

AJANews 98 - January-February 2011

Dear readers: it is our pleasure to inform you that our consulting editor, Danielle Vella, gave birth to a baby girl, Esther, on January 17, 2011. Mother and child are doing well and we ask you to keep them in your prayers. We also welcome at this time Adam Hincks, n.S.J., to the AJANews editorial team.

Tributes to Michael Czerny from Jesuit Companions An African View of Church and HIV AJAN Workshop on HIV Prevention among Youth The parish: A privileged place to fight HIV and AIDS

Blessed Anuarite Nengapeta is a young Sister of the Holy Family of Kisangani. She worked at Wamba as a teacher. She was murdered resisting the sexual demands of a rebel leader in the Congo in 1964. Saint Aloysius Gonzaga is a young Jesuit who selflessly gave his life caring for victims of the deadly plague in Rome in 1591. We entrust the African Jesuit AIDS Network to the prayer and protection.

TRIBUTES TO FR. MICHAEL CZERNY, S.J. FROM JESUIT COMPANIONS

Fr. Michael Czerny, S.J. officially handed over the reins as leader of AJAN to Fr. Paterne Mombé, S.J. in December 2010. As the following tributes from some of his brother Jesuits show, his influence and legacy will continue to be felt for a long time to come.

Starting a new office in Nairobi, raising funds and staff, establishing communications and keeping up with all the new developments in the AIDS apostolate was a awesome task, but Michael took it in his stride and before long AJAN was firmly established. He has left behind him a viable organisation that is making a most valuable contribution, through its office and publications and the coordination and encouragement of many Jesuits in the various Provinces of Africa. Above all, he managed to get young Jesuits involved in the programmes and helped to sustain their enthusiasm. We wish him Godspeed in his new endeavours, but hope he can take some rest before new involvements. *-Fr. Ted Rogers, S.J., Harare, Zimbabwe*

A man of vision and hope. This sums up the legacy that Fr. Michael leaves to AJAN as well as the qualities it will need to continue to foster. I am reminded of how he struggled to convince one and all how necessary it was to take over the JRS AIDS project in Bujumbura. It seems to me that he has an interior force pushing him to love the most poor-the friends of Christ, if we refer to chapter four of Luke. But his secret is his love for the Church and the Society [of Jesus], and moreover for Christ who is their head. This is a legacy that we, in our ministries working against AIDS, must keep to heart. Hope is at the heart of what we do in our ministries in order to give life. As he used to like to say, at AJAN we are at the service of those struggling against AIDS because we are a people that wants to live. *-Fr. Désiré Yamuremye, S.J., Bujumbura, Burundi*

I remain strongly marked by the one who since 2002 has been the kingpin [cheville ouvrière] of the Jesuit apostolates battling HIV/AIDS on our continent. Working with him for five years a grace and a blessing for me. He helped me by his counsel, his experience as an elder, his witness and his rigour in the battle against AIDS. I will remember him as a father

in love with justice and peace. A companion of generosity and great goodness of heart. In eight years, he built a solid Jesuit apostolate to combat HIV/AIDS on African soil. I am glad to have taken my first steps in this apostolate with him. And I bless the Lord for having put Fr. Czerny in my path. -*Harris Tombi, S.J., ITCJ, Abidjan, Ivory Coast*

Fr. Michael is a great friend of Madagascar and true companion of the Faravohitra *Centre Social Arrupe* (CSA). He came to Madagascar in 2005 to inaugurate our Centre. His conference on AIDS on 15 May 2005 has marked the history of the CSA. He succeeded in convincing us that this struggle legitimately belongs to our preferential option for the poor . . . He is also a man on the ground, who does not content himself with talk but works to the finish. This is why, because of his appeals to CRS in his capacity as Director of AJAN, the CSA received the necessary funds to run its AIDS project for five years (2006-2010) Michael showed us the way and it is up to us to continue, according to the Ignatian spirit. -*Fr. Jean Simon Ratsimbazafy, S.J., Faravohitra, Madagascar*

In his message of tribute to Fr. Michael Czerny [see above], Fr. Ted Rogers, who was among the pioneers in the Jesuit response to the pandemic, stated: 'Above all, he managed to get young Jesuits involved in the programmes and helped to sustain their enthusiasm.' I think that if there is a concrete example of this statement, it is myself. I did my first placement in the HIV/AIDS field in Kampala, Uganda, in June and July, 2002. After this experience of pastoral fieldwork, I developed an interest in doing something to promote hope and life among people threatened or touched by the pandemic. My provincial, to whom I mentioned my desire, pointed me to Fr. Czerny, whom I met for the first time in February, 2003. It was the beginning of a long experience under his constant guidance and encouragement, which included: writing and publishing the book *Rays of Hope: Managing HIV/AIDS in Africa*; planning, founding and running *Centre Espérance Loyola* (Loyola Hope Centre); working in a holistic programme to fight HIV/AIDS in Lomé, Togo; co-ordinating AIDS response initiatives in my own province, the Jesuit West Africa Province; and finally taking over from him as the AJAN co-ordinator. When I look back at this journey in the field of AIDS, with all that I have received in terms of guidance, encouragement and support, I am filled with profound gratitude, knowing that I am one of Fr. Michael's living legacies inherited by AJAN and the African Assistancy in its commitment to face the challenges of the AIDS pandemic. May the Lord crown his new mission with success and every achievement, and continue to bless AJAN, *ad majorem Dei gloriam!* -*Fr. Paterné Mombé, S.J., AJAN Co-ordinator, Nairobi, Kenya*

AN AFRICAN VIEW OF THE CHURCH AND HIV

This following is an interview of Fr. Michael Czerny, S.J., conducted by Mark Riedemann. It aired in December 2010 on "Where God Weeps", a weekly TV & Radio show produced by Catholic Radio & Television Network with the support of the international Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need.

What first started you in this work of HIV?

I was working as the Secretary for Social Justice at our Jesuit headquarters in Rome and a few Jesuits in Africa raised the alarm about the AIDS pandemic at the turn of the millennium. And so, here in Rome, we worked for two years with colleagues in Africa to come up with an approach, and that approach should include a network of support and encouragement and communications. That is how the African Jesuit AIDS network was founded in mid 2002 and I left my work in Rome and went to Nairobi to direct that network.

Who do you think of when you think of HIV/AIDS?

Sometimes I think of the people I first heard of back home in Canada who were suffering so much with so much fear and confusion during the late 80s and the early 90s, but now I think of the different people in Africa. Maybe I would especially mention Rosanna, a young HIV positive woman, who first had a son who is negative, who then gave birth to a positive daughter whom she lost; she was abandoned by her husband, was thrown out by her family and is struggling to bring up her boy. She is living as positively as she can, with a firm commitment to live as long as she can, so that she can see her son through school and get a good start in life. I admire her and I feel that she is the kind of person whom we would like to - in a sense - promote. We hope that everybody with HIV would have the positive attitude that Rosanna has.

The Catholic Church is often pilloried, if you will, for its position on HIV/AIDS and yet few realize how important the work of the Catholic Church is as a caregiver for HIV/AIDS victims. Can you tell us a little bit about this?

Certainly. The worldwide Church is the major caregiver for those who are HIV positive and those who are suffering from AIDS as well as also caring for those affected - especially widows, orphans and others who are carrying the burden. So there is a wide range of work that the Church does. If you look at it medically, perhaps worldwide, the Church offers 25% of AIDS services. My guess is that the average in Africa is closer to 40%, maybe even 50%. The further away you get from the big cities, the closer it gets to 100%. Often the only AIDS services in the remote areas are the Church clinics.

What are we talking about when we talk about care giving?

Since HIV and AIDS is not only an infection or sickness but also an enormous cultural, personal, family, social and spiritual problem, what the Church can do, and what I think we can be proud as a Church, is that we address the whole person and not just the infection - not just the medical part. So an HIV positive person can look to the Church for a wide range of care and support which can be summed up as being accepted as a person and encouraged to continue to live as fully as possible, as long as possible, and not to allow HIV/AIDS to be a death sentence.

How would an African view the work of the Church in this care-giving area?

I think many Africans would say: "The Church was with us before AIDS. The Church is now generously with us during AIDS and the Church will be with us after AIDS." In that sense the Church is not seen so much as a provider of projects or as a service provider but as that reality which we call "Mother": The mother who is there and has always been there and will be there as long as she is needed. You know the Church in Africa calls herself the family of God in Africa; that is the definition coming from the first Synod on Africa and so I would say that basically the Church deals with HIV and AIDS as a family. We try to make everyone feel that they are part of a family, whether they are in need of care or whether they are in a position to offer some kind of care.

You once used Mathew 8:3 as an example of the Church's approach to HIV infection and support. Can you tell us why you chose this particular example?

Gladly. You had this leper who, first of all, dared to approach Jesus - which in itself was against the law - and he challenged Him saying: "If you want to you can heal me," and Jesus did two things. He said: "I want to" and He reached out and touched him and healed

him. In this very short scene, we have many dimensions of AIDS care, of true pastoral ministry. The first: "Of course I want to," is this readiness to help. Someone who is in deep trouble and very upset, and perhaps very cruelly rejected by everyone on whom he has ever counted, can turn to the Church and knows that there will be a positive response. There will be no judgment. There will be no calculation and the answer is: "of course we want to". Secondly, we reach out and touch. I think it's the most fundamental gesture in response to AIDS.

So Christ, through the Church, has touched people?

A person who has, especially recently, heard had they have an HIV positive diagnosis feels as good as dead - feels inhuman and unfortunately society, culture and sometimes even family, will treat that person as dead. They say: "You no longer exist for us. You are dead. Go away. Don't show your face again." So the person feels dead and feels inhuman and there is nothing that can convince a person otherwise in that situation. Then think of a child suffering and in trouble and on the effect on their humanity, their worth, and dignity in being touched, being embraced. Furthermore there was a very strong cultural and medical taboo against touching a leper. Jesus broke through that, worrying less about the danger of infection and being more concerned in reaching the person and giving that touch, that healing touch. And that's what people will say: "When I first found out that I was [HIV] positive I was dead and now I feel alive." And some people will even go further and say: "Before I became positive I was wasting my life. I was throwing my life away by my misbehavior. Now, unfortunately I'm HIV positive, but now I'm really living and I'm living my life responsibly for my family - if I have one - and for others."

Pope Benedict XVI sparked a controversy - when he suggested that condoms were not the solution to the AIDS problem in Africa. Why the controversy? What happened there?

There is a "truth" which people hang on to which is that: If a couple decide to use the condom and one of them is positive, and they use that condom consistently and correctly, that will reduce their chances of infection. It will with a couple. But then people and they think: "Well, if one condom was good for one couple then a million condoms must be good for the population of a town or of a city," and that is not true. Statistics bear out the fact that the wide distribution of condoms as a prevention strategy does not succeed. It does not bring down the rate, and this is what the Holy Father said. He didn't deny that a condom might be useful sometimes. What he denied that was the promotion of condoms, as a primary prevention strategy does not succeed. It does not achieve its objective. It does not bring down the average rate of HIV in the population. But people got very agitated because they didn't study and listen carefully to what he said and because they are not well informed and because there is a lot of ideology and emotion and interest behind this whole issue, and so there was a lot of controversy.

Dr. Edward Green, the Director of the Harvard AIDS Prevention Research Project, said: "As a scientist, I was amazed to see the closeness between what the Pope said in Cameroon and the results of the most recent scientific discoveries. The condom does not prevent AIDS; only responsible sexual behavior can address the pandemic." Now you mentioned briefly the question of ideology. Are we talking also about a discrepancy of values between our sexuality - the lifestyle that we have chosen in Western civilization - and the cultural values in continents like Africa? Is there a cultural gap that is going on here?

Yes, there is a gap between what is now considered normal or acceptable in globalized culture: the culture of media, of advertising, of marketing. Those values are in sharp tension with traditional Catholic values and with traditional African values. Perhaps we could

sum up the cultural value of globalized culture regarding sexuality, as the reliance - and I would say the promotion - of the idea of mutual consent. That is to say that the norm for sexual behaviour is the consent of the two participants and as long as the two participants are beyond the minimum age and freely consent. Then there is no other norm to be applied. That's, I think, the thrust of what globalized culture promotes regarding sexuality. So as long as you and the other one agree, that's fine and nobody is to question that. The idea that we have in the Church and the idea that we have in Africa is that there are other norms and that those norms don't depend only on you and me: they depend on our family, they depend on our community, they depend on our parish, they depend on our nation maybe even on our tribe. That idea is in opposition because in Africa, and in traditional Catholic morality, it's not just what you and I agree on that makes it right, there are other norms and those norms in fact are meant to orient what you and I will do, or not do, at certain moments in our lives with certain persons. So there the difference is very sharp. It wasn't talked about in connection with the controversy, but I'm quite sure that is the real issue; that the Pope represents a set of norms about sexuality that we don't want to accept because they are more demanding. They are also more life giving and they, finally, produce more happiness. But in the short run they seem to be more demanding than simply two of us agreeing on what we want to do.

So, abstinence. Fidelity. These are in fact what the African bishops stated: This is the road to greater happiness, the greater good.

That's right. We say not because we thought of it yesterday but this has been our experience and this has been the experience of every serious culture; that sexuality is a great gift, a wonderful thing which, in order to be appreciated and used properly requires discipline, requires norms, requires the recognition that everything is not always possible and this is, as I say, a long standing human wisdom but it goes against the principles of entertainment and marketing and so we're having a conflict.

Do you ever get angry or frustrated with, perhaps, what you could consider a wrong-headed approach? If we understand that the condom solution is not the solution - it's a lot of money and a lot of time and a lot of effort being driven to a direction that doesn't seem to be providing the answers?

That's true. It's too bad but it's not something really to get all that angry about. The fact is that HIV is a challenge for everyone and in Africa it's a challenge practically in every community and in some places in every family. I think it is going to take time to face it and, yes, the massive promotion of condoms is a destruction. It's not meeting the problem and it's not helping, but unfortunately it is not the only example of wrong-headed approaches imposed on Africa and Africa has survived other mistaken policies and it will survive this one also. But my hope is that with the kind of teaching that the Holy Father has given that we will make progress and progress consists, secondarily, in improved statistics. The real success is when young people are able to live their sexuality more responsibly. When married couples live their sexuality more responsibly, and where, as I said earlier, the family of God faces AIDS as a family - that, I think, is a sign of God at work in Africa.

AJAN WORKSHOP ON HIV PREVENTION AMONG YOUTH

From January 20-27, 2011, AJAN hosted a workshop in Nairobi on HIV-prevention among youth in Nairobi, bringing together 33 Jesuits and collaborators from 12 countries. It was the first major step in the development of a manual for core HIV-prevention programme for

youth to be implemented in African Jesuit educational institutions, slated for completion by September.

At the beginning of the AJAN workshop on HIV prevention among youth, the co-ordinator of AJAN, Fr. Paterne Mombé, S.J., pointed out that over the past decade AJAN has succeeded in helping many Jesuit HIV/AIDS works get off the ground. The challenge now is to create stronger networks and encourage common practices between these diverse projects.

Seventeen Jesuit institutions with HIV prevention programmes were represented, and a significant portion of the workshop was given over to presentations on their HIV/AIDS programmes. The presenters explained what elements of their programmes are meeting with success, while not shying away from frankly naming the challenges they face.

Experts from non-Jesuit institutions were also on hand to add their own perspectives. Representatives from UNAIDS and UNESCO addressed participants on the opening day, expressing their support for the AJAN initiative. Delegates from four Catholic HIV/AIDS programmes in and near Nairobi described their work, and the next day, young beneficiaries of these programmes addressed the workshop with striking enthusiasm and articulateness. Outside consultation was rounded off by a panel of experts that gave feedback and constructive criticism of what had been presented at the meeting.

The meetings in the conference hall were complemented by two field trips: one to AJAN House itself in Kangemi, a poor neighbourhood of Nairobi; and a second to St. Aloysius Gonzaga Secondary School, which provides free education for the poorest AIDS orphans residing in the Kibera slums of Nairobi.

The spiritual dimension of the meeting was anchored by prayers and mass, with different participants presiding at both each day. Socialising at meal times and in the evenings allowed people to get to know each other on more personal levels and strengthened the networks that the meeting sought to foster.

How was all the input during the workshop processed? Participants were divided into four thematic groups: (1) HIV/STI Prevention, (2) Self-awareness, (3) Life Skills and (4) Values and Virtues. These groups met daily to discuss and debate what they had heard that day, and then presented their results to the larger groups. These lively sessions proved to be a key element of the workshop.

There were a few important points of convergence during the workshop. First, there was widespread agreement that combating HIV infection among youth needs to have human development as its cornerstone. Participants agreed that the pedagogy of such development should continue to be guided by Church teaching and Ignatian spirituality. Second, it was agreed that in many cases the problem is not that youth lack of information, but rather that they lack of ability to make prudent, moral and life-giving choices among the multitudinous and divergent messages they receive, especially from their peers and through mass-media. A third consensus was the need to have young people involved as much as possible in the development and implementation of the AJAN HIV prevention programme. This was perhaps best captured in a line of a poem performed for the workshop by youth from the Kibera Foundation of Hope: 'You surely need to engage us in finding solutions.'

Youth involvement was further highlighted when the winners of the Youth Movies for Life & for Love competition were announced at the end of the workshop. The panel of judges, drawn from the workshop participants, selected twenty winning screenplays on the theme of

HIV prevention from the over forty entries from Jesuit schools across the continent. The winning scripts will be produced as short films by AJAN in the coming year.

As the participants return to their work in their respective home countries, AJAN continues the work that they began. A manual containing a core HIV-prevention programme for Jesuit HIV/AIDS apostolates in Africa, stemming from a document drafted by the workshop participants, is currently being developed and will be implemented in an experimental capacity during the next school year.

THE PARISH: A PRIVILEGED PLACE TO FIGHT HIV AND AIDS

Experience has shown that in a sub-Saharan African context, the parish can be a privileged place to fight HIV/AIDS. In the third of an AJANews mini-series about AIDS ministry in Jesuit parishes, Ekeno Augustine, S.J. and Martin Waweru, S.J. write about a three-day HIV prevention campaign organised by the K/Ndege Jesuit Parish in Dodoma, Tanzania. This is an abridged version of the article "Walking the Talk: HIV/AIDS Prevention" which appeared on 1 December 2010 in the online Jesuit journal Thinking Faith (http://www.thinkingfaith.org/articles/20101201_1.htm). It highlights the HIV prevention work among youth that was the subject of the AJAN workshop described in the previous article.

Once told and heard, once seen and experienced, once shared and lived, a story is never the same. An event held this year in Dodoma, Tanzania aimed to share the stories of those living with HIV and AIDS with the young people of the area. In this three-day campaign, we aimed to bear witness to the stories of those with HIV and AIDS, to walk in solidarity with them, and to give our young people the tools to combat the spread of this illness.

With great enthusiasm and invigorated by their *walezi* ('formators'), scholastics Martin Waweru, S.J. and Peter Gumisiriza, S.J., young men and women from K/Ndege Jesuit Parish issued an invitation to the five other parishes that make up the Dodoma Deanery and to representatives from the other 33 parishes of Dodoma Diocese.

The three-day conference was hugely successful from the start. We were able to raise funds through the support of the African Jesuit Aids Network (AJAN) and, thanks to the large numbers that participated, the campaign reached far and wide—not only the young people of the deanery, but also the older members and the young people of Dodoma itself.

For the first two days, the young people took part in discussions about HIV and AIDS from a number of different angles: Fr. Eric of the OFM Capuchins presented on the Eucharist, on the Cross as a symbol of faith and on the meaning of Good Friday; the second facilitator from Kibaigwa talked about the role of family and the need for youth action; and Martin Waweru, S.J. spoke on values and principles centred on Christ, as well as on the AIDS virus itself: CD4 count, the spread of HIV, the symptoms of AIDS, and mitigation of HIV and AIDS.

Our hope in offering young people discussions on these topics was that they would recognise their own role in the fight against HIV and AIDS. Although our young people have a basic awareness of HIV and AIDS, they needed to demonstrate what they knew by 'walking the talk'. Young people have great influence on one another, and we hoped to give them the tools to make changes in their own lives in order to do this.

After two days of discussion and reflection, the participants could spread the message and continue to tell the story of the reality of HIV and AIDS with more vigour, energy, and information. So, on the third day, we held a march in town.

The three-hour march began on Sunday morning at the Cathedral, processed into the town and finished at K/Ndege Jesuit Youth Centre. The long and noisy queue of t-shirt-uniformed youth bombarded the senses of those who did not want to see or hear us, but also attracted huge crowds who chanted and shouted along with us as we marched with our placards and banners. The crowd halted the normal proceedings of the small but busy town with the help of traffic police and our well-organised security committee. The event went without a hitch!

The campaign concluded with an opportunity for women living with HIV and AIDS to share their stories. It was inspiring to listen to them and to see their assuredness and ease when talking about their HIV status-a real example for the young people of the need to eliminate the stigma associated with this pandemic.

The final session was an opportunity for the young people to see the importance and the relevance of all that they had learned, discussed and done over the previous days. We hope that the way in which they now let their values guide their behaviour will be a testament to the success of the campaign.

AJANews is published by the African Jesuit AIDS Network (AJAN) in English, French and Portuguese and is available free of charge. To subscribe, or to change your e-mail address, please click on *Update Profile/Email Address* below or write to ajanews@jesuitaids.net.

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