

MISSION APPEALS HOMILY 2021

A REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO BUILD A MEDICAL CLINIC AT MVUNGWE IN THE DIOCESE OF SAME IN TANZANIA

My dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ.

Warm Greetings and Best Wishes from the Catholic Diocese of Same in Tanzania, Africa. I am happy to be with you through this written message as we come together to pray and listen to the Word of God on this Sunday.

I am Father Mansuetus Kimbwe Setonga from the Catholic Diocese of Same, Tanzania. In many rural parts of Tanzania, people are still deeply rooted to their cultures and traditions. In my tribe, when a baby is born it is given three names. The first is the Baptism name, the second is the name of its grandfather if a baby boy or grandmother if a baby girl. The third name may refer to an important event of that day when the baby was born. Therefore, my first and Baptism name is Mansuetus which is a Latin name which means humble. I am not sure if I am humble or not, but it is my name. The second name is Kimbwe which is the name of my grandfather from my mother's side. The last name is Setonga, a name of the event when I was born. My Mother and another five women were going to the local market to sell bananas, beans, vegetables, and fruits. On the way my mother was not feeling well. The other women looked for shade under a mango tree and *there* I was born. These women asked my mother which name I was supposed to be given. Before my mother answered, one wise woman said, "We were going to the market so let us call him 'Setonga' which means '*women going to the market*'. So, from thereon this became my name.

First of all, I would like to express my most sincere thanks to the Archdiocese, the Mission Office and the Parish which organized these mission appeals today for the Diocese of Same. May the good Lord bless each and every one of you abundantly.

Tanzania is one of the poorest countries in the world, with 80% of the population practicing rural subsistence farming. Tanzania has a population of 57 million people, 15 million of whom live in absolute poverty, earning less than \$1.00 a day. The standard of living of the people in the Diocese of Same is below that of most Tanzanians. There are 623,000 people in the Diocese of which 45% are Christian, 45% Muslim, and 10% follow traditional, African religions. Catholics are 74,104.

One of the serious problems facing the people of Same is poor health. In Mvungwe Village, people walk on foot for more than eight hours to reach a medical clinic. Due to the lack of clinics in the village, many newborn babies, children and women, die from malaria, respiration infections, pregnancy complications and diarrhea.

This year the life situation of our people in Mvungwe Village and the Diocese of Same at large is getting worse due to COVID-19 restrictions imposed to prevent the spread of the Corona virus. Due to poverty, many people have no money to purchase face masks or sanitizers and have no access to the hospitals for a checkup.

I would like to share with you a true story of what happened when I visited Mvungwe, one of my out-stations/small parish. As I was preaching; a lady at the back of the church raised her hand and cried out: "Father, Father I have a problem!" I asked myself, what could be the problem? She kept on crying; "Father I have a problem!" I stopped preaching and asked her what was her problem? She said, "my daughter is sick, my daughter is dying, I want you please to take my daughter to Same Hospital". Same Hospital is about ten miles away. I told her that after Mass I will take her daughter to the hospital. After Mass I asked her where was her home? She said just one mile from the church. I put her in the car, driving towards her home. I drove the car until there was no road. We were in the middle of the jungle! I told her I could not drive any further. She asked me to wait there. She went further on to her place and asked her family to bring the poor girl on a stretcher to the car. As I was waiting, another lady appeared and told me she was pregnant, and the baby was due. She needed my help.

I told her I did not know anything about childbirth and that in school I only studied to celebrate Mass, not to deliver babies! Then I got a new idea. I told her let me go around, I might see someone to help you. As I was going around the jungle, I saw a woman carrying firewood. I called her as she saw me running to her in the jungle, she was running faster than myself. I kept calling and calling until she stopped and asked what she could do for me! I asked her to come and help a lady to deliver a baby. She came. After ten minutes I heard.... a baby crying! By then I was hiding alone in the bush to give her some privacy. Then the lady called me and said, "Father come out, the baby is born."

In African culture when a baby is born women cry out with joy three times if it is a baby girl. Uloooo, Uloooo, Uloooo! The lady asked me to join her to cry four times because this was a baby boy. Then the lady told me that the mother and the baby are weak, and I have to rush them to the hospital. I put them in the car driving them to the hospital ten miles. Remember I forgot completely about the dying daughter due to this new crisis!

When I told my Bishop about this true story, the Bishop said, "I think it is high time now to help these poor people to build a clinic so we can save the life of many people". My Bishop wrote a letter to your Bishop asking him to assign us some parishes to raise some money to help us build a clinic at Mvungwe Parish in order to save the lives of many people. Your Bishop gave us this wonderful parish to come and ask for donations in order to build a clinic at Mvungwe Parish. Your donations will make a big difference in the life of our people. Those who were to die because they did not have access to the hospital will not die because of your donations. What a joy!!!! So, my dear sisters and brothers in Christ I am asking you a favor to donate some funds in order to build a clinic for these poor people. Thank you in advance for your generosity and love for my people.

Father Mansuetus Setonga

Coordinator of Mission Appeals for the Diocese of Same