

In the hands of God

First African priest of Opus Dei is called to heaven after suffering a short illness. A Requiem Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Ndingi Mwana a' Nzeki on Saturday 9 September at 10 a.m. at the Holy Family Basilica.

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Hundreds of faithful gathered at the Holy Family Basilica to pray for the repose of the soul of Fr Luijino Miungi who passed away after a brave fight against cancer. The main

celebrant was Archbishop Ndingi Mwana'a Nzeki. He was accompanied by Msgr Albert Pampillon (Vicar of Opus Dei in East Africa), Fr Paul Mimbi (Chaplain of Strathmore University) and other priests of the Opus Dei Prelature and diocesan priests. Also present were the parents of Fr Luijino along with other family members who made their way from Meru to attend the Mass.

In his homily, Msgr Pampillon told the congregation that God had chosen "the best for himself" because Fr Luijino was a very dedicated priest and everyone had counted on him for the expansion of Opus Dei in Kenya. Msgr Pampillon cited a letter written by Bishop Javier Echevarria, Prelate of Opus Dei, after his recent trip to Kenya. In the letter, Bishop Javier reminded the faithful of the Prelature in Kenya that sorrows "are also joys because they help us to

touch what is truly important: the Will of God that always wants what is best for us."

Most people affectionately called him "Fr Lui"; when he was the chaplain at Kianda, the little girls would call him "grandfather" because he was so approachable. A tribute was paid to Fr Lui by Fr Thomas Ayugi who had accompanied him to Spain for the treatment and was able to give him the final absolution. Fr Thomas remarked that till the very last moment Fr Lui had remained cheerful, despite the pains he was suffering. Mr Gabriel Miungi, made a tribute to his brother in which he told a story of how, as a young boy, Lui had been miraculously cured of a sickness; "it is from that moment that we believed he was consecrated to God", said his brother. He thanked the faithful of Opus Dei for having taken such good care of Fr Lui both here in Kenya and in Spain where his

brother was finally laid to rest. Finally, a former classmate and long time friend, Pascal Manyuru, paid tribute to Fr Lui. Through various anecdotes he highlighted Fr Lui's fortitude that was lived on a day to day basis.

Fr Lui died on Tuesday, 29th August 2006 at the University of Navarre hospital in Spain. His death robbed the Catholic Church in Kenya, and particularly the prelature of Opus Dei in East Africa, of an illustrious and holy priest at the prime of his age.

Fr Lui appreciated the depth of this loss so much that when news was broken to him that he had only a few days left in his earthly life, he told Fr Albert Pampillon, the Vicar of Opus Dei in Kenya, 'pole' (Kiswahili for "I'm sorry") at the impending loss. He was only too aware of the load of work he was leaving behind.

Fr Paul Mimbi, the chaplain of Strathmore University, knew Fr Lui for more than a quarter of a century and described him as a person who lived in the hands of God.

The chaplain related how Fr Lui's mother was afraid of meeting him after the devastating news that he was terminally ill. So when she got to hospital, accompanied by her daughter, she asked the daughter to go ahead. When Fr Lui saw his sister, he spoke with such joy and looked so lively and well that his mother couldn't believe he was so ill.

Fr Lui incarnated those words of St Paul in Galatians 2:20, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." Bishop Anthony Muheria of the Diocese of Embu, a long-time friend of Fr Lui once described him as an affable man. He was also hardworking and brilliant.

Ordained when he was 40 years old, Fr Lui was the fourth Kenyan priest of Opus Dei and the first to pass away. He hailed from Nkabune in Meru Central District, and was born on 25th March 1958.

He is survived by his parents, Mr Renato and Mrs Teresa Miungi, seven siblings and numerous people whose lives he helped to put together.

He attended Kathurine Primary School before proceeding to Chuka High School for his O levels, then Strathmore College for his A levels and eventually the University of Nairobi, where he studied Civil Engineering and graduated with honours in 1981. He joined Opus Dei in 1978.

After graduation, he worked as a civil engineer at the Ministry of Public Works. One of the projects he worked on include the Moi International Sports Centre at Kasarani.

While working in the civil service, he also dedicated his time and energy to the spiritual and character formation of boys and young adults as director of *Hodari Club*, *Busara Study Centre* and *Satima Study Centre* - all facilities of Opus Dei dedicated to the Christian and human formation of young men.

While working and helping young people, he also studied philosophy and theology. In 1995, he proceeded to Rome to complete his doctorate in Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

Bishop Javier Echevarria, Prelate of Opus Dei, ordained him priest in Rome in 1998. On completion of his studies in 1999, he returned to Kenya where he served as the chaplain of *Kianda School* and *Riverside Study Centre*. He also served in the office of the Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Kenya.

He was involved in the *Training African Priests Fund* (TAPF), an initiative of *Nairobi Theological Forum* (NTF), a body started by priests of Opus Dei. TAPF aims at supporting persons coming from East Africa to be trained for the priesthood in the international seminaries of Cavabianca in Rome and Aralar in Spain.

While a student at Catholic University of East Africa last year, Deacon James Gatua of the Diocese of Eldoret said the one remarkable thing about Fr Lui was the conviction he conveyed especially when preaching. “You could tell he was convinced of his position,” he said.

Those who listened to Fr Lui preaching would agree with James. Once, he was giving a lecture on the history of the Church and he got so excited he had to be stopped. He preached with energy, verve and

conviction, but soberly and with a sense of humour.

His remains were interred in Spain on Saturday 2nd September, but his spirit lives with us. May he rest in peace.

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