

Homecoming Mass of Fr. James Mwaura

Sunday, 7th August. A chilly, overcast morning at St Peter's Church, Kinoo, a bustling suburb of Nairobi, just off the main Nakuru Highway, made warmer by the animated, expectant crowd gathering to witness the first solemn Mass of Father James Mwaura in his home parish. Made warm too by the friendly welcome of the parishioners, excited at this the first Mass of their first local boy to be ordained.

08/17/2016

Fr James, born thirty years ago, and who came to Kinoo at the age of one, was ordained a priest of the Opus Dei Prelature, on May 9th, 2015, in Rome, where he has been living ever since. An old boy of Lenana School, where he studied from 2000 to 2003, and then the University of Nairobi, where he graduated in Computer Science in 2009, James is the second born of three, and the only son.

The solemn entrance procession was made a little less solemn by the dancers, and to assist in the co-celebration were three other priests of the Prelature: Fr John Kuria, the master of ceremonies, Fr Paul Mimbi, and Fr Gabriel Mureithi.

The 600 capacity church, spacious and built in the shape of a cross, was

packed, with people standing outside and at the back. Immediately, with the Kyrie and the Gloria, the congregation came to life. During the homily, however, pin-drop silence as Fr Paul Mimbi, told two stories concerning St Josemaria. One, to emphasise the importance of prayer, was of the missionary and the Masai. The missionary asked the Masai if he prayed to God. The Masai in turn asked the priest how many cows and wives he had, and when the missionary, of course, replied that he had none of either, the Masai made his check-mate move, that he wasn't the one who needed to pray, rather it was the priest who did.

Then, on a more serious note, stressing the importance of the Mass, the very same Sacrifice of Calvary, in the life of a Christian, Fr Mimbi told a story straight from St Josemaria, that of a priest who died after celebrating his first Mass. When his bishop asked

how many Masses he had celebrated, and, being told that this was his first and only one, the bishop replied that the priest would have to give strict account to God of how he had celebrated that one Mass.

At the end of the Mass, the father of Fr. James, having been introduced by the lay chairman of the parish, in turn presented James's mother and sisters, and then his god-father.

Fr Gabriel then explained what Opus Dei is and the main activities of some of the members in Kenya. As we left the church, the sun made a brave effort to show itself. But in the excitement we hardly noticed, and among the most excited was the small Christian community of St Josemaria.

Fr. James will return to Rome shortly, as Assistant Professor in Sacred Scripture in the Pontifical University

of the Holy Cross, and to complete his doctorate in biblical theology.

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