

Dear Confreres, relatives and Benefactors

Every New Year opens up before us new windows of opportunities. When God gives us the opportunity to step into a New Year, He has his plans cut out for us. The addition of another year to our lifespan invites us to double our efforts with hard work, dedication and new initiatives. So we as the Inkamana Community wish you all a happy, fruitful and blessed New Year 2018!

2018 started with some joyful and memorable moments at Inkamana Abbey. On the 4 January 2018 the South African Education Department announced the Grade 12 (Matric) final results for 2017 and Inkamana students passed with excellent results – and furthermore Inkamana High School was chosen as the second best performing school in the whole of South Africa. We would like to congratulate all the students, teachers, benefactors and Inkamana monks for their efforts to make this wonderful achievement and indeed to place Inkamana High School in second Position in whole South Africa.

Another memorable and Joyful occasion was on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February, 2018, when the monks of Inkamana Abbey elected, Fr. John Paul Mwaniki OSB, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Abbot of Inkamana Abbey. He is the first African Abbot. He was confirmed in office and installed on the same day by the Abbot President of the Congregation of the Missionary Benedictines of St. Ottilien, Rt. Rev. Abbot President Jeremias Schröder OSB. The announcement took place in the Abbey Church where students, workers, sisters and neighbours gathered after hearing the bell to see and meet their new Abbot. Our Inkamana Students sang a few songs with dancing and clapping. His abbatial blessing will take place on 21<sup>st</sup> April 2018 in the Abbey Church of Inkamana, by the local ordinary, Rt. Rev. Bishop Thaddeus Kumalo of the Diocese of Eshowe. We are very happy to say thank you to our friends and benefactors for your prayers for a successful election. Our special thanks to Rt. Rev. Abbot President Jeremias Schröder OSB for his valuable time here with us and for chairing the election.

Here is the short history of about our new Abbot! Fr. John Paul Mwaniki OSB was born on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1967, in Kitale, located 395km Northwest of Nairobi. It is one of the most diverse towns in Kenya. John Paul Mwaniki attended his primary and secondary education in Nairobi, Kenya. From 1986 to 1987 he attended Tindinyo College (Kenya), by then a Junior Seminary offering “A” level High School education and graduated with Kenyan Advanced Certificate of Education. From 1988 he studied at University of Nairobi and in 1991 was awarded a Bachelor of Arts (Sociology and Religious Studies) with a Second Class Honours, Upper Division. From 1994 he studied at the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (CUEA) for his Post-Graduate Diploma in Education of which he attained in 1995 with First Class Honours. In 1995 he worked as a qualified teacher at Queen of Apostles Junior Seminary, in Nairobi, Kenya.

From 1998 to 2001 John Paul Mwaniki,OSB studied theology in South Africa at St. Joseph’s Theological Institute after which he was awarded a Diploma in Theological Studies (St. Joseph’s Theological Institute) and Bachelor of Sacred Theology. In 1998 he also studied Computer Literacy after which he was awarded a Diploma. On the

1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2000, John Paul Mwaniki, OSB made his Solemn Profession, in Tigoni (Kenya). On the 6<sup>th</sup> of December, 2000, he was ordained deacon in the Abbey Church of Inkamana (Vryheid, South Africa). In August 2001 he attended a short course for Clinical Pastoral Education in South Africa. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of December, 2001, John Paul Mwaniki, OSB was ordained priest in Tigoni (Kenya). From 2002 to 2005, he served as Novice Master of the Benedictine Monastery in Tigoni (Kenya). In 2003 he attended a short Course for Monastic Formators in Rome (Italy). From February 2005 to January 2008 he served as Parish Priest of St. Benedict's Parish (Ruaraka-Nairobi, Kenya). At the same time also served as Superior of Ruaraka Benedictine community. In 2008 he served as Parish Priest of Illeret Catholic Parish (Marsabit Diocese) and Superior of Illeret Benedictine Community. In 2009 (February-October) he served as an Assistant Parish Priest of North Horr Catholic Mission (Marsabit Diocese, Kenya).

In 2010, Fr. John Paul Mwaniki, OSB, served as Rector/Superior of Benedictine Study House in Cedara (South Africa) and from 2011 to 2015 as Cellarer (Bursar/Finance Administrator) of Inkamana Abbey. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of May 2011 transferred his stability from Tigoni Priory (Kenya) to Inkamana Abbey. From 2012 to 2014 he also studied Financial Management at Boston College in South Africa. From 2012 to 2015, under Abbot Godfrey Sieber OSB, he served as Prior of Inkamana Abbey. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of February, 2015, he was elected as Prior Administrator of Inkamana Abbey. It is our prayer and hope that the divine assistance may always remain with him in his new assignment as Abbot of our Abbey.

Abbot John Paul appointed new office bearers of our Inkamana Abbey, namely the Prior, Sub Prior, the Cellarer, Novice Master, Postulant Master and School Chaplain. Fr. Ambrose (Joseph Mboneni) Mshengu is the new Prior. He was born in 21 July 1969 in Pietermaritzburg, KZN South Africa. He made his first profession in 1996 and was ordained in 2004. We the Inkamana Community wish him all the best in his new assignment. Abbot John Paul also re-appointed Br Kevin (Ronald Julius) Thumbalabwazi as the Subprior. Br Kevin was born in 22 July 1978 in Mtendere, Malawi. He made his first profession on 3 January 2004. We wish him also the best wishes in his new assignment. Abbot John Paul also re-appointed Fr. Boniface (Benediktus Mwahindange ) Kamushishi as the Cellarer. We wish him also all the best in his new assignment.

Other new assignments: Abbot John Paul appointed Fr. Boniface (Benediktus Mwahindange) Kamushishi as our New Novice Master, Bro. Maurus (Raphael Bhekuyise) Khumalo as our New Postulant master and Fr. Dominic Onasseril as our New School Chaplin we wish them all the best in their new assignments. After the election of our New Abbot, the community elected new seniorate members. These new seniors are: Fr Victor Chavunga, Fr Dominic Onasseril and Bro Leonard Dlamini. We wish them also best wishes in their new assignments.

**Community engagements and work:** on Tuesday 02 January, our Father Cellarer Fr. Boniface Kamushishi took few days short break and went to St. Lucia Retreat centre for personal prayer and returned back on 07 January from his short break. On Wednesday 03 January Fr. Ambrose returned to the Abbey after his short break. On Wednesday 03 January Abbot John Paul flew to Kenya, to visit his family and came back on 08 January. On Thursday 04 January Bro Isidore took his short break and went home and returned on 10 January. On Sunday 14 January our Inkamana High school students returned from their annual summer holidays to start the new academic year. On Monday 15 January students and teachers started their new academic year with Holy Mass in the Abbey

Church, presided by Abbot John Paul OSB. On Monday 15 January Br Damian came back from his home leave and started his work in the hostel the same day he arrived. Br Damian is the assistant Boarding master in our Boys hostel. On Saturday 27 January Abbot John Paul attended the funeral of the two Brothers of charity, Br. Kaunda and Br. Antonine in Polokwane who were both tragically killed in a car accident on their way from the O.R Tambo International Airport. May their souls rest in peace. On Monday 05 February Fr. Maximilian Kolbe Richards OSB and Bro. Gabriel Thompson arrived here at Inkamana Abbey from Waldfrieden, Namibia for the abbatial election. On Tuesday 06 February Abbot President Jeremias arrived at our Abbey to facilitate the abbatial election and returned to Germany on 10 February. While the Abbot President was here he had a busy schedule – the day after on 07 February, he met the seniorate members and had seniorate meeting. On Thursday 08 February he celebrated Holy Mass for both monks and students and then after that he went to meet all the teachers and the Principal of our school. He congratulated the teachers and students in achieving the second position in whole South Africa. On Friday 09 February the preliminary section of the Abbatial election started and following day Saturday 10 February was abbatial election. On Wednesday 07 February Abbot Emeritus Godfrey arrived from Namibia for the abbatial election and he went back to Namibia on Wednesday 14 February. On Thursday 08 February Fr. Peter Blue arrived from Maria Ratschitz, for the abbatial election and he went back to Maria Ratschitz on 11 February. On Friday 16 February Abbot John Paul visited our Bishop Thaddeus Kumalo to finalise the date of his abbatial blessing.

On Saturday 17 February Fr. Dominic Onasseryil travelled to Glenmore pastoral centre to attend a short course on religious education teachers. On Monday 19 February Abbot John Paul, Sub Prior Kevin and Bro. Edward travelled to Benoni to attend the BECOSA AGM meeting and returned on Friday 23 February. On Friday 23 February Abbot Primate Gregory J. Polan OSB visited Inkamana Abbey after the BECOSA meeting in Benoni. On his way to Inkamana he stopped at Maria Ratschitz Mission to visit our senior monk Father Peter Blue OSB who also hails from the United States. They had a lot to share about the American Benedictine Monasteries which both know or have visited in the past. The Franciscan Nardini sisters at Maria Ratschitz mission continue to take great care of Father Peter Blue and we are most grateful to them. While at Inkamana, Abbot Primate Gregory Polan visited the Benedictine sisters of Twasana where he spent a day with them. Before leaving for Rome on Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> February, he celebrated Holy mass on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent for the Inkamana Abbey community which includes Twasana sisters who work at Inkamana, students, pilgrims and few Christians from around Vryheid. On his way to the airport he also visited the Benedictine sisters of St. Alban at Elukwatini. We are truly grateful for the visit of the Abbot Primate. It was very enriching. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February Brother Leonard travelled to Lesotho to meet the new candidates and also take part in a family unveiling ceremony. On Saturday 24 February Fr. Dominic Onasseril travelled to Pietermaritzburg to celebrate Syro-Malabar Mass for the Indian community from Kerala (South India).

Lent is the time of revival and renewal of our Christian life in accordance with Jesus teachings. It is a time to change ourselves through prayer, repentance and fasting. It is a time to receive the grace of god. Once father of India, Mahatma Gandhi said, a genuine fasting cleanses body, mind and soul. It crucifies the flesh and to that extent sets the soul free. Pope Francis writes in his Lenten message, ***“above all, I urge the members of the Church to take up the Lenten journey with enthusiasm, sustained by almsgiving, fasting and prayer. If, at times, the***

*flame of charity seems to die in our own hearts, know that this is never the case in the heart of God! He constantly gives us a chance to begin loving anew.”*

We Inkamana Abbey monks wish all our confreres, relatives and benefactors a fruitful Lent. May we come as renewed disciples to the Joy of Easter! The Month of February and March are a very special month, since we are in the season of Lent. These months call us for a spiritual growth, conversion, and a life of simplicity. It is a season of spiritual spring: a time for taking a spiritual inventory and then cleaning out those things which hinder our personal relationships with Jesus Christ and with one another. Thus it is fitting that the season of Lent begins with a symbol of repentance: placing ashes on ones forehead. However, we must remember that our Lenten disciplines are supposed to transform our entire person: body, soul and spirit and help us become more like Christ and more human too.

With kind regards and wishes from Inkamana Abbey, Fr. Dominic Michael Onasseril OSB