people did as well, including Mr. Caine himself.<sup>11</sup> This is a position also held by

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<sup>4</sup> Bishop Griffith, due to the vastness of his territory, asked Rome to divide the eastern part of his diocese and this was done in 1847 with the appointment of Devereux as new bishop of the newly formed Vicariate (diocese) and this included Natal. Bishop Devereux followed the same idea of his predecessor by asking Rome to give Natal to another bishop and this was done in 1850 when the Natal Vicariate was created and given to the Oblates of Mary Immaculate priests, with Allard as its new bishop. This too was extensive, as it covered a large area including Port St. John's, Umtata and Kokstad in the southern part – by the middle of the following century Southern Africa was made up of most of its present dioceses, over thirty in number. The first Oblate priests went to Kokstad from Mthatha, in 1883 – they were Frs. Baudry and Pierre Vernhet. [J.B. Brain, *A New Beginning? The Umzimkulu Diocese Fifty Years later* (Mariannahill, 2004), p. 14.]

<sup>5</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 267.

<sup>6</sup> *The Southern Cross*, Holy Cross Archives, S. African Province, Belgravia, (undated), p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Marcel Dischl provides a thorough list of priests who served in the Kokstad diocese missions, the first resident priest being Chrysostomus Ruthig, a Mariannahill missionary, who arrived there in 1927. He was followed by two other Mariannahill missionaries until the Franciscans took over in 1935 [*Transkei for Christ*, pp. 267-268].

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana, in Flagstaff, 24 May 2010.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Holy Cross Sisters' Archives on Flagstaff Mission, Belgravia.

<sup>11</sup> Catholic soldiers have contributed to the building of churches in other parts of the country. For example, the Italian prisoners of War helped build St. Joseph's Mission church, now under the Franciscans, in Dundee diocese, Ladysmith, KZN. Again, the cathedral church of Kokstad, as will be seen later in this chapter, was also built by Irish catholic soldiers. Another church that was built by Irish soldiers is the one in Grahamstown, at one stage the cathedral of the Eastern Cape Catholic diocese which later moved to

Dischl in his book, *Transkei for Christ*.<sup>12</sup> After the creation of the Mariannhill Vicariate in 1921, from the huge Natal Vicariate, Flagstaff formed part of the new ecclesial entity.

## **2.2. The Holy Cross Sisters – who were they?**

The Mission of Flagstaff, as such, is considered to have been founded by Bishop Fleischer of Mariannhill. He asked the Holy Cross Sisters to start a boarding and day school for Coloured children there in 1926.<sup>13</sup> In order for us to understand the situation of the Flagstaff Mission and community in general, we have to take a close look at the Holy Cross Sisters themselves, to know who they were and what contribution they made to the church and society in general. This will also help us see how the Franciscans were responding to the needs of the time when they arrived in this country. In fact, I would like to further argue here that the Franciscan dream that is the fundamental theme of this study – that, as we saw above, was aborted in Mariannhill - was realized in Flagstaff. Although the Flagstaff situation might not have been exactly according to the original vision of Bishop Fleischer as such, at the same time, its development was something that came very close to his dream, something he certainly would have been happy about. Again, this Franciscan vision, as pointed out earlier on, was shared by the Franciscan leadership of Bavaria and was the main reason for their agreement to send the first Missionaries to this country at the bishop's request<sup>14</sup>. At Flagstaff one could see the Franciscans living as a family, living with the religious Sisters that were serving the people of the area, particularly in education, meeting priests and other religious brothers that went through the Mission on their way to other parts of the diocese, living among and ministering to the people of the area, the larger community – things which were part of the original ideals of Fleischer, and which the leadership of the Franciscans in Bavaria had agreed to when they were asked, by the bishop, to send missionaries to South Africa. The Holy Cross Sisters were very helpful in the realization of this dream; they serve as a most suitable context and foundation towards the Franciscan dream in Flagstaff. It is,

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Port Elizabeth. Joy Brain also refers to churches built by British soldiers and they include Grahamstown, Kroonstad and Bloemfontein. [See Brain, "Moving from the Margins", p. 196.]

<sup>12</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 267.

<sup>13</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 152.

<sup>14</sup> See Polycarp Schmoll's letter of response to Fleischer's request, January 1932.

therefore, only appropriate that we should take a close look at them here. The Holy Cross Sisters, in the first place, are themselves a Franciscan Institute. They, therefore, belong to the world-wide Franciscan Family that is the largest spiritual family within the Church. These Sisters were founded in Switzerland by a Capuchin Franciscan Friar, a priest, by the name of Theodosius Florentini, in the then little village of Menzingen, central Switzerland, in 1844.<sup>15</sup> Sister McDonagh points out that this rather small country – Switzerland - is often seen as an important tourism centre of the world, with its beautiful, mountainous, relaxed and homely scenery. She then continues to state that, at the same time, this country is a most industrious, technical part of the world; its people being so hard-working and very precise with time-keeping and technological knowledge, producing watches, jewellery and other objects, not from their gold mines or any other self-producing minerals, since they have none of that, but from their laboratories.<sup>16</sup>

Politically, again, Switzerland has a very stable and interesting history dating back centuries. In 58 BC, under the Roman Emperor, Julius Caesar, a confederation of the “Helvetia” (*Confederatio Helvetica*), the Swiss peoples’ ancestors, was formed. This was affected, like all of Europe, by the barbarian invasions between the third and the sixth centuries. Towards the end of the thirteenth century the Swiss confederation began through the signing of a pact by peasant mountaineers in defence of their land from the feudal landowners. This is dear to every Swiss, the cradle of their freedom. Three cantons were involved in this process, the Schwyz, Uri and Unterwaldt, near Lake Lucerne, and the Schwyz being the strongest of the three thus giving its name to the country, “Schweiz” (German), “Switzerland” (English).<sup>17</sup>

Central to the history of the Swiss people has been the preservation of this liberty since the signing of the 1291 pact. While over the centuries this has been threatened by some nations – like the Austrians (feudal lords), at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and the French under Napoleon, at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century – the Swiss have remained undefeated and self-determined. The 1815 Congress of Vienna demanded recognition of their state as

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<sup>15</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

neutral, independent country and thus the Swiss Federal Republic was formed out of 23 cantons. A new constitution was formed in 1848 and that is still basically the same one today. Sister McDonagh notes that Switzerland was not formed like the Western European states – through wars and leadership of princes and others – but by the Swiss people themselves. She then goes on to add that this might tell the typical character of this people: sturdy, independent, individualistic and stubborn.<sup>18</sup>

As for Christianity, it came to Switzerland during the Roman times, the first record being in 377; by the end of the fourth century there were Christian communities, with bishops in important centres like Basle, Lausanne, and others.<sup>19</sup> The Irish monks brought missionary activity in the sixth and seventh centuries, St. Columbanus being one of the most prominent of them. Again, monasteries both spread Christianity and preserved people's traditions and culture. Reformation was led by Zwingli of Zurich and it is amazing that the Swiss confederation was preserved under such trying times of division and conflicts. In 1531 war broke out between Catholics and Protestants (Zwingli's); Zwingli was killed and the Catholics were defeated. This was a turning point in history and was followed by the concept of neutrality. The country was divided according to confessions (faiths) and this is still the case today. So, then, the political division of Switzerland was based on religion.<sup>20</sup>

Between 1830 and 1848 European society underwent political changes and Switzerland was not exempt from this. There were Federalists, radicals and liberals. Radicals were anti-clerical and tried to influence the other groups and the nation. In the end, however, the Swiss went for a compromise and moderation prevailed, unlike the revolutionaries of Europe.<sup>21</sup>

While this is part of the background to the founding of the Holy Cross Sisters, still more relevant to this Institute and to our overall topic is the intellectual revolution of the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

Renaissance in Europe. According to this phenomenon, people were central to everything. This was fully developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly the Enlightenment (eighteenth century). People could no longer be controlled either by religion, or authority, or anything whatsoever.<sup>22</sup> Yet Europe experienced a political, economic and social instability, especially between 1830 and 1848. The industrial revolution and capitalism brought about untold exploitation and there was much intolerance between the Church and the liberals. Switzerland was not exempt from this. In 1832 the radical liberals tried to enforce their views on all, but the Catholics resisted – there was much anti-clericalism, but with the 1848 revolution Enlightenment eventually became part of the general public and not just a reserve of the few in the upper class that it had been up till then. Society in general came to understand that true democracy meant education, the education of the nation; this was the real goal of true liberals: the development of the individual through education.<sup>23</sup> “Knowledge is power! Knowledge creates virtue!” These were the mottos. The state made this its plan, to educate the youth. Up till then education was only for the rich. Teachers were not well-trained and were just few; girls were left out.

Again, the liberals now vied with the Church in the sphere of education, they wanted to control it as it had been under the Church up till then. The liberals did not want education to be just a matter of teaching dogmas and faith, it was to be scientific too. It was at this juncture of the Swiss history that Father Theodosius Florentini emerged. A member of the Capuchin Franciscans “he decided to fight the radicals with their own weapons in the field of education.”<sup>24</sup> He founded schools and cared for the poor. By 1839 he had a plan to counteract the anti-Christian educational structure and establish a Christian system of education. For this end he needed a Religious Congregation that would be dedicated towards education and care of the poor, and this was realized in 1844 with the founding of the Holy Cross Sisters in the little village of Menzingen, in Zurich canton, central Switzerland. This foundation had humble beginnings, with only three young women trained by some other Religious Orders – the Ursuline Sisters, in Freiburg, Germany, and

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 27. See also Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, chapter 9.

<sup>23</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

the Divine Providence Sisters, in Alsace, France. After consulting with the three young women on whether they would join the Orders that trained them or become a new foundation in Switzerland, it was decided that they start a new Order, as Switzerland needed new Religious Institute according to the changed times.<sup>25</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1844 the new Institute was founded at Altdorf, according to the Third Order Rule of St. Francis of Assisi. The first superior was one of them, Sister Bernarda Heimgartner, and they began teaching in the village school of Menzingen.<sup>26</sup> The new Institute grew in numbers and in every other way, being received well by the people who realized their relevance and contribution. Children of the village were taught by the Sisters and this initiative developed quickly in spite of challenges of both the institute and society in general.<sup>27</sup> By 1851 there were 34 Sisters in ten villages and 14 young women interested in joining the Sisters (candidates).

While there were Religious Congregations of women involved in teaching children of the village, first of all, they were the enclosed Religious and so could not reach a good number of the population. Secondly, they educated only the children of the rich and not the ordinary citizens. The new Franciscan Institute of Fr. Theodosius went far beyond these confines. Furthermore, Fr. Theodosius was an experienced educationist himself, having taught at Altdorf boys' school and so he helped with the training of the Holy Cross Sisters himself as they had no such chance in Switzerland. Again, this aspect soon flourished as the community eventually recognized his contribution in education and he was asked to help more in this regard.<sup>28</sup> He insisted on the best professional training for

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<sup>25</sup> Sr. McDonagh (HC), (in her book *Wordless Witness*) refers to the fact that Fr. Theodosius Florentini was a member of the Capuchin Order who had themselves left the Franciscan Order, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as a means of reforming the Franciscan ideal of simplicity. It is, therefore, interesting that the three young women of the new foundation wanted to become a new Religious institute for the sake of reform of Religious life in Switzerland, according to the times. Again, Father Theodosius, as we can see, was applying the Christian values to the changed times of the Swiss society, through education that was also promoted by the civil leadership of the time.

<sup>26</sup> Sister McDonagh again points out that the appointment of Sr. Bernarda Heimgarten was a sign of Father Theodosius' pioneering spirit as Religious women had to be under a bishop or man superior at that time. Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> An example of challenge facing the Sisters was that women were not allowed in universities, in Switzerland, until 1905. Again, in Switzerland, education was controlled by the state and the church was not allowed to have its own schools. Finally, in society in general there was a continuing tension between the Protestants and Catholics, leading up to the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1851.

<sup>28</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, pp. 35-36.

his Sisters and he produced handbooks of pedagogy and instructions in schools that were well-known for ages. He promoted a holistic type of education and one that would identify each child's talents. At a later stage the Sisters were sent to other countries for training as professional educators, but they later founded their own college in Menzingen which is still considered one of the best in central Switzerland. Later Fr. Theodosius developed into a great Swiss social reformer, involving himself in the building of hospitals and institutes of care for the poor and a factory to provide job opportunities.<sup>29</sup> The Sisters continued strongly after his death in 1865.

On the question of coming out to South Africa, McDonagh underlines the fact that while Religious Sisters were brought to this country by Church authorities – Bishops and male superiors – and that this was for teaching children of the Settlers, the Holy Cross Sisters were sent out here by the Mother Superior General “to work on a mission for Africans in Kaffraria.”<sup>30</sup> And for this they were invited by Abbot Francis Pfanner, the founder of Mariannahill, in Natal (1882), who when he was overseas went to visit some of the European countries begging for assistance for the Trappists' new mission of evangelizing the Africans.<sup>31</sup> The Holy Cross Sisters were inspired by his request. At the same time, it is interesting to note the socio-political situation of Switzerland that time as it serves as a context for the Sisters' decision to go to a new mission outside their land that time. There was once again a renewed conflict between the radical liberals and socialists, on the one hand, and the Catholics, on the other hand. This was between the years 1876 and 1882. This time the tension cantered around the question of controlling education at schools and while the liberals and socialists wanted education to be controlled completely by the state and secularized, the Catholics believed that this should not be the case as secularization of schools would lead to a contravention of freedom of conscience.<sup>32</sup> After a long debate the Federal Parliament, in 1882, finally concluded that the matter should be left to each canton as long as education requirements of the country would be met. While this might

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>31</sup> Abbot Pfanner is founder of the one time world's largest monastery of monks, with over 300 community members, Mariannahill, in (Kwazulu-)Natal. He went overseas to a Chapter – formal gathering/conference of the Trappists - in 1881, and spent a whole year in European countries, including Switzerland, asking for help, of personnel and finances, for his new foundation and the evangelization project.

<sup>32</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 52.

have been a very fair judgment it left the Holy Cross Sisters in a most difficult position as their very existence was at risk. They had been the first and only Religious Institute of women founded to teach in cantonal and not, like the other Religious groups of women, in private schools. So, then, Abbot Pfanner had come at the right moment, this would be an opportunity for them to go and help where they were needed most and where they could give their talents and service in a situation that would appreciate them more than in their own land. They arrived in Durban by ship, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1883.

The new mission was not without difficulties and challenges. Right from the start there were hardships encountered. The Mother Superior General had sent them out explicitly to work among the poor Africans. But, to their dismay, the Sisters found themselves sent to teach children of Settlers. Secondly their new, and very first, mission outside their homeland was not to be in the rich and fertile land of Natal where they had hoped to be under the loving care of their new and admired friend Abbot Pfanner; they were sent to the small town of Mthatha, far away from Natal, because Bishop Jolivet wanted to reserve Natal to the Holy Family Sisters who were French-speaking like himself and not to a group of Swiss Sisters.<sup>33</sup> Thirdly, travelling was not so comfortable for the Sisters. The voyage by sea from Durban to Port St. John's was not the most luxurious ever: the sea was rough – a real Wild Coast experience – and it took 15 hours without enough accommodation in the boat. Fourthly, infrastructure in Western Pondoland – to which Mthatha and Port St. John's belong – was very poor as this area was not yet annexed by the British Crown. So, again, the Sisters had to endure a long, uncomfortable journey by ox-wagon from Port St. John's to Mthatha, arriving there on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1883. The greatest hardship for the Sisters though was to find that in Mthatha there was no permanent Catholic mission yet so that they had no priest to serve them; this area was served by priests visiting there from Natal who came from time to time and spent a few days ministering to their scattered flock. The priests travelled on horseback or by cart, moving in this manner: Durban-Pietermaritzburg-Kokstad-Mthatha-Port St. John's. As though the above-mentioned challenges were not enough, the first priest to be appointed to Mthatha was French-speaking, Father Baudry, and so communication with the Swiss

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 62.

German-speaking Sisters was just not easy, especially as his English was very poor and the Sisters too had little of that language at that stage. Finally, for their dwelling and upkeep the Sisters had merely three rondavels, until in 1891 when the first convent was built; food was scarce and expensive; they had to do their washing, by hand, in a nearby river.<sup>34</sup>

While some groups of Religious women had been supported, materially and morally, by the bishops of the given dioceses, the Holy Cross Sisters were left to struggle on their own.<sup>35</sup> However, Abbot Pfanner who did not abandon them in spite of the political complexities and distances involved. He went to visit them in Mthatha and sent professional brothers (monks), from Mariannahill, to assist the Sisters with whatever need they had. Brother Barnabas, a carpenter and a handyman, helped them with the building of their new convent. At the advice of Abbot Pfanner the Sisters obtained a farm, at Bedford, six miles from Mthatha, which they worked with their own hands and had to walk to and fro their convent each day. It was really hard for them as they had to work with their own hands, with the help of some labourers, from early morning until late afternoon, plus the walking and with little time to eat.<sup>36</sup>

The Sisters had started a kindergarten soon after their arrival, using their simple dwellings, the three rondavels, for this purpose until the new buildings were complete, in 1884. But the school fees were insufficient to support their living. The farm though paid off eventually and, at least, they produced their own vegetables, milk, bread and eggs from farming. An additional blessing to their small family life was the replacement of Father Baudry by a German-speaking Father Schoch who became a great friend and advisor for years, until he was promoted to be the Prefect Apostolic of the Transvaal in 1891.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>35</sup> McDonagh referred to the Dominican Sisters who went to King Williamstown, in 1877, and were supported by Bishop Ricards who had invited them to their diocese. He started building a convent for them, collecting funds and making arrangements for their arrival. Again, the Loreto Sisters to went to Pretoria, in 1878, were accompanied by Bishop Jolivet to their destination, finding temporary accommodation for them till the building of their convent was complete, Ibid., 68-69.

<sup>36</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, pp. 69-70.

As if the above-mentioned challenges were not enough, there was the added factor of dynamics between the Sisters and their authorities both in South Africa and Switzerland. First of all, as the Sisters were still trying to familiarize themselves with the situation of the new mission and in this process, on the one hand, they were counting on the positive contribution of Abbot Pfanner while, on the other hand, they had to deal with Bishop Jolivet in whose territory they found themselves. The Sisters found themselves pulled between two opposing points. As Abbot Pfanner had shown interest in them right from the start, the Sisters counted on him for help. At the same time, the Sisters were sometimes strongly reminded by their Mother General, in Switzerland, that he was neither their superior nor was he their official authority; they could not and should not do whatever he was advising or asking them to do. A case in point here was when the abbot challenged them to build a boarding school in Mthatha and to concentrate on Africans in their ministry. While, as we saw earlier on, this was exactly their original mission when their Mother General sent them out to South Africa and so should have rejoiced at this, it seems she was reacting – and perhaps even over-reacting – to the tough situation of the new mission. To me it seems that the Mother General could have understood the situation better and that would have in itself helped the Sisters cope better in their difficulty. Instead of that she kind of scolded them for being so closely attached to the abbot, reminding them to deal directly with Bishop Jolivet, their official authority, and implying that they should cut ties with the abbot.

There are certain points I would like to suggest here and which seem to indicate the trying and close to impossible circumstances in which the Sisters, in South Africa, found themselves. The first point is that Bishop Jolivet was the key person to address the issue of the Sisters; he was the bishop of the diocese. But, as we saw above, he did not show any interest in them; he preferred the French-speaking Sisters of the Holy Family rather than the German-speaking Swiss Holy Cross Sisters. His reason for this attitude towards the Holy Cross Sisters might have been national, or due to the personality of Abbot Pfanner whom he might not have particularly favoured<sup>37</sup>, or both of these factors

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<sup>37</sup> In reading about Abbot Francis Pfanner, one cannot help but be moved by his deep faith and strong character, his preparedness to face challenges, on the one hand. At the same time, this man had a tough

combined. The second point here is that Africa was still very much unknown and even feared by European people and the Sisters overseas would have been no different. Therefore, the General House, in Switzerland, had to command the Sisters in everything, leaving almost no room for them to move in the sense of implementing their spirituality in the circumstances they found here in South Africa. The third point is precisely on this relationship with the Mother General, the General House in Menzingen. Due to the distances and mentalities involved, between Switzerland and South Africa, and the additional factor of poor infrastructure and communication, the tension between the two sides escalated to such a level that there was a strong thought to separate the new Mission in South Africa from the original centre of Switzerland. The Mother General had made up her mind to call the Sisters in South Africa back to Switzerland, especially after the tragic death of their superior, Sister Pia Diem, in 1886, at the age of forty one. The hardships of the situation were just too much for her and she died after a short illness.<sup>38</sup> Again, one of the Sisters left them.<sup>39</sup>

However, the decision of the Mother General to call back the Sisters to Switzerland was diverted by the socio-economic situation of South Africa. Because of the gold-rush of the 1880s, after the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand, the Sisters could just not sell their property and go back as ordered. Mother General then revised her plans and instead sent six more Sisters to the Mthatha community. The new superior, Philothea, who took over after the death of Sister Pia, was not daunted by the difficulties; she moved ahead with new adventures, trying to found missions elsewhere in the surrounding areas. Old Bunting and Cwele Missions were two such attempts; she negotiated with the locals and opened schools for Africans. Unfortunately, due to different causes, both of these did not succeed. The Old Bunting mission failed partly due to the manager, Mr. Zurcher whom the Sisters brought out with them from Switzerland and who just created hostility with the locals. There is no detailed explanation as to how exactly Mr. Zurcher caused

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personality which might have made even those in authority feel threatened in dealing with him. For example, Bishop Ricards of Port Elizabeth (Eastern Cape Vicariate), who invited the Trappist monks of Abbot Pfanner, in 1879, did not find it easy in dealing with Pfanner. Jolivet would probably have heard about this situation when he kindly accepted Pfanner and his monks into his Vicariate, (Natal), in 1881. (See Brown, *The Catholic Church* and McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*.

<sup>38</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 73.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

hostility.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, that was not the sole reason for the closure of the mission, a war between two factions of the “tribe” also broke out and that was to the Sisters a sign that the site they had chosen was not the best place to be, they closed it down.<sup>41</sup> Cwele Mission did not work out partly due to the lawlessness that existed in the area as the British rule had not yet reached that part of the country and also due to the breakdown of the “tribal system” with the arrival of new development in Southern Africa.<sup>42</sup> But, in spite of the apparent failure of these initiatives, they were a statement in themselves: the Sisters were here for the poor and needy people, the Africans, as they had been sent out by their Mother General for that purpose.

A new development in the whole saga was that Mother General, Salesia, decided to separate the Mthatha Sisters from Switzerland. She realized that communication between the two centres was just almost impossible and so it would be better for the Sisters in Mthatha to be independent in South Africa under Bishop Jolivet. Interesting enough, it was Bishop Jolivet who saved the situation. While we should be realistic in attributing reasons for his siding with the Sisters of Mthatha who certainly did not want the separation – he was being cautious not to land up with responsibility of personnel and finances – I think that we should give him his due for supporting them in this regard. It is true that he could have changed his mind because of not wanting to leave himself a bad legacy, but he certainly did help in the situation. He lent the Sisters money – (one thousand pounds) to build their own convent and, with the advice of Abbot Pfanner, Sister Philothea, the superior, travelled to Menzingen, in 1891, to request that the separation not be continued. The result of her visit to Menzingen was that the idea of separation was abandoned and instead the Mother General sent a Vicar General to reside in Mthatha and help with the administration of the Sisters in the new mission. Moreover, twenty novices were sent to South Africa, to be trained there and belong to the new

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 74-75. The author, Sr. McDonagh, refers here to “Wagner Ms” – Mr. Wagner was a builder that the Sisters employed. He was probably one of the lay people, Swiss settlers, who had travelled to South Africa with the Sisters and Abbot Pfanner in 1883. He obviously kept his own written records in some form or another, e.g. a personal diary.

<sup>41</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness.*, p. 74.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

Mission that by then had twenty Sisters.<sup>43</sup> Bishop Jolivet died a happy man, in 1903, seeing the new situation and the flourishing life of the Sisters, and he was by then their devoted friend.

In fact, the new and first mission began to expand itself. The first foundation outside the “Transkei” (Mthatha) was Kokstad and they arrived there by ox-wagon, on 16 July 1888. The journey took them three weeks, which today is less than two hours by car. Kokstad was named after the Griqua leader, Adam Kok III. The Griquas were a Khoikhoi group that moved out of northern Cape Town (Malmesbury), under the leadership of Adam Kok I, and after the British negotiated with the Amampondo King Faku in the 1830s and 1840s they finally settled in a supposedly unoccupied land in the 1850s under Adam Kok III. According to Peires, however, Griquas were a Khoikhoi group who moved from Philippolis, in the Southern Free State, who were encouraged by the British Colonial government to move from their homes to the supposedly unoccupied land (“No-mans-land”), south of the Drakensberg.<sup>44</sup> The Maitland Treaty (British Colony) of 1844 gave Faku, the amaMpondo King, rule over the land between the Mthatha River and the Umzimvubu River, and between the Drakensberg and the sea. In 1850, however, Faku of his free will, although probably with some pressure, ceded Harding to the British of Natal. In 1860, under Sir George Gray, all the land that was not under the amaMpondo (Faku) was declared a “No-man’s-land” and was in 1862 named “Currie”, after a policeman of the British Colonial government. Certain observations need to be made here. First of all, there was much politicking in the background of all these developments, with the British Colony behind most of what was going on, doing much to keep control of the events and situation.<sup>45</sup> Secondly, the tribal groups in the area between Natal and Mpondoland – which the British labelled “No-man’s-land” – did not really want Faku to be their ruler, as they were more inclined to be under the Zulu of Natal and probably even preferred to be under the British Colony. Coincidentally, Faku was most probably not really interested in ruling over them as they were not his own people. So then, the British established that area which they called “No-man’s-land” in order to have a bridge

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. pp. 77-78.

<sup>44</sup> Interview with Jeff Peires, (Grahamstown, 3 July 2012).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

between Natal and Mpondoland.<sup>46</sup> And that was where they later placed the Griquas of Adam Kok. After their arrival in 1860 the Griquas founded the town of Kokstad which was their state (independent). But again this was unilaterally annexed by the British in 1874 and the magisterial district of East Griqualand was born.<sup>47</sup> When it grew into a commercial town and settlers came there the Griquas sold their land and property cheaply, losing everything, becoming leaderless and embittered in the process.<sup>48</sup>

The Holy Cross Sisters arrived in 1888 and were to minister to such a people. As far as church life is concerned this area was part of the Natal Vicariate from its establishment in 1850, under Bishop Jolivet, until 1921 when the Mariannahill Vicariate was formed. As indicated earlier on, Kokstad was served by priests – Oblates Missionaries – who used to travel from Pietermaritzburg to Port St. John's. When the annexation by the British took place, in 1875, one camp of the East Griqualand army was stationed on the site of the present Catholic church there. Many members of the Cape Mounted Riflemen were Irish Catholics who in 1884 decided to build a church in order to practice their religion. Father Meyer was appointed as the first resident priest in 1884 and was succeeded by Father Howlett in 1886 who served there until 1905. The Holy Cross Sisters came during his term and he became their great helper and friend. He immediately handed over to them the school he was running for European boys and girls and though the beginnings were not quite luxurious here, too, it was certainly nothing to compare with the beginnings in Mthatha. While they had no classrooms at first and were teaching in the presbytery and on the stoep, which the priest gave to them and himself went to live to the church sacristy (vestry), they had the full support of the friendly priest, Father Howlett, and Bishop Jolivet. The Sisters, then, also opened a music school and in this way got some fees for their living. They began to teach Coloured children as well. When the bishop came to do confirmations in 1889 he encouraged them to hold a bazaar to fundraise for building purposes and as the school grew in numbers he lent them money to be returned once the school was established. As already seen above, the local superior, Sr. Philothea, went to Menzingen, the General House of the Holy Cross Sisters, in 1891. This was to discuss the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 78.

question of separation from the Mother House and as a result bonds between the two centres were strengthened. While she was there she also obtained help for their new foundation, including the school, in Kokstad. In 1890 there were ninety children at the school, an increase from previous years, and nine of these were borders.<sup>49</sup>

From then onward it was plain sailing for the new project of the Sisters – things just fell into their place. In 1892 a new modest school building and boarding establishment were ready for the new year of 1883. That same year, Mother Cecilia was appointed Vicar of the Holy Cross Sisters in South Africa, as a result of the discussions on the question of separation mentioned above, and the good news for the Sisters was that there was to be no more fear of such an idea. The Mother House, in Menzingen, assured the Sisters in South Africa of their full support. In 1895 Mother Borgia replaced Sister Cecilia as Vicar of the Sisters in South Africa. This, again, was an additional blessing as she was a very talented person and most dedicated to the mission of education. Under her leadership new missions were founded, schools enlarged, standard of subjects raised, novitiate in South Africa was strengthened and she insisted on paying off debts of the Sisters and buying the property for the Sisters.<sup>50</sup> She returned to Switzerland, in 1906, a happy person.

The Kokstad foundation also bought a farm, just like in Mthatha, and this helped them to be financially stable and independent. Kokstad in those days was a farm village, but then as the town grew the farm had to close down, in 1940. The Sisters ran three distinctive schools in Kokstad: the original primary school that was handed over to them by Father Howlett; High school (Convent) and the Coloured school. The contribution of the Sisters to the community was recognized both by the government, Department of Education, and the Kokstad community itself. The *Kokstad Advertiser* refers to this adventure, praising the Catholic church for such a contribution that had been mostly needed. The Department of Education recognized the high standard of the school too.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

However, there were challenges and shadows to this great contribution too. Firstly, the discriminatory regime of the 1930s and 40s interfered with the flourishing work of the Sisters and the Church. In 1938 the Sisters were told by the Department of Education that the school had to teach through Afrikaans which was the medium of instruction. The Sisters and the bishop resisted, referring to the parents' right to choose the medium of instruction of their children. After some debate and exchange between the Department and the Church, the Sisters, backed by the parents, won the case.<sup>52</sup> In the second place, there were some prominent Protestant Ministers and people who were complaining about the school run by the Sisters, claiming that it was not open to the public, to non-Catholics. But this was quickly quelled down by both Church representatives and community members who pointed out the wonderful service that the Sisters were doing for the whole community of Kokstad and beyond, without any prejudice or discrimination.<sup>53</sup> In the third place, the Second World War and the apartheid laws of 1948 finally weighed down heavily on the school and it began to decline. As a result of the Second World War, there were no more new vocations from overseas and the Population Act and the homeland establishment all contributed to the final closure of the Convent High school in 1977, after 80 years of service to the community.<sup>54</sup>

As for the Sisters' missionary activity among the Africans, this was almost non-existent. One might want to pose questions here. How could the Sisters - coming from a background and such values of national resistance, self-determination and freedom, as we saw in studying the Swiss people above - fail other people suppressed in a similar way? Again, the Holy Cross Sisters were sent by their Mother General, at the request of Abbot Pfanner who had inspired them so much with his preaching on the African people, to come out and serve these poor people. So, what had happened to that original enthusiasm and objective? Did the Sisters, perhaps, lose that spirit of determination and freedom that is so fundamental to the Swiss people, the spirit in which they were serving the poor villagers in the cantonal schools back in Switzerland? First of all, it has been noted a

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 135-138.

<sup>53</sup> Father Howlett, who, as seen above, had been in Kokstad and a great friend of the Sisters, and had been transferred to Mthatha, was one of the Church representatives who defended the Sisters.

<sup>54</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, pp. 142-143.

number of times, above, that the Sisters were the first ones to be disappointed with the new mission situation, especially on realizing that they were not brought among the Africans in the new mission but were sent to the Settlers and their children. This was the case both in Mthatha and in Kokstad. The priests in these areas were serving mainly the whites and though the Sisters were fully aware of the situation it was not easy for them to really do anything as they did not have the language yet and the Church structures were more geared toward the settlers. In general, all the Christian churches were faced with this challenge when they came to evangelize among the Africans.<sup>55</sup> The Sisters depended on the Church authority, especially in the very beginning of their presence and ministry, and had they separated themselves from that, it would have been almost impossible to survive. And that would have been more so as they were struggling with the understanding and the sympathy of their Mother House in Menzingen. As we have just seen, it was very much with the assistance of the eventually “converted” Bishop Jolivet that they won the support of Switzerland. So, they were in no position to start a mission outside the parameters dictated by the Church authorities. It looks like to me that the Sisters did their best in the circumstances.

As indicated earlier, in 1921 the Mariannahill Vicariate was formed and East Griqualand became part of it, under the Missionaries of Mariannahill.<sup>56</sup> Bishop Fleischer was very devoted to the spiritual and social development of the African people and he fought any kind of discrimination against them. He saw to it that a school for Africans was built on the grounds of the Kokstad church. However, this was never used for that purpose as the whites were against the idea. Instead, that was used as a kindergarten for the Coloureds as the Sisters feared that they (Coloured children) would run away had they gone ahead with the bishop’s idea.<sup>57</sup> I think that this was very sad and a missed opportunity for the Sisters. They could have done some witnessing to their charism and the Church’s mission, especially as they would have had the bishop on their side. On the other hand, one can sympathize with these women who had already suffered so much from the time of their

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<sup>55</sup> See chapter one of this study, especially the Religious element.

<sup>56</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 144; Brown, *The Catholic Church*. See also the works of J. Brain.

<sup>57</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 144.

arrival in the country. How much could they still provoke risky situations by trying to challenge the system in place?

When one thinks back of the situation in Switzerland one can see some similarities with South Africa. First of all, in Switzerland the socio-political development began by favouring the Sisters' ministry in schools; they started well and eventually flourished, being recognized by both the cantons and the state, ending up with the embracing of Father Theodosius Florentini and the Sisters' program of education. In this way, the Sisters were able to grow in every way, helping many young people with all kinds of practical skills and learning. In South Africa too, the Sisters' ministry began quite well, not without certain challenges which are to be expected in any new project, and they were eventually recognized by the community and the state. Again, like in Switzerland, they were able to help so many young people obtain learning and practical skills of all various kinds. In the second place, in comparing Switzerland and South Africa, the socio-political mood in Switzerland turned against the Sisters' ministry as secularization and some anti-clericalism, or at least anti-religious attitude replaced the religious spirit that was always there. The liberals and socialists were pushing their own agenda and did not want to see the Church in control of schools. While, as we saw, the Federal Parliament, in 1848, finally decided to leave the matter to each canton, it did not really defend the vulnerability of the Sisters who had been founded precisely for the education of the villagers, in the cantonal schools, unlike other Religious groups of women who ran private schools for the children of the rich. In South Africa, too, the socio-political development of the 1930s and 40s did not favour the ministry of the Sisters and the Church. As we saw above, apartheid laws eventually interfered and weighed down heavily on the good work at the Holy Cross Convent. Again, the Second World War had an additional negative effect on that community of Kokstad. One wonders whether in such conditions the Sisters, at least some of them, simply gave in to the apartheid mentality, seeing that there was no way out and opted for the dictum: "If you cannot beat them, join them!"

So then, the question of whether or not the Sisters were serving the community, of the social impact of their ministry, is obvious. They did serve the people, they were not just an enclosed group concerned only with internal convent matters and church affairs. Just who did they serve, the rich and middle class citizens or the poor for whom they had originally been sent to this country? That seems to have been a setback to their calling and their mission to South Africa. Even Bishop Fleischer who had asked these Sisters to start the convent school in Flagstaff for the Coloured children, seemingly realized their limitation in that regard. As we saw above, the bishop sent them to Flagstaff in 1927 and the following year he sent the Daughters of St. Francis to the Sacred Heart Institute in the Eastern Cape, in eCala, where the Holy Cross Sisters were working.<sup>58</sup> In fact, according to the Daughters of St. Francis, this was the first project of his own foundation (the Daughters of St. Francis) outside the Mariannhill Vicariate and they were to work together with the Precious Blood (Mariannhill Missionary) Sisters, as they were still a young religious foundation.<sup>59</sup> This was a college run by the Marists Brothers who had to close it at the beginning of the First World War. It was then abandoned until Fleischer revived it in 1927.<sup>60</sup> The point is, Fleischer wanted the Sisters to help uplift the Tembu (Xhosa) young women, just as it was the case with the white and Coloured ones in other parts of the country (Mthatha, Kokstad, Flagstaff). Again, the life of the religious Sisters was seen among the locals as something just for Europeans and Fleischer who, as seen in the first chapter of this study, was champion of religious life in the African people, wanted to undo this.<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, this project was not successful as opposition from the local leaders (African chiefs), who were Protestant, was too powerful.<sup>62</sup>

But again, I would suggest that one looks at the wider context of the whole issue. Firstly, as already mentioned earlier on, the Sisters were part of the whole Church which operated in a manner that did not directly favour the Africans. The Church of that time is

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<sup>58</sup> Chronicles of the Daughters of St. Francis, (FSF General House, Umzumbe, 28 February 1928).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. As seen in chapter one, it was part of Fleischer's ideal to get Africans to join religious life and evangelize their own people. That was one of the reasons why he founded the Daughters of St. Francis.

<sup>62</sup> Opposition from other religious groups was common – as we saw some of it in the above section, with the Holy Cross Sisters – we will notice this again when we study the relations of the Franciscans with the other religious groups (chapter 6).

often seen to have been for the Settlers and Europeans.<sup>63</sup> Next to these groups would have been the Coloureds who were closer to them both in colour and in culture. The Africans were probably seen as being too crude and strange for them. Secondly, the Holy Cross Sisters were foreigners in South Africa and, again, German-speaking who were not particularly favoured by the political development in Europe that time. So, it would have taken very strong personalities to dare swim against the stream in the South African socio-political mood of that era.

Between 1931 and 1935 there was an increase in the number of Catholic conversions and baptisms among the Coloured population. This was partly due to an epidemic fever that had broken out in the area and the people seeing the help given by the Catholic priest and Sister Philomena, the superior, decided to join the Catholic church. Their children were sent to the convent school and instructed there in the Catholic faith.<sup>64</sup> As for the Africans, Sister Innocentia began teaching in the new African school opened by the church in the African location, in 1935. A church had been opened there in the previous year and the Mother General of the Holy Cross donated two hundred pounds (the total amount for the building being four hundred pounds). Again, a relative of Sister Philomena gave something toward this project as well. Seemingly there was some opposition to the granting of a site for the Catholic church building, from the town, but the Catholic priest ignored that and gathered children to be taught by Sister Innocentia and another Sister took over when she (Sister Innocentia) was transferred in 1943.<sup>65</sup>

In 1935, 8 April, the new Prefecture Apostolic of Mount Currie was established and entrusted to the Bavarian Franciscans. During the Second World War it was difficult to continue the work by the Sisters among the Africans as both the Franciscan Friars and the

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<sup>63</sup> Although Brown, in his book on the origins of the Catholic church in South Africa, tries to defend this reality – stating that it was never an official position of Rome that the first bishops of South Africa sent from overseas should look only after the Settlers and also claims that the first bishop, Patrick Griffith, of the Vicariate of South Africa did not discriminate in his receiving of converts – yet he does show that the church at that time was more at home with the Settlers and attracted more Europeans and Coloureds than Africans. Other writers on this subject also agree with this point of view, e.g. Joy Brain; Elphick and Davenport put this in a wider context of all Christian churches.

<sup>64</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 145. According to McDonagh, there the number of baptisms was between 275 and 358.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146.

Sisters were Germans or German-speaking. Though the Kokstad magistrate and General Jan Smuts were kind to the Sisters, they still had to withdraw from the African township.<sup>66</sup>

### **2. 3. The Sacred Heart Convent School<sup>67</sup>**

In the above section, 2.1., we saw how Flagstaff was created as a Catholic mission. Now, Flagstaff formed part of the newly established Prefecture Apostolic of Mount Currie, which was entrusted to the Bavarian Franciscans in 1935 and would later be known as Kokstad diocese. The mission of Flagstaff itself was founded by Bishop Fleischer, of Mariannahill, who also asked the Holy Cross Sisters to start a boarding and a day school there for Coloured children in 1926.<sup>68</sup> It was also noted, above, that the first resident priest went there in 1927. This was Father Chrystosostomus Ruthig, of the Mariannahill Missionaries, and he made Flagstaff his headquarters for the surrounding mission work.<sup>69</sup> The Sisters did the planning and supervision of the school building. Sister Clare Mayr was the planner and architect. She was helped by locals in removing trees and clearing the site. The bishop seemingly did not get much involved himself and that was probably due to various reasons. For one, he probably did not have personnel for all the work – building – that was needed in his large diocese. Another reason for the bishop's little involvement in Flagstaff was probably that he knew the skilfulness and efficiency of the Holy Cross Sisters as they had already proved themselves in other places, like Mthatha and Kokstad. He did have expectations of the building being at a cost of not more than 500 or 600 pounds which the Sisters thought to be impossible.<sup>70</sup> He also advised in the letter he wrote to the Sisters on the project that they apply for a grant from the government, but that was more for the boarding school aspect of the project: providing food was going to be quite costly at least until the Sisters had their own vegetable

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<sup>66</sup> McDonagh refers to a tradition, seemingly an oral one, that Jan Smuts is said to have told the officials, "Leave the women alone!" Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>67</sup> I was informed, by Holy Cross Sisters in Belgravia, (their Provincial House), that this Convent school was so named – Sacred Heart – in order to avoid confusion with the nearby Anglican mission-hospital that was already built and which bore the name of "Holy Cross".

<sup>68</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 152.

<sup>69</sup> *The Southern Cross*, in the Holy Cross Archives South African Province, Belgravia, (undated), page 4; Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, pp. 267-268.

<sup>70</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, pp. 152-153.



Sacred Heart Convent School- Flagstaff



Holy Cross Sisters School – Bedford, Mthatha (1900)



Holy Cross Sisters Convent – Kokstad (1920s)

garden.<sup>71</sup> So, the Sisters in their planning decided to send one of them to prepare a garden before the rainy season came and this was a few months in advance, i.e. before the building would be completed in June. Again, in order to prepare for the opening of the school and the application for a Government grant, a committee was formed with the initiative of the local doctor. Those children from Flagstaff who had attended at the Mthatha Convent School were looking forward to the coming of the Sisters to their hometown. So, we can see that the Sisters were once more warmly welcomed by the larger community and this would help them settle in the new place as it had been the case in Mthatha and Kokstad. This would certainly give them confidence in working among the people they had been sent to. In August 1926 Sister Clare took two Sisters with her to open Flagstaff Sacred Heart Mission even though the building of the school was not yet ready. They were helped by Dr. Caine and his family for bed and breakfast, they lived in two rondavels till 4 December when their little convent was ready. There were nine pupils for a start at the school but the Sisters knew, from experience by then, that the numbers would rise. In August 1927 – a year after the Sisters’ arrival – the school was approved by the Department of Education as a one-teacher school, paid 122 Pounds per annum.<sup>72</sup>

Parents of African children asked for their admission, as there was no other school in the area. Thirty children were taught in a rondavel, separately from the Coloured children as it was government policy. But, unfortunately, this school never got government approval and was seemingly closed down in 1937.<sup>73</sup> So, a pattern similar to that of other schools of the Sisters followed in the new place. One would wonder, again, how the Sisters took this situation, whether they were heart-broken and even tried to resist, as they had done in Kokstad for the language. Or were they just used to this kind of situation?

As time went on, the school grew and became a government-aided Primary school. Later, a private Secondary school was added and, in 1939, a Vocational school was opened for

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

Domestic Science which was also recognized by the government. The numbers of pupils and staff increased and a new Coloured school was built by the Sisters, in 1956, and opened by the mayor of Flagstaff, a further recognition of the Sisters' contribution to the community of the area. Father Antonine Kelly, a Franciscan, took the opportunity to publicly thank the Holy Cross Sisters for the great work they had done in the past and for their present achievement.<sup>74</sup>

#### **2.4. Social impact of the school (education)**

In this section I would like to underline certain points which show the social impact of the Sisters' presence and ministry, particularly in relation to the area of education.

Just like in Switzerland, where the Sisters were following their founder and model, Father Theodosius Florentini, in the education of youth, so here in South Africa they did the same. Florentini had emphasized the fact that education has to be holistic, embracing the whole person with his or her needs. First of all, the spiritual dimension was to be catered for. As noted earlier on, Florentini was a member of the Franciscan Family, Capuchin Order, and so his spirituality and outlook were very Franciscan. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan Movement in the thirteenth century was very universal in his way of life and that is the legacy he left his followers, something still very relevant in our day and age. Elements of his spirituality include: respect for ecology,<sup>75</sup> relations with

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>75</sup> Francis' most celebrated song in this regard is known as *The Canticle of Creatures*, or *Canticle of Brother Sun*, in which he calls upon all creatures, including Death whom he calls "Sister Death" just like all creatures are seen by him as brothers and sisters for they are all created by the same God who created us human beings. Franciscan scholars tell us that this was written in 1225, the year before his death in 1226. In this song/poem one cannot help but sense the mood of joy, praise in Francis as he calls upon all creation, people and all creatures, and even Death – and remember he is conscious of the approach of his own death – to join him in praising God, the Creator. As all creatures are sons and daughters of God, they are our brothers and sisters and, therefore, deserve to be respected and loved. We are told by his biographers that he would command the brother (friar) doing the cooking for the friars not to cut down all the branches of "our brother tree" as it needed to grow again. Again, he freed a rabbit that was caught by some people, and he would sometimes replace such an animal with his own clothes or whatever he could give in order to let that particular creature go free. Pope John Paul II declared Francis the Patron saint of Ecology. Indeed, today's Animal Rights Groups, ecologists and human rights groups have much to learn from Francis. It was for reasons such as these that the Franciscans, about twenty years ago, decided to ask for admission to the New York and Geneva Headquarters of the United Nations Organization. The Franciscans were the first, and to my knowledge still the only, religious NGO to be member of the UNO, lobbying political leaders and law-makers for laws and policies that favour the cause of the poor of the world.

other religions,<sup>76</sup> loyalty to the Church, simplicity, humility, joy and love of God and all humans. The Sisters then looked after the spiritual element of the youth attending their schools. The “Flagstaff Diary” of the Holy Cross Sisters informs of the visit by Bishop Kurz and Father Magnobon, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 1936, to examine the children in religious knowledge and that the bishop was very pleased with them.<sup>77</sup> But the religious aspect was not promoted in isolation, it was a holistic approach that the Sisters worked for in the education of the youth and no wonder the parents were sending their children to these schools, including those of other churches and faiths because they saw practical and positive result of this approach. The intellectual and theoretical dimension was equally important. We saw how the Department of Education recognized these schools, their quality and standard of education was marvellous. Again, as part of development of the total person the young people were taught practical skills, sewing, knitting, gardening and social activities like music, concerts and dancing and in these areas too the young people obtained good results and recognition by the community and the Department of Education as they were taken seriously at the schools.

In the above section of this study I referred to the question of apartheid laws and how the Sisters and the schools they were serving were affected by these. In an interview with the Cardinal, Wilfrid Napier, (Franciscan),<sup>78</sup> who is currently the most senior Catholic Churchman in South Africa and was the bishop of Kokstad between 1981 and 1992, his impression was that the Sisters in Flagstaff (and I presume he includes Kokstad) could have done more to ignore the apartheid policies in their schools. He compared the situation in these schools with Little Flower, in Ixopo, which was run by the Precious Blood Sisters, where the Cardinal attended. I do not intend to defend any side here, and I would not be in a position to do so anyway. I would nevertheless like to suggest that the

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<sup>76</sup> It is even more interesting and note-worthy that Francis advocated for healthy relations with other religions especially when the Catholic Church (Christians) were involved in battles with Muslims, in what are usually known as “Crusades”. Francis went to the war, in Damietta, north of Africa, without any sword and, due to his spirit and attitude of simplicity, humility and love, the Muslims befriended him instead of killing him. He continued not only to visit them – he spent most of 1219 in the Middle East – but also learnt some values of their spirituality. Again, Pope John II began the “Assisi Day of Prayer” inviting all Religious Leaders to be together in Assisi, the birth place of St. Francis.

<sup>77</sup> Holy Cross Sisters’ “Flagstaff Diary”, 3 September 1936.

<sup>78</sup> Interview of Thursday, 3 June 2010, (10.30-11.30 a.m.), at the Archdiocesan Cardinal’s lounge, Durban.

Precious Blood Sisters, having been founded by Abbot Francis Pfanner – who was also a great supporter of the Holy Cross Sisters - would have probably been in a better position to stand up to the government and thus afford to ignore their policies. That is so because right from the start they had someone – the abbot – on their side. He seems to have had good connections in the government and was quite a tough personality to deal with matters challenging his ideals and projects.<sup>79</sup> Although Pfanner was supporting the Holy Cross Sisters he had to move more gently and cautiously in the end as the General House, in Switzerland wanted the Sisters to have more independence in deciding on their issues<sup>80</sup> The Sisters then remained under the supervision and assistance of Bishop Jolivet whose territory they had come into and who was not of much assistance and support to them at first.

So, then, the Holy Cross Sisters were certainly involved in the uplifting of the community at large, in all their schools and ministries. There is no doubt about that. And, as pointed out above, they did according to the spirituality of their founder and model, Theodosius Florentini. What is questionable though is their stance, or rather their readiness to stand for the rights of the poor African children. And, as I have already noted, I wonder if they were able at all to do so. At the same time, I wonder if one could really blame them.

This leads us to the next chapter, the coming of the Franciscan Friars, the priests and brothers, of the Order of Friars Minor, to the Kokstad diocese and how this social involvement was further promoted under them. Again, we have to realize that the Friars were working with the Holy Cross Sisters in the diocese of Kokstad, first the Bavarian Friars (1935 onward) and later the Irish Friars (1946 onward). And these were all sons and daughters of St. Francis, all of the same Franciscan Family.

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<sup>79</sup> As we saw earlier on, Abbot Pfanner was a tough character, even in dealing with his own men (monks) and bishops. In fact, he volunteered to come out to South Africa when no other one was prepared to do it, and so he led a group of the first Trappists monks to Dunnbrody, Port Elizabeth, in 1879. Later, they went to Mariannahill, in 1882.

<sup>80</sup> Again, as noted in the above sections, Pfanner advised the Holy Cross Sisters to start a boarding school in Mthatha and to buy land. Mother General had to make it clear to him and the Sisters that they were an independent Institute and their official superior in South Africa was Bishop Jolivet.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Coming of the Franciscans to Mount Currie/Kokstad Diocese**

Originally, in this chapter I had intended to take a closer look at the Franciscan friars who came out to South Africa. I would have studied their family, social, educational, professional and religious background as this should help us better understand their life and ministry in the new country where they came to minister. Unfortunately, however, as indicated in the introduction of this research, that did not happen. That was due to the absence of documents necessary on the subject in that area. I still hope that some day I will have that chance and make use of it. This should assist us in trying to get behind the mentality and judgment of the situation in which the pioneer Franciscan missionaries found themselves. South Africa would surely be different from Germany, in many ways, as they would have discovered for themselves. What was their attitude to the culture, rituals and way of life in the South African society? Another question would be on the formation and training of those friars, their preparation for the new Mission in South Africa. So, what we will do here and now is to take a look at each and every one of the pioneer missionaries, giving as much information, and also some assessment, of each one of them, as much as we can from the few sources we have available.<sup>1</sup>

#### **3.1. Entrusted with a new Mission (Kokstad Prefecture Apostolic)**

Various sources give us slightly different details around the arrival of the early group of Franciscan Friars in Kokstad diocese.<sup>2</sup> What is certain from these sources is that the

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Franz Gruber, (Pretoria, 27 June 2012). Franz, a Franciscan Friar from Germany who was formerly a Franciscan missionary in Bolivia, and now working at the Financial office of the Archdiocese of Pretoria, confirmed that in order for one to study the background of the Franciscan pioneer missionaries one needs to go to the archives in Munich as there is plenty of information there which would not be easily forwarded by post. Gruber himself was working in the archives of the Franciscan Provinces in Germany and so has much experience in that area.

<sup>2</sup> S. B. Kurz (Monsignor, Prefect Apostolic of Kokstad), Ixopo, to Minister Provincial (Bavaria), (Munich 28 November 1935). A booklet prepared for the celebration of the “Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers”, 1935-1985, provides pictures and details of the arrival and appointments of the early group from 1935 to 1937. The chronicles of the Holy Cross Sisters also give us certain dates of events and names of the early Friars in the Kokstad area. Bishop Fleischer’s Pastoral letters also provide some information on the same subject; he had a Pastoral letter each year. Then, Mrs. Groom and Mrs. Mngeyana of Flagstaff, who knew the Friars from the time of their arrival there, were interviewed on the

Friars came to that diocese, a Prefecture Apostolic at the time, in 1935. Again, we can establish from the same sources that two other Friars had by then joined the original group of six men.<sup>3</sup> From the sources we can gather the following sequence of events.

- 1935, April 8: formal declaration, by Rome, of the newly created Prefecture Apostolic.
- 1935, June: Father Severin, O.F.M., escorted to Flagstaff by Father Guido, O.F.M., where Father Ulrick, C.M.M. (Mariannahiller), welcomed them heartily.
- 1935, July: Father Maximillian, O.F.M., arrives in Maria Telgte.
- 1935, November: The newly appointed Prefect Apostolic of Kokstad, Monsignor Sigebald Blasius Kurz, O.F.M., (of the Bavarian Province), arrives in Durban from China where he had been a Missionary.
- 1935, December 6: The new Prefect and the Bavarian Friars arrive in Kokstad, the Friars came from Izingolweni (where they had been since March 1933).
- 1935, December: local official declaration of the new Prefecture and inauguration; there were the following people at the ceremony: Bishop Fleischer (Mariannahill) who handed the new Prefecture over to the Bavarian Franciscans; Father Chrysostom Ruthig (C.M.M, Mariannahiller who had been serving in the diocese, especially in Flagstaff); Monsignor Sigebald Kurz, the new Prefect, and 10 Franciscan Friars (7 priests and 3 brothers). As Bishop Fleischer handed over the newly established Prefecture to the Franciscans he had these beautiful words to say, “I shall never forget the good people of Kokstad and their generosity and co-operation with their priests and all the great work accomplished.”<sup>4</sup>
- After a Pontifical High Mass was celebrated in the new cathedral, the local community, of whites, Coloureds and Africans, had a reception for the Friars.

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24<sup>th</sup> of May 2010 – they had such vivid memory of events from before the arrival of the Friars in the Kokstad diocese and were most helpful in this part of the research. (Interview was recorded); See also Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, pp. 255-280 and Hermann, *100 Years of Mariannahill*, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> The booklet for the “Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers” adds two names to the original group of six and one of the original men is missing, that is Brother Melchiades who – according to the letters of both Father Gottschalk (written: 2 January 1936) and Brother Melchiades himself, (written: 3 January 1936) – was in Hardenberg with Father Gottschalk. Read more about this in section 3.2 where I take a closer look at each of the pioneer Bavarian missionaries.

<sup>4</sup> The *Kokstad Advertiser*, 1935, in the booklet on the “Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers”.

- As for the appointments of the Franciscans in the Prefecture, it was as follows: Fr. Lucas Purstinger – Kokstad and Mount Ayliff; Fr. Guido Nurnberger – Matatiele; Fr. Gottschalk Kunsteiger and Br. Melchiades Koferihler – Hardenberg; Fr. Maximillian Schlereth and Br. Dositheus Buehler – Maria Telgte; Fr. Hanno Probst - Mount Frere; Fr. Severin Neumeier – Flagstaff; Fr. Magnobon Koller – Bizana.<sup>5</sup>

One of the elderly Irish Friars, who at one stage was regional superior, recalled the coming of the Bavarian Friars as was narrated to him by them.<sup>6</sup> He told the story of the Bavarian Friars when they left the Mariannahill diocese, in 1935, for the diocese of Kokstad. First of all, they went to the monastery of Mariannahill and put up a protest, expressing their unhappiness over the way they had been treated since their arrival in the diocese. Their performance was: gathering at the cloister of the monastery; singing rebel Bavarian songs; raising their (national-Bavarian) flags; candlesticks with lighted candles. All this was due to their dissatisfaction with the monks (Mariannahill Missionaries), how they had been ill-treated. They felt that it was not fair to be invited to the diocese and then be treated in the manner they had been. Secondly, as soon as the Friars had left the diocese of Mariannahill, the Mariannahill Missionaries went to St. Boniface Mission, Izingolweni, where the Friars had been stationed for the past three years, (1933-1935), and did away with whatever was Franciscan there: statues, pictures, and so on.<sup>7</sup>

This story is quite interesting and confirms what has already been told above about the way the Friars were received on their arrival in Mariannahill. Going through the Pastoral letters of Bishop Fleischer, which were written to the clergy and people of his diocese on an annual basis, there is no particular mention of the Franciscan Friars, neither their arrival (1932), nor their transfer to St. Boniface Mission (Izingolweni, March 1933), nor their departure (1935). What makes this point even more conspicuous is that the bishop,

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<sup>5</sup> Kurz to Minister Provincial ,28 November 1935; Booklet on the “Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers”.

<sup>6</sup> Fr. Egbert O’Dea, is now 88. I visited him (he is with another elderly Friar, Fr. John Kerr) a number of times, taking notes from our conversations and later recorded his stories on the Friars, especially the Bavarians, in the Kokstad area.

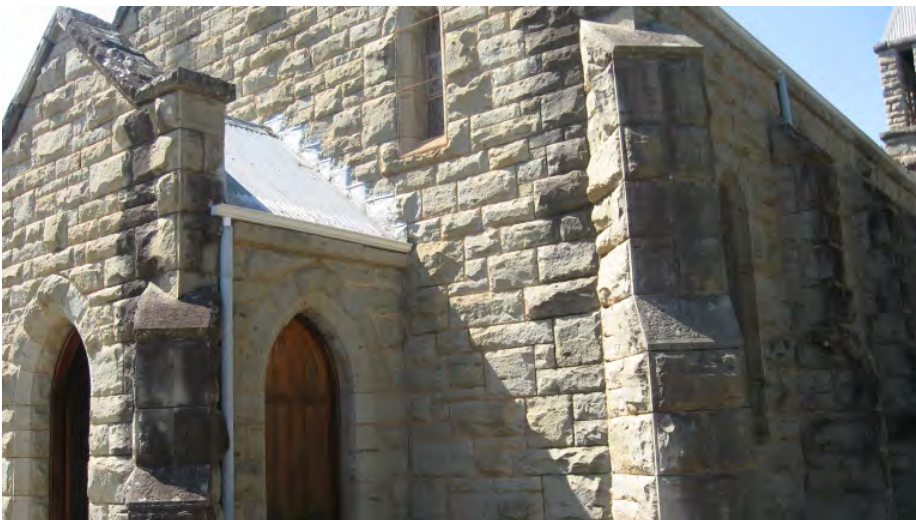
<sup>7</sup> Interview of Fr. Egbert O’Dea on 22 March 2010.



St. Patrick's Cathedral – Kokstad



Franciscan House - Kokstad



Maria Telgte Mission Church

in his letter of 1932, mentions the other Franciscan groups, both new arrivals from overseas (1931) and local ones that he had personally founded and for which the Bavarian Friars had been invited.<sup>8</sup> The bishop would use his Pastoral letters as an occasion to officially announce and publish important matters and events. And yet, the Franciscan Friars, who came to his diocese in September 1932, are not mentioned at all in his letter. The Pastoral letters are not usually dated, except for the year, one may conclude from reading the introductory section what time of the year they were written and, depending on the important events in the diocese, they seem to have been written at whatever time of the year. So if, for argument's sake, the Franciscan Friars arrived only after the Pastoral letter of 1932 had already been issued, why would the bishop, then, not include them in his 1933 letter? And again, if he had invited them out for a particular ministry, should he not have made it a point to write another special letter, even a short one, just on these new important arrivals? As a clear proof that the bishop did not omit the Friars by mistake, in the Pastoral letter of 1933, which was his campaign to the people of the diocese to a spirit of conversion and indulgence – the theme of the letter – he refers to St. Francis of Assisi, his favourite saint and whom he appropriately places in the minds of his people as he writes on that particular theme.<sup>9</sup> So, the Franciscan Friars are still not mentioned in the letter. Why not? The only explanation, of course, is that – as already seen in chapter one - there was a problem with the coming of the Franciscans to his diocese. The bishop, then, chose not to make an issue of the Bavarian Friars. It was safer for him to do so at the time. But here one might ask another question: Was the bishop also disappointed with the Franciscan Friars, just as he was with his own Order, the Mariannahill Missionaries? Had their behaviour hurt him too, especially their protest in the monastery? Did they include or imply him in that performance, or was it directed only

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<sup>8</sup> In page 6 of his Pastoral letter (1932) the bishop refers to his two local foundations, the Franciscan Familiars of St. Joseph's (FFJ) and the Daughters of St. Francis (FSF), on his campaign for local vocations. He then mentions the new arrivals from overseas, the Franciscan Brothers of Waldbreitbach, Franciscan Capuchin Sisters, both of which had arrived in 1931, and he welcomes these latter two. Also see the bishop's letter to the Minister Provincial of Bavaria, Polycarp Schmoll, which the latter forwarded to the Minister General of the Order, 9 January 1932 (Latin) and Nogemane, , "The Coming of the Franciscans", Appendix B, p. 173.

<sup>9</sup> Read p. 12 of the 1933 Pastoral letter.

at the Mariannahill Missionaries? Perhaps they saw him as being too laid back and might have wanted him to take action about their situation. As we saw earlier on, when they arrived, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1932, he broke the news to them that they would not have the house he had promised them while they were still in Germany. Again, they were not welcomed in an appropriate manner as other religious groups had been. Instead, they were sent to the remote part of the diocese, Izingolweni, where they had to physically build their own place and till the hard and dry soil for their vegetable garden. It was probably too much for them! Purstinger's history of the Bavarian Franciscans in South Africa shows very clearly that there was opposition to their arrival in Mariannahill.<sup>10</sup> Sister Adelgisa – referring to this situation, and particularly to “far away Izingolweni” – makes it clear that the Friars were not happy about the whole matter.<sup>11</sup> Izingolweni was only “a way out”, a last resort, after the Mariannahill Missionaries opposed the bishop's plan to give the Franciscans the beautiful mission of Maris Stella.<sup>12</sup>

One of the two Sisters of Assisi – Fleischer's foundation – I interviewed, Sister Sylvia Nkomo, who stayed with him in the last few years of his life, told about how the bishop was suffering from ill-treatment and even rejection from his own men, the Mariannahill Missionaries.<sup>13</sup> She said that certain priests, Mariannahill Missionaries who held significant positions at the Bishop's office, did not want him.<sup>14</sup> According to her, these priests claimed that he was the people's bishop and not the priests'. They seemingly contacted the Apostolic Delegate, who used to be based in Bloemfontein that time, and he then called Bishop Fleischer, stating that he had retired as bishop, which was to Fleischer's surprise as he thought that he could still continue with his job since he felt he was still strong. The bishop, then, did not have a place to stay.

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<sup>10</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 14-16; 35-44.

<sup>11</sup> Hermann, *100 Years*, p. 54; Letter, Kunsteiger to Minister Provincial, 26 December 1934, St. Stephen's day.

<sup>12</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Sister Sylvia Nkomo worked for the bishop from 1949 to 1951. Interview of 1 June 2010, in Assisi Convent.

<sup>14</sup> Sister Sylvia said that it was particularly the Bishop's Secretary, Fr. Brunna who was in the forefront against the bishop. Ibid.

The story continues that these priests went to the archbishop of Rhodesia<sup>15</sup> who seemingly signed some letter concerning Fleischer's retirement or resignation.<sup>16</sup> Bishop Fleischer then moved to a mission in Bulwer known as "Pholela" which was also a seminary for formation of young men toward the priesthood. As if that was not enough, the Mariannahill Missionaries decided to sell the place, which was a farm and a Sisters' convent with a church, to a white farmer. Realizing that he had nowhere to stay and celebrate the Holy Mass (Catholic church service), the bishop asked to go back to the monastery in Mariannahill. It was a painful situation indeed, so said Sister Sylvina.

In another interview with Sister Sylvina she added that the bishop was not allowed to stay in the monastery due to the fact that he was considered by the Mariannahill Missionaries as the people's bishop<sup>17</sup> (with the implication that he was not of the Mariannahill Missionaries).<sup>18</sup> So, the Sisters – who were working for him and were Franciscan Sisters of Assisi – would collect meals from the monastery for him.<sup>19</sup> Sister Sylvina claimed that there was much discrimination against Africans and she saw this herself. While I would not totally dismiss this claim, especially as it was experienced by the Sisters and to which there is plenty evidence,<sup>20</sup> I think it is equally important that we bear in mind here the fact that it was a time when the Catholic Church had to work on the separation between the religious missionary Orders' role and property, on the one hand, and that of the local church, the dioceses which were to be stabilized for the future local clergy and people. And sometimes there was quite a lot of tension in this regard. In fact, Fleischer's vision of the local church was also along those lines, as shown in chapter one, he worked hard

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<sup>15</sup> That was probably in Bulawayo as the Mariannahill Missionaries have had their men there since Abbot Pfanner's time. In fact, as it was noted above, in chapter one, Bishop Fleischer was also a Missionary over there before being elected as superior of the Mariannahill monastery and, then, first bishop of Mariannahill in 1922.

<sup>16</sup> What I could gather from this interview is that the letter would have been influential in recommending to higher authorities that Fleischer was not healthy enough to continue with his apostolate as bishop.

<sup>17</sup> Interview of Sr. Sylvina Nkomo and Sr. Maria Mildred Mncadi, in Assisi Mission-Convent, 27 July 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Words between brackets are my own (for clarification).

<sup>19</sup> Interview of Sr. Sylvina and Sr. Mildred, 27 July 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. Mukuka's book, *The Other Side of the Story*, is precisely on this unfortunate situation and experience of the Black Clergy in the South African Catholic Church, (1898-1976).

for the empowering of the local church in Mariannhill diocese. In one of the interviews with Sister Dominica Mkhize she referred to this same experience of Bishop Fleischer.<sup>21</sup>

As mentioned earlier on, Dominica herself interviewed elderly Sisters who were close to Fleischer and one of them was Sister Ursuline Ndaba who looked after the bishop's meals when he was exiled in Pholela – where the minor seminary for boys was situated. According to Dominica, Sister Ursuline did her best to look after the bishop in spite of the challenges facing her (and the bishop). She had to walk about two hours from her convent to the bishop's residence, and it took her the same time to return to her convent. So, it was more difficult in winter as it was not only cold but was also dark. Sister Ursuline's testimony concurred with that of Sister Sylvina when she said that the bishop literally cried tears when he saw the church where he was staying being taken over and demolished by the new owners, particularly the altar with the tabernacle.<sup>22</sup>

To add to the above, there was another trouble for the bishop and this time it was his own foundation of the Assisi Sisters. Some of the Sisters wanted one of their own to govern the young Congregation; they had had enough of a Missionary Sister looking after them. According to Sister Sylvina, these Sisters did not want Fleischer either as he had placed them under a White Superior and probably had not indicated the time for an African Superior yet. It was a very difficult situation for the bishop as he could not even go to Assisi. The Sisters were divided into two main factions, those who wanted Sister Emiliana, the Superior General, to continue and those who wanted an African Superior.<sup>23</sup> Those who wanted to have an African Superior were the educated ones.

Again, this is interesting because a similar situation arose within the Franciscan Order in the thirteenth century, during the time of Francis of Assisi. Certain men, who had joined the Order with their qualifications and education, did not want to be led by a simple,

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<sup>21</sup> Interview of Dominica Mkhize, Izotsha, Port Shepstone on 20 September 2010 (9.30-10.30).

<sup>22</sup> According to Catholic belief, the altar and the tabernacle is where the Lord Jesus is present to us in a very special manner and so is highly revered. The altar is where the Eucharistic celebration – the sacrifice of Jesus – takes place; the tabernacle is the place (a box-like container) where his body (the host), left over from the Eucharistic celebration, is reserved.

<sup>23</sup> Interview of Dominica Mkhize, 20 September 2010.

uneducated person, just like Francis himself.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, they did not agree with Francis' vision of the gospel life. An interesting factor to this whole saga – of the Assisi Sisters – is that the Sisters working for the bishop would be carrying the post for the bishop from the Sisters who were fighting him without any knowledge of what was going on until one day the bishop's secretary told them the story.<sup>25</sup> During the interview Sister Sylvina kept on repeating, “There was a lot of suffering in Assisi – Bishop Fleischer, Mother Emiliana and Mother Jucundis!”<sup>26</sup> Due to this situation Mother Emiliana towards the end of her life, went to die and was buried in Himmelberg,<sup>27</sup> one of the important missions of the Franciscan Sisters of Assisi, where the formation of the young ones was based for years. She preferred to be away from the tense situation and die peacefully. Mother Jucundis, on the other hand, insisted that she would be buried in Assisi, which was done indeed.<sup>28</sup>

So, then, the question comes up again as to whether the bishop was disappointed and even frustrated...and, if so, with whom would he have been disappointed? Did he feel betrayed by his own Mariannahill Missionaries? He was probably asking himself what his Mariannahill men actually wanted as they even seemingly opposed the creation of the new Prefecture Apostolic of Kokstad, separating a section of the huge Mariannahill diocese.<sup>29</sup> And for that he had a clear answer, which was probably not necessarily welcomed by all. For him it had become obvious that the Mariannahill Missionaries could not continue to staff newly created dioceses. This he communicated to the Church authorities.<sup>30</sup> Did he feel let down by the Franciscans, in their abandoning of his vision? Was it all simply a dream, after all, and nothing more? His own founder, Abbot Francis Pfanner of Mariannahill, had also ended up in exile due to a misunderstanding of his own men and he eventually went to a mission, Emmaus, in Umzimkulu.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas of Celano, *Remembrance of the Desire*, par. 145; *The Assisi Compilation, Early Documents*, Vol. 2, (New York, 1999), par. 47; par. 112.

<sup>25</sup> Interview of Sr. Sylvina and Sr. Mildred, 27 July 2010.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* Mother Jucundus was the successor to Mother Emiliana.

<sup>27</sup> Interview of Sr. Sylvina and Sr. Mildred, 27 July 2010.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Hermann, *100 Years*, p., 54.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> It is not an uncommon phenomenon for such great leaders to end in isolation from misunderstanding of their ideals by their own followers. Abbot Francis Pfanner was “persecuted” for having changed the Trappist rule of silence and contemplation when he opted for active life of evangelizing the Africans in

The stories of the Friars' protesting, the Mariannahill Missionaries' behaviour and the Franciscan Sisters of Assisi all show how human the agents of this history were. And that refers to all of them: the bishop who was vulnerable in this situation, the Mariannahill Missionaries, the Assisi Sisters and the Friars themselves. Although they were men and women of God, serving the people they were sent to, in their different areas, they were still just as human as any other people, just as we saw with the Holy Cross Sisters too.

From the moment the Friars were entrusted with the new mission they applied themselves with great zeal and dedication, building up the church there in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi who was always loyal to the church and its reform, and who taught his followers to do the same.<sup>32</sup> They began work in the already established mission-churches and also opened new ones.<sup>33</sup> In 1936 two new groups arrived from Germany. Father Canisius Bertsch arrived in June, first appointed to Kokstad in order to get used to

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the Mariannahill area. As pointed out above, Francis of Assisi too was misunderstood in his ideals, especially when educated men joined his Order, and he died suffering from this psychological and even spiritual rejection as it were. Read the *Testament* of St. Francis, especially paragraph 14, which has been central in the tension that existed later within the Franciscan Order and which shows how Francis insisted he was guided by the Lord and not by any human being in his gospel way of life.

<sup>32</sup> One of the famous stories on the life of Francis of Assisi is that of his vision in which the Lord called to him while he was praying in a small, neglected and ruined church of St. Damiano, "Francis, go rebuild my house; as you see, it is all being destroyed." As one of his biographers, Thomas of Celano who is also the first official biographer of the saint, tells us, Francis took this command of the Lord literally and immediately obtained bricks and cement, renovating the ruined church and two others in the neighborhood, with the help of some people who sympathized with him. According to Thomas, Francis later realized that the command from the Lord was directed to the spiritual rebuilding of the church, which again Francis did with great dedication and enthusiasm. This story is told in many of Francis' biographies: *First Life of Francis* by Thomas of Celano, par. 18; *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* (Second Life of Francis) by Thomas of Celano, par. 10-11; *Major Life of St. Francis* by Bonaventure of Bagnoreggio, par. 1-8; *Legend of the Three Companions (of St. Francis)*, par. 21-24. Moreover, in his Rule, Francis admonishes his followers to be loyal to the Church of Rome, both the opening and the closing of his Rule directly states this teaching – (see Rule of 1223 - which is the one officially approved by the Church – chapters 1 and 12).

<sup>33</sup> Sources again give different versions on the names and number of places which the Friars found already established and the new ones they opened. For example, Bishop Fleischer in his Pastoral letter of 1936, in officially announcing the new Prefecture Apostolic of Mount Currie, gives the following list of places falling under it: Kokstad (seat of the Prefecture); Mount Frere; Matatiele; Mount Ayliff; Flagstaff; Lusikisiki and Bizana. The booklet on the "Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers" adds Hardenberg mission to the above. In my dissertation on the Franciscans in South Africa, it says that the Friars found five mission-churches already in existence...Flagstaff, Mount Frere, Matatiele, Hardenberg and Maria Telgte; they then opened two new places: Mount Ayliff and Bizana, p. 41, Rome 1995. In my interviews with Mrs. Groom and Mngenyana, Fr. Severin left Flagstaff for Lusikisiki, which is about 50 km towards Port St. John's, in 1939, leaving Fr. Alpius Mangold in Flagstaff. But the latter did not stay long there as he was taken for internment and Fr. Severin went back to Flagstaff, to be taken for internment too later. The Cardinal, Wilfrid Napier, O.F.M., did mention that Fr. Severin did Lusikisiki from Flagstaff which was the main centre of mission work.

mission life and start learning the languages - English and Xhosa - and later sent to help Father Lucas Purstinger in Mount Ayliff,<sup>34</sup> especially as the latter was also looking after Kokstad and being superior of the Friars in the area. There were three other Friars that arrived the same time with Canisius, those were: Juniper Wurthner, Macarius Buehler and Quintus Hofbauer. Then, in December of the same year came another group: Father Gerhard Maier, Brothers Octavius Lankes, Leontius Alfons Kaiser and Zaccheus Max Rieder.

In 1937, another group of Friars arrived from Bavaria and they were: Caius Grellner, Alpius Mangold, Celestine Mass and Magnerich Winner.<sup>35</sup> On June 12 of that year was the joyful occasion of the opening and blessing of the new wing of the Franciscan Friary. Again, on September 20 was the solemn profession of some of the young Friars who had come out to South Africa before the completion of their formation and training. Those were brothers: Macarius Anton Buehler, Juniper and Nonnosus Adalbert Wagner. This was a sign that the Province in Bavaria was really supporting the new mission of the Friars here in South Africa and they believed in the men they had sent out here. So, the life and work of the Franciscans, in the new mission, grew and developed with time and perhaps even sooner than one would have expected. The Prefect – Monsignor Kurz - did his duties as pastor of the Prefecture, doing confirmations and opening new houses and churches. There were good relations between the Prefect and the Friars, and with the Sisters and the people. Later on we will come back to explore more about the relations between the Friars and the Sisters. The anxiety and interruption caused by the Second World War, especially as the Germans were taken away from their people and interned in Pretoria, will also receive attention.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Sigebald Kurz (Prefect Apostolic), Kokstad, to Minister Provincial (Bavaria), (Munich 5 December 1936).

<sup>35</sup> According to the Holy Cross Sisters' Kokstad chronicle, these arrived on 28 August 1937; the booklet on the "Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers" give December as the month of arrival, without any date. The Holy Cross Sisters are probably more reliable as they recorded this in their chronicles. The "Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers" was probably a recalling of dates and events from memory without written records and so some of them would not be remembered clearly.

<sup>36</sup> There is much reference to this time and event in the documents we have, the chronicles, Sr. McDonagh's book on the Holy Cross Sisters and letters of the time; Sr. M. Adalgisa Hermann, CPS, and Fr. Henry Ratering, a Mariannahill Missionary, also refer to this situation. In my interviews with the two ladies from Flagstaff, too, they mentioned this as a painful experience for all. We will have to come back to this later when dealing with the social involvement of the Friars and also in relations with the state.

### **3.2. The pioneers of the South African Mission**

In this section I would like to take a close look at each of the first group of Franciscans who came to South Africa from Bavaria. Unfortunately, at this stage I will not be in a position to present all the necessary details on each of them. I hope to do so at a later stage. So, I will just make a few points on them, and naturally some would be more detailed than others, until later when I hope to get more information in this regard. I will start with the first six men and, then, take one more from a later group, Maximillian Schlereth who, as we saw above, was appointed to Maria Telgte with Dositheus Buehler, and was part of the first group of Franciscan Friars to arrive in Kokstad, in 1935. I do that because he serves as a good example of the background of the Bavarian Friars who came out to this country with their talents and skills, applying them in their ministry to the church and the people.

#### **Lucas Purstinger**

Lucas Purstinger was the senior of the group and was made superior right from Bavaria when they first came out to South Africa. From his writings and interviews with the Franciscan Sisters of Assisi – Daughters of St. Francis founded by Bishop Fleischer – he travelled with the bishop when they first arrived in Mariannahill, (13 September 1932), and the idea was to see the overall picture of the diocese to which they had been invited. Another reason for his moving around with the bishop would have been the placement of the Franciscan Friars he was leading; he had to see them settling in their new stations.

Purstinger was very good at correspondence with his Minister Provincial in Bavaria,<sup>37</sup> giving good details on everything concerning the life of the Friars, the events and the situation in South Africa. According to his letter of 19 September 1932, which was the first one after their arrival in the country, Bishop Fleischer who had come personally to

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<sup>37</sup> He has probably written more letters, reports and documents, including a history of the Franciscan Friars in South Africa, than any other Friar. He corresponded with Bavaria, Bishops, his Friars, Sisters and other persons in authority and ordinary people.

meet the Friars at the boat, told them of his plans<sup>38</sup> as a result of which Purstinger led a meeting of the Friars, their first “Chapter” in South Africa, and accordingly he made the following appointments: Guido Nurnberger was to go to the seminary (boys’ school), in Ixopo, to teach<sup>39</sup> as he had better English than all others; Magnabon Koller was to go to the German Franciscan brothers (“White Brothers”), of Waldbreitenbach;<sup>40</sup> Gottschalk was sent to the Franciscan brothers (“Black Brothers”) of Kwa-St. Joseph’s,<sup>41</sup> the African foundation of the bishop; the two Friars who were brothers, Melchiades Paul Koferichler and Dositheus Buhler, were sent to Maris Stella.<sup>42</sup>

After visiting various places and leaving his companions at their respectful stations Purstinger was stationed at Lourdes Mission, which was one of the centres of the Mariannahill Missionaries.<sup>43</sup> He was also able to visit other parts of the diocese and negotiated a contract with the bishop.<sup>44</sup> After the Friars had moved to Kokstad, Purstinger was Parish Priest of Kokstad, looking after both the English-speaking and the African parishes. He was also in charge of Mount Ayliff mission-station until the arrival of Canisius Berstch from Germany in 1936. The Africans nicknamed him “Maqengqelezana”, referring to his small stature<sup>45</sup> and the way he would just run, “rolling down”, as he was doing things fast.<sup>46</sup> He became the Administrator of the diocese during the absence of Bishop Kurz, when the latter was interned, before the

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<sup>38</sup> Lucas Purstinger, to Polycarp Schmoll (Minister Provincial), (Munich 19 September 1932); Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 14.

<sup>39</sup> Guido had studied some English with the American Fr. John Forest, in Munich, and was to teach the boys religion, history and anatomy. Read Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 14.

<sup>40</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.; Letter of Gottschalk Kunsteiger, 4 December 1932.

<sup>42</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 14.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. The Necrology of the Franciscan Province of South Africa states that Purstinger’s first appointment was at Lourdes Mission where he was Assistant Priest (Revised edition, February 2007); according to the two Sisters of Assisi, interviewed on the Franciscan Friars of Bavaria, they knew Frs. Lucas Purstinger and Gottschalk Kursteiger from Lourdes Mission where they were stationed with other Sisters (interview of Sr. Sylvina Nkomo and Sr. Maria Mildred Mncadi, in Assisi Convent, 1 June 2010); Fr. Purstinger’s letter of 19 September 1932 mentions the Franciscan Solanus Sisters, who came out at the same time with the Friars and in the same boat, that some of them were stationed at Lourdes Mission. Purstinger claims that they were placed in Lourdes Mission in order to learn the Zulu language well, and it is a fact that he did learn it well as he was fluent in it later.

<sup>44</sup> Purstinger’s letter, 19 September 1932.

<sup>45</sup> Mr. Nkalweni, a retired prosecutor who was studying for the priesthood and left, made it very clear that Purstinger was a short man. Interview held in Aliwal North on April 1, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Interview of Getrude Mngeyana, in Flagstaff, 26 July 2010; Sr. Sylvina Nkomo knew this name too, in the interview of 27 July 2010.

appointment of the new man, Bishop John Evangelist McBride of the Irish Province, in 1949.

Purstinger was very active and popular among the African people, preaching to them in Zulu and was full of enthusiasm and joy as a true son of St. Francis. Sister Sylvina Nkomo, of Assisi Mission, told me of a letter the Sisters received from Fr. Purstinger toward the end of his life.<sup>47</sup> In the letter he shared his anxiety at the approach of death. Again, the letter would be a proof of his dedication and closeness to the Franciscan Family he had been part of and which he served so well; even his sharing with the Sisters on death would be a sign of his deep devotion to them and one could sense this relationship as Sister Nkomo was talking during the interview.<sup>48</sup> In 1951 he started writing a history of the Bavarian Franciscan Missionary Friars in South Africa and was completed a number of years later.<sup>49</sup> After forty years of service among the peoples of South Africa, he died in Germany while on his home leave, on 16 October 1972.

### **Gottschalk Kunsteiger**

As seen above, Fr. Purstinger appointed Gottschalk to the African Franciscan brothers of Kwa-St. Joseph's, Fleischer's foundation. Gottschalk was seemingly lost over there, at least at the beginning when he first arrived among them. He wrote in his letter, of 4 December 1932, "After our surprisingly fast scattering amongst the heathens, I arrived here happily; in the Rivo Torto<sup>50</sup> of the blacks. I was a little scared..."<sup>51</sup> First of all, Gottschalk is probably the one who showed the feelings, attitude and mentality of the missionary Friars more than any other, at least when they first arrived. He was not shy to spell out clearly what he thought and felt. Phrases like "...amongst the heathens"; "Black

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<sup>47</sup> Interview of Sr. Sylvina and Sr. Mildred, 1 June 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, begun on 27 July 1951.

<sup>50</sup> *Rivo Torto* is a place in near Assisi – Francis' birthplace – in Italy, where Francis and his first companions (eleven) stayed for some time in the early days of the Franciscan Order. It was such a poor dwelling and when one particular day a donkey went into the building Francis took it as a sign from the Lord and he told the brothers that it was time to move on to another place, part of the Franciscan spirit of being itinerant and not possessing any place. "Rivo Torto" has become a romantic tradition and idealism of the Franciscans.

<sup>51</sup> Letter, Kunsteiger to Minister Provincial, 4 December 1932; Interview of Sister Dominica Mkhize, FSF, at the Daughters of St. Francis' Novitiate House, Izotsha, Port Shepstone, 24 February 2010..

Brothers...”; “I was a little scared”, can be quite revealing in this regard. And in case one would think that these phrases were not directed at the African brothers he was sent to live with, the following words – concerning the foundation of Bishop Fleischer which the bishop seemingly wanted to be taken over by the Franciscan Order – sound even stronger:

I heard that the Bishop likes black clerics to join in order for them to get stability and support. With his first black priests he was unfortunate. Considering this fact, he will hold on to his Congregation. In case he would hand it over, a very experienced, strong and wise man would be needed. One who is able to handle the strong-minded Blacks. Religious life is not easy for them, considering the free life the men live with little work they do. I noticed that one may not use our standard for the Brothers, neither for the Christians.<sup>52</sup>

Having said that though, one must quickly add that this was a general mentality among Europeans when they came to Africa.<sup>53</sup> As pointed out in the last chapter of this study, the Holy Cross Sisters too were not so free when it came to dealing with African pupils in their schools; they preferred to keep the status quo instead of rocking the boat by taking in African children when the White parents were not happy with that and again the Sisters were afraid that the Coloured children would disappear once the African children were admitted. In his critical and detailed study of mission David Bosch makes this point very clearly, the fact that the missionaries in general came to mission territories with a superior complex and that this was due to the fact that the West has had scientific and technological development that far outdoes the rest of the world, particularly the “Third World”.<sup>54</sup> He then shows how the West needs to open itself to other cultures and ways of looking at life, especially in his chapter where he shows the weakness and limitations of the Enlightenment period and, then, calls the world to interdependence.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 19-31.

<sup>54</sup> The whole of the Bosch’s book, *Transforming Mission* is on the constructive criticism of Mission as it has been done over the centuries by the Western Christians (and other religions too), especially in “marrying the church and state”, colonialism, and so on. This theme is particularly in chapter 9. The book is to be highly recommended in studying such topics as ours here.

<sup>55</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission.*, chapter 10.

After the Franciscans had transferred from St. Boniface Mission, in Izingolweni, to Kokstad diocese, Gottschalk was appointed to Hardenberg Mission, together with Melchiades who was to be in charge of the farm, and so they were the very first Franciscans there.<sup>56</sup> Hardenberg is a Sesotho-speaking area and Gottschalk found it hard to learn the new language after his work in a Zulu-speaking area.<sup>57</sup> However, he worked hard there too, with the advantage of a good foundation having been laid by the Trappists and later the Congregation of Mariannahill Missionaries.<sup>58</sup> He was also looking after New Makoba, a group of African people who had been moved there from Swartberg and its surrounding when the government gave the land to whites (farmers) in the 1950s.<sup>59</sup> In the beginning he travelled by horse to the mission-stations and also to town for shopping in Matatiele, which was 25 kilometres from Hardenberg. He is said to have been a semi-professional horse-rider.<sup>60</sup> When some of the Bavarian Friars were interned during the Second World War, Gottschalk, Lucas Purstinger, Magnobon and Guido carried the burden of the whole diocese on their own. Later when some of the Bavarians opted for Zululand, leaving the Kokstad diocese to the Irish Friars, Gottschalk went to work in Mangete, the home of the famous Dunn clan.<sup>61</sup> He later died, in 1994, in Mbongolwane Mission where he was serving as chaplain to Franciscan Sisters.<sup>62</sup>

### **Guido Nuernberger**

From Nuernberger's first and long letter to the Minister Provincial we find a good amount of information about him and his first appointment.<sup>63</sup> This was to St. Mary's Seminary, in Ixopo, where he had to teach young men aspiring for priesthood. We know that this seminary was started by Bishop Fleischer who in his 1924 and 1925 Pastoral

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<sup>56</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, pp. 262-263.

<sup>57</sup> Read Fr. Gottschalk's and Br. Melchiades' letters, written from Hardenberg Mission where they were both stationed on 2 and 3 January 1936 respectively; also read Dischl's *Transkei for Christ*, p. 262.

<sup>58</sup> Necrology of the Franciscans in South Africa, Revised Edition 2007, (31 March 1995).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. Neither he nor Br. Melchiades refer to this aspect in their letters, written from Hardenberg Mission on 2 and 3 January 1936 respectively.

<sup>61</sup> John Dunn was a Scotsman who became a chief among the Zulus, in the North Coast area, taking African women for wives and thus has a number of descendants over there.

<sup>62</sup> Another group of Franciscan Sisters, originally German too, known as Franciscan Sisters of the Holy Childhood.

<sup>63</sup> Written from St. Mary's Seminary, Ixopo, 24 November 1932.

letters refers to it.<sup>64</sup> In the 1924 Pastoral letter the bishop announced his plans for such an institution. First of all, he stated that there was a need for such a “college for Latin”, “a seminary for Africans” as they did not have one. There was already one for white candidates and one young man studying for the Mariannhill diocese was almost through with his studies. The bishop also states, in his letter, that he is not yet sure where this one for Africans would be situated.<sup>65</sup> The idea of the bishop was seemingly affirmed by the meeting of the Bishops Conference (of South Africa) which took place in 1924, in Kimberley. At that meeting the Apostolic Delegate, who is the Pope’s representative, insisted that there be a national seminary for local candidates and the bishops suggested that it be established in the diocese of Mariannhill.

In his Pastoral letter of 1925 Fleischer provided the address for the seminary, it was to be in Mariathal Mission, Ixopo, and he asked the people to contribute to this project by encouraging their sons to join the priesthood, pray for priests from South Africa and to give money towards its success.<sup>66</sup> We know for a fact that Rome at that time was promoting indigenous vocations in the church. Doctor Mukuka traces this important phase in the church’s missionary movement to the end of the First World War, particularly to Pope Benedict the XV who in 1919 issued a letter, *Maximud Illud*, “On the Propagation of the Faith throughout the World”.<sup>67</sup> In the letter, the pope called for the indigenization of the clergy throughout the world, particularly in mission countries, as this would contribute a great deal to the spreading of faith. Mukuka claims that this letter of the pope is considered the *magna carta* of modern catholic missiology.<sup>68</sup> The pope again warned against the temptation of some missionaries to extend colonial power rather than the kingdom of God.<sup>69</sup> Benedict XV’s letter was foundation for future discussions and policies of subsequent popes and leaders of the Catholic Church.<sup>70</sup> His successor,

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<sup>64</sup> Bishop Fleischer’s Pastoral letters, 1924 and 1925.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Apostolic Letter of Pope Benedict XV promulgated 30 November 1919. Read Mukuka, *The Other Side of the Story*, pp. 30-36.

<sup>68</sup> Mukuka, *The Other Side*, p. 34ff.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 33-34. This is also found in Bosch’s critique of missions by Europeans in the “Third-World”, in his book *Transforming Mission*.

<sup>70</sup> Mukuka, *The Other Side*, p. 33.

Pope Pius XI issued another letter along the same line, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, “On Catholic Missions.”<sup>71</sup> Pius XI, in that letter, emphasized the fact that indigenous clergy must be encouraged as they are the ones who could teach the faith to the people and govern them in a better way.<sup>72</sup>

A question here is whether Guido was aware of this when he was stationed in the seminary. Looking at his letter, one would tend to think that he was aware of this development in the church’s thinking. First of all, Guido, unlike Gottschalk, sounded very positive about the students in the seminary. Although there was plenty of work for him, especially as he was just at the beginning of his new apostolate, he was at home there, quite content about the fact that he had been placed there and ready to further develop his talent in teaching. He saw that as an opportunity for him to study more English and even asked his superiors to allow him go do that during the holidays.<sup>73</sup> He had a good relationship with the young men and appreciated their interest and attentiveness in class. Again, Guido referred to the fact that he had just come out of his own training for the priesthood, having been taught good theology by the Minister Provincial himself, in Germany. So, he was still fresh in his knowledge and formation in theology and this placed him in a good position to teach in the seminary. A good theology course would have included such subjects as missiology and this would be particularly more probable in Germany where there was a tradition of good critical scholars in theology and other disciplines. Furthermore, this would have been more appropriate with the first missionaries to South Africa.

In his letter responding to Bishop Fleischer’s request for Franciscan Friars to come to South Africa, in 1932, the Minister Provincial, Polycarp Schmoll, mentioned that the young men interested in mission were still doing their final year of theology studies and so could not be sent to Mariannhill immediately.<sup>74</sup> Polycarp further stated to the bishop that if he was really in a hurry to get the Friars immediately, he should let them know so

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<sup>71</sup> Encyclical of Pope Pius XI promulgated February 8, 1926, in Mukuka, *The Other Side*, p. 36ff.

<sup>72</sup> Mukuka, *The Other Side*, p. 38ff.

<sup>73</sup> Letter written from St. Mary’s Seminary, Ixopo, to the Minister Provincial, 24 November 1932.

<sup>74</sup> Letter written to Bishop Fleischer, by Polycarp Schmoll, Munich 23 February 1932.

that they would give them a special course on missionary life.<sup>75</sup> So, this shows how the leadership of the Franciscans in Bavaria was conscious of the need to prepare the missionaries for their new mission. In fact, it was not the very first mission of the Franciscans from that Province, they had some missionaries in China already and had also started a new mission in Bolivia all of which would have given them a good experience in mission. South Africa was the first mission in the African continent, yes, and this would have made them even more conscious of preparing the young men well.<sup>76</sup> Guido, then, was in the right place in the seminary and at the right time too. However, he eventually had to move on with the other Bavarian Friars to other places. He went to Izingolweni with other Friars.<sup>77</sup> Even while there he continued his interest in reading theological books and to give spiritual talks (retreats) to Franciscan Sisters, according to the Franciscan vision of Fleischer and the Bavarian Franciscans.<sup>78</sup>

Guido's letter of 1934 also shows how the Franciscan Friars' mission in South Africa was soon transformed into a pastoral setting, thus moving away from the original ideals of both Fleischer and the Bavarian Province's leadership, at least when they sent their first missionaries to Africa. I think that a sentence found in the same letter reveals something in this regard; he wrote: "A good knowledge of English is of utmost importance for the extraordinary pastoral work as the only basis for relieving the home Province of its financial burden"<sup>79</sup> While one might justly argue that this statement does not necessarily put pastoral work above other kinds of ministries, pointing out that this could equally refer to other means of involvement in church and society, yet it is a fact that the Franciscan Friars were all in pastoral work in the new mission of Kokstad diocese. They had the whole diocese to look after, it was entrusted to them by the Church as their

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. letter of 2 September 1934.

<sup>78</sup> In a letter he wrote, from Izingolweni, to the Minister Provincial, Munich, he informs him of a retreat he had to give to the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of Mary, in Umzinto; in the same letter he refers to the theological-spiritual books he was reading, 2 September 1934.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

responsibility and this would naturally lead to pastoral work being the priority, over those other ministries for which they had been originally invited by Bishop Fleischer in 1932.<sup>80</sup> As already seen above, he was appointed to Matatiele in Kokstad diocese; he was the first Franciscan Friar in Matatiele, arriving there in December of 1935.<sup>81</sup>

In 1951 the superior, Purstinger, sent him to the United States for collecting funds for the work of the Franciscans in the missions. There he died tragically from a car accident in 1959.<sup>82</sup>

### **Magnabonus (Magnabon) Koller**

Magnabonus (Magnabon) Koller was born on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1906, in Weiden, Germany, and joined the Franciscan Order in 1926.<sup>83</sup> On his arrival in South Africa, Mariannahill diocese, in 1932, he was assigned to Umhlabatshane Mission to learn the Zulu language.<sup>84</sup> According to the first letter of his that we have, he was in Kokstad by September 1933.<sup>85</sup> This raises a question as to why of the first six Friars he alone went to another place other than Izingolweni where the others were. It is true that Kokstad at that time was still part of the Mariannahill diocese but, as already mentioned, all the other Friars went to Izingolweni after their first experience which as we have seen was not so encouraging. When the group moved from St. Boniface Mission, Izingolweni, to Kokstad he was appointed to Bizana and was the first resident priest there until 1950.<sup>86</sup> He was a very popular and active missionary, extending the church of Bizana<sup>87</sup> and the number of mission-stations. He put up the first private school and hostel for African children in the area of Bizana.<sup>88</sup> Some of the people interviewed in eDutyini,<sup>89</sup> Bizana, remember the

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<sup>80</sup> These were identified earlier in a letter of correspondence between Bishop Fleischer and Minister Provincial Polycarp Schmoll.

<sup>81</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, pp. 272-273.

<sup>82</sup> Necrology of Franciscans in South Africa, 18 March 1959.

<sup>83</sup> Personal file (Munich Franciscan Provincial Archives)

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> His letter was written on 4 September 1933; also see Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 61.

<sup>86</sup> Necrology of Franciscans in South Africa, 7 December 1965; Booklet for the "Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers".

<sup>87</sup> Letter written from Bizana to Minister Provincial, 30 August 1936.

<sup>88</sup> Letter written from Bizana to Vicar Provincial, 14 September 1939; Letter written from Bizana to Minister Provincial, 19 May 1939; Necrology of Franciscans in South Africa, 7 December 1965.

town of Bizana when it was only a small village and it used to be called “enkampini”.<sup>90</sup> It was so named because of the police (“amaqakamba”) who had their camp (“inkampi”) there. According to some of them – Mrs. Bhala is one of those who went to the Catholic boarding school in Bizana – there were just two stores in Bizana that time, in the 1940s, “kwa-Fitsha” and “kwaMahlathini”, and those belonged to White people.<sup>91</sup> The priest, then, used to come to Bizana from Lourdes, in Umzimkulu, (Mariannahill Missionaries).<sup>92</sup> He would be riding a horse, stayed at eMagusheni store where the owners there would provide a room for him to spend the night and would then move on to eNtsingizi where the Holy Mass would be celebrated in a hut. The Dutyini people too used to go there for that. The next Catholic centre to be opened after Ntsingizi was Bizana.<sup>93</sup> While it was the Mariannahill Missionaries who started these two places – Ntsingizi and Bizana – it was Magnabonus who really established Bizana as a mission, building a house for the priest and then a boarding school and a convent for the Sisters.<sup>94</sup>

There are two versions on how the Bizana mission was founded. While these are slightly different they do not contradict each other and are not necessarily exclusive of each other. The first of these versions is that of Bishop William Slattery. He claimed that Bizana mission started off with men who were working in Durban, men who were originally from Bizana. According to Slattery, these men experienced the church life in Durban and wanted to take that back to their home (Bizana). So, they went to Lourdes, Umzimkulu,

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<sup>89</sup> Dutyini is earliest mission-stations to be established in the Bizana area. According to the people interviewed, the priests from Umzimkulu, Mariannahill Missionaries, used to go to Ntsingizi for Holy Mass and all the people in the surrounding areas would go there. The next place to be established was Bizana, and then Dutyini. Others followed from that. (Interviews of people in Dutyini, 10 October and 20 December 2011); also read the Franciscan Missionary of Mary Sisters’ description of Bizana when they first arrived there in 1954, chapter 8 of this study.

<sup>90</sup> Interview of Agnes Nomvete, Luciana Msongelwa-Bhala, Sophia Candlovu and Getrude Candlovu in Dutyini on 10 October 2010.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 269.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Interview of Agnes Nomvete, Luciana Msongelwa-Bhala, Sophia Candlovu and Getrude Candlovu, (eDutyini, Bizana, 20 December 2010); Magnabonus, Bizana, to Vicar Provincial (Bavaria), (Munich 14 September 1939); Magnabonus, Bizana, to Siegbald Kurz (Bishop of Kokstad), (Munich 8 January 1942). Dischl’s book, *Transkei for Christ*, is in accord with much of the sources referred to here. Cf Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, pp. 267-278.

which was the headquarters of the Catholic Church in their area, to ask for a mission to be established in Bizana.<sup>95</sup>

According to the people interviewed in eDutyini, Bizana mission was established through people, mainly men but there were also women, who were schooling in Lourdes (Umzimkulu) Catholic boarding and in Mariannahill.<sup>96</sup> During the interview the people even identified the names of some of those who were involved: Xavier Mbhele – (born in 1895 and) later became catechist; Hamilton Candlovu – (born in 1902); Carolus Khatywa – schooled in Mariannahill; Eustace Ngonini – schooled in Lourdes and Damian Madikizela – schooled in Mariannahill. These and a few others went to ask for a church site at Khatywa's place.<sup>97</sup> These above-mentioned people, then, brought the Catholic faith to the area of Bizana and it was through their devotion to the same faith that the church was established there.<sup>98</sup> There were also girls who schooled in Lourdes and they too, like their male counterparts, brought back home the faith they had received from school.<sup>99</sup> Again, some of the men married women from Lourdes and then brought their wives to eDutyini. From what the people interviewed could remember, there was only one case in which a girl from eDutyini, who was schooling in Lourdes, was married by a man from there (Lourdes) and then went to settle in eDutyini, her home village. The people interviewed were referring to the 1940s.<sup>100</sup>

At the same time, I think that it is important to bear in mind the fact that the indigenous people interviewed did not have written records with them and so their dates and figures would have to be weighed against written records that are available. Fortunately, we have plenty of the written records and from them we can establish that Magnabonus was in Bizana from the mid-nineteen thirties and was there until 1950. His letters, to which we

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<sup>95</sup> Interview of Bishop William Slattery, OFM, (Kokstad, 20 December 2010).

<sup>96</sup> Interview of Agnes Nomvete, Luciana Msongelwa-Bhala, Sophia Candlovu and Getrude Candlovu, 20 December 2010.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. The Khatywa family was one of the leading people in the local church in eDutyini.

<sup>98</sup> These people were the parents of the people interviewed and the years were the 1940s. Interview of Agnes Nomvete, Luciana Msongelwa-Bhala, Sophia Candlovu and Getrude Candlovu, 20 December 2010.

<sup>99</sup> Interview of Agnes Nomvete, Luciana Msongelwa-Bhala, Sophia Candlovu and Getrude Candlovu, 20 December 2010.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

will be referring in the following few lines, bear much evidence to this history. This then was the foundation on which Magnabonus built the Catholic church in Bizana and its surrounding areas. Dischl pointed out that Magnabonus – being the first Franciscan in Bizana – coming from Natal where he had been working among the indigenous people, knew the language and could start mission work with all energy.<sup>101</sup> Dischl continued to show how this was actually implemented: the number of mission-stations was increased to thirteen, the Bizana church which was the main mission-station was extended in 1936 and blessed by the bishop in 1937.<sup>102</sup> Later on, in chapter 4, we will deal with the question of the school that he founded.

Koller wrote a number of letters, there are twenty of those we have, written between 1933 and 1947, and are addressed to his superiors – the bishop of Kokstad, Fr. Lucas Purstinger who was the first Franciscan superior in South Africa, leaders of the Franciscan Order in his original Province of Bavaria and in Rome – and Fr. Walter, a Franciscan Friar who seems to have been a friend of his. As already indicated above, he seems to have been a man of many talents, organizing building of churches,<sup>103</sup> boarding school<sup>104</sup> and even a hospital.<sup>105</sup> Sensing from the letters he wrote to the bishop, he was probably the bursar of the Friars in the region and even of the whole diocese (vicariate) as that was all under the Franciscan Order.<sup>106</sup> He gives the impression of having had a straightforward and expressive personality which is one of the likely causes of his plentiful correspondence. An example of this frankness of his is a letter he wrote to the bishop of Kokstad, Sigebald Kurz, in 1942, in which he expressed himself in the following manner:

In the last few days it has been brought to my notice that You wrote a letter to His Lordship the Bishop of Johannesburg, in which You accuse me of certain things. May I ask You to also let me know to my face the accusations You voiced behind my back<sup>107</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 278.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Cf letter written from Bizana to the Minister Provincial, Munich, 30 August 1936.

<sup>104</sup> Cf letter written from Bizana to the Vicar Provincial, Munich, 14 September 1939.

<sup>105</sup> Cf letter written from Bizana to the bishop, Kokstad, 8 January 1942; Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 278.

<sup>106</sup> Cf letter written from Bizana to the bishop, Kokstad, 10 February 1942; letter written from Bizana to the bishop, Kokstad, 12 February 1942.

<sup>107</sup> Written to “Excellantissime et Reverendissime Domine, from Bizana, July 8<sup>th</sup> 1942.

Could that perhaps be the reason why he did not join the group in Izingolweni, one wonders? Perhaps he could not live under those conditions and the other Friars decided to let him off as his presence would have been inconvenient for all.<sup>108</sup> However, according to an interview of certain people who knew him, in Bizana, he was a kind person and was gentle.<sup>109</sup> One of those people interviewed was Luciana Bhala who attended at the Bizana Catholic boarding school established by Magnabonus. Luciana mentioned that as boarders they used to steal fruit – guavas, oranges, pears – at the mission – and Magnabonus would not be harsh with them; even when they went to him for confession after stealing, he was not hard.<sup>110</sup> At the same time, the people interviewed say that although he was popular he was frank and direct with anyone who did anything wrong, which is in accord with the letter he wrote to the bishop and quoted above. During the interview the people added that he was very punctual and would leave behind those who came after the time agreed upon, which of course is part of the stereotypical picture of the German people – punctuality.<sup>111</sup> So, the interviews of the people then give us a different picture of the man. After all, then, he was a decent and kind person who was apparently approachable even to the young people who were boarders at the school that he himself founded in Bizana. Even in confession he was not so hard and that becomes even more interesting when one considers the time we are dealing with. In the 1950s – before the Second Vatican Council of the Church (1962-1965) – the Catholic Church was generally hard and strict and, indeed, priests could be insensitive and stiff towards the penitents.

So then, what conclusion could be drawn on the personality of Magnabonus? Looking at the above points raised both in the documents referred to and the interviews, I think that we could say Magnabonus was a talented and quite capable person. The fact that he was a straightforward person does not necessarily mean he was harsh and unapproachable. On the contrary, it would seem that many people were happy with his frankness – they knew

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<sup>108</sup> In that case, he would have been left alone for the same kind of argument that was applied to the first Franciscan Friar in South Africa, Daniel Burke, which we saw in chapter one of this study.

<sup>109</sup> Interview of Luciana Bhala, Sophia Macandlovu Mbhele, Getrude Candlovu and Agatha Nomvete, 10 October 2010).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Interview of Luciana Bhala, Sophia Macandlovu Mbhele, Getrude Candlovu and Agatha Nomvete, 10 October 2010.

where they stood with him and so could deal with him quite easily.<sup>112</sup> Because of this straightforward character they most probably saw through that he was doing things out of love for them; he was a dedicated missionary. It was probably due to all these positive qualities, then, that he was moved to Kokstad before the other Friars of his group – he could have been the most mature of the six Friars who were all young except Lucas Purstinger their superior who was older than the rest of the group.<sup>113</sup>

As for Magnabonus' letter to the bishop, referred to above, we also need to take into consideration the bishop's personality and his difficulties. That will be dealt with in chapter eight of this study, under the Irish Franciscan Friars. Let it suffice for now to point out that Magnabonus was not the only Friar, and not the only priest, who had to clash with the bishop. The bishop, unfortunately, created a number of enemies for himself and, in fact, he was eventually removed from his office and also went out of the diocese and the country. Magnabon, then, was not like the very first historically known Friar – Daniel Burke – who, as seen above, was “dumped” by the bishop in Grahamstown due to his difficult personality.<sup>114</sup>

A final point I would like to mention at this juncture is the fact that the Franciscan vision of Fleischer and those Bavarian Friars – which they had embraced from the start – was not implemented in its entirety, in its originality and with the same passion with which it began. As time went on there were other practical realities that had to be considered, especially with the Friars transferring to Kokstad area where they got more involved pastorally. As we will see in the next chapter, the Friars practically became Parish Priests in charge of their individual mission-stations, each one on his own which was something certainly not planned by Fleischer and the Minister Provincial who sent them to Mariannahill, and this was not planned by the missionaries either. So, in a way, Koller led the Friars in this new trend.

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<sup>112</sup> Obviously, there would have been others who disagreed with this summation.

<sup>113</sup> Magnabonus was twenty six years old (in 1932) – and all the others were about the same age, except Lucas Purstinger who was in his late thirties. See Polycarp Schmoll (Minister Provincial)'s letter to Bishop Fleischer of Mariannahill, (Munich 23 February 1932); Personal file (Munich Franciscan Provincial Archives).

<sup>114</sup> Cf chapter 1.2 & 1.3.

While on home leave, in Bavaria, Koller volunteered for the Missions in Bolivia – which was another new area at the time for the Bavarian Province – that was in 1951. He died over there on the 7<sup>th</sup> of December 1965.<sup>115</sup>

### **Melchiades Paul Hofrichler**

Melchiades Paul Hofrichler was one of the two brothers, not ordained priests, of the original six Franciscan Friars that were sent to South Africa in 1932. The second one was Dositheus Melchior Buehler. Melchiades was born on 29 June 1910, in Rudolstadt, Germany, and was received into the Order of the Franciscans (Order of Friars Minor) on 23 September 1929.<sup>116</sup> From St. Boniface Mission when the Friars moved into Kokstad, in 1935, he was appointed to Hardenberg Mission together with Fr. Gottschalk. They both sent letters to their Minister Provincial, in Bavaria, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of January respectively and, as noted earlier, Gottschalk's was not so positive about the situation in South Africa.<sup>117</sup> Melchiades', on the other hand, was quite positive and looked at challenges in the new place as being part of life. He was mainly looking after the farm in Hardenberg, which gave him great joy agriculturally, and the horses which were their means of transport between the Mission and the town of Matatiele, and also for serving the mission-stations.<sup>118</sup> Melchiades does not appear in the necrology of the Franciscan Friars of South Africa, something that is quite strange as this is usually a precise document. The only reason one could imagine for his omission is that he was dispensed from his vows on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November 1938.<sup>119</sup> There is no reason provided for the cause of his dispensation and that is the most probable explanation too for his omission from the list of appointments provided in the booklet on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee celebration, on the arrival of the Franciscan Friars in Kokstad, in 1985.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Necrology of the Franciscan Friars in South Africa, 7 December 1965.

<sup>116</sup> Personal file (Munich Franciscan Provincial Archives)

<sup>117</sup> Letter written from Hardenberg Mission, on 3 January 1936.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Personal file, Melchiades Hofrichler (Paul).

<sup>120</sup> Booklet for the "Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers", 1985.

## Dositheus Melchior Buehler

As already noted above, Dositheus Melchior Buehler was one of the only two brothers, (not ordained priests), in the original group of pioneers who came to South Africa in 1932. He was born on 8 June 1910, in Spaichingen, Germany. On the arrival of the Friars in Mariannahill he was sent to Maris Stella Mission, together with Melchiades.<sup>121</sup> When the Friars first arrived in Kokstad, from St. Boniface Mission, Izingolweni, he was sent together with Maximillian Schlerer to Maria Telgte Mission.<sup>122</sup> He was transferred to Kokstad in October 1936<sup>123</sup> and was a builder in the diocese of Kokstad. A number of buildings – clinics, hospitals, churches, presbyteries, and schools attest to this.<sup>124</sup> In an interview of some people from eDutyini, the first and still the biggest mission-station of Bizana, it was stated that the Franciscan Brothers would go to build whenever there was a new church to be built and two of them were remembered in particular and they are Brothers Dositheus and Juniper whose nickname was “Mkhobokhobo” (the tall one).<sup>125</sup> Dositheus was remembered by old Mrs. Mafunda who is the late catechist’s wife in Bizana.<sup>126</sup> She pointed out that Dositheus was popularly known as “Dusudusu”, which I thought is a kind of play in words and also based on the sound of his name. Mafunda mentioned that Dositheus was a carpenter, and that he was involved in the building of the hospital in Bizana.<sup>127</sup> He was interned, together with some of the Bavarian Friars, in 1940, and went back to Kokstad in December 1945. He is described as having been “a great man of prayer and obedience, always kind, gentle and full of Franciscan joy.”<sup>128</sup> He died suddenly, at the Franciscan house in Durban, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 1962.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Lucas Purstinger’s letter, written in Assisi Convent, to the Bavarian Minister Provincial, 19 September 1932.

<sup>122</sup> Booklet for the “Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers”, Appointments in the Prefecture, 1935; Personal file, Dositheus Melchior Buehler.

<sup>123</sup> Personal file, Dositheus Melchior Buehler.

<sup>124</sup> Necrology of Franciscans in South Africa, 8 September 1962; *The Southern Cross* – Church of the Holy Spirit, Flagstaff, in the Holy Cross Archives, South African Province.

<sup>125</sup> Interview of Luciana Bhala, Sophia Macandlovu Mbhele, Getrude Candlovu and Agatha Nomvete, eDutyini, 10 October 2010.

<sup>126</sup> Interview of Laurentia Mafunda, Mount Frere, 22 March 2011.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Necrology of Franciscans in South Africa, 8 September 1962.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.; Personal file, Dositheus Melchior Buehler.

## Maximillian Schlereth

Maximillian Schlereth was born on 2 January 1896, in Affalbrach, (diocese of Rottenburg), Germany.<sup>130</sup> He joined the Franciscans, of the Bavarian Province, on 8 May 1924.<sup>131</sup> He was appointed to Maria Telgte Mission, in Kokstad diocese, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July 1935.<sup>132</sup> Max – as he was known – took up residence in Maria Telgte on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1935,<sup>133</sup> and was then arrested by the police on 18 July 1940 when he was interned in Andalusia, Pretoria, and Kimberley and Johannesburg, to return to Maria Telgte on 23 December 1945.<sup>134</sup> He continued his ministry there until the end of March 1951 when he left for his home leave in Germany, after twenty six years in South Africa.<sup>135</sup>

Schlereth was a man of many talents which he used so well for the people in the area where he ministered.<sup>136</sup> Travelling on horse-back he went around in the spirit of his spiritual father, St. Francis of Assisi, as an itinerant Friar – he moved from his base in Maria Telgte to places like Mzongwana, Makhoba and Ndawana. He laboured hard for his African people in these places, having mastered the Zulu language and popular with them.<sup>137</sup> He would often go on his journeys until nightfall and would have no qualms about stopping at a house in a village, asking for a place to stay, for food and fodder for his horse.<sup>138</sup> Francis of Assisi in his rule exhorts his followers not to be ashamed of begging when they are in need.<sup>139</sup> Again, Max always travelled in his Franciscan habit (robe). He was a hard worker, both pastorally and physically, applying his talents. Parish

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<sup>130</sup> Personal file, Maximillian Augustin Schlereth.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Personal file; Booklet on the “Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers”, Appointments in the Prefecture, 1935; J. Kerr, “Franciscan Presence in Maria Telgte”, (Matatiele, 2009) (also interviewed on 22 February 2010); Necrology of Franciscans in South Africa, 29 September 1952.

<sup>133</sup> Kerr, “Franciscan Presence”..

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.; Personal file.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.; Necrology of Franciscans in South Africa, 29 September 1952.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.; Kerr, “Franciscan Presence”.

<sup>137</sup> Necrology of Franciscans in South Africa, 29 September 1952.

<sup>138</sup> Kerr, “Franciscan Presence”.

<sup>139</sup> Rule of 1223, chapter 6: “As pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them go seeking alms with confidence, and they should not be ashamed because, for our sakes, the Lord made Himself poor in this world.” *Rule of St. Francis of Assisi, 1223*, Early Documents vol.1, (New York 1999).

records testify to this fact, baptisms, confirmations and marriages are in large numbers during his time in Maria Telgte.<sup>140</sup> As for his other talents and qualifications, he was a blacksmith, trained in Germany. White farmers in the area came to him and he would repair their ox-wagons, wheels, ploughs, yokes and so on. During these hours of work he would be in the forge, still wearing his Franciscan habit and sweating there. Another talent of his, not quite unconnected to the above, was being a farmer and his fields would produce a variety of crops: maize, beans, potatoes, wheat, turnips, apples, pears, plums and grapes. Even some wine would be produced from the grapes by the Sisters at the Mission.<sup>141</sup>

Once he started with some task, he would go for it at full strength, and would not be stopped by anyone or anything and this is probably part of his German personality. And for this, the African people nick-named him “*Indlovu ayiphenduki*” (An elephant that never turns back).<sup>142</sup> He died while on home leave, in Germany, on 29 September 1952.

As indicated at the beginning of this section, I found Max to be an example *par excellence* of the Franciscan Friars who applied themselves to the service of the people. All were acceptable to him no matter what their cultural or racial background and so he touched the lives of many people. Dischl clearly paid tribute to Max, highlighting the popularity that he enjoyed by using phrases like the following: “with genuine care and love he devoted himself to the work of the African people...<sup>143</sup>; .he knew each African by his name; he died from a broken heart – longing for that peaceful Maria Telgte and the kind, trusting people”.<sup>144</sup> The other Franciscan pioneers, in their various ways, were the same.

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<sup>140</sup> Kerr, “Franciscan presence”

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid. Dischl’s version of this is slightly different, he writes that Max was nicknamed “*Indlovu ayiphenduli*” (the elephant who would not answer back), *Transkei for Christ*, p. 259-260. I would raise the following points in this regard, a) either the people called him variantly, using either of these two versions, or b) the missionaries who recorded the name misunderstood the people..., or c) both of the above points. I would tend to think that the first version – “*Indlovu ayiphenduki*” – is more accurate, thinking of the nature of an elephant. At the same time, that does not necessarily exclude the second version (“*Indlovu ayiphenduli*”).

<sup>143</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 259.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

In concluding this chapter, I would like to underline two points which, I believe, should serve as a background to the life and work of those pioneering missionaries. The first point to be borne in mind in this regard is that we have to view the mission of these Friars in the light of a wider context, the establishing of missions in South Africa at the time. Brain refers to this kind of situation when she writes in her history of the Roman Catholic Church, stating that in the 1930s there was a progress in the mission with the coming of more priests from Europe and the United States of America, and new churches were opened and built by the new arrivals, and this was both in urban and rural areas.<sup>145</sup> She goes on to state that priests trained catechists to look after the church communities in their absence, with the Holy Mass being celebrated about once a month.<sup>146</sup> As we will see later, this was very much the situation with the Franciscan mission in Kokstad diocese.

It would also be quite interesting, I think, to study the other groups who came out around the same time, to see common trends and developments in the missionary project. But that would be for another project and not for us here. An article by *Fides News Service* on the arrival of 45 Missionaries to work in Southern African territories gives us an idea of those missionaries who came out with the Franciscan Friars at that time. First of all, they were all from Germany and came in the same boat, in 1932. Secondly, they were Orders and religious institutes of various kinds: Oblates of St. Francis de Sales (going to Namaqualand, to join others who were already working in that area); Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (going to Lydenberg-Witbank diocese); Dominican Sisters (going to Kimberley, Queenstown, Oakford in Natal); and Franciscans. On the Franciscans, there were the Sisters and the Friars – different groups of Franciscan Sisters plus the Friars. The news article also identifies the kind of ministries the Bavarian Friars would be involved in.<sup>147</sup> So, it was a successful period of sending missionaries from Germany. However, this would not last for long, the advent of the Second World War would bring about undesirable changes, particularly for the Germans.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Brain, “Moving from the Margins”, p. 202.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Fides News Service clipping, in a letter written by the pioneer Franciscan Missionary Friars, in the boat to South Africa, 9 August 1932.

<sup>148</sup> As we will see later, the Second World War made it difficult for the Germans to send more missionaries to South Africa, or to any part of the world, as they had to look after their war-torn country.

The second point here is that those men and women came out to the missions as people of faith. It is true that they were from Europe and as part of the Western world they would have had their prejudices and attitudes on “poor Africa” and the “Third World” they were coming out to “rescue”. That is only human. At the same time, they were basically men and women of faith, and they brought their skills and professions in that spirit of faith and obedience to their superiors.<sup>149</sup> Bavaria, in fact, where not only the Friars came from but also two other groups in that boat,<sup>150</sup> is still considered as the seat of Catholicism in Germany.<sup>151</sup>

Those men and women came here with their background, they were Bavarians and Germans. The same elderly Friar who told the story of the Bavarian Friars’ departure from Mariannahill – as mentioned above - recounts how great they were, so brotherly, kind and generous; competent in their work like true Germans. He tells how the Bavarian Friars would be sitting with the rest of the Friars, of other nationalities, and especially with the Irish who came to help them after the Second World War. While they would be enjoying themselves with a drink and relaxing, sometimes after a hard day’s labour, one of the Bavarians would suddenly bang the table with his fist, stand up and exclaim, “Ja, that’s it now, it’s time to go (to bed or work)!” They were just competent, over-organized and regimental in character.<sup>152</sup> While this kind of attitude and disposition might have left

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<sup>149</sup> David Bosch would be most helpful in the understanding of the Western mentality here, both in the socio-political and the religious aspects. For example, in the socio-political dimension, he shows how through discoveries and science, particularly since the Age of Enlightenment, the West has gone out to other parts of the world with the attitude of knowing all and would help the Third World with development, only to find that the answers the West brings are not only limited but are also causing problems. Read chapters 9 and 10 of his book *Transforming Mission – Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. In the religious level, he shows how the Eastern and the Western understandings and emphases in theology differed, with the East highlighting in redemption the process in which the human nature was taken up into the divine through a “pedagogical” progression, while the West emphasized the destruction of sin and reparation of fallen humanity through a crisis experience, read chapter 7 of his book *Transforming Mission*.

<sup>150</sup> The Dominican Sisters of Schlehdorf were sending ten of their members to King William’s Town, diocese of Queenstown, and the Franciscan Sisters of Solanus who went to the Mariannahill diocese, Fides News Service clipping, in a letter of the Franciscan Friars, 9 August 1932.

<sup>151</sup> The current Pope Benedict XVI is a Bavarian.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with Egbert O’Dea, (Maria Telgte, 22 February 2010). Egbert O’Dea is one of the early Irish Franciscan Friars to take over from the Germans in Kokstad. I had a number of conversations with him in the course of the research.

a good impression in some of the peoples, it also did much harm to the indigenous culture and way of life. Indeed, there were those to whom the German hard-working, creative and productive element appealed. A local man, for example, who is a retired lawyer and who knew those pioneer Franciscan missionaries quite well argued that the Germans were so much of hard working people that when they left a place it simply collapsed.<sup>153</sup> According to him, the Germans were industrious missionaries and the Irish were the opposite: liked to sit down and read newspapers, enjoying a relaxed way of life and taking a siesta.<sup>154</sup> As John Allen, in his biography of Joseph Ratzinger – Pope Benedict XVI – puts it, “Bavarians are a tough lot”, and he partly attributes this to the very cold weather, the worst in middle Europe as they are up against the Alps.<sup>155</sup>

To conclude this chapter I would like to refer to another incident that would highlight this very point. Getrude Mngeyana told me about Lucas Purstinger who would put a sackcloth over those young women that had got married outside the church, in the African language(s) this is known as *ukugcagca*.<sup>156</sup> Such a young woman would be covered with that sackcloth in the course of the celebration of the entire Eucharist (Holy Mass) and would not receive communion until she got married in church. The sackcloth would be put over her beautiful clothes and, of course, the women would try to avoid this by all means. It was the penalty meted out to such women, their penance. It might be helpful to put this in context. First of all, such penances were not uncommon in the Catholic Church before the Second Vatican Council and they went back to the early times of history, especially in the medieval period. The German missionaries, probably more than any other nationality, continued with these in South Africa. For instance, in Mariannhill which, as pointed out in chapter one of this study, is considered by many as the “mother church” of the Catholic Church in South Africa, these kind of practices were done. I think that this is one of the areas in which the missionaries could have done better research and

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<sup>153</sup> Interview of Mr. Nkalweni, Aliwal North, 1 April 2011. Mr. Nkalweni – who was frank in his preference of the German missionaries - belonged to the Ntabankulu parish but due to his joining studies for the priesthood, often spent his holidays in Mount Ayliff during Canisius Bertsch’s time there. Went to school in Mount Ayliff and later joined priesthood, (1957-65); left the priesthood before ordination. He proudly considers himself a product of the German hard-working missionaries.

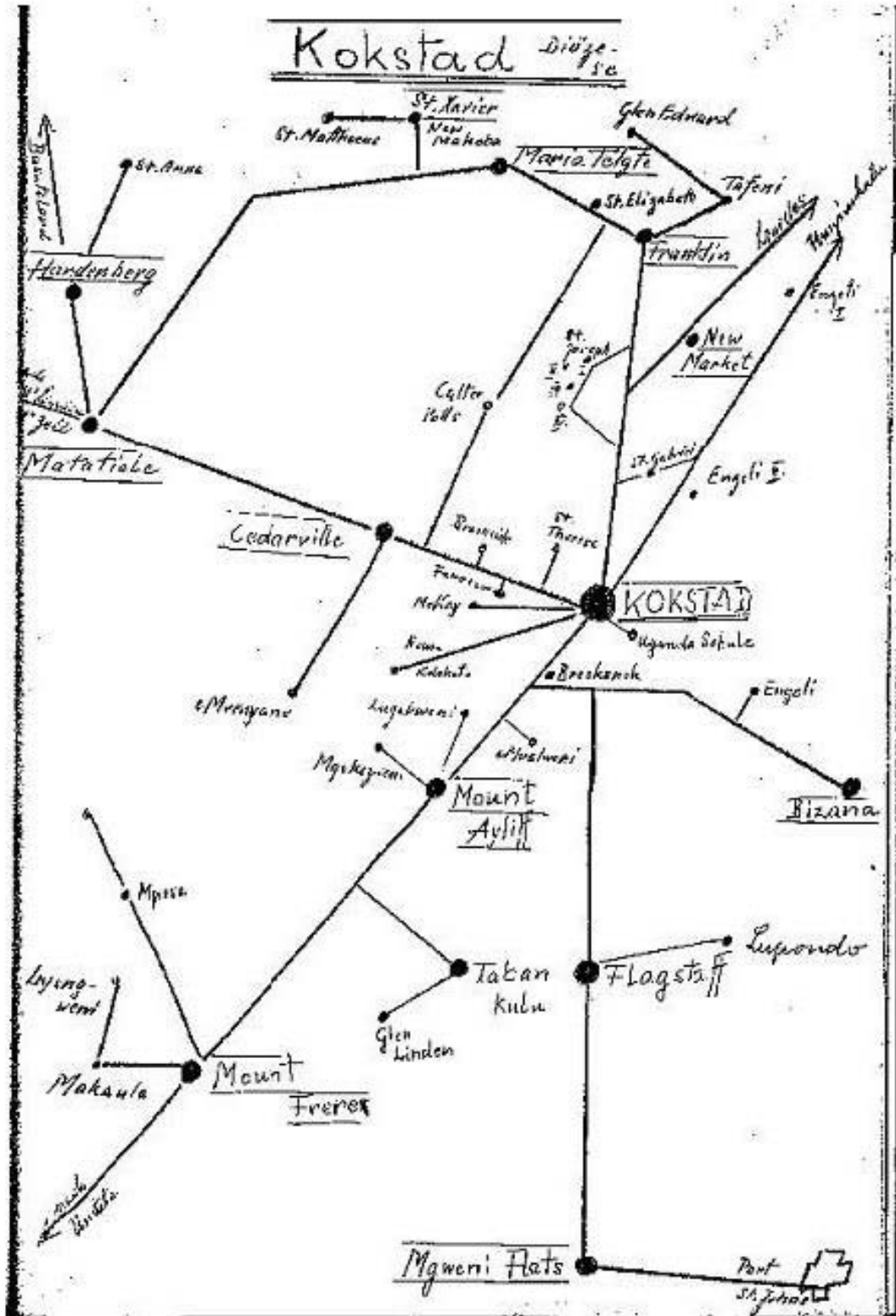
<sup>154</sup> Interview of Mr. Nkalweni, 1 April 2011.

<sup>155</sup> J.L. Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI, a biography of Joseph Ratzinger*, (London, 2000), p. 1.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with Getrude Mngeyana, in Flagstaff, 26 July 2010.

enculturation (indigenization) instead of imposing western traditions, and this refers to both the customary way of marriage and the kind of penances given.

**Map 4:**  
**The Kokstad Diocese in 1940s by Lukas Purstinger OFM**



## **PART III: A VISION NOT ACTUALIZED – A MISSED OPPORTUNITY?**

### **Chapter 4 Realization of the Franciscan Dream: socio-political context (Mpondoland)**

The following two chapters go hand in hand, they should be seen as two sides of the same coin. In these chapters I will discuss the realization of the Franciscan dream, the actualization of the vision of Bishop Fleischer which was embraced by the Franciscans of Bavaria, in the Franciscan Province of Munich and who then sent some of their members out to South Africa in 1932. In the first of the two chapters we take a close look at the socio-political context in which that Franciscan dream was implemented. And there is no doubt about the importance of such a study, for a context will provide an explanation and a background of what they found and why the Franciscans acted the way they did. In the next chapter we will then go into the dream itself, the vision, and show how it was actualized, particularly in Mpondoland.

#### **4.1. Formation and division of the amaMpondo kingdom**

Before going into the actual life and ministry of the Franciscans among the amaMpondo people I would like to take a close look at the context in which they lived and worked. What kind of Mpondoland did they find themselves in, what were the agro-ecological conditions of Mpondoland and the socio-political situation of the area that time?

#### **Physical and agro-ecological conditions**

In chapter two of her research - under the theme: Agro-ecology, History and Politics – Janet Kalis studies the physical and agro-ecological conditions of Mpondoland.<sup>1</sup> She portrays the ruggedness of the area, particularly the coastal part that is marked by ravines and cliffs, with the vast indigenous forests that stretch over distances along the Indian

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<sup>1</sup> Kalis, “research”, p.1.

Ocean. She exclaims, “This part of the wild coast is indeed wild and even those parts of the country which are habitable present a landscape of numerous hills (with an altitude of 500 m and less) divided from one another by deep valleys.” As for the fertility of the land, she points out that the climate is quite balanced, with mild winters – 16-18 degrees – and warm summers of 20-24 degrees. The vegetation is classified as “coastal tropical forest”. There is an average rainfall of more than 1000mm per annum but – just like the rest of Southern Africa - this is not always reliable, droughts are not an unusual phenomenon.<sup>2</sup>

### **Economic situation**

The amaMpondo people are part of the group of the Nguni-speaking groups who moved southward from North-east Africa, down to Natal and then further down the eastern part of the coastal region in search of grazing pastures.<sup>3</sup> This was in the 1500s. Clive Dennison in his book, *A History of the Wild Coast*, referring to archaeological evidence, claimed that the Nguni peoples arrived in southern Africa between A.D. 1100 and A.D. 1300 and that they had originated from the “interlocustrine area, between the Great Lakes of Africa.”<sup>4</sup> And, then, after they had settled in their territory, they were affected by the Mfeqane turmoil caused by the times of Shaka’s reign in KwaZulu, in the 1820s.<sup>5</sup> The amaMpondo have, therefore, been pastoral-agricultural people, with livestock and fields of crops which were mainly sorghum at first and later – after encounters with settlers of European origin - was replaced by maize.<sup>6</sup> Those living along the coast also added

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 3; D. Hammond-Tooke, “Tribal cohesion and the incorporative process in the Transkei, South Africa”, in R. Cohen and J. Middleton (eds.), *From tribe to Nation in Africa: studies in incorporation process*, (Scranton, Pa, 1970), pp. 219-220.

<sup>4</sup> Clive Dennison, *A History of the Wild Coast*, (Ashburton, 2010), pp. 5-7. This is despite the Comaroff’s reference to Hall who claimed that there was no longer any consensus regarding the peopling of the Bantu groups of the subcontinent, on their dispersal or “spread”. Read J. Comaroff and J.L. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution – Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, Vol. 1, (Chicago 1991), p. 40. Note that the Comaroffs wrote their book before findings of the two researchers quoted in this section of our study, i.e. Janet Kalis and Clive Dennison.

<sup>5</sup> Kalis, “research”, p.5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p 2. As we shall see later, according to Beinart, after 1880 maize took over as an item of trading and it was exported to Port St. John’s, East London, Durban and Port Elizabeth and later even to Pietermaritzburg (Read W. Beinart, *The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930*, (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 27-28).

fishing to this list of means of sustenance. There was also the hunting of wild animals by men and boys. And, finally, with the modern development that came with urbanization the amaMpondo also moved into migrant labour, especially as this was forced by the apartheid government as part of “separate development” of the homeland system under the Nationalist government.<sup>7</sup> How could one forget the informal economy of a number of homesteads in the form of dagga cultivation?<sup>8</sup> Kalis, though, points out that “a great deal of staple foods are produced domestically.”<sup>9</sup>

William Beinart, in his well-researched book - *The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930* – provided a more detailed account of the above points made by Kalis and also looked at them from a political-economic perspective. He claimed that after the disruption and confusion created by Shaka’s iMfecane (1828) Faku soon managed to reconstruct his followers into a powerful and formidable military force.<sup>10</sup> Beinart continued to state that having lost cattle in the iMfecane, amaMpondo intensified their raiding, hunting and agricultural activities; trading both hunted products and grain that was surplus. In fact, “Faku country was described as the granary of the eastern parts of Caffreland.”<sup>11</sup> And soon they re-accumulated a significant number of cattle. With settlements organized around him, Faku gained more power and control over the people: the military force, hunting and working force (agricultural), and trading – it was a centralized system just like other chiefdoms around southern Africa, for example, the Basotho, the Swati and the Ndebele, which were also affected by the iMfecane.<sup>12</sup>

Ownership and control of cattle was also closely linked with access to wives; cattle were main part of the bridewealth and the more royal a man was, the more cattle he would demand for his daughter. Closely related to this, chiefdoms would be incorporated into the Mpondo kingdom through giving of their daughters to the king. While commoners would get ten cattle for their daughters, royal men would obtain between twenty and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. pp. 2-3.

<sup>8</sup> Kalis, “research”, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Beinart, *Political Economy*, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

thirty cattle.<sup>13</sup> Mqikela took his wife from Sarhili of the Gcaleka and the people paid with their cattle for her. The Mpondo system of marriage is exogamous, unlike the Tswana-Sotho who tend to be endogenous; the Swati also seemingly changed from exogamous to endogenous which is for control of cattle (kept within the clan).<sup>14</sup> Cattle were also used as payment in court cases.<sup>15</sup>

The pattern of settlement was predominantly patrilocal, with the woman moving to the man's place at marriage and the children would remain there unless the marriage broke and cattle reclaimed. A man could take more than one wife and each of them had her rondavel, these being ranked according to status, something that was practised both among the commoners and the royal families. This played a role in the question of property ownership and succession. Women could not own property except for personal and household equipment; they were certainly excluded from control over cattle.<sup>16</sup> This is reiterated by Clive Dennison in the context of arguing on the arrival of the Nguni's in Southern Africa and on their distinctive characteristics from other peoples.<sup>17</sup>

As for itinerant colonial traders, Beinart argued that they came into Mpondoland already in the 1820s and 1830s, that was after the abolishing of the Cape policy of non-interaction with African chiefdoms.<sup>18</sup> These traders were coming mainly for exchange of beads and cattle for ivory.<sup>19</sup> The ivory trade fell off in the mid 1830s and the Mpondo people had little to offer to the colonial markets, only wagons passing by between Cape and Natal, and also ships visiting from time to time the Mzimvubu River.<sup>20</sup> In the 1840s Port St. John's was established for Natal merchants on the Mzimvubu River and trade became regular. Much of the business was trading timber and supplying mission stations after missionaries had come to Western Mpondoland in 1830 and then moved on to eQawukeni, at Palmerton. However, the port never really grew in a significant way as ox

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Dennison, *A History*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Beinart, *Political Economy*, p. 22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

wagons were the principal means of transport between Mpondoland and Natal, especially when Natal needed the good cattle of Mpondoland during the cattle disease of the 1850s. But the cattle of Mpondoland were also killed by the rinderpest in 1897.<sup>21</sup> Trade between Natal and Mpondoland was mainly in cattle and hides. Traders needed to be on the spot in order to compete successfully and as a result between 1860 and 1880 about fifty stations were built between Mpondoland and Natal to serve that purpose. Some of them ended up there permanently.<sup>22</sup>

Items of trade and bartering included blankets, cotton, beads, metal products, knives, firearms, agricultural implements and horses. The amaMpondo previously had great numbers of military forces but pressure came on them from surrounding chiefdoms which were using horses for battles and so they too changed so that horses became a demand.<sup>23</sup> Imported hoes and picks were soon used in exchanges for hides rather than for beasts and they then replaced wooden implements that had been used up till then.<sup>24</sup> Ploughs were introduced in the 1870s and an estimated one thousand of them were in use in 1879. Ox wagons were then introduced in later decades and they served as means of transport. But these were limited to certain chiefs and wealthier people; in general sledges were commonly used and relieved loads on women who were carrying the burden for most of the time on their heads.<sup>25</sup>

Droughts experienced in Mpondoland in 1862 and 1863, and again in 1877, led to faster introduction of new and better technological methods of working the land as the soil was too hard for ploughing by hand.<sup>26</sup> The introduction of firearms led to the extinction of all but small game in the larger forests.<sup>27</sup> Border disputes were a result of land shortage as the amaMpondo were restricted in land for grazing and cultivating due to the presence of new neighbouring chiefdoms, like the amaBhaca, and the Griqua, in the 1870s.<sup>28</sup> As a

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp. 24, 25.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 26.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 26, 27.

result of this shortage of grazing pasturage small stock, sheep and goats, were introduced as they were not so much in need of grass as the cattle would do. In the late 1870s and early 1880s woollen sheep were brought in large numbers into Mpondoland but these were only adaptable to inland upper regions where there was less dampness than in the coastal parts.<sup>29</sup> The change in products in Mpondoland was becoming more entrenched and irreversible as the new implements were also becoming indispensable for daily practical use. So, the amaMpondo had to produce certain items for the external market in order for them to obtain particular implements that they could not produce for themselves.<sup>30</sup> Initially, pastoral products were the main items for export: cattle, sheep, hides, and so on. After 1880, however, maize took over and it was sent to Port St. John's, Durban, East London and Port Elizabeth. By late 1880s maize was going to Pietermaritzburg. Tobacco, which was always part of coastal Mpondoland and used for exchange within the area, began to be exported to traders from the 1870s onward.<sup>31</sup> Wool was also sold to traders, especially in Western Mpondoland. From early 1880s cash was used between traders and producers.<sup>32</sup> These items of trade had impact on social relations. For example, firearms affected the question of the control of paramount chiefs over sub-chiefdoms and also the succession disputes.<sup>33</sup>

What about labour migrancy in Mpondoland? The amaMpondo have not always been into migrant labour; that started much later, later than other African chiefdoms. For example, the Kimberley discovery of diamonds attracted many African peoples who flocked there for work but that was not the case with the amaMpondo, only a few did go.<sup>34</sup> Although some migrant workers went to Natal in the 1890s, especially from Bizana, most went to the Rand and this was due to the natural disasters of drought and locust plagues experienced there after the annexation of 1894.<sup>35</sup> Other chiefdoms had their people working in the mines for over fifty years already. "The crux of Mpondo economic

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 28, 29.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 54, 55.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

independence, as has been illustrated, was their cattle.”<sup>36</sup> There was no need for them to go to Kimberley for work as they could purchase other commodities with their own cattle. When migrancy began in Mpondoland it took a peculiar form. Whereas most of the other peoples in Southern Africa, especially in what is today known as the Eastern Cape – amaMfengu, abaThembu, amaGcaleka, and others – did not take contract agents, the amaMpondo, in 1908, preferred that way.<sup>37</sup> That involved making a contract with an agent in which case one would work for a payment not by cash but by a beast, a head of cattle, depending on the period of time of work under the employer. The head of cattle would be given to the family, generally it would be in advance. It was easier to make such arrangement through an agent.<sup>38</sup> The origins of such a system are not clear. While stocks were quite often used as payment for work on farms the idea of such a system on migrant workers organized in large scales is unknown, it is unique to Natal and Transkeian Territories.<sup>39</sup> Labour recruitment was largely in the hands of the mining industry itself or of specialist labour contractors; the Government Labour Agent did very little in this regard. Local agents were usually used by the employers to recruit workers.<sup>40</sup>

In Mpondoland most of the agents were established traders and they based themselves in the magisterial towns. These in turn employed runners who literally ran around to families attracting men to the labour and the runners received commission for each labourer they recruited and brought to the agent.<sup>41</sup> The traders were in the best position for this as they organized supply of cattle which they grazed on their own land. Prospective migrants had to go to the trading station to get their head of cattle if they wanted “an advance”.<sup>42</sup> So, this system made great demands of cattle in Mpondoland and cattle even had to be obtained outside Mpondoland.<sup>43</sup> If a migrant opted for cash payment, he would get it directly from the trader who would be refunded by the migrant company or employer. Naturally, there were difficulties and risks associated with this

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 55, 56.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 56, 57.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 56, 57.

whole system. For example, cattle could die and the trader would refuse to replace them; a migrant could work for an unstipulated amount of money, open to being cheated, and so on.<sup>44</sup> In 1902, after the South African War (Anglo-Boer War), the Gold Mines (Witwatersrand) needed workers to produce gold again. As many more migrant labourers were recruited from Mpondoland the advance system was abused. Migrants of up to 1560 were recorded in 1905 and in spite of the police and the pass-law system at work that time many of the migrants managed to escape and went back home, some with forged passes, after having already received their cattle.<sup>45</sup> After some disputes within the system, it was finally brought to an end in 1910 and 1911 by the Native Labour Regulation Act of the Union Parliament.<sup>46</sup> In his fifth chapter of *The Political Economy of Mpondoland 1860-1930* Beinart takes a close look at another quite interesting phenomenon which clearly characterized the situation of the region. Under the subheading of “Rural differentiation, alliance and conflict 1910-1930”, he shows how modernization affected Mpondoland, with the educated and rich families escaping the lot of migrant labour while the poorer families had little option in that regard. Moreover, education was acquired in mission schools, but the missionaries did not really make much progress in converting people to their particular religion (Christianity).

Taking a closer look at this phenomenon of Beinart’s study, the following points emerge. First of all, he points out that the most fundamental change in the rural economy of Mpondoland between 1910 and 1930 was the increased dependence of many families on wage labour.<sup>47</sup> While most of the families retained their rural homesteads and had access to land the predominant form of proletarianisation was migrancy.<sup>48</sup> However, the incorporation of Mpondoland into the larger capitalist system, while it modified the life of the people in general, did not bring about change in pre-colonial forms of political authority. It did not bring about special kind of wealthy peasants with it, i.e. colonization and pre-colonial forms of rank and authority, which brought about certain wealth, were

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 58, 59.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 59, 60.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

not changed; they were just translated into a new context.<sup>49</sup> This does not suggest that colonization did not affect social relationships. “The process of differentiation...largely by means of different life histories...men who were born and brought up in the early decades of the twentieth century.”<sup>50</sup>

While the tendency in Mpondoland was for men in general to go to the mines and industries in South Africa for work, there were those men who escaped this lot. These were men who were born into certain ranks that made them have access to land and other resources, like finances, tax or dues. Others, again, were from wealthy families and had inherited resources. They were “differentiated” from the rest of the population. The patterns of differentiation were to some extent becoming solidified by the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>51</sup>

Education was only available at the mission institutions, which were responsible for organizing, but not for funding anymore, of schools. And it was usually accompanied by the teaching of Christian doctrine.<sup>52</sup> Mission activity in Mpondoland goes back to the 1830s and the origin of the group of men occupying salaried positions there must be attributed to the small Christian community in Mpondoland.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, only a few managed to obtain that status. Despite the Christian missionaries’ efforts it was just a minority who were attracted to Christianity. Many of those who settled at the main Methodist stations of Buntingville, Palmerton and eMfundisweni were immigrants from the Cape or Natal.<sup>54</sup> In the days leading up to the annexation the missionaries were associated with colonialists and this had a negative setback to their work. Methodists were a dominant group but soon the Anglicans established themselves in places like Ntlaza, St. Barnabas hospital, in Western Mpondoland (near Libode), St. Andrews, in Lusikisiki, and Holy Cross Mission hospital, in Flagstaff. Other denominations

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

followed.<sup>55</sup> As late as 1930s less than 5% of the population was Christian and amongst them were a few leading chiefs and notably Victor Poto Ndamase. In fact, even this small number of Christians consisted mainly of immigrants from outside Mpondoland, which was a trend from late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. This was due to shortage of land.<sup>56</sup>

The amaMfengu were part of this movement. In the 1860s they had gone from the Eastern Cape to Fingoland, some had moved more than once and from the 1870s were moving to Mpondoland which was underpopulated.<sup>57</sup> In the areas of South Africa that had been more thoroughly colonized and where Christianity had been more aggressively introduced and successful there were some men who moved to Mpondoland. These usually had some literacy too. Christians were often, but not always, monogamous and so their families were smaller than those of Mpondoland.<sup>58</sup> These Christians were more readily prepared to accept the new agricultural methods and crops that were imported than the Mpondo in general and so were among the largest producers of crop (and export too). With the difficulties encountered in crop production – drought, East Coast fever, rinderpest, and so on – these Christian families sent their children to school in preparation for employment and salaries.<sup>59</sup> In this way their children escaped migrant labour.<sup>60</sup>

Among some of the well-known families – Christian or associated with Christianity – were the Cingo, W.D. Cingo was principal of eMfundisweni, descended from an important chiefly lineage in Lusikisiki and his family was based in eMfundisweni.<sup>61</sup> On the question of migrancy and the rural poor, not all the educated men could find jobs in Mpondoland in spite of the limited number of such men in the area. So, many were forced to migrate to bigger cities like Durban and Cape Town.<sup>62</sup> By 1936, out of a total of 30 000 migrant workers from Mpondoland, about 18 000 or 19 000 of them were in the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., pp. 139, 140.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

Rand mines.<sup>63</sup> Between 5000 and 7000 were in Natal Sugar estates, and the rest went to do farm work in cities or towns. The educated men obviously had better chances of finding jobs in towns and also, with literacy and English, had more options. So, they were better off in many ways than the ordinary mine worker who had only to go to the compound.<sup>64</sup>

At the same time, mine workers had their own benefits and advantages. The Native Recruiting Corporation (NRC) helped root out hazards associated with mine workers travelling from the mines back to their rural homes as they were victims of gangs. In the 1930s, improvements were also introduced to their working contracts, including transport from their nearest towns to the mines (Gauteng).<sup>65</sup> Finally, they had the advantage of both salary and their cultivated land at home.<sup>66</sup> Frank Brownlee made the same observation about the amaXesibe of Mount Ayliff, adding a description of their beautiful, green and rich land, claiming that: it is the finest part of South Africa, with green grass, wood and water.<sup>67</sup> Many Mpondo men also went to work in the Sugar plantations which had the advantage of providing work above rather than underground. These were mainly from the coastal towns of Lusikisiki, Flagstaff, Bizana and Port St. John's which was nearer to Natal.<sup>68</sup> Another advantage of the Sugar cane fields was that the age restriction of the mines was wider – mines could take men only above eighteen years upward; Sugar cane fields could take them from the age of sixteen upward. There is also evidence that it was men from poorer families who went to Natal Sugar cane fields; men from families that were indebted to traders, with fewer labour market options.<sup>69</sup>

Although it was above ground there were also hardships to be endured in the Sugar cane fields, life was not that easy there either. A story of a certain Mgeyana young man showed how they were beaten up by the Indian man in charge of them in the fields – that

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 144.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. pp. 144, 145.

<sup>67</sup> Frank Brownlee, *Cattle Thief* (first published as *Ntsukumbini*, Johannesburg 1929), p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Beinart, *Political Economy*, p. 146.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., pp. 146, 147.

was in 1921.<sup>70</sup> In the 1920s the cash income from employment was increasingly becoming an important factor in differentiating rural families.<sup>71</sup> As we saw earlier on, the payment in advance – either by a head of cattle or by cash – was brought to an end by the Union’s Act of Parliament in 1911. The recruitment system of men to the mines and the Sugar cane fields, however, continued. Recruitment was done through companies like TEBA<sup>72</sup> and in which runners were also involved. While in the recruitment there was no payment in advance there were still some difficulties associated with it.

Sakhephi Rogers Sihlobo of Lusikisiki, who was also recruited as a young man, told of how the system operated. A certain man – Mr Nompongwana – was a runner and, in 1964, collected young men among whom was Sakhephi Rogers Sihlobo. When he arrived at the point of collection Sakhephi was told that he was still too young (he was 12 years old that time) and had to wait for the following year. But the following year, 1965, his parents preferred to send him to school rather than join the mine workers.<sup>73</sup> Sihlobo said that Nompongwana just collected young men so that he would get as much money as possible and, indeed, he made money because he not only built himself a beautiful house from his job but also got quite wealthy with a number of cattle. The runner was paid a certain amount of money for each recruit he brought.<sup>74</sup> Depending on the demand for recruits in each mine or company, the amount of money paid for each recruit could be quite good. Sihlobo told how the runners like Nompongwana would sometimes recruit men that would be turned back when arriving in Gauteng, at the mines, as they were not fit for the job. Sometimes the company employing them would end up paying the runners for his work and tell them that some of the men recruited should come to work only the following year, as it happened with himself (and he ended up not going at all). The recruited men in Gauteng (mines) would be weighed and those under-weight (fifty kg)

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 147, 148.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>72</sup> TEBA was one of the, if not the, most prominent companies in the recruitment programme of Southern Africa. Men were recruited and collected mainly from their rural centres, like trading stores, and towns to the industrial hubs of Gauteng and Durban where they would be employed in the mines or Sugar Cane plantations.

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Sakhephi Rogers Sihlobo, Franciscan Friar (OFM), (Grahamstown, 28 May 2012).

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

would not be accepted. Secondly, they were also tested with TB (tuberculosis) which was another condition for acceptance or refusal to be employed.<sup>75</sup>

A final point I would like to refer to, which is observed by Beinart and which is also quite relevant to our Franciscan Friars in Mpondoland as we will see later in this study, is that of “patterns of alliance and conflict”. Beinart began by noting that while in most of the Cape Colony areas there were tensions between, on the one hand, those who had accepted the missionaries’ message and became Christians, taking upon themselves Christianity with its modern way of life and often with colonial elements and, on the other hand, those who clung to their traditional ways of life. Such were the amaMfengu in Qumbu, and other parts of South Africa, who clung to their Christian lifestyle and other Xhosa Christian communities who absorbed elements of colonial life.<sup>76</sup> The amaMpondo did not really undergo such experience of conflict and that was due to the fact that missionaries there were not seen as a threat to the political authorities (chiefs and others).<sup>77</sup> In fact, missionaries played a role that was valued by chiefs. New immigrants who came to settle as Christians in Mpondoland were often dependent on the chiefs and headmen for land and cattle.<sup>78</sup> In late nineteenth century and early twentieth century up to the time of Poto Ndamase in Western Mpondoland – Poto ruled from 1918 to 1972 – and in Eastern Mpondoland educated immigrants were welcomed by the paramounts for the skills they could offer. These chiefs had supported garden, education and health social projects and it was these educated immigrants and Christians who were implementing such schemes. Marelane explicitly told the people that he would support immigrants who brought such skills, educational or religious.<sup>79</sup> Though there might have been pressure from the state for promotion of such projects I still think that it was significant that the local traditional authorities were showing interest.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Also read O’Connell’s study of the amaXesibe in which he referred to this phenomenon among the amaXesibe people and also placed it in a broader context of the Xhosa-speaking groups of South Africa. [M.C. O’Connell, “Xesibe Reds, Rascals, and Gentlemen at home and at work”, in P. Mayer (ed.), *Black Villagers in an Industrial Society: Anthropological Perspectives on Labour Migration in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1980), p. 257. ]

<sup>77</sup> Beinart, *Political Economy*, p. 152.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 153.

## Socio-political development of Mpondoland

Here I rely very much on the research done by Jeff Peires and Fred Hendricks, especially chapter fourteen of their latest book – *Rural resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts after Fifty years*.<sup>80</sup> I also employ Hendricks' article on "Tribalism, Chiefs and Apartheid: The Case of Poto's Pondoland".<sup>81</sup> I found their study quite well-researched, basing themselves on the archival material and oral interviews.<sup>82</sup>

First of all, in their study they deal with the interesting situation of the two areas of Mpondoland – Eastern and Western – which, while they were historically and culturally united, yet were politically diverse. Their research deals with the famous Mpondo rebellion which took place in Eastern Mpondoland, in the early 1960s,<sup>83</sup> while Western Mpondoland did not undergo such a revolt, or at least not to the same extent.<sup>84</sup> In the introduction of their chapter fourteen, they point out this kind of situation – the difference between the two Mpondolands - was due to various factors, the main one being the presence of stable leaders like Victor Poto who ruled Western Mpondoland for over fifty years and whose political policies were quite interesting, as he played a clever game of balancing between the white government and loyalty to his people. Again, Western Mpondoland had a history of established succession of rulers, whereas Eastern Mpondoland lacked both of these elements. At the same time, the two authors do warn of

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<sup>80</sup> Jeff Peires & Fred Hendricks, *Rural Resistance in South Africa: The Mpondo Revolts after fifty years*, in publication.

<sup>81</sup> F. Hendricks, "Tribalism, Chiefs and Apartheid: The Case of Poto's Pondoland", in *South African Sociological Review*, 5, no. 1 October 1992, pp. 58-82.

<sup>82</sup> Important primary sources like magistrate's comments on certain cases, Paramount Chief (Poto)'s speeches and the government's rulings or policies. Again, interviews are of various parties concerned, including Govan Mbeki who had just been unbanned by the National Party in early 1990s.

<sup>83</sup> Ben Turok maintains that the Nationalist government introduced Bantu Authorities into the area in 1957; that same year saw the people's resistance to this policy, with delegations sent to the authorities to express the people's dissatisfaction with this move. That was the beginning of the Revolt which finally led to the 1960, (March – the same month as the Sharpeville incident), attack on government agents as they were insisting on implementing government policies against the people's will and requests. Then the police and the army retaliated hard, with helicopters flying over the hundreds and thousands of people gathered for meeting at Ngquza Hill, Flagstaff - with a white flag signalling the peaceful nature of the meeting – and many were killed while even more were wounded. Read Turok's sixteen page article "Pondo Revolt", especially pp. 9 & 10. (Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown).

<sup>84</sup> Peires & Hendricks, *Rural Resistance*, p. 1.

the danger of overstretching this difference, pointing out that the rest of Mpondoland was quite against the imposition of the policies of repression, particularly under the apartheid government, it is just that in Western Mpondoland the resistance never got the chance of exploding in the way it did in the Eastern section of Mpondoland.<sup>85</sup>

Some history on Mpondoland would be of benefit here. King Faku is the one under whom the amaMpondo were established as a kingdom – one of the four kingdoms that existed, in the Eastern Cape, in pre-colonial times. The other three were the: Xhosa, Thembu and Mpondomise.<sup>86</sup> Faku ruled the amaMpondo for almost fifty years, from before 1820 till his death in 1867. Just like Shaka of the amaZulu, Faku absorbed some smaller chiefdoms – especially those on the run from Shaka’s Mfecane - and was equally astute in dealing with the white settlers or colonists.<sup>87</sup>

According to Queen Masobhuza Lombekiso Sigcawu of eQawukeni, the amaMpondo kingship started long before all others in Southern Africa, including that of amaZulu; according to her, it is only the amaSwati kingship that is older than the amaMpondo one.<sup>88</sup> She maintained that Faku merely extended the amaMpondo kingdom which goes back to Mpondo and Mpondomise, the twins who later established the two kingdoms that were named after them.<sup>89</sup> This point is reiterated by Beinart in the second chapter of his book *The Political Economy of Pondoland 1860-1930*.<sup>90</sup> Faku’s “personal power was greater than that of the chiefs to the south-west and by the 1840s he governed a people composed of fragments of many different tribes...held together and harmonized in a surprising manner by his influences”.<sup>91</sup>

The population has been variably estimated between 35000 and 50000. Faku was anxious of disturbances not by Zulu warriors, in 1840s, but by the newly-formed trekker state of

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Interview with Queen Masobhuza Lombekiso Sigcawu, eQawukeni Great Place, 16 April 2012.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. As we will see below, Cingo in his book *Ibali lamaMpondo*, (Mfundisweni, Lusikisiki, 1925) points to the two figures as the origins of the two tribes.

<sup>90</sup> Beinart, *Political Economy*, p. 9.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

Natal.<sup>92</sup> However, his authority was recognized by the Cape Colony government in 1844<sup>93</sup> and his chiefdom was expanded by other new tribal groups that joined him in search of grazing lands and who also moved in with their cattle. By the 1860s his people were about 100 000. Pastoralism became central again to his people.<sup>94</sup> In 1846, which was the height of Faku's reign, the Mpondo kingdom underwent a significant split. Faku's son of the Right-Hand House, Ndamase, defected and crossed the Mzimvubu River to establish his own kingdom.<sup>95</sup> He was about twenty years older than Faku's Great Son, Mqikela, and had fought in his father's wars since the first invasion by the amaZulu in 1824. This division was so severe that when the Cape Colony annexed Mpondoland in 1894 it was no longer one kingdom – although it still had the same culture and history it was politically divided. As Faku got older, the two sides of Mpondoland advanced in differences and there was more jealousy between Faku's direct adherents and Ndamase.<sup>96</sup> Ndamase then relocated to the western part, across the Mzimvubu River, a part that was already known to the amaMpondo as Faku himself had lived there for some time and where two branches of the royal family – the amaTshomane and the amaKhonjwayo – had already moved. The headquarters of the western part of Mpondoland became known as eNyandeni Great Place, from the famous event of crossing the Mzimvubu River on a bundle of sticks by Ndamase and his men.

eNyandeni is situated near Libode.<sup>97</sup> Eastern Mpondoland headquarters are eQawukeni, near Lusikisiki. Like his father, Ndamase extended his new kingdom by absorbing weaker chiefdoms,<sup>98</sup> more prominently the amaMpondomise kingdom which had grown weaker with time. However, he met with tough resistance from the amaKhonjwayo who constantly rejected his authority.<sup>99</sup> Ndamase refused to hand over the town of Port St.

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<sup>92</sup> Dennison, *A History*, pp. 36-39.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Beinart, *Political Economy*, p. 11.

<sup>95</sup> Peires and Hendricks, *Rural Resistance*, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> In "Tribalism, Chiefs", Fred Hendricks argues quite convincingly on the existence of chieftaincies in pre-colonial times.

<sup>99</sup> Peires and Hendricks, *Rural Resistance*, pp. 2-3; Up to this very day the amaKhonjwayo – to whom I belong – are recognized as a separate entity and do not really consider themselves as amaMpondo, something just like the Bavarians in Germany.

John's to the British Colony of the Cape – offered a prize twice between 1869 and 1874 – as they wanted it for their own control. However, his son, Nqwiliso ceded and handed it over to the Colony for a mere official recognition and a thousand pounds.<sup>100</sup> And after this event, the actual annexation of the two sections of Mpondoland, which took place in 1894, was only a matter of formality. The settlers were driven by land-hunger and all these led to the deepening of the separation between the two sections of Mpondoland.

Again, the colonials were employing the old tactic of divide and rule: placing Eastern Mpondoland under the Chief Magistrate of East Griqualand, in Kokstad, while Western Mpondoland was to be under the Chief Magistrate of East Transkei in Mthatha. Furthermore, Western Mpondoland adopted the Council System (Bunga) in 1911 and Eastern Mpondoland did so only later, in 1927, under duress.<sup>101</sup> The paramountcy was a colonial way of keeping the amaMpondo under control, they realized that a strong paramountcy “could be an invaluable asset in implementing state measures and entrenching colonial rule.”<sup>102</sup> Outside Mpondoland there was only one other paramountcy recognized by the colonial rule, that of the abaThembu: Dalindyebo. Naturally, there was a price to be paid for this position by the Paramount Chiefs, utter obedience to colonial power. The once proudly independent Mpondo paramountcy was reduced to a crouching institution.<sup>103</sup> Of the two Mpondo Paramountcies, Qawukeni was the greater, with four magisterial districts – Mbizana, Ntabankulu, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki – and had a total population of 245 550 in 1958. ENyandeni (Western Mpondoland) had only three districts – Libode, Ngqeleni and tiny Port St. John's – with a total population of 120 000 which was about half of eQawukeni. Western Mpondoland, however, had a far better political stability which was lacking in Eastern Mpondoland.

As already mentioned above, Victor Poto Ndamase gave Western Mpondoland the stability that it enjoyed, ruling from 1918 to 1972. In Eastern Mpondoland, King Sigcawu, who was Mqikela's son and successor, died at a relatively young age in

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<sup>100</sup> Peires & Hendricks, *Rural Resistance*, p. 3.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

1905.<sup>104</sup> He was followed by regency that was not so successful, until his son Marelane took over in 1909. But he too did not last as he was killed by pneumonia, in 1921. Then, another regency followed. Mandlonke, Marelane's son, who had ascended the throne to the great joy of the amaMpondo, shot himself, without a son of his own and his brothers – Nelson and Botha – contested the throne, each with his own supporters. Nelson had the backing of the inner circle, the traditional group, of his father and Botha was the one favoured by the elite, including Poto and the whites, and he won the case.<sup>105</sup> Botha was installed in February 1939, in the presence of a visible government military-police force supporting him.

## **4.2. AmaKhonjwayo**

As has already been noted, the amaKhonjwayo were one of the two royal branches of the amaMpondo kingdom that had broken away before Ndamase's crossing of the Umzimvubu River where he established a rival kingdom to that of his father, Faku, founder of the amaMpondo kingdom. I think that the origin and development of this branch is crucial not only for the history of the amaMpondo nation as such but is also significant in the study of the dynamics of its development and growth, with all the strengths and pitfalls characterizing it. Indeed, I would like to suggest that this is a trend found in some other parts of the world too. For instance, the Bavarians in Germany, the Basques in Spain, the Eritreans in Ethiopia and, more recently, South Sudanese of the largest country of Africa – Sudan - plus others. In other words, the amaKhonjwayo got established in their own and obtained a status which would be similar to that of the Bavarians in Germany and perhaps the other splinter groups such as found in some other parts of the world, as indicated above. In this section of the research I rely very much on the information provided by Zidyokweni Gwadiso, an elder of the amaKhonjwayo.<sup>106</sup> On

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., pp. 4-5.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Zidyokweni Gwadiso, (Nothintila, Ngqeleni, 4 January 2012). I found it quite interesting that he was so accurate in his narration and explanation of history that although he has no formal education whatsoever – and he is not ashamed of that – yet he is clear and confident. For me, this shows the reality and power of oral tradition in the African people which, unfortunately, is slowly but surely declining with the new generation who are more into modern Western technology. On comparing Gwadiso's points to the written sources there was no inconsistency at all. For example, he

the origins of the amaKhonjwayo, Gwadiso traced them to Chithwayo – twin brother of Ndayini – whom he considered the father and founder of the same royal branch. He gave the genealogy of the amaKhonjwayo, from Chithwayo to the present, as follows:

Chithwayo was the father of Khonjwayo<sup>107</sup> (in eQawukeni)

Khonjwayo was the father of Ntsikinyana

Ntsikinyana was the father of Makhanda

Makhanda was the father of Nogemane<sup>108</sup>

Nogemane was the father of Gwadiso

Gwadiso was the father of Godloza

Godloza was the father of Ntenti

Ntenti was the father of Gobizithwana

Gobizithwana was the father of Dumisani.<sup>109</sup>

This genealogy is quite similar to the one provided at the inauguration of Dumisani Gwadiso, current King of the amaKhonjwayo, in Nkanunu Great Place, 13 December 2008.<sup>110</sup> The only difference is that in the latter are added two more names – Khiwa and Ngcekula – between Khonjwayo and Ntsikinyana. Another point to be mentioned in this regard is that “Gobizithwana” (second last name and father of Dumisani) was the popular name while his real name – used in the inauguration ceremony programme – was “Sandi” (and Ferguson).<sup>111</sup> Moreover, the inauguration ceremony programme placed the amaKhonjwayo genealogy within the longer one of the amaMpondo kingdom, stating

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referred to the *iinkumbi* (*locust plaque*) which occurred just around the Second World War, and that is also found in two or three letters of the pioneer Franciscan Friars and the Solanus Sisters. Read Severin Neumeier's letter and those of the Franciscan Sisters of Solanus letters already referred to. Those letters were written between 1934 and 1936, the years of the Second World War and during which Gwadiso claimed to have been a little boy of six. Again, his genealogy of the amaKhonjwayo is consistent with the one provided by D.W. Cingo of Eastern Mpondoland (*Ibali*).

<sup>107</sup> Interview (telephonic) with Sabatha Mbalekwa, (17 July 2012). In this interview I asked him a question that was raised by one of my professors as to whether Khonjwayo and Chithwayo were brothers or not. Mbalekwa told me that it was Soga's translation of Poto Ndamase's *Ibali* lamaMpondo which was misleading - and this has been followed by Monica Hunter – claiming that Chithwayo and Khonjwayo were brothers. Mbalekwa made it clear that Chithwayo was the father of Khonjwayo, as Gwadiso had also said. Mbalekwa continued to state that Poto put it clearly: Chithwayo gave birth to twins, Khonjwayo and Ndayini.

<sup>108</sup> Makhanda's grave is in Gomora; that of Nogemane is in Maqebvu.

<sup>109</sup> Dumisani Gwadiso is the current leader of the amaKhonjwayo, anointed formally as “King of the amaKhonjwayo”, on December 13<sup>th</sup> 2008 at Nkanunu the amaKhonjwayo Great Place; he is also ambassador of the South African government to the Ivory Coast.

<sup>110</sup> Inauguration Programme of King Dumisani Gwadiso, (Nkanunu, Ngqeleni, 13 December 2008)..

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

that the amaKhonjwayo derive their kingship from the amaMpondo kings, and the list, of kings, is as follows:<sup>112</sup>

Mbo

Gubhela

Khuboni

Mgebelezana

Dlozela

Sibiside

Njanye

**Mpondo (twin brother of Mpondomise who established his own kingdom: amaMpondomise).**

Sihula

Mthwa

Santsabe

Mkhondwane

Sukude

Hlambangobubende

Ziqelekazi

Hlamandana

Thobe

Msiza

Ncidise

Cabe (c. 1677)<sup>113</sup>

Gangatha

Bhala.

Then, the **amaKhonjwayo begin (with Cithwayo, as seen above).**<sup>114</sup>

According to Gwadiso, Chithwayo sent his son – Khonjwayo who was at his home in Qawukeni - to go create his own kingdom on the other side of the river, Umzimvubu.<sup>115</sup> He crossed the river with six other tribes, dependent on him – amaNtusi, amaGingqa, amaSukude, amaNcame, amaRhadebe, amaJola – and he led them across the river. He also told those groups that if they went with him, they would not be dependent on anyone else but would be autonomous. Again, when Faku's son Ndamase later had to leave his father's house, of eQawukeni Great Place, Faku advised him not to go to his brother-in-law, the leader of amaBhaca, and instead to go to his brother Makhanda, grandson of

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Crampton, *The Sunburnt Queen*, p. 47.

<sup>114</sup> Also read Cingo, *Ibali*, p. 2; Hazel Crampton's genealogy is also similar to these two above: *The Sunburnt Queen*, p. 47.

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Zidyokhweni Gwadiso, 4 January 2012.

Khonjwayo, on the other side of Umzimvubu.<sup>116</sup> Ndamase had been regent for his much younger brother Mqikela – who, as seen above, was about twenty years younger – and when Mqikela had reached maturity to take over as king, Ndamase was not willing and was, therefore, forced to flee. Before accepting him in his area Makhanda sent six men to Qawukeni in order to find out what exactly was happening with Ndamase.<sup>117</sup> However, Peires totally refuted the idea of Ndamase’s regency, pointing out that Faku was still alive when Ndamase crossed the Umzimvubu River and that Mqikela took over only after his father’s, Faku’s, death (in 1867), at which point he was a mature young man and, therefore, ready for the position.<sup>118</sup> Ndamase, then, obviously did settle in that area because Makhanda told Ndamase and Nogemane to push the amaMpondomise upward so that he (Ndamase) could get his own territory. According to Chris Gwadiso, Zidyokhweni’s son, they were to push up the amaMpondomise for land since Ndamase would be too close to Mqikela across the Umzimvubu River and the amaKhonjwayo on this side.<sup>119</sup> He would have been squeezed in-between.

Another interesting development in the history of the amaKhonjwayo was the role played by Nqwiliso, son of Ndamase. The whites had made an agreement with Gwadiso over the town of Ngqeleni: they would take it over. But then the whites demanded him to pay tax for it; he changed his mind on the agreement. The whites in the meantime had united forces with Nqwiliso and they sought to capture Gwadiso. He was defeated and imprisoned.<sup>120</sup> However, in fact, they had caught Mbalekwa who was Gwadiso’s younger brother, and not Gwadiso himself. The whites gave Nqwiliso land for compensation. They also promised to make him Paramount Chief if he were to kill Mhlontlo – the amaMpondomise king – which he did.<sup>121</sup> But, according to Peires the killing of Mhlontlo by Nqwiliso was not literal – he suggested that claim by Gwadiso should be understood to be a figurative manner of killing. That is to say, Nqwiliso stabbed Mhlontlo in the back, he betrayed him to the whites and for that he was, indeed, given recognition by the

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Interview with Jeff Peires, 3 July 2012.

<sup>119</sup> Interview with Chris Gwadiso, (Nothintila, Ngqeleni, 30 January 2012).

<sup>120</sup> Interview with Zidyokhweni Gwadiso, 4 January 2012.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

Colonial government.<sup>122</sup> So then, while Faku was Paramount Chief of eQawukeni Nqwiliso was Paramount Chief of eNyandeni. The amaKhonjwayo had huge territory going up as far as the Tsitsa River in the north and as far as the Mthatha mouth sea in the south. Nqwiliso, then, joined the whites against the amaKhonjwayo and that was on three main occasions. First, in the battle over Ngqeleni which has already been indicated above. Secondly, when Sarhili – Chief of amaXhosa (amaGcaleka) – went hiding with the amaKhonjwayo. Sarhili had married Gwadiso’s sister Hlinzelwa. Sithelo, Gwadiso’s younger brother who was a spy, went to tell Nqwiliso who went to inform the whites.<sup>123</sup> Finally, another younger brother to Gwadiso, Bhunge, stole White people’s horses and did it twice. Sithelo once again went to inform Nqwiliso who passed this on to the whites. War ensued.<sup>124</sup>

Zidyokhweni Gwadiso held that Ndamase had no problem with the amaKhonjwayo; it was his son Nqwiliso who did have a problem with them and that could be attributed to two factors which again would boil down to power-hunger. Firstly, he wanted to rule over all, over the amaMpondo and the amaKhonjwayo. Secondly, in order to fight and rule over those peoples he aligned himself to the whites.<sup>125</sup> When the case went to court the amaKhonjwayo asked what the fighting was all about as they did not see any problem – they claimed that it was Nqwiliso who had joined the whites and that, in fact, it was they (whites) who were fighting and were more powerful. Gwadiso went on to point out that all other groups – amaKhonjwayo, amaMpondomise, amaBhaca, and so on – fought with the whites, except amaMpondo: Nqwiliso, Bokleni and Poto joined the whites. They got their power from the whites.<sup>126</sup> This very point will be reiterated when we take a closer look at Victor Poto Ndamase. Gwadiso concluded by bringing in a wider historical context in which he referred to the 1910 handing over of South Africa to the Boers by the

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<sup>122</sup> Meeting with Jeff Peires, (Cory Library, Grahamstown, 3 July 2012). In a telephonic interview with Sabatha Mbalekwa he confirmed this view of Peires (17 July 2012).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Interview with Zidyokhweni Gwadiso, 4 January 2012.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

British Empire. In the process the Blacks were once more left out.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, as has been pointed out above, the British were once again applying their old tactic of divide and rule in order to control people.

There are two other questions that I directed to Gwadiso on the subject in consideration here. Firstly, when the amaKhonjwayo came to the other side of the Umzimvubu River, from eQawukeni, who did they find there? He responded by saying that there were amaBomvana whom the amaKhonjwayo defeated and drove off to the area where they are found to this very day, south-western part of amaKhonjwayo, along the Wild Coast.<sup>128</sup>

The second question was on the position of Victor Poto Ndamase's collaboration with the whites, amaKhonjwayo and the Land Trust system (*Ucando*). That is, if according to Gwadiso – and other sources, like Peires and Hendricks – Poto collaborated with the whites, why did the amaKhonjwayo who originally resisted the Land Trust system (*Ucando*) later accept it? While this will be dealt with in more detail in the following sections of this study, it is worth noting here already the fact that Poto, as Gwadiso responded to the question, often saw things the same way as White people. At the same time, continued Gwadiso, Poto was smart and diplomatic; cautioning the amaKhonjwayo not to force matters. In this particular case of the amaKhonjwayo and *Ucando* (Land Trust), Gwadiso compared Poto to Mandela who so well negotiated the South African tricky situation, especially when he became the first Black President. So, the amaKhonjwayo realized that Poto was wise and that through the Land Trust there would be the advantage of education and development.<sup>129</sup> As we will see later, in the following sections, not all would agree with Gwadiso on this point of view. Some would see Poto as a collaborationist who, first of all, followed in the footsteps of his forebears and even went further than them in that regard. In fact, Gwadiso too indicated this when he pointed out that the amaMpondo – under Nqwiliso and other kings – had unlike all other tribes

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. This year (2012) celebrates the centenary of the birth of the African National Congress which was an attempt to seek incorporation of the Black people into the newly formed South Africa against that discrimination in 1910 onward.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Interview of Zidyokhweni Gwadiso, (Nothintsila, Ngqeleni, 4 January 2012).

not fought with the whites. According to the study of Peires and Hendricks, this trend – of collaborating with the Colonialists – was more so in Western Mpondoland; Eastern Mpondoland was dominated by a spirit of resistance and even rebellion.

I think that it is very interesting that the amaKhonjwayo too have been known for their spirit of fighting and resistance. They obtained the fame of being great fighters and even today when one speaks to the people that characteristic is recognized.<sup>130</sup> In an interview with Mandabazempi Philippina Nogemane she referred to this matter.<sup>131</sup> Nogemane stated that the amaKhonjwayo were well-known for two things, fighting and eating meat. The two are linked: they would be glad to go to war as they wanted to get the enemies' cattle and have meat.<sup>132</sup> This was also implied in an interview with Kumkani Mpondombini Sigcawu, of eQawukeni, when he was referring to Ngquza Hill, stating that during the reign of Mapiki, kwaKhonjwayo, there were a number of battles.<sup>133</sup> Mapiki was regent to Gobizithwana Ferguson Gwadiso who was too young to rule in the nineteen forties. Gobizithwana became the amaKhonjwayo Chief in 1953 and even then he continued to rely on Mapiki's wisdom and experience.<sup>134</sup> Sigcawu continued to say that Mapiki was also at Ngquza Hill and just managed to escape being killed there. That was on 6 June 1960 when twenty three people were killed.<sup>135</sup> Moreover, Mapiki too was leading similar protests, as at Ngquza, in KwaKhonjwayo.<sup>136</sup> During the interview with Princess Wezizwe Sigcawu, daughter of Paramount Chief, she brought up the case of the dispute about kingship of Mpondoland, stating that the two – dispute and Ngquza Revolt – should not be confused as they are two different issues.<sup>137</sup> Kumkani Sigcawu ended the

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<sup>130</sup> My paternal grandfather is still remembered for his “love of war” and in a number of battles fought – against amaMpondo – he is known to have been in the fore front with certain other men of the amaKhonjwayo side.

<sup>131</sup> Telephone interview with Mandabazempi Philippina Nogemane, (30 May 2012).

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Paramount Chief (Kumkani) Mpondombini Sigcawu, (Pretoria, 15 May 2012).

<sup>134</sup> Interview (telephone) with Sabatha Mbalekwa (17 July 2012).

<sup>135</sup> Interview with Paramount Chief (Kumkani) Mpondombini Sigcawu, 15 May 2012.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Princess Wezizwe Sigcawu, (Pretoria, 15 May 2012). Apparently, some government officials had been bringing up the “dispute” (“umbango”) issue even at funerals, like that of Sicelo Shiceka who died and was buried recently. He was originally from Ngquza, of the Sukude clan, and was brought up by his mother in Johannesburg.

interview by claiming that amaKhonjwayo are now intending to go back to eQawukeni, leaving eNyandeni.<sup>138</sup>

Peires maintained that on the question of Land Trust Western Mpondoland had advantages which Eastern Mpondoland did not have.<sup>139</sup> According to him, the whole situation is not as simple as might seem to be. That is, it is not just a matter of thinking that Western Mpondoland was simply under the direction of Victor Poto Ndamase who was a collaborationist with the government, as if that part of Mpondoland was merely forced to toe the line without any questioning. It was something more complex than that.<sup>140</sup> He continued to explain that the Rehabilitation and Betterment programme was not evil in itself, there were good reasons behind the idea: indeed, all would agree that there was need to manage the land and so place it in hands that were capable of doing so, something that would apply to any country in the world. The problem, however, was the context in which it was done in South Africa, i.e. colonialism and apartheid, so that the connotation of it was not healthy. Therefore, the socio-political environment was not conducive and that led to its failure and the resistance it faced.<sup>141</sup>

For Western Mpondoland, however, the idea of Rehabilitation and Betterment had been promoted and implemented over years by Poto Ndamase, with certain benefits for himself and for the people too. So, when it eventually came from the government it was not a totally new and strange animal as the people were more familiar with it than in Eastern Mpondoland. That is part of reason for less rebellious reaction to the programme.<sup>142</sup> On the question of the amaKhonjwayo resisting being under the amaMpondo King Ndamase, of Western Mpondoland, Peires pointed out that they were not really resisting and denying the seniority of eQawukeni or Eastern Mpondoland. They recognized the position of their seniors in Eastern Mpondoland. What they were resisting was the claim and the effort made by Ndamase and his family over them who – the amaKhonjwayo – have always been equally an important branch of the royal family and

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<sup>138</sup> Interview with Paramount Chief Mpondombini Sigcawu, 15 May 2012.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with Jeff Peires, Professor and researcher, (Cory Library, Grahamstown, 28 February 2012).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

had established themselves across the Umzimvubu River long before Ndamase crossed it.<sup>143</sup> As we saw above, it was in fact the amaKhonjwayo who offered a territory to Ndamase when he fled from eQawukeni, beginning with Makhanda sending a delegation of six men to eQawukeni (Faku), to find out why Ndamase had crossed the River to their side, and then Makhanda telling Nogemane and Ndamase to push the amaMpondomise upward so that Ndamase could get a land to settle.<sup>144</sup>

This point and others of the present discussion were reiterated by Professor Masilo Lamla who for many years taught anthropology at Walter Sisulu University in Mthatha.<sup>145</sup> In the first place, Lamla referred to the Mpondo Revolt of 1960, clarifying certain points related to the subject. For example, he maintained that both the Church and the ANC had nothing to do with the Revolt. The Church failed to address the issue and act when it should have done so, to help and protect the victims, and so on.<sup>146</sup> We will be taking a closer look at that later in this section of our study. For now, I think that we should focus on the question of the Revolt in so far as its background and origin, its meaning and the protagonists.

As already indicated, Lamla held that the Revolt was not really an ANC event that it has sometimes been thought to be, at least the impression given by some people.<sup>147</sup> It was just

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<sup>143</sup> Interview of Jeff Peires, Professor and researcher, (Cory Library, Grahamstown, 28 February 2012).

<sup>144</sup> Interview of Zidyokhweni Gwadiso, 4 January 2012.

<sup>145</sup> Professor Masilo Canisius Lamla worked in Mpondoland, Ntlaza area, Western Mpondoland. In 2006 he wrote on the Mpondo Revolt of 1960. He was attracted by Bernard Huss's social projects in Mariazell, Hardenberg – in Matatiele – Mariathal in KZN, Keilands, and so on. Fr. Bernard Huss who became famous for his social projects was a monk of the Mariannahill Missionaries, in the 1930s and 1940s. His projects were of various types: agricultural, financial, leadership and religious, (e.g. Catholic Men's Union), in which people were trained in all the different fields of life. Lamla did some research in this area even though his work has not been published yet. Lamla also looked into the question of amagqirha – ancestor veneration – and completed his PhD in 1999. (I interviewed him on 16 April 2012, Mthatha).

<sup>146</sup> Interview of Professor Lamla, retired lecturer of WSU in Mthatha, (Mthatha, 16 April 2012).

<sup>147</sup> Part of the confusion stems from the fact that the Revolt is commonly referred to as "UKhongolose", Mpondo word for "The Congress", and so people naturally understand this to be the African National Congress. Seemingly some people, promoting the ANC, have claimed that it was "The Congress of the People", the African National Congress, who initiated the Revolt. However, Professor Lamla maintained that the terminology – of "Congress" – in the Revolt derived from the Congo, today's Democratic Republic of Congo, particularly referring to Patrice Lumumba's revolt which led to the overthrowing of the Belgians over there in the same year, 1960. (Interview of Professor Lamla, 16 April 2012.)

a spontaneous initiative by the people.<sup>148</sup> Peires agreed with this view, adding that it was sort of natural nowadays for people to think and say that the Revolt was an ANC initiative.<sup>149</sup> Providing some background to the situation, Lamla reminded that when the incorporation of Mpondoland to the British Empire took place, in 1894, there were already German traders in the area. In fact, in 1870 Leopold Edward von Bismarck wanted to annex Mpondoland but the British protested, sending envoys to Faku in order that he would not let Mpondoland be taken by the Germans.<sup>150</sup> Then, again, the Glen Grey Act of 1890 included Mpondoland with the understanding that it was to be considered a protectorate, just like Lesotho, and not to be part of the Union of South Africa as the amaMpondo did not want anything to do with that.<sup>151</sup>

According to Beinart, itinerant traders in Mpondoland came already in the 1820s and 1830s.<sup>152</sup> Lamla continued to point out that with time the amaMpondo accepted Bantu chieftainship. But then, again, when Botha was later made Paramount Chief, the amaMpondo were opposed to it. That was part of the Revolt of 1960; they demanded, among other things, that he should step down.<sup>153</sup> According to Lamla, there is nothing like Western Mpondoland really – Mpondoland, “emaMpondweni”, is one and should be so considered. Lamla maintained that Western Mpondoland was created just to elevate Victor Poto Ndamase. That land is “KwaKhonjwayo”, it is amaKhonjwayo’s, and the fact that they were defeated in battle does not in any way mean it is no longer their property.<sup>154</sup>

On that point, Lamla could be seen as implying what Zidyokhweni Gwadiso was claiming when he said that the amaKhonjwayo did not consider themselves to have been defeated in the battle with the amaMpondo during Nqwiliso’s time, since the battle was

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<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Discussion with Jeff Peires, (Cory Library, Grahamstown, 8 May 2012). Peires made references to Philip Mayer’s book *Black Villagers* and Clifton C. Crais, *The Politics of Evil: magic, state power and the political imagination in South Africa* (Cambridge, 2002) on the unity movements in Mount Ayliff where they were quite strong. A third reference was Beinart’s *Political Economy*.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Interview of Professor Lamla, 16 April 2012.

<sup>152</sup> Beinart, *The Political Economy*, p. 19.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. Also read Ben Turok’s article, “Pondo Revolt”.

<sup>154</sup> Interview of Professor Lamla, 16 April 2012.

fought by the whites and not by the amaMpondo themselves. Whereas Gwadiso referred to three battles between amaKhonjwayo and the amaMpondo, Lamla pointed out that there were two wars, in the 1880s.<sup>155</sup> He traced the origins of the clashes over land to Sir Philip who thought to be ending that situation by bringing to “Nomansland” (“No Man’s Land”) Adam Kok and his people from Kimberley. And so the area then came to be known as “East Griqualand”. That was in 1879 and before that the land was claimed by various groups, including amaMpondomise, amaBhaca, amaMpondo, and even foreigners. Lamla, however, held that the land belonged to amaMpondo.<sup>156</sup>

According to Frank Brownlee, the Griqua were a section of the Nama people who were moving from place to place and finally settled in the Free State.<sup>157</sup> Then, they were offered “No Man’s Land”. Brownlee continued to claim that Adam Kok built a fort and had his own state, with an independent parliament that was recognized by the British Colony until their rebellion – the Griqua Rebellion of 1878 - when that was brought to an end by the British Colony.<sup>158</sup> Brownlee placed the Griqua’s settlement in their new home around 1850.<sup>159</sup>

Peires referred to the fact that eQawukeni’s response to the whole question of land here was that Ndamase had been given those special rights for his outstanding personality and that they were for him alone and not for any of his successors, so that they would end with his death. He died in 1874.<sup>160</sup> This is reiterated by Beinart who claimed that Ndamase was sent by Faku to the western side of the Mzimvubu River so that he could establish his chiefdom over all the amaMpondo and the immigrant chiefdoms over there and in order to avert conflict between Ndamase and Mqikela. Beinart continued to state that this arrangement of special authority for Ndamase was an exception.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Interview of Professor Lamla, 16 April 2012. Also see Dennison, *A History*, pp. 127-131.

<sup>156</sup> Interview of Professor Lamla, 16 April 2012.

<sup>157</sup> Frank Brownlee, “Chats with Christina”, in *Cattle Thief*, p. 154.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> Discussion with Jeff Peires, (Cory Library, Grahamstown, 8 May 2012).

<sup>161</sup> Beinart, *Political Economy*, p. 13.

Lamla concluded the question of the amaKhonjwayo by referring to the claiming of kingship. His stance on that is: it should not even be seen as “claiming” because when one claims something it would mean that the person did not own that item; and so, for Lamla, the amaKhonjwayo were not “claiming” their kingship but it was a matter of “restoration”, “restoring” what belonged to them and which had been taken away from them.<sup>162</sup> He stated that the Nhlapho Commission unfortunately limited themselves to cases after 1927. According to him, in that sense the Commission did not do its work well since there is so much history before that date.<sup>163</sup> He also referred to the “Battle of Ngcayichibi” which – he pointed out – started off in Butterworth (eGcuwa). It was a clash between amaMfengu and amaGcaleka (amaXhosa). Sarhili, the Xhosa King, did not want to intervene because he claimed that it began as a row during a drinking session, “etywaleni”. But then it grew hot so that he himself had to flee; he went to take refuge in Mpondoland, in Port St. John’s, as the British took the side of the amaMfengu, something that would have been expected. amaGcaleka were defeated and amaMpondo did not feel comfortable with Sarhili’s presence and did not want to be involved. Again, this showed their allegiances to the British. amaMpondo seemingly told Sarhili that he could live with them but they were not going to join a war that they did not even know how it started.<sup>164</sup>

It is probably then that Sarhili moved over to the amaKhonjwayo, taking refuge with them.<sup>165</sup> But Peires maintained that the “Ngcayichibi battle” did not really affect the amaMpondo, it was the Basotho war that was closer to Mpondoland and so would have more likely affected the amaMpondo.<sup>166</sup> He continued to explain that Sarhili went into exile twice. Firstly, it was just after Nongqawuse when the amaXhosa were starving from the cattle killing and crop burning (1858). It was then that the British, under Sir George, sent forces to chase the amaGcaleka (amaXhosa) across the Mbashe River and Butterworth, their headquarters, was given to their enemies, the amaMfengu who were also the British allies.<sup>167</sup> The amaGcaleka were angry with this and war started. The

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Interview of Professor Lamla, 16 April 2012.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Interview of Zidyokhweni Gwadiso, 4 January 2012.

<sup>166</sup> Discussion with Jeff Peires, (Cory Library, Grahamstown, 8 May 2012).

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

amaMfengu called on the British for help and the amaGcaleka called on amaRharhabe (Sandile). The war was fought at the border – Willowvale, Elliotdale and Ciskei territory – which was not Mpondoland. Sarhili went into exile to Sholorha, in Elliotdale, and not to Mpondoland.<sup>168</sup>

The Basotho war that would have affected amaMpondo, took place earlier, before the “Ngcayichibi battle”. What is nowadays known as “Lesotho” was under the British Cape Colony. Some of the Basotho chiefs started to fight the British and the British Cape Colony – in their old tactic of divide and rule - approached certain Basotho chiefs to fight on their side, to fight for the Queen.<sup>169</sup> Mhlontlo was one of those approached but he was too clever and told Hope – his magistrate – that he could not fight for the Queen since he did not have weapons. The magistrate then ordered weapons for him, which he took. However, he then joined the Basotho chiefs, Moshoeshoe’s sons who were fighting the British. Moshoeshoe died a disappointed man. While he was a great man for peace he lost the Free State to the whites: the British who were pretending to be the good ones and the Boers the bad fellows really betrayed him. The Boers went away with the Free State and the British acquiesced to it because, in fact, they were one with the Boers.<sup>170</sup> The British then were after Mhlontlo and, as was seen earlier on, they promised Nqwiliso (amaMpondo Chief) that he would be made Paramount Chief of Western Mpondoland were he to kill him; he did kill him and was rewarded accordingly.

So then, according to Peires, Sarhili was in exile and this was probably in Mpondoland – before the “Ngcayichibi battle” – and returned to Willowvale, in 1865, where he was confined by the British.<sup>171</sup> The British also wanted to move the abaThembu from Ladyfrere to Cofimvaba so that the whites could occupy it. Matanzima and some others did move but Nonesi did not, she just refused to do so and was exiled to Libode. The

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

British were then confused as to what to do with Ladyfrere because after all the abaThembu ended up not moving.<sup>172</sup>

### 4.3. The amaMolo and abeLungu

Another interesting and important phenomenon in the history of Mpondoland is the presence of certain groups known as the “amaMolo” or/and “abeLungu”. Basically, these are descendants of people from overseas – Europe and Asia – who were shipwrecked and ended up settling among the local people along the coast, mainly the Wild Coast, marrying and intermarrying with the locals. One of the famous stories ever written on the subject is that of Bessie – *The Sunburnt Queen* – by Hazel Crampton.<sup>173</sup> In the late 1730s Bessie was found by the amaMpondo lying on the shore on a particular morning; she was an English girl who had been shipwrecked and the locals took her to their chief. She grew up among the amaMpondo who subsequently and affectionately nick-named her “Gquma”, referring to the sound of the sea waves which had brought her to them. She eventually became the Great Wife of the amaTshomane chief – amaTshomane being part of the amaMpondo.<sup>174</sup> Bessie’s story, then, is one of many more others highlighting the phenomenon of castaways who settled among the Xhosa-speaking peoples – the amaMpondo, amaBomvana and others – especially along the Wild Coast of South Africa.

And through this vast panorama are the thousands of European and Asian castaways that are shipwrecked on the treacherous shores of the Wild Coast: some from famous wrecks like the Grosvenor, and many from unknown East Indiamen that had simply vanished. Many died, some were cannibalized, but others were absorbed into the peoples of the amaXhosa.<sup>175</sup>

Janet Kalis who has been doing her research in that particular part of the world has a number of observations on this same subject. First of all, unlike Crampton who relies on documents for sources, Kalis approaches her study more from an anthropological perspective and, therefore, very much employs the personal interviews and dialogue with

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Crampton, *The Sunburnt Queen*.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., pp. 31ff.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., back cover-page.

people.<sup>176</sup> Of course, this does not in any way mean that Kalis does not read or use recorded material – she certainly does. One of the interesting factors she observed was that of different surnames used in one and the same family. That is, members of the same family would choose different surnames. Indeed, that is an interesting observation and while this is true of the Xhosa-speaking people the Zulus have a different way of doing in this regard. The Zulus stick to their clan name, using it for surname as well, so that it does not change. Xhosa-speaking people, amaMpondo and others, employ names of their forebears – great grandfathers and even grandfathers – for surname. In this latter case, then, people of one and the same clan have different surnames and it is easier for members of the same family to have different surnames as each member might choose a certain name of their grandfather or great grandfather rather than another one.

An example of this is that of my own family where my father used a surname that was different from his own brothers and even from us his children. My surname being “Nogemane”, one that is used by my siblings and most of my uncles as well, my father’s official surname, written in his identity document – the old “Dom Pass” – was “Nongqudlwana” which was one of my grandfather’s, paternal grandfather’s, name. My father’s explanation of this situation – when I spoke with him while he was still alive – was that when the government officials, who were whites, came for the identity documents, or the “passes”, they would ask the person for his or her father’s name. So, members of the same family ended up giving different names of their father as a person would be called with different names, and this is more common among the African people. This phenomenon would obviously be a concern in research projects.

Another factor that was mentioned by Kalis, one that is closely linked to the above point and yet quite distinct, I think, is that of continuity and consistency in oral and written traditions regarding the names of people. She maintained that the people that were interviewed gave the same names in the genealogy, of amaMolo, that were recorded by

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<sup>176</sup> This observation was first made by Jeff Peires in my second meeting with him, at the Cory Library, Grahamstown, in November 2011, and was confirmed during my first interview of Janet Kalis, in Mthatha on 1 February 2012. She reiterated the fact that she is more interested in anthropological approach of research rather than history.

Soga two centuries ago; there were hardly any changes in the names. On the one hand, this could be a confirmation of the point made above on the reality of oral tradition among the African people. Yet, on the other hand, Kalis raised a question on that very point, namely, is it a matter of the people passing the stories from one generation to another, in oral tradition, or is it because they had read recorded stories and later repeated the same stories? This was reiterated by Bishop Sithembele Sipuka who – in my sharing with him on the subject – agreed with Kalis’ observation.<sup>177</sup> He referred to his own research among the Xhosa people of Queenstown – Qoqodala and the surrounding area – when he did his doctoral thesis on “sacrifice”.<sup>178</sup> The same question has sometimes been raised in relation to the great Xhosa prophet, Ntsikana, on his devotion to the wounded God who so much loved us that he was pierced on his hands and feet which is a clear reference to Jesus Christ’s crucifixion. This contemplation is beautifully expressed in what has come to be known as *Ntsikana’s Great hymn*, with one verse going like this: “Ahomna homna, ho homna homna.... Wena, Wena, uzandla zinamanxeba” (“You, You whose hands are wounded”).<sup>179</sup> The song continues to ask: “Why did your blood flow from You?” And it responds by saying: “It was because of your love for us.”<sup>180</sup> Now, the question that has been asked is whether the great Xhosa prophet, Ntsikana, who is also known for his beautiful compositions, had already met with the Christian missionaries. It seems that he had already met them as they were around during his time and area.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Discussion with Bishop Sithembele Sipuka, Bishop of Mthatha , (Mthatha, 5 February 2012)

<sup>178</sup> S. Sipuka, “The Sacrifice of the Mass and the Concept of Sacrifice among the Xhosa Towards an Inculturated Understanding of the Eucharist” (PhD Thesis, University of South Africa, 2000). In this, he explored the concept of “sacrifice” in the Xhosa people and what this means in the teaching of the Catholic Church, especially the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in his death on the Cross and in the Church’s celebration of the Eucharist today.

<sup>179</sup> See Lumko Xhosa Hymnal, Ntsikana’s Great Hymn. Lumko is the official teaching Department of the Southern African Catholic Bishop’s Conference (SACBC), based in Benoni, Gauteng.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> This question could also be extended to embrace the presence and worship of “God” among the African people. There are those who argue that the African people knew and worshipped “God” long before the White missionaries came to their land. Others though argue that Africans did not worship God but venerated the ancestors. Again, within that discussion some people claim that Africans did not worship the ancestors but only venerated them, had devotions to them and approached them to intercede on their behalf to “God”. This latter would point to the popular devotion to the saints in the Western Christian world and compare the African ancestor veneration to that Western practice.

As we have seen, there were hundreds, if not thousands, of shipwrecks on the Wild Coast and the amaMolo and abeLungu tribes come out of those. According to Kalis, the shipwreck of these two groups took place a hundred years before the famous Grosvenor of 1776, which means it was about 1676.<sup>182</sup> What is the relationship between these two groups of people, the amaMolo and abeLungu? Indeed, they are sometimes confused as one tribe. Why is it so? Kalis' explanation of this story is that the ancestors of the two groups were in the same shipwreck but they were of different nationalities, three whites, English, who were two men and one woman; there were also Indians, two men and one woman. After the shipwreck had occurred the two groups split and went in different directions.<sup>183</sup> Kalis also pointed out that DNA tests had been done but that there were also difficulties with these. She did not elaborate on that.<sup>184</sup>

What is more interesting on this same subject is that, Kalis noted, Soga also claimed that amaMolo ancestors were of Asian origin.<sup>185</sup> So, the amaMolo are the ones who descended from the Indians and the abeLungu – which means “Whites” or “Europeans” – are descendants of the English people.

One final question that I raised during the meeting with Kalis is one concerning rituals of the amaMolo. I had heard from my mother who belongs to the amaMolo that there is one particular ritual that is performed by them and which so much recalls the celebration of the Eucharist in the Catholic Church. In this same ritual the principal person, the elder of the clan who is usually a senior man, roasts a piece of dough on the fire in the hearth while all the participants remain in silence and sitting in a circle around the hut or house.<sup>186</sup> Then, the senior man leading the celebration of the ritual would break the piece of dough – by now roasted – and distribute it to each participant who eat in silence. My mother told me that when she joined the Catholic Church she immediately found the celebration of the Eucharist so familiar with her traditional ritual. However, while my

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<sup>182</sup> Interview with Janet Kalis, (Mthatha, 1 February 2012).

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> My mother told me this story for the first time about thirty years ago. She told me again, when I asked her to repeat it for me, and she had not changed her version of the story which for me was a sign of consistency and probability of its truth.

mother said that this is the only ritual performed by this clan, that they do not have any other one, Kalis maintained that the amaMolo do have other rituals, like all other African people, just that they do not slaughter animals in the same way that most African people do, they would do it in a modified way. For example, they would not stab the beast in the stomach for it to make that noise; they would do it in the neck. Again, they would use a knife instead of a spear which is the tool used by most African groups.<sup>187</sup> Kalis also added that it is quite characteristic of these tribes – amaMolo and abeLungu – to use tables and chairs in their houses for furniture, that is instead of the mud-built stools and tables that were found in traditional African homes they would have the table and chairs that are found in modern African homes. And this for Kalis was another sign that their origins were from overseas.<sup>188</sup>

#### **4.4. AmaXesibe of Mount Ayliff**

I would like to make a brief reference here to the amaXesibe people and that is for two main reasons. Firstly, the amaXesibe are geographically neighbours of the amaMpondo who live to their south. And, surely, there are some interactions and similarities between the two groups. This includes the strife that existed between the two groups and which involved the burning of land and crops of one tribe by the other.<sup>189</sup> The amaXesibe settled in their present home around 1830 to 1840. They lived mainly on hunting and herding. In 1878 they were annexed by the British, just like the amaMpondo were annexed later in 1894. Then, the amaXesibe – as part of the pact – had to cut down their huge forest, in which they used to take refuge in times of war. They settled in their new home and started to cultivate their land.<sup>190</sup> O’Connell in the introduction of his research referred to the fact that the amaXesibe are sometimes confused by people, including the South African labour centres, with the amaMpondo or amaBhaca.<sup>191</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Interview of Janet Kalis, (Mthatha, 1 February 2012).

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> O’Connell, “Xesibe Reds”, p. 270.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p. 255.

The second reason for my referring to the amaXesibe here is that the Franciscan Friars who went to live and work in the diocese of Kokstad, from 1935 onward, also settled among the amaXesibe at Mount Ayliff – the administrative centre of the amaXesibe-land – was and still is part of the same diocese. As we shall see later, the Bavarian Franciscan missionaries initiated social projects in that area just as they did in Mpondoland. For this part of the study I rely on two main sources. The first is the field work done by M.G. O’Connell of the University of Transkei – so called during the apartheid regime, being part of the homeland system – which he did in 1976 and 1978.<sup>192</sup> The second source of my study is Frank Brownlee who lived and worked very closely with the amaXesibe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He was born in 1875, in Cape Town, and died in 1952. Brownlee was born and bred into an outstanding family who were of Scottish origin. His grandfather was the famous Xhosa linguist, John Brownlee, who arrived in South Africa in 1816 and founded King Williamstown.<sup>193</sup> Both his father and mother, and the elder brother William, were writers who wrote much about the events of the frontier at their time. So, Frank himself was inspired to be an author and he produced a number of books on the life of the people among whom he lived and he did that with much understanding and profound appreciation of their cultures. His father was the Secretary of the Cape Colony’s first administration of “Native Affairs” and Frank himself was later called to Pretoria, in 1934, to be the President of the Union’s Native Appeal Court. This was after he had lived among the amaXesibe, Mount Ayliff, and among the amaGcaleka (Xhosa) in Butterworth where he had already started collecting archival material and oral history for his writings. In these so-called Transkeian Territories he had held magisterial and administrative posts and had also been in West Africa and other parts of the Cape where he had responsible positions, like being in charge of the army during the First World War.<sup>194</sup>

AmaXesibe are one of the twelve Xhosa-speaking peoples inhabiting the Transkei, South Africa.<sup>195</sup> They settled at their present home after escaping – like many other Southern

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid., pp. 255-303.

<sup>193</sup> Brownlee, *Cattle Thief*, front page.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> O’Connell, “Xesibe Reds”, p. 255.

African groups – Shaka’s iMfecane in the 1820s, originating from the Tugela River area. Xesibe-land, with the administrative centre of Mount Ayliff, is about 88 000 hectares and is a mountainous large land with a population of about 50 000.<sup>196</sup> In Brownlee’s days it was probably even more beautiful and richer in natural vegetation for his description of the area points to that. He referred to it as the finest part of South Africa, with green grass, wood and water.<sup>197</sup> O’Connell’s study was to establish the impact of labour migration and urbanization particularly on the youth of the area.<sup>198</sup> Again, this shows some similarities with the amaMpondo case seen above: the labour migration that was studied in the above sections.

O’Connell pointed out that the Xhosa-speakers would generally be divided into two cultural groups, the traditionally-oriented and the western-oriented, the former being referred to as “Reds” or “*amaqaba*” – from the ochre that they dub on their faces and clothes – and the latter referred to as “School people”. The *amaXesibe*, and other eastern Transkeian peoples draw a further distinction within the school group: Gentlemen (“*amanene*”) and Rascals (“*iindlavini*”) so that there are three subcultures involved.<sup>199</sup> Again, “*amaqaba*” is interchangeable with “*abantu ababomvu*” (“the red people”) – “*amaqaba*” being a noun for “*ukuqaba*”, to smear (the ochre).

As indicated earlier on, there are similarities between the *amaXesibe* and the Mpondo people. Concerning this question of the various subcultures under study here, in Mpondoland there are such terms as: “*oonombola*” – “*imbola*” being ochre and so “*oonombola*” means those who dub or smear themselves with ochre - and there are also “*iindlavini*” (“Rascals”). As O’Connell himself stated, “Rascal” is a “liberal translation”.<sup>200</sup> Finally, there are also “*amagqobhoka*”, which literally means “those that are pierced”, referring to “the converted” (Christians). In an interview of Mandabazempi Philippina Nogemane over the phone, she pointed out that “*iqaba*” refers to a person who smears ochre (*imbola*), also a person who is uneducated and, thirdly, a person who does

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Brownlee, *Cattle Thief*, p. 2.

<sup>198</sup> O’Connell, “Xesibe Reds”, pp. 255, 256.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 258.

not believe in Christianity.<sup>201</sup> According to her, there are also “*iinzevu*” which are equivalent to “*iindlavini*” as they are boys who have some schooling, sons of educated people, or children of “*amagqobhoka*”, or again, “*amakhumtsha*” (“*khumtsha*” is “to speak English”). These would be uncircumcised and when they get circumcised they are then called “*abafana*”; they dance, “*ukugaja*”, with girls singing for them. The “*iinzevu*” would be mischievous fellows - as O’Connell puts it, they were “rascals”. For instance, if they were passing by a homestead and find a pot of food on the fire (cooked), they would go in there and take it for their own consumption. Again, if they found a calabash of “*amasi*”, they would drink it and finish it. When they would be walking and see a woman, they would pretend to be crying like a baby and demand that they be placed in the back of that woman, just like a little baby. “*Iinzevu*”, and “*iintsizwa*” too, put on their legs “*amaphaxothi*” or “*amagaskithi*” which was something like a gumboot but without the foot part, only covering the leg and it was a rubber-like. “*Iintsizwa*” were sons of “*amaqaba*”, thus they would also put on red blanket and would be uncircumcised. A young man could be “*intsizwa*” – going to “*isitshotsho*” (singing and dancing party with girls) even up to a mature age and some even were married. There does not seem to have been a clear indication of what stage or age one would have to stop being an “*intsizwa*”; just that there was a kind of expectation that when one was on in age he would stop.<sup>202</sup>

Another point on these groups is that the “*amaqaba*” would laugh at the “*amagqobhoka*” by saying that they did not know anything (about life in general, implying that they should not be trusted for advice); and vice-versa, the “*amagqobhoka*” would laugh at the “*amaqaba*” as being rude, “uncivilized”, calling a spade a spade. These attitudes, however, do not seem to have been serious, it was more of a joke with some truth in it.<sup>203</sup> In one of his statements about these people in which he showed his profound knowledge and love of these people Brownlee wrote: “It must not be concluded that most South African natives are thieves. Far from it. The average *red* or raw native is inherently

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<sup>201</sup> Interview of Mandabazempi Philippina Nogemane, (telephone, 30 May 2012).

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

honest, but there have been certain families and clans where cattle-lifting has been a traditional profession.”<sup>204</sup>

I would like to start with the first part of the above statement. The “*amaqaba*” are frequently people who keep to their social traditions. As O’Connell pointed out, these people generally spend their childhood looking after cattle and if school is part of their schedule at all, then it comes only after herding livestock – it is secondary.<sup>205</sup> O’Connell continued to state that these people’s behaviour is determined by tradition which includes respect for elders, profound interest in livestock, fighting, traditional dances and music, beer drinking and sacrifices.<sup>206</sup> When they go into cities for work they usually do their best to keep their traditions by, for example, sticking together. The money they get from working in the mines or in the Sugar cane plantations is for maintaining their traditional life at home, like paying *ilobola*, buying food and agricultural equipment.<sup>207</sup>

Moving on to the second part of Brownlee’s statement, in which he referred to the cattle-stealing, as already indicated, Brownlee had profound knowledge and love of the “natives”, the African people among whom he lived and worked. He also wrote about them - the amaXesibe - that they were a peace-loving people, but had been forced by circumstances at times to fight for their tribal entity and self-preservation.<sup>208</sup> Already when they had to flee from Shaka’s iMfecane they had to look for a home and this would have left them a scar. Again, surrounded by larger and more powerful tribes they had to protect and defend themselves. Clive Dennison highlighted this point of smaller tribes protecting themselves when he looked at the question of annexation, stating the fact that sometimes smaller groups asked for it from the colonialists as they feared their bigger neighbouring tribes.<sup>209</sup> As with the amaMpondo, the amaXesibe’s wealth lay in their livestock. And, as seen above, they would be introduced to the duty of looking after them – especially the boys – from a young age.

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<sup>204</sup> Brownlee, *Cattle Thief*, p. 2.

<sup>205</sup> O’Connell, “Xesibe Reds”, p. 257.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>208</sup> Brownlee, *Cattle Thief*, p. 3.

<sup>209</sup> Dennison, *A History*, pp. 40, 41.

Brownlee's book – *Cattle Thief* – is precisely on the people's tactics in stealing livestock. But again, his argument was that first of all, not all "raw natives" ("*amaqaba*", Reds) were thieves. Secondly, there were those families that had been associated with this habit – they had, as it were, become experts in that practice. The champion or the starring of *Cattle Thief* was a man by the name of Ntsukumbini – which means "two days". That was due to the fact that his mother was in labour for two days when delivering him.<sup>210</sup> Ntsukumbini was initiated into this family practice, the secrets of his clan, by his own father who sent him to go steal a sheep from his uncle during the night and after that had to perform the ritual of first throwing the skin of the slaughtered sheep with a heavy stone wrapped around it into a deep river so that there would be no trace of it at all. The ritual would end by him wiping his face and hands with the sheep's inside. Finally, his father would send him to his uncle the following morning so that he would find out what was being said about the sheep and Ntsukumbini would not only be pretending that he had never seen it nor had he heard about the sheep but also would help his uncle in searching for it.<sup>211</sup> And, of course, everything was calculated in the process of stealing. For instance, Ntsukumbini had walked on rocks on his way home so that the foot-tracks would not be seen where they ended after leaving his uncle's sheep kraal.<sup>212</sup>

Continuing with the different groups, the subcultures, within the amaXesibe people, O'Connell found out in his study that "*iindlavini*" means "wine-drinkers". This was because the school-going people, the educated, were seen by the "*amaqaba*" as people who drank wine instead of the ordinary beer taken by the people.<sup>213</sup> However, as O'Connell rightly pointed out, the word "*iindlavini*" (rascals) later had a connotation of mischievous, unruly and rough people. But, again, "*iindlavini*" were not necessarily such a group. They would be more educated and open to education than the "*amaqaba*"; education would be part of their subculture and this would give them some status in society. O'Connell continued to state that they are really an in-between group, acting like

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<sup>210</sup> Brownlee, *Cattle Thief*, p. 8.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-14.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> O'Connell, "Xesibe Reds", p. 258.

school people sometimes and also like traditionalists in some respects.<sup>214</sup> When it came to work in the cities they would go for better jobs both for salary and for their status, but they were sometimes also compelled to work underground in the mines, as there was a shortage of jobs.

The third group of subculture is the “*amanene*”, the Gentlemen.<sup>215</sup> These valued western culture much more than the other two groups mentioned above; they went to school and wanted education; they drank wine and not beer, looking down upon the ways of socializing practiced by the “*amaqaba*” and “*iindlavini*”.<sup>216</sup> The “*amanene*” did migrate to big cities for work but also could find jobs in their home areas, their nearest towns, much easier than the other two groups because of their education. And so, they would form cliques of their own instead of the fighting gangs that the other groups formed. Their houses too were more western and more comfortable and of huge size. They were men and women of prestige; there was also much competition amongst themselves; for social status, that is.<sup>217</sup>

Education, like in Mpondoland and among most indigenous peoples of Southern Africa, was provided over centuries by missionaries.<sup>218</sup> In the fifth chapter of his book, *Cattle Thief*, Brownlee told the story of Kamteni who was charged and arrested for stealing the sheep of a white farmer.<sup>219</sup> The story itself reveals the kind of two worlds – the Western and the African – operating parallel, side by side, and sometimes without much interacting and so with little understanding of each other. Brownlee, in fact, pointed out this fact in the earlier pages of his book where he said that as a magistrate of the people one had to consider both the tribal and the British ways of life, and their different manner of equity and justice.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Ibid., p. 259.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 260.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> O’Connell, “Xesibe Reds”, pp. 260, 261.

<sup>218</sup> Brownlee, *Cattle Thief*, p. 3.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., pp. 22-27.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., pp. 3, 8.

Continuing with the case of Kamteni, the white farmer's sheep were found on his (Kamteni's) property and so was charged for theft.<sup>221</sup> He then decided to call together his family and relatives in order to discuss the matter with them. They all had to agree in their evidence. This is how things developed: his nephew was walking to his uncle's (Kamteni's) at night when the sheep started to follow him. They all had to state that the sheep belonged to Hasha who was another white farmer in the area, and not to the white farmer who was accusing Kamteni. The family and relatives, then, decided to call for a doctor (a traditional doctor) so that he would help "reinforce" them in their fight against the case and help Kamteni get acquitted. The doctor demanded he be paid upfront for starting to look into the case, "*umkhonto*"; he wanted a goat to be slaughtered plus beer.<sup>222</sup> When they insisted on his advice he was indignant and said they were ignorant, telling them that the "inspiration" (of his spirits) should not be forced or rushed, it had to come in its own time. Moreover, he told them, the case he was dealing with was not an easy one at all and so he was exhausted from thinking hard about how to go about it. Kwanguba, the doctor, went back to take more beer. This was the most difficult case ever since he had been dealing with various cases. And to assure him of their confidence in him they brought him another pot of beer, hoping for the unseen forces to bring about "inspiration" to him.<sup>223</sup> Having emptied that pot he asked for his pipe to be filled with tobacco and he lighted it. By then it was dark and he began singing a song – "inspiration" had come at last, they thought. And it was from the "influence" and from the unknown forces. They waited for the announcement. He gradually fell into silence – a trance – which gave them much more hope for an answer; they all kept quiet in case they would disturb the "inspiration". The next thing was a drama – the fire around which they were sitting suddenly collapsed, the logs just fell upon his (doctor's) legs and blanket. He woke up from his deep sleep and started to curse them for their disturbing his "inspiration".<sup>224</sup> More beer was brought to him at that point and he took it quickly. He then told them that they had ruined the process of "inspiration" and also injured him, and so should the case not go well they had only themselves to blame. He ordered them to take him to place of

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., pp. 22, 23.

<sup>223</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

rest since he was exhausted from that day's hard work; he was taken to a hut for the night.<sup>225</sup>

Kamteni, who also happened to be the elder at the kraal, told them that he thought that they had made a big mistake by causing the burning of the doctor and so they should make reparation by offering a fat goat and another pot of beer to the doctor, knowing that he would not refuse the offer and also told them that he was aware that they still had to be charged a heifer for all the work. All agreed with him and the following morning they took the offerings to the doctor who gladly accepted the gift as was expected. However, he still did not give the awaited advice. Disappointed by this, especially because he continued to moan about their trying to burn him, they felt that they had done a terrible thing. Yet, things could have been worse – they told themselves – he could have died, and so they were still hopeful that no more evil would befall them.

Kwanguba remained at the kraal for five days and was secluded from them. After a time of seclusion he came back to them, joined them in drinking beer and then started to share with them: some “inspiration” had come to him during that period of seclusion. He told them that the various elements of the case had to be treated each to be doctored on its own and should not be confused. The magistrate needed a special attention so that he would judge favourably; Kamteni had to be protected (from harmful spirits and enemies) so that he would win the case; the witnesses too needed to be looked at separately. All agreed to that process. Kwanguba felt that he was ready to tackle the case, he was almost ready to demand the fees – “*umlandu*” – for the case. He left them and would be back the day before the case; he would even go along to court with them in order to make sure that his medicine worked.<sup>226</sup> Indeed, he was so loyal that he came the day before and he doctored the family, causing Ntsukumbini and the rest of the family to have more confidence in him. For despite the misunderstanding that he underwent, due to his

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

unfamiliarity with western system of court, Ntsukumbini's confidence in himself and his telling of the story to the court made them win the case.<sup>227</sup>

All these details were to help the reader understand the profound and different mentality of the African world which is juxtaposed with the western reality so common in Brownlee's time. To further support the value of the African people's thinking, in the following two chapters, Ntsukumbini questioned the way in which doctors were so easily available in his time, 1920s, unlike in the olden days and also the validity of their authority. The conclusion to this point is that some of the doctors were not genuine both due to the fact that they were not well-trained, as they used to be in the days of old, and were not getting their inspiration from the ancestors so that as a result they would be wrongly accusing people of being witches.<sup>228</sup> Ntsukumbini was getting better and better in his family's business of stealing cattle and horses and this made him proud of the fact that he was becoming a fully-fledged member of the clan that was deeply entrenched in its special practices.<sup>229</sup> Moreover, he learnt that this business also brought them into links with other tribal groups, like the baSotho and amaMpondo where he travelled for trading and exchanging of beasts; in these far away peoples Ntsukumbini also observed new cultural ways of dealing and their customs.<sup>230</sup> As was noted earlier on, amaXesibe and amaMpondo do have common ways of thought and practices, including the following: women in relation to animals, courting a girl for marriage and process of *ilobola*, and the migratory labour.<sup>231</sup> The system of "advance payment" found in Mpondoland was also, to a certain extent, prevailing among the amaXesibe in the early 1900s.<sup>232</sup> Ntsukumbini had to go to the mines to find work for his new bride – Nondwe – as his father would not pay for him everything towards his marriage. There he had hard experiences of all sorts, witnessing the death of one of his closest friends crushed by the falling of a mine rock and escaping from underground in search of farm work, being ill-treated by a farmer but

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<sup>227</sup> Brownlee, *Cattle Thief*, chapters 6 & 7.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, chapters 8 & 9; also read Dennison's *A History*, pp. 127-129.

<sup>229</sup> Brownlee, *Cattle Thief*, chapters 10 & 11.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, chapters 16, 17, 18.

<sup>232</sup> Brownlee, chapter 18.

eventually obtained his hard-earned cash and got his wife after being welcomed back to his home by his delighted father.<sup>233</sup>

At this juncture I would like to make some concluding remarks on the question of annexation which, as seen above, in one way or another affected amaMpondo, amaXesibe and indeed practically all the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa. Dennison provided a list and order of the annexation of the various peoples of the Transkeian territories in which he described it as having “followed in a piecemeal fashion over the period 1875-1894.”<sup>234</sup> According to him, these were independent peoples until the Thembu sought the protection of the British in 1875 and their territory was between the Bashee and Mthatha Rivers, with Mthatha as the magisterial district. In 1877 the Gcaleka territory was occupied by the British due to a war between the amaMfengu and amaGcaleka; as has been noted earlier on, the amaMfengu were always favoured by the British, they were their allies. In 1879 Fingoland – Idutywa, Butterworth and also “No-Man’-land” – were annexed into the Cape. In 1885 Bomvanaland was annexed. In 1886 Gcalekaland was divided into the magisterial districts of Kentani and Willowvale. In 1878 Port St. John’s was proclaimed British territory and in 1884 was incorporated into the Cape Colony. In 1886 Xesibeland became the magisterial district of Mount Ayliff and in 1887 the Rode valley and the Tina area became the Mount Frere magisterial district. In 1894 the entire Mpondoland was annexed, thus extending the Cape to the Natal border.<sup>235</sup>

Various factors led to the annexation of the peoples by the British. Sometimes a tribe requested protection from the threatening power of more powerful ones, just like Faku with the Boers which led him to seek refuge with the British in 1844. The abaThembu, amaBhaca and amaXesibe were in a similar position in relation to the amaMpondo. Again, some people saw the advances made in areas that had been annexed, like education and development. But probably, as has been noted above, it was mainly power-hunger on the side of the western nations that led to the annexation of indigenous peoples, in Africa just as in other parts of the world. Or at least it was to fulfil their

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid., chapters 19, 20 & 21.

<sup>234</sup> Dennison, *A History*, pp. 40-44.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

motives, like making sure that their neighbours were secure borders to their own (colonists') benefit.<sup>236</sup>

During a meeting that I attended in Congo-Brazzaville, I had the fortune of visiting a memorial of the city (Brazzaville)'s founder, Pierre Savignoc Brazza, which has become a tourist attraction.<sup>237</sup> Brazza was the great French explorer of the time, born in 1852 and died in 1905. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1880 he handed over the country, Congo-Brazzaville, to the French government, with the signing of an agreement by the Chief of the Congolese people, Kakko in which it was declared that the people would be protected and the French explorers would be given land. Brazza was apparently a great defender of the indigenous people's rights and fought for their dignity against those colonists who abused them. He was then removed by the French government as a result of accusations of his administration, which were brought up against him by his enemies, the private organizations that were only interested in their own enrichment even at the cost of lives, including slavery and exploitation. But later Brazza was vindicated and was entrusted with investigations into the abuses, especially as the French population were questioning and protesting against these. He died on his way back to France, in the boat, in 1905. His body and those of his family members – wife and children – were brought back to Brazzaville and at a ceremonious celebration were handed over by the French government and Brazza's descendants to the Congo government and people.

While this story might be beautiful and heroic, at the same time, it does reiterate the fact that Europeans were colonizers who came to Africa and other parts of the world with a mentality of patronizing the indigenous peoples whose cultures and mentality differed from them and most often they (Europeans) regarded those peoples as inferior and in need of "civilization". And, of course, exploitation of the colonized peoples was rife. This is not to say that there were no individuals that were outstanding, just like Pierre Brazza and more others – including some of the Bavarian Franciscan pioneer

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<sup>236</sup> Ibid..

<sup>237</sup> This was the annual meeting of the Secretaries of Franciscan Formation and Studies of the African Conference which took place in Brazzaville, 4-8 June 2012. I went there in my capacity as the Secretary of the South African Province of the Franciscan Order and we were taken around the city for visiting certain places and peoples there, which is normal practice during these meetings.

missionaries that we will study in the next chapter - but the overall trend was still one that produced negative experiences for the indigenous peoples. The Comaroffs – in the context dealing with the motives, imaginations and intentions of human agency, particularly the colonizers and missionaries - pointed out something quite relevant in this regard, stating that they, (colonizers and colonized), are often misrepresented. Colonizers are not portrayed in their motives and meaningfulness of their actions, and the divisions that were there amongst themselves and their people back at home, or at best these were seen only as “non-antagonistic contradictions”,<sup>238</sup> and Africans were only tributaries of production and, therefore, their thought and culture were not considered at all. But then, fortunately, historians and anthropologists have more recently begun to show these facts, of divisions among the colonists, the racial divisions that existed between the ruler and the ruled.<sup>239</sup> Finally, even the Christian missionaries were right from the start caught up in these complexities and so the study of Christianity in Africa is more than mere analysis of religious change, it is also anthropology and history of colonialism, of culture and power.<sup>240</sup> We will come back to that in the following sections of this study.

#### **4.5. Colonialism, chieftaincy and land**

In his article “Tribalism, Chiefs and Apartheid” Hendricks dealt with the question of colonialism and chieftaincy. In it he raised points that are worth-noting if we are to understand the whole question of the socio-political context in Mpondoland. He stated that “sovereignty over the land in Pondoland was transferred from the paramount chiefs to the Cape Colonial Government by the act of annexation in 1894”.<sup>241</sup> So, in this way chiefs were reduced only to the authority of allocation and distribution of land. In this process of annexation, which was supposed to be done in a peaceful manner, force was to be used by the Colonial Government on those elements that would resist and any opponent to this would be removed from Pondoland.<sup>242</sup> Magistrates were placed in the towns of East and West Pondoland, representatives of the Colonial Government in

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<sup>238</sup> Comaroff & Comaroff, *Of Revelation*, p. 10.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., pp. 10 & 11.

<sup>241</sup> Hendricks, “Tribalism”, p. 59.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid.

administration. Moreover, by retaining the system of communal land tenure in the Cape Colony the government laid foundations for the later apartheid policy of the National Party on reserves for Africans and the co-operation of chiefs (with the government's policies).<sup>243</sup> Furthermore, confusion arose over land due to maladministration. Ideally, the headmen were to allot land to the people through the magistrate's registration but then very often there were irregularities: no magistrate's registration as the headmen did not forward the matter to the magistrate's office and disputes arose because of common usage of land.<sup>244</sup>

Even Victor Poto – who was both a loyal supporter of the government on the one hand and kept his legitimacy over the people he ruled – was affected by this state of affairs. This was one of the instances in which he struggled to keep a balance: trying to protest to the government for this transfer of land, arguing that “the territory should not be regarded as crown land proper” but as land placed in trust (on the Cape Colonial government) till the time when the Africans were able to manage it themselves.<sup>245</sup> Indeed, the Mpondo people were reluctant to hand over their land, claiming that it was a contradiction of the terms of the annexation which stated that the treaty was entered upon in a peaceful manner. The government on the other hand argued that there was nothing in the treaty that prohibited granting of land to whites for farming, trade, plantation and seaside resorts.<sup>246</sup>

Hendricks highlighted the powerlessness of the chiefs under such conditions. He stated that even the administration of Mpondoland showed the dependency upon colonial powers – resembling that of the Transkeian Territories with a few exceptions in which councillors were nominated by the Paramount Chief and the particular councils (districts) appointed by the governor with the right to veto nominations; magistrates were part of the governing body, being ex-officio members.<sup>247</sup> Hendricks referred to this state of affairs of

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid., pp. 60-61.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., pp. 65-66.

the powerlessness of the chiefs as “prestige and power of an empty shell.”<sup>248</sup> Again, he reiterated that it was “an institution superficially resembling its old self but robbed of the internal dynamics vital to its authority. Herein lies the ambiguity.”<sup>249</sup> This ambiguity lay in the fact that the chiefs were deprived of their claim to income from the people, which was in the form of land, texts and so on, and in this way a wedge was forged between the chiefs and the people.<sup>250</sup> In the olden days chiefs would supply the poor with food and material benefits, including cattle, and this was part of a healthy relationship with the people. In the new situation the poor lost that respect and that relationship toward the chief since he no longer did anything for them.<sup>251</sup> Poto’s chieftaincy (1918-1972), while he had great legitimate authority over the people yet it fell under this inhibiting situation as all chiefs during that time were government appointees charged with implementing its policy and with a paid salary which further made them no longer chiefs over independent people.<sup>252</sup> At this point we take a closer look at Victor Poto.

#### **4.2.6. Paramount Chief Victor Poto Ndamase<sup>253</sup>**

Peires and Hendricks, in chapter fourteen of their book, highlighted the fact that Western Mpondoland had a history of collaboration with the Colonial powers. While his forebears started this tradition – after Ndamase – Victor Poto was the one who took this much further and made it part of his political policies, and this was very much for his personal interests and benefit. For instance, he constantly asked for an increase in his salary, arguing for an equal status to that of eQawukeni which was not always the case. Indeed, Ndamase’s son, Nqwiliso – as already indicated above - had given away Port St. John’s and also aided the Colonial powers crushing the amaMpondomise resistance, between 1880 and 1881; Bokleni, Poto’s father, accepted the Council System in 1911 and also

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>253</sup> Peires & Hendricks, *Rural Resistance*, pp. 5-8 deals with this outstanding figure of Western Mpondoland.

sent two of his sons to France (Native Labour Contingent), death on the *Mendi* in 1917.<sup>254</sup>

Poto's personal family background is quite interesting in this regard. He grew up in a white Christian missionaries' home, the Barrett family. This was due to his father, Bokleni, who believed so much in witchcraft that he claimed his son was threatened by evil forces and so sent him to hide in a Christian mission where such forces would fear to go. This family moved from place to place, due to their ministry, outside Mpondoland: Clarkebury, Queenstown and Leribe in Lesotho. In 1913 the young Poto was summoned to his father's deathbed and Bokleni confirmed him his successor although he knew and even hinted that Poto would not be following his Mpondo traditions. Having been rushed for completing his studies at Headtown and Fort Hare, Poto then returned to take over as Paramount Chief in eNyandeni, in 1913, at the age of twenty. He combined the western and the traditional aspects: adopting "Christianity at a time when less than 5% of amaMpondo belonged to mission churches, owning a new Dodge Car driven by a Native Chauffeur and built a fine house in Libode, complete with gables in the Cape Dutch style."<sup>255</sup>

Agriculture had always been his favourite subject and in 1924 he founded the Nyandeni Farmers Association, with himself as its first President. He also ran a farm, in 1937, where he produced maize, pumpkins and beans for the market, and invested a great deal in this. This also helped him managing the rehabilitation schemes of the white government which was introduced twenty years later.<sup>256</sup>

Poto was great in adapting to new methods, both administrative wise and in agriculture. In 1926 he built a modern block of offices where he employed a full-time secretary to handle correspondence and proper records. He was one of the very first chiefs in South Africa to secure civil jurisdiction under the 1927 Native Administrative Act.<sup>257</sup> Poto

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

wanted to be lawfully recognized by the western system as well as the traditional one, he held on to both of these and made sure that he was not just the Paramount of Western Mpondoland but was also the only recognized Mpondo chief in Western Mpondoland, beside Chief Gwadiso of amaKhonjwayo who constantly refused to be under amaMpondo.<sup>258</sup> Poto wanted to be of equal status to the Paramount Chief of Eastern Mpondoland, but was less successful in that regard.

Closely linked to this fight for powers was his request for increase in salary, but his territory was less in size to that of Eastern Mpondoland and the abaThembu Paramount Chief.<sup>259</sup> His luck came only with the advent of Bantu authorities which was introduced by the Nationalist Party regime in 1951: the legislation which had far-reaching consequences regarding traditional authorities in South Africa declared that these were no longer independent but were from then on agents of the government.<sup>260</sup> While this was rejected by Eastern Mpondoland, Victor Poto's role was again crucial in smothering any protest in that regard. He went to Pretoria to meet Verwoerd, in 1960, and pledged his loyalty to his policies.<sup>261</sup> Thus, he bought his way up to the top. All the other chieftaincies in Western Mpondoland submitted to him, with the amaKhonjwayo as the only exception and who had always resisted from the time of Ndamase's crossing of the Mzimvubu River. The salary, as mentioned earlier on, bound the chiefs to colonial loyalty. Poto was paid the same amount to Nqwiliso at the time of the annexation, i.e. five hundred pounds per annum.<sup>262</sup> After years of application for an increase his salary was finally raised in 1944, having started to apply in 1924, to six hundred pounds per annum. This application and increase is itself a testimony of dependence upon colonial power.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid.

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., pp. 7-8.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>262</sup> Hendricks, "Tribalism", p. 64.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

#### 4.7. The Nationalist government and the Bantu Authorities Act (1951)

Three years after the Nationalist government came to power they established an administrative system that closely linked the government with the regional representatives. This was actualized in the changing of the Natives Representative Council into the Bantu Authorities Act.<sup>264</sup> The concocted system of land tenure was now to be under chieftaincy; the chieftaincy itself was by then corrupted by colonial interference and capitalist industrialization, and then to be placed in charge of local administration. The role of chiefs as agents of social control, long practiced under colonial rule, was now institutionalized by the Nationalist government.<sup>265</sup> So, the chiefs were now practically performing policing function – this was self-evident. However, its impact on the people’s lives was not so self-evident.<sup>266</sup> Basically, the Africans were made to be the slaves - working machines – of the apartheid system: “developing along their cultural lines”, as it was termed. The kind of education they were given was to help further entrench this trend and Verwoerd’s Bantu Education Policy of 1953 was the climax of it all. Furthermore, not only were Africans kept away from the White’s world but they were also to be kept apart from each other, i.e. tribal groupings.<sup>267</sup> Forced removals were an intrinsic part of this project, all of which brought about untold suffering to people of various groups: those who were in mixed racial groups and also those who were living on their own in their particular places as they were forced to give way to white farmers. What about Mpondoland, when and how was this policy implemented?

This scheme of Bantu Authorities reached Mpondoland in 1956.<sup>268</sup> In the Transkei the “Bunga” council was used to prepare the way for the new system. In Mpondoland, however, the Paramount Chiefs again tried to bargain for more power over that of the Native Commissioner, for example, on the appointment of representatives of their tribes in the territories.<sup>269</sup> This, however, was refused by the Secretary for Native Affairs. Poto

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<sup>264</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Hendricks, “Tribalism”, p. 72.

seemingly wanted this added power to deal with the amaKhonjwayo who were a constant thorn in his otherwise trouble-free reign.<sup>270</sup> This clash between the amaKhonjwayo and amaMpondo took place in 1950 and reached its climax in 1962 when the amaKhonjwayo refused to bow to Poto's authority of appointing headmen in their territory which they claimed was a violation of their independence. In this way Poto was using the new powers of the Bantu Authorities to assert his power over the regions.<sup>271</sup>

The Bantu Authorities in Western Mpondoland did very little to help develop the people. It was just a pretext of self-reliance and self-development on the part of the government, thus placing the blame of lack of development squarely on the people themselves while in fact the government was neglecting them intentionally – partly due to lack of funds.<sup>272</sup> When the government had failed to impose this system of tribalism and self-reliance through Bantu Authorities it then proceeded to the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act in 1959.<sup>273</sup> This was based on the explicit understanding that the African peoples of South Africa were not one unit but different tribes each consisting a nation.<sup>274</sup> Obviously, this was all part of the old divide and rule system by the Nationalist government. This led to the sham independent states of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>275</sup>

#### **4.8. Betterment and Rehabilitation**

Poto fully embraced the government's programmes of rural development – he identified with it - and this was acknowledged by the authorities.<sup>276</sup> A close look at these programmes shows the nature of the South African government's policy in the 1930s which was dominated by fears of ecological decline. Again, the government and the opposition were in agreement about this: prevention of deterioration of reserves which was also very much linked to another crucial element in the mind of the whites at that time, that is, preventing the flow of Africans (Blacks) into urban South Africa. In 1939

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid.

<sup>273</sup> Hendricks, "Tribalism, Chiefs and Apartheid", p. 75.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Peires & Hendricks, *Rural Resistance*, p. 11.

was the first attempt of the so-called Betterment Programme which focused on reducing stock pressure on the land (destocking) as the government officials insisted that the problem of the reserves was overstocking and overgrazing which led to soil erosion.<sup>277</sup>

The African opposition to this held that the actual problem was that too little land was given to people, thus there was not enough grazing land for them.<sup>278</sup> In the 1940s the government - faced with practical challenges in implementing the Programme and also interrupted by the Second World War, plus the consistent opposition by the Africans – switched over to another plan, the Rehabilitation Scheme. The new system focused on the re-arrangement of people between the peasants and the proletariat so that the land could be inhabited and used accordingly. Victor Poto again showed his utter conviction and enthusiasm in this regard, claiming (in 1945) that any opposition to such an initiative would be a failure to face facts; this new or rather revised land programme had to be accepted if the land was to be wisely used and thus save the people. It was this conviction and enthusiasm of his, together with the traditional legitimate stature he enjoyed, which popularized the Betterment and the Rehabilitation schemes and thus, once again, prevented an outright revolt in Western Mpondoland which was prevalent in Eastern Mpondoland.<sup>279</sup>

The National Party's victory in 1948 entrenched apartheid mentality and policies, reinforcing the reserves as places of Blacks with their own land. This might have initially attracted many in the reserves as a return to pre-colonial times when people had huge tracks of land. However, it smacked of the government's apartheid policies as it was driven by White magistrates and later the scheme favoured these Black areas as reservoirs of labour for urban industry whereby thousands of active men were taken to work in the cities outside their homes so that there was absolutely no intention to develop the African areas.<sup>280</sup> In the 1950s this trend added another negative element to the whole system, that of "forced removals" under the pretext of giving back the land to the people:

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Peires & Hendricks, *Rural Resistance*, p. 12.

the “Black spots” were done away with, forced out of the urban areas and the white farms to be settled only in the reserves. The traditional chiefs fitted in with this system very well as they were to be in a better position for control of both the land and the people.<sup>281</sup> The most unacceptable aspect of this system was that of culling, which was the killing of stock. It was introduced in the late 1950s and early 1960s. However, it was never accommodated both in Eastern and Western Mpondoland. The officials eventually gave up on this and even Poto managed, with his usual wit, to escape facing this challenge by pretending to be supporting the government while in fact he did not implement this horrible aspect of its plan.<sup>282</sup> The introduction and the failure of the culling element of Rehabilitation made the entire scheme to be suspected and so even Western Mpondoland, while unlike Eastern Mpondoland it did not actually erupt in an open rebellion, yet it strongly opposed the programme. For instance, meetings on this idea were just boycotted and even in those areas where it was implemented it simply remained a theory and was not effective.

#### **4.9. Rebellion in Western Mpondoland - murder case of a headman**

In the last section of their chapter fourteen Peires and Hendricks deal with the case of a murder of a certain Aaron Majali, a headman of Majola location in Port St. John’s.<sup>283</sup> With this case they argue that Western Mpondoland was not as quiet and absolutely non-violent as one might be led to think. The murder of Aaron Majali is one such proof. This took place in 1960 which was the era of the Mpondo Revolt in Eastern Mpondoland and so Majali’s murder should be considered within that context. Although the Magistrate of Port St. John’s tried to explain it away, claiming in his report to his superiors that it was a personal matter which had nothing to do with the introduction of Bantu Authorities, the truth of the matter is, the murder had to do with the apartheid system, particularly the Bantu Authorities.<sup>284</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>284</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

Majali was just over fifty years of age and an educated man, a teacher. He was Chairperson of the Port St. John's District Authority and brother-in-law to Ngqeleni strongman DDP Ndamase and, therefore, a member of Poto Ndamase's elite group. All these would have contributed to the people's venting their anger on him when such an opportunity arose, as was the case when they protested against the political system of the time. "Majali must have agreed to the declaration of Majola as a betterment area in 1946."<sup>285</sup> But then he was caught up when faced by the Magistrate for his failure to support the system publicly; he simply responded by saying that the people were not ready for it yet. The immediate cause for Majali's murder though was an old dispute and the evidence was a more complex reality. For instance, it emerged that Majali was not really a supporter of the rehabilitation but was the census enumerator and was carrying business cards to that effect on the day he was killed. However, it was also revealed during the court case that the people of the hostile location had intentionally spread rumours of Majali's promoting the reclaiming of the location by the government and that the census was part of such a process. So, it is a rather complex story which might not be easy to establish the actual truth. Yet, more importantly for us, it points to the significant implications for our understanding of the Mpondo Revolt.<sup>286</sup> There are three points in the Majali murder case which show its link to the Mpondo Revolt. Firstly, the amaMpondo people were against the Betterment and Rehabilitation programmes as they considered them to be oppressive.<sup>287</sup> Secondly, while the murder might have had various causes and complex evidence, these were not in themselves strong enough to lead to an open rebellion.<sup>288</sup> Yet the murder did spark a flame of thinking which never existed before, that a chief could be killed. Thirdly, the murder was provoked more by the fear of Betterment rather than by the Programme itself.<sup>289</sup>

In the conclusion to their chapter fourteen, Peires and Hendricks reiterate that the Majali murder is one in a body of evidence which clearly indicates the fact that Western

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., pp. 16-17.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

Mpondoland was equally affected by the socio-political situation of the country.<sup>290</sup> Again, the Mpondoland Revolt which took place in Eastern Mpondoland, in the 1960s, was prevented in Western Mpondoland by the presence and role played by Victor Poto. The Mpondoland situation cannot be seen in isolation from the rest of the country. The government policies on the reserves, particularly in making these as reservoirs of urban labour, directly caused the unstable and revolutionary situation in Mpondoland.<sup>291</sup> Another interesting element in this story which also shows links between Mpondoland and the rest of the country is that the difference between the two parts of Mpondoland was partly due to their destinations or areas of labour migration. Western Mpondoland migrated mainly to the closed compounds of the Rand mine whereas Mbizana migrated mainly to places that were politically open and thus their exposure to such revolutionary thinking and spirit.<sup>292</sup>

#### **4. 2.10. Religious context of Mpondoland**

Just as we looked at the religious aspect of the amaXhosa, brief though it was, in chapter one of this research it is equally appropriate that we do the same for Mpondoland here.<sup>293</sup> And the relevancy of such a study lies in the fact that, first of all, the people we are dealing with – amaMpondo – are themselves, like Africans in general, religious. Secondly, the Franciscan missionaries were religious and should have been men and women who took the Christian message to those they went to live and work with. Some of the points raised in chapter one will be repeated in this section as the contexts are similar. The Comaroffs pointed out that despite the amount of large volumes of literature on religious transformation in Africa yet there is very little analysis done on the anthropological aspect.<sup>294</sup>

Another point relevant to our study here that the Comaroffs raised was that evangelism in Africa was not an independent motor of social change and closely linked with that is the

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<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>293</sup> Chapter one of this study, section 1.3.

<sup>294</sup> Comaroff & Comaroff, *Of Revelation*, p. 7.

danger of overemphasizing the role played by politics and economics to the detriment of culture, symbolism and ideology.<sup>295</sup> In the above sections of the present chapter I believe that I have covered much in the area of the socio-political and economic dimensions. That has been crucial to the scope of this research. Equally important though is the religious aspect of the peoples of the present study: amaMpondo, amaXesibe and others.

In the first chapter of his book on the amaMpondo, Cingo dealt with two major issues. The first of these was the interactions between the amaMpondo (Faku) and the religious Ministers or the Missionaries. The second was that of the interaction between the amaMpondo (Faku) and the Government (British Empire/Cape Colony).<sup>296</sup>

In exploring the first of these issues, he argued that the arrival of missionaries from Grahamstown in 1823 laid the basis for the first written versions of amaMpondo History.<sup>297</sup> For him, the coming of the Missionaries or the religious Ministers was a blessing and a great assistance, since it brought much relief to a people that were traumatized by socio-political turmoil, especially with the reign of and the attack by Shaka of the Zulus (1824) and all that this brought with it.<sup>298</sup>

According to Cingo, it was Faku's mother, Nkulu, who played a central role in inviting the Missionaries to preach among the amaMpondo. A woman of prayer, she felt that these was praying to a "God that was not known by the nation".<sup>299</sup> Accordingly, she approached her son, Faku, advising him to send a delegation to the Missionaries – "who knew how to talk to God who is in heaven" – so that they would come and help the amaMpondo in the upheavals that came with Shaka's wars.<sup>300</sup> Faku obeyed his mother, consulted the nation and it was agreed that a delegation be sent – led by Tyalinkobe – to Grahamstown to invite the Missionaries to Mpondoland.<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>296</sup> Cingo, *Ibali*, pp. 1-10.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>299</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

When the delegation met with the missionaries, they presented them with an elephant's tusk. In the first place, an elephant's tusk was a sign of appreciation and love for the person presented with it – that was due to its scarcity and preciousness; people even died in the course of hunting the elephants.<sup>302</sup> Secondly, it was a symbol of peace – due to its white colour.<sup>303</sup> Thirdly, it was a symbol of “exalting the person given it and the self-abasement of the person presenting it, because of the elephant being the greatest animal of all”.<sup>304</sup> Faku's delegation was well-received in Grahamstown and the delegation was followed by Reverend William Shaw and others.<sup>305</sup>

Describing the situation that the missionaries found on their arrival amongst the amaMpondo, Cingo stated that, at that time, the population was small and so there was plenty of land for the people to live in. It is not really clear what he means by “there was no need for many children due to the death of the land”.<sup>306</sup> Was he referring to Shaka's imFeqane? Or was he referring to the many “wild beasts roaming about in the open space”?<sup>307</sup> People did not wear clothes but animal skins that were slaughtered; there was plenty of meat.<sup>308</sup>

Here I would like to make a few observations which I hope should help in the understanding of the picture as presented by Cingo. First of all, the times he was referring to were not his own times – (1920s) – but rather the times of Shaka (1820s) and the Settlers. Secondly, it is obvious that Cingo was a religious person himself and, therefore, he was writing from a religious perspective. His interpretation of history – according to me – was very religious. Under the various traditional practices he dealt with “*Idini*” (sacrifice) and at the climax of this he introduced “Jesus the greatest sacrifice”.<sup>309</sup> There are those scholars who would differ with this interpretation; those who would totally

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<sup>302</sup> Ibid.

<sup>303</sup> Ibid.

<sup>304</sup> Ibid. For example, when King George of England visited South Africa, he was presented with an elephant's tusk by King Sigcawu of the amaMpondo both to show his being welcomed by and the homage of the amaMpondo to him.

<sup>305</sup> Cingo, *Ibali*, pp. 4.

<sup>306</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid., pp. 86-87.

disagree with his second point – as outlined above – on the blessings and benefits of the arrival of Missionaries in Africa.

Alan Kirkaldy looked at such scholars in the introduction to his doctoral work, “Capturing the Soul: Encounters between Berlin Missionaries and the Tshivenda-Speakers in the Late Nineteenth Century”.<sup>310</sup> In his presentation of the argument Kirkaldy showed very clearly that the missionaries were very much part of the colonizers in their thought and actions. They came with their background, which was mostly western, and in their dealings with the indigenous people they enforced their own thought patterns, judging the people according to their own standards which were so often prejudiced.<sup>311</sup> It is these and such discoveries that made some scholars to totally reject the whole idea of missionaries coming to “save” Africa, or to “civilize” the people. To drive this point home Kirkaldy outlined T.O. Beidelman’s analysis of the situation of missionaries whom he dubbed as even worse than the colonizers.<sup>312</sup>

In his six points that summed up the missionaries’ attitude and work in Africa basically Beidelman underlined the fact that missionaries came with their own background – of education and training, culture, status, psychological, mental and social - and imposed it on a people whose life and beliefs the missionaries considered to be “inferior” and “barbarian”. The missionaries were just like the colonizers, or even worse in a certain sense.<sup>313</sup> One of the mistakes of the missionaries was their failure to understand the African world in its element of union between the spiritual and the secular. Part of this mistake was that the Western world was suffering from a secularization that became prevalent especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>314</sup> On the one hand, the missionaries brought with them a culture of secularization and saw the African practices with those eyes, condemning even the good traditions of the indigenous people. On the other hand, they were in denial of the changed Western world and in their deep desire to

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<sup>310</sup> A. Kirkaldy, “Capturing the Soul”, pp. 6-30.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid., pp. 13-16.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid., pp. 14-15.

keep the “good” religious values of their homes enforced such ideas on the indigenous people. And in that process they perpetuated colonialism.<sup>315</sup>

Taking this argument further, the Comaroffs argued that the British Nonconformist missionaries who evangelized the Southern Tswana separated spiritual and the temporal affairs in order to facilitate their work of evangelizing the people. However, this had disastrous effects; it brought about confusion and inner conflict to the evangelized, psychologically and socially.<sup>316</sup>

Regarding Cingo’s work, a question that could be asked here is whether this is a reflection of the peoples of the time, or if it was his personal attitude and point of view. In addition, one would wonder whether on Cingo’s part there was a melancholic spirit, and a longing to go back to those pristine times, “the good old days”, as he found himself in the “modern times”. Very often in such a situation the author tends to be unrealistic and not quite historical.<sup>317</sup>

In the last part of his book – chapter VI - Cingo dealt with the customs and way of life of the amaMpondo.<sup>318</sup> In the final part of that same chapter he clearly reflected a concern that he, and probably many people of his time, had on the keeping, or lack thereof, of those valuable customs and way of life.<sup>319</sup> He even ended by adding an admonishing on how we should, in our times, keep the good traditions that our forebears handed down to us so that the future generations might see our contribution too and follow it.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Comaroff & Comaroff, *Of Revelation*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>317</sup> An example of that is the *legendae*, the lives of the saints, written in the Middle Ages. For example, Thomas of Celano wrote two *legendae* or lives of St. Francis of Assisi. The scholars today make it very clear that a great deal of the writing is not historical but more of a desire to go back to “the good old days”, especially in the political battle that was taking place between the different factions of the Franciscan family after the death of St. Francis in which they were fighting over the true identity of their calling and way of life. Thomas of Celano wrote the second life of St. Francis in 1228.

<sup>318</sup> Cingo, *Ibali*, pp.74-110.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid. pp. 106-110.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

I am not by any means here trying to claim that there is no truth in what Cingo was writing about. What I am saying though is that sometimes writers, like many other people, in times of hardships and difficulty do tend to look back at the times of their forebears and so much highlight the good aspects of those past times even to the point of forgetting the challenges of those times. A person with that kind of attitude easily tends to exaggerate, blowing their presentation of the story out of proportion. Of course, there is great value in claiming that “the olden days”, the times of the amaMpondo ancestors, were wonderful – for example, there was a less stressful situation and people were not so much under pressure as they would be in later times – but those times of the ancestors had their own difficulties and challenges too. Those people, for instance, were traumatized by the wild animals that were roaming about in the open. A story is told about the missionaries who went to Pamerton, in Lusikisiki, Eastern Mpondoland. It was those times when wild beasts were roaming about in the open, and the chief of the area who seemingly did not believe in them and in their message gave them that place. He told them that if indeed their message was genuine they should live in that area and preach to the people there without themselves being harmed by those wild beasts and also protect the people from the danger. The missionaries cleverly approached their British authorities to collect the wild beasts and take them to the zoo. They then went to the chief and told him that they had prayed so much that the lions, wolves, leopards and other wild beasts just disappeared. Then, they were given land to build their mission and did their work without being disturbed by the chief and the people.<sup>321</sup>

Another example of the difficulties the people faced “in the olden days” was that of wars which would just make them unsettled. Even the way they built their homes pointed to this reality – according to Cingo, the beehive huts were due to this factor, so that people would flee easily.<sup>322</sup> It was only later that they built more solid homes. I think that it is of utmost importance to bear in mind the fact that the amaMpondo, like most of the people in Africa, were leading a “religious” life – even before the arrival of the missionaries. Their customs and way of life was certainly very human, respectful and principled. And,

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<sup>321</sup> Discussion with Sakhephi Sihlobo, a Franciscan Friar from that part of the world (Lusikisiki), (Grahamstown, 6 March 2012).

<sup>322</sup> Cingo, *Ibali*, p.74.

again - going to the point already indicated above - the missionaries sometimes failed to appreciate the values inherent in these people's way of life and traditions. In so doing they missed the point. Obviously, I am not trying to claim that there were no practices that fell short of respecting life in Africa. There were such traditions and they needed to be challenged. However, the Western colonizers and missionaries either pretended that their own traditions were far superior to those of Africans, or just failed to see any value in African practices, only the Western ones were good and those of the Africans were just "heathen and barbarous".

What are some of those traditions that were valuable in Mpondoland? What was the attitude of the Bavarian Franciscan missionaries to those practices? These questions and others will be answered in the remainder of this study. In a statement that referred to the situation of colonization and evangelists or missionaries, in Africa particularly, the Comaroffs point out that human agency is practice invested with subjectivity, meaning and to a greater or lesser extent power; in other words, it is motivated.<sup>323</sup> What were subjectivity or meaning, what power and motives lay behind the Bavarian and other missionaries of this research?

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<sup>323</sup> Comaroff & Comaroff, *Of Revelation*, p. 10.



Ngquza Hill Massacre Memorial (1960)



Graves of the Ngquza Hill Massacre (1960)

## **Chapter 5**

### **Realization of the Franciscan Dream: Franciscan social involvement**

Bearing in mind the social dimension of the amaMpondo people, as portrayed above, we now turn back to the Franciscan Friars, especially Father Severin of Flagstaff. He was based in Flagstaff Mission. Flagstaff Mission is one of the Franciscan places taken over by the Franciscan Friars in 1935. As we saw in chapter two of this study, it had been established in 1877 and was looked after by the Oblates and the Mariannahill Missionaries in the pastoral aspect. The Holy Cross Sisters brought in the area of education and this had widespread social implications. We will now be studying the Franciscan contribution. I would like to show-case here that the Franciscan vision that was meant to be actualized in Mariannahill and which did not happen in that diocese, was actually implemented in this part of the world. It was particularly in Flagstaff that Fleischer's vision was put into practice. I think that it is only fair at this moment to provide some idea of who this Severin was.

#### **5.1. Father Severin Neumeier and the Franciscans in Flagstaff**

The necrology of the Franciscan Friars of South Africa opens this way on Severin: "Severin had the unique distinction of being in Flagstaff Mission, in Pondoland, for 50 years – something for the ecclesiastical '*Guinness Book of Records*'".<sup>1</sup> Severin is certainly an outstanding person among the Friars who came to South Africa, not only the Bavarians but of all the missionaries who lived and worked in this country. He was assigned to Flagstaff Mission and went there in June 1935, escorted by Guido Nurnberger who was one of the very first group of the Bavarian Friars, in 1932, and was himself appointed to Matatiele.<sup>2</sup> Severin was the first Franciscan to live and work in Flagstaff, taking over from the Mariannahill Missionaries.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Necrology of the Franciscan Friars of South Africa, 5 May 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Booklet of the "Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers", Their Arrival and the Appointments in the Prefecture.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

One of the people interviewed in Flagstaff, Anastasia Groom, recalled how the Franciscans replaced the Mariannahill Missionaries in 1935.<sup>4</sup> She herself was baptized by the Mariannahill Missionaries and was attending the Holy Cross Sisters school in Flagstaff. The Mariannahill Missionaries told them of another Order that would be coming to replace them. Then came Father Severin, a young priest in his 20s.<sup>5</sup> Anastasia, again, remembered when the Mariannahill Missionaries handed over to the Franciscans, it was Fathers Ulrich and Otto. According to the booklet of the “Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers”, Father Ulrich, of the Mariannahill Missionaries, gave the two Friars – Severin and Guido - a hearty welcome.<sup>6</sup> They then left the place, leaving the Friars to take charge of it.<sup>7</sup> As already indicated above, Severin was to be there for the following fifty years, till he died in May 1989 and had the uniqueness and honour of being buried among his beloved people of Mpondoland. That leads us to the next section in which I would like to suggest that this man was indeed an “apostle of Amampondo”, the people among whom he lived and worked all his life as a Franciscan Friar. In the next few sections I will be focusing on him, showing how he proved to be an “apostle of amaMpondo” through his life and ministry. But I will also try to balance this study by showing how he was also human and so failed in certain ways to, for instance, he did not sufficiently challenge the government that continued to oppress the people through the apartheid system.

## **5.2. Father Severin – “Apostle of amaMpondo”**

As the two ladies spoke about Severin during the interview, one could sense their devotion to him and their sharing also revealed the Flagstaff people’s love for this man who had just been almost everything to them.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, almost all the people I interviewed – and that includes Franciscan Friars of different age groups, ordinary church people and Sisters - were just singing the praises of this man. We will come back to those people

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<sup>4</sup> Interview of Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngenyana, 24 May 2010.

<sup>5</sup> In fact, Anastasia put Severin’s age at 20. I intervened, telling them that in the Catholic church a person cannot be ordained a priest at that age, one has to be 24 years at least. Indeed, Severin was in his 80s when he died in 1989 and so must have been in his late 20s when he came to Flagstaff, in 1935. (Unfortunately, we do not have his personal file with us).

<sup>6</sup> Booklet of the “Golden Jubilee of Franciscan Pioneers”, Their Arrival.

<sup>7</sup> Interview of Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngenyana, 24 May 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

later. Here one is reminded of the first missionary among the Xhosa people, J.T. Van der Kemp who arrived there in 1799 and distinguished himself as a great missionary by his sincerity and simple life which made him accepted and loved by the people. Indeed, Severin was not just a true pastor and priest of the church community and a spiritual father, but was also a champion of justice, a defender and lover of the poor, and a friend of the Holy Cross Sisters. When one considers that “charity begins at home”, Severin was also a real brother to his own Franciscans, being a regional superior of the group at one stage.<sup>9</sup>

That is why I chose to give him this title “apostle of Amampondo” people which, I think, just really sums up all that he was for the time he spent in Flagstaff. Dischl’s description of Severin confirmed this when he wrote: “A missionary of truly Franciscan humility and charm, Fr. Severin became a household word at Flagstaff.” Furthermore, Severin preferred to stay in Mpondoland, among his beloved people when the other Bavarian Friars moved on to Zululand in 1960.<sup>10</sup> This shows the mutual bond that existed between the people and their “apostle”.

In an interview with Cardinal Napier, who as was noted earlier on was bishop of Kokstad between 1981 and 1992, he pointed out that during the time of the Mariannahillers there was not much relationship between the priests and the ordinary people. The priests at that time just went around every few months, celebrating the Eucharist, going to the shops over there as relations with these few notable people were quite easy.<sup>11</sup> That changed with the coming of the Franciscan Friars who were certainly much more available to the people. That is probably and partly due to the fact that the Franciscans had finally found their own home, their place of ministry, as they had only been “strangers” in Mariannahill diocese. Secondly, some of the Friars who came to Kokstad diocese had not been part of the original six men who had gone through the experience of Mariannahill. Thirdly, and I think more importantly, Franciscans are generally known to be close to the people - their

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<sup>9</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 380; “Flagstaff Diary” of the Holy Cross Sisters, Belgravia, 8 May 1946.

<sup>10</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 267.

<sup>11</sup> Interview of His Eminence, Wilfrid Cardinal Napier, O.F.M., in Durban, 3 June 2010.

charisma and spirituality is one that underlines this aspect: relationship with people, especially the simple, poor and ordinary ones and this is from the founder of the Franciscans himself, St. Francis of Assisi. Indeed, the great Franciscan men and women, throughout the history of this Order and whatever cultural background they found themselves in, have distinguished themselves in this regard.<sup>12</sup>

At this juncture I would like to refer to the one and only letter that we have which Father Severin wrote. The Comaroffs point out that once the imagination, motives and intentions of people who are alive or dead speak through their records then they cease to be monolithic social forces of cultural structures.<sup>13</sup> With this in mind I would like to take a close look at Severin's letter. It contains a number of points which help us have quite a good idea of the situation in Flagstaff Mission, at least pastorally, at the time. It was written in 1936, the year after his arrival in South Africa, and was addressed to the Minister Provincial. Severin began, in the usual manner like all good subjects of his time, with congratulatory remarks to the Minister Provincial who had just been elected at the Chapter of the Friars in Bavaria.<sup>14</sup> He then apologized for his "laziness" for not writing, referring to the two letters the Minister Provincial had written to him to which he had not replied. That makes it clear that he had not written all that year since his arrival in South Africa, something that was unusual as almost all the missionary Friars were writing to the Minister Provincial that time. This could also indicate his being a very busy man, something he referred to in the next sentence: "Should I now say I had no time to write,

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<sup>12</sup> The Rule and Testament of St. Francis, and indeed many of his other writings, highlight this point of closeness to the poor. Read, for instance, the Rule of 1223 chapters 2-6. Again, other Franciscan founders or foundresses of new Franciscan Institutes have followed this teaching of St. Francis of Assisi. Examples in this regard are: Mary of the Passion, the foundress of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary who are one of the largest Congregations of women in the Church and are very close to the poor being themselves exemplary in this way. Here in South Africa they used to have a convent in the squatters/slams of Kliptown and they are still found in such poor places; there is also the founder of the Holy Cross Sisters, Theodosius Florentini, whom we saw was dedicated to the cause of educating the poor village children in Switzerland. Finally, Bishop Adalbero Fleischer, of Mariannahill, as part of his vision on the Franciscan spirituality and family in South Africa founded the two groups of African men and women Congregations along those lines – see his pastoral letters, especially those of 1924/25. When one talks to the members of these foundations, one can sense that spirit.

<sup>13</sup> Comaroff & Comaroff, *Of Revelation*, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Severin Neumeier, Flagstaff, to Minister Provincial, (Munich, 12 October 1936). See opening of the letter. This was most probably Polycarp Schmoll who was Minister Provincial in 1932 when the first group of Friars came out to South Africa and was later re-elected.

then it sounds rather cheap and familiar and does not make it seem true anymore. Yet, in my case it is true alright.”<sup>15</sup>

Then he provided some statistics of Flagstaff: the district population that time stood at 111 000, and there were 500 Catholics.<sup>16</sup> The few Catholics were spread all over: forty, fifty and even more miles apart from each other. There were eleven outstations, and were visited by the priest on a monthly basis. That means that he had to go out to these communities two or three times a week.<sup>17</sup> When one considers the fact that travelling in those days in South Africa was not as comfortable as it would be nowadays, it becomes clear that this was really quite demanding. No wonder then that Severin added in his letter, “One comes home tired and is not always in a mood of writing.”<sup>18</sup> The next three or four lines are most significant regarding our discussion here. Severin wrote:

But I would know who could help me...And generously send a few fellow brothers so that poor Flagstaff can be divided. Here are many places which could be started if there were two missionaries. We are still by far too few priests in our area, which could be a successful missionary area.<sup>19</sup>

In the first place, these words reveal the kind of man Severin was: a dedicated missionary, one who worked hard for the good of his people, a true apostle. In conformity with his belief structures, he would not rest until the people he served had heard what he saw as the good news that he was convinced as the main objective of being missionary. And these words again are in conformity with the ones quoted earlier on, those referring to his being so busy that he had no time and was in no mood to write a letter. Secondly, he did not want to do the job alone, thus showing off that he was the man doing everything by himself so that people would start praising him; it was the work to be done by more people, more missionaries than one man. Indeed, it is not uncommon to meet those people, including missionaries, who want to own the people and the mission, thus

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Naturally, Sunday would be one of the two or three days in which the priest would go out to the communities (outstations); then, Saturday would be another day; the third day would be any other day, with the exception of Monday as that would be a day of rest after the busy weekend, just as it would be nowadays.

<sup>18</sup> Neumeier to Minister Provincial, 12 October 1936.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

making themselves a name rather than attributing such work to God whom they claim to be serving, and the community, the group or the missionaries. Severin did not see it that way, it was to be the work of a group, of all, and not just himself. Thirdly, Severin in that way showed that the Franciscan dream of Bishop Fleischer and the Franciscan Friars was being implemented and had to be realized in their situation, in Flagstaff. The more missionaries they had in that particular area, the better would be the fulfilment of the Franciscan dream. Thus, it was up to the Bavarian Province to bring about such a realization of the dream they had accepted from Fleischer. Because he had himself embraced such a dream and was even an embodiment of the same, he was convinced that Flagstaff “could be a successful missionary area.” Severin’s words of requesting for more missionaries has also to be placed within a wider context. There was a general sense in the missionaries that the work was overwhelming and there was need for more men and women to be sent out to the mission lands. One certainly gets this reality when reading the letters of some of the missionaries, including church leaders of the time: Apostolic Delegates,<sup>20</sup> Bishops,<sup>21</sup> Regional superiors of both men and women,<sup>22</sup> the priests in the mission field<sup>23</sup> and even lay leaders (catechists).<sup>24</sup>

In the remainder of the letter he dealt with his getting used to the climate and the language (isiXhosa).<sup>25</sup> He also mentioned the plague of locusts which was apparently part of the climate that time in certain parts of the country as some of his contemporaries also

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<sup>20</sup> Buehler to Apostolic Delegate, 17 November 1936.

<sup>21</sup> Bishop Fleischer continued to beg for more men from the Bavarian Franciscans. For example, his letter to the Minister Provincial of Bavaria in which he was informing him of the safe arrival of the very first Franciscan missionaries – the Friars and the Solanus Sisters – he also asked for more Friars (Mariannahill 21 September 1932). Again, as we saw above, Purstinger in his history of the Bavarian Friars in South Africa (*Missionsgeschichte*) informs us that Fleischer wanted men to be sent from Bavaria. Sigebald Kurz when he was appointed Prefect Apostolic of the newly formed diocese (Vicariate) of Kokstad was also asking for more Friars: letter written to the Minister Provincial (Bavaria) on 9 January 1936 and another one written on 25 May 1936.

<sup>22</sup> Lucas Purstinger in his history kept pointing out that there was just too much work for the Friars both in Mariannahill diocese and in Kokstad. Read pages 46-51 of *Missionsgeschichte*. Sister Antonia Kraus (Regional Superior of the Solanus Sisters) pointed to the fact that there was plenty of work for the missionaries: letter written to the Minister Provincial (Bavaria) on 27 November 1932.

<sup>23</sup> Canisius Berscht, who later became Regional Superior, is an example of such Friars who were begging for more missionaries from the Minister Provincial. For example, his letters of 6 December 1932; 8 August 1938; 21 September 1938 and 27 November 1939.

<sup>24</sup> Andreas Kwela (Catechist), St. Boniface Mission, Izingolweni (Port Shepstone), to Minister Provincial (Bavaria), 11 March 1935. This letter is written in Zulu and is the only one of its kind.

<sup>25</sup> Neumeier to Minister Provincial, 12 October 1936.

referred to it.<sup>26</sup> Like a true Franciscan he enjoyed being surrounded by other creatures: snakes and frogs that were found around his house.<sup>27</sup>

When Alypius Mangold came to join the missionaries in Kokstad, in 1937, Severin began to work in the neighbouring mission of Lusikisiki,<sup>28</sup> but Flagstaff remained the base and centre of the area.<sup>29</sup> Severin was interned, with other Bavarian Friars, during the Second World War. However, this was only for a short while as they were soon allowed to work in the parishes around Johannesburg until their release after the War. He then returned to Flagstaff and continued to serve the area, including Lusikisiki which is in itself a large section of Pondoland.<sup>30</sup> He proved his being an “apostle of Amampondo” through his hard work and dedication to the people; as was already indicated, he was just everything to them.

Having seen the socio-economic-political context of Mpondoland the question has to be asked: How do those points on the amaMpondo history apply to the Franciscan story? First of all, we have to bear in mind that Flagstaff belonged to Eastern Mpondoland which, as seen above, was the boiling point of the resistance movement to the White government. One of the people I interviewed - Mr Gerald Somdizela - a catechist who knew and worked with Severin in the 1950s and 1960s, had the following points to share. Firstly, speaking on Ngquza Hill he mentioned that people used to meet and discuss issues, (concerning the political situation), and the whites went there to disrupt those gatherings. The meetings were on the people’s freedom from the whites.<sup>31</sup> Some people – the leaders – were caught due to claims that they had killed others who were supposedly spies. And, then, some of those, among whom there were Catholics, were

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<sup>26</sup> At least in one of their letters the Franciscan Solanus Sisters mentioned it, in Maris Stella Mission: Sr. M. Antonia’s, Maris Stella Mission, to the Minister Provincial of the Franciscan Friars (Munich, 23 November 1934).

<sup>27</sup> Severin Neumeier, Flagstaff, to Minister Provincial, (Munich, 12 October 1936); see Francis of Assisi’s *Canticle of the Creatures*, 1225, in *Early Documents*, (New York 1999), pp. 113-114.

<sup>28</sup> Interview of Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngenyana, 24 May 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Interview of His Eminence Wilfrid Cardinal Napier, 3 June 2010.

<sup>30</sup> Necrology of Franciscans of South Africa, 5 May 1989.

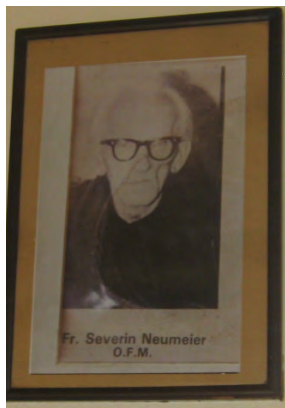
<sup>31</sup> Interview of Gerald Somdizela, at his home, (Flagstaff, 29 June 2011).



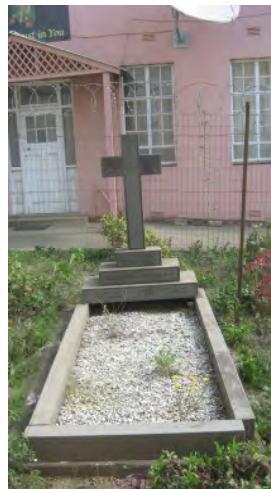
Catholic Church - Flagstaff



St. Francis Statue in front of the Friary where Fr. Severin lived



Fr. Severin OFM



Grave of Fr. Severin OFM

released after investigations cleared them of any wrong-doing.<sup>32</sup> There are still graves of some of those who were killed on the spot. Those leaders belonged to “Khongolose”, or “Congo”, which was the popular term for “Congress” referring to the African National Congress.<sup>33</sup>

Secondly, on Severin’s response to the situation, there were two points that Somdizela raised both of which recall his being a Franciscan Friar and a Catholic priest. In the first place, Severin would encourage the Catholics, his congregation, to go to the meetings as failure to participate in these would put them in danger of being targeted by the rest of the people. He urged them, however, not to be in the forefront as there was possibility of some people being killed in the process and Catholics should not be involved in the killing of people. The second point on Severin’s response to the situation was that the Catholics should pray the Rosary: a traditional Catholic prayer addressed to Mary the Mother of God to intercede for the people in their needs.<sup>34</sup>

Egbert O’Dea, the elderly Franciscan Friar who has worked in the Kokstad diocese for many years, added to these points that amaMpondo people were quite good in resisting the White government in the 1960s.<sup>35</sup> O’Dea reminded us that Bizana – which is part of Eastern Mpondoland and is a neighbouring town of Flagstaff – was the Colonial Regiment from earlier times and when the amaMpondo began their rebellion at “Ngquza Hill” the police and the army flew there in helicopters to shoot them from the air. As a result, there were talks of “iintaka or izinyoni ziyasidubula” – Xhosa and Zulu respectively, for “birds shooting” at the people.<sup>36</sup> O’Dea himself has attended celebrations at “Ngquza Hill” in commemoration of those tragic and yet heroic events. Confronted with this unhealthy and cruel state of the government towards the people

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.; also see the section on the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Sisters who worked with the Franciscan Friars in Mpondoland, particularly Bizana (Mbizana), as they witnessed the spirit of the amaMpondo rising in the 1960s. Some sources though question the idea that “Congo” was a reference to the African National Congress, arguing that it was referring to the uprising of the Congolese people’s movement against the Belgian colonizers which was also in the 1960s. Among those is Professor Lamla (retired Professor of Walter Sisulu, Mthatha, interviewed on 16 April 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Interview of Egbert O’Dea, (Maria Telgte Mission, Kokstad, 30 June 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Severin started projects of social uplifting of the people, gardening, church and school buildings,<sup>37</sup> and providing for the poor through nourishment and clothing programs.

The two ladies interviewed in Flagstaff – Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana - referred to his abhorrence of apartheid and this was seemingly aggravated in him through his experience of internment during the Second World War. After that, the ladies claimed, he loathed discrimination and injustice inflicted upon any other person. Here we must also remember the fact that Severin, being a German, had experienced the rise of Hitler and his Nazism. Hitler rose to power in the 1920s and 1930s when Severin was a young man and joined the Franciscans that time. As we saw in chapter one, the Bavarian Franciscan leadership in their consideration of Bishop Fleischer's invitation to Mariannahill had the situation of their country in mind as well: getting out of Germany at that time was an opportunity to experience peace and take the Gospel of Christ and his Church to a place free of the spirit of war that was in the air in Europe, particularly Germany.

In chapter seven we will consider the relationship of the Church to the state and we will see how the Church in Germany was so much part of the nation and to an extent failed to challenge the government of the time. The Franciscan Friars were part of that Church and when they came to South Africa they brought their background with them. Naturally, some of the missionaries unfortunately went along with the system, without challenging it, while others did oppose it in one way or another. In my interview with Professor Lamla, I asked him about the role of the Church in the whole situation of the Mpondo Revolt, especially at Ngquza Hill.<sup>38</sup> Lamla was very critical of the role played by the Church and clearly pointed out that in fact the Church failed the people, according to him this was a missed opportunity by the Church leadership which was quite tragic. First of all, Lamla claimed that the meetings at Ngquza Hill opened with prayer, something that would indicate the people's trust in the Church and also the fact that the Church was present at such meetings, conducting prayers. Meetings were also held in other

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<sup>37</sup> Necrology of Franciscans of South Africa, 5 May 1989.

<sup>38</sup> Interview of Professor Lamla, 16 April 2012.

surrounding places like Msikaba and Nomlacu. But, then, so many people were killed, especially at Ngquza and there is no indication of the Church's opposition to that. In fact, some people – a number of them – were turned back from Holy Cross Hospital, the huge Anglican hospital in the area, and some of them died as they could not be admitted. This was due to the fear of the authorities of the hospital, not wanting to be identified by the perpetrators of the violence and murders of the people.<sup>39</sup> Lamla made reference to Sol Mabande who was Botha Sigcawu's right hand man – and part of the Revolt, according to Lamla, was the amaMpondo's rejection of Sigcawu's appointment by the apartheid government as the Paramount Chief – who seemingly stated that if the amaMpondo did not accept Bantu authority Act, then they should be forced and spoon-fed with it. He was almost killed for that.<sup>40</sup> According to Lamla, Khadi – who was investigator in the whole matter – held that those people should not have been sentenced or killed as they had already surrendered.<sup>41</sup>

Going back to Severin in the situation of Mpondoland, in his attitude and social uplifting of the poor and those discriminated against by the government he certainly proved an advocate of the poor. At that time in South Africa apartheid laws had just interfered with the school of the church, run by the Holy Cross Sisters, in Flagstaff and in the country. When the African children could not be admitted to the school of the Sisters, Severin started a new school for them. This was situated on a nearby hill, just outside the town<sup>42</sup> and it was called "St. Mary's school". It not only provided intellectual learning but also included practical skills for young people, like a vegetable garden, which consisted of a huge field. This school went up to standard four and had two teachers, Theresa Mdletye who was the principal, and Getrude Nogula who later got married and became Mrs Mngeyana.<sup>43</sup> They would teach normal school subjects and catechism, the teachings of the Catholic Church, every day. Severin was the manager of the school and paid the teachers as the government policy was not for supporting African schools. Children were

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Interview of Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana, 24 May 2010. This land is still a property of the church and one of the old catholic church members, Mr. Mangqalaza, has put up a simple structure mud-building, trying to fend off people who would apparently want to occupy it.

<sup>43</sup> Interview of Getrude Mngeyana, in Flagstaff, 26 July 2010.

also involved in sports so that just as the Holy Cross Sisters were doing, both in Switzerland and in South Africa, the Friars followed a similar process of educating young people in a holistic manner, catering for all dimensions of the pupils: spiritual, mental, physical and social areas.

There was a second school opened by the Franciscan Friars for African children in the Flagstaff area. I will look at this one later as I think it is more appropriate in that particular section in which we will be discussing the Franciscans' involvement with the wider community.<sup>44</sup>

Two other schools of a similar type were established by the Franciscan Friars in another area, Mount Ayliff. Mount Ayliff Catholic mission-station, like many other places in the region, was started by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate who used to serve it from Kokstad.<sup>45</sup> They would come every three months and church services were held in people's homes until in 1902 when the government gave a church site. Later on there were more frequent visits by the priests, especially under Fr. Raphael Boehmer, a Mariannahill Missionary. The village itself was established in 1898 when the first magistrate, Read, set up his office there, after moving from the slopes of nearby Mount Evelyn. Mount Ayliff is situated on the Mthatha-Kokstad N2 road, 3 km from the road.<sup>46</sup> According to Dischl, the place was probably named after the Methodist minister John Ayliff who founded a mission near the village.<sup>47</sup> Peires, however, disputed this, maintaining that it was named after William Ayliff who was the "Secretary of Native Affairs" in the 1870s.<sup>48</sup> The first Catholic Church building was blessed by Bishop Fleischer on 10 March 1935.<sup>49</sup> Mount Ayliff became part of the new Prefecture entrusted

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<sup>44</sup> Section 5.6: Franciscan involvement in the wider community.

<sup>45</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 273.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 274.

<sup>48</sup> Discussion with Jeff Peires, (Cory Library, Grahamstown, 8 May 2012).

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

to the Franciscans in 1935.<sup>50</sup> It was first served by Lucas Purstinger who at the time was looking after both Kokstad and Mount Ayliff.<sup>51</sup>

When the first residential Franciscan Friar, Canisius Bertsch, took over the parish, in 1936, the number of Catholics was as follows: 180 Africans; 40 Coloureds; 20 whites.<sup>52</sup> The African population was found in the many mission-stations around, six or seven of them altogether. Later, when Bertsch had been there for twenty years, the number of African Catholics had grown from 240 to 1300;<sup>53</sup> in 1964 when Bertsch left for Zululand – to join his Bavarian brothers – there were over 1750 Catholics.<sup>54</sup> As for the question of schools established by the Franciscans in this area, there were two of them. A brief look at these highlights the social implications of the Franciscan ministry in the area. The first of these schools was in a place called “Mvalweni”, one of the seven mission-stations. In fact, one of the ladies interviewed, Getrude Mngeyana, taught at that school.<sup>55</sup>

Getrude was born in the Mount Ayliff area, in Mvalweni village. She had been attending at St. Mary’s school, in Flagstaff, and on completion there she went back to her home village of Mvalweni where by then a new school had been built by the government. The new school had replaced the Franciscan one and went up to standard 6.<sup>56</sup> The teacher at the original school was a Coloured lady by the name of Aloysia Kipping, from Kokstad, and had been brought out there by Lucas Purstinger, who was looking after both Kokstad and Mount Ayliff. According to Getrude Mngeyana, Aloysia was a very simple person who readily mixed with the African locals, living among them and eating their food.<sup>57</sup> People in the area at the time followed African traditional beliefs, with little or no idea about Christian living. With the evangelization of the Franciscans at least some of the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Chapter 3, see Lucas Purstinger.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 274.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Dischl is completely silent about the school in this area; instead he concentrates on the second one in Mount Ayliff village. He was probably unaware of this school which was situated in a mission-station and not in the main mission-station. We, therefore, rely on interviews of Getrude Mngeyana and others for information.

<sup>56</sup> Interview of Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana 24 May 2010.

<sup>57</sup> Interview of Getrude Mngeyana, in Flagstaff, 26 July 2010.

people in the area began going to church and then changed some of their inappropriate ways of living, adopting Christian values and principles. For example, some people who used to drink much and cause harm to others began to convert and lead good lives, not inflicting violence on others and doing such unsocial things. Again, some of the men who used to take as many women as they wished, abusing them and not being committed to family life, began to take marriage seriously according to the church teaching. Thus, according to her, the ministry of the Friars in the area converted many people and some of them became catechists or teachers of the faith. The ministry helped reduce some of the social problems in the area as the Friars told wives to look after their husbands too.<sup>58</sup>

A significant asset to the Catholic Church in the area was the coming of three blood-brothers of the Mbiko family.<sup>59</sup> They originated from Umzimkulu which, as pointed out earlier, was one of the centres of the Catholic Church, under the Mariannahill Missionaries. In one of the interviews with Sister Sylvina Nkomo, of Assisi in Port Shepstone, she told me that she knew the Mbiko family, in Umzimkulu, and that in fact, her own uncle (*bab'omncane*, literally the younger father, which is her father's younger brother) married one of the Mbiko daughters by the name of Hendrietta. She confirmed that the Mbiko's were indeed a well-known devout Catholic family.<sup>60</sup> Apparently, the Mbikos just came to settle in Mvalweni.<sup>61</sup> The eldest was Joseph who stayed on the church premises and the people called the site "kwa-Yosefu" (Joseph's place). The second one was Isaac and the third was James.<sup>62</sup> They were all catechists,<sup>63</sup> helped in the

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 24 May 2010.

<sup>59</sup> Interview of Getrude Mngeyana, 26 July 2010.

<sup>60</sup> Interview of Sisters Mildred and Sylvina Nkomo, in Assisi Convent-Mission, Port Shepstone, 27 July 2010.

<sup>61</sup> According to Getrude's version, there was no connection between the coming of the Mbiko brothers to the area and the mission work of the Franciscans. It was, therefore, a mere coincidence that their arrival there was a great blessing to the mission and work of the Franciscans and they were obviously very well-received by the people and the Franciscans. Interview of Getrude Mngeyana, 26 July 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> The term "catechist" has undergone some change in significance. In those days, before the Second Vatican Council, catechists were mainly men, who were not just teachers of the Catholic faith but were the priest's right hand men. They were looked up to by the church community and were close to the church, not only through their teaching and way of life but also in a literal, physical manner as they would often be housed next to the church-building, on the mission land and, therefore, would act as caretakers as well. Today, "catechists" are usually women and they are just teachers of the faith. The Second Vatican Council, as it were, stripped the old form of "catechists" of the power and honour they used to have, and this has to be seen in the wider context of the whole vision of the Council which

strengthening of the Catholic faith which was obviously to the delight of the Franciscans.<sup>64</sup> As we in the above chapter, immigrants were welcomed in Mpondoland – especially from the 1860s and 1870s up to the early twentieth century – and this was due to the shortage of land in southern Africa. Mpondoland was underpopulated and traditional authorities were open to immigrants particularly those who brought skills there. Such people were offered land and even cattle to settle. Again, it was noted, in the same chapter, that unlike other regions where there were tensions between those who, on the one hand, adopted Christianity and colonial elements and those who, on the other hand, clung to their traditional way of life, Mpondoland did not have that situation but was open to all. Christianity was not seen as contradicting the people’s traditions and the missionaries were not seen as opposed to the customs and so they were warmly welcomed.

There in Mvalweni, too, the school followed the model of St. Mary’s in Flagstaff, with pupils being taught practical skills and working in vegetable gardens. In both places, the Franciscan Friars brought food and clothing for the poor children who could not afford these.<sup>65</sup> Getrude, again, brought up the religious element in the schools as being part of the Friars’ means of transforming the people’s lives. She mentioned that the Friars would get teachers to teach religion in schools, paying them so that they would do this work properly.<sup>66</sup> When the government school was established there was still an opening for the Catholic Church to teach catechism (their faith). Agnes Nogula – Getrude’s elder sister – was appointed as the catechism teacher and that took place three times a week,

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recalled the Church to the humility and simplicity of the Gospel. Naturally, there are some and, indeed, many people who would not agree with Vatican’s attitude and would be still aggrieved, longing for the good old days!

<sup>64</sup> In their book on the history of Christianity in South Africa, (*Christianity in South Africa*, p. 4), Elphick and Davenport (eds.) point out that the spread of Christianity was much due to the hard work and zeal of African converts. Norman Etherington concurs with this in his article “Recent Trends in the Historiography of Christianity in Southern Africa”. He points out the significant role played by African evangelists in “winning African souls and minds”, that these agencies were far more vital than the White missionaries. At the same time, Etherington bemoans the fact that so little has been written on this important subject on which many scholars agree.

<sup>65</sup> Interview of Getrude Mngayana, 26 July 2010.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Monday, Wednesday and Friday.<sup>67</sup> The children of other religions (Protestants) joined with the Presbyterians<sup>68</sup> and had their own religious instructions separately.

The second school of the Franciscans in the area was a boarding school situated in Mount Ayliff town itself where there was the priest's house and the Franciscan Sisters of Solanus, in their cottage, who were doing the catering for the children.<sup>69</sup> According to Dischl, Bishop Kurz bought a house in the village, in 1937, which was then used by the Sisters as their convent.<sup>70</sup> The Coloured school was established already in 1931 by the Mariannahill Missionary Fr. Raphael Boehmer.<sup>71</sup> The African school was opened only after the Second World War when Canisius Bertsch came back from the internment.<sup>72</sup> The Coloured school building was a hut and the principal was a certain Ms Studd who lived in a small house at the Mission, next to the gate.<sup>73</sup> The African school was opened in 1946 and in 1948 a better and larger one was built, opened by Magistrate van Aswegen on 27 May.<sup>74</sup> There were three teachers, all ladies, including Getrude Mngeyana, and they looked after the girls in the dormitories which were huts.<sup>75</sup> The boys' dormitory too was a hut and a man, by the name of Petrus Dingane, originally from Elubaleko, was the boarding master and also a catechist. This school went up to standard 5.<sup>76</sup> According to Purstinger, this school was the final fulfilment of Canisius Berscht's long-desired dream.<sup>77</sup>

Just like in Flagstaff and other areas, education in Franciscan schools went further than the classroom; there were other social projects attached to learning in the school. For

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> According to Dischl, the Presbyterians came to the area with the Presbyterian missionary Peter Hunter who in 1889 established a mission at nearby Gillespie. Thus these Christian denominations: Methodists, Presbyterians and Catholics were neighbours from the beginning in this area. We will look at the relations between the churches in chapter 7.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 274.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Interview of Mr. Nkalweni (lawyer), (Aliwal North, 1 April 2011); Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 274.

<sup>73</sup> The small cottage is still there. Interview of Mr. Nkalweni 1 April 2011; Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 274.

<sup>74</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 274.

<sup>75</sup> Interview of Getrude Mngeyana, 26 July 2010.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Purstinger *Missionsgeschichte*, p. 408.

instance, outside the school times the boys at the boarding school used to look after the cows of the mission, milking them.<sup>78</sup> Again, the boys were digging in the garden, and sometimes this would be done together with the priest and the Sisters which was probably intended to be a training for the young men.<sup>79</sup> In fact, this in itself left such an impression in those young people that the Church personnel were not for apartheid; one of the men who was at that boarding school and was interviewed told of how he saw this activity as pointing to the Church's practical opposition to apartheid.<sup>80</sup> In another interview later this same man reiterated this point by recalling how when he was studying for the priesthood, at St. Peter's Seminary in Hammanskraal which was for Blacks, they used to play soccer with the students of St. John Vianney Seminary in Pretoria and which was for whites.<sup>81</sup> How this came about, that there were separate Seminaries for Blacks and for whites, will be dealt with later, in chapter 8. For now, let it suffice to know that this situation was due to the apartheid government policy and the Irish Friars who staffed the White Seminary were not able to stand up against such an unjust system. The man insisted, in the interview, that the fact that the Black and the white Seminarians came together for sport did not please the whites in the area, including the police.

In addition, boys learnt to paint and helped with the painting of eLugelweni mission-station in 1960.<sup>82</sup> Another small but equally interesting project was that of making crosses. Boys were required to make them for the mission-stations and the priest – Canisius – paid them a penny each.<sup>83</sup> These were for the “Stations of the Cross” – a

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<sup>78</sup> Interview with Mr. Nkalweni (retired lawyer who was later asked to be acting magistrate in Aliwal North), (Aliwal North, 1 April 2011).

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. Mr. Nkalweni highlighted the fact that Church personnel were not allowed by the apartheid government to live in areas of racial groups other than their own, yet the Catholic priests and Sisters did that, and this was seen by the people as the Church's defiance of such segregation laws. We see a similar kind of situation with the burial of Severin Neumeier in Flagstaff, in 1989, when the magistrate there stated that it was against the law to bury a White person in a black area as the people wanted to fulfill their priest's wishes to be buried among them. See under Severin (Flagstaff).

<sup>81</sup> Interview of Mr. Nkalweni (Aliwal North, 31 October 2011). For a history of the Seminary, see J. Brain, *St. John Vianney Seminary: 50 Years of Priestly Training*, (Pietermaritzburg, 2002).

<sup>82</sup> Interview of Mr. Nkalweni, 1 April 2011, who was part of that team of boys.

<sup>83</sup> Interview of Mr. Nkalweni, 31 October 2011.

prayer of the Catholics in which is traced the way of Jesus Christ to his crucifixion and death on Mount Calvary – and so some standard quality would have been expected.<sup>84</sup>

A significant point that is closely linked to this project is that, according to this man, non-believers, or rather those who followed traditional African beliefs, admired the Catholic Church beliefs and they respected their liturgy, that is, their public prayer and rituals like incense and holy water. The man argued that these practices would be very close to these people and they bring up much curiosity in them.<sup>85</sup> The traditional healers, for example, frequently use incense and water for their healing sessions. Again, the interviewee added, the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the central spirituality and prayer of the Catholic Church and in which the death and resurrection of Jesus is recalled, reminds traditional believers of their slaughtering for the ancestors.<sup>86</sup> The interviewee pointed out that the Catholic celebration of “Holy Thursday” and “Good Friday” – the Paschal mystery originating from the Jewish Pesach and in which Christ has become the centre – remind traditional believers and Africans in general of the procedure in their families when there is mourning of the dead. For example, in the celebration of “Holy Thursday”, at the end of the Eucharistic celebration (the Mass), the altar is stripped of all cloths, utensils, flowers and whatever decorations might be there and that is in honour of Jesus’ being arrested and stripped of all power by those who sentenced him to death, (Pontius Pilate, the Roman Prefect representing the Emperor, in Jerusalem). Catholics should start a time of silence in respect of and mourning the death of their Lord and King, and this atmosphere is kept for three days – Easter Triduum – till the Resurrection (on Saturday night). In African families the clothes and belongings of the dead person are taken out of the house, washed and distributed to his or her relatives or even burned. Again, the house is marked by silence and if there is need for talking, then it should be in a low tone.<sup>87</sup> Finally, on the question of the devotion to saints and statues in the Catholic Church, the

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Interview of Mr. Nkalweni, 31 October 2011. Mr. Nkalweni claimed to know these from his own family background and personal experience: his mother having been the first family member to join the Catholic Church from the Methodists. His mother was buried by a priest and people who attended it were so impressed by the liturgy or the rite; some of them even took photographs of the “Stations of the Cross” in the church.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

interviewee felt that the traditional believers were confused because he thought that they failed to make a link between the devotion to saints and the ancestors. That is, whereas they venerate the ancestors they did not seem to see any similarities with the Catholic Church's veneration of saints, the ancestors of faith. According to him, traditional believers were probably confused by the other denominations some of whom criticize the Catholic Church for these practices.<sup>88</sup>

This leads us to the area of the Franciscan schools, as this very experience was present also in other places, that is, the pressure of Protestants on Catholic believers. But before going into that, I would like to make a few comments here, especially concerning the interviewee's position on the above issues. First of all, the man is a Catholic believer and is quite enthusiastic about his faith. That has to be taken into consideration when listening to him. Secondly, he likes the Bavarian Friars, forever singing their praises and comparing them to the Irish Friars who came later. For him the Bavarians were the real missionaries who dedicated themselves fully to the work of the Church and development of the people; he considers himself a product of the Bavarian missionaries and boasts about that. Indeed, he himself seemed a hard worker. He would not say the same about the Irish Friars – for him the Irish Friars were too laid-back and were not the kind of missionaries who worked hard. Let us now move on to another area where a similar experience to that of Mount Ayliff was present regarding relations with other churches.

A third area where the Franciscans had a school in the Kokstad diocese was Bizana. This was managed by Magnabonus Koller. As we saw in chapter 3, he was a very capable person, with a number of talents and a forthright personality. Among the many letters he wrote – we have twenty of them – one can get a good picture of the situation in Bizana and also what was going on in the Catholic Church in the Kokstad area.<sup>89</sup> Here, however, we will limit ourselves to the subject of our research and which, in this section, is the schools. There are a number of references, in the letters, to the school in Bizana Mission. As mentioned earlier on, Magnabonus put up the first private school and a boarding

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<sup>88</sup> Interview of Mr. Nkalweni 31 October 2011.

<sup>89</sup> Letters were written between 1933 and 1947.

establishment for African children in that area.<sup>90</sup> In fact, his involvement with the children began in Kokstad when he was stationed there in 1933.<sup>91</sup> Those were Coloured children and though he was quite critical of the Coloured people – expressing anger with their misbehaviour and linking that to their being of mixed race which he saw as cause for their confusion - yet he seems to have enjoyed the children.<sup>92</sup>

In the letters, dealing with the school (and boarding), there are a number of interesting points in connection with our study here. Firstly, in his first letter in 1939 he dealt with the relations between Catholics and Protestants,<sup>93</sup> an area we will closely look at in chapter 6 of this study. There was some tension that existed between these two Christian groups, and the Protestants were the larger of them, something which made the Catholics feel undermined and, to an extent, even threatened.<sup>94</sup> Just like in Flagstaff, the Catholic population was a minority in the area and even about the same number as in Flagstaff.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, as we will see later, there were tensions between churches in the Flagstaff area too.<sup>96</sup> The total population of Bizana district was 63000; the area being 2000 square km. Catholics were only 532 while the Protestants were 10 000.<sup>97</sup> At that time, then, the Catholics had to defend their faith and the schools were part of the process. In another letter he wrote in 1939, Magnabon had to make some clarifications regarding the boarding school property.<sup>98</sup> The Franciscan Sisters of Solanus were involved in the boarding. According to an interview of certain people who knew Magnabon, in Bizana,

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<sup>90</sup> Necrology of the Franciscan Friars in South Africa, 7 December 1965.

<sup>91</sup> Magnabonus (Koller), Kokstad, to Polycarp Schmoll (Minister Provincial), (Munich, 4 September 1933).

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Magnabonus (Koller), Bizana, to Minister Provincial, (Munich, 19 May 1939).

<sup>94</sup> Magnabonus (Koller) to Minister Provincial, 19 May 1939.

<sup>95</sup> Magnabonus (Koller), Bizana, to Minister Provincial, (Munich, 30 August 1936). In this letter which was his report on the mission work he was doing, he gave statistics: there were 100 people in the main church at the Mission; there were 532 Catholics in the Bizana area; there were 10 mission-stations and there was no way one could do the work on horse-back anymore, a car was necessary.

<sup>96</sup> Section 5.6. in which we will deal with the Catholic Church's religious and social projects in the wider community.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Magnabonus (Koller), Bizana, to Vicar Provincial, (Munich, 14 September 1939).



Old Catholic Church - Bizana

Dutyini Church - Bizana



Children of Mvalweni – First Franciscan School at Mount Ayliff

First Franciscan Boarding school – Mount Ayliff



he put up the convent for the Sisters there.<sup>99</sup> There were two Sisters that time and they were Sisters Isentraud and Edith, both Germans.<sup>100</sup> They were looking after the children, cleaning, and so on, just like the Holy Cross Sisters were doing in other schools of the Church.<sup>101</sup> Again, just like in all other Catholic schools, the children would have been of various religions but the priority would have been given to the Catholics.<sup>102</sup> Obviously, the Bavarian Province was assisting with funds and the idea, according to Magnabon, was that in some future day the boarding school would be self-sufficient.<sup>103</sup> But that probably took quite some time before it was realized and to our knowledge there is no evidence that it ever happened. In other words, the boarding school was most probably heavily subsidized by the Bavarian Province until much later than Magnabon's expectations. He was in Bizana until 1950.<sup>104</sup>

Again, just like in other schools established by the Franciscans, particularly in Flagstaff, there was a variety of activities going on for the children. First of all, the school went up to standard 6.<sup>105</sup> And because it was a private school, they had to go to do examinations at eLudeke, about 8 km from Bizana, as private schools were apparently not allowed to hold standard 6 examinations.<sup>106</sup> As for manual work, the students were grinding mealie-meal, the mealies brought to the boarding school by their parents for the children's food. Parents also brought pumpkins and other vegetables from their gardens and fields. The students were doing gardening, planting and growing various sorts of vegetables and mealies. The girls would also assist the Sisters with the cooking for the boarders and collect dishes from the priest's dining-room, washing dishes after meals; they also did the laundry. The boys looked after the cattle, herding them and milking them for the boarding school. Thus those interviewed and who were boarders at Bizana believed that they had a

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<sup>99</sup> Interview of Luciana Bhala, Sophia Macandlovu Mbhele, Getrude Candlovu and Agatha Nomvete, 10 October 2010.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Magnabonus, Bizana, to Minister Provincial, 19 May 1939.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. In an earlier letter, Magnabon was dealing with statements (accounts) on the spending of the Franciscan Friars: medical costs, transport, and so on. See 4 September 1939. So, he had to do much correspondence regarding funds both for the Friars' spending, the church-buildings and boarding school.

<sup>104</sup> Necrology of the Franciscan Province in South Africa, 7 December 1965.

<sup>105</sup> Interview of Luciana Bhala, Sophia Macandlovu, Getrude Candlovu and Agatha Nomvete, 10 October 2010.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

good and healthy diet, with plenty of food with three meals per day.<sup>107</sup> The teachers were from the community and only one of them was living at the mission, she was Wilhemina Dzanibe – they used to call her “Ngqabayi”, as she would swear by that, her clan name. Wilhemina also served as boarding mistress both for boys and girls. She had a niece, her sister’s daughter, her name being Hilaria. Hilaria also lived at the mission and cooked lunch.<sup>108</sup> At the beginning the girls’ boarding house also served as classroom for the first grades, Subs A and B. Later, more classrooms were built so that the boarding house served only one purpose.<sup>109</sup>

Cardinal Napier added to the aspect of providing young people with practical skills. As a former pupil of the Holy Cross Sisters Convent School of Flagstaff, he stated that the social implications of these schools – of the Sisters and the Friars as well – were widespread. This was because the children who attended these schools were from all over South Africa and not just from Flagstaff and the surrounding areas. He claims that the Friars would be discussing about their schools, wanting to know from the other Friars who had a good teacher in his school or any other place.<sup>110</sup>

Again, when it came to work among the people, the two ladies – Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana, of Flagstaff - emphasized the fact that the Franciscans were very close to the people, especially the poor, something, as already noted above, that is essential in the life and spirituality of the Franciscans. For instance, they would go to the simple huts, often full of smoke from the fire at the hearth, and would sit on the mud-stools that were in those huts, without making fuss of it. They would visit the sick and pray for them; burying the poor people, bringing some food for those families that were desperately poor.

During my interview of the Cardinal he pointed out the fact that the Friars had schools, clinics and hospitals in the places where they worked. Where they could not build

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Interview of His Eminence Wilfrid Cardinal Napier, O.F.M., 3 June 2010.

hospitals and were not there, they would put up clinics. Examples of such projects are: Hardenberg – a clinic; Lusikisiki – a hospital; Bizana – a hospital. Bizana, where the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Sisters were working in the hospital,<sup>111</sup> at the invitation of and alongside the Friars, has had a number of young women joining the Sisters and this, the Cardinal believes, is the effect of the Sisters' involvement in the social uplifting of the people, as young people realized how much the Sisters cared for their people.<sup>112</sup> The Cardinal also places this trend within the wider context: this was the way other denominations worked too,<sup>113</sup> that is, the Anglicans had opened their centre, Holy Cross Hospital, in the neighbouring area.<sup>114</sup> Again, where necessary, there were mobile clinics run by the Sisters and this was a good outreach, providing inoculations against measles, kwashiorkor (skin rashes and itching), Tuberculosis, polio, and so on.<sup>115</sup>

Social uplifting included parcels from Germany, with second hand clothing for those who could hardly manage to buy from a shop. These were not given free of charge; they were sold for little amount and the funds would be used to continue projects of serving people and the church.<sup>116</sup> Again, the Sisters would go out to the mission-stations with the Friars (priests) and do their sessions of teaching the people on health matters while others would be teaching religion and the priest would do the service (celebration of the Eucharist).<sup>117</sup> When the Irish Franciscans came to help the Bavarians, beginning from 1946, we will see how they too continued with the aspect of social involvement in the lives of the people

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<sup>111</sup> The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Sisters are studied in chapter 9.

<sup>112</sup> Interview of His Eminence Wilfrid Cardinal Napier, O.F.M., 3 June 2010.

<sup>113</sup> The same point is mentioned by Elphick & Davenport who, in referring to missionaries of various Christian denominations, state that the common themes in all the regions were: founding of schools, study of African languages and translation of the bibles [*Christianity in South Africa*, p. 4]. Brian also states that in the very early stages of the Catholic Church in South Africa the bishops' first task and challenge was to find out the number of Catholics in their territory and where they actually lived. Then, the building of structures (churches) and provide catechism, newspapers and schools ["Moving from the Margins", p. 196].

<sup>114</sup> The Cardinal reminds us that the law of the time was that there should be no church within five miles of reach of the other denomination.

<sup>115</sup> Interview of His Eminence Wilfrid Cardinal Napier, O.F.M., 3 June 2010.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

they served. For example, hospitals, clinics and schools were built and many young people were educated in those centres of education.<sup>118</sup>

Even when he was already retired, Severin continued to show interest in the people he had served for so long; he would ask the younger Friars working in Flagstaff about the people in the area and it was amazing how he knew and remembered their names. After his death the people fought for him to be buried in Flagstaff, according to his wish and something the people would only have greatly appreciated. They won the case despite the fact that it was not in the interest and the policy of the state for a white person to be buried in an African area.<sup>119</sup> So, he proved himself a true “apostle of Amampondo” people both in life and in death. Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana fully agreed with me when I suggested “UBawo uSeverin nyani wayengumpostolo wamaMpondo!” (Father Severin was truly an apostle of the amaMpondo people!). They added by saying that he practiced what he preached.<sup>120</sup> And this was shown again in his relationship with his brothers, the Friars. The two ladies interviewed in Flagstaff told of how he was such a great brother to the other Franciscans, not only when he was in charge of them and of the people but even when he was already retired.

First of all, we have to note here that he was by himself for most of the time as a priest in Flagstaff, at least in the early days of the Bavarians. It has been pointed out already that

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<sup>118</sup> It was under Bishop McBride that the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary agreed to run the hospital of Bizana, in 1954, and they were over there serving the people for years. See documents and photos from the Archives of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Umzinto. The Sisters were always working together with the Franciscan Friars.

<sup>119</sup> There are different versions to the story. One is that the local magistrate refused permission to let a White man be buried in an African area. The people then went to Mthatha – a higher court – and that did not work as Mthatha agreed with the Flagstaff magistrate’s ruling in the matter. The people though did not give up, they went back to Flagstaff, approached one of the businessmen who had been educated by the Catholic schools in Flagstaff and he went to see the magistrate in Flagstaff privately, and that brought about the permission being granted. Another version is that, when the magistrate realized that the people were insisting with the request he wanted them to bring up proof of any other White person who had ever been buried in the area and the people referred to a popular Sister of the Holy Cross who had in fact been buried in the local cemetery and that was enough to let them go ahead with the funeral of their beloved Severin. Yet another version claims that it was the Paramount Chief, Mpondombini Sigcawu, of Qawukeni the Great Place, who granted permission to the people when they finally approached him. His wife is a Catholic and a regular one too, with services being conducted at the Great Place and he also attends them – there is a good relationship between the Great Place and the Catholic Church.

<sup>120</sup> Interview of 24 May 2010.

when Alypius Mangold came to join him, just before the Second World War, Severin went to Lusikisiki<sup>121</sup> and would go back to Flagstaff only after the internment. By that time Alypius had already left Flagstaff. The point here is that Severin was not by himself because he could not live with other Friars but because of the shortage of priests in the new Vicariate that had been entrusted to the Franciscans, in 1935.<sup>122</sup> In fact, almost all the Friars were living by themselves, coming together for meetings and sharing on a regular basis and for special occasions. The two ladies claim that Severin was such a humble man that even when the younger Friars, of the Irish Province, arrived to join him later, in the 1960s, he was extremely understanding and kind to them. They refer to one particular younger Friar who was not an easy person and could be harsh even to Severin, his senior, and yet Severin would tell the people not to worry about this younger man.<sup>123</sup> Of course, Severin's relationship with the Friars was obviously proved to be healthy when he was the superior in the Kokstad region; he showed so much care for them. As pointed out at the start of this section, Severin was at some stage the regional superior of the Franciscans in Kokstad. The kindness and loving service rendered his people in the parish community and the wider community – that will be dealt with in the next sections below – was equally and even more so toward his brothers, the Franciscans.

### **5.3. Relations between the Franciscan Friars and the Holy Cross Sisters**

One of the many entries recorded in the “Flagstaff Diary” of the Holy Cross Sisters is that on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 1946 Severin received the news of his appointment as the regional superior of the Franciscan Friars in the Kokstad Vicariate.<sup>124</sup> This is a position that had been up till then been held by Lucas Purstinger and was probably changed due to the latter's appointment as Administrator Apostolic of Kokstad after the removal of Bishop Sigebald Kurz.<sup>125</sup> The reason behind this event is not really clear, all that is provided in

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<sup>121</sup> “Flagstaff Diary”, 4 October 1939.

<sup>122</sup> As seen in his letter quoted above, Severin was looking for more Friars to join him in the vast area of Flagstaff. See Neumeier to Minister Provincial, 12 October 1936.

<sup>123</sup> Interview of Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana, 24 May 2010.

<sup>124</sup> “Flagstaff Diary”, 8 May 1946; also see 13 March 1948.

<sup>125</sup> “Flagstaff Diary”, 31 December 1942; *ibid.*, 17 January 1943; Lucas Purstinger's letter, from Kokstad, to the Apostolic Delegate Archbishop B.J. Gijlwijk, in Bloemfontein, 29 January 1943, Holy Cross Archives, Belgravia; letter of the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop B.J. Gijlwijk, Bloemfontein, to

the official documentation from the Church authorities is: “Jurisdiction of Vicar Apostolic withdrawn for the present and Fr. Purstinger nominated Administrator Apostolic”.<sup>126</sup> Without getting into the details of this matter here – this will be closely looked at in chapter 7<sup>127</sup> - one thing for certain is that the removal of Bishop Kurz was a shock to both himself and the Holy Cross Sisters, and probably to most of the people too. He reacted to this situation in a letter to Lucas Purstinger, reminding him that he was still the bishop of Kokstad and asking him to correct the wrong impression given to the people through the announcement that Lucas had made.<sup>128</sup> Kurz also wrote to Cardinal Maglione, in Rome, on the same subject.<sup>129</sup>

Back to the question of Severin, the Franciscan Friars and the Holy Cross Sisters in Flagstaff, the “Flagstaff Diary” and chronicles of the Holy Cross Sisters are full of references to the Friars’ life and ministries. That in itself is proof enough of the good relationship that existed between the two groups of religious men and women. The Sisters recorded with great joy the arrival of the Franciscan Friars in Kokstad, Flagstaff and other parts of the diocese.<sup>130</sup> The Friars presided over the ceremonies of the Sisters, when they were received into the Convent, or celebrated their jubilees;<sup>131</sup> they preached their annual retreats and those of the children of the Sisters’ convent school.<sup>132</sup> The Friars were very helpful to the Convent schools, both in Flagstaff and in Kokstad, visiting them and not only examining them on the religious subject taught by the Sisters but also giving some sweets and blessing their classrooms. They also blessed the workers’ quarters of the

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Lucas Purstinger, Kokstad, (seal of 25 January 1945); Decree of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith, Holy Cross Archives, 17 December 1942.

<sup>126</sup> Copy of Cardinal Maglione’s communication to the Apostolic Delegate, Gijlswijk, Bloemfontein 27 December 1942; also see “Flagstaff Diary”, 17 January, which records a correction of an earlier announcement, by Lucas Purstinger, and which then stated “that the faculties have been withdrawn only for the time being, i.e. for canonical reasons.

<sup>127</sup> In chapter 8, we take a close look at Bishop Kurz’s case.

<sup>128</sup> Lucas Purstinger’s letter, Kokstad, to the Apostolic Delegate, Gijlswijk, Bloemfontein, 29 January 1943.

<sup>129</sup> Document only marked “D4” and undated.

<sup>130</sup> “Flagstaff Diary”: 13 April 1935, creation of the new Prefecture; 8 December of the same year, official declaration of new Prefect and inauguration; 1 October 1936, Apostolic Delegate visits Kokstad and is happy to have the Franciscans in Kokstad...; 28 August 1937, arrival of new group of Franciscan Missionaries, and so on.

<sup>131</sup> “Flagstaff Diary”: Fr. Lucas preached at the Silver Jubilee of Sr. Chantal, 13 January 1939.

<sup>132</sup> “Flagstaff Diary”: Celestine gave retreat to the children from 21 to 24 May 1946.

Sisters.<sup>133</sup> When Severin became regional superior the Sisters enjoyed the visits of the Friars to Flagstaff and looked after their meals, especially when they came for their regular gatherings.<sup>134</sup>

#### 5.4. Visitors

One of the central elements of Franciscan life and spirituality is that of hospitality. Again this goes back right to the life of St. Francis and stretches right through centuries of Franciscan history.<sup>135</sup> The Franciscan Friars and the Holy Cross Sisters too had this mark in their home of Flagstaff, it was indeed a home for all who came visiting or passing through and this was true of church or religious officials and ordinary people. The chronicles and diary of the Holy Cross Sisters attest to this fact. Both Flagstaff and Kokstad were frequented by visitors, bishops, priests, sisters and brothers on their way to some church service or ceremony and those going for holidays to the coast, Port St. John's where some Orders/Congregations had holiday houses, or the parish there.<sup>136</sup>

We have to bear in mind, too, the fact that travelling in those days was not much of a luxury as the roads were not as comfortable as they became later. Journeys between places took much longer than today. As we have seen in this study, the Holy Cross Sisters and the Friars had to travel in ox-wagon or on horseback as cars were not easily available.<sup>137</sup> Poor people used to walk long distances and sometimes it took days to go to places. Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana told of people walking to Lourdes, in Umzimkulu, for church services and again many people would walk to Kokstad – a journey of an hour and-a-half by car today – to go to the doctor and even for shopping.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Kokstad Holy Cross chronicles, Belgravia, 20 April 1939.

<sup>134</sup> In the interview of Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana they told of beautiful relations between the Franciscans and the Sisters, the Sisters would look after the meals of the Friars and when Severin brought some poor people from his mission-stations the Sisters would provide some food for them (24 May 2010).

<sup>135</sup> Rule of 1223, chapter 6 and especially paragraphs 8-9.

<sup>136</sup> The diocese of Kokstad used to have a house in Port St. John's, so did the Sacred Heart Fathers of Aliwal North and more others.

<sup>137</sup> Letters of Gottschalk Kunsteiger and Melchiades Hoferichler, Hardenberg, 2 and 3 January 1936 respectively.

<sup>138</sup> Interview in Flagstaff, 24 May 2010.

In a way, South Africa was still living according to the standards of medieval Europe when Francis of Assisi wrote his Rule. And so, then, the Franciscan Friars and Sisters, in Kokstad, were implementing the life and teaching of their founder in a practical manner in this area of welcoming visitors.

### **5.5. Local Church community**

Referring to the local church community of Flagstaff obviously includes the mission-stations which the Friars served on a regular basis. As indicated above, the Franciscan Friars visited these mission-stations and they would usually bring services of various sorts, and would often be helped by the Sisters who would serve the people on health issues. There would also be catechesis, that is teaching of the faith. Again, it has been noted that the evangelization of the Friars and the Sisters was holistic: spiritual, intellectual or pedagogic, social, practical skills and physical.

The spiritual obviously covers the religious and church dimension, the intellectual covers the educational level which was practically implemented through establishing schools, the social covers gatherings of children for concerts and dancing, practical skills cover gardening, cooking, sewing and other such items, and physical covers sporting events. It has already been pointed out that the parcels of clothing items from overseas were used both for helping the poor who could not afford to buy from the ordinary stores and, at the same time, they were for fundraising projects for the church community. There was a healthy relationship between the mission, in Flagstaff, and the mission-stations, with the Friars, especially the priests, playing the key role in this regard. For instance, the priest, particularly Severin, would bring some poor needy people he had identified to the mission and the Sisters would co-operate with the priest by providing for such people according to their needs. Again, the Sisters would give food parcels, including vegetables from their garden, to the priest to help needy people. The local church community was strengthened through the presence of the school children, especially the boarders in Flagstaff. They brought new life to the community, especially in church services and activities. The “Flagstaff Diary” of the Holy Cross Sisters recorded children outdoing

each other in visiting the church and attending services, especially during the Holy Week (Easter).<sup>139</sup> These services were well-attended by the children, especially Coloureds and Africans (“Natives”).<sup>140</sup> Another entry recorded by the Sisters in their diary reads as follows:

The church was three times crowded to capacity. A well-rendered Missa Cantate by children of Mary and the Sisters added much solemnity to the liturgy...10 a.m. church was packed with Natives. Their service is always most touching...After Mass (12.00) they were all dispersed, some walk for 30 miles.<sup>141</sup>

As mentioned earlier on, the children attending the convent school were from all over the country and this contributed to the beauty and the richness of their talents and activities. Again, the church was a helpful means of bringing together the different racial groups that were not supposed to be so by the laws of the state. Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana made it clear that, first of all, the coming of the apartheid laws brought about much pain to all: priests, sisters, people and children. Secondly, Severin was very much against these and he insisted that he would be buried among his African people and not with the whites in Kokstad.<sup>142</sup> The schools run by the church would admit children of all denominations.<sup>143</sup> That brings up another point which should be noted here, and that is, conversions. The Catholic Church community received some members, particularly through education.<sup>144</sup>

A question to be asked here would be how much the church members were committed to their faith and Christian values. I think that this question should be directed to both the evangelizers or the missionaries and the local people who were part of the church. Alyward Shorter, a priest belonging to the Missionaries of Africa, posed a similar

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<sup>139</sup> “Flagstaff Diary”, 18 April 1946.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 21 April 1946.

<sup>142</sup> Interview of Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngeyana, 24 May 2010.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.; also see chapter 2 on the Holy Cross Convent School in Flagstaff where some few people were complaining about the catholic school, claiming it was catering only for Catholics and this was refuted by both the parents and the priest – Fr. Howlett, OMI – who had served the parish for some time...

<sup>144</sup> The “Flagstaff Diary” of the Holy Cross Sisters recorded one of the former boarders, Iris Methis, being received into the church and confirmed on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1936 respectively.

question concerning the Rwanda genocide of 1994. He referred to people, understandably of the Western world, who were exclaiming and asking: How could a people of the same nation, with the same faith (Catholic) of about 80 percent, commit such cruel violence against each other? The same people accused the Africans of being more faithful to their ethnic group rather than to their faith – blood is thicker than water, (water referring to baptism)! Shorter, then, responded by stating that we should perhaps ask even a deeper question, and that is: was Christianity well planted in the lives of those people? In other words, were the evangelizers, the missionaries who brought faith to these people, successful in their duty?

An entry recorded during the Second War World in the church at Flagstaff, when the Bavarian Friars were interned or taken away from their missions, gives us a hint on that very point of our discussion here. It refers to the numbers, especially of Africans, decreasing in church as the people missed their priest.<sup>145</sup> How would the Franciscans have evangelized the people? Was it a real commitment to the faith that was preached and taught, or was it just a superficial, cosmetic covering? I would like to believe that it was both of these situations. First of all, as it was pointed out earlier on, the Franciscans helped the people by providing for the poor in their basic needs, like food and clothing. Sometimes this has to be done, these basic necessities need an urgent response. But, then, we should not stop there, we need to go further and address the root-causes. This the Franciscans and the Sisters did by providing education at all levels as it has already been noted in the above pages. Education is key to freeing the poor and oppressed people. And that means that it is up to the people, then, to apply their skills in life and also to do so in their context and not just indiscriminately adopt principles that are not relevant and useful to their situations. Secondly, as was pointed out again above, the parcels from overseas were not providing people for free, at least not for everybody, but the items were sold – yes, for less perhaps but still sold – and the money was used for church projects. So, this was a healthy way of helping the poor.

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<sup>145</sup> “Flagstaff Diary”, 25 December 1943.

## 5.6. Wider community

In chapter one, we saw how, according to Peires, there were secular motives in the people's acceptance of missionaries who came among them.<sup>146</sup> I would like to believe that this reality equally applied to the amaMpondo where the Franciscans lived and worked. So, bearing this in mind, in this section I would like to show how the church, under the Franciscan Friars, related to the community in general. There is no doubt about it, the Friars did not touch only the lives of the people who belonged to the church officially; the effects of their ministry went beyond the borders of the formal church members.

The mission in Flagstaff and those in other parts of the diocese were centres of the public who approached the priests, the Friars and the Sisters with great honour and respect and that was simply due to the fact that these church men and women appealed to the aspirations of all who sought the truth and wanted to be freed of their personal, spiritual and social ills. And as part of this very situation, those who were able to, contributed to the church in various ways. So, it was a mutual interaction between the church and the larger community. Anastasia Groom and Getrude Mngenyana, during the interview, pointed out that the king of Flagstaff – George Ndabankulu – gave a sheep to the church whenever there was a ceremony. And, of course, being the leader he was not doing this just as an individual but as representative of his clan. Moreover, the people in the area followed that example too.<sup>147</sup> This was their way of acknowledging the work of the church in their place.

It was indicated above that the Franciscans had two schools in the Flagstaff area. I also pointed out that the second school would be dealt with in a later section of this study. I now turn to it here. It took place during the opening and blessing of the church (mission)

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<sup>146</sup> See chapter one, section 1.3. (Religious dimension).

<sup>147</sup> Interview in Flagstaff, 24 May 2010.

in Lumphondo, in 1949.<sup>148</sup> First of all, Anastasia and Getrude point out, the Paramount Chief of the amaMpondo people, King Botha, of eQawukeni Great Place, offered Father Severin a huge area of forested land and an ox. He then told Severin that he should develop the area, build it up as he (Botha) had seen how the Catholic church was doing wonderful work in this regard. Secondly, in continuing their story, the two ladies stated that some people who were attending that ceremony, on hearing those words from the Paramount Chief, were jealous, claiming that the Catholics converted people to the Catholic church and the children who attended the Catholic schools were bringing their parents to the Catholic faith. Thirdly, the area that Botha was offering to the church was full of rocks, trees and bushes. Then, when the church began their work on it, it was transformed into a developed land, with a school just like the ones that were built by the church in Flagstaff – St. Mary’s - and Mvalweni, in Mount Ayliff.<sup>149</sup>

There are certain points that need to be raised here. First of all, this King Botha Sigcawu is the one who was installed as Paramount Chief of eQawukeni, Eastern Mpondoland in 1939 and who was supported by the White government and preferred by the elite of both the Blacks and the whites, as seen above. Secondly, as we saw above, the 1930s to the 1950s the government was implementing its policy of controlling the land of the people and in the process it used the chiefs. Both of these points raise questions as to what the position of Botha Sigcawu was in that regard. Was he on the side of the White government which was supporting him, at least choosing him over his brother Nelson Botha who was supported by the traditional and inner circle of his father and who even went to court for his case?

Considering the situation in Mpondoland and the position of some of the chiefs, it is clear that Botha was – just like Victor Poto Ndamase, who was one of the amaMpondo elite behind Botha – was trying to keep a balance between loyalty to the government and popularity with his people; that was necessary for him. Although he might not have gone

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<sup>148</sup> Dischl concurred with the people’s date when he wrote about Severin: “Returning at the end of 1945 – i.e., from being interned during the Second World War - Fr. Severin launched a series of outstations...Solid churches were built in 1949 at Lumphondo...,” [Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, pp. 267-268].

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

to the same extent as Poto, yet he too had to please the White government on whom, as seen above, all the chiefs depended for their living. At the same time, Botha was fending for his people. As has been clearly stated in the above sections, the government employed chiefs as agents of its policy on land, to control the people and in the process the chiefs had to pay a prize, that of serving the government's policies. Botha was no exception in that regard; he did not have much choice. At the same time, by offering the land to the Church, particularly to the Franciscans in Lumphondo, Botha was entrusting the property of the people to an institution that cared for the people when the government was failing them.

As seen in chapter two, the Church was providing good education and a holistic one too for the people: with all the skills necessary for them to have a living. The Holy Cross Sisters and Fr. Severin had proved to be true advocates of the poor and the people had come to trust them; they realized that the Franciscans and the Sisters cared about them and so the King could entrust them with the land. As was noted in the above chapter, the traditional authorities of Mpondoland were very open and welcoming both to immigrants, particularly those who brought skills with them, and the Christian missionaries. The question of what side was Fr. Severin in all this has, therefore, already been answered. Severin was on the side of the people, the poor and the needy, those deprived of the benefits of the country, the oppressed. He hated apartheid with its policies of discriminating against the Blacks. At the same time, he did not encourage them to rise up in protest against the White government – as seen earlier on, his stance on this particular matter was more of prudence: advising his congregation to go and join but not to be in the forefront position. His direct response, if one may put it so, was to equip the people with skills that would help provide for the basic necessities of life; education was the answer. Furthermore, as a Franciscan Friar and Catholic priest, he believed that he had to teach people to pray for the transformation of the government and for the spirit of perseverance on the part of the suffering people.

Another person who was a close witness to that event in Lumphondo is Mrs Mbane. She was the catechist's wife in the mission-station of Lumphondo.<sup>150</sup> While on the whole her version agrees with that of Getrude Mngeyana, she introduced other details and some are quite different from Getrude's. First of all, Mrs Mbane attended school at that Catholic church school of Lumphondo, the very first one in the area which was in a hut and they were taught by a certain Mrs Zuziwe Khumalo.<sup>151</sup> That was in 1946. According to her, the Franciscan Brothers then came to Lumphondo to make bricks and were helped by the children in fetching water.

Gerry O'Reilly, who lived and worked with Severin for sixteen years and whom I interviewed, told a story about one of the Franciscan brothers which adds some fun to all the hard work that was going on.<sup>152</sup> He said that Brother Dositheus who used to have one glass eye, would pluck it out and tell the people that he would continue watching them even when he was gone from the site of the church-building. As a result, the people would work hard.<sup>153</sup> That was the beginning of the new church-building which was used for school, divided into two parts with a partition. In this new situation, one part of the building was used for school and then on Sundays the whole building would be used for the celebration of the Eucharist and church services, with the partition removed. The lower standards of the school used the hut while the higher standards, two up to four, used the church part of the school.<sup>154</sup> The teacher of the new school was a certain Mathilda who was from eMfundisweni.

The opening of the new school and church-building was in 1949<sup>155</sup> and, as Getrude pointed out, King Botha was present. During that opening ceremony Mrs Mbane had the privilege of being asked to look after the King's two children, Mpondombini and Stella Sigcawu, both of whom became leaders of the nation in later years.<sup>156</sup> Botha himself was

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<sup>150</sup> Mrs. Mabane, interviewed in Lumphondo, Flagstaff, 20 September 2010.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Interview of Gerry O'Reilly, (Boksburg, 29 March 2011).

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Mrs. Mabane, interviewed 20 September 2010.

<sup>155</sup> Dischl, *Transkei for Christ*, p. 268.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. Mpondombini – whose praise-name is "Thandizulu" – is the current Paramount Chief of the Amampondo, in eQawukeni Great Place, having succeeded his father King Botha who was at the

a Methodist, like all the Paramount Chiefs of the amaMpondo as that is a state religion in that part of the world, but obviously he had no problem with the Catholics and had to be open to all faiths as leader of the people.<sup>157</sup> According to Mrs Mbane, there were three points that Botha did during the ceremony and they are as follows: a) he praised the new building of the Catholic Church; b) he offered land to the Catholics and, c) asked the Catholics to establish a Convent for the Sisters in that part of the country. Indeed, then, as mentioned above, the King was more than welcoming to the Franciscans and the Catholics. Unlike Getrude's impression, Mrs Mbane's view is that the people were happy with the King's offer to the Catholics.<sup>158</sup> In fact, many left their "old ways" and joined the church, similar to the Mvalweni situation in Mount Ayliff.

Mrs Mbane claimed that before the opening ceremony of the Lumphondo church and school Catholics were "persecuted" by Anglicans – who were dominant in the whole area; Catholics had to hold services under trees, as they did not have a building, and due to the tension with the Anglicans they could not even ring the bell for calling people to their services.<sup>159</sup> The Anglicans, in fact, even removed the Catholics from another site in the area, claiming that the Catholics would take away their people – same sentiments that were expressed by Getrude. So, there was much competition between the churches in that area. Mrs Mbane claimed that the opposite happened as people joined the Catholic Church even more so in the new site which was meant to isolate them. The school grew in numbers and succeeded well. Young people completed their primary education and proceeded to secondary schools in other places, and some even went as far as tertiary institutes of education. This church school went on until about twenty years ago when, in that area, the government separated schools from churches and the Catholic school was moved to another place, about a kilometre away from the original site and it then went up to grade nine. Once again, Mrs Mbane referred to the fact that there were other projects connected with the school at Lumphondo, just like in other places. There were nutrition

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opening ceremony of the Lumphondo Catholic Church. Stella Sigcawu was Minister in the old "Transkeian government" and also in the new democratically elected government of South Africa (Minister of Public Enterprise).

<sup>157</sup> Mrs. Mabane, interviewed, 20 September 2010.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

projects, like gardening which produced vegetables for children's consumption and not for sale. The Sisters also got involved, coming with Fr. Severin and looking after the catechism, the church teaching. There was no clinic in this place as the Holy Cross hospital of the Anglican Church was only a few kilometres away. Mr Mbane, Mrs Mbane's husband, was a catechist and looked after a few mission-stations in the area: Khanyayo, Hlabathi, Lumphondo and others. Mrs Mbane also sang the praises of Father Severin, just like all the other people interviewed. She said that "he had a sweet personality, was good to all and looked after the poor, educating children and feeding them."<sup>160</sup> At that time, she claimed, Fr. Severin had about ten mission-stations to look after.<sup>161</sup>

Another person interviewed on Fr. Severin and the Flagstaff situation was Mrs Daki one of whose daughters – Nokubonga Annacletta Daki – joined the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Sisters, in Bizana. Mrs Daki was born and bred in Flagstaff and later got married in Bizana.<sup>162</sup> In 1949 she went to school in Lourdes Mission where she was baptized and confirmed, and that is where some of the Franciscan Friars and Franciscan Sisters of Solanus were based when they first arrived in Mariannhill Vicariate.<sup>163</sup> She was assisted by Fr. Severin with her education and even getting a job from Lourdes Mission later.<sup>164</sup> She had much to say about Fr. Severin, for all he did for herself and many other people, especially poor young people. Her father had died while she was still a child and Fr. Severin obtained benefactors for her. Later he went to the magistrate, in Flagstaff, to find out about scholarship and she got it for her higher education, from standard six to Form III. After that, Fr. Severin again took her to Mariazell, a Catholic Teachers' College at the time, where she trained as a teacher. Then, when the Mariannhill Missionaries were

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Today the number of mission-stations is about double that number.

<sup>162</sup> Interview in Margate, 20 September 2010.

<sup>163</sup> As noted in chapter one, this was one of the Mariannhill Missionaries centre and it produced many leaders in the Catholic Church in South Africa, some of the lay leaders went out to other parts of the country, including Kokstad diocese. The Mariannhill Missionaries served Kokstad from this Mission before the handing over to the Franciscan Friars in 1935. Lucas Purstinger was there, in 1932, to learn Zulu and also got trained as missionary in South Africa. The Franciscan Sisters of Solanus were also based there before they settled in places like Maris Stella and later in Kokstad diocese.

<sup>164</sup> Interview in Margate, 20 September 2010.

looking for Catholic teachers at Lourdes Mission Fr. Severin got her there.<sup>165</sup> Mrs Daki knew the schools that were established by Fr. Severin in Flagstaff. She added that it was not just the ones that have been mentioned so far but there were others – near eMfundisweni, another one was near Marhatshu and another one was at Ntlezi.<sup>166</sup> She claimed that Fr. Severin wanted quality education and not the “Bantu education” of the apartheid government. It was pointed out above that he just loathed apartheid. And so he promoted private schools. Mrs Daki reiterated what Mrs Mbane said about Severin in relation to young people: he was great in helping the young people, especially with education. Mr Dolo, the catechist in Flagstaff had a huge family and, again, Severin helped in educating all of them. Finally, Mrs Daki was honoured when Fr. Severin blessed her marriage in 1961. When I asked her, she stated clearly that she would indeed promote her cause of canonization, i.e. the process of the Catholic Church whereby a person is publicly declared a saint.<sup>167</sup>

David Barnard, a Franciscan Friar who lived with Severin in the last few years of his life, told me that he was truly a holy man, so humble and prayerful. In fact, Barnard is the one who found him dead in the house one morning, in Flagstaff.<sup>168</sup> As a good and saintly man he was blessed with a peaceful death. Another Franciscan Friar that I interviewed and who lived with Severin for sixteen years – Gerry O’Reilly who is originally from the Irish Province that took over from the Bavarian Friars in Kokstad – highlighted the human aspect of Severin.<sup>169</sup> In the first place, Gerry reminded me that the Bavarian Friars initially came out to South Africa to do Franciscan spiritual work according to Bishop Fleischer’s invitation and vision, and that they were frustrated in the end, especially when they were in Izingolweni.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Interview in Grahamstown, 9 May 2010.

<sup>169</sup> Interview of Gerry O’Reilly, 29 March 2011. O’Reilly was in Flagstaff from 1973 to 1989 the year of Severin’s death.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.* Izingolweni, as we saw in chapter one, was where the Bavarian Friars eventually settled in 1933 in the Mariannahill Vicariate after they being placed in different missions (and monasteries).

There are a few points to note here. Firstly, the fact that Gerry started by referring to this experience of the Bavarian Friars shows that Severin would have shared and discussed it with him a number of times, and most probably he looked back at that experience of the Bavarian Friars with some melancholy. Closely linked to that is the fact that Severin himself had not been part of the group that was in Izingolweni, he was not in the first group of six pioneer missionaries who came out from Bavaria in 1932; he came out only in 1935 and went to Kokstad diocese where the Bavarian Friars were going that very same year. So, this would also be an indication that not only did the Bavarian Friars share their experience of Izingolweni and the whole story of Mariannahill with the other Friars who came to join them, like Severin, but it also tells us that at least some of the Friars who followed the six pioneer missionaries came out with the intention of living according to the original vision of Fleischer and the Bavarian Franciscan Province. It was probably not easy for them to adjust to the new form of that vision, to adapt it to a new and different context as it was to be found in Kokstad. We saw the elements making up that vision in chapter one. In Kokstad, particularly in Flagstaff, that vision was implemented in a manner quite different from that of Mariannahill.

Was Severin disappointed too when he arrived in South Africa only to find that the original vision was not to be implemented as it was meant to be initially? Well, if he was disappointed, that would be understandable because he was human too. However, the argument of this thesis is that he and the other Bavarian Friars did not give up on the vision; they did their best to implement it even in a different context. In the second place of Gerry's discussion on Severin, he stated that Severin was a man of his time.<sup>171</sup> This too is part of being human, born and bred in a particular place and time – and his background would have influenced him. Under that premise, Gerry first mentioned the fact that Severin was faithful to the things he did – doing what he was told to do, like the men and women of his time who were obedient to the word of their superiors. Gerry provided an example here of the time when Severin was to be interned. When the police arrived in Flagstaff to arrest him, apparently he asked to say the Holy Mass - Catholic celebration

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<sup>171</sup> Interview of Gerry O'Reilly, 29 March 2011.

by the priest – before they would take him away, assuring them that he would not escape. His request was granted.<sup>172</sup>

Gerry insisted that Severin belonged to the old school in which missionaries were providers and patronizing.<sup>173</sup> And so, when the new system came under the auspices of Lumko,<sup>174</sup> Severin found that very difficult. For instance, Severin relied on the old style of catechists who used to be the right hand of the priest and did much of the work for the priest in teaching the people and leading services in the absence of the priest. Lumko sort of empowered everyone, conscientising all members of the church of their important role and participation, according to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.<sup>175</sup> Another little story about Severin, which also shows his human dimension, was that of being a good chess player.<sup>176</sup> Gerry pointed out here that Severin was a strategist. The doctor's wife (Demalagrbe) told him that they knew it when Severin had lost: he would bang the door on his way out.<sup>177</sup>

When Severin was sick and almost died in 1986 he found it hard to resign as Parish Priest of Flagstaff.<sup>178</sup> He claimed that the bishop – Wilfrid Napier, now Cardinal, in Durban – did not accept his resignation. Indeed, the bishop did admit that he had not accepted

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid. I will deal more with this in chapter seven of this study, under the Bavarian Franciscan Friars' relations with other religious groups, particularly in the section of the Bavarian Franciscan Friars' Catholic attitude. For now I would just like to point out that while one would not want to defend or excuse Severin in his limitations and mistakes – of course he did have his limitations, that is only human – at the same time, this needs to be seen within a context. For instance, almost all the missionaries that time fell into the same trap – whatever nationality or Order in the Catholic Church, and no matter what denomination or Church they belonged to. That was the understanding of the people in those days. Gerry is an Irish and they too had a similar attitude in their mission work. In the minutes of an important meeting – a Provincial Chapter - of the Irish Franciscan Province it referred to a concern of such an attitude: Friars were paternalistic towards their people in the missions (in South Africa and Zimbabwe). Read the "Irish Provincial Chapter" (St. Isidore's Irish College, Rome, 1972).

<sup>174</sup> Lumko is an institution of the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference which promotes the Church's teachings not only in Southern Africa but internationally too. Lumko material and staff members have gone to Germany, Asia and other parts of the world – their system of training and teaching is very popular, practical and up-to-date with modern thinking and ways of doing.

<sup>175</sup> As indicated in the introduction of this research, the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) opened doors in various ways: the updating of religious life according to the modern times; the lay people's role and participation in the Church - the Church is not just for a few specialists, like priests, Sisters, Brothers and Catechists but is for all its members (all the baptized).

<sup>176</sup> Interview of Gerry O'Reilly, 29 March 2011.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

Severin's resignation as he realized that it was not easy for him and so he wanted him to rather die as Parish Priest.<sup>179</sup> It is interesting though that Severin had gladly handed over being superior of the Franciscans in Kokstad; he handed it over to Canisius Bertsch. Was it perhaps more difficult to be in charge of his Franciscan brothers than to be in charge of the Christian congregation? And that is quite possible too. Severin was very much human and indeed a man of his times, a German who had been brought up and lived the times of the Nazis in Germany. Fitting the stereotype of a "true German", he followed the orders given him and could not be faltered on that. But this means he was also limited, this mentality limited him in challenging the state. It is true that he did so much good for the people, as we have seen all the stories and the projects he founded. But, as we will see in chapter seven of this research – on the relations of the Bavarian Friars to the state – the Germans did not do much in challenging the Nazi regime. That was a setback in the life and ministry of the Church and the Franciscans were part of that. In chapter eight, for instance, we will see the Irish Franciscans and how they too lacked vision in challenging the status quo of the apartheid regime, particularly with the Seminary question that they were staffing. But there were obviously exceptional individuals like Rudolf Frank O'Flynn – Parish Priest of Sharpeville, 1956-1965 – who championed resistance to the apartheid system. Now, while Severin was a champion in his part of the land, in Flagstaff and Kokstad, he would not be that kind of person who would defy the government. He worked within the system. That was his human limitation and yet, at the same time, I certainly would not see it taking away the credit given him in the above pages.

The human side of Severin only confirms an underlying element in the topic of this thesis, a thread that runs through the entire work of this research. That is, those missionary men and women of our history were just as human as we are. According to me, that does not take away their greatness – they are still the heroes and heroines of this history, with all their human failings, in spite of that and indeed sometimes because of their human limitations.

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

### **5.7. Traditionalists – their attitude towards the missionaries and the Church**

In the above sections, particularly in the part just before this one, we have seen that the Friars' presence and ministry affected the people's lives and that refers not only to Catholics, Christians and other denominations or believers but also to all other people in general. In those schools that were built by the Church there were also children of people who did not belong to any particular faith or religion, people that are sometimes referred to as "non-believers" – whom here I would prefer to call "traditionalists, since they too had their own traditional beliefs and practices – even though the children in those schools had to attend the services of the Catholic Church. Again, in the communities and villages that the Friars helped to develop – with their social projects – there were also people who were not Christians and did not necessarily belong to any particular denomination.

In this section I would like to take a closer look at the attitude and reaction of traditionalists to the presence and work of the missionaries. I consider this very important because such a study would reveal either the limitation or the universality of the missionaries' impact on society. Again, when we listen to those outside the area of the Friars' life and work – that is, those not directly falling under their faith and religion – that would give our research a broader and a more objective perspective. Whether we like it or not, if we are to have a critical and credible study of a subject, we do need to look at it from as many angles as possible. Now, in trying to apply such a principle to our present research there are certain limitations and difficulties that have to be noted. The main one being the scarcity, and indeed the absence, of "non-believers" or "traditionalists". During the interviews I so often begged the people interviewed to bring forth names of such individuals, those people who did not belong to any religious affiliation at the time of the missionaries, and the response was always negative. That is, such people either have died or they have since joined some religious group, mainly Christian denominations found in the area, like the Methodists, Anglicans, Zionists and even Catholics – some of whom were even originally against the Church.

In approaching this subject during the interview of the people in eDutyini, Bizana, I introduced it this way:

Today I was supposed to interview non-believers or traditionalists but, unfortunately, I have been told so many times that such people are not to be found anywhere anymore. So, I would like you to really do your best in putting yourselves in the shoes of those people whose side of the story I would have liked to hear. So far, I have been listening to your stories about the missionaries' presence and work among you and the people, for which I am truly grateful. At the same time, we need to consider this story from the perspective of those who were not coming to Church, those who were not formal members of the Christian movement. What did they think of the missionaries and the Church as such?<sup>180</sup>

I made it clear to them that such a reflection on the non-believers' view and attitude would not in any way obstruct our understanding and appreciation of the missionaries hard work among them (Catholics) but, in fact, would enhance our study of the good done by the Church and the missionaries as it would prove that we are open to critical observation of people other than our own. And, again, should there be mistake on the part of our missionaries we would be in a position to reflect on those and learn from them.<sup>181</sup>

Before going into the actual content of the interview, I would like to mention certain points which I believe should help in our analysis here. First of all, there were only three people who shared their understanding and their experience of the subject, less than the previous interviews that had been conducted in the same place. To my knowledge this was not due to the fear of the discussion on the people's part. The people were always happy to meet me, as a priest coming to their Church and, like most Africans, they even made sure there was a good lunch for me and for all after our discussion. Some of the factors that would be likely causes for fewer people participating are the following: the summer heat and unreliable weather – it could rain anytime, which is not the case in winter – would have made the older people not to take risks, and indeed one elderly

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<sup>180</sup> Interview of Luciana Msongelwa, Patrick Candlovu and Agnes Nomvete, 7 February 2012.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

woman who was an important source in all the previous interviews was not present at the last one.<sup>182</sup> Again, request for the interview was a short notice.

The second point I would like to make regarding the interview is that I will not follow the order in which the people interviewed shared. I will rather follow the points raised in the course of the entire discussion which lasted just over an hour.<sup>183</sup> In fact, even within the same contribution of one person interviewed I take a certain point and leave others for another part of the entire story, i.e. have reconstructed the conversation and discussion.

An observation raised during the interview that I think should be mentioned, in the very first place, is that the attitude of traditionalists towards the missionaries and the Church was very positive. This was due to the fact that generally people at that time were respectful of religion and that is even those who did not go to church whatsoever.<sup>184</sup> In the second place, as a result of the above, traditionalists would go to church for special events and celebrations and they would be wearing their traditional garb. They went to observe what was going on – not with a negative attitude but rather out of curiosity – and some of them ended up by joining the church as they liked the missionaries' attitude and manner of doing things.<sup>185</sup> When I asked during the interview the reason for people, especially traditionalists, for liking the missionaries they simply stated that the missionaries appeared to be good, humble and innocent people who would not harm anyone, they were compassionate. This could be rather a pious reaction on the traditionalists' part. Moreover, I think it is one of those situations where one would not be sure who actually saw the missionaries that way. In other words, was it really a true reflection of the traditionalists' attitude towards missionaries, or was it more of the Christians' interpretation of facts?

One of the interviewees added that in Brooksnek, Kokstad, where Fr. Lucas Purstinger used to go for services, the people - and those were particularly traditionalists – used to

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<sup>182</sup> Mrs. Bhala, personal communication.

<sup>183</sup> The interview was originally scheduled to start at 9.30 but due to some other difficulties I arrived only at 12.00 and, as usual, the people were extremely understanding and patient.

<sup>184</sup> Interview of Luciana Msongelwa, Patrick Candlovu and Agnes Nomvete, 7 February 2012.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

say that he was God's image or photograph. And that was again because of the manner in which he did things, so humbly and not discriminating against anyone, including traditionalists.<sup>186</sup> One of the traditionalists who eventually joined the Catholic Church was a certain "Ma-Fourteen" Maria Zameko who died in 2002. She joined the Church around 1963, coming from a traditional family, with no particular Christian denomination. How she joined the Church was through a group within the Church known as "The Legionary of Mary" who used to go around visiting people's homes, praying, sharing or testifying and doing some good works the families where it would be necessary. For example, if they found an elderly person by him/herself, they would clean the hut, fetch water and collect firewood for the person, and so on. "Ma-Fourteen" was moved by this act of the Legionary of Mary group and later joined the Church; she grew strong in her faith. Her children also joined the Church but later left it after her death, especially as the girls got married to traditionalists or other denominations. Her husband was not against all this but he himself never joined.<sup>187</sup>

A third observation in this discussion was that "traditionalists", and other people too, liked the missionaries for practical reasons. For example, one of the interviewees – who was a member of the Legionary of Mary that time – told us that when they went visiting people's homes they would sometimes find a person in danger of death and the family or the person themselves would ask that they be buried by the Catholics. The missionaries usually did bury such people and so, then, more people would join the Church as they were saying that the Catholic Church did not discriminate against anyone.<sup>188</sup> I think that this is a quite a valid argument in this discussion as the reality of death affects people of all walks of life - Catholic, Christian, Jew, Muslim, Traditionalist or whatever status a person holds - and so the way we treat dying people and the people's dead ones will certainly affect the people in one way or another.

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Interview of Luciana Msongelwa, Patrick Candlovu and Agnes Nomvete, 7 February 2012.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

Another practical reason for the people liking the missionaries was that of second hand clothes that, as we saw earlier on, were sold for low prices.<sup>189</sup> This project which was meant to assist the needy people attracted many traditionalists and members of other Churches. As for the very poor who just could not afford to pay anything, they would be identified and be given clothes for free. The person selling the clothes would take the case to the missionaries and then the poor person would be given for free.<sup>190</sup>

So, then, it was not just the pious and spiritual element, seen above, that appealed to the people about the missionaries. There was something more to it. Up till now we have been considering cases of people who, traditionalist as they might be, yet were quite open and positive in their attitude to the missionaries and the Catholic Church. What about those instances where people were the opposite, where there was some resentment and resistance to the missionaries and the Catholic Church? There are two cases that I would like to relate here. The first of these is about a certain Vayina Majavu of eSiphaqeni, in Flagstaff, whom I interviewed.<sup>191</sup>

Majavu is a traditional healer without any formally established religion. She was born in December 1940, in Ncische, Mthatha. During the *umnyama* (solar eclipse), which occurred about 1940 she was in that place, Ncische, near Cicira in Mthatha, and there were Catholics in the area. In 1951 she began looking for her mother who had abandoned her as a little child and she found her the following year. The reason for her searching for her mother was mainly due to the fact that she, the mother, had been appearing to her in her dreams and her face was not happy at all as she regretted her action.<sup>192</sup> She then went to a Catholic school which was in her home area. But then she was ill-treated by her step-father and could not stand the situation of both the school and home with all the abuse she was experiencing at home.

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Interview of Vayina Majavu, 17 April 2012.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

When I asked her for some description of the Catholic Church, especially the missionaries that were there that time Majavu portrayed the situation before the Second Vatican Council. That is, there was no eating of meat on Fridays; she went on to say that the priests used to visit the people's homes, prayed for the sick and looked after the orphaned children, including herself.<sup>193</sup> She then went on to say something that showed her little knowledge on the Church, stating that the Catholic Church came first and from it came Jesus and Mary followed by the other Churches like the Weslyans (Methodists), Anglicans, Presbyterians and others. Moreover, Majavu was frank in saying that she did not know the Catholic Church in Flagstaff, she had never been to church there – she knew it only in Mthatha – she did not know the Franciscans, nor did she know their work. She did point out though that as she lived among the Catholic neighbours, in Flagstaff, she has found them very good – they were kind and sometimes assisted her with food and donations when in need.<sup>194</sup> Furthermore, Majavu said she would not mind being buried by the Catholics when she died and has used their holy water and incense. She would like to be buried by both the Catholics and other traditional healers. So, she absolutely had nothing against Catholics.

Majavu told me that she became a traditional healer and was praying for people, using candles, holy water and incense together with *amayeza* (indigenous herbs).<sup>195</sup> When asked about her understanding of the Church and people's traditional practices she responded this way. The Church did, and perhaps still does, suppress the people's traditions and customs, claiming that people worship demons, the dead and so on. However, she said, the Catholic Church did not have such an attitude, it was open and she gave the example of African traditional beer that she would brew and drink with others, especially when she had to perform her rituals. She concluded by saying that she left the Church due to her sickness and not because of any other reason. The Church was in fact the Christian Zionist (Zionist Christian Church), in 1958, and this was precisely due to

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

what she had said above about some Churches, that they do not accept beer (traditionally brewed) and traditional rituals, together with “ancestor veneration.”<sup>196</sup>

There are quite interesting points raised by this case of Majavu. First of all, I think it is worth noting the fact that she has combined two important aspects in her background, the traditional African which includes the healing practice and the Christian religious one in which she acknowledges the role played by the Church in positively contributing to her life. Secondly, I find her distinction between the fair and the unfair attitude of Christian religion towards her traditional practice quite amazing, she is convinced of her position and will not be veered by any person in that. In other words, she knows that her traditional beliefs are equally important as those of Christians or any other religion as long as they respect the fundamental principles of life. And, I believe, it is only such a person – who is convinced of her or his belief and practices – who will be able to respect others and treat them for who they are and not what one wants them to be. Such a person is secure in him or herself, he or she knows his or her identity and so will be able from that deep inner power to affirm others.

The missionaries too could have learnt from such a person as Majavu, I believe. In other words, those missionaries who were disrespectful of other religious beliefs, including African traditional or indigenous practices, were partly insecure and ignorant. They failed to go beyond the stipulated laws and practices of their own religions and in this way were limited. Therefore, they made the mistake of looking at life and other people only through the lens of their established religion. That is a mistake of fundamentalism and fanaticism. While Majavu might have been kind to the Catholic Church there are also other views on this whole question. And sometimes even within the Catholic Church there were opinions that differ with the stand that she took. Professor Lamla is such a person, a very committed and active Catholic. In my interview of Professor Lamla he pointed out that the Church – including the Catholic Church – took time to recognize the fact that amaMpondo were a culture *sui generis*.<sup>197</sup> To highlight his point he referred to certain

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<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Interview of Professor Lamla, 16 April 2012.

instances. The first one being that of a person who died in an accident, especially murder, and would not be buried in his or her home according to the people's tradition. Moreover, this is not only in Mpondoland, reminded Lamla. The Church did not agree with that.<sup>198</sup> The other instance is that of polygamy. A man with more than one wife wanting to join the Catholic Church would be compelled to renounce the other one or two wives. Even the famous Fr. Bernard Huss – the Mariannahill Missionary who was a champion of social projects – renounced the people of Keilands for their “heathen” customs.<sup>199</sup>

On the question of the attitude of non-believers towards the Catholic Church Lamla agreed with the above idea – expressed by some people, like Advocate Nkalweni of Mount Ayliff referred to in the above sections, the people of eDutyini, Bizana, and Majavu herself.<sup>200</sup> That is, Lamla reiterated that Catholics were held in high esteem by non-Catholics and were sometimes viewed as if they were superior to others.<sup>201</sup> Another reason for this attitude on the part of non-Catholics, continued Lamla, was that the Catholic Church resisted the apartheid government's Bantu education until they had to give in, in the 1970s. Finally, Lamla pointed out, the use of Latin was part of this whole question of the Catholic Church's being elevated by non-believers – it just gave the Catholic Church an image of a mysterious atmosphere around it.<sup>202</sup>

The second case that I would like to relate here is the story of Nyathela mission-station. This mission-station was obtained in a manner that was certainly not easy. As the story is told by the people it goes like this: The people of this particular area were not happy that a church was to be built by Catholics there. The reason for that was a belief that whenever the Catholics build they take away the people's land.<sup>203</sup> The situation got so serious that whenever the members of the Church made the blocks (mud) the locals would trample upon them during the night. However, the Catholics persevered and continued to make the blocks afresh. The priest – Germain Mannion, an Irish Friar – also

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid.

<sup>200</sup> Advocate Nkalweni, interviewed at least twice, is a retired man but is currently the acting Magistrate of Aliwal North.

<sup>201</sup> Interview of Professor Lamla, 16 April 2012.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Interview of Luciana Msongelwa, Patrick Candlovu and Agnes Nomvete, 7 February 2012.

came up with the idea of building with iron sheets and when the matter was taken to the chief of the area he admonished his subjects to accept the Catholic Church as the members of that Church were equally his subjects. He also ordered the people to look after the church-building.<sup>204</sup> The mission-station got its name, “Nyathela”, from that very act of the people’s resistance and rejection – the word “*ukunyathela*” meaning “to trample upon” – since the people destroyed the blocks made by the Church members.

In fact, before the Catholics moved to this place – Nyathela – they had planned to build on another spot which had been offered by the chief, some few kilometres away from this one. However, the Methodists protested, claiming that they were too close to their church and should go elsewhere.<sup>205</sup>

I think that this is a very interesting story for various reasons. First of all, it proves that there was some resistance to the Catholic missionaries - whatever the reasons might have been - and the resistance could be quite strong too. Another interesting factor about this incident is that the people of that area – Nyathela – eventually ended up joining the Catholics, the very people they were fighting. It was pointed out during the interview that those people were so convinced of their Catholic faith that they even advised traditionalists to bring their young wives to the Church claiming that the incense used in church was helpful to barren women who would fall pregnant.<sup>206</sup> Although this was a superstition on the part of those new converts, yet I still think that it is quite interesting as it shows the turning around of people’s attitude, from fear and resistance to devotion and love of the newly discovered faith. A final observation in this whole discussion is that it is important for us to remember the socio-political context of our study. That is, as has been seen above, apartheid and colonialism had taken the people’s land away from them. Whether this was in the form of the betterment and rehabilitation programme, or the Land Trust, or the Land Act of 1913 and other Acts that were directed against the Black majority’s life and movement, the people were deprived of their rightful property. Therefore, the Mpondo Revolt that ensued and the resistance to the apartheid laws. No

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

<sup>206</sup> Interview of Luciana Msongelwa, Patrick Cndlovu and Agnes Nomvete, 7 February 2012.

wonder, then, that the stories of “Nyathela” resisted the Church’s building in their area and that would be intensified by any rumour or belief that the Catholics would take away the people’s land once they were allowed to establish themselves in their midst. The people would be against any Church or person believed to be that way inclined, and so it was not being anti-Catholics as such. And that would also explain why the people turned around and adhered to the Catholic faith after they had settled in that area for quite some time, the people realized that there was no truth to the rumour.

So, in conclusion to this and even to all the chapters above, it can be seen, from these and the stories mentioned earlier on, that the church under the Franciscan Friars had a social impact, just as we saw under the Holy Cross Sisters in chapter two of this study. The religious dimension that they brought to the people had far reaching consequences in their lives. And all this would have been in keeping with the original vision of Bishop Fleischer who invited them to this country, in 1932. It was particularly in Flagstaff that the Franciscan dream Fleischer and the Franciscans had was realized.

## **PART IV: COMPARISON BETWEEN MARIANNHILL AND FLAGSTAFF**

### **Chapter 6 Mariannahill revisited**

The intention of this chapter is to underline certain points that have been raised earlier on in this study, especially in chapters two, three and four. The reason behind that is to highlight the success of the mission in Kokstad and how the Franciscan dream was realized, particularly in Flagstaff. I propose to do that by comparing the Mariannahill situation, where the Franciscan dream originated, with the Kokstad story where it eventually got actualized. In making the comparison, it is hoped that this will help us better understand what happened in the two situations concerned and so learn from mistakes of the same. It should also prove what has been so much part of this study concerning the agents of our history, i.e. the humanity of those men and women.

I would like to start this exercise by looking at some areas that are common to both the Mariannahill and the Kokstad/Flagstaff situations. In the second place, I will move on to those areas that I consider as dissimilar to both situations. Since the details of these stories have already been done in the above chapters, the intention here is not to repeat them. I will just refer to the incidents concerned. In both areas – similarities and dissimilarities – I will give comments meant for necessary explanations and clarifications respectively. I will then end the exercise with concluding remarks.

#### **6.1. Areas common to both Mariannahill and Kokstad/Flagstaff**

Both of the groups of missionaries were of German/Austrian/Swiss origins; they belonged to religious Orders – Trappist monks and Franciscan Friars; both were missionaries working mainly among Africans, in South Africa; their dioceses were taken out of older and larger ones – Mariannahill had been taken out of Durban (Oblate Missionaries) and Kokstad had been taken out of Mariannahill; both groups of

missionaries had social involvement and upliftment as part of their evangelization; due to the nationalities of the missionaries in these groups, both of them were affected by the Second World War and, finally, in both of them we see the role played by human nature in their evangelization.

The above seven are the points that I would like to consider for highlighting the common areas of the two situations - of Mariannhill and Kokstad - that affected the Franciscan Friars when they came to South Africa. And, as we will see, some of these points might have been in-between, not quite clear which side they fall under, whether they are similarities or dissimilarities.

In the first place, we are dealing with people of the same nationalities; they were mainly from Germany and some were Austrians and also Swiss (Mariannhill Missionaries)<sup>1</sup> with the same language and mentality in many ways. Even today, we find that both the Mariannhill Missionaries and the Franciscans of Bavaria have both nationalities in their religious institutes. So, one would ask the question whether the tension between these two religious groups was based on their religious backgrounds or, rather, on other points of conflict? In response, I would argue that the tensions were far more personal – petty squabbles over “turf” – spheres of influence, access to and power over converts and parishioners. It was just human nature.

In the second place, the two groups belonged to religious Orders within the Catholic Church. Why then clash, especially being church members and even leaders? Again, human nature does not change totally, and perhaps should not, just because of religion. Thirdly, again these two religious groups of men were missionaries to African people in South Africa. We saw earlier on, especially in chapters one and two, that the church in South Africa started by focusing on the Europeans that had arrived in this country from various countries overseas. The two groups of our consideration here, the Mariannhill

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<sup>1</sup> Even the women section of the Mariannhill Missionaries was characterized by this element, i.e. the first women missionaries came from both Germany and Austria. Mariannhill Missionaries also had Swiss members although those would generally be in the Mthatha Province of their Order. See Hermann, *100 Years*, p. 11.

Missionaries and the Franciscans, both concentrated their work on the Africans, those that up to that time were not cared for by the church. At the same time, while these missionaries should be commended for their bravery and initiative in this regard, as it has been shown more than once in this study, they came to their subjects in Africa with their prejudices which they brought along from their European background and these were often enough an inhibition to their work.<sup>2</sup>

In the fourth place, it is a matter of interest that both of these religious groups settled in new missions, dioceses that were formerly part of older and larger ones. This was the process that they both followed. Mariannhill diocese used to be part of the large Vicariate of Natal which was under the Oblates Missionaries and, as we saw, it was separated from that and given to Mariannhill Missionaries under Bishop Fleischer, in 1922. The same process was followed when the Franciscans were given their separate entity of Mount Currie which later became known as “Kokstad diocese”, taken out of Mariannhill. Again, this process was not without tension: Pfanner were not great friends with the bishop of Natal that time, Jolivet who, for instance, did not want the Holy Cross Sisters that came with Pfanner to settle in Mariannhill. The Mariannhill Missionaries too, we saw, were not happy with the separation of their Vicariate as it was given to the Franciscans (1935).

In the fifth place, both the Mariannhill Missionaries and the Franciscans took social involvement seriously. One would wonder here whether the Franciscans learnt something from the Mariannhill Missionaries in this regard. Lucas Purstinger was involved in a social organization of the church introduced by the Mariannhill Missionaries, particularly Bernard Huss the champion of social development for the African people. One of the projects toward this end was what came to be known as the Catholic African Union, which was formed in 1928 and was in response to Popes Leo XIII’s and Pius XI’s call for the Church’s support for any group that worked for the workers’ justice and upliftment.<sup>3</sup> This served as an umbrella for all the various associations of the Church in socially uplifting the people and was embraced by the Catholic bishops of South Africa and so

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<sup>2</sup> Cf Gottschalk Kunsteiger’s letter of 1932 to his Minister Provincial, in Bavaria, in which he clearly expresses little belief in the “Black Brothers” among whom he lives (chapter 3 of this study).

<sup>3</sup> Hermann, *100 Years*, pp. 55-58; Brain, “Moving from the Margins”, p. 203.

spread to many dioceses beyond Mariannahill.<sup>4</sup> On the front page of the *Sunday Tribune* newspaper for 8 January 1939 Purstinger's photograph is seen prominently, with an article about the Franciscan Order and other ancient Orders, like the Benedictines, that were represented at that Fourteenth General Congress of the Catholic African Union.<sup>5</sup>

In the sixth place, both groups of religious men were affected by the Second World War. We will take a closer look at this when we study the relations with the state. For now, it is enough to mention that the two religious groups – because of their German and Austrian members respectively – suffered from the War as they were interned and found it difficult to continue with the mission work after that.<sup>6</sup> Ratering perhaps summed it all up when he stated that, “A hostile attitude developed towards German speaking missionaries.”<sup>7</sup>

The seventh and final point that I would like to refer to in this commonality between the two religious groups of our consideration is that of human nature. These men were just as human as any other. As we saw earlier on, the Mariannahill Missionaries were not happy with the coming of the Franciscans to their territory and this caused tension between the two groups and that affected the man behind the Franciscan dream, Bishop Adalbero Fleischer. The Franciscans, however, were no angels either. When the Bavarian Friars had finally settled in their area in Kokstad diocese, there was an element of dissatisfaction among some of them when the Irish Friars came to their help, in 1946, and eventually took over practically.<sup>8</sup> Human nature made these men to be led by a spirit of competition and power and sometimes that led to undesirable consequences.

So then, the Mariannahill situation – the ill-treatment of the Franciscans – should not be seen in isolation from these points otherwise one risks the danger of bedevilling one

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> *Sunday Tribune*, January 8, 1939.

<sup>6</sup> Read Hermann, *100 Years*, chapter 14;

<sup>7</sup> H. Ratering, “The Birth of the Congregation and Mariannahill 1909 – *Quo Vadis?* Two Centenary Talks”, (Mariannahill 2009), p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> In one of the interviews with Egbert O’Dea he tells how Lucas Purstinger just saw no other man but himself as suitable candidate for bishop of Kokstad, and this was so especially after the removal of Siebald Kurz, as seen above (chapter 3). He would have been greatly disappointed when Rome appointed one of the Irish Franciscans, John McBride, who was a missionary in China.

group while canonizing the other, something that would be unfair to the history of the church and humankind. There were good and not so good elements on both sides and that fact is true of every group of men or women. When we recognize this point of human nature in those great men, then we will be easily prepared to learn from their mistakes and also be more open to understand our own shortcomings.



Marianahill Monastery – Workshop where many locals were trained



Franciscan Brothers' Workshop, Kokstad, where locals were trained

## **6.2. Areas of dissimilarity between the two situations**

I would like to turn now to areas of dissimilarity between the two groups of our study. I must start by stating that there are not many of these, at least not as many as there are areas of commonality. There are just two areas that I would like to bring up that show differences in the two missionary groups of our concern.

Firstly, the Mariannahill Missionaries came out to South Africa as Trappist monks who practice strict silence as part of their rule. Their leader, Abbot Francis Pfanner, saw the need for evangelizing the local Zulu people among whom the monks had settled in Mariannahill, in 1882, and that was the beginning of a process that led them into a missionary institute (opened in 1909).<sup>9</sup> So, the Mariannahill Missionaries were originally monks whose rule had the core element of silence and that implied – as that is still the case today for monks – enclosure, living within the walls of the monastery and both of these aspects of the monastic tradition go back to the times of St. Benedict the founder of Western monasticism in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> Franciscans, on the other hand, were founded as itinerant preachers. Francis of Assisi intentionally opted for a life outside the walls of the monastery, breaking away from the traditional understanding of religious life in church and society.<sup>11</sup> So, then, Franciscans were not and should not be monks, they are friars, moving about the world, among people, mixing with them instead of separating themselves from them as the monastic life does.

The second area of dissimilarity between the two missionary groups of our study is the time of their arrival in South Africa. The Mariannahill monks arrived in this country in

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<sup>9</sup> Ratering, “The Birth”.

<sup>10</sup> Benedict – considered as the “father of Western monasticism” - was born at Norcia, in Umbria (Italy), in 480, and died in 547.

<sup>11</sup> Francis himself went to experience life in the monastery, visiting Benedictine monks for some time, and he valued some of the elements of monastic life. At the same time, he made a complete break with monasticism, claiming that the gospel life must permeate the world and not be confined to the walls of the monastery. According to his belief, the laity can and should live the life of the gospel as much as the monks just that they would do so in their own state in their families (Secular Franciscans, or Third Order of St. Francis who are part of the Franciscan Family).

1879, in Dunbrody, Port Elizabeth, having been invited by Bishop Ricards of that diocese.<sup>12</sup> They then moved on to Mariannahill, in 1882, where they finally settled. The Franciscans arrived fifty years later, in 1932. So, then, it is not surprising that tensions arose between these as they were two groups with different spiritual foundations and, as we saw above, they were just as human as any other people. Over that period of time traditions, practices and habits had already been established and any new group coming would easily be seen as interfering with the way of life of the older group, the Mariannahill missionaries in our case.

In conclusion here, perhaps it is worth noting that both of these religious groups had differences and tensions within their origins and development. These factors led to reform movements in the successive years and centuries which in themselves cannot be seen just negatively as they often helped their members to grow in their objectives, purifying their motives. The Franciscans, having been founded by Francis of Assisi and officially approved by Pope Innocent III, in 1209, began questioning their vocation (their calling) right after the death of the founder in 1226. There were basically two streams within the Franciscan movement and as time went on they grew more and more estranged to each other. On the one hand, there were those who longed for the original ideals of Francis and his early companions, the ideals of simplicity, strict poverty, itinerancy which were expressed in the Rule and the Testament of St. Francis and his other writings. These Friars felt that these ideals were being compromised by the institutionalization of the Order and the Church and advocated for a return to them. On the other hand, there were those Friars who felt that the Order had to move with the times and the Church development as the Church leaders were calling upon the Order to serve the people in institutions like parish communities, universities and so on. These emphasized education, organization and institutions.

There were accusations and counter attacks, even physical at times. The group of the original ideals was always a minority, and thus often suppressed by those who wanted to move with the times and the Church and were in the majority, but they were very

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<sup>12</sup> James Ricards was the bishop of Port Elizabeth diocese between 1871 and 1893.

powerful and influential. They organized protests which could not be ignored. As a result of disagreement on the exact meaning of the Franciscan vocation there were reform groups formed and this process continued for centuries, with different Popes intervening. The most recent merging of the different reform groups was by Pope Leo XIII in 1897.<sup>13</sup> However, some Franciscan scholars claim that this was not the end of division within this largest of spiritual families in the church.<sup>14</sup> Nimmo, a Franciscan historian, holds that these were two sides that were both part of the development of the Franciscan history and these should not be compared over and against each other as there were good men and not so good ones on both sides.<sup>15</sup> I think it is interesting that this same argument is followed by Peires in his consideration of the conflicts between the African peoples, particularly the Xhosa in the Eastern Cape, and the Colonists.<sup>16</sup>

I do not intend to go into the details of this story of the Franciscans, as that is not our objective here. The point here though is that the Franciscans have always experienced tension and conflict in their history right from the start. And this makes us wonder how much our missionaries to South Africa were prepared to face such challenge in their situation here. As we saw earlier on, the missionary Friars in South Africa certainly learnt from their forebears in the protest they put up in Mariannhill monastery. The other question we could ask would be how much tension there was within that group of Franciscan missionaries.<sup>17</sup> What about the Mariannhill missionaries? In their origins too we find splinter groups in form of reform movements. The Trappists themselves are a reform of the Cistercians who had also broken away from the Benedictines. Once again,

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<sup>13</sup> Maurice Carmody has worked extensively in this field. See M. Carmondy, *The Leonine Union of the Order of Friars Minor 1897* (New York, 1994).

<sup>14</sup> History of the Franciscan movement is very much characterized by this tension and division. At the height of this tension, in the fifteenth century a certain Pope is supposed to have delegated members of two different religious groups – a Dominican and a Jesuit – to look into the infighting of the Franciscans and one of them came to report to the Pope that it was just what the Franciscans have always done, fighting among themselves (and nothing more)!

<sup>15</sup> Nimmo's comment on the division within the Franciscan movement, in Maurice Carmody's "Notes on the History of the Franciscan Movement", (Rome 1994).

<sup>16</sup> See chapter one of this study, sections 1.2 and 1.3, the socio-political and the religious dimensions respectively.

<sup>17</sup> When the Bavarian Friars were given option either to stay in Kokstad or go to the newly opened area of Eshowe diocese, in Kwazulu ("Zululand" as it was then known), some of them chose not to go there and it is sometimes seen as part of differences and even tension within the group. Egbert O'Dea, in the interviews, suggested that the Bavarian Brothers felt suppressed by the Friars who were priests. Again, he pointed out that Lucas Pustinger, the first superior, was seen as a hard man on others.

all this only goes to show that these religious men were all human, as much as we are. This point is revealed again, in addition to the letters of Gottschalk Kunsteiger already referred to above, in those of Magnabonus Koller.<sup>18</sup>

### **6.3. Concluding remarks of the comparison**

In concluding this part, then, we should say that the Franciscan vision was realized in Kokstad and not in Mariannahill as had originally been intended by Fleischer; it was actualized in a manner different from the original one. First of all, it was away from the area where it was supposed to be. But perhaps that was not a bad idea as we just saw above that Franciscans are itinerant preachers by the nature of their calling, and not static, stable like the monks. Secondly, the question would be whether the vision was implemented to the same extent in which it was meant to be. However, that is not really our scope here, it would be for another project. The question was raised above as to whether Fleischer perhaps felt disappointed by all parties concerned, including the Franciscans and his own Mariannahill Missionaries.

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<sup>18</sup> It has already been noted, in chapter 3, that he wrote many letters, corresponding with his superiors and his friend Walter who had also been a missionary Friar in South Africa. Again, the letter in which he challenges the bishop of Kokstad – Sigebald Kurz – to tell him in his face instead of back-biting has been pointed out above. Another one in which he writes about the Franciscan Sisters of Solanus also makes this point clear – written from Bizana to the bishop, 2 September 1942.

## **PART V: RELATIONS WITH OTHER ENTITIES – THE CHURCH AND STATE**

### **Chapter 7 Relations with other Christian Denominations and African Initiated Churches**

#### **7.1. Other Christian Churches – relations among each other**

British conquest of South Africa - both in 1795 and in 1806 – exposed the country not only to the dynamic global economy but also to a variety of Christian denominations. The Settlers brought along their churches to South Africa, and they were mainly Protestant groups; the Catholic Church was slow in starting, as we saw in chapter one. As for relations among these churches, the first point to note would be that there were common areas, on the one hand. They focused on personal conversion; emphasized Biblical authority; cultivation of intense devotion and the Christian imperative to preach the Gospel. One of the outstanding features of this time, then, was a zeal for Christian missions. By the early nineteenth century South Africa had become one of the most intensively occupied fields of Christian mission in the world.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand though, there were differences among these Christian denominations and these were mainly in the areas of ecclesiology and politics. Each of them brought along some aspirations and fears from historical background of Europe and the French Revolution. They wanted to introduce to their new country those organizational characteristics that they had in Europe: Episcopal, Presbyterian or Congregational and to have good relations with the state, just as it was the case in Europe.<sup>2</sup> As for relations between these Christian denominations and the Catholic Church, there was a distance between them and both sides were responsible for such a state.

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<sup>1</sup> Elphick & Davenport, “Christianity in South Africa”, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

Brain's contribution to Elphick and Davenport's Christianity in South Africa makes it clear that the Catholic Church has remained apart from the other Christian denominations throughout its history in South Africa.<sup>3</sup> This was due to the Church's strong allegiance to the Roman See and also because of its emphasis on doctrinal orthodoxy which prevented its members from co-operating with the rest of the church in pastoral or socio-economic matters. As for the other churches, they also kept a distance from the Catholic Church – both the English-speaking and the Dutch Reformed Church – and particularly the latter considered the Catholics as “the *Roomse gevaar*”.<sup>4</sup>

Looking at this situation from the perspective of mission in the 1940s, Stuart Bate concurs with the point that the Catholic Church alienated itself from other Christians and religions as it went out to the missions with the idea of saving primitive peoples from being deceived by other religions. It saw itself as the true Church of Christ and so its mission was to draw all non-Catholics into the true (Catholic) Church.<sup>5</sup> When the Oblate Missionary Bishop Allard was sent out to South Africa by his Superior General to go and evangelize the Zulu people of Natal, in 1852, he told him to go “not just to a few heretics” in towns, and he was, of course, referring to the White Settlers of other Christian denominations.<sup>6</sup>

Another significant factor of this question was that of the Dutch Reformed Church, which originated from Calvinism. First of all, the Afrikaner nation – basing themselves on the Calvinist doctrine of predestination - considered themselves the chosen, redeemed people of God, just as Yahweh had chosen the people of the Old Testament. They believed that God had given the Afrikaners, according to his choice and promises, the land of South Africa. Naturally, for them, this meant that they had the right to possession of the land here. Secondly, all other groups, particularly the indigenous peoples, were not part of this choice and of God's promises; although again there were some Reform Church groups

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<sup>3</sup> Brain, “Moving from the Margins”. See also especially J. Brain & P. Denis (eds.), *The Catholic Church in Contemporary Southern Africa*, (Pietermaritzburg, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.; also see Christopher Ulyatt (Prefect Apostolic of Volksrust), “The English Franciscans in South Africa”, (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 1965), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Christopher Ulyatt (Prefect Apostolic of Volksrust), “The English Franciscans in South Africa”, (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 1965), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Brain, “Moving from the Margins”, p. 197.

who argued that slaves and other indigenous groups could become part of salvation through baptism. On the whole though, the White population did not believe in baptism of slave children – only the Company officials practiced this sometimes. Part of all this argument was that if the slaves were baptized, then they would have to be freed and not treated as slaves and this was not acceptable to many Settlers. This led to the beginning of formal church apartheid.<sup>7</sup>

Missions in South Africa did not start with the Reformed Church but with the Moravians which was a break-off from the Lutherans in Germany. Georg Schmidt was sent to South Africa to evangelize the Khoikhoi (in 1737).<sup>8</sup> Unlike the Reformed Church, Moravians believed that Christ's salvation had been won for all nations. Naturally, here in South Africa this led to opposition. When Schmidt was deported his ministry continued under Khoikhoi leadership who held on to their faith until new missionaries of the Moravian Church came<sup>9</sup>; in 1787 they came and extended their missionary work to the Xhosa.<sup>10</sup> In 1792 they found Lena, a Khoikhoi woman holding services in her house.<sup>11</sup> But the opposition from the White population continued; more other missionaries to the indigenous people were also targeted. Dr. Philip of the London Missionary Society, who had arrived in 1819 and not only evangelized but also fought for the rights of the indigenous people, met with opposition from the Settlers.<sup>12</sup> The English-speaking and the Afrikaner churches sometimes agreed when it came to guarding their political and economic position against the indigenous people. In fact, the English-speaking Christians wanted conciliation with the Afrikaners, especially after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).<sup>13</sup> However, later when the Black members of the English-speaking churches fought for their rights many of their White leaders sided with them.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Elphick & Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa*, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> Elphick & Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa*, pp. 28-29.

<sup>10</sup> Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> Elphick & Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa*, p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", p. 36.

<sup>13</sup> Elphick & Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa*, p. 156.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

## 7.2. African Initiated Churches

In this section I rely very much on Hennie Pretorius and Lizo Jafta's study of the African Initiated or African Independent Churches.<sup>15</sup> The idea here is obviously not to reproduce their work but to bring up certain important points which I consider relevant to our present topic. We will have to see how the Franciscan Friars related with the other Christian denominations and the African Initiated Churches.

In 1997 about 72 percent of the African population of South Africa were Christian, a huge growth from the approximately 46 percent of 1911.<sup>16</sup> This is to be understood in two ways which are closely related, and those are: a) the number of Christians had grown in the South African population, and b) this phenomenon was also in comparison of Christians with other religious groups – Jews, Muslims, Hindus and African traditional religion. During the twentieth century this reality has been particularly so in the Black population which is the largest section of the South African peoples.<sup>17</sup> As we saw in the above section, there was an unhealthy attitude in the Christian churches of European origin towards the indigenous peoples of South Africa. This factor is one of the reasons for the creation of the African Initiated Churches. As we will see, there was a quest for a better religion in which Africans would feel more at home against the background of, firstly, all-White leadership to which the white people clung and, secondly, an African expression of worship. In other words, these African Initiated Churches wanted to indigenize Christianity.<sup>18</sup> And this was a positive development of Christianity.

In 1991 there were at least 9.2 million members in these churches; comprising 47 percent of all Black Christians. More people in South Africa belong to these churches than to those of Western origins.<sup>19</sup> I think that it is important for us here to clarify the terms “African Initiated Churches” and “African Independent Churches”. “African Initiated

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<sup>15</sup> H. Pretorius & L. Jafta, “‘A Branch Springs Out’: African Initiated Churches”, in R. Elphick & R. Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa*, pp. 211-226.

<sup>16</sup> Elphick & Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa*, introduction.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Pretorius & Jafta, “A Branch”, p. 211.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Churches” would refer to the distinctive African origins of these churches, whereas “African Independent Churches” would point to their refusal to depend on foreign resources, both materially or financially and person-wise. The search for independence and the rootedness in the soil (African) is a positive development of the Christian faith in a South African context and not just a rejection of a foreign Christianity.<sup>20</sup>

We are dealing with huge numbers here and so an indication of the significance of this subject. There are at least 6000 of such churches in South Africa alone and, again, there is a great variety among them, with different categories.<sup>21</sup> In them there would be the following elements: some would be bridges back to African culture; revolts against colonialist oppression; search for supernatural power; above all, there is the aspect of physical healing.<sup>22</sup> They were a very significant part of the world into which the Franciscans came to live and minister from the 1930s onward. Just to mention some of the major ones of the same churches: Ethiopians – there is even a branch of this group known as “Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion”; Zionists – with its hundreds if not thousands of branches; Pentecostals – again, with various groups within them. Ntsikana, the Xhosa prophet, inspired the formation of African Initiated Churches. In the 1879 Frontier War thousands of Christians sided with the rebels and this was a sign of future Christianity (as this had not been the case in earlier wars).<sup>23</sup>

The Ethiopians arose in the late nineteenth century under ecclesial and colonial circumstances. It was a direct expression of resistance against missionaries, White Settlers and the colonial government and so the concern of these churches was not primarily on spiritual matters but social, i.e. land, oppression, unemployment and so on.<sup>24</sup> “Ethiopian” – (1871 and even before) - Africans, both in Africa and in the United States of America, interpreted social evils, like slavery and oppression, in terms of “Ethiopia” as found in certain biblical references. For example, Psalm 68: 31 reads, “Let Ethiopia stretch out her hands to God”; again, the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by the apostle

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 212. See also Etherington, “Recent Trends”, p. 204.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., See also Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 37-38.

<sup>23</sup> Pretorius & Jafta, “A Branch”, p. 213.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

Philip,<sup>25</sup> which was seen to be salvation of African people without mediation of Western churches.<sup>26</sup> By 1902 “Ethiopianism” referred to the rest of the indigenous church movement.<sup>27</sup>

This whole idea, in fact, covered all spheres of the peoples’ lives: religious, spiritual, social and economic. For instance, many of the ANC leaders and leaders of other political organizations struggling for freedom in the African continent were either from this religious movement or had some association with it. Until the mid-nineteen hundreds the Ethiopian movement formed the majority of African Initiated Churches; then it seems that the indigenous Spiritual Churches (“Zionists”) took over in the 1970s.<sup>28</sup> But still the Ethiopian Church is quite prominent among Blacks and is one of the largest among South African Blacks. In general, they have retained the traditional spirituality, vestments and symbols (rituals), but are also more tolerant of indigenous spirituality than the mainline churches, and even their names indicate this factor.<sup>29</sup> The “Zionists” and the “Pentecostals” have more or less similar origins to those of “Ethiopianism”. They would emphasize the Spirit (Holy) and indigenization of services, appealing to the members, who are mainly African, and addressing their daily practical needs, like suffering, evil spirits, that whole question of healing, and so on. There is plenty of symbolism and ritual.

### **7.3. Bavarian Franciscans and Catholic attitude**

As we saw above, Catholic attitude towards other Christian denominations was one of distancing itself from them. The Catholic Church considered itself as being the only true Church and so all the others were “heretics” and the pagans to whom the missionaries were sent had to save them from being “deceived” by the other religious groups. If this mentality was applied to mainline Christian churches, it would be even more so with the

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<sup>25</sup> Acts of the Apostles, 8: 26-40.

<sup>26</sup> Pretorius & Jafta, “A Branch”, p. 213.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

African Initiated Churches, the reason being that these were not from the “civilized” Europe or the Western world but from the dark and poor continent of Africa.<sup>30</sup>

The Franciscan Friars who came to South Africa were not any different to this Catholic teaching and attitude in relation to other Christian denominations and other religions. First of all, being from Bavaria, which is still considered the centre of Catholicism in Germany,<sup>31</sup> they would have had that attitude of superiority. In the letter the Minister Provincial of the Bavarian Province, Polycarp Schmoll, wrote in response to Bishop Fleischer’s invitation in 1932, he refers to the fact that it was the first time in the history of the Province to send missionaries to a mission territory where there were Catholics, Protestants and “pagans”.<sup>32</sup> He, therefore, asked the bishop to carefully look after the young missionaries. Furthermore, the Provincial assured the bishop that he would look after the financial needs of the missionaries, by begging from benefactors in Europe and the United States.<sup>33</sup>

The Provincial was a man of his times, a time in which the distinction between Catholics and other religions and non-believers (“pagans”) was so significant that it was a taboo for Catholics to mix with those groups. In those days if a Catholic married a Protestant or a “pagan”, the latter two would have to convert to Catholicism and their children would naturally be Catholic. Secondly, the Provincial undertook to look after the material needs of his men; it was a time when the missionaries were supplied with practically everything for their needs from overseas. Africa was seen to be too poor and would not be expected to make any contribution to its own structures, let alone its expatriate missionaries. While, of course, this was advantageous for the missionaries and, to an extent for the

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<sup>30</sup> As seen earlier on, David Bosch’s study, in his book *Transforming Mission*, shows that due to the West’s advance in technology and science it considers itself far superior in every other aspect as well, including the spiritual one. In the first place, according to Bosch’s argument, the West needs to realize that its superiority in technology and science has its limitations as these do not all have all answers. Secondly, technological and scientific progress does not necessarily imply spiritual superiority as well. The West has much to learn too from other parts of the world in certain spheres.

<sup>31</sup> John Allen shows this element very clearly in his biography of Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) who is from Bavaria. [*Pope Benedict*, especially pp. 3-4.]

<sup>32</sup> Letter of Polycarp Schmoll, (Minister Provincial), Munich, to Bishop Adalbero Fleischer, Mariannhill, 23 February 1932. Appears in Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 175-176.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

mission territories, it also had quite negative impact as the people were given the idea that they could not do anything of value for themselves. Churches were just an import from the West, both the structures and the mentality, given for free. This, of course, would not help much in making the people feel responsible for the church, both the building and the spiritual values of it. It was “Father’s church”, or the “Romans’ church”.

Magnabonus’ relatively long letter of May 1939 once again reveals something of the Franciscans’ relations with other churches.<sup>34</sup> There are a few points to be noted in the letter. Firstly, he told of the many difficulties and challenges they were facing in that part of the world, Pondoland, concerning the life of Catholics in the midst of Protestants and “pagans”. For example, he reported that the Protestant churches would not make a big issue when a man had a number of wives as long as he paid his church tax. This was not acceptable to Catholics. Secondly, converts from the Protestant to the Catholic Church learned the extent to which the Catholics were hated by other churches. Those churches claimed that the Catholic Church was from the devil and led to hell. Added to this, it was extremely difficult to be a missionary in such a large area which was largely Protestant. More missionaries were needed to cover the area.

From a more positive perspective, Magnabonus reported that when the Catholic converts noticed the tendency among some of the other churches to break into splinter groups, they began to see the importance of the more unified nature of the Catholic Church. He also emphasised the importance of having a Catholic school in the area. In that way, the children would learn the Catholic faith instead of being immersed in a Protestant faith. Costly as a school might have been, it was worthwhile.<sup>35</sup>

We saw how Gottschalk thought about Africans in regard to religious life as it was led in Europe, that he did not see Africans fit to live in such a way, and the same would apply to the Christian life as well. I think that it is worth quoting him again here - “I noticed that

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<sup>34</sup> Magnabonus (Koller) to Minister Provincial, 19 May 1939 – a five page letter.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

one may not use our standard for the Brothers, neither for the Christians.”<sup>36</sup> As pointed out in chapter three, on this very same letter of Gottschalk, this was a general mentality of Western missionaries here in Africa and in other parts of the so-called “Third World”. The point though was, the missionaries expected the Africans – and Asians, South Americans and others - to lead a Christian life that was gauged by Western standard; there was no room for indigenization. Again, let us remember that this was long before the Second Vatican Council which brought about changes and adaptations in many such areas and mentality.<sup>37</sup>

When I interviewed certain people in the Bizana area who knew Magnabon well they told me the following. First of all, there were the following Christian denominations in the area: the Methodists, the Anglicans and the Baptists.<sup>38</sup> To my surprise, they claimed that there were no Zionists or Apostles yet at the time. Regarding relations with these churches, Mrs Bhala shared that the Roman Catholics and the Methodists were not on good terms. As an example, she said that the Catholics used to hold their services at old Mr Khatywa’s house, the catechist’s father, who then suggested that they should get their own site. The other churches in the area though, especially the Methodists, were not happy with the Catholics getting their own site as they felt that they would just take over the whole area. Others still were saying that the Catholic Church was for whites and they (Catholics) should be in town and not in the villages. Again, the Methodist church members at some stage trampled upon and destroyed the mud bricks of the Catholics as they were preparing to build their church. The Baptists were not close to the Catholic church and so were no threat to them. The old man, Mr Khatywa, once told the young people to marry each other, within the Catholic church so that the tension would be contained and not continue between Catholics and other churches.<sup>39</sup> So then, in such a situation among the various denominations the Bavarian Friars could not be of great help

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<sup>36</sup> Letter, Kunsteiger to Minister Provincial, 4 December 1932.

<sup>37</sup> The Second Vatican Council was in 1962-1965, and topics such as mission work and evangelization, inculturation or indigenization of the Church in mission lands were discussed. It came up with a far more positive teaching on such issues.

<sup>38</sup> Interview of Luciana Bhala, Sophia Macandlovu Mbhele, Getrude Candlovu and Agatha Nomvete, 10 October 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

in easing the tension as they had a fixed mentality of the superiority of the Catholic Church.

This leads us to another question, closely linked to the above-mentioned point of the attitude of the Church and the Bavarian Friars to other churches. That is that of what the Friars' way of evangelization was like? Was it a German, European or was it African? This question was raised in chapter 4, in relation to the Friars' ministry to the local church community, particularly in Flagstaff. There we saw how the Friars did their best in evangelizing the people through education and that through this means they equipped the people to translate Christian values and apply them to their daily life, in their cultural context. So, here we want to take a closer look at that same point, listening to the people to whom the Friars ministered. Again, we saw in the above section how the African Initiated Churches focus precisely on this point, implementing the values of the gospel in their own traditions as Africans. In the interviews with the people of Bizana, at eDutyini, most of the people gave the impression that the missionary Friars fell short of this truth, that they made mistakes in this area.

Agatha Nomvete was of the opinion that the missionaries failed the people when it came to their traditions and that instead they imported the European ways of doing.<sup>40</sup> Sophia Candlovu agreed with this, providing an example of those who went to school at Lourdes Mission, that they came back not eating meat that was sacrificed in honour of the ancestors, as the missionaries were anti-ancestors. Again, *ukuthonjiswa* - girls' ritual of womanhood (puberty) - was not allowed by the church. In general, the people agreed that the missionaries should have rather engaged with the locals and discussed customs, dealing with the parts that were not Christian instead of dismissing the entire tradition.<sup>41</sup>

As a result of the church's antagonism to the people's practices and traditions even the language and terminology was changed, by the people themselves, as they were afraid of being seen doing them which would lead to their being "cut off" from church

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<sup>40</sup> Interview of Luciana Bhala, Sophia Macandlovu Mbhele, Getrude Candlovu and Agatha Nomvete, 10 October 2010.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

membership.<sup>42</sup> Christians who were caught practicing such traditions would be labelled “pagans”. The customs referred to were: “*ukuthonjiswa*”; “*ukuchaza*”, “*ukufak’intambo*”<sup>43</sup>, and more others. In this context I would like to tell the story of my father who was a catechist. I believe that he was a great catechist, quite capable of working with the people, with natural skills and ways of handling different situations. It was partly due to this that the priest in my home area transferred him from where he was working to the main mission, as the catechist there was away for a year or two. This was in the early 1960s. Due to my father’s effective way of working with the people many of the traditional people came to church, converting from their old way of life. The young men and women also followed him. In fact, he knew their ways quite well as he had been leading that way himself. When they came to church on Sunday, they were wearing their traditional clothes, which were not the western ones, and these were dubbed with ochre which was part of the people’s tradition and decoration. But the Sister working in church – an African - was not impressed with that, she complained to my father, saying that these people were dirtying the priest’s robe as he had to move along the middle aisle which the people had filled up so that the priest had to push his way through in order to get to the altar (the sanctuary) where he positioned himself to lead the celebration. When the priest – himself a missionary – heard this complaint, he was not happy at all as he was glad to see the church packed. So, in a way, the Sister failed to appreciate the people’s ways of doing and preferred them to put on western clothes. Sometimes, local people after conversion could be harder with their own traditions.

To the question of what the result of the Friars’ projects in the places where they were working, whether the products of those projects – the pupils taught at the Catholic mission schools – were of any value to society, whether they contributed in any way to the local people’s lives, the people could not say much on this, but simply referred to a certain gentleman who was heard singing praises of the Catholic schools, saying that they

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> “*Ukufak’intambo*” refers to the practice of taking parts of the cow’s tail, putting it around one’s wrist as a sign of being accepted by the family.

helped with forming of people's character.<sup>44</sup> This sounded very similar to what the two ladies, Getrude Mngeyana and Anastasia Groom, had said about Mvalweni in Mount Ayliff where the Friars had founded a church and a school.<sup>45</sup> Once again, the reality is that the Friars were men of their times. One of the great missionaries of the Church, Saint Francis Xavier - a follower of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and his contemporary – was a missionary to the East, India and Japan. In one of his letters to his founder and leader, Saint Ignatius, he wrote the following:

We went through the villages of the new converts who received baptism a few years ago. No Portuguese lives in these parts, which are utterly barren and poverty-stricken. The native Christians are without any priest. The only thing they know about Christianity is that they are Christians. There is no one to offer Mass for them; no one to teach them the Creed, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, the commandments.

So, since I came here, I have had no rest. I have been going from village to village and every child not yet baptized I have baptized. So I have brought redemption to a very great number of children who, as the saying goes, cannot tell their right hand from their left. But the children would not let me say my office or eat or rest till I had taught them some prayer...<sup>46</sup>

Saint Francis was born in Spain in the year 1506. He joined Saint Ignatius – founder of the Jesuits (Society of Jesus), himself a Spaniard and based in Rome – and was ordained a priest, in Rome, in 1537. He went to the East and spent ten years there as a missionary, in India and Japan.<sup>47</sup> This is the kind of mentality that prevailed in the missionaries of those times. As Bosch shows in his book, *Transforming Mission*, the theology of one period did not necessarily end in that particular epoch, it went on and continued to dominate in the successive centuries even when a new period had been ushered in. Bosch points this out particularly in relation to the emergence of the “Postmodern Paradigm” at the end of the “Modern Era”.<sup>48</sup> He states that paradigm shift does not occur overnight, it

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<sup>44</sup> Interview of Luciana Bhala, Sophia Macandlovu Mbhele, Getrude Candlovu and Agatha Nomvete, 10 October 2010.

<sup>45</sup> Chapter 4 – Mvalweni was one of the places where the Friars had a church and a school. People there converted, joining the church and stopped their old, unbecoming and unacceptable practices.

<sup>46</sup> Saint Francis Xavier, Book 4, Letters 4 and 5 in *The Divine Office, The Liturgy of the Hours according to the Roman Rite*, Vol. I (London-Glasgow 1974).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, chapter 10.

takes decades and even centuries to establish itself.<sup>49</sup> This was true in the Catholic Church too, as much as it would have been with other denominations and religions. Indeed, one could say the same with secular movements and ideologies, political or social.

Another point worth noting by Bosch here is that of the idea of “mission”. He points out that the word itself has been used more so among Christians since the 1950s, and its concept has been broadened since then.<sup>50</sup> Before that time “mission” had a limited meaning: sending of missionaries to a territory; activities of missionaries; geographical area of missionaries; agency which dispatched missionaries; mission field; centre from which the missionaries operated, and so on. And a theological synopsis of mission that time would have been: propagation of faith; expansion of the kingdom of God; conversion of the heathen; founding of new churches. Having said so Bosch points out that this understanding of “mission” was introduced to the church by Jesuits in the sixteenth century. Before that, “mission” was only applied to God’s sending of his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, into the world. And the new sense – from the sixteenth century – tied up “mission” to colonialism.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, it was the time of discoveries – when the Spanish and the Portuguese “discovered” new worlds of Africa, Asia and Americas. And the Jesuits – being founded by a Spanish, Ignatius of Loyola – were part of that development. Again, we have to remember that this kind of mentality and attitude was rooted in the Catholic Church’s theology of the Middle Ages in which it was stated very clearly that “*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*”, i.e. “Outside the Church there is no salvation”. This was first stated by Cyprian, one of the prominent Fathers of the Church of the third century. While he applied it in relation to his context of North Africa, it was extended to the entire Church by some other Church leaders, including Popes like Boniface VIII (1302), Benedict XV (*Maximum Illud*, 1919), Pius XI (*Rerum Ecclesiae*, 1926), Pius XII (*Ad Apostolorum Principis*, 1958), and Church Councils (Council of Florence, 1441). Bosch concludes that because these peoples to whom the Europeans

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

went (“discovered”) were different they were seen to be inferior and, therefore, could be enslaved.<sup>52</sup>

The Friars then were also part of the world in which they lived, and those were times before the Second Vatican Council which profoundly shook the thinking and attitude of the Church towards other religions and peoples. Before the Council the Church saw itself as the only bearer of truth and light for all. And any people who were not part of it were doomed, living in darkness and had to be saved by conversion – and remember that too was not always in a gentle manner – so that they would be saved.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., chapter 7.

<sup>53</sup> Read Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 67-70.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Relations with the State**

The phenomenon of church-state relations can be traced back to the origins of Christianity and that is itself based on the scriptures. Both the Old and the New Testament have contribution to make to the understanding of relations between the church and state which has been marked both with friendship and tension, even to the point of persecution and killing of church members by the rulers. In the Old Testament we are told of how the people of God, the Israelites or Jews whom God had chosen to be his own nation and over whom he was the ruler, began to look for a king like all the other nations surrounding them.<sup>1</sup> After trying to dissuade the people, through the prophet Samuel who was their judge, Yahweh eventually and reluctantly allowed them to have a king.<sup>2</sup> Their first king was Saul, son of Kish<sup>3</sup> who happened to be a failure, i.e. pleased neither God nor the people he ruled. The ideal was that the king would govern the people in the name of Yahweh, obeying God's ways (commandments) himself, being close to God and being God's son so that Yahweh would continue to be the ruler of his people through that person.<sup>4</sup> It was Saul's successor, David,<sup>5</sup> who probably came to that ideal more than any other ruler in Israel. David was anointed by Samuel too, just as Saul had been, and that was after Yahweh had rejected Saul due to his failure.<sup>6</sup> David was such a great leader that he combined the spiritual element with the administration aspect so well that the people of Israel always looked up to him and even after his death they expected the Messiah to be the son (descendant) of David.

In following that tradition, the Christians who see themselves as a spiritual heritage of the Jews, the new people of God, consider Jesus as David's descendant.<sup>7</sup> As already indicated above, there were times when relations between the early Christian church and

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 8:1-18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Samuel 8:19-22.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Samuel 9:1ff.

<sup>4</sup> The idea that the king or ruler was son of God is not exclusive to the people of Israel, it was shared by the Egyptians too as the Pharaohs were considered "sons of the gods".

<sup>5</sup> 1 Sam., 16:1-13.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Sam., 15:10ff.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew's Gospel, 1:1-17; Matthew 1:18-24; Matthew 9:27; Mark's Gospel 10:46-52, and others.

the state were good, but there were also times when they were strained. The first part of this history was marked by persecutions, beginning with the Roman Emperor Nero who in AD 60 accused the Christians of having been responsible for the burning of the city of Rome.<sup>8</sup> This was the start of a series of persecutions of Christians which would last up until Emperor Constantine was converted to the Christian faith in AD 313. His conversion was the turning point in the history of the Church and state; with Christianity becoming the state religion of the Empire. Obviously, this has had its advantages and disadvantages. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries there were attempts to separate the Church and State. The famous so-called “battle of investiture” was precisely a struggle by the Church authorities to obtain independence from the civil authorities who were controlling the Church in almost every sphere.<sup>9</sup> It was men like Hildebrand, who became Pope Gregory VII, who made great strides in this regard. He ruled the Church between 1073 and 1086, introducing helpful reforms in liturgy, morality of the clergy and spiritual life of the Church.<sup>10</sup> And this situation was so complicated that sometimes those Church leaders who wanted to bring about the necessary reform would find resistance from other Church leaders. A case in point here was that of Pope Paschal II who told Emperor Henry II, in 1111, that the Church wanted to separate the worldly matters from spiritual ones. The Emperor told him that he had no difficulty with that as long as that was acceptable to all the bishops. When the Pope consulted the bishops, they were divided over the issue, many preferred to hold on to worldly benefits and so that was the end of discussion of separation.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Christians were suspected of all kinds of evils by the pagan citizens of the Roman Empire and this was probably a natural situation as they were only a new religion and were just a minority in the midst of a majority of people who had their own beliefs and practices. For instance, Christians were accused of being cannibals due to their celebration of the Eucharist in which the words of Jesus are repeated by the priest, “Take and eat, this is my body...drink, this is my blood”! So, they were suspected and accused of eating human flesh and drinking human blood! [L. Padovese, “Notes on Patristics and Martyrology”, (Rome, 1995)].

<sup>9</sup> This “marriage of the Church and State” involved the civil authorities controlling of appointment of bishops and even popes. The emperor, king or prince would hand the symbols of the church to the bishop or pope, i.e. the bishop’s mitre and staff, and the pope’s tiara (hat). The same applied to the crowning of emperors, kings and princes, with the pope and bishop presiding over their ceremonies.

<sup>10</sup> Carmody, “Notes”.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

This kind of situation was very much part of the causes of Reformation in the sixteenth century. Martin Luther longed for a religion and a spiritual life that was more profound than that of the Church at the time which was quite superficial. The Catholic Church had become too mundane and partly due to its marriage with the state. Yet, John Calvin, who even went further than Luther in certain ways of the Reformation, took the opposite direction to Luther in his rejection of any distinction between the competencies of the Church and the state.<sup>12</sup> He had profound influence on public life, taking control of the city of Geneva where he had gone to settle and was the most intolerant of the reformers, with hatred of the Catholic Church that knew no bounds.<sup>13</sup> And this difference to Luther in that way was probably precisely so that he could take control of people's lives and compete with the Catholic Church that had been in control all along.

### **8.1. Background: Situation during and after the First World War**

The Bavarian Friars who came to South Africa from 1932 onward had a background of the German church and state relations. Here we have to consider the kind of relations that existed between the Catholic Church and the State in that country which had been through the First World War (1914-1918). Again, those Friars came to South Africa during a time that was characterized by an atmosphere leading up to another World War, and this certainly affected them as much as it did their country of origin.<sup>14</sup>

One of the prominent pontiffs of modern times who played a significant role in the question of relations between the Catholic Church and the state was Benedict XV. He ruled the Church between 1914 and 1922 which was the period of the First World War. He won a name for the Church in his policy of neutrality which was very much criticized by some, especially in France and Italy who accused him of siding with Germany.<sup>15</sup> However, he eventually won prestige for the papacy. He was "a man of intelligence and breadth of view".<sup>16</sup> Benedict XV tried to prevent the War and after the War had started he

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<sup>12</sup> J. C. Dwyer, *Church History – Twenty centuries of Catholic Christianity*, (New York, 1985), p. 246.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Letter, Schmoll to Fleischer, 23 February 1932.

<sup>15</sup> Dwyer, *Church History*, p. 365.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

worked hard to mitigate the suffering of the innocent.<sup>17</sup> Another crucial role he played was that of being one of the first Popes to see the need to strip the Church in Asia and Africa of its colonial image and develop a local church out there.<sup>18</sup> He was indeed a man of vision and ahead of his time. Unfortunately, his papacy lasted only eight years and many of his plans were disturbed by the War.<sup>19</sup> Pius XI succeeded Benedict XV (1922-1939). He concluded the Lateran Treaty in 1929 which ended the confrontation between the papacy and government.<sup>20</sup> Mussolini's Fascists had taken over in 1922 and realized that they could not lead the people without the co-operation of the Catholic Church – which was being realistic – and so they settled matters with the Church. The Lateran Treaty was a recognition of the Vatican City as papal territory within the city of Rome, and that Catholicism was the state religion.<sup>21</sup>

## **8.2. The situation in Nazi Germany**

The situation in Germany was far more complicated and worrisome. Hitler and the Nazis really fooled the Church authorities by pretending to be respectful and loyal to the Church, wanting to do good for all.<sup>22</sup> The bishops then accepted Hitler and encouraged the people, especially the youth to vote for the National Socialists. Even the Pope signed a concordat with the German government. However, in 1937 the Pope wrote an encyclical letter stating that the concordat was being violated, attacking the Nazis.<sup>23</sup> The Nazis became hostile to the Church, but before the outbreak of the War in 1939 the Nazis realized that they could not win the nation without the Catholic Church and so changed their tactics.<sup>24</sup> So the Fascists (Italy) and the Nazis were both using the Church for their own ends, and that is not an unusual element in church-state relations.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 370.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 371.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., pp. 371-372.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Dwyer, *Church History*, p. 372.

When Pius XI died in 1939 Eugenio Pacelli was elected as his successor. This was to no one's surprise because he had been nuntius in Germany and was also Pius XI's Secretary of State.<sup>25</sup> He took the name of Pius XII. His papacy will be judged, especially by non-Catholics – on what he did or did not do to oppose the Nazis against the extermination of the Jews. He was too careful to oppose Hitler, even advised Pius XI, as nuntius, not to do that due to fearing the reprisal of Hitler on the Church. In fact, the bishop of Berlin asked for the Pope's intervention for the Jews and that did not happen.<sup>26</sup>

### **8.3. The situation in South Africa in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s**

Bishop Fleischer's Pastoral letter of 1932<sup>27</sup> – the year in which the Bavarian Friars arrived in Mariannhill – focused on the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of Abbot Francis Pfanner in Mariannhill.<sup>28</sup> The bishop pointed out, in the letter, that the seed had grown into a huge tree, with new dioceses coming out of Mariannhill, i.e. Mthatha and Bulawayo; again, local vocations to the Congregations founded by the bishop himself, i.e. the Daughters of St. Francis<sup>29</sup> and the Franciscan Familiars of St. Joseph;<sup>30</sup> and, finally, the African diocesan clergy that were trained in the seminary that was in Mariannhill.<sup>31</sup>

As indicated earlier on, Fleischer's vision of the church in South Africa was in accordance with the universal teaching of the time, particularly Pope Benedict XV and Pope Pius XI who issued Encyclical letters on the indigenization of the Church in mission

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Bishop Fleischer's Pastoral Letter 1932.

<sup>28</sup> As seen in chapter one, the Trappists came to South Africa at the invitation of Bishop James Ricards of Port Elizabeth (Eastern Cape) and settled at Dunbrody in 1879. But they did not stay for long there, claiming that they could not sustain the monastery as the soil was too hard and the area had drought, and so they moved to Natal, settling in Mariannhill, in 1882.

<sup>29</sup> Founded by the bishop himself, in 1922. See Pastoral Letter of 1922; Document on the affiliation of the Congregation (FSF) to the Order of Friars Minor, 8 August 1947 and chapter one of this study.

<sup>30</sup> Founded by the bishop himself, in 1923. See Pastoral Letter of 1923; Document on the affiliation of the Congregation (FFJ) to the Order of Friars Minor and chapter one of this study.

<sup>31</sup> See Bishop Fleischer's Pastoral Letter of 1924; Fleischer's Pastoral Letter of 1925 and chapter one of this study.

areas like Asia and Africa.<sup>32</sup> Fleischer, then, was absolutely in line with the Catholic Church thinking. Again, the Bishops of South Africa, encouraged by the Apostolic Delegate to establish a national seminary in the country, agreed at their meeting of 1924 in Kimberley, to have it in the diocese of Mariannhill.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, we have to bear in mind the socio-political situation of the time. Internationally, on the one hand, one could say that after the First World War, the family of nations was fed up with tensions and fighting. There was a desire to establish a peaceful world and develop economically. As a result of that the League of Nations was created in 1919.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, there was a new unhealthy situation growing, at least in certain circles and this would eventually affect the entire world. Germany saw the rise of Hitler to power and he wanted to place Germany as a superior nation over all; in fact, it was racism – he claimed that he would rid Germany of all other races as they were the cause of Germany’s hardships and challenges.<sup>35</sup> Again, Hitler was power hungry, intent on annexing neighbouring states into Germany. The League of Nations was toothless and failed in preventing Germany in this trend. Here in South Africa too, the growing trend of racism was getting stronger and more unfriendly, especially under Malan, Hertzog and others, with the Afrikaner government securing the political and economic position for the whites, particularly its own people. In a way, just like Hitler’s Nazis, the Afrikaners saw themselves as the superior race in South Africa. Blacks were excluded more and more, with new Acts that made it impossible for them to live, work and own property in urban areas.<sup>36</sup> This eventually led to the taking over by the Nationalist government and the formal establishment of Apartheid in 1948. South Africa was part of the two World Wars too, being on the side of the Allies, and so it was also affected by what was going on in the world.

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<sup>32</sup> As was seen earlier in this study, Pope Benedict XV issued the Encyclical letter in 1919, entitled *Maximum Illud* (“on the Propagation of Faith throughout the World”), 30 November 1919, and Pope Pius XI issued his *Rerum Ecclesiae* (“On Catholic Missions”), 8 February 1926.

<sup>33</sup> Fleischer’s Pastoral Letter of 1925. The seminary address was Mariathal, P.O. Ixopo (Natal).

<sup>34</sup> Mukuka, *The Other Side*, p. 36.

<sup>35</sup> Part of Hitler’s agenda was to get rid of non-German peoples and so the Jews and other racial groups were targeted. Interestingly, Hitler himself was not originally a German but an Austrian and had to get a German citizen at a later stage.

<sup>36</sup> The Land Act (1913) gave 87 percent of the land to the whites who were in the minority and only 13 percent to the Blacks that were in the majority; 1923 was the Urban Areas Act.

Again, as was seen in the above chapters of this study, the churches of the Europeans (Settlers or whites) in South Africa did not do much in opposing the White government's policies against the indigenous peoples. Referring to the situation of the nineteenth century Davenport states that civil authorities that time saw the Christian churches as subordinate but important element in colonization.<sup>37</sup> They used the churches for furthering colonial interests. The churches, then, faced this dilemma: a) to be united or "married" to the political power of colonists, or divorce themselves from it; b) to serve the Settlers' community or to reach out beyond it. And if they were to choose the latter, then they would also take the Gospel values into all spheres of peoples' lives: "civilization" of "pagans", justice for the oppressed.<sup>38</sup> So then, Fleischer's vision of the Church was quite a prophetic stance in the socio-political and even religious context of the time.<sup>39</sup>

#### **8.4. The Second World War and the Internment of the Franciscan Friars**

The Holy Cross Sisters have a wide range of sources on this period in their documents.<sup>40</sup> A newspaper clipping found in the chronicles of the Holy Cross Sisters told of the consecration of the bishop-elect, Monsignor Sigebald Kurz of Kokstad, together with James Colbert of Port Elizabeth, to be in Rome, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October 1939.<sup>41</sup> Part of the news in the paper was a comment on the Pope's opinion concerning the situation of the Church (and society) in Europe. It was noted that the Pope seemed to believe that whatever the state of the Church might be in Europe, in the situation of Nazi-communist domination, the Church's mission should not be neglected. On the contrary, it should be reinforced.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Elphick & Davenport (eds.), *Christianity in South Africa*, p. 51.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Sr. Dominic Mkhize, FSF,

<sup>40</sup> Holy Cross Chronicles and "Flagstaff Diary".

<sup>41</sup> The newspaper in question is not identified but it was probably the *Southern Cross* (Catholic weekly magazine, still active).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

Another entry in the Sisters' chronicles reads as follows: "The world crisis is very serious and we tried to persuade Monsignor not to leave – he leaves with a German boat with only few passengers ... Lorenzo Marques ... continues his voyage."<sup>43</sup> On that very same date was recorded that Monsignor Kurz left for Durban, accompanied by Frs. Lucas and Guido.<sup>44</sup>

Going through the chronicles, of the Holy Cross Sisters, the impression one gets is that while on the one hand life seems to have continued as usual during that time, there is also much evidence of the apprehension and uncertainty that existed in the churches and convents of the Friars and the Sisters. The reason for that being that they were Germans and, as indicated above, South Africa was on the side of the Allies who were fighting against Germany. Having gone for his consecration in Rome (1939) Monsignor Kurz came back safe and sound. He arrived on the evening of 8 January 1940 and there was a great excitement in Kokstad.<sup>45</sup> Bells were rung, the whole congregation assembled to greet him in the convent hall which was decorated in "bene and yellow" the bishop's colours.<sup>46</sup> In fact, preparations for his return were begun earlier – on the 4<sup>th</sup> of January Sister Lidwina returned (from wherever she had been) in order to get the church decorated for the bishop's arrival.<sup>47</sup> Again, Sister Ernestina's Jubilee celebration was anticipated so that it would not clash with the great occasion of the bishop's return. In the hall, the bishop addressed the gathered assembly who responded joyfully for seeing him back with them. The following day, the bishop spent time with the Sisters, in recreation, and related to them on his visit to Rome, showing them photographs of his consecration. An interesting part of the story is that the Holy Father (Pope) sent the Sisters a personally signed blessing and this was in response to a letter the Sisters had sent him.<sup>48</sup> One would wonder then whether the Sisters knew the Holy Father personally.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 23 August 1939.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Holy Cross Sisters' Chronicles, Belgravia, 8 January 1940.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 4 January 1940.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Then, not long after this joyful celebration the mood of the church and the convent was changed. For the enthronement of the bishop, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, in Kokstad, there were no bishops and no priests invited and that was due to the political tension at the time.<sup>49</sup> *The Advertiser* (Kokstad) of 2 February that year told the story of the enthronement; at the same time, it referred to Parliamentary Notes on the Debate on General Hertzog's "Peace" Motion.<sup>50</sup> Things got tougher as the internment of the Germans finally came. Referring to the sad situation an entry of the "Flagstaff Diary" (of the Holy Cross Sisters there) reads: "Dark clouds gather on the horizon of the Transkeian Territories: The long-feared bill was issued: all aliens must move into European Territories, only British subjects are allowed to stay. This means 6 of our community must go, only 2 may remain here in Flagstaff".<sup>51</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> of July 1940 twenty priests and brothers left Kokstad for the internment camps, in Andalusia, Pretoria.<sup>52</sup>

Father Severin, *Apostle of Amampondo*, arrived back from the neighbouring parish of Lusikisiki, which as was indicated in chapter three, he used to serve from Flagstaff, only to receive the news of the internment.<sup>53</sup> The "Flagstaff Diary" which tended to be more detailed than the Kokstad chronicles, although they are both by the Holy Cross Sisters, again had this entry on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July that year:

Great consternation! Fr. Severin to be interned. Br. Juniper was fetched by the Detective from Lusikisiki at their Farm at Port St. John's, while the Rev. Frs. Cajus, Canisius and Gerard were escorted by police from their villages, Mt. Frere, Mt. Ayliff and Tabankulu to Flagstaff where Fr. Severin and Br. Juniper had to join them. What a sad spectacle! Were taken on an open small lorry-like van! Internment camp is near Pretoria (Andalusia). Sisters pray that it may not last long!"<sup>54</sup>

So, it was a very difficult situation for the Friars, the Sisters and the people whom the Friars were serving. During this time of the internment, which lasted for five and a half

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 28 January.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., a newspaper clipping attached to the chronicle.

<sup>51</sup> "Flagstaff diary", 29 June 1940; the description continued with the entries of the following two days, i.e. Holy Cross Sisters' chronicles, 30 June and 1 July.

<sup>52</sup> Holy Cross Sisters chronicles, Belgravia, 21 July 1940.

<sup>53</sup> "Flagstaff diary", 2 July 1940.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 21 July 1940.

years, (July 1940 - end of December 1945),<sup>55</sup> only four Franciscan priests were left behind and they were to serve the whole Kokstad Vicariate during the period of internment.<sup>56</sup> Those were the pioneers of the mission to South Africa: Lucas Purstinger, Gottschalk Kunsteiger, Guido Nurnberger and Magnabonus Koller. These had been spared the ordeal of the internment.<sup>57</sup> The bishop too was interned and this was a shocking event to the bishop, the Friars, the Sisters and all.<sup>58</sup> However, it also reveals a positive side of relations between the Church and State. First of all, the police who came to the presbytery to fetch the bishop, in Kokstad, were quite respectful of him.<sup>59</sup> Again, the mayor and the mayoress visited him before he left and they saw him off at the station.<sup>60</sup> Another point showing a positive side to the relations between the Church and the State is that of the exemption of the Sisters from the internment. The precise reason for this does not seem to be clear. An entry in the “Flagstaff Diary” refers to this as “a ray of hope”.<sup>61</sup> According to this version of the story, a certain Sergeant Mybrough telephoned Pretoria and the answer from the civil authorities there was favourable: the law concerning the evacuation of the German Religious was cancelled.<sup>62</sup>

In her book on the history of the Holy Cross Sisters in South Africa Sr. McDonagh points out, first of all, that there was a great anxiety in the Congregation (of the Holy Cross Sisters) at that time. Secondly, the tradition in the Sisters’ Congregation, which was obtained from the Sisters of that time, is that this favour was due to General Jan Smuts’ intervention who ordered that women should be left alone.<sup>63</sup> This version is also mentioned by Adelgisa in her history of Mariannhill.<sup>64</sup> So, this sad situation did not only affect the Church in Kokstad but the whole country as German missionaries were found almost all over.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 23 December 1945; 30 December 1945.

<sup>56</sup> Letter (unsigned – but most probably written by Lucas Purstinger), from Catholic Church, Mount Ayliff, to His Excellency, Archbishop B. J. Gijlswijk, O.P., Apostolic Delegate, Bloemfontein, 15 April 1942.

<sup>57</sup> History of Hardenberg Mission, in Kokstad diocese, Bishop’s House, 1939-1945; History of Matatiele Mission, in Kokstad diocese, Bishop’s House, 1939-1948.

<sup>58</sup> Holy Cross Sisters chronicles, Belgravia, 8 September 1940.

<sup>59</sup> Holy Cross Sisters chronicles, Belgravia, 8 September 1940.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> “Flagstaff diary”, 2 July 1940.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> McDonagh, *Wordless Witness*, p. 148.

<sup>64</sup> Hermann, *100 Years*, pp. 75-79.

After the War and the return of the Franciscans from the internment it was as usual in the Kokstad diocese. Naturally, there was much excitement and jubilation in the churches and convents when they saw their priests back in the area after five and a half years. On the 25<sup>th</sup> of December (Christmas Day) 1945 Flagstaff had three Holy Masses,<sup>65</sup> which was really a bonus after the struggle without their own priest during the internment. Father Magnabon had been helping out there from his parish of Bizana, and that was surely not a luxury both for him and the people, in Bizana and in Flagstaff and, as was indicated earlier on, this did affect the church attendance too, especially the Africans.<sup>66</sup> In fact, Magnabon had to do the whole area of Pondoland, which is Bizana, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki,<sup>67</sup> just as Gottschalk in the northern area of the diocese which is Hardenberg – his own mission that time – Ntlangwini and Makhoba.<sup>68</sup> As indicated above, the whole of Kokstad diocese (Vicariate) was served by only four Franciscan priests during the internment period. However, the Vicariate did obtain the assistance of neighbouring dioceses, Bloemfontein<sup>69</sup> and Mthatha;<sup>70</sup> Fr. Larkin was sent from Bloemfontein and was stationed first in Kokstad and later moved to Matatiele (Maria Telgte) area. Fr. Jackal was stationed in Mount Frere area. On the Christmas Day (25 December) 1945 the Holy Cross Sisters' chronicler, in Flagstaff, wrote:

3 Holy Masses – how happy especially the Natives were to have once again a priest who could talk to them. Now they are all looking forward to welcoming their jealous priest, Fr. Severin.<sup>71</sup> Fr. Severin finally came back on 30<sup>th</sup> of December, a few days later than the others.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> “Flagstaff diary”, 25 December 1945.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 13 April 1945. Even on the most important Solemnity of the Catholic Church, Easter, the area served by Fr. Magnabon – Bizana, Flagstaff and Lusikisiki – had to struggle for Holy Mass; Ibid., 25 December 1941; Ibid., 25 December 1943.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 9 December 1945.

<sup>68</sup> History of the Hardenberg Mission, in Kokstad diocese, Bishop's House, 1939-1945.

<sup>69</sup> Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to B. J. Gijlswijk, 15 April 1942; Bishop Kurz, St. Vincent's school for Deaf, Melrose, Johannesburg, to Fr. Lucas Purstinger, Kokstad, 2 April 1942; Letter (unsigned but most probably written by Lucas Purstinger), Kokstad, to His Excellency Archbishop B. J. Gijlswijk, Apostolic Delegate, Bloemfontein, 9 April 1942; His Excellency Archbishop B. J. Gijlswijk, Ap. Del., Bloemfontein, to Fr. Larkin, (Mount Frere), 20 April 1942.

<sup>70</sup> J. Gunter, CMM (Vicar Apostolic), Umtata, to Fr. Lucas Purstinger, (Kokstad), 20 April 1942; Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to B. J. Gijlswijk, 9 April 1942.

<sup>71</sup> “Flagstaff Diary”, 25 December 1945. “Their jealous priest” probably means that the people guarded and loved him jealously, did not want him to be removed from them.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 30 December 1945.

## 8.5. Bishop Sigebald Kurz's case

A sad development in Kokstad diocese was the removal from office of Bishop Sigebald Kurz who, as we saw earlier on, had been consecrated bishop (Vicar Apostolic) in August 1939.<sup>73</sup> The story of this event is not very clear as to the reason for such a development. The entry in the Kokstad chronicles – of the Holy Cross Sisters – reads as follows:

We (Sisters), on the last day of the Retreat, received the sad news that our reverend Bishop has been deposed from his office by Rome. The unexpected news struck a sad cord in every Sister's heart. The very Rev. Fr. Lucas was appointed as Administrator Apostolic of the Vicariate.<sup>74</sup>

This was in December of 1942. It must have been a shock indeed, to the Sisters, the people and, probably to the Friars as well – at least to some of the Friars, as some of them might have had an idea of what was going on. One would wonder whether it was a political situation among the Franciscan Friars or not. At the beginning of the following year (1943), another entry in the Holy Cross Sisters' chronicles reads thus:

A new announcement in church amends that His Lordship is removed from here to a new place of activity and states that faculties have been withdrawn only for the time being, i.e. for canonical reasons.<sup>75</sup>

But this still does not help much in clarifying matters. "Canonical reasons" is a very vague phrase, it could mean anything and does not give any clue as to the reason for such a serious action on the part of the church authorities. In an interview with a German Franciscan Friar who had been a missionary in Bolivia, where the Bavarian Franciscans opened a mission about the same time they did in South Africa, and who was later involved in office work in Germany, he commented that the life of the first bishop of

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<sup>73</sup> Holy Cross Sisters chronicles (Kokstad), Belgravia, 1 August 1939. Monsignor Kurz was nominated as bishop of the Kokstad Vicariate on 13 July 1939; preparations for the consecration were under way when the Apostolic Delegate broke the news of the consecration to be done by Pope Pius himself and so the newly appointed bishop had to go to Rome; the enthronement in his diocese of Kokstad took place on 28 January 1940. See Holy Cross Sisters chronicles (Kokstad) 13 July 1939, 1 August and 23 August 1939.

<sup>74</sup> Holy Cross Sisters chronicles (Kokstad), 31 December 1942; Decree of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of Faith (Latin), Rome, 1 Holy Cross Sisters chronicles (Kokstad), 7 December 1942; His Excellency Archbishop B. J. Gijlswijk, O.P., Apostolic Delegate, Bloemfontein, 8 March 1943; His Excellency Archbishop B. J. Gijlswijk, O.P., Bloemfontein, 4 March 1944.

<sup>75</sup> Holy Cross Sisters chronicles (Kokstad), 17 January 1942.

Kokstad had been an extremely interesting one.<sup>76</sup> He then went on to point out that Kurz was first in China, as missionary.<sup>77</sup> He was then appointed to Kokstad diocese, and after that went back to China. He finally ended up in New York.<sup>78</sup> Due to poor health he went back to Germany, in October 1969, where he ministered to an old age home – St. Martin's in Waldsassen – and finally died in 1973.<sup>79</sup>

The following is obvious regarding this matter. Firstly, we know for certain that, as already seen above, the bishop was interned together with most of the Friars in the Kokstad Vicariate and that during that time he lived in Melrose, Johannesburg.<sup>80</sup> While he was away the bishop continued to involve himself in matters of the Vicariate (Kokstad), something that was not necessarily wrong but his continued involvement also shows development of difficulties in his dealings with the personnel, especially the priests over there. There are documents from higher authorities, in Rome and in South Africa, including the Apostolic Delegate in this regard. Again, there was communication with the newly appointed Administrator Apostolic - Lucas Purstinger – he too corresponded with the respective higher authorities on this question.<sup>81</sup> As a result of this, it is clear from documents, that there were people who were not happy with the bishop and some of them were his own Franciscan brothers in the diocese.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Interview with Franz Gruber, 27 June 2012.

<sup>77</sup> As was stated in chapter three of this research, Sigebald Blasius Kurz was appointed the first bishop (Prefect Apostolic) of the newly created Prefecture (diocese) of Kokstad while he was a missionary in China and began in the new diocese with ten Franciscan Friars (all Bavarian), in November 1935.

<sup>78</sup> Interview with Franz Gruber, 27 June 2012. In a document that Gruber sent me on Bishop Kurz's curriculum vitae, he first went to China as a young priest (1923) and was there until his appointment as Prefect Apostolic (Bishop) of the newly created Prefecture Apostolic of Mount Currie (Kokstad) in 1935. After the Second World War Kurz was appointed as Prefect Apostolic of Yungchow (China, 31 May 1946) and when the Communist Government expelled missionaries there, in 1949, he went to New York where he had friends, including Cardinal Spellman, and offered services there. He participated in the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and was not happy with the reforms that came with the Council.

<sup>79</sup> *Curriculum Vitae* of Bishop Dr. Sigebald Kurz (sent by email, Franz Gruber, 11 July 2012).

<sup>80</sup> His address was St. Vincent's school for Deaf, Melrose, Johannesburg and, as we can see from the letters of correspondence mainly with Lucas Purstinger and also from the Holy Cross Sisters' archives, he stayed there for a reasonable period of time.

<sup>81</sup> Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to B. J. Gijlswijk, 15 April 1942.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*; Magnabon Koller, Bizana, to Bishop Kurz, 8 July 1942; Magnabon Koller, Bizana, to General Definitior, Rome, 24 May 1947.

From a reconstruction of the sources at our disposal one would come to the following conclusions regarding the whole affair. The priests in the Vicariate of Kokstad, both the Franciscan Friars and those who had gone there from neighbouring dioceses to assist, were not happy with the bishop's way of handling matters. The particular situation we are referring to here is that of re-distributing priests in the Vicariate during the War. Apparently, the bishop wanted the civil authorities to call him back from the internment in order to look after the church in his diocese.<sup>83</sup> And for this he re-distributed his priests to places outside the town of Kokstad so that the situation would look so desperate and the people would then ask the civil authorities to intervene on their behalf since the Catholic Church was serving the people.<sup>84</sup> The priests were just not happy about this move and, according to them, the bishop was doing all this for selfish motives and at a very high cost of their own health and the people's spiritual good. They claimed that the bishop was acting from hearsay of certain Sisters (Holy Cross) and lay people in the Kokstad parish who also wanted him back in the Vicariate.<sup>85</sup> Moreover, they claimed that the whole affair smacked of racism, i.e. the bishop had no interest in the "Natives"; it was just about the White and Coloured people.<sup>86</sup> The priests resisted and some even threatened to resign from the Vicariate.<sup>87</sup> According to them, this was an unjust way of dealing with the situation. The bishop seemingly branded them as "communists", "traitors" and "bad Franciscans" for their being so close to the "Natives".<sup>88</sup> The bishop insisted on his orders and had, therefore, to face the consequences.<sup>89</sup> As a result of his decision, Fr. Larkin had to be withdrawn and went back to his own diocese of

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<sup>83</sup> Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to B. J. Gijlswijk, 15 April 1942.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.; Bishop Kurz, St. Vincent's school for Deaf, Melrose, Johannesburg, to Fr. Larkin, Kokstad, 2 April 1942; Kurz, to Purstinger, 2 April 1942; Letter (unsigned but most probably written by Lucas Purstinger), Kokstad, to Bishop Kurz, (Johannesburg), 7 April 1942; Priests of the diocese, Kokstad, to Bishop Kurz, (Johannesburg), 8 April 1942; B. J. Gijlswijk, to Larkin, 20 April 1942.

<sup>85</sup> Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to B. J. Gijlswijk, 15 April 1942; Purstinger, to Kurz, 7 April 1942; Letter (unsigned but most probably written by Lucas Purstinger), Kokstad, to Bishop Kurz, (Johannesburg), 6 May 1942.

<sup>86</sup> Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to B. J. Gijlswijk, 15 April 1942; Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to Bishop Kurz, 7 April 1942; Letter (unsigned probably Lucas Purstinger), to Kurz, 6 May 1942.

<sup>87</sup> Priests of the diocese of Kokstad to Kurz, 8 April 1942; Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to Kurz, 7 April 1942; Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to B. J. Gijlswijk, 9 April 1942; Letter (unsigned) written to "Superior", 24 April 1942.

<sup>88</sup> Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to Bishop Kurz, 7 April 1942; Letter (unsigned but probably Lucas Purstinger), to B. J. Gijlswijk, 15 April 1942.

<sup>89</sup> Gijlswijk to Larkin, 20 April 1942.

Bloemfontein.<sup>90</sup> The bishop was controlling things from Johannesburg<sup>91</sup> and this made the situation in Kokstad even more serious, the priests there were more infuriated that such orders should come from a person far away from the place and without consultation of the people (priests) on the spot.<sup>92</sup>

The laity too were not happy with the situation, as their priests were moved to other places far away. They sent telegraphic messages to the Apostolic Delegate and the bishop himself proposing a turn around to the situation; otherwise, they suggested, a meeting with the government officials was to be held in which they hoped that government intervention would help solve the matter.<sup>93</sup> It looks like in the end the priests were vindicated: as already seen above, Lucas Purstinger became Administrator Apostolic. He invited the Apostolic Delegate to go down to Kokstad in order that he would have a personal and first-hand information about the whole issue.<sup>94</sup> We do not have any document to prove that Archbishop Gijlswijk, the then Apostolic Delegate, did go to Kokstad. He died in 1944.<sup>95</sup> The new Apostolic Delegate, Martin Hubert Lucas, S.V.D. – consecrated on the 29<sup>th</sup> of October, in Rome, 1945, arrived in Durban from Cape Town, on 14 February same year, and visited Kokstad.<sup>96</sup> Bishop Kurz did go back to Kokstad.<sup>97</sup> That was in December of 1945 and probably the higher Church authorities were just

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<sup>90</sup> Letter (unsigned but most probably written by Lucas Purstinger), Kokstad, to Bishop Kurz, (Johannesburg), 6 May 1942.

<sup>91</sup> Magnabon Koller, Bizana, to Bishop Kurz, (Johannesburg), 21 October 1942. In this letter Magnabon asked for the Bishop's telephone number which shows that the bishop was still not in Kokstad since the Friars would have known the telephone number of the Bishop in Kokstad; Magnabon wrote a number of letters to the bishop during that year, (1942), which would be an indication of the bishop's absence in the diocese. We have ten letters (from Magnabon alone to Bishop Kurz) between 8 January 1942 and 21 December 1942; Lucas Purstinger's letters too, which are quite many, are mainly reports on the Vicariate, and there are a few more letters from other priests in the Vicariate which deal with reports on finances; Magnabon, Kokstad, to Walter (Switzerland), 29 July 1943.

<sup>92</sup> Letter (unsigned but most probably written by Lucas Purstinger), Mount Ayliff, to His Excellency Archbishop J. B. Gijlswijk, O.P., Apostolic Delegate, Bloemfontein, 15 April 1942; Magnabon, Kokstad, to Walter, (Switzerland), 29 July 1943.

<sup>93</sup> McGahan (Telegraph), Kokstad, to (His Excellency) Archbishop Gijlswijk, O.P., Apostolic Delegate, Bloemfontein, 15 April 1942; McGahan (Telegraph), Kokstad, to Bishop Kurz, St. Vincent's Deaf School, Melrose, Johannesburg, 15 April 1942.

<sup>94</sup> Letter (unsigned but most probably written by Lucas Purstinger), Kokstad, to His Excellency Archbishop Gijlswijk, O.P., Bloemfontein, 9 April 1942.

<sup>95</sup> Holy Cross Sisters' chronicle, Belgravia, 9 January 1945 (Kokstad Advertiser clippings).

<sup>96</sup> Holy Cross Sisters' chronicles (Kokstad), Belgravia, 9 January 1945; Magnabonus, Bizana, to Walter, 1 February 1946.

<sup>97</sup> "Flagstaff Diary", 17 December 1945;

doing their best to let things go as smoothly as possible as they would have been aware of the possible arrival of a new group from overseas, the Irish Franciscan Friars, who came to the rescue of the situation, in 1946, at the request of the General administration of the Franciscan Order in Rome.<sup>98</sup> Kurz did not last for long in Kokstad as Rome later appointed one of the Irish Franciscans to succeed him.<sup>99</sup> That story will be followed up in the next part of this research.

## **8.6. Franciscan Nardini Sisters and the Bavarian Friars**

We have seen in the preceding chapters how the Franciscan Friars have so often worked side by side with their Franciscan Sisters. Both in Mariannhill and in Kokstad there were Franciscan Sisters doing invaluable service to the people in Church and in other areas of life, particularly in education and health care. Another group of Franciscan Sisters whom the Bavarian Friars met and lived with are the Nardini Sisters. Before going into details of who these Sisters were I would like to refer to one of the Bavarian Friars whom the Sisters knew quite well and whose story in a way ends the Bavarian Friars' history on a lighter note.

Hanno Probst came to South Africa on 16 May 1935 and worked in the country till 17 June 1950.<sup>100</sup> On 10 July 1953 he went to join the Franciscan mission, also served by the Bavarian Friars, in Bolivia, till June 1962. On 16 January 1963 he returned to South Africa and went to join the Friars in Zululand – those Bavarian Friars who had left Kokstad for Zululand in 1960. According to Sister Isentraud who was a long-time regional superior of the Franciscan Nardini Sisters – working in Eshowe diocese, Zululand, where the Friars were – Probst was a very kind man.<sup>101</sup> He was stationed in Mangete and was looking mainly after the Coloured people in the area. One of the interesting points about him is that he planted coffee in the graveyard and this was to prevent it from being stolen. So, then, Sister Isentraud concluded by stating that although

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<sup>98</sup> Magnabonus (Koller), to General Definitior, Rome 24 May 1947.

<sup>99</sup> Urban O'Sullivan (Apostolic Delegate's Secretary), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 1 March 1948).

<sup>100</sup> Necrology of the Franciscan Province of Our Lady Queen of Peace in South Africa, 19 February 1986.

<sup>101</sup> Interview of Sister Isentraud Rauscher, (Maria Ratschitz, Newcastle, 29 March 2011).

he was a kind man he was also wise enough to know what was going on; he was not a naïve person. Perhaps even more interesting is the following story about him. A certain man came to him, at the mission, asking for accommodation that night which Probst offered him. The following morning when Probst got up he found that the man had already left and Probst was suspicious of the man not just because of his leaving like that but particularly because in their conversation during that night the man had been so knowledgeable and that made him to be wondering and questioning. He went to inform the police about this matter which they did nothing about, and indeed they probably could not do much about it. The man, however, eventually moved on to Cape Town Parliament and that was Verwoerd's murderer, Tsafendas.<sup>102</sup>

The Franciscan Nardini Sisters are part of the large Franciscan family in the Catholic Church and were founded in Speyer, Germany, by a priest – Doctor Joseph Paul Nardini – who belonged to the Secular Franciscans and was concerned about children that were underprivileged and were deprived of the experience of a warm family life. Due to their huge numbers a few years after their establishment, they had to move their Mother House (headquarters) to a larger place and this was at a former Benedictine Abbey of Mallersdorf, Bavaria, where they still are today. There are currently over two hundred Sisters in that set-up, although sadly the numbers of admissions have dwindled over the years.<sup>103</sup> In 1955 they celebrated their centenary of foundation, having been founded in 1855 and, as an expression of gratefulness for this gift, they sent out their first missionaries to South Africa. They were themselves Bavarians and went to establish their mission-base in Vryheid, in the Eshowe diocese, in Zululand, where the Benedictines (Order of St. Benedict) Missionaries were running the diocese. The Franciscan Nardini

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> That is quite a general phenomenon in the Church. After the Second Vatican Council a number of priests and religious Sisters and Brothers left this way of life, partly due to the fact that the Council called for a liberal manner of leading a holy life. Many people had joined the priesthood and religious life with an understanding that it was the way, and even the only way, to holiness and when the Council taught that all people are called to holiness and we should all strive for that goal in whatever state of life we are, many priests and religious decided to leave...somehow disappointed.

Sisters are running a huge primary school, in Vryheid, with a boarding school attached to their convent.<sup>104</sup>

Although they are Bavarians and are also Franciscans they did not really know the Bavarian Friars here in South Africa – not when the Friars were in Kokstad – until they went to Eshowe diocese in 1960.<sup>105</sup> When the Sisters, then, met the Friars and came to know them there was a normal relationship that is of brothers and sisters of the same family, which after all is what St. Francis wished and exhorted his sons and daughters to do.<sup>106</sup> Hanno Probst gave the Nardini Sisters a retreat – spiritual exercises – in December 1963, the very year of his arrival in this country. The Nardini Sisters looked after the Bavarian Friars when the latter retired, offering them frail care, especially because some of the Sisters are medical doctors and nurses. In fact, Hanno Probst had a blood sister with the Nardini Sisters in their Mother House, in Mallersdorf, and when he got sick in later years he went there (in May 1976) to be taken care of by her. The Sisters have beautiful memories of the Friars. For instance, they remember Gottschalk as a story teller. One of the stories he told them was about the Friars being invited to the Benedictine monastery of Inkamana, in Eshowe. During the normal reading at table the reader went on about this emperor... “and the emperor laughed – footnote: ha, ha, ha!”. Apparently this went on and on and the Friars found this boring, especially because it was in a

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<sup>104</sup> Like with most, if not all, institutions that used to be staffed by Church personnel, Nardini Convent School at one time had mainly the Sisters teaching there. Nowadays it is just the Principal and a few Sisters on the staff and the rest are lay teachers. It is one of those very good schools, where the children of VIPs (Zulu King Zwelithini and government Ministers) are educated.

<sup>105</sup> Interview of Sister Isentraud Rauscher, 29 March 2011.

<sup>106</sup> There are a number of references to this desire of St. Francis and the history of the Franciscan movement is very clear about that. That is, Francis founded a spiritual family within the Church and he wanted his followers to preserve this value. First of all, the very fact that Franciscans are in three Orders: the First Order of Friars Minor (OFM) being the brothers (men), the Second Order being the Poor Ladies (Poor Clares, named after St. Clare, the first female to follow Francis) and the Third Order being men and women in their families; the Third Order also has a branch of those who belong to the religious Orders, like the Nardini Sisters and others, including all those we have seen in this study (Franciscan Sisters of Solanus, Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, the foundations of Bishop Fleischer in Mariannahill, etc.). Again, in his Rule Francis exhorts his followers: “And wherever the friars are and find themselves let them mutually show themselves to be among the family members. And let them without fear manifest to one another their own need, since, if a mother nourishes and loves her own son according to the flesh, how much more diligently should he love and nourish his own spiritual brother?” (St. Francis’ Rule, 1223, chapter 3, par. 7-8).

monotonous voice; they went under the table and just laughed. The Benedictines were all keeping their tradition of silence!<sup>107</sup> Hanno Probst died on 19 February 1986.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Interview of Sister Isentraud Rauscher, 29 March 2011.

<sup>108</sup> Necrology of the Franciscan Province of Our Lady Queen of Peace in South Africa, 19 February 1986.

## **PART VI: A DIFFERENT ERA – THE IRISH, THE ENGLISH & THE LOCAL FRANCISCANS**

I do not intend to go into a detailed history of the Irish and the English Friars here. That is not the core of this thesis; the central theme of the research is on the Bavarian Franciscans and I would like to limit myself to that. These last two chapters are sort of a closing of the project of my research on the Bavarian Friars. Both the Irish and the English Friars would have to be studied on their own as they equally deserve that, just as much as the Bavarian Friars, and the two Provinces of the Irish and the English Franciscans came to continue where the Bavarians had started and left off. But again, as we will see, these two Provinces came with different goals and for reasons that were not the same as the original ones of the Bavarian Friars. At one stage in the history of the Franciscans in South Africa these three nationals - whose members were all of the same spiritual family, the sons of St. Francis – lived and worked apart from each other, according to their nationalities. It was only in the late seventies that they all formed one entity, the South African Franciscan Federation and by that time there were South Africans who had joined and so were also part of that the same entity. However, that is another topic and one that falls under a different period from ours.

## Chapter 9 The Irish Franciscans come to help (1946)

### 9.1. In Kokstad – Coming to the rescue of the Bavarians

In chapter one, we saw how an Irish Franciscan, Daniel Burke, came and worked in South Africa (1837-1839). As we noticed there, Burke came out to the country with the very first residential bishop – Patrick Griffith, O.P. – who was based in Cape Town and Burke himself was appointed to the Eastern Cape, based in Grahamstown. We also asked in that part of this study whether Burke had any vision about the future presence and work of the Franciscans in this country or not, and the conclusion was rather negative. We now turn our attention to the first group of Irish Franciscans who came from Burke’s Province, where he had been Vicar Provincial, second-in-command, in Ireland. These Friars came to South Africa just over a hundred years after Burke and they came to work in a country where the Church was by then different from his time. In Burke’s time South Africa was only one huge Vicariate, with one bishop, Griffith, being the very first residential one. Again, those Franciscans came for reasons that were different from those of Burke: he was accompanying Griffith; they were to help build up the Church in various ways, as we will see in this chapter.

As already seen in the preceding chapter, the difficulties that came up with the Second World War made life and work particularly hard for the Bavarian (German) Friars.<sup>1</sup> And so in 1946 the Irish Friars came to the help of the German Friars, in Kokstad.<sup>2</sup> The Irish Province itself had been affected negatively by the War, withdrawing some of their members from certain foreign missions,<sup>3</sup> and yet the missionary spirit that went back centuries in the Irish church did not completely die out in the face of such challenges.<sup>4</sup> It

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<sup>1</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans “, p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.; “Locus nativitates/Tempus nativitatis/Adventus in Missionum” (a one-page document with personal files of Missionary Friars in Kokstad which is undated) gives 24 December 1946 as the date of first arrivals, two of the Irish Friars in the document: Antonine Ballinasloc and Bernardine Dore; Kokstad chronicles of the Holy Cross Sisters, Belgravia, Johannesburg, 25 December 1946; “Flagstaff Diary”, 25 December 1946.

<sup>3</sup> Conlan, *Missionary Work*, p.32.

<sup>4</sup> Dwyer, *Church History*, pp. 133-135.

was in that context, then, that the Province sent missionaries to South Africa.<sup>5</sup> Archbishop William Slattery – who is himself Irish, was the bishop of Kokstad and has just been recently appointed Archbishop of Pretoria<sup>6</sup> – told of how the first Irish Missionary Friars were selected. He said that the Minister Provincial in 1946, Hubert Quinn, sent out a letter to the Province, inviting volunteers for the new mission – Kokstad – and twenty five Friars volunteered.<sup>7</sup> It was then decided to select from that list of twenty five volunteers and that was done alphabetically, starting with the letter “A”, in other words, those Friars whose names began with that letter – e.g. Antonine, Bernardine, Benedict, and so forth.<sup>8</sup>

According to the various sources, there seems to have been different reactions on the part of the Bavarians as to the arrival of the Irish Friars in Kokstad. Some of the Bavarians welcomed this move while others were not happy at all. In an article entitled “Our New Mission”, which is a brief description of the situation in the Kokstad Mission, the author included a letter plus annual statistics which was a report sent to the Minister General of the Franciscan Order in Rome.<sup>9</sup> According to a handwritten note at the top of the second page of the document, it was written in 1940, by Sigebald Kurz who, as seen above, became the first bishop of Kokstad, in 1939.<sup>10</sup> The document stated the following:

the mission was short of supplies from the very beginning, both in manpower and in money – the difficulty which eventually led to the abandoning of the mission to the Irish Province.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Conlan, *Missionary Work*, p. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Appointed Archbishop of Pretoria in January 2011, after serving as the bishop of Kokstad Diocese for over fifteen years.

<sup>7</sup> Interview of (Arch)Bishop William Slattery, in Kokstad, on 19 December 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Slattery claimed that he was told this story by Bernardine Dore who was among the first Irish Franciscan Missionaries to go to Kokstad and became the Regional Superior there.

<sup>9</sup> “Our New Mission”. The author is not identified but seemed to have been one of the Bavarian Friars. For instance, the title “Our New Mission” is an indication of that and he seemed to have a personal knowledge of and familiar with the situation of the Kokstad Mission.

<sup>10</sup> “Our New Mission”, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. The report had statistics of the diocese attached to it. This was probably Kurz’s first report to the General administration of the Order, in Rome, as he also provided a brief historical background. The new diocese was assisted by the Order, financially as well. A note, handwritten, on top of the said brief history indicates the year “1940?” which shows that it was a later addition by someone other than the author. And that would be quite probable since the statistics, to which the report referred, began from the years 1933-1934 and ended with 1938-1939.

There are a few points to be noted in this article. First of all, the author of the article made certain explanations himself and among them he stated that the report (statistics) began with the year 1933-34, the year before the taking over by the (Bavarian) Franciscans, for the sake of comparison. Secondly, the handwritten note indicating the date of the document (1940) is not correct, or was placed in a wrong place and should have been put on the statistics part of the document, because the taking over by the Irish Province was later (1946). Thirdly, in employing the term “abandon” one would wonder whether there was a particular intention and motive behind it. Was it political or not? In other words, was he engaging on the tension that seemed to have been there with the taking over by the Irish Friars and which is attested to by some of the sources?

A central element to the tension of the taking over by the Irish Friars was again Bishop Sigebald Kurz. In a letter written by Magnabonus to the General Definitor, in Rome, he brought up this matter very strongly.<sup>12</sup> As mentioned earlier on, in chapter three, Magnabonus was a straightforward person and did not mince his words when he had to face another person no matter who that would be. In the said letter to the General Definitor, Magnabonus complained of various issues concerning Bishop Kurz, particularly of his personality and leadership. According to the letter, the bishop seemed to want control of everything, interfering with the Franciscan Superior in the area and forcing the Friars to deal only with him and not with the respective Superior. More relevant to the subject of our present study, Kurz seemed to have been against the Irish Friars. In the four-page letter, which is rather long, he wrote: “It is a fact that he was against the Irish helpers.” And he continued, “When they eventually arrived Monsignor tried...with all his power to prevent the Father Provincial in meeting us and to get him as fast as possible out of the Vicariate...”<sup>13</sup> When the Friars forced matters and managed to arrange a meeting with the Irish Provincial the bishop was not pleased with that and, as

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<sup>12</sup> Magnabonus, Bizana, to General Definitor, Rome, 24 May 1947 (Munich 1947). General Definitors or Definitors General are the Councillors of the Minister General: those who assist the Minister General (head of the Order) with the animation and administration of the Franciscan Order, in Rome. They are elected, together with the Minister General, at the General Chapter every six years and are representatives of the various geographical and language make-up of the international Order. So, Magnabonus’s letter would have been addressed to the English-speaking Definitor General. The original letter was written in German and translated by Sr. Mechtildis Wilking (Holy Cross Sister, Provincial House, Belgravia).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Magnabonus put it again, “It seems that my daring to speak in this matter against the opinion of Monsignor was a criminal offence.”<sup>14</sup>

Lucas Purstinger saw the whole move of the coming of the Irish Friars as robbery.<sup>15</sup> It was all a plot and, according to his understanding it was planned the following manner. The people involved in this plot were: first was Martin Lucas, the Apostolic Delegate, who belonged to the SVD – a Religious Congregation. From Holland, he was a close friend of the newly elected SVD General Superior, who was also Dutch. The new SVD General Superior had taken over from a German man and again this was probably a political move as the Germans had taken over Holland during the Second World War. The second person in the plot was John Evangelist McBride who was the outgoing Irish Provincial and was destined to be the new bishop of Kokstad. Thirdly, there was Hubert Quinn, the then Minister Provincial of the Irish Province who had also been based in Rome and was close to the entire story and was, therefore, introduced to the plot.<sup>16</sup>

Purstinger then pointed to two mistakes made by Bishop Kurz in this matter. Firstly, Kurz took his case to the Apostolic Delegate, Martin Lucas, and Hubert Quinn who was in Rome and, therefore, close to the whole issue over there. Secondly, Kurz was then forced to resign – by the Apostolic Delegate, here in South Africa – and, then, only after that he tried to explain his situation. According to Purstinger, Kurz should not have resigned and should have rather appealed to Rome, and explained the situation while still in power, before his resignation. So, Kurz lost everything and could not have any influence in the matter after his resignation – he was no longer in power.<sup>17</sup> In a letter Urban O’Sullivan wrote to John Evangelist McBride, the then Minister Provincial of the Irish Province, he stated:

I am pleased that you have passed on that information about Bishop Kurz. I am sorry for the poor fellow...I just cannot understand what Kurz wants to come back here for. He seems to have given the impression in Rome that he had a chaplaincy here...That chaplaincy at

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Purstinger, *Missionsgeschichte*, pp. 394-395.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Melrose is no longer vacant...If it is true that that Propaganda offered Kurz a Vicariate in China, I think he was a fool to turn it down.<sup>18</sup>

A few comments on the above words. First of all, O'Sullivan was the Apostolic Delegate's Secretary. He, therefore, would have had some access to the Delegate's and the Church hierarchy's thinking and positions on certain issues, not excluding Kurz's case. Secondly, as seen earlier on, Bishop Kurz was causing much confusion and tension in the diocese of Kokstad, with the Franciscan Friars, the priests helping out there during the War, the Sisters and the people. This, as we noticed, made the priests want to protest against him and even resign. So, the words of O'Sullivan's letter seem to confirm that situation and also the position the hierarchy took on him, his removal. Did that removal of Kurz also include what Purstinger called a "plot" against the Bavarian Friars by the Church hierarchy together with the leadership of the Irish Friars? That is a question that would probably not be easy to answer, depending what side one is, I suppose.

## **9.2. The Bavarians' options!**

According to Cardinal Napier, the coming of the Irish Friars to Kokstad was not meant to be a "taking over"; the Irish Friars were asked to come to help in Kokstad as the Bavarians could not continue to staff the Mission.<sup>19</sup> The Cardinal continued to argue that, according to Thomas-Bruno - one of the early Irish Friars to arrive in Kokstad - John Evangelist McBride, the new bishop who was an Irish, in fact placed the Bavarian Friars in the top jobs.<sup>20</sup> McBride seemingly considered the Bavarian Friars the seniors who had been in the ministry and the Kokstad Mission for longer and because of this the Irish felt that they were being treated in an unfair manner.<sup>21</sup> So, then, the arrival of the Irish Friars in Kokstad cannot be blamed for the moving of some of the Bavarian Friars to other new Missions later. At first, the Bavarian Friars worked side by side with the Irish Friars, in

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<sup>18</sup> O'Sullivan to McBride, 1 March 1948.

<sup>19</sup> Interview of His Eminence, Wilfrid Cardinal Napier, 3 March 2010.

<sup>20</sup> According to a one-page document with personal files of Franciscan Friars in Kokstad - "Locus natiuitatis/Tempus natiuitatis/Adventus in Missionum" - Tom Bruno was born in Roscommon, Ireland, on 3 August 1924; he came out to the Mission (Kokstad) on 25 April 1952; (died in August 2009, in Kokstad), Franciscan Archives, Santa Sophia, Pretoria.

<sup>21</sup> Interview of His Eminence, Wilfrid Cardinal Napier, 3 March 2010.

Kokstad. In fact, the Minister General of the Order, in Rome, decided to entrust the Vicariate (Kokstad) jointly to the two Provinces of the Bavarian and the Irish Friars.<sup>22</sup> Then later when new opportunities were available some of them opted for those, leaving their mission of Kokstad.<sup>23</sup> They were given a choice between staying in Kokstad or going to Bolivia, a new Mission that had been opened around the same time as South Africa. Or, again, they could go to the new area of Eshowe diocese, in Zululand, where the German Benedictines were working.<sup>24</sup>

The Cardinal insisted that the Bavarian Friars were certainly not pushed out of Kokstad.<sup>25</sup> Some of them remained there till death, and those who did move out to other new openings, especially Zululand, went there later.<sup>26</sup> To support the Cardinal's point here, we have with us letters of application by some of the Bavarian Friars to join the Irish Province which goes to show that those Friars were at home in the Kokstad Mission that had become an Irish and no longer a Bavarian entity.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, it must be pointed out that earlier on, after the arrival of the Irish Friars in 1946 and 1947, there was some anxiety and apprehension on the situation in Kokstad.<sup>28</sup> The South African government lifted the ban on Germans entering South Africa which had been imposed during the War. The suspicion, then, was that the German Friars could invite more of their men from Bavaria and overwhelm the Irish Friars, something which would not have pleased the latter.<sup>29</sup> As a result, the Irish Friars were apparently seeking a territory of their own in the country and Lydenburg Mission – which was being offered by the Apostolic

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<sup>22</sup> Urban O'Sullivan, Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia 21 May 1947); John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial), Dublin, to His Excellency, Martin Lucas (Apostolic Delegate, Pretoria), (Santa Sophia 30 May 1947).

<sup>23</sup> Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", p. 41.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Interview of His Eminence, Wilfrid Cardinal Napier, 3 March 2010. The Cardinal mentioned names like Severin, Octave and Juniper.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. In this category the Cardinal mentioned names like Canisius and Gottschalk.

<sup>27</sup> Lucas Purstinger, Kokstad, to Hubert Quinn (Minister Provincial, Dublin, Ireland), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 18 August 1958); Gottschalk Kunsteiger, St. Xavier's Mission, Taylorville, East Griqualand, to Hubert Quinn (Minister Provincial, Dublin, Ireland), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 18 August 1958); Juniper Wuertner, Kokstad, to Hubert Quinn (Minister Provincial, Dublin, Ireland), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 18 August 1958); Dositheus Buehler, Flagstaff, to "Dear Very Rev. Father Superior", (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 16 November 1958).

<sup>28</sup> Urban O'Sullivan (Apostolic Delegate Secretary), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 6 January 1948).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Delegate and the bishop of that Mission, (Lydenburg Prefecture), Monsignor Riegler, to a missionary religious group<sup>30</sup> - was seemingly a favourable option for them.<sup>31</sup> The situation, however, calmed down as the Bavarian Friars did not get any more men for South Africa and the Lydenburg idea was not pursued, especially because the national Seminary was accepted by the Irish Friars.

As for those Bavarian Friars who decided to join the Irish Province there are some points to be noted on their letters of application. Firstly, all three of them have the same date in which they are supposed to have written – 18 August 1958 - and the formula (wording) is the same in all of them. Secondly, the witness is the same person – Urban O’Sullivan – signature at the end, below the individual Friar (applicant). What this tells us is that it was probably a decision taken by individual Bavarian Friars – after they discussed the matter among themselves – to apply to join the Irish Province, something that was natural in the given situation. These Friars could have consulted with the Irish Friars in Kokstad, as to what they were about to do and what they (Irish) thought about them joining their Province. Or again, the initiative might have come from the Irish Friars who, seeing the good relationship with their Bavarian brothers, might have approached them to join their Province. Urban O’Sullivan – the witness with the signature on the letters (applications) was Secretary to the Apostolic Delegate when the Irish Franciscans arrived in South Africa, 1946. We will take a closer look at him in the next section.

Observing the fourth letter we find that it is different from the other three; it was written by Dositheus Buehler. Firstly, his letter was written on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November, and not on the same date as the other three (18 August 1958). Secondly, his was addressed to his “Very Rev. Father Superior”, his local Superior, in the Kokstad region. Thirdly, his letter revealed a questioning and even a refusal by his Minister Provincial, in Bavaria, on his intention to join the Irish Province. It opened thus, “Two days ago I got a letter from my Fr. Provincial saying that he received a letter from your Provincial in Ireland concerning

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<sup>30</sup> Martin Lucas (Apostolic Delegate), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 2 September 1947); O’Sullivan to McBride, 6 January 1948.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

my joining your Province. He was very amazed about my step and asking the reasons, saying that he and his definitors would only consider grave reason.”<sup>32</sup>

First of all, it is obvious that Dositheus had, like all the other three Bavarian Friars, applied to the Irish Provincial. The Irish Provincial then would have contacted the Bavarian Provincial. We do not have documents showing the disapproval of the applications of the other three; only Dositheus’ letter is a proof of his refusal by the Bavarian Provincial. The question then would be why was he refused? One explanation of this would be that he was refused for a certain reason that is unknown to us. Another explanation would be that they were all refused and we just do not have evidence, documentation to that effect. What we do know though is that, as the Cardinal stated above, some of the Bavarians continued to work in Kokstad alongside the Irish Friars and died in that area. The Bavarians were applying to join the Irish Province because they preferred to remain in the area – Kokstad, in Africa – where they had been for long and also because they realized that the future of the Franciscans in South Africa was from that time onward to be in the hands of the Irish Friars and, again, they were prepared to happily build up the future of the Franciscan Family in South Africa.<sup>33</sup>

The above points, coming from both the interview of the Cardinal and the relevant documents, show the two sides of the Irish Friars. That is, on the one hand, there was the human element of self-preservation and the natural tendency to control what they had obtained, in that way the Bavarian Friars were persuaded to join the Irish so that they would increase their numbers and reinforce the Irish presence in Kokstad. On the other hand, the Irish Friars were open to the Bavarians and they provided a home for them, thus causing some of them to opt to stay in Kokstad rather than go to another place. These two aspects of the Irish Friars were reiterated by Egbert O’Dea in an interview with him in Maria Telgte Mission.<sup>34</sup> While O’Dea confirmed the Cardinal’s reading of the situation he also tended to differ from him. On the positive note about the Irish Friars, O’Dea made

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<sup>32</sup> Buehler to “Dear Very Rev. Fr. Superior”, 16 November 1958.

<sup>33</sup> Letter (application) of the Bavarian Friars, to Hubert Quinn, (Minister Provincial, Dublin, Ireland), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 18 August 1958).

<sup>34</sup> Interview of Egbert O’Dea, Maria Telgte, (Kokstad, 30 June 2011).

it clear that the Bavarian Brothers did not want to leave Kokstad for Zululand, where their counterparts (priests) had gone. They remained in Kokstad till death, why, because – in an earlier interview – O’Dea had mentioned the fact that the Bavarian priest-Friars were “real Germans”, loyal and hard with the Brothers and so the Brothers felt more at home with the Irish, they experienced more freedom with them.<sup>35</sup>

On the question of why Canisius Berscht eventually left Kokstad and joined his Bavarian brothers in Zululand, O’Dea claimed that Canisius was probably pressurized by Lukas Purstinger –who as we saw in earlier chapters was the first Superior of the pioneer Bavarian Friars (1932) – and the other Bavarians who had already moved to Zululand.<sup>36</sup> O’Dea, however, went on to argue that the Bavarian Friars were under pressure from the Irish Friars. The Irish came and had to staff the diocese of Kokstad without having any knowledge of the local languages and so they took the towns where they could just use English. The Bavarians then were squeezed out and so Zululand was the next option really left for them. O’Dea even went further to maintain that the failure of the Irish Friars not to learn local languages was all part of a colonial atmosphere at the time: towns were English-speaking (with whites and Coloureds). Magistrates (white) knew isiXhosa and/or Sesotho quite well but would not speak them, they always had interpreters and this was a way of keeping a distance and a sense of superiority over the Blacks. Worse still is the fact that some of the Irish Friars even encouraged others not to learn the local language.<sup>37</sup> He himself went to Lesotho for a few months to learn the language – insisting that it was the only way to know and mix with the people and do work among them. According to O’Dea, John McBride, the bishop,<sup>38</sup> was afraid of Blacks; he did not trust them. He provided the example of one time when he paid a visit to his (O’Dea’s) mission-station, Hardenberg. McBride made sure that all the doors and windows were closed at night and when he woke up the following morning not only was he shocked to find that the door had been opened all night but he was also furious and shouted at

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid..

<sup>38</sup> John Baptist McBride was the Minister Provincial of the Irish Friars (Dublin) and he was then appointed bishop of Kokstad in 1949.

O’Dea, asking, “What on earth do you think you are doing?”<sup>39</sup> O’Dea continued to explain that McBride was not per se anti-Blacks, he had no problem with them, but he depended perhaps too much on certain people – whites and Coloureds, in the parish in Kokstad – who were feeding him with negative stories and who had such attitudes toward the Blacks.<sup>40</sup>

### 9.3. Irish expansion

As mentioned above, the Irish Franciscan Friars came to South Africa at the end of 1946.<sup>41</sup> Like the Bavarian Friars in 1932, the first group of Irish Friars arrived in Durban by boat, on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December and the following day were collected by Severin Neumeier who was the regional Superior of the Franciscan Friars, in Kokstad.<sup>42</sup> The next group came by plane in August 1947.<sup>43</sup> When the Irish Friars came to South Africa the Apostolic Delegate appointed one of them, Urban O’Sullivan,<sup>44</sup> as his Secretary. As a result, O’Sullivan was sent up to the Apostolic Delegation in Pretoria.<sup>45</sup> When the Catholic Bishops of South Africa decided to open a national Seminary<sup>46</sup> for the training of priests the staffing of the Seminary had to be the next question. While the Apostolic Delegate was struggling with this matter, having sought assistance from various Religious Orders, he was advised by his Secretary, O’Sullivan, to once again approach

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> “Locus nativitates/Tempus nativitatis/Adventus in Missionum” (a one-page document with personal files of Franciscan Friars in Kokstad) gives the date of the first arrivals as 24 December 1946 (Santa Sophia, Pretoria); Kokstad chronicles of the Holy Cross Sisters, Belgravia, Johannesburg, gives 25 December 1946; Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, p. 41.

<sup>42</sup> “Locus nativitates/Tempus nativitatis/Adventus in Missionum”; Kokstad chronicles of the Holy Cross Sisters, Belgravia, Johannesburg.

<sup>43</sup> Urban O’Sullivan, Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial, Dublin, Ireland), (Santa Sophia 1 August 1947).

<sup>44</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 45-46.

<sup>45</sup> The address was 800 Pretorius Street, Pretoria. See his letters – which are many and quite informative – in Santa Sophia, Franciscan Archives, Pretoria; (Arch)Bishop William Slattery claimed that O’Sullivan was one of the first group of Irish Franciscan Missionaries, selected alphabetically like all others – as stated above – and the Apostolic Delegate who was looking for a lawyer (Canon Lawyer) for a secretary then commandeered him to work for him in that position. Interview of (Arch)Bishop William Slattery, 19 December 2010.

<sup>46</sup> O’Sullivan to McBride, 21 May 1947.

the Irish Provincial and this proved a great success.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, the Apostolic Delegate did ask the Irish Province<sup>48</sup> and the Minister Provincial, John Evangelist McBride, with the encouragement of O'Sullivan, responded positively.<sup>49</sup>

In the letters of the Ministers Provincial to the members of the Irish Province around that time the Irish mission in South Africa was mentioned, and it included their ministry at the Seminary in Pretoria.<sup>50</sup> In 1947 the Irish Provincial, John Evangelist McBride, came out to South Africa with some more Irish Friars. After his visit to South Africa, Urban O'Sullivan wrote to the Provincial to thank him for accompanying them to the new mission. So, that group of new missionaries must have included O'Sullivan himself.<sup>51</sup> However, other sources seem to suggest that O'Sullivan came to South Africa with the first group, in 1946.<sup>52</sup> So, this would mean that his reference to the Minister Provincial's "having come with us to South Africa" and the Minister Provincial's visit..., immediately

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<sup>47</sup> Urban O'Sullivan, Kokstad, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 24 November 1947); Urban O'Sullivan, Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 14 December 1947); Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", pp. 45-46.

<sup>48</sup> Martin Lucas (Apostolic Delegate), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 12 January 1948); Martin Lucas (Apostolic Delegate), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 22 September 1948); Martin Lucas (Apost. Deleg.), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Prov., Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 20 December 1948).

<sup>49</sup> John Evangelist McBride (Min. Prov.), Dublin, to His Excellency, Martin Lucas (Apost. Deleg.), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 10 October 1948); John Evangelist McBride (Min. Prov.), Dublin, to His Excellency, Martin Lucas (Apost. Deleg.), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 3 March 1949); Martin Lucas (Apost. Deleg.), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Min. Prov., Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 19 March 1949); Martin Lucas (Apost. Deleg.), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Min. Prov., Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 30 April 1949).

<sup>50</sup> In his very first letter after being re-elected Minister Provincial, in 1949, John Evangelist McBride, did not really mention South Africa but referred to "the foreign missions". See p. 3 of the five-page letter to Friars of the Irish Province, (Santa Sophia September 1949); Hubert Quinn (Minister Provincial, re-elected for third term, wrote to the Friars of the Province on 1 November 1951, mentioned South Africa under foreign missions and the "regional Seminary"; he also sent word of encouragement to "His Excellency, Dr. McBride, and to the missionaries of the diocese of Kokstad...and the Rector and professors of the Regional Seminary of Pretoria." See page 8 of his eight-page letter (Santa Sophia 1 November 1951); Celsus O'Brian, Minister Provincial in 1960, in his letter to the Irish Friars referred to the financial projects of the Province "both at home and in Southern Africa." It is a known fact that the Irish Province had financial responsibilities of its projects in the missions, including the Seminary in Pretoria (Santa Sophia 1 November 1960).

<sup>51</sup> Urban O'Sullivan (Apostolic Delegate's Secretary), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia 21 May 1947); John Evangelist McBride (Min. Prov.), Dublin, to Martin Lucas (Apostolic Delegate, Pretoria), (Santa Sophia 30 May 1947).

<sup>52</sup> Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", pp. 45-46; Necrology of the Franciscan Friars in South Africa, Revised edition February 2007, 9 December 1960. See also O'Sullivan to McBride, 14 December 1947.

after that sentence, does not necessary have to be interpreted as the same time.<sup>53</sup> That is, the Minister Provincial would have first come out with the Friars of O’Sullivan’s group, in 1946, and then later paid visit to South Africa, in 1947. The fact that his name does not appear in the list of Friars in the Kokstad Mission would only be due to the fact that he was not in that Mission; he went straight to the Apostolic Delegation in Pretoria either on his arrival or very soon after that.<sup>54</sup>

Who was Urban O’Sullivan? This question is worth asking especially because he was to play a prominent role in the life and ministry of the Irish Friars in this country. Urban O’Sullivan was born in County Cork on 10 June 1918.<sup>55</sup> After joining the Franciscans in Ireland he was ordained priest in 1942. He was then sent for further studies in canon law (Church law) and then came out to South Africa in 1946. And so it is no wonder that was appointed the Apostolic Delegate’s Secretary when he came to South Africa, with such qualifications and mentality. He held that position for six years before joining the Kokstad Mission of the Bavarian and Irish Friars. In 1959 he was appointed the first Provincial Delegate of the Franciscan Commissariat. He was a hard worker and this is reflected in his letters – many of them and quite detailed, and very competent - and also in his appointments to various positions which he held in a brief span of time. He was a talented person too. O’Sullivan also became the first regular Superior of the combined Irish Friars in South Africa and managed that very well too. He died suddenly and prematurely in 1960, at La Verna Franciscan Retreat Centre, Vanderbijlpark, and this was probably due to over-exerting himself with work; he had just opened the Catholic church in Vanderbijlpark whose building he had supervised.<sup>56</sup> However, there is another side to this great man: certain positions of his make one wonder, as we will see in the next sections of this chapter.

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<sup>53</sup> O’Sullivan to McBride, 21 May 1947.

<sup>54</sup> “Locus nativitates/ Tempus nativitatis/ Adventus in Missionum”.

<sup>55</sup> Necrology of the Franciscan Friars in South Africa, Revised edition 2007, 9 December 1960.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

More missionary Friars from Ireland followed – 1949: Kirian McCrann (from Athlone);<sup>57</sup> Valerian (from Roscommon) and Matthias McSweeney (from Dublin); 1950: Eymard (from Galway); 1952: Reginald Gunn (from Roscommon); Thomas Brunno Byrne (Roscommon) and Egbert O’Dea (Galway); 1954: Maseo Giblin (Dublin); 1955: Aelred (Derry, N. Ireland); 1957: Seraphin and Laurence O’Shea (Cork); 1958: Vianney (Dublin).<sup>58</sup> So then the Irish Friars expanded in numbers and in strength in the country, in various ministries. They performed pastoral work in Kokstad, the Seminary and even retreat work. Pastorally they established themselves in Kokstad diocese. One of their own, John Evangelist McBride, who was the Minister Provincial in Ireland, was made bishop of Kokstad, in July 1949.<sup>59</sup> The Friars were also asked to go and work in the Vaal Triangle, Gauteng, and quickly took over a whole area there which was quite sizeable. First they worked in white areas but eventually established themselves in areas of other races, Coloured (Reiger Park) and Black townships.<sup>60</sup>

In 1958 the Irish Province also sent Friars to work in Zimbabwe, but that is another study on its own. It is mentioned here, first of all, to show how the Irish Franciscans were expanding. Secondly, the Friars of both South Africa and Zimbabwe were working closely with each other and at one time, when the idea of forming one entity in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe was part of the process and had to pull out only in the end (1970s) due to difficulties caused by the apartheid government.<sup>61</sup> So, eventually there were two main centres of the Irish Friars in South Africa and they were the Kokstad and the Transvaal (Gauteng). And the Seminary in Pretoria was even like a third centre as there was a good number of Franciscans in the area, in the Seminary itself plus a parish run by the Irish Friars in Waterkloof, St. Pius X.

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<sup>57</sup> “Locus nativitates/Tempus nativitatis/Adventus in Missionum”.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, p. 42; Urban O’Sullivan (Apostolic Delegate’s Secretary), Pretoria, to Pacificus Nolan (Vicar Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia 10 June 1949); Conlan, *Missionary Work*, p.34.

<sup>60</sup> Conlan, *Missionary Work*, pp. 35-37.

<sup>61</sup> The apartheid government made it hard for peoples on either side of the border to communicate and so travel permits were not easy to obtain.

Regarding the Seminary, the Irish Province had been asked to staff it. But the original Seminary was in Queenstown and the Apostolic Delegate was requesting the Irish to look after that, with only three Friars, and they were Fergus Barret (Rector), Bonaventure Burkley and Eustace O'Callaghn.<sup>62</sup> That was accepted by the Province, but then the second request was for the Irish Friars to staff the Seminary that was to be built in Pretoria itself and that was a larger project.<sup>63</sup> Again, the Irish Province was generous in accepting that invitation.<sup>64</sup> It is worth noting the fact that the Seminary was for white students only and not for other racial groups;<sup>65</sup> the Church was following the country's apartheid that was made official in 1948. Later on, in the 1970s and 80s when the country revolted against these, the bishops were to regret this unfortunate move and worked hard at undoing it.

As indicated above, the Irish Franciscans were also requested by the Church to establish a retreat centre and provide retreats for the clergy and religious in the country.<sup>66</sup> So in this way and their teaching in the Seminary they were doing apostolates that were similar to their Bavarian brothers when they were first invited by Bishop Fleischer of Mariannhill.<sup>67</sup>

Urban O'Sullivan's term of office as Secretary to the Apostolic Delegate came to a close. We do not know how this came about, as there are no documents on it, but we know that

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<sup>62</sup> Letter (probably written by the Secretary of the Irish Province), Dublin, to Martin Lucas (Apostolic Delegate), Pretoria, (Santa Sophia 24 May 1949); Martin Lucas (Apostolic Deleg.), Pretoria, to Pacificus Nolan (Vicar Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 9 June 1949).

<sup>63</sup> Martin Lucas (Apost. Deleg.), Pretoria, to Pacificus Nolan (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 6 March 1950); Martin Lucas (Apost. Deleg.), Pretoria, to Pacificus Nolan (Min. Prov., Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 29 August 1950); Martin Lucas (Apostolic Deleg.), Pretoria, to Pacificus Nolan (Min. Prov., Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 9 September 1950).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid; Pacificus Nolan (Minister Provincial), Dublin, to Martin Lucas (Apostolic Deleg.), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 19 November 1949); Urban O'Sullivan (Apostolate Delegate's Secretary), Pretoria, to Pacificus Nolan (Minister Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 18 December 1949); Lucas to Nolan, 6 March 1950.

<sup>65</sup> O'Sullivan to McBride, 24 November 1947.

<sup>66</sup> Martin Lucas (Apostolic Delegate), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Min. Prov., Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 20 August 1947); Martin Lucas (Apostolic Delegate), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Prov., Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 2 September 1947); Urban O'Sullivan (Apost. Deleg.' Secretary), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Minister Prov., Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 24 September 1947).

<sup>67</sup> As we saw in the above chapters, the Bavarian Friars were invited by Fleischer to provide, among others, the service of preaching retreats and teaching in the Seminary.

the Apostolic Delegate had asked for his stay at the Delegation to be extended in 1947.<sup>68</sup> After five years of his hard work of competency and dedication,<sup>69</sup> the Apostolic Delegate had to relieve him of his duties at the Delegation. Since the Irish Provincial, Pacificus Nolan, told the Apostolic Delegate that O’Sullivan had been originally appointed to the Kokstad Mission, the Apostolic Delegate wrote to McBride who was by then bishop of Kokstad, requesting that O’Sullivan be given a good rest before going to take up another ministry in Kokstad.<sup>70</sup> According to a letter written by Hubert Quinn, Minister Provincial, O’Sullivan was appointed Regional Superior of all the areas staffed by the Irish Friars.<sup>71</sup>

The letter is undated but since Quinn was re-elected Provincial in November 1951,<sup>72</sup> it was probably written after his re-election late that year. So, if the Apostolic Delegate’s proposal to give O’Sullivan a good break was heeded, and there is no reason to suggest the contrary, then he would have come back from that holiday – was it a few months overseas or what? – and gone to take up his new position as Regional Superior of the Irish Friars in Southern Africa, and again that would have included Zimbabwe.<sup>73</sup> What the exact nature of O’Sullivan’s position was does not seem too clear. In the above-mentioned letter by Quinn it is stated that he would be both the Provincial’s personal delegate in Irish Missions (Southern Africa) and Regional Superior.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, the letter stated that Kokstad would be left on its own in this matter as it was a thousand kilometres from Johannesburg and there was already a Regional Superior in that area, Bernardine Dore who, the letter added, was so busy with the mission work that he “would have no time to attend to affairs at Johannesburg or to the general interests of the Order in South Africa.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Martin Lucas (Apostolic Delegate), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Min. Provincial, Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 3 September 1947).

<sup>69</sup> Martin Lucas (Apost. Deleg.), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Bishop, Kokstad), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 8 May 1951).

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Hubert Quinn (Minister Provincial, Dublin), to Irish Franciscan Missionaries in Southern Africa (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, Undated letter, probably written late in 1951).

<sup>72</sup> Hubert Quinn (Minister Provincial, Dublin), to the Friars of the Province, (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 1 November 1951).

<sup>73</sup> As indicated above, the Irish Friars went to Zimbabwe in 1958 and the Friars in the two countries – Zimbabwe and South Africa – have always had good relations, being from the same Irish Province.

<sup>74</sup> Quinn to Irish Franciscan Missionaries in Southern Africa, undated letter, probably written in late 1951.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

#### **9.4. Social involvement of the Irish Friars**

As we saw in the previous chapters, the Bavarian Friars had projects for the uplifting of the people. The Irish Friars too were working close to the people, initially pastorally and eventually they too got involved in projects for the uplifting of the poor, mainly in areas of health and education and again, later, in the struggle for the liberation of the oppressed. Pastorally they helped the Bavarian Friars carry the load of parishes in the missions that they had established over the ten years that they had been in the Kokstad Vicariate. As we saw above, within a short space of time, the Irish Friars grew in numbers and they became the stronger group. Again, we noticed how they spread to other parts of the country and Zimbabwe. While the Bavarian Friars initiated projects of uplifting the poor and discriminated-against people in their areas, the Irish, at least initially, were rather more concerned with establishing their presence, wanting to have a good grip of the situation in Kokstad and elsewhere in the country. For example, in that situation referred to above, in which there were rumours about the Germans wanting to swell their own men and overwhelm the Irish, the Irish wanted to have their own territory outside Kokstad so that they were not in danger of being under another group or nationality.<sup>76</sup>

#### **The Regional Seminary for White Clergy – Uplifting the poor?**

As for being on the side of the poor and underprivileged, the position of those Irish Franciscan Missionaries is questionable. First of all, they came to the country just before the official declaration of the apartheid policy, in 1948, and so they could have grabbed the opportunity for siding with the underprivileged and discriminated. It does not look like they did.

In a letter O’Sullivan wrote to the Minister Provincial, John Evangelist McBride, in November 1947, he begged that the Irish Province accept the invitation of the Church hierarchy to establish the Seminary only for European students which was to be built in

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<sup>76</sup> O’Sullivan to McBride, 6 January 1948.

Pretoria.<sup>77</sup> Just less than a month later, he reiterated his plea: “I do not have to stress again how important the seminary would be for our position here in South Africa were it offered to us.”<sup>78</sup> We have to remember that O’Sullivan was in a prominent position as Secretary to the Apostolic Delegate and he had great influence on the leadership of the Irish Province. And again later, as seen above, he was made the overall Regional Superior of the Irish Friars in Southern Africa. Yet, he encouraged the involvement of the Friars in such a project, a Seminary that would be only for whites. In an earlier letter he wrote to the Provincial O’Sullivan had insisted: “This country needs priests, priests and more priests”.<sup>79</sup> What kind of priests then did he think the country needed, ones who would support the segregation that was promoted by the apartheid regime? Indeed in the same letter he told the Provincial that “another important development was the agreement to establish Native and European Seminaries for Secular Clergy.”<sup>80</sup> The one for the White students would be built in Pretoria, a high class area, and the one for Africans would be in Mariannhill diocese where Fleischer had offered his own Seminaries, already in existence, to the whole Southern Africa.<sup>81</sup>

Closely linked to this idea of Seminary was the question of vocations, that is, the young men who would be interested in joining the Franciscan Friars in South Africa. O’Sullivan wanted to promote the Franciscans only among the whites, with no interest in other cultural or racial groups. This is clear from the fact that in his insistence on the Irish Friars taking charge of the Seminary, “it would give us a unique influence and advantage in this country.”<sup>82</sup> And he continued to count the advantages: a) a site for the retreat house - which the Irish Franciscans were being asked by the hierarchy to run in this country - and, b) “The retreat house would be near the seminary and thus encourage vocations...for our own order...”<sup>83</sup> As the Seminary that the Friars were being asked to run was only for whites and, therefore, the vocations would be only white. O’Sullivan,

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<sup>77</sup> O’Sullivan to McBride, 24 November 1947.

<sup>78</sup> Urban O’Sullivan (Apost. Deleg.’s Secretary), Pretoria, to John Evangelist McBride (Min. Prov., Dublin), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 14 December 1947).

<sup>79</sup> O’Sullivan to McBride, 21 May 1947.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> O’Sullivan to McBride, 24 November 1947.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

more than anyone else, knew this. In a draft of the agreement between the Bishops of Southern Africa and the Irish Franciscan Province on the Seminary, and which as Secretary of the Apostolic Delegate he was part of, he wrote to Bishop Rosenthal of Queenstown who was head of that the Seminary Department and who had not attended the particular meeting: “I have been giving the draft agreement serious thought and have noted a few points which I quote here...”<sup>84</sup> So, O’Sullivan’s stance was not based on mistakes or ignorance – he thought matters through, and that is one of the reasons he was appointed Secretary to the Apostolic Delegate. He knew very well what the question of separate Seminaries implied; that it was application of segregation laws in the Catholic Church. In fact, the first point of the draft agreement clearly stated the same issue of our concern:

The Minister Provincial of the Irish Province...accepts for an indefinite length of time the direction of the inter-Vicarial (Regional) Major European Seminary of Southern Africa.<sup>85</sup>

### **Building God’s kingdom or what?**

Such an attitude and practices would make one wonder whether or not the Irish Franciscans were, in fact, busy building their kingdom. When they thought of taking the Lydenburg Mission, as indicated above, was it a matter of wanting to give room to their Bavarian counterparts, or was it just a matter of seeking their own little corner where they would be by themselves comfortably without any disturbance of another nationality? In other words, was it an altruistic thought, or was it a mere selfish tendency which is not unheard of in men and women of religion too?

History has shown that religious men and women, including Christian missionaries, have tended to forget Jesus Christ’s teaching on “Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”<sup>86</sup> In fact, applying these words of Jesus to our present subject one would even question the rumours that,

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<sup>84</sup> Urban O’Sullivan (Apostolic Delegate’s Secretary), Rome Mission, Basutoland, to J.B. Rosenthal (Bishop, Queenstown), (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 14 May 1949).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> *The Holy Bible* N.R.S.V. Catholic Edition, (London 2005), Matthew, 6: 33.

according to O'Sullivan, were making rounds in Kokstad. The rumours claimed that the Germans were thinking of bringing out more of their own men to South Africa. Were these rumours perhaps just created by the Irish Friars themselves and, if so, for what good reason? Just as a pretext to seek for their own comfortable corner? Or to make a bluff of the Germans after their humiliation in the War? Or both of these? So then, having not got that privilege of taking their own area in Lydenburg, did they perhaps start competition with the Bavarians?

The Irish had the numbers on their side and this was part of their power as well. They had material advantages as well. Indeed, compared to the Bavarians who were the underdogs after the War, the Irish were far more powerful in every way: with Ireland being a Catholic country the Friars had all the necessary financial and moral support. As we will see later with the English Friars, when they first arrived in this country they also struggled with numbers of Friars and with finances.<sup>87</sup> So then, was the intention in the competition of the Irish Friars either to get the Bavarians out of their area, or absorb them into their group? As we saw above, some of the Bavarians applied to join the Irish Province. As stated at that point, the Irish Friars themselves might have encouraged the Bavarians to join their Province. With this kind of mentality, of the Irish Friars, shown in the documents that we are looking at, one begins to wonder again what the motive was in wanting the Bavarians to join them. In other words, was it because the Bavarians had no other choice, as the saying goes: If you cannot beat them, join them? Those Bavarians who remained in Kokstad, instead of taking one of the options offered them – going to Zululand, or going back to Germany or, again, going to Bolivia – were probably so much at home in the Kokstad diocese and could not afford to go elsewhere. After all, they had been ill-treated enough in Mariannhill and could not afford going to another new place, especially after building up the Kokstad diocese.

The same argument could be applied here to the whole question of the Seminary. That is, it seemed to be more than just a matter of supporting the growth of the Church in

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<sup>87</sup> Christopher Ulyat, "The English Franciscans in South Africa", (Pretoria, 1965), pp. 3-4; "Prefecture Apostolic of Volksrust: 25 Years a Prefecture", (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 1983), p. 3.

Southern Africa, but wanting to be in another comfort zone of their own, with the advantages of prestige and power in the Church, and getting to be known in the country – for what good reason? Well, it would have been for keeping their position and extending their kingdom with the help of some South Africans who would join them and those would have to be from the upper or the middle class of the South African society which were, naturally, like themselves “Europeans.” The South African whites would help in maintaining that kingdom as they had the material advantages too, like the Irish Province. The other racial groups were poor and would have drained the resources of that kingdom!

However, life is not always black and white; there are grey areas in life as well. And so I think we have to realize that there are certain factors that would help toward an explanation of this mentality and attitude in the Irish Friars. First of all, as we saw with the Bavarian Friars and kept pointing out, the Irish Friars were just as human as we all are and their behaviour and attitudes should be seen in that way. Secondly, again what we noted with the Holy Cross Sisters regarding their failure to confront the government that promoted segregation in schools applied to the Irish Friars as well. That is, as we said about the Holy Cross, the Irish Friars had come into a situation that was not favourable in the Church, as it was not challenging the government in its discriminatory policies. The Friars had been invited by that very same Church and it would not have been easy for them to stand up against the government as the Church itself was not prepared to do so. Needless to state, of course, had the Irish Friars stood up to the government that time, it would have had a great impact and given the Franciscan Order a prestige in the future of the Church and society. But the fact is, they did not do that. The Catholic Bishops began to issue statements against apartheid only in the late 1950s.<sup>88</sup> In those statements the Bishops condemned apartheid as an evil practice<sup>89</sup> within the Church institutions: convents, schools, seminaries, hospitals and so on.<sup>90</sup> Otherwise, up till then, the Church was not outspoken. So, the Irish Friars were obedient and loyal to the Church.

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<sup>88</sup> While the Bishops started issuing statements against apartheid in 1952 the prominent ones were really those of 1957 and 1966. See Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 142-145.

<sup>89</sup> 1957 statement. See Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 142-144.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145.

Remember, again, that what we saw about the Bavarians above, in connection with relations with other Christian denominations, also applied to the Irish. That is, Ireland is a traditionally Catholic country, they have over centuries sent missionaries all over the world, just as the Bavarians are traditionally Catholic. And so, just as with the Bavarian Friars, they sort of thought of the South African people, particularly the Africans, as not up to the Irish standard in their knowledge and practice of faith and morals. And of course, as we saw with the Bavarians in the above chapters, evangelization was sometimes confused with cultural elements so that just because people were of a different cultural background they were condemned as having inferior and despicable practices.<sup>91</sup> Again, the Irish – just like most missionaries of the time, before the Second Vatican Council – would not have felt comfortable with the indigenous people’s customs and traditions: they were “pagan and heathen.”

As pointed out when studying the Bavarian Friars, in chapter three and chapter 6, the Western world considered itself superior to the rest of the world, particularly the so-called “Third World”, just because of their progress in technological and scientific fields – the missionaries, who were from the Western world – did not expect to find anything positive in what they saw as the poor, dark, backward and primitive Africa. In their thinking, Africa needed the West to save it and the West did not need Africa, except of course for raw materials which they (Africans) could not manage anyway without the West. And, in that kind of attitude, slavery, colonialism and oppression were supposed to be part of that “rescuing of Africa”. So, it is in that context that we should understand O’Sullivan’s mentality and the attitude of the missionaries.

In an interesting conversation with a member of the Oblate of Mary Missionaries, Fr. Sekwati, who is also a historian teaching at the Seminary in Maseru, Lesotho, this situation was also highlighted.<sup>92</sup> Sekwati told of the Oblate Missionaries who came to the country and were, like the Franciscans, allotted different areas according to their

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<sup>91</sup> This is one of the setbacks that has been identified in evangelization of various people throughout the world by missionaries from Europe over centuries. David Bosch, among other theologians and authors, brings out this aspect very clearly in his book *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*.

<sup>92</sup> Conversation at table with Fr. Sekwati, OMI, (Assisi Convent, Marseilles, Bloemfontein, 8 July 2012).

nationalities. One of the Provincials just did not want to accept even the White South Africans and if they did join, then he would make sure that life was not easy for them. The fear of the Irish Oblate Missionaries apparently was that the White locals would get more popular than the missionaries who were foreigners in the country and so the best way to keep them under control was to refuse them admission or make life hard for them to join.<sup>93</sup> At times it was even easier for Black South Africans to join.<sup>94</sup> In a way, the Irish Friars were in a more awkward position than the Bavarians. The Bavarians had been in the country for ten years and this gave them an experience better than the Irish. It seems that Bishop McBride recognized this fact and so, as we saw above, he placed them in positions of leadership over his own Irish brothers in the diocese of Kokstad. Secondly, the Bavarians had been interned and so had first-hand experience with discrimination and were, therefore, more prepared to fight such an evil when imposed on others.<sup>95</sup> So, these are some of the factors that would help explain the stance and attitude of the Irish Friars, and they should hopefully help us understand the situation of those men. But they are not meant to be an excuse; again, the Irish Franciscans were just being human and, unfortunately, the opportunity was missed in that situation. As indicated earlier on, eventually the Irish Friars did get involved in projects of fighting racial segregation in the country. But that is a period outside our scope here and so we will not get into it.<sup>96</sup> The Irish Friars began certain projects in the early 1950s for the relief of the underprivileged people in the Kokstad area. Let us take a close look at some of those.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> As we saw in chapter 4, in the interviews with Getrude Mngenyana and Mrs. Groom, the Bavarians' experience in the internment camps made them more ready to fight against any form of discrimination, and so they wanted to work for the uplifting of the underprivileged.

<sup>96</sup> In the Boksburg-Reiger Park area - in East Rand, Gauteng - those multi-purpose projects, particularly under Seamus "Stan" Brennan, were for the uplifting of the poor and underprivileged: education and all sorts of skills to help people who otherwise had no chance in the country ruled by segregation. These projects were introduced in the 1960s (1966). Again, in the 1980s and 90s the Irish Friars in the Vaal Triangle were siding with the oppressed in protests and legal advice for the people who were helpless in the face of discrimination practices that saw some of their parishioners sent to prison or brutally treated by the state's machinery.

## **The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Sisters (FMMs) - Bizana hospital**

In Bizana, where Magnabonus Koller had established a boarding school for Africans, a hospital was built under the new Irish bishop, McBride, and the Irish Friars. The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary (Sisters) were invited by the bishop, in 1952 and they staffed the hospital. One of the reasons for Bishop McBride's choice of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary was the closeness of Umzinto and Park Rynie to Bizana.<sup>97</sup> The Provincial House of the Sisters was, and still is, in Umzinto and they also had a house in Park Rynie which is just about 13 kilometres from Umzinto. Another reason why Bishop McBride chose these Sisters was probably that they were Franciscans, belonging to the same family as his own Order and that of the men working in his diocese of Kokstad, the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscan Friars). Indeed, what the Holy Cross Sisters were to the Kokstad diocese, particularly during the Bavarian Friars' period,<sup>98</sup> the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary were to the Bizana area during the Irish Friars' period.

While the Holy Cross Sisters specialized in education, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary specialized in health. But, as we will see, they also got involved with the local people through other means, particularly in the parish work. First of all, we have to realize that the FMMs, as they are often called, are one of the largest Religious Congregations of women in the Catholic Church.<sup>99</sup> These Sisters are wonderful in being very close to the poor, that is certainly one of their special marks; they live among and minister to them. Another priority of their spirituality is internationality, in all their communities throughout the world they have members of mixed nationalities, usually in groups of four or five, and that is another great witness to our society not only here in South Africa but in the entire world.<sup>100</sup> The FMMs were founded by Blessed Mary of the

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<sup>97</sup> FMM book on the South African Mission/Province, (Umzinto Provincial Archives), chapter 5: "A new hospital at Bizana in Pondoland", p. 74.

<sup>98</sup> See chapter two where the chapter is dedicated to the Holy Cross Sisters.

<sup>99</sup> Between the FMMs and the Sisters of Mercy they are the largest Congregations of women in the Catholic Church. The FMMs number over 8000 members in the world.

<sup>100</sup> At the Extraordinary General Chapter of the Franciscan Friars (OFMs), which I attended in my capacity as Minister Provincial of South Africa, in 2006, the Superior General of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Sr. Christan (Syrian) addressed the assembled delegates and she shared with us on this very aspect of their spirituality, among other things. She told us of the challenges experienced in that priority

Passion, on 6 January 1877, in India where she was a missionary belonging to a religious Congregation known as the “Marie Reparatrix Sisters”, of French origin. She was herself a French woman and so her new foundation, the FMMs, became strong in France and then in India where they still have a strong presence, with about five Provinces there alone. Blessed Mary of the Passion, originally known as Helen De Chappotin, was born in Brittany, France, on 21 May 1839. After becoming a nun of the “Marie Reparatrix Sisters, in France, she was then sent to India as a missionary. She later founded her own religious Congregation, the FMMs.

Coming back to the Bizana story. Having received the invitation from Bishop McBride, the Sisters went to take a look at Bizana. They realized that this Eastern Cape small town was about forty miles from Kokstad and about one hundred and seventeen miles from Umzinto (three hours by car, in those days).<sup>101</sup> The Sisters also noticed that the area they were coming into – the former Transkei homeland, from their convents in Park Rynie and Umzinto in South Africa – was poor: the land was suffering from soil erosion due to over-grazing and drought; it had become a semi-desert.<sup>102</sup> Thousands of men from this territory flocked to the large cities of South Africa – Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and so on – in search of work. The hospital was to be built next to the Catholic church, on the outskirts of the village, and the grounds were about twenty-two acres, all flat.<sup>103</sup> It was foreseen that the building of the hospital would last for two years and the Sisters were asked to go to Bizana in advance so that they would familiarize themselves with the situation both in the health and the pastoral (parish) dimensions.<sup>104</sup> Four Sisters went there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1954, and they were: M.M. Rosary (Bridget Leavy, Irish), M.M. Declan (Annie Perrott, Irish), M.M. Judith Ann (Yvonne Gagne, American) and M.M. Luisa Giulia (Giovanna Teresa Alivesi, Italian).<sup>105</sup>

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of internationality. In fact, she made history by being the very first woman ever to address the Order (Franciscan Friars).

<sup>101</sup> FMM book, chapter 5: “A new hospital at Bizana in Pondoland”, p. 74.

<sup>102</sup> Documentation of Institute: Memories of Srs Cecile Boulanger, Marie Fontaine, Kathleen Fitzsimmons and Yvonne Gagne, (Provincial Archives, Umzinto 1954-1975), p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 75.

<sup>105</sup> FMM book, chapter 5: “A new hospital at Bizana in Pondoland”, p. 76; Documentation of Institute: Memories of Srs Cecile Boulanger, Marie Fontaine, Kathleen Fitzsimmons and Yvonne Gagne, (FMM Provincial Archives, Umzinto 1954-1975), p. 1.



FMM Convent – Park Rynie The first group of sisters went to Bizana from here

Old Franciscan Friary – Bizana



Franciscan Friary - Maria Telgte

Daughters of St. Francis looking after Maria Telgte boarders



Three vehicles came to Park Rynie from Kokstad diocese to meet the Sisters and they were: Brother Juniper (Bavarian), who was to collect the Sisters' luggage in his lorry, Bishop McBride with his Vicar General, Fr. Antonine Kelly (both Irish), and the new Parish Priest of Bizana, Fr. Germain Mannion (Irish). When the Sisters arrived in Bizana the mission had a friary (Friars' house) and a school – the one that had been established by Magnabon Koller. The church was large and well-built, with catechist living with his family nearby.<sup>106</sup>

Construction of the new hospital was not easy, partly due to the difficulty of getting material for building as Bizana was only a small town and Durban, the nearest city being 157 miles away.<sup>107</sup> In November 1954 the bishop sent two Franciscan Brothers to direct the building. This project was financed by the Department of Health, the Sugar Company and the Catholic Diocese of Kokstad.<sup>108</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup> of March 1958 the bishop blessed the Sisters' chapel within the hospital and the following day saw the arrival of the first patient in the new hospital.<sup>109</sup> It housed 248 beds and there were general, maternity and TB wards.<sup>110</sup> The official opening was a great occasion, it took place in April of the same year and was attended by missionaries, many European visitors, the Paramount Chief and hundreds of locals who were dressed in their customary festive attire. As usual, the Paramount Chief addressed the people, encouraging them to bring their sick to the hospital and not to think that illness was a result of some spirit that was sent to them.<sup>111</sup> Indeed, the Sisters had to work hard in convincing the people to believe in the modern medicine as they were rather suspicious of the European methods of curing.<sup>112</sup>

In 1959 the Sisters opened the nurses' training school which included training for midwives as well.<sup>113</sup> This was another important step in the Sisters' involvement in the

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> FMM book, chapter 5: "A new hospital at Bizana in Pondoland", p. 77.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>110</sup> Documentation of Institute: Memories of Srs Cecile Boulanger, Marie Fontaine, Kathleen Fitzsimmons and Yvonne Gagne, (Provincial Archives, Umzinto 1954-1975), p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., FMM book, chapter 5: "A new hospital at Bizana in Pondoland", pp. 78-79.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

new mission as it meant progress for local girls, both in training and in employment.<sup>114</sup> In 1960 more Sisters arrived in Bizana and the Sisters got more and more involved in the pastoral work, spiritually and practically: teaching catechism, visiting the parishioners in their homes, starting new parish groups and offering clinical services as they went out to the mission-stations with the priests.<sup>115</sup>

The Sisters had the joy of welcoming their first local vocation, Sister Rosalina Candlovu, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1964.<sup>116</sup> More girls were to follow her example. As the Cardinal mentioned during the interview, the FMMs got a number of local vocations in Bizana due to the fact that the young people saw how they were close to the people and very involved in their lives.<sup>117</sup> As time went on, the Sisters got even more active...”Bizana was a centre of missionary activity. Besides the work in the hospital and the training of nurses, the Sisters went out to the outstations with the Franciscan priests and continued with all the activities already noted.”<sup>118</sup> According to the memories of some of the Sisters, every month a Sister and a student nurse had to travel about 130 miles (209 km) to an area where people would rarely see a doctor and they would do clinic services.<sup>119</sup>

The socio-political changes that came in the 1960s on the African continent, with a number of states obtaining political freedom from colonialism, also affected the Transkei. Men sometimes gathered on the hills nearby the mission and hospital, signalling a longing for freedom.<sup>120</sup> Indeed, the Transkei was a home of revolutionary activities – “Upoqo”, PAC and ANC stalwarts were born in that part of the country – and they joined the protest against the “Dom Pass” which ended with the 1960 Sharpeville massacre. While on the one hand this might have been necessary for the eventual collapse of the

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Also see interview of the Cardinal in chapter 4.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>117</sup> Interview of Cardinal Napier, 3 June 2010.

<sup>118</sup> FMM book: chapter 5: “A new hospital at Bizana in Pondoland”, p. 80; Documentation of Institute: Memories of Srs Cecile Boulanger, Marie Fountaine, Kathleen Fitzsimmons and Yvonne Gagne, p. 2.

<sup>119</sup> Documentation of Institute: Memories of Srs Cecile Boulanger, Marie Fountaine, Kathleen Fitzsimmons and Yvonne Gagne, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

apartheid regime, on the other hand it led to the pulling out of the Sisters from Bizana which finally took place in 1975.<sup>121</sup>

### **Rudolf Frank O’Flynn – a man with a difference**

The above section on the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Sisters closed with a reference to the socio-political situation that developed in the country, particularly in the Transkei where the Sisters were based. Well, that in fact affected the entire country and some of the Franciscan missionaries, men and women, did react in a manner that was courageous. Rudolf Frank O’Flynn was one of those few who could not stop challenging the apartheid system and, as we will see, that led to his being tracked down by the regime.

This Irish Friar brought a difference to the kind of situation of the Irish Friars that we have seen up to this point. He was placed in charge of Sharpeville Parish in 1956, the year that the Franciscans took over there. In doing so, they took over from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, who themselves had taken over from the Redemptorists (who had been serving the area since 1916) in 1930. Top Location had ceased to exist in 1927.<sup>122</sup> It used to be a multi-racial area and in 1960 the people were moved out to their respective racial groups: the Coloureds were moved to Rustevaal and the Blacks were taken to Sharpeville. The Friars worked under tough circumstances in the area. MacDermott recalled how in those days in Vanderbijlpark there was a siren – a loud alarm bell – warning the Blacks to move out of the town and go to their own places in the township. If any Black was found in town, he would be arrested. MacDermott recalled all this and in the process asked himself, why Vanderbijlpark and not Vereeniging, nobody knows! So, the Friars had to have special permits for working in the area and it lasted for three months. It would be renewed if one was considered “worthy”.<sup>123</sup>

O’Flynn was an avid cinephilliac. It was a combination of both business, a means of fund-raising and hobby. He used to go to Johannesburg every Friday to watch not just

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>122</sup> Interview of Liam MacDermott, (La Verna, Vanderbijlpark, 26 September 2011).

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

one film but films, a number of them, even up to five of them. He would leave Vanderbijlpark quite early so that he would see the films from 9 o'clock and see five of them, one after the other.<sup>124</sup> Could it have been also his way of coping with the apartheid system, one wonders. Was it a way of relaxing from the tension that existed in the area and the country?

In his time in Sharpeville, O'Flynn used to show films that became popular, more than those of other companies in the surroundings. In fact, these were popular even with the *tsotsis* of the township. However, he also had to deal with *tsotsis* who wanted to disrupt his business and in the process of sorting them out he won himself the popular name of "Boxer" as he had to drive a few punches into these troublesome fellows.<sup>125</sup> O'Flynn did not limit his fights to the *tsotsis* but also tackled the government of the day, particularly the Bantu Affairs Administration. He had constant battles with this Department, opposing them for their discriminatory policies. A certain official of the same Department by the name of Ferreira asked him one day, "Why don't you go back to Ireland", to which O'Flynn responded by asking him, "And why don't you go back to Portugal?" Ferreira of course had nothing to do with Portugal, was very much of an Afrikaner but just because he had such a name – sounding like a Portuguese – O'Flynn would provoke him that way.<sup>126</sup>

O'Flynn was totally against the Afrikaner and the apartheid regime. The irony of all this was that when the Sharpeville shootings took place, in 1960, he was not around. He was in Hardenberg, Matatiele – Kokstad diocese, which as we saw above was staffed by Irish Friars – where he was learning Sesotho.<sup>127</sup> When he went to Zimbabwe in 1965, to visit the Friars up there, the South African government was so pleased and took the opportunity to get him out of the country. They refused to renew his permit and so he was not allowed back in the country.<sup>128</sup> In Zimbabwe he changed his name and obtained for

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<sup>124</sup> Interview of Liam MacDermott, 26 September 2011.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.. The other Friar there, Columbanus Timmons, was also not around at the time as he was in hospital with a broken leg.

<sup>128</sup> Interview of Liam MacDermott, 26 September 2011.

himself a new passport so that he could not be recognized when he came for a visit in South Africa.

### **Stan (Seamus) Brennan of Reiger Park, Boksburg**

Another situation worth noting is that of a Franciscan Friar by the name of Stanislaus Seamus Brennan – or “Father Stan Brannan”, as he has popularly been known. He is another powerful man that brought about much relief to the lives of many people in the Gauteng Province. Stan came from Ireland and was sent to a minor Seminary, of young men interested in becoming priests but still at school, in the early 1960s. Brother Juniper O’Brein, an Irish missionary in Zimbabwe, related in an interview that Stan was with another Franciscan Friar, a certain Francis, at the minor Seminary where they were part of the staff.<sup>129</sup> Juniper said that the Seminary was in Boksburg, not far from Reiger Park where Stan later initiated a multi-purpose complex of projects.<sup>130</sup>

According to Stan, the Seminary was established in 1957 and closed in 1966.<sup>131</sup> It was quite common at that time to have a Minor Seminary for boys who could later join the priesthood and that Seminary, in Boksburg, was for the diocese of Johannesburg. Stan went on to state that it (the Seminary) was, unfortunately, for whites only – which of course confirms an argument of this research on the Irish Franciscan’s leaning towards the policies of the White regime and the fact that the agents of our history were human. With the coming of the Second Vatican Council many of these Seminaries were closed as that was more in accordance with the spirit of the Church.<sup>132</sup>

The multi-purpose complex of projects began in 1966 when he (Stan Brennan) was sent to Reiger Park to take over from the Oblates Missionaries of Mary who had decided to move out of the area due to shortage of manpower. At that time, the government was in the process of implementing its Group Areas Act, the Black people being moved out to

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<sup>129</sup> Interview with Brother Juniper O’Brein, 24 June 2012.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Seamus Stan Brennan, 27 June 2012.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

Black townships like Vosloorus and the Coloureds moved into Reiger Park (from Stirtonville). Stan realized the basic need of the people who were without education and lacked facilities thereof. He then went begging from the surrounding mine companies in the area and collected books (old) from these and from benefactors who offered them to him free of charge. He established a small library and that eventually and in no time grew up into a whole complex of various levels of an educational centre. There was a Night School and afternoon classes which helped hundreds of miners who started as workers underground and ended up as clerks as they had been illiterate when they arrived. Later on, teachers from the Black townships of Gauteng who had had no matric would travel by train to the centre also to improve their education and so get promoted at their work. More areas were added to the complex centre: various skills training, like electric course, plumbing, welding, building, boiler making, and so on. Even a pub was set up for training men in social and drinking activities. The elderly of the surrounding area were looking after through the Day Care Centre where they would see a doctor and eye optician and spend the day eating and playing games, meals provided for them during the day. The huge buildings, with four to six stories housed computers where computer skills were taught to young people and a large library was later part of the centre, especially when the Franciscan Matric Project was included in the 1970s. More other projects were added later, in the 1980s and even 1990s, like the House of Mercy for Drug and Alcoholics and St. Francis AIDS centre. But that is outside the period of our scope here.

### **Concluding remarks**

By way of concluding this chapter then, the Irish Friars had their share of both the neglecting and even despising of the indigenous people – preferring to side with the privileged whites of this country, just as the Church leadership was doing in those days – and were also part of such projects in the uplifting of the poor and underprivileged people, particularly in the Kokstad diocese and Reiger Park, Boksburg, in Gauteng. They also ran schools in missions like Hardenberg and Maria Telgte where Fr. John Kerr has been managing a boarding school since his arrival there in 1959. The boarding school goes up to grade 9 and has been serving children from many parts of this country. Again,

it is important to note that there were certain individuals who not only abhorred the apartheid system but also showed their opposition to it and also bore the consequences thereof. Rudolf O'Flynn was one of them. Stan Brennan was another one who helped many people overcome their suppression by equipping them with the necessary skills.



## **Chapter 10**

### **The English Franciscans in South Africa (1948)**

Contacts between the English and the Irish Provinces began early.<sup>1</sup> One of the reasons for that would be the presence of a number of Irish men who joined the English Province. Many Irish people had gone over to England during times of hardships in Ireland, like the potato famine of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and people who were looking for employment. So, these people of Irish descent continued with the Catholic faith in those countries where they had settled: in the United States, in Australia, in England and in South Africa too, and so on. But, as we will see, there was much difference between the Irish and the English Friars' presence and ministry in South Africa. First of all, they did not settle and work in the same areas: they did not both live and work in Kokstad, did not live and work together in the Seminary, in Pretoria, and were not together in the Vaal Triangle (Transvaal) where the Irish were involved – as we saw above – in pastoral work. Secondly, the conditions and states of the two Provinces were different. The Irish had the advantages of numbers in personnel and financial support from their Province which had a powerful Catholic background unlike the English Province which had difficulty with the staffing and materially maintaining of the new Mission in South Africa, at least initially. And of course, human as all these men were – and this has been one of the key elements in understanding the agents of this research – one cannot rule out the difference and tension that has characterized the two nationalities involved here. That is, for reasons that are historical, the English and the Irish have not always been the best of friends.

#### **10.1. The English Province of the Immaculate Conception**

The first Friars arrived in England on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September 1224, at Dover beach. They made their first foundation at Canterbury, not too far from the coast. Canterbury is still one of the centres of Franciscan life and studies not only for England but internationally as well. With the Reformation and persecutions under King Henry VIII the Franciscans were suppressed in 1534 and 1539, but some Friars continued there. Another period of

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<sup>1</sup> *St. Anthony's Brief* (Irish Franciscan Mission Magazine), No. 6, October/November 1999.

persecution was in the eighteenth century. Then, Franciscan life was re-founded by the Belgian Friars in 1858 and 1860. As these Friars belonged to the reformed Recollects group, they did not accept parishes but then later in the early 1900s they were compelled by necessity: the rapid growth of the Catholic Church in England.<sup>2</sup>

That – acceptance of parishes in huge numbers – is something that has “shaped the English Province since.” The thing is, most of the European Provinces have not taken parish ministry as the main priority, except in the mission (foreign) – they had other main ministries, like leading pilgrimages, retreats, caring for the poor and needy, and so on – and so England suddenly increased their parish involvement from that time on. The numbers of the Friars, then, grew rapidly. In 1891 the English Province was fully re-established and the Minister Provincial was an Irish by the name of David Fleming.<sup>3</sup> As time went on, Missions were opened in India and South Africa.

## **10.2. The new Mission of South Africa**

In the preceding chapter we saw how the Lydenburg Mission was offered to the Irish Friars. As we saw again, that offer was not taken by the Irish Province due to its acceptance of the Kokstad Mission.<sup>4</sup> This territory was then given to the English Franciscans in 1948. The exact area and size we are referring to here is the southern part of the diocese of Lydenburg, which included both the Transvaal and northern Natal, and comprised about 10, 000 square miles, consisting of the magisterial districts of Standerton, Bethal, Ermelo, Wakkerstroom, Amersfoort and Volksrust.<sup>5</sup> At that time, that was the Mission of the Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart - the Comboni Missionaries, as they are usually known today - of Germany.<sup>6</sup> That had been created as the Prefecture Apostolic of Lydenburg in 1923, which was originally part of the entire Transvaal Vicariate under the Oblate Missionaries of Mary.<sup>7</sup> Missionary activity had been among

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> See chapter 8; Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans”, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.; “Prefecture Apostolic of Volksrust: 25 Years a Prefecture”, (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, 1983), p. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans in South Africa”, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

the whites only and the Africans were neglected in that sense, except for a primary school that was opened for Africans by the Prefecture Apostolic in 1932, at Ermelo, and which was for the whole area (10 000 square miles).<sup>8</sup> This was one of the difficulties encountered by the English Friars on their arrival there, something which was not uncommon, as we saw earlier on in this study, and one which we will come back to later on.<sup>9</sup>

The first group of Friars to South Africa were: Denis Kevelehan, Roman Scott, Cormac McAteer, Barnabas Mann and Clement Waddington (the last one was a brother and the rest were priests);<sup>10</sup> Denis was the Superior of the group. Ermelo was the centre of the new Mission area, with the church – the first in the whole 10 000 square miles – having been built there by Fr. Charles Steidal (Comboni Missionary) in 1938.<sup>11</sup> The Friars settled in Ermelo, in a bungalow house built by Fr. Charles next to the church there.<sup>12</sup> Some of the difficulties experienced by these pioneer missionaries included accommodation, language and lack of transport.

### **10.3. Expansion and growth of the young Mission (Ermelo)**

In October 1949 the Superior of the new Mission, Fr. Denis Kevelehan, received a telegram (cable) message from the Minister Provincial - (Paulinus Lavery) – to go ahead with the purchase of a house in Standerton, some 56 miles from Ermelo. This was a response to the request of the Friars who due to the difficulties referred to above were looking for more places to live in. The news of permission to buy a new house in Standerton was received with great jubilation by the Friars. “All the frustrations were swept away and the Franciscan Mission started on its amazing period of expansion.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.; This point was raised in chapter one of this study – that the Catholic Church and other European churches tended to neglect the African people, and that even the few exceptional individuals who tried to evangelize them were not welcomed. The early church concentrated on the European settlers.

<sup>10</sup> Christopher Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans”, p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of November 1949 the Apostolic Delegate visited the Friars, in Ermelo, and he too congratulated them on this new acquisition.<sup>14</sup> Obviously, it was a relief to him as well, it meant success in the Church's plans and program. Standerton was officially opened in May 1950 with Friars Roman, Barnabas and Clement being stationed there.<sup>15</sup>

Although the English Provincial leadership committed itself to assisting the new missionaries the main challenge continued to be lack of funds and part of this difficulty was that the English Province itself was small and already having another Mission in India.<sup>16</sup> Unlike the Irish Province which was more powerful and ready to take on new missionary work in South Africa and elsewhere, the English Province was not in that position. So then, according to Christopher Ulyatt,<sup>17</sup> difficulties to expansion were: lack of funds, lack of staff and usual tools necessary for missionary's life.<sup>18</sup> In 1954 a new church for Africans was opened in Standerton,<sup>19</sup> which was another sign of growth in an area in which, as it was pointed out earlier on, was a church of Europeans. That year also saw the acquisition of another house in Volksrust and this was to be the centre of the future Prefecture. When the English Provincial visited the Mission, the following year, he promised to help with more missionary Friars and indeed he sent three of them, making the total number of the Friars in the mission nine. The new bishop of Lydenburg appointed the Franciscan Superior, Christopher Ulyatt one of his consultors, something that was seen as an honour and recognition by the Friars. It was this and such moves again which stimulated the Minister Provincial to send more Friars in 1956, those were Antonine Morton and Martin Cassidy.<sup>20</sup> This encouraged the opening of new places by the Friars.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.; Ulyatt became the first Prefecture Apostolic in November 1958 (ibid., p. 6).

<sup>18</sup> Christopher Ulyatt (Prefect Apostolic), "The English Province in South Africa", (Santa Sophia, Pretoria, n.d.), p. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

#### 10. 4. Prefecture Apostolic of Volksrust

The new Franciscan Mission of Ermelo finally reached the next stage of “Prefecture Apostolic”, a sign of growth and development. The establishment of the local church in the places taken over and run by the Franciscan missionaries had to follow the procedure of the Church in general. Again, just as the Bavarian and the Irish had done, in their respective areas, the English Friars too had to start as a “Mission” which was followed by a “Prefecture Apostolic” (and later would become a “Diocese”).<sup>21</sup>

#### A word on the sources

Various sources on the subject highlight different reactions and responses to the announcement of that particular stage of the new Mission. One source expresses shock at the fact that the Franciscans were given such a large area, one that they would not have expected at all – it was double the size that they should have been given.<sup>22</sup> We have to see this in the light of the few men that were involved - there were only twelve Friars in the Mission.<sup>23</sup> A second source shows the opposite of that reaction: joy and enthusiasm.<sup>24</sup> Yet again, another source, a third one, is just silent about the whole matter – and silence here speaks volumes! - the fact that the Ermelo Mission had been raised to a higher ecclesiastical level, that of a “Prefecture Apostolic,” did not mean much to them, if it meant anything at all!<sup>25</sup>

I think that in order to understand the different sources and their interpretation of the history here it is important to have an idea of the background to each of them. Regarding the first source, for instance, that one of shock, it was written by Marius Banks who succeeded Christopher Ulyatt as the Prefect Apostolic of the Volksrust Prefecture and it was produced for the celebration of the twenty fifth anniversary of the Franciscan

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<sup>21</sup> “Prefecture Apostolic of Volksrust”, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Marius Banks (Prefect Apostolic), foreword to “Prefecture Apostolic of Volksrust”.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans”, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Urban O’Sullivan (Apostolic Delegate’s Secretary, Pretoria). He was more concerned with Irish matters, “the kingdom of the Irish Friars” in Southern Africa!

presence and ministry in that area, which was in 1983.<sup>26</sup> So, it was a reflection on the past and one that was done by a man who had seen the development of the Mission (Prefecture Apostolic) over the years. By that time, 1983, the enthusiasm and energy that usually characterizes every new project was not the same: there were fewer men in the Prefecture Apostolic, they had grown much older and the English Province too had less Friars as so could no longer send new missionaries to South Africa. And this and perhaps other realities influenced Marius Banks, the Prefect Apostolic.

As for the second source, that was Christopher Ulyatt. He was the very first Prefect Apostolic (1958) and so was still in the honeymoon period of the new Mission. That time, the new and young missionaries were still in the spirit of adventure and “going out to save the heathens of the dark continent of Africa.” That kind of mentality, as we have seen above, was common in the missionaries that came out to Africa (and other parts of the “Third World”). They had the full support of the English Province in spite of that entity not being as powerful as the Irish Province, for example. As we will see later, the English Province were still able to send new missionaries to the new Mission. Moreover, Ulyatt had to give a rosy picture of his time as he was the leader of the Mission in South Africa, the second Superior – after Denis Kivlehan – and the first Prefect Apostolic. We have already seen the third source (above) – O’Sullivan.

### **Initiatives and challenges of the new Prefecture**

Christopher Ulyatt was installed, by the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Damiano, as the first Prefect Apostolic of the new Prefecture Apostolic of Volksrust on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 1959.<sup>27</sup> Here I would like to start with a reference to a story that is recorded by Ulyatt, a story that to me contains much testimony as to who the Friars saw themselves to be and how that affected the people they served. On July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1958 Mrs Eva McEvelly TOSF died – she became the Mission’s first Tertiary in 1956 and was a benefactress of the Friars, leaving her house and property at Charlestown to the Franciscan Order. In her last letter to Father Christopher she said: “I knew nothing of Franciscanism...Brother Clement’s

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<sup>26</sup> Marius Banks, “foreword”.

<sup>27</sup> Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans”, p. 7; “Prefecture Apostolic of Volksrust”, p. 2.

patience and suffering, his unselfishness and deep love of the Franciscan way of life of which he often chatted when we sat over the fire on the cold winter evenings, all made a deep impression on me. He it was who talked to me of the Third Order and repeatedly advised me to become a Tertiary of St. Francis”.<sup>28</sup>

First of all, the “Tertiaries” or “Secular Franciscans” are those men and women who live in their families and follow the rule of St. Francis; they are spiritual brothers and sisters of the Franciscan Friars, and this “Third Order” was founded by Francis of Assisi himself.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, normally, wherever the Franciscan Friars are, they should encourage the establishment of the Secular Franciscans and in this way help toward the presence and completion of the “Franciscan Family” which, as we saw in the first chapter, was part of Bishop Fleischer’s vision. Sometimes members of the religious Orders have tended to lose their orientation and direction, often due to the activities involved in their work, and Franciscans have not been an exception in that reality.<sup>30</sup>

So, Clement’s initiative was in keeping with the Franciscan life and ministry and was a challenge to the others, particularly the Friars who were priests (Clement was not a priest, he was a Brother). One of the challenges in this situation was that between the Friars who were priests and those who were brothers there was a gap, a friction and unhealthy relationship which has been there in the Order for centuries and partly due to the clerical status in the Church.<sup>31</sup> The Friar-Brothers are usually in a better position to live according to the charisma of the founder as they are not distracted by the many activities of the

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<sup>28</sup> Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans”, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Founded by Francis of Assisi in 1210. Read Thomas of Celano’s First Life of Francis of Assisi, Early Documents, Vol. 1, par. 37. There are more other references to this historic fact but this one is considered by Franciscan historians as the most ancient source to the founding of the Secular Franciscans.

<sup>30</sup> Leaders of the Franciscan Order, especially Ministers General, have frequently been reminding their members in the world not to forget their vocation and calling. The Ministers Provincial of the Missionaries in South Africa kept reminding their members of this fact, e.g. John Evangelist McBride after his re-election in 1949, reminded the Friars and encouraged them to live according to their vocation, to observe their life (Santa Sophia, Pretoria 1949).

<sup>31</sup> That is still an ongoing reality and Franciscan scholars after the Second Vatican Council intensified the research into the matter, calling on the members of the Order to go back to the original ideals of the founder, St. Francis, and the early companions of St. Francis who all saw each other as equal in their calling no matter what the ministry of each one might have been (lay or cleric). Today the Franciscans are still trying to obtain permission from Rome – the Pope and assistants - to implement this reality in their constitutions. It is not yet over!

priestly life and ministry. The question has always been: how open are the individual Friars to the charisma lived and practiced by those who are Brothers? So, then, one of the fundamental questions we have to keep in mind as we follow the development of the new Prefecture would be whether the Friars were ministering in a Franciscan manner or not. To me, it looks like they did their best in the given circumstances. We have to remember that it was the time before the Second Vatican Council which called the various religious Orders and Congregations to go back to the spirit of their founders and so that conscientiousness and effort of living and ministering as Franciscans was not so intense as it should have been later, after the Council. The attempt of living the Franciscan life was boosted by the increase in the number of Friars in the new Prefecture. More Friars were sent to the new Prefecture and early in 1959, after the installation of the new Prefect Apostolic, the total number was fifteen.<sup>32</sup> By the end of that year the number had gone up to twenty.<sup>33</sup>

### **Missionaries versus African culture-Christianity**

I think that the statistics here speak for themselves as to what was the situation in the Prefecture that time. The statistics sent to the Vatican (Propaganda Fide) at the end of the year (June) 1959 were as follows:

Territory (size) of the Prefecture – 24 000 square miles (38624.26 Kilometres)

Total population – 400 000

African Catholics – 17 435

European Catholics – 1 236

Franciscan Friars – 20

Religious Sisters – Dominicans, Daughters of Charity of the Sacred Heart, Augustinians - 127

Churches – 5 with seating capacity of over 400 and 40 chapels (seating of under 400)

Primary stations where priests reside – 15

Stations where Mass (Catholic service) was celebrated and where priests were not residing – 95

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<sup>32</sup> Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans”, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

Primary mission schools – 30

Higher schools – 6; 4 for Europeans and 2 for Africans

Health centres – 5 clinics and 1 Sanatorium<sup>34</sup>

Thus, we can see again that the Church was predominantly European in leadership. At that time, all the Franciscan Friars were missionaries (from the English Province); there was not a single African Friar or a priest. The Sisters were also mostly European. As for the schools, it is interesting that of the six higher schools, four were for whites and only two were for the Africans who were by far the majority of church members in the Prefecture. So, again, the Church cared more for whites in education, at least higher education. The Friars lived in areas reserved for whites and were serving their African congregations from those centres, once again showing the priority of whites over Blacks. Ulyatt wrote:

The problems of the adaptation of the Faith to the needs of the African people has exercised the thoughtful White missionaries for years but it has become more acute problem since World War II and has been further highlighted by the Second Vatican Council. It is thought that only the African priests themselves can solve the problem of proper adaptation.<sup>35</sup>

He seemingly ascribed this state of affairs – of the challenge of adaptation of Christianity to African culture, especially by White missionaries – to two factors that are not unlinked. First, he referred to the Zulu history and attitude thereof. That is, the proud Zulu nation on their confrontations with the British and the Boers (Afrikaners). This factor then led to the saying among the Zulus that the whites brought the bible to the Africans and took away their land. The second factor was that of the “proliferation of Christian sects”.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

### **Indigenous clergy and religious (Sisters/Brothers)**

As we saw above, the religious personnel – priests, Brothers and Sisters – were mostly European missionaries. In fact, at the early stage of the Prefecture there was not a single African religious personnel. This state of affairs was to change, especially with the Church’s insistence on the need for indigenous clergy and religious Sisters and Brothers. In 1960 the Prefect Apostolic, Christopher Ulyatt, opened a “Minor Seminary dedicated to the Uganda Martyrs, for the remote training of African boys to the priesthood.”<sup>37</sup>

The first local priest of the Prefecture Apostolic was Rodney Nelson, originally from Durban, and was ordained in 1964 by Bishop McBride of Kokstad.<sup>38</sup> According to Dorothy Vere, who knew Rodney Nelson quite well since he was a family friend, he was from Wentworth – a Coloured township of Durban – and was involved in the struggle against the apartheid government, especially in its forced removals project.<sup>39</sup> As a result of that, Nelson’s involvement in the struggle, the diocese of Johannesburg – where he was based managed to get him out of the country to London.<sup>40</sup> Soon after that, there were four other indigenous priests – from other dioceses but working in the Prefecture Apostolic – and they were: Alois Ngongoma, Rupert Maluleke, Engelbert Khuzwayo and Sigisbert Ndwandwe.<sup>41</sup> As already noted, these were all from other dioceses, given to the Prefecture on loan – “*Fidei Donum*” – Rupert Maluleke was from Pietersburg Diocese;

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. It was a common practice in the Church that time to have a Minor Seminary where boys (of 12 or 13 years of age) were educated on their own, i.e. without the girls, with the intention of preparing them for future religious life or priesthood. The same idea was in Bishop Fleischer of Mariannhill when he appointed one of the pioneer Franciscan missionaries, Guido Nurnberger, to the Minor Seminary in Ixopo, as we saw in chapter one and three of this study. In the Minor Seminary they would do the normal subjects of high school, with one or two extraordinary subjects, like Latin and religious subjects. From that stage they would move on to the Major Seminary where they would do philosophy and theology courses, which is still the case today for the candidates of priesthood in the Catholic Church.

<sup>38</sup> Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans”, p. 11.

<sup>39</sup> Interview of Dorothy Vere, (Durban, 27 March 2011).

<sup>40</sup> The forced removals referred to are those of the Black people being moved from Miran, to Ekuvukeni, Tholeni, Hlathikhulu, all between Newcastle and Ladysmith area; period of these removals was between 1972-1976. However, Dorothy Vere knew Fr. Rodney Nelson already in the 1960s – as he was ordained in 1964.

<sup>41</sup> Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans”, p. 11; Michael Paschal Rowland (Bishop Emeritus of Dundee Diocese, 1983-2008), “Answers to various questions”, 23 November 2010, no. 2.

Engelbert Khuzwayo and Alois Ngongoma were either from Mariannhill or Umzimkulu.<sup>42</sup>

So, at that stage the Prefecture did not have its own African priests; at the same time, the Friars were open to that possibility and even went to the point of making sure there were African priests in the Prefecture something that would have encouraged the local young men. There were three young Zulu men studying for the priesthood in the Major Seminary in Hammanskraal.<sup>43</sup> One of them, Pius Myeza was going to be the very first Zulu to be ordained a priest in the Prefecture, in 1966.<sup>44</sup> But the lack of African young men joining the Franciscans continued so that by 1965 Ulyatt had this to write, "...it is a strange thing that among our Zulu boys and young men there seems to be no desire to join the Order and it is 16 years that the Friars have been working in South Africa."<sup>45</sup> Those young men who showed some interest in the priestly vocation wanted to be diocesan priests and not Franciscans.<sup>46</sup>

There are certain factors that would explain this tendency. First of all, the young men would have thought of Franciscan life as meant for whites since there was not a single indigenous Franciscan that time. We saw a similar mentality with the Holy Cross Sisters when they were in Cala, and Bishop Fleischer responded to that by sending his Sisters of Assisi. One, then, would not blame young men or women in keeping out of such a group whose members were all Europeans – that would be a normal, or at least understandable feeling and reaction. Secondly, the Friars too were seemingly not showing much interest in local vocations. In that same context just related above, Ulyatt concluded: "but up to the present there has been no serious touting for vocations among the Zulus."<sup>47</sup> The English Friars at that stage were still concerned with the establishment of their presence

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<sup>42</sup> Ulyatt, "The English Franciscans", p. 11. As Bishop Michael Paschal was writing in retrospect, and as he admitted, he could not remember all the details. He is in the process of producing a history of the Diocese of Dundee – what used to be the Prefecture Apostolic of Volksrust.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 12. St. Peter's Seminary was for Blacks only, just as St. John Vianney Seminary, in Pretoria, was for whites only.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

and ministry in the Prefecture. In the interview of Dorothy Vere she stated that, according to her, there were good and healthy relations between the Franciscan Friars and the local priests who were working in the Prefecture Apostolic of Volksrust.<sup>48</sup>

As for the Bavarians and the Irish Friars, they too did not have many locals at that time. Bonaventure Hinwood<sup>49</sup> was one of the very first locals to join the Friars in South Africa, in the Transvaal, in the late 1950s; he was closely followed by Cardinal Napier<sup>50</sup> in Kokstad, and that was in the early 1960s. There was one other local man who was sent overseas for his studies, just as all the other locals that time, but he left the Order in the early stage of his training over there. Another factor to be considered here was that of the effects of the Second Vatican Council. With its sweeping changes in the life and activities of the Church, the Council brought about confusion in many people, including the religious and priests. Many who had lived in the way the religious and priests did up to the time of the Council were secure with the laws and teachings of the Church. When the Council changed these it was like removing people's security whether spiritual or psychological. A great number of Orders and dioceses lost religious members, Sisters, Brothers and priests.<sup>51</sup> So then, it would not be easy for the Friars, or anyone else, to encourage young men or women to join their ranks while they themselves were shaken and unclear about their own vocation.

As far as local vocations to the women religious in the Prefecture is concerned, as we saw above, it was almost a similar situation with the men. That is, the religious women were mostly missionaries from Europe. The English Friars attempted to found a local religious Congregation for young women.<sup>52</sup> According to Michael Paschal Rowland – Bishop

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<sup>48</sup> Interview of Dorothy Vere, 27 March 2011.

<sup>49</sup> Bonaventure Hinwood, a quite well-known Afrikaans poet, taught in the National Seminary of St. John Vianney for years and was involved in many television programmes in explaining the Christian or Catholic Faith.

<sup>50</sup> The Cardinal is the most senior Churchman in the Catholic Church, i.e. after the Pope; it is from Cardinals that the Pope is elected by the Conclave of Cardinals in Rome. Cardinal Napier is the only one here in South Africa and is the second one in the history of the Church in this country, based in Durban; he succeeded Owen McCann, the first Cardinal, who was based in Cape Town.

<sup>51</sup> "Prefecture of Volksrust: 25 Years A Prefecture", p. 5; Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", pp. 79-80.

<sup>52</sup> Ulyatt, "The English Franciscans", p. 9; "Prefecture of Volksrust: 25 Years A Prefecture", p. 7.

Emeritus of Dundee Diocese and who is himself a Franciscan – it was Christopher Ulyatt himself, the Prefect of Volksrust Prefecture, who initiated this process. Rowland stated that Ulyatt invited the Mill Hill Sisters – from England and Franciscans themselves – to do various works in the Prefecture and one of those was precisely to help found a new local Congregation for women.<sup>53</sup> This was at a mission station called Alva, near Pomeroy, and these women were following the rule and spirituality of St. Francis, “Third Order Rule”.<sup>54</sup> The name of the new foundation was “*Izimpelezi zikaJesu*”, in Zulu, or “the Companions of Jesus”. There were five postulants (beginners) in 1965.<sup>55</sup> However, this project did not last for long and girls interested in religious life ended up joining other religious groups of women either in the Prefecture Apostolic or in other dioceses, and some went back to their homes.<sup>56</sup>

I interviewed some of the women who were with the Sisters. Angela ka-Majola, now Mrs Magudulela, joined the Sisters in September 1963 and was with them for three years, up till 1966.<sup>57</sup> She told me that they were the third group of the local candidates and they were three altogether; the first group had been five and the second had been three; then, Angela’s group (three).<sup>58</sup> In her group she was with another girl from her area, a home girl – Theresa ma-Sithole, now Mrs Zikalala – from Driefontein, in Ladysmith (KZN) and Miriam Selepe from Standerton. The Franciscan Friar – Marius Banks, who was their Priest-in-charge and later became the new Prefect Apostolic of Volksrust - explained to them what religious life was about and also went to their parents to do the same.<sup>59</sup>

As already indicated, this local religious foundation did not last for long; it was eventually closed down due to certain difficulties. In the interviews I asked the women about the situation in the convent and about the closure of the same foundation. One would sum up the process leading up to the closure in this way: 1) While on the one hand the young women enjoyed being at the convent, on the other hand there was the reality of

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<sup>53</sup> Michael Paschal Rowland, “Answers to various questions”, 23 November 2010, no. 1.

<sup>54</sup> Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans”, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Michael Paschal Rowland, “Answers to various questions”, 23 November 2010, no.1.

<sup>57</sup> Interview of Angela Majola Magudulela, (Watersmeet, Ladysmith, 21 December 2010).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.; interview of Theresa Masithole Zikalala (Besters, Ladysmith, 21 December 2010).

experiencing difficulties and challenges.<sup>60</sup> 2) The main cause of this unfortunate situation was the personality of Sister Carmel who was not well and it looks like she was psychologically not fit to be in charge of the young women. The other Sister – Judith – was elderly and was in charge of the convent, and not of the candidates. 3) Although the Church authorities tried to explain the closure to the girls it was not enough and not clear to them – it could have been handled better. According to Angela and Theresa, the young women did not understand why the community was closed down. They were aware that Sister Carmel was an impatient person, with all its implications, but just did not think that that alone would have led to the closure of the convent.<sup>61</sup> According to Theresa, it is not certain whether Sister Carmel was sick or she was just impatient. But she knows that, first of all, due to this situation some of the young women left the convent. Secondly, this was a later development in her, she was not like that at the beginning when they joined.<sup>62</sup> 4) Some of the young women who joined were just too young and not mature enough. Angela was only thirteen years old when she went there. At the same time, this should be understood within the context of the time: it was quite normal in those days to join at that age and was not seen to be anything unbecoming. At least, Theresa was seventeen years old.<sup>63</sup> 5) Theresa would have liked to join another religious community but was not given that option. The priest-in-charge took her straight home and her mother was not willing to let her try another community again. So, some went back to their homes, while others went to join other communities.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Interview of Angela and Theresa, (Ladysmith, 21 December 2010).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Interview of Theresa (28 March 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Interview of Angela and Theresa (Ladysmith, 21 December 2010). Some of those who went back to their families were: Angela, Theresa and Miriam Selepe. Some of those who went to join other religious groups were: Sr. Clara (joined the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Witbank-Lydenburg diocese) and Franciscan Mthembu (joined the Montebello Dominic Sisters, Durban Archdiocese).

## **Catechists**

It has been noted earlier on, in this research, that the indigenous people are the ones who really help the church take roots. Just as it happened in Kokstad with the Bavarian Friars, so it was in the Prefecture.<sup>65</sup> Catechists were mainly men – but there were a few women too – who dedicated their lives in the service of spreading the faith and teaching of the Church. Usually these people would be full-time workers and would be paid minimum wages. Some of them were founders of missions. Ulyatt made special mention of Petrus Mabaso and Bernard Sithole.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, these men and women made many sacrifices for the building up of the church and very often they involved their families, which was part of their absolute dedication and zeal.

## **Lay-groups**

Again, like in all dioceses of the Church, the Prefecture had various groups among the laity. Ulyatt saw these as being of greatest value in missionary work, and particularly the women.<sup>67</sup> There were a number of these groups and prominent among them were the Sacred Heart, St. Anne's Sodalities, the Legion of Mary and St. Agnes.<sup>68</sup> The first three was for women and the last one was for girls. Groups among the whites were the Catholic Women's League and St. Vincent de Paul Society which more than any of all those groups paid special attention to the poor (St. Vincent de Paul). There were not many lay groups for men and boys, but the scouts were started for boys.<sup>69</sup> But, we should remember that there were other means of church involvement for men and boys. For instance, as already mentioned above, catechists were mainly men – it was very rare for women to take that role, and that was partly a social matter: in the African society women would not be easily acceptable to stand in front of the people as leaders. They would back up their men in public. The boys would be servers (altar servers). Again, in those days girls were not allowed to take that ministry. Remember again, it was before the Second

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 10. They founded the Mission of Umhlumayo in the Ladysmith area.

<sup>67</sup> Ulyatt, "The English Franciscans", p. 12.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Vatican Council, or just after it, and the changes that the Council brought about were not implemented immediately in many areas.

### **Financial situation**

Ulyatt pointed out, in 1965, that the keeping of a modern diocese was not a cheap business, with all the building, maintenance, transport, salaries and other costs.<sup>70</sup> As in other dioceses of the country, and other mission parts of the world, most of the money for all necessary costs came from overseas. Rome was the number one source of support for the missions, followed by the Franciscan Missionary Union, based in Glasgow. Then, there was also the practice – a new one – of going to the United States to beg for help from the Catholic Churches there. The Friars would send one of themselves to go and do this for a certain period of time. Locally, the African people were considered too poor to do anything and the White Catholics were just too few to carry all the projects and financial burdens of the Prefecture.<sup>71</sup> Here again, the English Friars were not unlike all the other groups of missionaries – the Bavarians and the Irish, plus other groups of missionaries – who were just spoon-feeding the Africans. One wonders whether at all there was any effort to conscientise, encourage or train the Africans towards self-support.

It looks rather like there was just an attitude of patronizing the locals and when one compares the situation with the other denominations, one sees a difference. For instance, the Methodist instilled the idea of self-sufficiency long before the Catholics. Even if the Africans might have been poor, there would seem to have been little or no effort at all on the part of the Franciscans and Catholic missionaries in general to educate them for future in this regard. They were just seen – and sometimes even told so – that they were poor. Church-buildings were often just thrown up for the Africans, without any consultation or involvement, with monies that came from the missionaries' home towns overseas and so the people could not in any way feel a sense of ownership. And that is part of why people's cultural practices were estranged from the churches. As it has been pointed out before, the missionaries' attitude and practice in this regard was due to the Europeans'

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

looking down upon the peoples of the “Third World”, as they considered them to be far more “primitive” and “undeveloped” when compared to the Western world. They could, therefore, not expect much from the African peoples and there would have been no point in engaging them in financial matters. The best way was to give them everything and not ask for anything from them. While one would like to believe that this was from good intention, it is also true that it did not do much in helping the African people to grow and develop in any way.

### **10.5. Social outreach and challenges – educational and health projects; orphanage; justice (forced removals)**

When it comes to social outreach, on one level the English Friars were no different from the other entities, the Bavarian and the Irish Friars. As noted above, in the statistics sent to Rome in 1959, they too had projects for the uplifting of the poor and underprivileged: schools,<sup>72</sup> health centres that were mainly clinics and a hospital, in Pomeroy,<sup>73</sup> which were run by religious Sisters or lay mission-helpers and an orphanage.<sup>74</sup> They had a home for the elderly,<sup>75</sup> especially the African people who were neglected by the government of the time in such services. On another level, the English Friars seem to have been better in identifying and fighting for the rights of the indigenous people. First of all, the Friars found that while the Church had gone and made some attempts among the whites, nothing had been done for the Africans who, in fact, lived in serfdom as farm workers of the white farmers.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, such an atmosphere made mission work hard for the new missionaries – the white Afrikaner farmers were anti-Catholic, labelling them as “*Roomse Gevaar*”.<sup>77</sup> And while, on the other hand, the English farmers were quite helpful in this regard – allowing the missionaries to go into their lands for evangelizing the Africans – they, too, did nothing for their African labourers in encouraging them in the faith. As a

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<sup>72</sup> As we saw in the statistics provided above, in section 9.4., there was an imbalance in the distribution of Church’s centres of education between the White and the Black population, with the whites being favoured over the Blacks.

<sup>73</sup> Ulyatt, “The English Franciscans”, p. 11.

<sup>74</sup> “Prefecture Apostolic of Volksrust: 25 Years A Prefecture”, p. 5.

<sup>75</sup> Michael Paschal Rowland, “Answers to various questions”, 23 November 2010, no. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 1-2.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

result, Africans joined other denominations<sup>78</sup> or, as already indicated above, started their own sects.

Another important area of the involvement of the English Friars in the socio-political factor was the question of forced removals which were part of the apartheid regime's tactics to suppress other racial groups, particularly in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Due to the Land<sup>79</sup> and Group Areas Acts hundreds of thousands of the country's population were forcefully moved from their homes and settled in new places that were foreign to them and far from centres of the economic activities. Africans were the worst to be affected as they were considered the last on the scale of the government's priorities anyway. The English Friars, seeing some of their flocks (people) being moved from their homes and churches, joined the protest. The famous of these was that one of Limehill where people were moved and settled in places that had no basic services, like sanitary, health and education facilities. As a result of this, some of the Friars were deported back to overseas.<sup>80</sup>



Franciscan Friars in happy times

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> The Land Act was one of a series of Acts by the apartheid government and was aimed at sidelining the African people from the socio-political and economic benefits of the country. First passed in 1906 this Act was revised in 1913 when 87% of the land was allotted to whites who were by far in the minority and the rest of the country's population was given the remaining 13%. Also read Nelson Mandela's autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, (London 1994), pp. 153-154; Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", pp. 48, 151.

<sup>80</sup> Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", p.151.

Michael Paschal Rowland sent me the story of the sad but quite interesting event of the removals of the people in that area and of how the Church leaders – Archbishop Hurley together with leaders of other Churches - and lay people resisted the government’s action against the people.<sup>81</sup> Rowland was himself part of the Church leaders at that time and later became the first bishop of Dundee diocese, the very area that was served by the English Friars. On the story of that event Rowland raised the following points. In the first place, when the news of the removals reached them, the churches of Natal set up a committee to oppose them – it consisted of Archbishop Dennis Hurley, who was elected chairman of the same; the Anglican Bishop, (Michael Nuttal?);<sup>82</sup> Senator Henderson; Alacock and Paschal Rowland himself who was Parish Priest of Maria Ratschitz – the main mission of the Franciscan Friars - in that area in that time. Rowland then rode on horseback around all the kraals of the people at Thelaphi, the main settlement of Maria Ratschitz, trying to get the people to enrol as workers on the mission so that they would be saved from the removals. However, most of them did not trust that and did not get enrolled.<sup>83</sup> The Bantu Affairs Commissioner then came and numbered all the houses of the people in the area, those of Thelaphi, Meran, Sigwetshe and Mahlabathini. Rowland managed to convince a friend of his, a certain Doctor Brown in Ladysmith, who had a light plane to fly him over the area of the forced removals so that he could take photographs and those appeared in the Rand Daily Mail later.<sup>84</sup>

The removals were to start with the people at Meran. On the Sunday before the start of the removals on the Monday, I said Mass and preached at the Mass. Although I knew all the people in the congregation I was summoned to appear before the Bantu Affairs Commissioner in Dundee (Mr Dreyer) on the Tuesday for a “dressing down”. I sent a message to all the Friars in the Prefecture to come and make a protest with us at Meran on the Monday. Archbishop Hurley came, thirteen Friars and Fr. Rodney Nelson. Of course one of the Friars was Cosmas Desmond who came from Ermelo and attached himself to the reporters from the Rand Daily Mail.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Michael Paschal Rowland, “Answers to various questions”, 23 November 2010, No. 3.

<sup>82</sup> Rowland told me that he could not remember all the details of the event anymore and he had also forgotten some of the names, including the Anglican bishop.

<sup>83</sup> Michael Paschal Rowland, “Answers to various questions”, 23 November 2010, No. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

Rowland also provided the names of the Friars who participated in the protest and, once again, he admitted that he could not remember all of them.

...but besides those named above were certainly the following: Neil McGovern, Anselm Prior, Wilfrid Jackson, Samuel Tokington, John Evangelist Betts, Godfrey Tortolano, Robert Stewart, Alexander McCann, (possibly John Crone, Celsus Longland and Eustace Warneken and Antonine Morton).

Oswin O'Grady, Wilfrid Jackson, Samuel Torkington, John Evangelist Betts and John Crone were all eventually refused renewal of their Residence Permits. All of them eventually left the Order and the Priesthood. Cosmas Desmond devoted himself to covering all the forced removals and wrote the book – "The Discarded People". He received a banning order and he too left the Order and Priesthood.<sup>86</sup>

As usual with such confrontations with an unjust government, including the apartheid regime, the state was not going to allow opposition to its policies and practices. So, the results of the Friars' protest were obvious – as Rowland shows in the above quotation. Though there were some legal difficulties on the part of the government in punishing the Friars, yet it did penalize them and showed that it was not ready to bow to such resistance. Rowland ended his story in the following manner:

Some of us had become South African Citizens, beforehand and some others already had Permanent Residence, and these were more difficult for the Government to deal with. However, they could and did make life uncomfortable for some of us. Regularly I was "interviewed" by a member of the Security Branch from Ladysmith. I had my telephone tapped and my post, especially overseas letters, were intercepted and opened – coming in, or simply never arrived at their destinations. Often, when I left the Mission, I was followed by police or Security Branch people. Sometimes it was quite a game trying to see how we could lose our tail!!!<sup>87</sup>

Cosmas Desmond – to whom Rowland referred in the above story and whom I also interviewed – told the same story from a different perspective. First of all, he was very

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

insistent that the Franciscan Friars were too late in their response to the government's suppression of the people; he thought that they should have resisted long before that protest of Limehill which took place in 1968.<sup>88</sup> Secondly, he disagreed with the opinion that the Friars were pro-active in matters of justice for the people. In this way he is in line with some of the historians and commentators on the Churches in South Africa, that they were quiescent in their stance against apartheid. These hold that although there were outstanding individuals, like Archbishop Denis Hurley, Trevor Huddleston, Desmond Tutu, Mandlenkosi Zwane,<sup>89</sup> Beyers Naude and others, on the whole the Churches were not outspoken against the injustices of the apartheid regime.<sup>90</sup> Desmond claimed that the Friars were not courageous but frightened of standing up for the people.<sup>91</sup> Rowland, on the other hand, stated that the Friars had already made a resolution for training their local candidates of the Franciscan Order on a non-racial basis which was against the government's policy of Segregation and the Group Areas Act.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, continued Rowland, the Franciscan Friars were the first group of Religious in South Africa to challenge the government in that way, i.e. through a formation and training that was on a non-racial basis, and also by protesting to forced removals. The other Religious groups, including the Oblates who were the first group of male Religious in this country, either sent their candidates to Lesotho (Blacks) and to Cedara (whites) or sent them to their places overseas.<sup>93</sup>

Another important point that Desmond brought up in the discussion was that the Friars were of different opinions in relation to resisting the apartheid government, particularly when it came to the question of protests. There were those who felt that the Church

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<sup>88</sup> Interview of Cosmas Desmond, (Durban 25 March 2011).

<sup>89</sup> Mandlenkosi Zwane was a young Catholic bishop of Swaziland and led a simple life, wearing jeans even as bishop and going to convents and church institutes to visit without any notice so that he would be treated like ordinary people who go to these places and are sometimes not given the best treatment. He was a great analyst and a forthright critic of the apartheid system and was killed in a car accident (1976) which is an open secret that it was a plot by the South African government.

<sup>90</sup> Writers like Peter Walsh hold this opinion.

<sup>91</sup> Interview of Cosmas Desmond, 25 March 2011.

<sup>92</sup> This was decided by the Friars of the English Province here in South Africa at a meeting that discussed among other matters the formation and training of local candidates, and it took place in 1968, at Besters, where the Friars met with the Minister Provincial, Urban Judge, after his official visit to South Africa. See Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", pp. 74-75.

<sup>93</sup> Interview of Michael Paschal Rowland, (Maria Ratschitz, Newcastle, 29 March 2011).

leaders, and the Friars, should stand up against the evil of apartheid by protesting publicly on behalf of the oppressed people. These held that the gospel values could not be confined to church buildings and prayer, there was a need to show the unjust regime that it was a sin to take away people's rights: their land and their homes. The other group of Friars felt that Church leaders were to focus on church services and preaching the gospel values, and then leave the rest to the people themselves, including such public actions against the government as protests.<sup>94</sup>

Such a difference of perspectives and interpretation of situations is not unfamiliar with the Franciscans. This is a Religious movement that – as pointed out in chapter five – has a long history of divisions and tension based on the actual understanding of the Franciscan vocation. Right from the beginning, after the death of St. Francis, the founder of this great religious family, the followers were not in agreement on how to lead a Franciscan life in a world that was different from that of the founder and his companions.<sup>95</sup> Some wanted to go back to the original ideals of the founder and his companions – a life of simplicity, absolute poverty and itinerancy, even when the number of the Friars had grown immensely and by then they were all over Europe. Others, on the other hand, wanted to move along with the Church leaders, serving their politics and going where the Church wanted them to be, in huge parishes and other church institutions, with the progressive life of the people who had by then been urbanized. So, the Order was divided in their interpretation of Franciscan life and ministry, and this eventually led to the formal division of the Franciscan Order, beginning with Pope Celestine V in 1294, and then again under Pope Leo X in 1517.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Interview of Cosmas Desmond, 25 March 2011.

<sup>95</sup> St. Francis died on 3 October 1226. As his followers could not agree on the exact interpretation of their vocation and life four Friars in leadership positions went to meet with Pope Gregory IX who was close to Francis. Many Franciscan historians consider this a huge mistake on the part of the Order as it was a “selling out”, a betrayal of the charisma and vocation of St. Francis to the Church's interpretation according to Church politics and control so that the original ideals were lost.

<sup>96</sup> The history of the Franciscan movement is very much characterized by this element of tension and division and that is precisely on the question of the interpretation of the Franciscan Rule and life. While, on the one hand, this might be seen as a scandal of division within a religious family that claims to lead a life of holiness and love, on the other hand, it has to be admired as a positive sign that Franciscan life is led by the Spirit of God whom we cannot pin down. The divisions were inspired by the ongoing aspiration of some members who wanted to go back to the original ideals of St. Francis and his early companions, a life of simplicity, absolute poverty, not owning anything in this world and instead being

Desmond claimed that it was he and his friend, Samuel Tokington, who encouraged the Friars to go on a public protest.<sup>97</sup> Both of them were very strong in their resistance to apartheid.<sup>98</sup> He is in agreement with Rowland on the effectiveness of the protest by the Friars. As Rowland pointed out in the above story, Desmond was with the press and so made sure that the incident be publicized as much as possible. Indeed, the protest was discussed in parliament and, to add some element of fun to the hard work which was also quite risky, Rowland pointed out the fact that the parliamentarians were giving out about “a lot of old women”, which was a reference to the long brown Franciscan robe worn by the Friars. Still on the impact of the protest, Rowland stated that after that incident the government would always make sure that they put up toilets before moving the people to any place.<sup>99</sup> That had been one of the concerns expressed by the Friars, that the people were moved to places where there was no sanitation and no water. Furthermore, the publicizing of the protest made the government so embarrassed that it took the land to itself instead of giving it to the individual Afrikaner families who had already put up their own names to the pieces of land.<sup>100</sup>

## 10.6. Relations with the Bavarian and the Irish Franciscans

It has been indicated above that there was not much interaction among the different groups of missionary Friars that came to South Africa. There are various factors that can be used to explain that situation. First of all, the three different missionary groups were of three nationalities and so, to start with, their backgrounds were not the same. Secondly,

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itinerant, taking the gospel to all instead of being confined to huge institutions. After the official division of 1517, there was another division in 1528 (Capuchins), and again more groups – at least four other groups broke away – until in 1897 when Pope Leo XIII called for a union of those four groups and formed one big Franciscan Order so that in the end there are now three main branches of the Franciscan Order: the OFMs (Observant), the Conventuals and the Capuchins. Read Maurice Carmody, OFM, his notes on the history of the Franciscan movement and his book, *The Leonine Union of the Order of Friars Minor 1897* (New York, 1994).

<sup>97</sup> Interview of Cosmas Desmond, 25 March 2011.

<sup>98</sup> Both Tokington and Desmond eventually left the Franciscans. Desmond continued to work against the apartheid system and even joined the PAC (Pan African Congress); he was one of the top five on the list for the leadership of PAC in the first democratic elections of 1994 and has written (published) a book, *The discarded people*, (Pretoria, 1970), on forced removals in South Africa.

<sup>99</sup> Interview of Michael Paschal Rowland, 29 March 2011.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

the idea and legislation of the Order (Franciscan) to that effect – of different nationalities working in the same area should form a united entity<sup>101</sup> – did not exist until only in the late 1960s, and that was as a result of the Second Vatican Council which took place between 1962 and 1965. Thirdly, closely linked to the first factor, there was the usual range of perspectives, i.e. these groups differed in their approaches to life and ministry and that is partly due to their backgrounds – educational, political, psychological and spiritual - which were just different. Another factor to be born in mind when considering this matter of interaction among the different groups of Friars is that they did not all come with the same motive and intention. Although it could be safely stated that in general they all came for the common purpose of evangelization, yet it was not exactly the same objective and motive that they came out with.

For instance, as it was pointed out in chapter one, the Bavarian Friars came out to Mariannahill at the invitation of Bishop Adalbero Fleischer, and it was for assisting the various Franciscan groups that were in the Mariannahill Vicariate that he asked them to come. And they too agreed to come out for that purpose, especially the leadership of the Bavarian Province that studied the invitation, its objectives, and also selected the missionaries for the same. The Irish, on the other hand, came mainly to assist and even rescue the Bavarians who were struggling with manpower after the Second World War. As has been noticed again, both the Bavarian and the Irish underwent certain developments once they had arrived in the country. That is, the Bavarians could not continue to live and work in the Mariannahill Vicariate as circumstances made life and their involvement there particularly unbearable for them. The Irish, too, were asked to extend their presence and involvement something that was not in the original plans when they first came out to Kokstad. The English Friars, then, came just for the purpose of pastoral work in a mission area that was neglected by the missionary group – the Comboni Missionaries – that were responsible for it. Thus again, their objective was

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<sup>101</sup> The 1967 General Constitutions of the Order – precisely article 179 - stipulated that Friars of different Provinces (overseas) working in one mission-area (country) should discuss and form one united entity which would be known as a “Federation”, with the aim of eventually setting up a Province in that part of the world. This actually took place in South Africa, among the three missionary groups of the Franciscan Order – Bavarians, Irish and English – in 1977 when the Franciscan Federation of Southern Africa was created. Read Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 62-133.

different from the Bavarian and the Irish Friars and so they did not have much in common with them.

Going back to the question of resistance to the apartheid government by the Franciscan Friars, Rowland pointed out that, in fact, Friars took the decision to keep the local young friars here in South Africa for their formation and training before the protest against forced removals of 1968.<sup>102</sup> That resolution was made on the basis of not wanting the local Friars to be taken out of their context. Moreover, the English Friars held that the formation and training of the local young Friars should be on a non-racial basis.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the English Friars decided that if the other groups of Friars, the Bavarian and the Irish, were not going to collaborate, then they (English Friars) would go ahead on their own in this matter.<sup>104</sup> According to Rowland, the Irish Friars were not interested in formation and training here in South Africa because they sent their candidates overseas. For example, Bonaventure Hinwood, Wilfrid Napier, now Cardinal of South Africa, and others were sent to Ireland and Rome. The Bavarian Friars were interested but just did not have enough men here in South Africa.<sup>105</sup>

So, when Urban Judge, the English Minister Provincial, came to visit the English Friars later, in 1968, the Friars asked for his opinion and he pointed out: a) the possibility of a “Federation” as provided by the Order’s new legislation after the Second Vatican Council.<sup>106</sup> According to that provision, the Friars of different Entities (Provinces) from Europe working as missionaries in an area should move towards forming such an Entity, a “Federation”.<sup>107</sup> b) The Minister Provincial, Judge, also informed the English Friars of the possibility of opening a second Novitiate House of the English Province here in South Africa.<sup>108</sup> After the meeting of the English Friars with Urban Judge, Rowland, who was the regional Superior of the English Friars, went around to visit and discuss with the

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<sup>102</sup> Interview of Michael Paschal Rowland, 21 December 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, p. 74.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.; interview of Michael Paschal Rowland, 21 December 2010.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> This was found in the Franciscan Order’s Constitutions of 1967, article 179.

<sup>108</sup> Interview of Michael Paschal Rowland, 21 December 2010; Nogemane, “The Coming of the Franciscans”, pp. 74-77.

Regional Superiors of the other Entities: The Irish Franciscan Custody, based in Pretoria, the Regional Superior being Fergus Barret; The Irish Franciscan Mission of Kokstad, the Regional Superior being Bernardine Dore; the Bavarian Mission of Zululand, the Regional Superior being Canisius Berstch and the Irish Franciscan Mission of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), the Regional Superior being Paschal Slevin.<sup>109</sup> Later on when the English Friars had started on formation and training of local candidates to the Order, with the second Novitiate House of the English Province established in Besters, Ladysmith (KZN), both the Bavarian and the Irish collaborated. They not only sent their candidates there but also supported the project by the Irish sending their own Friars to help and the Bavarians gave their financial support.

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<sup>109</sup> Interview of Michael Paschal Rowland, 21 December 2010.

## **Chapter 11**

### **The Local Friars**

In the preceding chapters it has been pointed out how the question of the local young men and women wanting to join the priesthood or religious life was addressed by the different groups of Franciscan missionaries. It was also indicated that the various groups of missionaries, to various degrees, were not so open to the indigenous people. Part of this tendency was the attitude of mistrust that the missionaries and the Europeans in general had towards the people in their missions. An example par excellence in this regard is the letter written by Gottschalk Kunsteiger, one of the pioneer Bavarian missionaries who came to Mariannhill in 1932, to his Minister Provincial back in Munich, in which he stated clearly that the indigenous people – the Blacks among whom he was stationed – were not up to the standard of the Europeans in the way they lived and in their faith.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter I would like to focus on the question of those local men who joined the Franciscan Friars, how they were recruited and trained, and how they either succeeded or did not in the end. In other words, while in the rest of this study we have been discussing the European missionaries, it is time now for us to take a closer look at the locals. Who were they and what are their stories?

#### **11.1. The three Franciscan missionary groups' different views and approaches**

Again, it has been clearly shown that the three Franciscan missionary groups – the Bavarian, the Irish and the English – had different outlook on life and ministry, both overseas and in this country.<sup>2</sup> The same applied to their understanding and policy on the recruitment and training of the local candidates. As has been noticed in the preceding chapter, the English Friars began discussion on the recruitment and training of the local young men in the 1960s and at their meeting with the English Minister Provincial, Urban Judge, in 1968, they made the following resolutions in that regard. First of all, they

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<sup>1</sup> The letter is quoted in chapter 3 of this study and has been referred to a few times in other parts of this research (written at Kwa-St. Joseph's, Hibberdene, 4 December 1932).

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 10.6 of this study.

decided that formation would be on a non-racial basis in this country, something that was not encouraged at all by the apartheid regime.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, they resolved that the other entities of the Bavarian and the Irish missionaries should be invited to work with them in this project and that if they – the other missionary groups - were not ready to join, then they (English Friars) would go it alone.<sup>4</sup> According to Rowland, the English Friars had already expressed their opinion on keeping the local candidates to the Order in the country and not to send them overseas as some other groups of missionaries, including the Irish Friars, were doing.<sup>5</sup>

## **11.2. The first locals**

In this section I will discuss some of the local young men who joined the Franciscans and then either remained with them or left them in the process. I will not go into the details of each one of them and that is for two reasons. First, I do not have those details with me and it does not seem easy to obtain them. Secondly, the main idea here is to provide some examples of how the locals were received or not received by the Franciscan missionaries.

### **Bonaventure Hinwood**

Bonaventure Hinwood – who would be known to many in this country from his participation over years in the discussions on matters of faith and religion on the Television – was the first South African to join the Franciscan Friars. Bonaventure has also written a number of Afrikaans poems, beside the theological writings he has produced over many years. He was born in Johannesburg, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1930. His father was Hewitt Victor and his mother was Clara May Joseph.<sup>6</sup> They gave him the names of Edward Victor and he got the name of Bonaventure when he joined the Franciscans, a practice that was common in those days for a person to be given a new name upon entering religious life, in a monastery or convent. First he was received into

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<sup>3</sup> See chapter 10.6 of this study.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Interview of Michael Paschal Rowland, 21 December 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Schematismus Ordinis Fratrum Minorum (Romae 2001).

the Catholic Church, from the Anglicans, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 1951 and two years later he expressed his desire to become a Franciscan Friar.<sup>7</sup> He was then told to meet with Bishop John Evangelist McBride of Kokstad – as we saw above, he had been the Minister Provincial of the Irish Friars back in Ireland – who was going to St. John Vianney Seminary in Pretoria where the Franciscan Friars were teaching. Bonaventure was to have a meeting with the bishop and with Fergus Barrett who was the Rector of the Seminary that time. He was then given just a month to leave his job and come to St. John Vianney Seminary where he was to spend a year as a postulant (initiate) where he was also to study philosophy under the Franciscans.<sup>8</sup>

Bonaventure said that he found this quite inconvenient – especially the fact that he had to leave his job within a month – and he felt that the Friars did not really want the locals, they were not prepared to receive and train them.<sup>9</sup> During the interview he then went on to remind us that the missionaries came here with the idea that they would do their work and then go back to their original overseas Provinces; they were not here to implant the Order.<sup>10</sup> That was to be expressed later in the objectives of the Federation of the three missionary groups, in the 1970s.<sup>11</sup> Bonaventure was then sent to Ireland where he entered the novitiate in Killarney, 1954. After the year of novitiate he was sent to do his theological studies in Rome where he later obtained his doctorate. He claimed that his dream was to be an itinerant Friar,<sup>12</sup> wandering about and preaching just like Francis and the early companions, something that – as we saw earlier on in this study – was a desire of some of the followers of Francis, to go back to those original ideals. He read about St. Francis of Assisi and was attracted to that spirituality, even when some of his friends tried to persuade him to join the Oblates of Mary Immaculate or the Jesuits he was not

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<sup>7</sup> Interview of Bonaventure Hinwood, 30 March 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> It has been noted that the Franciscan Federation of Southern Africa was established in 1977, under the Presidency of Paschal Rowland. The process leading up to this final stage of unification of the three entities – the Bavarian, the Irish and the English Friars – began in 1968 with the visitation of the English Minister Provincial, Urban Judge, followed by Sylvester McGoldrick (an Irish Franciscan who was sent by Rome) and they both encouraged the missionary Friars in this country to work together and form the Federation.

<sup>12</sup> Interview of Bonaventure Hinwood, 30 March 2011.

interested in those but just wanted to be a Franciscan Friar.<sup>13</sup> He was ordained a priest in Rome on 3 July 1960.

Initially he was assigned to work in Kokstad diocese where the Irish Friars were working. However, Bonaventure's superiors changed their mind and had other plans. Just as he was about to leave Rome, the Rector of St. John Vianney Seminary, in Pretoria, Fergus Barrett, came to see him with the new plan of continuing with his studies towards a theology doctorate so that he would then go to teach in the Seminary, in Pretoria, where the Irish Friars were educating future priests of this country.<sup>14</sup> Back in South Africa, in January 1964, he was to spend the major part of his life as an academic.

Liam McCarthy, an Irish Friar based at Tafara, in Zimbabwe, and was with Hinwood during those early Franciscan formation years, recalled Bonaventure's arrival in Killarney, Ireland where the Novitiate was in those years. First of all, said McCarthy with a broad smile as if truly enjoying the event, Hinwood came with a small bag hanging over his shoulder and they thought that he was carrying a camera only to find that it was not. He said that Hinwood's arrival really lifted up the standard of the group of young men as he was a learned and "civilized" man while the rest was "a bunch of youngsters, rough and without much experience of life".<sup>15</sup> And as a result of his education and experience Hinwood did not spend long time in Galway where the Franciscan students did their three year philosophical studies; he was sent to Rome instead to continue with his theology studies.<sup>16</sup>

### **Peter Napier**

Peter Napier, classified as Coloured, was the first Black South African to join the Franciscans. Born in Swartberg, in the Kokstad diocese where the Franciscan Friars were based, and as he was brought up by them in faith, he decided to enter the Order there. His

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Liam McCarthy, (Gandachibvuva, Zimbabwe, 25 June 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

family, the Napier's, were devout Catholics and his younger brother, Wilfrid Napier, also joined the same Order after him. Peter joined in 1959 and was also sent to Ireland for his Novitiate, in Killarney, 1959-1960, as the Franciscans were not yet organized in South Africa for the formation of local candidates. However, Peter did not stay with the Franciscans as he decided to leave them again before he was professed as a Friar. Juniper O'Brein, who later came out to Zimbabwe as a missionary, recalled the young Napier's arrival and time at the Franciscan Novitiate. He did not remember though when and how he left the Order and that is probably because he himself might have been moved to another house of the Province.<sup>17</sup> Napier, then, after leaving the Franciscans came back to South Africa and later got married.

### **Wilfrid Fox Napier**

Wilfred Fox, the younger brother of Peter Napier, followed his brother in joining the Franciscan Friars. He went to Ireland where he did his Novitiate in Killarney, 1960 to 1961. He was professed as a Friar on 8 September 1960.<sup>18</sup> Like all the candidates of the Franciscan Order in Ireland, at completion of his Novitiate year Napier went to study philosophy in Galway where the Professors were Franciscan. Again, the Irish Franciscan Province used to send some of selected young Friars to Louvain University for Theological studies and, after three years in Galway, Napier was one of those chosen for that. At the end of his four year course of theology, in Belgium, he was ordained as a priest in 1970<sup>19</sup> and returned to South Africa where he was appointed to pastoral work in the Kokstad diocese, his home area. Later on, he became the first South African to lead the Church, in his diocese, as bishop, and still later he was made Archbishop of Durban and then Cardinal of Southern Africa.<sup>20</sup> Napier also was also the President of the

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<sup>17</sup> Juniper O'Brein, (Gandachibvuva, Zimbabwe, 24 June 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Franciscan Directory of the Irish Province, (February 2005).

<sup>19</sup> Franciscan Directory of the Irish Province, (February 2005).

<sup>20</sup> Napier was appointed Administrator of Kokstad diocese, at the retirement of Bishop John Baptist MacBride, in 1978, and was then consecrated bishop of Kokstad – at the age of forty – in February 1981. He was later appointed Archbishop of Durban, the first Black person holding this position in South Africa, succeeding the famous anti-apartheid stalwart Archbishop Hurley (Oblate), in 1992. In 2002 Napier became the first Black and the second Cardinal of Southern Africa after the first one, who lived in Cape Town, Owen MacCann.

Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, an office he took over from Archbishop Denis Hurley, the famous champion of the anti-apartheid struggle in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and a position he held for about twenty years.

### **Karel Schoeman**

According to Bonaventure Hinwood, Karel Schoeman became very negative after leaving the Franciscans, blaming them for the failure of his vocation.<sup>21</sup> He was a convert, baptized a Catholic on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1959, the day of the celebration of the *Transitus* - (the passing from this life to the next life, through death) - of St. Francis of Assisi, at the cathedral in Bloemfontein. The very fact of his being received into the Catholic Church on that day must have made a deep impression on him for he later wrote warmly about it in his autobiography, written in Afrikaans, and he also decided to join the Franciscans.<sup>22</sup> Schoeman moved from place to place around the towns of South Africa and the following was his itinerary:

- 1931-1941, Trompsburg
- 1941-1943, Bloemfontein
- 1943-1956, Paarl
- 1957-1960, Bloemfontein
- 1958- 1964, Sancta Maria Mater
- 1964-1966, Bloemfontein
- 1966-1968, Johannesburg
- 1968-1973, Amsterdam

He was inspired by the great and world-renowned American Cistercian monk, Thomas Merton, whose writings he claimed to have touched him deeply even during his university years and which he later referred to in his autobiography.<sup>23</sup> He then joined the Franciscans in Pretoria. He left his mother's place, in Bloemfontein, early in 1961<sup>24</sup> and

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<sup>21</sup> Interview with Bonaventure Hinwood, 27 June 2011.

<sup>22</sup> K. Schoeman, *Die Laaste Afrikaanse Boek*, (Cape Town, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 315-316.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327.

went to spend a few months with the Irish Franciscans at their house in Pretoria, the other side of the street of St. John Vianney Seminary.<sup>25</sup> He went to Ireland in August of 1961 and entered the novitiate in October of that year,<sup>26</sup> making his profession a year later.<sup>27</sup> Again, like all Franciscan newly professed he was sent to Galway where he did his studies in philosophy. Schoeman also left the Friars.

Bonaventure claimed that Schoeman became so negative later in life, blaming the Franciscans for the fact that he had left them. Bonaventure insisted that Schoeman was not honest in his story about himself, maintaining the wrong reasons for not making it with the Franciscan Order while the real reason was that he was really a hermit by nature – a loner - and was just not meant for life with others which is a clear requirement for Franciscan life.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, in reading his autobiography one gets that critically negative attitude towards the Franciscans he was with in the house near the Seminary in Pretoria. However, I think that Schoeman should be given credit for rightly referring to the unfortunate situation of the Seminary being for whites only, something we saw in chapter nine of this study.<sup>29</sup> So, then, it could be that Schoeman had a point after all, that his criticism was in line with reality and that perhaps life for him with the Irish Franciscans was not as ideal as he had hoped it would be.

Even Bonaventure had mentioned, in the interview I had with him earlier on, that he himself did not feel welcome to the Franciscans when he first requested to join. It is very probable, then, that due to the fact that the Irish Friars were not yet organized and, therefore, not yet ready for taking local candidates they made life not easy for those who were interested in their way of life like Schoeman. We saw how Bonaventure was moved from place to place, from one person to the other when he enquired about becoming one of the Franciscans and just because he persevered and was determined to become a Franciscan he eventually made it. However, the truth is, not all are like Bonaventure and so some would not stand such treatment and Schoeman would be one of such people.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 320.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 325.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 339.

<sup>28</sup> Interview of Bonaventure Hinwood, 27 June 2011.

<sup>29</sup> K. Schoeman, *Die Laaste Afrikaanse Boek*, p. 320.

Schoeman's critical attitude was seemingly in him even before he joined the Order. He told the story of his experience with Archbishop Whelan of Bloemfontein, how he differed with his and the Catholic Church's "cautious attitude towards the political developments in the country and the issue of colour-bar".<sup>30</sup> He compared the Archbishop with the time when he was in Johannesburg, before his transference to Bloemfontein, and realized that he had changed from being an outgoing, inspiring and interested enthusiastic person. Bloemfontein was a different scenario, with conservative priests, sisters and lay people who were more inclined toward the White government than Johannesburg. And this apparently had a bearing on the Archbishop. When Schoeman tried to involve the Archbishop in a discussion on matters of segregation – telling him about a certain Black man who knelt in the very back pew in church – the Archbishop remarked strangely, "Yes, they know their place".<sup>31</sup> In the same conversation the Archbishop tempered Schoeman's enthusiasm on the question of doing something about the situation in the country, telling him that it had to be done slowly.<sup>32</sup> So, once again, it might as well be that Schoeman was disappointed with the Church and the Franciscans in their attitude toward and lack of action in the face of the country's policies.

This was confirmed later when I interviewed a Franciscan Friar by the name of Paddy Noonan who has been very much involved in the area of Justice and Peace, both at the level of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference and at the practical daily activities of the peoples in the apartheid days.<sup>33</sup> Noonan started by pointing out that Schoeman was, according to him, a big name in South Africa, the "Shakespeare of Afrikaans community". Noonan continued to say that in fact he brought Schoeman out to Black townships in the 1970s and that was his first time of meeting with the Blacks at the level of speaking with them face to face and was impressed with their open and reasoning attitude.<sup>34</sup> Noonan did agree with Hinwood on the point of Schoeman's reserved personality, pointing that Schoeman was a loner, a thinker and a very observant writer

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 309-310.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 309.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Interview with Patrick "Paddy" Noonan, (Sebokeng, 28 June 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

who was smooth.<sup>35</sup> When I asked Liam McCarthy, the Irish Franciscan in Zimbabwe who was with Hinwood at the Novitiate in Killarney, he did not remember meeting Schoeman as he was long after them. He did recall though hearing about him but did not think he ever met him.<sup>36</sup>

### **Anthony Duigan**

Anthony Duigan joined the Irish Franciscans in mid 1960s. Like all others, he went to Ireland for Franciscan formation, that is, Novitiate and philosophy. He then went to Rome for his theological studies. The Irish Franciscans had a student house, St. Isidore's College, at the city centre in Rome, attending classes at the Franciscan university, the "Antonianum", (named after St. Anthony of Padua, the first Franciscan Friar to teach theology to the Franciscans, in Bologna).<sup>37</sup> He was with Patrick "Paddy" Noonan both in the Novitiate, in Killarney, and in Philosophy in Galway. According to Noon, Duigan had a balanced personality, open to ideas and constructive criticism, and that included comments on the apartheid system of South Africa which the Irish Friars of his time questioned a great deal.<sup>38</sup> These were obviously different times from those we saw in chapter nine of this research, when the Friars were generally not critical of the status quo in the country to which they came as missionaries. Duigan was different from the other Anthony (Dobson) who was in the same class with him that time. Duigan apparently had a soft personality.<sup>39</sup> He left the Franciscans while still doing his theological studies.

### **Anthony Dobson**

Anthony Dobson accompanied Anthony Dugan to Ireland for his Franciscan formation, and later also went to Rome. According to Noonan, Dobson was, unlike Duigan, assertive

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Liam McCarthy, 25 June 2012.

<sup>37</sup> See the letter written by St. Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscan Order, in the thirteenth century, in which he was approving the young and educated Friar, Anthony, and encouraging him to teach theology to the Friars, *Early Documents*, Vol. I, (New York, 1999), p.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Patrick "Paddy" Noonan, 28 June 2012.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

and cheeky, defending the apartheid system and saw nothing wrong with it at all. In fact, he thought that South Africa had the best system in the world.<sup>40</sup> Anthony Dobson, went to Killarney, the Franciscan Novitiate in Ireland, in 1960 and completed that stage the following year.<sup>41</sup> Noonan pointed out that they, Irish Franciscans, did not know how to handle the White South Africans; they just heard about the situation in South Africa and were probably hard on them. Dobson was defensive and did not want being attacked and, at the same time, Noonan added, that probably helped him open up and reflect on the situation for the first time in his life.<sup>42</sup> Dobson lasted only a short time, about two years, with the Franciscans, and then went back to South Africa.<sup>43</sup> Noonan recalled hearing Dobson's name being mentioned years later and was seemingly a successful Principal of a Catholic Secondary School, St. Benedict's, in Bedfordview, Johannesburg. So, he was probably a changed man by then.<sup>44</sup>

### **Thomas Tshabalala and others**

After the Second Vatican Council the Order encouraged what has come to be termed *implantation Ordinis* - Latin for implanting the Order or the implantation of the (Franciscan) Order. This was referring to those parts of the world, particularly in Asia and Africa, where the Franciscan Order was not yet established. Even those who came out before the Council considered themselves to be missionaries who were to assist in the building up of the local Church and not to introduce or build up the Order as such. That was one of the reasons why local candidates, like Bonaventure and others, did not really feel warmly welcome to the Franciscans when they knocked at their doors. The Franciscans were just not ready to accept candidates from South Africa, that was not their objective in coming out to the missions. The Second Vatican Council though encouraged the religious institutes of the Church to adapt themselves to the culture of the times and the world and this led to the Franciscans, and more other spiritual families within the Church, to open themselves up to receiving local candidates so that the spirituality of

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Interview with Patrick Noonan, 28 June 2012.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

those institutes would be expressed in the various cultures of the world, the cultural context of the people to whom the missionaries were bringing the message.

Thomas Tshabalala was one of the very first Black South Africans to join the Franciscans. He was born in Ladysmith, Kwazulu-Natal, (1950s), and asked to be received into the Order there. He came from a stable Catholic family, with an uncle of his being a member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) missionaries whom, as we saw in the first chapter of this research, worked very hard in establishing mission-stations in the country, including those in Kokstad diocese which was later entrusted to the Franciscans (1935). Again, as we saw in chapter ten of this study, the English Franciscans were responsible for the area that later came to be the diocese of Dundee, Northern Kwazulu-Natal, and so Tshabalala and a few others who were interested in joining the Order, in the 1960s were placed in a mission called St. Joseph's, in Besters, twenty five kilometres outside Ladysmith, where they were offered Franciscan formation. At first it was not that clear what the formation programme was exactly but then, with the insistence of some of the English Franciscans who were entrusted with the formation of local candidates, things began to improve and there was progress. As it was indicated in the previous chapter, the English Friars were quite strong in matters of justice not only at the social but also within the Franciscan Order, especially in the formation of the locals. They had made it clear that, first of all, local formation had to begin and, secondly, that it had to be on a non-racial basis.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, as time went on, there were young men of the various racial groups of South Africa interested in becoming Franciscans and all were trained together in Besters.

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<sup>45</sup> Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", chapter 3.



Franciscans discuss their presence and ministry in South Africa (Provincial Chapter – 2011)



New Provincial leadership - 2011

## **Conclusion**

Bishop Fleischer had a clear and powerful vision: the Franciscan life and the Franciscan Family, to be implemented in his diocese. As was argued in this research, to a certain extent he might have been disappointed with those involved in the realization of such a dream – and that included the Franciscan Friars and his own Order of Mariannahill Missionaries. He nevertheless still would not give up and realized that the vision could be actualized in another setting which was slightly different from his original one, namely in Flagstaff. Further, he would have accepted and even encouraged the implementation of that vision in other areas of South Africa as well. The coming of the Irish and the English Friars should have been such an extension of the Franciscan dream.

In this research I have tried to show a few realities that should situate that vision in a certain context. That, first of all, the Franciscan Friars and the Franciscan Sisters were men and women of faith; that it was within that context that we have to understand their missionary presence and work in South Africa. One of the interesting points here is that all three groups of Franciscan Friars had close and good relations with Franciscan Sisters. The Bavarians were associated with the Franciscan Solanus Sisters who actually came out in the same boat in 1932 and continued to work alongside each other both in Mariannahill and in Kokstad later. As we saw, in Purstinger's history, he defended these Sisters in the situation of Mariannahill diocese which was not always favourable to them. There were also the Holy Cross Sisters who did wonderful work alongside the Friars in Kokstad and in Flagstaff, especially in the education of the young people. These Sisters continued to work with the Irish Friars when they took over in Kokstad. The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary were introduced to the Kokstad area, particularly Bizana, by the Irish Franciscans and, again, they had a profound devotion to the poor in the domains of health and religious education of the people. Finally, the English Friars were associated with the Mill Hill Sisters, a Franciscan group that was invited by the English Friars to work with the indigenous people and also establish a local religious group of Sisters, the "Izimpelezi zikaJesu" or "Companions of Jesus". In this way we can see the Friars'

commitment to recognizing the important role played by women in the Church and society at large.

Again, all those Congregation of Sisters were – in various degrees and ways – dedicated to the course of uplifting the poor. The missionary Sisters helped in founding local Congregations –the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, at the request of Bishop Fleischer, assisted with the formation and training of the Assisi Sisters, and the Mill Hill Sisters helped with the founding of the “Izimpelezi zikaJesu”, in the Prefecture Apostolic of Volskrust. As for the Franciscan Sisters of Assisi – the Daughters of St. Francis, founded by Fleischer – they expressed the Gospel, brought by missionaries, in an African context.

Secondly, it has been shown too that those missionaries were human beings who thought and acted in the various given situations in a human manner, and that is both positive and negative. Indeed, they had their strengths and weaknesses which made their efforts great, on the one hand, and shameful, on the other hand. Yes, human as they were, they carried in them their religious, national, educational, economic, social, psychological background which was an influence in their efforts to evangelize the people they came to minister to. For instance, one could generally state the following regarding the different groups of missionaries. The Bavarians – being hardworking Germans, would often be impatient with other peoples and see them as slow and stupid compared to themselves; they would see other nationalities as being inefficient and even incapable of working, particularly those from outside Europe. We saw this, for instance, in the letter written by Gottschalk when he was at Kwa-St. Joseph’s with his “Black Brothers”;<sup>1</sup> his prejudices and judgment of the African people there was so strong. Guido Nurnberger too, in teaching the indigenous boys at the minor Seminary in Ixopo, argued that the Africans were “not up to the standard of the Germans”. This attitude was combined with other factors, like being Bavarian which, as we saw earlier on, was and still is to a great extent a powerhouse of Catholic faith both in Germany and in Europe. Another factor was that of being European who, again as seen above, particularly in David Bosch’s argument, due to their technological progress, considered themselves far superior to other peoples, and

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<sup>1</sup> Letter, Kunsteiger to Minister Provincial, 4 December 1932.

especially those of the so-called “Third World”. These three factors were probably combined in Purstinger’s treatment of the young women when he put a sack on their beautiful traditional clothes when he discovered that they were not married in church but had done only the customary wedding.

The Irish – being from an island, and one that for centuries has played a significant role in the missionary aspect of the Catholic Church, came with an attitude of superiority too in this regard. According to such an attitude, the African peoples needed the true faith which they were to be given only by a Catholic people, the Irish nation was that kind of people. Again, they were coming to rescue the poor Germans who had been humbled by the Second World War and so would have nothing much left – no personnel, no financial means and probably not much spiritual strength either. Ireland is a rather small country and the mentality of a people in such a situation can easily be narrow, enclosed in their little world. It was within that context that to a considerable extent they began building their kingdom rather than God’s for which missionaries both from Ireland and other parts of the world have done. In seeing themselves as those who came to rescue others, both the Bavarians and the poor Africans, they also tended to see themselves as the only perfect ones and all the rest were “not up to their standard”, something we notice in Western people in general. Another example of that is the question of local vocations in the Irish areas of this country. In the light of all this, one does not wonder why there were no young men joining the Franciscan Friars for such a long period of their presence and ministry.

As for the English – although they had the background of being from a nation of empire and colonization, and probably considered their superiority from that perspective, yet they were quite humble in the Franciscan life and ministry in South Africa. This was due to the fact that they were thin on the ground, both overseas and in the new mission of South Africa. England was not, and still is not, a Catholic country – unlike Bavaria and Ireland – and the English Friars were not as powerful in numbers and in their financial standing. It was probably this humble state that made them focus themselves on the positive values of standing up for the rights of the oppressed, as we saw with the forced

removals. The same was true again later when the Franciscan Order was working towards unification in Southern Africa. The English were in a leadership position in, once again, seeking justice for the indigenous of this country, wanting to start a formation of the local candidates of the Franciscan Order on a non-racial basis which was a courageous and prophetic stance in a country of discrimination and oppression.<sup>2</sup> So, one could say that the English, with their background of being from a nation that has long colonial power and empire, positively contributed to the new mission the values of rule and law, justice and equality for all those who were in the same Franciscan family. Surely, Fleischer's vision was being well-implemented when the African candidates were being received and formed in Besters and also the non-racial basis of formation of the country's candidates would have greatly pleased the visionary bishop who always believed in the Black people and worked hard to build up the Franciscan family.

The three missionary groups of Franciscan Friars settled in different areas of the country. They lived and worked side by side, without much interest in each other and this was another sign of the human element. While it is true that they came with various motives and, in a way, for different reasons, at the same time, they were all coming as Catholic missionaries with the sole main objective of bringing God's kingdom into the peoples' lives and realities. Again, they all belonged to the same spiritual family, the Franciscan family which Fleischer's presented to them. So, as men of the gospel they could and should have realized that they belonged to the same Franciscan family and, therefore started to come together rather wait for the Second Vatican Council and the implementation of its spirit and the Order's legislation later.

So then, while the Franciscan Friars did something in expressing the values of the gospel in the situation in which they found themselves, here in South Africa, it is equally true that in certain areas they lacked the necessary courage and zeal that is in the gospel. They

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<sup>2</sup> Nogemane, "The Coming of the Franciscans", pp. 74-77.

fell short of the prophetic spirit of their founder, St. Francis of Assisi, who became a brother to all people and creatures,<sup>3</sup> particularly the weak and the marginalized of society.

At the same time, I think that it is important to always bear in mind the various factors that were in the background – human as well as spiritual or religious ones – of the lives of the Friars. One of those factors is the structures of the Catholic Church, particularly in those times. For example, the Church did encourage the kind of clergy and religious we have seen in our Friars – so that once again they were just men of their times. The Catholic Church did, and to an extent still does, promote values that are not quite congruent with the Gospel teaching and attitude of Jesus. The institutional church, for instance put the priest on a pedestal so that he would see himself as the centre of everything, having all the answers and informing the people, and even worse commanding them, what to do. Jesus in the gospel taught: “The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”<sup>4</sup> Again, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples at “the Last Supper”.<sup>5</sup> In the times of the missionary Franciscan Friars here in South Africa the priest – all over the world - would do almost everything and in such an atmosphere the people’s ability to think and act was undermined. Friars who came from a strong Catholic situation, like Ireland and Bavaria, would find it particularly a challenge to undo that mentality and attitude as they were brought up in it. In other words, the Catholic Church did lose – at least in certain periods of history – that sense of humility, service and self-giving that was lived and promoted by Jesus who is, for Catholics, the high priest of their religion. In such times, with the elevation of the priests the ordinary lay people were pushed to the background and both the priests and the laity themselves came to believe that this was the correct way in the Church. It was the Second Vatican Council – between 1962 and 1965 – that brought about changes, calling for a return to the spirit of the Christian sources: the gospels, scriptures, liturgy,

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<sup>3</sup> As it was pointed out earlier on, Francis of Assisi was powerful in preaching and living this message of universal brotherhood of all peoples and creation. His celebrated song of “Canticle of Creatures” is still so valid today as he calls all creatures “Brother” or “Sister” – “Brother Sun, Sister Moon, Brother Fire/Wind, Sister Water” – when people abuse nature. It is no wonder that Pope Johan Paul II, in 1979, declared Francis the “Patron Saint of Ecology”.

<sup>4</sup> Mark’s gospel, chapter 10 verses 35-45.

<sup>5</sup> John’s gospel, chapter 13 verses 1-16. “The Last Supper” refers to Jesus’ farewell meal (during the traditional Jewish festival of Passover) before he died.

catechumenate (RCIA),<sup>6</sup> the spirit of the founders of religious life like Francis of Assisi, and so on.<sup>7</sup> Whereas before the Council the lay people in the Church were seen as merely helpers of the priests when there was a shortage or need on the part of the priests – and that was not so frequent as there were great numbers in the priesthood – suddenly the Council taught that the laity were to participate in the Church’s activities from their calling, their right and their duty as members of the Church.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the Council taught that all the members of the Church – whatever state they belong to: priests, religious sisters and brothers, and laity – have one common fundamental vocation, which is a call to holiness, a holy life through the one baptism that they share.<sup>9</sup>

It is my hope that, as indicated at the beginning of this research, this thesis will contribute to a soul-searching of the Franciscans as they continue to live and minister to the people of South Africa. This history will hopefully teach us to learn from and be inspired by the great and heroic deeds of our spiritual forebears – our Franciscan brothers and sisters – and also teach us to learn from their mistakes. According to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, one of the greatest historic moments in the life of the Catholic Church, let us go back to the spirit of our founder, St. Francis so that we may serve the Lord and the peoples, particularly the poor and marginalized of our society. Fleischer’s vision, though he lived before the Council, was certainly in accordance with that spirit.

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<sup>6</sup> *Catechumenate* refers to the formation and admission of converts as new members of the Church, a period that lasts between one and three years. RCIA refers to the services and rites performed for such candidates (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults). See *Our Journey Together* by Oswald Hirmer (Bishop Emeritus of Mthatha), (Lumko, Germiston, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> *Perfectae Caritatis*: Decree on the up-to-date renewal of Religious life, (Vatican Council II 1965), pp. 611-706. This is just one document on the teaching of Vatican Council II, there are many others that give that sense of profound change in the Catholic Church’s thought and attitude, e.g. the decrees and pronouncements on the priests, on the bishops, on the laity, and so on.

<sup>8</sup> Decree on the apostolate of lay people, (Vatican Council II 1965), pp. 766-798; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, (Vatican Council II 1964), pp. 388-395.

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## Photos & Buildings (plans/maps)

- Grave of Daniel Burke (Grahamstown, 1839)
- Grahamstown Catholic Church
- The first Bavarian Franciscan Missionaries in South Africa
- Bishop Adalbero M. Fleischer
- Mariannahill Monastery
- Site of Izingolweni
- Plan of the first Franciscan house/friary at St. Boniface Mission
- Kokstad (Mount Currie)
- Holy Cross Sisters
- Converts (early Christian converts)
- Franciscan Brothers of Waldbreitbach, Germany (1931)
- Capuchinneses (1931)
- Franciscan Sisters of Solanus (1932)
- Maris Stella Mission (Mariannahill diocese, Port Shepstone)
- Assisi Mission (Port Shepstone)
- Franciscan Missionaries of Mary Provincialate (Umzinto)

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- Mokoena, (Catholic Priest of Izingolweni Mission), (Izingolweni, Port Shepstone, 25 January 2010)
- Wilking, Mechtildis, (Belgravia, JHB, 29 January 2010)
- Mrs. Shabalala, (St. Boniface Mission, Izingolweni, 23 February 2010)
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- Dorothy Vere, (Durban, 27 March 2011)
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- Hinwood, B., (Pretoria, 27 June 2011)
- Sombizela, G., (Flagstaff, 29 June 2011)
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