

PROJECT SUMMARY

APPLICANT:

Rev. Fr. Bernard Silungwe

St. Mary's Catholic Parish, P.O. Box 75, Karonga, MALAWI

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REFEREES:

Rt. Rev. Martin Mtumbuka,

Bishop of The Diocese of Karonga, P.O. Box 140, Karonga

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AIM OF THE PROPOSAL:

Seeking financial assistance to help St. Mary's Catholic Parish respond to Covid19 Crisis.

INTRODUCTION

This project seeks financial assistance totalling to **MK9,957,500.00 = \$12,948.63 (€10,661.13)** to enable St. Mary's Catholic Parish; of Karonga Diocese, Malawi, respond to Covid19 Crisis.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Malawi

Malawi is one of the poor countries in the south of Sahara region. It is among the third world countries that are on the threshold of development. A number of interventions are being made in line with development but still the country is dependent on foreign aid.

Karonga Diocese

Karonga Diocese is one of the eight dioceses in Malawi. This diocese was created on 21st July, 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI and the official opening of the diocese, and the consequent consecration of Bishop Martin A. Mtumbuka, the first bishop, was on 20th November, 2010.

The motto of the diocese on which all of us focus our apostolates on is: "*We shall go to them.*" The basic aim of this motto is that we should be able to reach out to people meeting their respective needs.

St. Mary's Catholic Parish

St. Mary's Catholic Parish is one of the twelve parishes of Karonga Diocese. It was opened in 1945. The parish is found at the centre of Karonga District.

The parish has 4 zones, 12 outstations and 27 prayer centres. It has a total of 12,217 Catholics in the 4 zones. The general village population is about 78,000.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

For a very long time, in times of problems like floods, earthquakes and hunger, people have looked to the church to assist them with their needs. In those days, parishes like ours was able to give such support with the help of many well-wishers from outside Africa who in one way or another were related to the missionary priests who served in these parishes then.

After these missionary priests, there came a generation of priests who made friendship with missionary priests who had retired and went back to their respective countries. These missionary priests continued to fundraise on behalf of their friends or on behalf of the parishes they were fond of. This helped to have a continuity of the help the parishes rendered to the people within their jurisdictions.

After these priests, came the current generation of us who have very little means of fundraising for such purposes. And this makes things very difficult to run parishes. As much as the needs in the villages are still very many in the areas of education, health and life in general due to poverty, in times of crises like flash floods, earthquakes and hunger, people of all denominations still look to the Catholic Church for assistance. For a long time, the diocese of Karonga has tried to come in and cover parishes through Caritas Desk. However, intervention of the diocese is very minimal and it has very little impact on the ground.

This time, we are in a very different kind of crisis, which has made even the Diocese of Karonga fail to give the usual support which it has been giving. The little support the diocese has received has been directed towards very crucial area of health. This has left the situation in parishes to be very critical for priests to respond.

First of all, it would be good to make it clear that in this part of the world, priests have two main sources of their sustenance. The first one is through mass stipends which are supplied by the bishop. The second one is through the support from the Christians of the parishes they are serving. In the second source, Christians contribute towards the management of parish which includes transport/fuel allowance for priests and charitable works which are referred to on top.

However, at the moment, due to Covid19, priests of Karonga Diocese have been greatly affected in their services because their main sources of income which help them to serve properly have been compromised. At the moment, the bishop cannot manage to source much from the traditional sources because they too have been affected by Covid19. This means that priests are not able to receive any assistance from the bishop.

At the same time, Christians, who are the most reliable source, are the most affected and consequently parishes can no longer sustain themselves and let alone manage to have some charitable works.

As a result, priests are failing to go out and reach out as before because they do not have resources to help the very many desperate people they meet when they go out. Many people are currently very miserable in many ways. With the restrictions and rules set by the government, they have been left completely without enough per day. And most of them have big families and it is making life very hard on them. And this is what is making many of them break the covid19 rules and in the process spreading the virus more. To slow down the movement of these people, the distribution of some food stuffs like maize, salt and sugar, some basic PPEs for individuals like cloth masks, soap, washing baskets and hand sanitizers would be of big help.

Culture and traditional beliefs like large numbers of people coming for funerals and hand shaking for greeting, are as well perpetuating the spread of this virus as many people don't want to part ways with them. To curb this, people need sensitization from the people they trust.

Unfortunately, with this lack of resources, priests themselves are failing to go out confidently since they cannot prepare themselves enough to meet potential Covid19 infectious people and sensitize them. The failure of priests to go out and disseminate the message of Covid19 is a big loss in regard to the influence of the Catholic Church on the society. At the moment, the civic education on Covid19 is not enough. The church has not taken the full responsibility it requires to take by using priests to convey the right information to people.

As of today, in the Diocese of Karonga, 80% or more of the village population either think that Covid19 is for the rich people or believe that it only kills old people or are convinced that it is for town places and it cannot reach them. But as of today seeing the many deaths in their villages, they react very differently refusing that their relatives have died with Covid19.

By not using priests to convey the message of reality of coronavirus and its prevention measures, is a big loss because priests are listened to and believed quickly than the health workers whom people think that are being used by politicians for political purposes or they are doing that so that they can receive money from outside for their personal gains. Priests, instead, are trusted by both Catholics and non-Catholics equally.

As such, priests who frequent these villages and town centres to serve the people during church services, community meetings and funerals, will need to continue this exercise and use this opportunity to convey the most needed information at the moment. As of today, Malawi has recorded more local infections than the imported ones. And the territory where the Diocese of Karonga occupies, the numbers of infections and deaths have grown rapidly primarily because people in this area have not received the proper information in regard to Covid19.

It is with this background that we are requesting for financial assistance to help St. Mary's Catholic Parish to respond to Covid19 Crisis by providing the basic needs to people in its territory and help priests reach out to people serving them with the usual church services while emphasizing on how real Covid19 is and how people should take prevention measures seriously especially in Malawi where the government has repeatedly said that it cannot enforce a total lockdown and cannot respond to all the needs of Malawians.

THE HELP WE ARE SEEKING

The funding we are seeking amounts to **MK9,957,500.00 = \$12,948.63 (€10,661.13)**. Enclosed is the quotation.

REPORTING

As soon as the project will be implemented, a report will be sent to you accompanied with photographs.

Your consideration in this regard will be highly appreciated.

Yours in the service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BE Silungwe' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rev. Fr. Bernard Silungwe (Parish Priest)