

Turmoil in Kenya



By Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh O.P.

Dear Mission Friends:

In our December issue, we read the article by our Western Dominican Province Missionary to Kenya, Brother Daniel Thomas, O.P. describing for us the beautiful nativity sets that he found for sale in the “Masai Market” in downtown Nairobi. His description of the market depicted a peaceful setting where he enjoyed shopping in a friendly atmosphere. At this moment that scene is the setting of bloodshed and violence.

Many of you have expressed great concern for our Dominican Missionaries in Kenya during this time of social and political turmoil. Hopefully by the time that you have received this newsletter the situation in Kenya will be calmer. However, I would like to give a report to you on the situation in Kenya at the time of the writing of this article, based on news that we are receiving from our Dominican Missionaries in Kenya.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN KENYA

There are 14 major tribes in Kenya and another 17 that are quite small. The Kikuyu are the largest tribe with 13 percent of the population. The current president, Mwai Kibaki is Kikuyu. His opponent in the recent election was Raila Odinga and he is Luo. Historically there has been friction between the two tribes. Since the independence of Kenya as a nation, the Kikuyus have dominated the politics of the

Masai Marketplace during calmer times.





Through sponsorships, Dominican Friars are assisting around 220 children in Kisumu, Kenya, allowing them to attend school.

country causing great resentment on the part of the other tribes.

The results of the recent election were quite clearly questionable. It seems apparent that changes in the tally were made in the electoral commission. While opposition leader Odinga had been winning, in the end, the results declared Kibaki as president by a narrow margin. One reason this is odd is that Odinga's party won about 75 percent of the parliament seats and many of Kibaki's cabinet and supporters were not elected. It seemed clear that the country wanted a change.

Mwai Kibaki was sworn in as president in a private

ceremony within a half hour. Odinga has refused to accept this action and called for a rally the following Friday and again on Sunday. The Catholic bishops asked for a recount and for dialogue between the two sides. **Our Missionaries feel that neither Kibaki nor Odinga are accepting responsibility for what is happening in the country, and they ask our prayers that they both might change their hearts as they are causing great sufferings for the people of Kenya.**

THE DOMINICANS IN KENYA

There are two Dominican houses in Nairobi. Brother Daniel Thomas, O.P. is at St. Catherine of Siena Church.

Many of you will remember how, starting in July of 2003, we followed in our newsletters the articles by Father Kieran Healy, O.P. on the establishment of this, the first Dominican-run parish in East Africa. Our other Dominican house is St. Dominic's House of Formation and this is the home of our Dominican Brothers in formation and our Friars who teach, preach, and are involved in campus ministry. In both cases the houses are far away from the center of the city where the violence is taking place. However, Brother Daniel is concerned that with all of the stores closed and businesses shut down, that the food supply will soon give out. **The great worry at this time, however, for the Nairobi Dominicans is that the student brothers are visiting with their families and may be in danger in the areas where they live.** Already a report has come in that the uncle of Brother Thomas Odhiambo, O.P. was dragged from his house and beaten to death, as he is a Luo living in a Kikuyu area. The rest of his family is in hiding. In an area where Kikuyus are being killed by Luos, Brother Mark Anthony, O.P. who is Luo was approached by three men with knives and told to speak Luo to save his life.

In Kisumu our St. Martin de Porres Novitiate is located along with the project for FATHER TOM'S KIDS that you read about in our newsletter last May and also the new hospice for children with cancer that is now a ministry of the Hawthorne Dominican Sisters. Today's New York Times describes Kisumu as follows: ***"Dozens of stores have been looted, torched, and smashed by rioters and then picked clean by an army of glue-sniffing street children searching for whatever was left. The scorched Ukwala Supermarket looks as if a bomb blew up inside it. The gates of Zamana Electric are smashed. People here say this is just the beginning. ...***



Dominican Novices at the St. Martin de Porres Novitiate in Kisumu, Kenya. At this time, almost 100 refugees are living in the novitiate compound.

Kisumu, Kenya's third largest city, is still quivering with anger. Few places have been so thoroughly gutted by the turbulence as here....

Around 2,000 people from Mr. Kibaki's tribe, the Kikuyu, are camped out at the police station, trying to escape a wave of revenge killings."

Brother Daniel Thomas, O.P. with students at Lower Kabete Campus, Nairobi University in more peaceful days.



As you will remember from our newsletter of October 2006, Father Thomas Heath, O.P. died as a result of injuries sustained during a robbery at our St. Martin de Porres House. The houses of both the Friars and the Hawthorne Dominican Sisters are located above the town of Kisumu and after Father Tom's death, a stone wall was built around the compound topped now by an electric fence. ***There are now almost one hundred people being sheltered in the compound who have fled there to save their lives.***

Some people have come by asking about the tribal identity of the guests in the compound and so the Friars are “on the alert.”

Dominican Sisters of the Congregation of the Holy Rosary from the Philippines, who have convents in San Francisco, California, also minister in Kenya among the Masai people on the border between Kenya and Tanzania. I remember spending time with them along with Father Kieran Healy, O.P. in 1994. At this point, there is no violence in their region.

We ask your prayers for our Dominican Friars and Sisters in Kenya and for the people whom they serve there. As we begin this New Year, we also look back with gratitude to your support, which has enabled us to carry on the preaching of the Gospel among the people of Kenya.

In Christ’s Peace,

Fr. Martin de Porres Walsh, O.P.

If you would like to remember our missionary work in your will, our legal title is:

**Province of the Holy Name, Inc.
Dominican Mission Foundation
2506 Pine St, PO Box 15367
San Francisco, CA 94115-0367**

We are a 501(c)3, non-profit organization.

St. Martin de Porres Triduum *Pray for Peace in Kenya*



First Day: *St. Martin, you always had sympathy for the poor and those who were suffering. I need your help and now ask for it with great confidence in your goodness and power. Please remember me, as you adore God. Amen.*

(Mention your petitions, followed by the Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)

Closing Prayer: *Dear St. Martin, I turn to you in my sorrow and anxiety to seek your friendly protection. Please intercede for me with our merciful Father in heaven so that I may be truly sorry for all my sins and be freed from the evils that shackle me. Ask that I might have something of your spirit of love and self-sacrifice, and so be at all times reconciled to God’s holy will. Oh heavenly Father, in the name of your Son and of His blessed Mother, and by the merits of your faithful servant Martin, help me in my trouble and do not forsake me. Amen.*

Second Day: *St. Martin, we praise God for the manifestation of His love. The favors you received from God encourage us now to seek your intercession and help. We ask you most humbly to befriend and assist us from your place in heaven; but most of all, we beg you to commend us to our beloved Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

(Petitions, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)

Third Day: *Brother Martin, when you were here on earth, you spent your life loving God and your neighbor. This we know from the testimony of your own Dominican brethren. Now that you live in the presence of God in paradise, intercede for those who stand so much in need of the healing help of God and beg the Divine Physician to give us health of the soul and body. Amen.*

(Petitions, Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be and Closing Prayer.)