

MARYKNOLL HISTORY IN AFRICA PART FIVE

EXPANSION OF PARISH WORK IN NAIROBI

Introduction

In Section Four we saw that the creation of the Kenya Region led to an immediate increase in the number of Maryknollers coming to Kenya seeking diverse ministerial possibilities. Some had been working in Tanzania for many years and were looking for pastoral or other church work in an urban area that was less physically demanding, others were new personnel that the Kenya Region was requesting from Maryknoll, NY, and still others were Maryknoll priests and Brothers seeking different dioceses after Maryknoll's withdrawal from the Dioceses of Kisii and Eldoret. These years, 1979 to the early 1980s, corresponded with the dramatic increase in Kenya's urban population, especially in Nairobi and Mombasa, accompanied by the need in each diocese to open new urban parishes. This section and Section Six focus on the work that Maryknoll did in about a dozen parishes, primarily in Nairobi and Mombasa, but also in one parish each in the nearby dioceses of Machakos and Garissa. Section Six, on Maryknoll's work in Mombasa Archdiocese, also discusses non-parochial apostolates at the Coast of Kenya.

The Eastland's section of Nairobi, in which Jericho Parish was located, experienced exponential growth each decade up through the new millennium and much of it was taking place in estates being served by the Maryknollers living in Jericho. Eric Wheeler, the photographer of Maryknoll Magazine, used to visit East Africa every three years or so and he joked that on each visit to the Maryknoll parish or parishes in eastern Nairobi Fr. Bob Vujs would take him to a vast empty field, exclaiming that in the next three years or so there would be fifty thousand people living in that area. As it turned out, Vujs was right.

From 1979 to 1985 about fifteen to twenty Maryknollers were assigned to Kenya, many with a desire to work in urban ministry. Given Maryknoll's excellent reputation in Nairobi, the Society was requested and was able to open or take over four new parishes plus the Kenyatta University chaplaincy/parish, just in Nairobi Archdiocese alone, between 1980 and 1990. By 1991, Maryknoll was responsible for five of the approximately sixteen parishes in Eastlands Deanery, the largest, most populated deanery in the city, and had, of course, started a sixth parish, Jericho. In addition, several Maryknollers were living in a seventh parish, Makadara. The ecclesial impact of Maryknoll on the eastern two-thirds of Nairobi has been enormous, in both tangible and intangible matters. Maryknoll was also staffing another parish in the neighboring Diocese of Machakos, in Athi River, which bordered on Nairobi and on Eastlands Deanery. The twelve to fifteen Maryknollers working in parochial assignments complemented the similar number of Maryknollers doing specialized ministries, making Maryknoll's presence in Nairobi noticeably larger than that of any other missionary society.

At the same time, it should be noted that the year 1991 probably marked Maryknoll's zenith in Nairobi. After that year, as we will read, the number of Maryknoll personnel inexorably declined and by the year 2000 Maryknoll had only two parishes in

Nairobi – Doonholm and Kenyatta University – each with only one Maryknoller stationed in the parish; in fact, these were the only two Maryknoll-staffed parishes in all of Kenya in the year 2000. Sections Five and Six of this history, therefore, present clearly a major difference between Maryknoll and the other missionary societies that worked in Nairobi. Whereas Maryknoll took on many parishes and specialized ministries, it did so for a relatively short period of time. The other societies usually took only one or at most two parishes, but have remained in these same parishes for many years. They do not intend to turn these parishes over to the diocese nor does the diocese wish to take these parishes. With this introduction, then, let us examine the history of Maryknoll in each parish.

Buru Buru Phase Three, Blessed Sacrament Parish

The five phases of Buru Buru were built in the 1970s, with an average of 1000 houses in each phase. To respond to the Catholic community's needs in these estates, Fr. Bob Vujs, pastor of Jericho Parish, which included the five phases of Buru Buru, built multi-purpose centres, first in Buru Buru Phase One in 1975, and another in Buru Buru III in 1977. Two Masses were celebrated every Sunday in Phase One beginning in 1975, and in 1980 one Sunday Mass was begun in Phase Three.

The decision to make the two centres in Buru Buru separate parishes, with their own churches – or to at least add adequate chapels with altars and tabernacles within the multi-purpose centres – evolved slowly. In 1979, Kenya was started as a new region. Fr. Tom Burke, who had been stationed at Jericho since 1975, was elected Assistant Regional Superior, and he and the new Regional Superior of Kenya, Fr. Bill Madden, decided that to get new Maryknoll personnel they would have to start an Overseas Training Program (OTP). Burke says, “I visited the Director of OTP and the Brothers’ Formation Director in New York, and we were able to get three Brother candidates and one seminarian to come to Kenya in 1979. They first went to language school, and when they came to Kenya in May of 1979 we all began living in two houses in Buru Buru III that Maryknoll rented.” Brother Jim Fahy came in 1980 and assisted Burke as moderator of the OTP Program for six months.

From 1980 to 1982, Fr. Paul Oshayo, a Chagga priest from Tanzania, was living at Jericho Parish and covered Buru Buru III full-time, although Burke helped out sometimes with Mass and other programs. Burke was also still teaching in local secondary schools and overseeing the OTP program. In 1982, when Oshayo left Jericho and went to Ngong Diocese, Fr. Mike Callanan, who was then the pastor in Jericho, asked Burke to take on responsibility for Sunday Mass at Buru Buru III, plus some other parochial responsibilities there. In 1982 the OTP program was coming to an end and four of the five phases of Buru Buru had been built and occupied (Phase Five was completed about 1985). Burke went on home leave and on his return in late 1982 he was asked to accept full-time ministry in Buru Buru III, which included phases three and four, and later phase five. He added a second Sunday Mass and ran this centre as though it were a parish, since “there were a lot of people there and much work to be done.”

Two families of Lay Missioners had come to Buru Buru in 1982, Mike and Mary Mantey and Larry and Mimi Doperak, the latter couple with their four children. Mary

Mantey had great difficulty with the birth of her first child in Nairobi, and the Mantey family made the decision to return to the U.S. The Doperaks tried to continue living at Buru Buru, but as their children's school and their own work assignments were on the other side of central Nairobi, they moved to a different part of Nairobi. So Burke moved into one of the rented houses, and the other remained for various Maryknollers who were working in Nairobi and needed short-term housing.

It would not be until November, 1985, that Buru Buru III became a parish, but beginning in late 1982 Burke began operating as its pastor, and he would remain the pastor until the mid-1990s. One of his immediate goals was to organize a file system listing all the members of the parish, which was one of his skills. (Burke also organized the file system at Jericho Parish.) Other goals were to start Small Christian Communities (SCCs), form a parish council, and facilitate the formation of a good parish choir.

For the first two years, though, "our main thrust was just in the center, trying to give ourselves an identity. All the people were new in the area and didn't know much about the Catholic Church in the vicinity. We were only an outstation, so we couldn't really call ourselves a parish. It wasn't till 1984 that we began to consider the establishment of SCCs."

In the early 1980s, SCCs were a new way of being church that was unknown to Catholics. Burke found it frustrating and almost impossible to persuade Buru Buru's Catholics to accept the need for SCCs.

The response was completely negative. I was wondering what was wrong, but I finally found the reason. Buru Buru was a relatively affluent area (by African standards), with middle income people. They were very, very busy and not interested in knowing one another.

Finally, one of the women asked me if they could meet together once a week, just a few women, to say the rosary. I answered that I would be delighted, and I would even join them. So the rosary group started and grew very quickly. Overnight they had twenty families and then it spread to four or five of the other neighborhoods (each phase of Buru Buru had at least twenty neighborhoods). But the rosary groups were not interested in bible sharing nor outreach to needs in the community.

The establishment of SCCs in Buru Buru resulted from a fortuitous visit from Burke's seminary classmate, Fr. Jack Grady, who was the formation director of the Philippines Lay Missioner Program. Burke asked Grady if Filipino LMs could work in Buru Buru. Grady was skeptical, as the lay missioners worked only with the poor and Buru Buru was obviously a middle-class area. But Burke stressed the spiritual needs of the parish, and eventually both Grady and Fr. Jerry Nagle, the Filipino LMs' Director, agreed to send two lay missioners. They began coming in 1986, and by the early 1990s eight Filipino Lay Missioners had worked in Buru Buru. Burke discussed their impact:

The lay missioners immediately started trying to interest people in the small Christian community concept, working with the existing prayer groups. But there was resistance and a certain number of people continued to come together for rosary only. Other communities, though, began having a second meeting

during the week, for bible sharing, reflection and looking at local needs that they could help with.

In 1992 Burke said that there were ten SCCs in Phase Three and seventeen in Phase One (which had become a part of Buru Buru Parish in 1986), plus three youth SCCs. He expressed satisfaction with the good quality of the SCCs that existed, even if in terms of quantity the majority of Catholics were not interested in them.

One contribution by SCCs in Buru Buru was in improving security. Daytime break-ins to houses and theft of valuable items were becoming frequent, as both parents were working and all the children were in school. SCC members canvassed the neighborhood, persuading all residents to install gates at street entrances (most neighborhoods were cul-de-sacs) and to hire day and night guards. This dramatically reduced crime in Buru Buru, and this model spread all over the city. People were empowered by coming together to discern where common action was needed, and their success illustrated powerfully the value that SCCs can have in their lives and communities.

In 1985 the Maryknoll Nairobi Unit raised the issue of phasing out of Jericho Parish, since it was self-reliant, with a very high quality of participation and lay responsibility for the parish. Maryknoll had recently taken on a commitment to develop the parish in the new Umoja Estate (to the north of Buru Buru), and also wished to elevate Buru Buru to parish status. The Maryknoll Regional Superior, Joe Glynn, discussed the transition of Jericho and elevation of Buru Buru to parish status with Cardinal Otunga, and it was agreed.

Being a parish was what spurred the parishioners to take on responsibility for their own parish, as Burke explained.

At that time Buru Buru was still quite far from being self-sufficient and didn't have the good qualities you would expect to find in a parish. But after the Cardinal came and made it a parish in November, 1985, the parish council met in January, 1986, a meeting which marked a turning-point in the parish. For the agenda they prioritized building a church and a rectory, and collecting the money themselves. They established a parish harambee committee (*harambee* is a Swahili word meaning to pull together). They raised about one million Kenyan shillings (equal in 1986 to about \$60,000), and began the construction when they had only \$2,000. They did a number of things to raise money, such as fund-raising days, a special luncheon, and putting a chain of silver all the way around the existing building. Maryknoll added another \$20,000 and I donated something, and we were able to build both the church and rectory.

There had been very few involved in the parish, but that has changed dramatically in the last few years. Not only are they supporting the church generously, but there are many more people involved in different programs in the parish. That is one of the signs that our parish is becoming mature. Urban people always used to think of their parish as being in the rural area where they grew up. Now they're saying 'Buru Buru in my parish.'

Burke made those comments in 1989 by which time the parish had become very strong. In the 1990s it was customary for the parish council to meet every year to draw up a parish plan, focusing on three areas: small Christian communities, family life within the parish, and youth. In 1992 Burke said, “The Lay Missioners are leaving our parish, so we will see if the SCCs continue without them.” He need not have worried; SCCs have become one of the basic pillars of urban parishes all over Kenya.

Regarding the other two parish concerns, Burke mentioned some of the social dynamics of the urban area that were and still are challenging.

Family life is a big concern of mine, but the Marriage Encounter group has ceased to be active (in 1992). This needs to be revived. As for youth, we have a lot of good programs for youth, but one segment we haven’t touched is the maids. These are uneducated girls, who come mainly from rural areas to be housemaids in urban homes where the wife is working. Often they work very long hours, are paid a very low salary, and in some cases are mistreated. But this is a very delicate topic to pursue, since many women in the parish might be embarrassed at what we might find out. So, it is very difficult to even contact the maids. At one time I wanted to start a special school for maids and after they were trained have them sign a contract with their employers. But that never got off the ground. It will take a complete change in attitude towards maids by the middle class.

The Filipino women Lay Missioners also tried working with a few maids, teaching them how to bake cakes, etc. However, they too found it very difficult to have much contact with maids, to say nothing of changing the fundamental mindset that ignores the human rights issues of long hours and dismal pay. Even in the year 2011 the exploitation of young, mainly rural women – many of them teenagers – as urban housemaids remains a huge but ignored ethical quandary, seldom if ever addressed by church people.

Burke was also concerned about “the young singles, those who have finished college/university but are not yet married. We need to provide a social outlet for them, and hopefully encourage them to be more active in the parish. I had given some reflection to whether some of them could join the Filipino Lay Missioners, maybe even living with them, and doing full-time ministry guided by the Lay Missioners. Kenya could use a Lay Missioner Program of its own, but it is hard to get started.”

Later, a Kenya Lay Missioner Program was started, and attracted some young Kenyan Catholics to join. Funding was the biggest impediment, and it never functioned very well. The Kenyan Church is very clerical, and it is doubtful that Kenyan priests would feel comfortable sharing a measure of authority with Kenyan Lay Missioners.

Buru Buru had an excellent youth group, however, which included all ages ranging from upper primary school, through high school, to those who had recently finished high school. They engaged in a variety of positive activities, according to Burke:

They put on plays, cultural dances at hotels, and other events, to which they charge admission. The amount collected, which at the end of the year is quite a lot, is used to help poorer groups in the city, such as Mother Teresa’s Home for

the Aged, or to enable the group to travel somewhere together for a retreat or a day of prayer, or to assist the College of Fine Arts that the parish built. We are very happy with the way the youth program has worked out. Joe Tondo, one of the Filipino Lay Missioners, has been the moderator of the youth group.

One year the group had collected so much money it was able to subsidize a one-week trip to Mombasa for all the members of the group during the December vacation.

In September, 1991, Burke oversaw construction of a unique type of college for the Eastlands section of Nairobi on the church plot of Buru Buru III, the Institute of Fine Arts, which would grant a two-year diploma in a variety of fine and practical arts, such as ceramics, graphics, textile design, sculpturing, glass-blowing and others. Burke stepped down as pastor that year, to work full-time on the Institute. Fr. Jim Collignon, who had previously worked in Taiwan, and had been with Burke in Buru Buru for over a year, became pastor.

By 1990, Burke had been living and working in Buru Buru for over ten years, and strongly felt that a college granting diplomas in readily marketable skills would make a great contribution to the parish and the general community. It turned out that the people of the parish did not need much convincing, exemplified by the astounding amounts they collected. Burke said, "The buildings cost close to \$200,000, and two-thirds of the money came from the people themselves. Maryknoll made a sizeable contribution, and I added a personal gift. This is an indication of the involvement of many people within the parish and of their sense of unity. They are willing to give not only their money but also their time for their youth. The youth also gave a sizeable donation."

Burke had to spend much of 1991 and 1992 in not only overseeing construction, but also to get the Institute registered, recruit qualified staff, and begin operations. The Institute opened in 1992, with about 100 students. Burke continued as Manager of the Institute till the late 1990s, by which time one of the teachers was capable of becoming Manager. The staff was always very competent and cooperative, and Burke encountered no extra stress in managing the Institute. It has graduated many students since its inception, with most of them able to find good jobs within a year or two after graduation. The Institute is highly sought after by Nairobi's high school students with an artistic bent, and is able to select high quality students.

Because of his age, Collignon never learned Swahili well. Due to this and some family issues in the U.S. he returned to America after just two years. Burke had to become pastor again, but requested the Archdiocese to assign a diocesan priest to Buru Buru as assistant pastor, a request that was granted. After this priest became pastor in 1994, Burke continued to live in the rectory and help at the parish with Sunday Mass. Sadly, in December, 1998, it was discovered that Burke had a rapidly growing form of cancer, and he had to return immediately to the United States. He died at Maryknoll, NY, in May, 1999.

Archbishop Rafael Ndingi made a formal request to Maryknoll in Nairobi to assign another Maryknoll priest to be Director of the Institute of Fine Arts. He believed it needed continued managerial and financial assistance from the U.S. Maryknoll made a sincere attempt to find someone willing to accept this assignment, but no one was available. By 1999, Maryknoll's personnel numbers had declined greatly, and the few

Maryknollers living in Kenya already had ministries they were committed to. In 1998 the Kenya Region had ceased to exist, and there was only one Africa Region, with the Superior living in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Thus, in February, 1999, the representatives of the two Maryknoll Units in Nairobi made an official visit to Archbishop Ndingi to inform him that there was no Maryknoller available to manage the Institute. This was a prime example of what is called a personal commitment as opposed to a regional commitment, and illustrated that Maryknollers had to be extremely cautious of starting a large personal commitment unless it could be ably assumed by the local church.

In July, 2010, Fr. Dominic Kianduma, one of three diocesan priests staffing Buru Buru, commented on the subsequent history of the Institute of Fine Arts.

After Fr. Burke left, the institute encountered some management difficulties. Sometime in the early 2000s a new management board that included some highly qualified professionals was chosen and this board chose a good Director. BIFA, as is it commonly known, is now managed very well and is doing well. Several students have won awards for their designs.

The parish at Buru Buru Three, called Blessed Sacrament Parish, had no problems continuing on in self-reliant fashion. The parish has one of the highest yearly incomes not only in Nairobi but in all of East Africa, has been staffed by excellent, committed diocesan priests, and has retained superb involvement by hundreds of parishioners. It was the first parish in the middle- or upper-class estates of Nairobi to have a native African pastor, something now considered normal. (Cardinal Otunga wanted expatriate orders to staff these parishes indefinitely, mainly because he feared the high incomes would be too tempting to Kenyan priests from poor backgrounds. Archbishop Ndingi reversed this policy.) Five Masses are celebrated every Sunday, three in the church, of which at least one Mass is in English, one in the hall for the parish youth, and one at Buru Buru Girls Secondary School, when school is in session. The latter is a government school but has always had a close relationship with the parish.

In the twelve years since Maryknoll left Buru Buru there has been a great deal of physical development. A Sisters' Congregation, which has a convent on the property, has started a Catholic Boarding School for Girls at one end of the parish compound. In the center of the compound, abutting the church, is a huge primary school, named Fr. Thomas Burke Primary School, in memory of the parish's first pastor. The Montessori School continues on in the multi-purpose section of the church. Additional administration and catechetical buildings have also been built, and the Institute of Fine Arts takes up the land at the other end of the compound. As a result of all these additions, what was just fifteen years ago an enormous, grassy parish plot is now packed with buildings and parking lots, leaving very little space for play or recreation for the hundreds of schoolchildren on the Buru Buru compound every day. This is a scene that repeats itself in some of the other parishes started by Maryknoll, revealing the very different conceptualizations of spatial needs of Americans and Africans. The primary school uses school buses to transport many of the children to and from school, some coming from as many as twelve miles away.

On June 26, 2011, the parish will celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary on the Feast of Corpus Christi, the parish's annual feast day, even though the parish was

officially started in November, 1985. The parish has come a long way in twenty-five years, from a fledgling outstation without a dedicated parish council to being one of the central institutions within the Buru Buru estates.

Buru Buru One, Holy Trinity Parish

As stated previously, the multipurpose center was built in Buru Buru Phase One in 1975, two years prior to the center in Phase Three. However, it was not until 1992 that it became a parish. From 1975 to 1980 the priests from Jericho said the two Masses on Sunday at Buru Buru I, but no one was assigned to be a quasi-pastor there. In 1980, though, when Bob Vujs was leaving for an assignment in the U.S., Fr. Mike Callanan decided to request certain priests to serve the two centers in Buru Buru. Fr. Laurenti Magesa was given Buru Buru I, giving him two full-time tasks as he was also starting Alcoholics Anonymous Groups throughout the Archdiocese of Nairobi. Magesa always thought that his pastoral tasks should have been reduced in order to give AA his full-time attention.

Early in 1984 Fr. Jack Quinn was assigned from Sudan back to Nairobi, and to Jericho Parish. As Magesa was going to the U.S. for further AA preparation, Quinn took over Buru Buru I. He had a history of heart problems, and in 1979 had had quadruple bypass surgery in the U.S. For one year, though, he was able to happily serve in Buru Buru I.

When I first arrived at Buru Buru I, I met a group of Luo people (Nilotic people similar to those in southern Sudan) who received me very well. I had felt ashamed about leaving the Sudan, but I allowed the Luo people to capture my heart.

One area where I immediately made a change was in the use of one room in the center being used by the Montessori Program for storage. I refashioned it into a small meditation room. The people of Buru Buru were delighted by this and they began telling me that they wanted a church.

Quinn began planning with the people how to build a church, although these plans would not come to fruition for another eight years or so. At the end of 1984, Quinn's heart difficulties began to bother him again and he had to return to the U.S. till 1988.

In 1985, Fr. Tom Burke took on responsibility for Buru Buru I, while remaining in residence at Buru Buru III. When Buru Buru became a parish in November, 1985, the centers in both phases one and three were included in the one parish, with Burke as pastor. Laurenti Magesa returned to Nairobi and lived with Burke in Phase Three, and did pastoral work in Phases One and Two, albeit continuing to expend most of his energy on starting and serving AA. When the Filipino Lay Missioners came they served all the phases of Buru Buru, and were instrumental in fostering Small Christian Communities, which eventually reached seventeen communities in Buru Buru I.

In mid-1989 an Associate Maryknoll priest from Rochester, NY, Fr. Edwin (Ted) Metzger, moved into Buru Buru III with Burke and Magesa, and was introduced to the work in Buru Buru I, for which Metzger remained responsible until Easter of 1991. Metzger said, "Fr. Magesa broke me in at Buru Buru I, and set a very good example. He

was a very good parish priest.” In January, 1990, Magesa left Buru Buru, and moved to Umoja Parish, where his pastoral duties would be limited and he could devote his full attention to AA work in the Archdiocese.

Metzger was an older priest and had a long history of both pastoral and teaching experience in the United States. He was expecting an undeveloped, mission type of church even in urban Nairobi, and said, “I was surprised at how developed both sections of the parish (i.e. Phases One and Three) were in regard to lay leadership, Small Christian Communities and Parish Council. Parishioners were videotaping First Communions, which I never imagined was what Africa would be like.”

Burke asked Metzger to be fully in charge of Buru Buru I, including signing important letters from the parish to the Cardinal, which revealed a fundamental difference in pastoral vision between Maryknollers in Nairobi and Cardinal Otunga. Metzger explained, “The Cardinal considered it one parish, and that Burke was Father-in-Charge. For example, when I co-signed with the men’s group of Phase One a letter to the Cardinal about their constitution, the Cardinal wrote back to Burke, with a copy to me. But he didn’t know what to call me. One letter referred to me as co-worker; another to the Chaplain of Buru Buru Trinity Chapel.”

The Maryknoll pastoral vision emphasized the sharing of work and authority, a vision that inevitably was not in conformity with the vertical, hierarchical understanding of authority of almost all Kenyan Bishops. This was a major subset affecting relationships with Kenyan Bishops, diocesan priests and other missionary societies from the time Maryknollers began working in parishes in Kenya in 1966 until the last Maryknoll priest working in a parish retired in 2005 (Bob Vujs at Doonholm).

In 1991 Metzger requested permission to go to a rural parish, where he thought he would have a more African experience as he understood it. He sought this despite his difficulty hearing and limited knowledge of Swahili, which would have been essential in a rural area. (In fact, in a truly rural area of Kenya, knowledge of the local tribal language is essential.) There were only two parishes with some rural aspects, Kilifi on the Coast and Athi River in neighboring Machakos Diocese. Both were town parishes (small towns) with some rural outstations. Metzger was assigned to Athi River, and left Buru Buru after Easter of 1991. Just before he left, the plot behind the Montessori School was allocated to the parish, “thanks to the hard work of one parishioner who worked at the Ministry of Lands. I was able to take the title deed and hand it personally to Cardinal Otunga. Jack Quinn was replacing me at Buru Buru I, and he shared the same interest as the people in building a church on that plot.”

Fr. Jack Quinn returned to Kenya at the end of 1988 or beginning of 1989, and worked with Fr. Marangoni in Rongai, near Nakuru in the Rift Valley, till 1991. He then transferred back to Buru Buru I, living at a house very near the multipurpose center. Filipino LM Lelong Macanip was also living there, and he had been successful in making the SCCs very strong.

Quinn said about the day he arrived at Buru Buru I, “The Christians had been working for six years trying to get a piece of land behind the Montessori School. On that day they said, ‘This is a sign from God, as we have just gotten title to the land. We have to build a church.’” Quinn stayed there until the middle of 1992, getting the plot surveyed, hiring a contractor and beginning construction. Shortly before construction was completed Quinn returned to the U.S. again, to check on his heart situation. During this

time Burke filled in at Buru Buru I. On Quinn's return later in 1992 the new church was dedicated by Cardinal Otunga and Buru Buru I (which included phases one and two) was made a parish – named Holy Trinity Parish. Quinn continued as pastor until he again went back to the U.S. for another check-up in mid-1995. While in the U.S. he was struck with a massive heart attack, and died on July 8, 1995. A year later a moving memorial Mass was celebrated for Quinn at the church in Buru Buru I he had labored so long and hard to build.

Shortly before he died Quinn reflected on his missionary vocation and work in East Africa.

In the beginning years I was very strong and demanding with people. This just led to bucking heads with them. As years went on I calmed down, partly because my heart would not let me become emotional or heated, and partly because I learned that it is God who is accomplishing mission. I became aware that I was part of a transition in the Church. There is going to be change and the question for us is whether we will let the change come. If you truly can come to the one-to-one relationship with God through Christ you can have the peace of knowing that you're doing what God wants.

After Quinn's death it is unknown who became pastor in Buru Buru I although diocesan priests have been in charge from 1995 till the present. In 2010 there were three priests stationed at the parish. One of these priests had been ordained just one or two years before this and was one of two diocesan priests studying for a degree in Business Administration at the Catholic University in Nairobi (called CUEA), a sign that the Archdiocese plans to take professional diocesan administration very seriously.

A two-story rectory, containing four bedrooms, had been built in 2003, eliminating the need for the priests to rent an apartment off property. The parish is also planning to build a multi-story primary school, strong enough to eventually go up to seven stories, in a corner of the parish compound. The new buildings will also contain an office block for the parish, plus washrooms and toilets for use by parishioners. As the parish compound is only two acres, all these buildings – church, rectory, multi-purpose center and school – will leave the compound very cramped. There will be no playground at all and there already is no space for parking cars. The parish is located in a densely populated residential neighborhood, where there is likewise little room for parking. Despite these limitations, the priests are trying to beautify what little soil there is, by planting trees, flowers, bushes, etc.

The multi-purpose center is still used for the Montessori School, attended by over a hundred students. When the primary school construction is finished, planned to initially be four stories, it is hard to envision how all these hundreds of children are going to be able to gather in the tiny parish compound every school day.

There are three Masses celebrated at the church every Sunday, one in English and the others in Swahili. Mass is also celebrated every Sunday at a slum area about two miles away. In 2010 the parish was able to have a plot for a church allocated at the slum area, on which the parish intends to build a large church.

There are now thirty SCCs in the parish, each meeting on its own during the week. The priests go out in the evening to SCCs to say Mass on a rotating basis, reaching

each of them once in a two-month period. In addition to Mass, the visit by the priest offers the people an opportunity to discuss matters with the priest, whether about the parish, needs in the area, or about enriching their faith.

There is also an Adoration Chapel open every day from 6:00 AM to 9:00 PM. People are requested to sign up for specific hours, to ensure that at least one person will be present in the chapel at all hours.

The Buru Buru estates were built between 1974 and 1985, and have received constant service from the Catholic Church since 1975. Not only the second but now the third generation of residents and Catholics are growing up in that heavily populated part of Nairobi, still considered a middle-class area. Proximity to downtown Nairobi on the city's traffic-snarled streets is one reason families remain in Buru Buru. When Maryknoll started in Jericho Parish in 1969, a mere forty years ago, there was nothing at all in the huge area now called Buru Buru. Today there are thirty to fifty thousand people living there, a quarter to a third of whom are Catholic, with two large, well-developed Catholic parishes. Mass attendance at these two parishes is estimated at about 5000 every Sunday, and can be higher on certain feast days. The people of Buru Buru's five estates feel that this is their home and that the church is theirs. Maryknoll can be proud in having played an integral part in this development.

Umoja Parish

In the 1970s the Comboni Fathers of Kariobangi Parish built a large church on a Catholic Church plot in the center of Umoja Estate, and said Mass there every Sunday. During that decade, just as the Buru Buru estates were nearing completion, the enormous site and service residential area in Umoja Estate was started across Outer Ring Road, the major thoroughfare running from east to west in the Eastlands section of Nairobi. This was a World Bank funded project (along with other donors and Kenya government involvement), in which the developer laid out the roads, installed electric, water and sewer connections, and demarcated plots. Individuals took out mortgages to purchase the plots, which were cheap, and then had the responsibility to put up housing themselves. In Umoja Estate most of the buildings became multi-story, in which the owners rented out flats (apartments). Almost every flat had electricity, water, indoor toilets and sewerage, but were very small, often with only one bedroom, a living room, tiny kitchen and bathroom. This has become the most common type of working/middle class residential housing development in Nairobi since 1980. Often landlords do not live in the buildings that they own.

In the early 1980s there was an influx of Maryknoll priests to Kenya looking for parish work. Tom Keefe had left Juba, Sudan, and tried – unsuccessfully – to start a parish in Spring Valley, a wealthy suburb northwest of Nairobi. Walt Gleason came to Nairobi in 1980 after many years in Dar es Salaam, where he had done primarily youth and education work. He continued this type of work by teaching at the Apostles of Jesus Seminary in Langata, where he was very well liked by the students and staff. In October of 1982 Bob Jalbert was assigned to Kenya. Jalbert had done his Overseas Training Program from 1976 to 1978 in East Africa and knew Swahili. After ordination in 1979 he studied for two years at Georgetown University, earning a Masters Degree in Socio-Linguistics and for one year after that he worked at Maryknoll, New York. On his return to Kenya he went first to Kilifi on the Kenya Coast for a six-week refresher in Swahili

with a language informant and then returned to Nairobi to continue Swahili practice. At that time Maryknoll already fully staffed Jericho Parish, and ministered to the churches at Buru Buru phases One and Three as though they were parishes. The Maryknoll parishes in Mombasa Diocese were also fully staffed and the Kenya Regional Council realized that Maryknoll could take on responsibility for more parishes in Nairobi.

In 1982 the Comboni parish at Kariobangi was expanding very fast, particularly into the enormous slum of Korogocho, and the Combonis decided to break off Umoja as a separate parish. Since they were not able to staff this new parish, the Maryknoll Kenya Region was approached by the Archdiocese of Nairobi with which it made a formal agreement to start a parish in Umoja. Gleason, Keefe and Jalbert were requested to go to Umoja Parish, with Gleason as pastor. The new parish was formally established with a huge, celebratory Christmas Day Mass on December 25, 1982. As there was no rectory in Umoja, Gleason and Jalbert lived at one of the two Maryknoll-rented houses in Buru Buru III, and Keefe and Tom Burke lived in the next-door house. Burke continued serving the Buru Buru churches.

If one wanders through the three huge phases of Umoja today, with its hordes of foot traffic, chaotic driving and multifarious types of buildings, one might ask whether there was any plan governing expansion of this estate. Jalbert says:

Right from the beginning we knew there was a plan. The first phase was around the church and was going up rapidly when we were there. The second phase was a circle around that and then eventually the third phase would be a wider circle further out, making three concentric circles. We knew that Umoja would gradually expand to be a huge estate and a huge parish, as this was the only place available for city expansion. The city was growing by leaps and bounds, and houses were literally going up every day.

The parish covered two other places, Embakasi and Soweto, both near the airport. Jalbert was given responsibility of building up the church communities in these places and describes them thus:

Embakasi was a planned housing estate build by the government for the workers at the International Airport. Workers and their families lived in this estate in separate neighborhoods, according to their type of work, for instance those in Customs in one neighborhood, those in Food Services in another, and so forth. In all there were seven or eight neighborhoods in Embakasi at that time. This I would classify as a middle-class estate, although in many cases the spouses would also be working in the city and in some cases be professionals. So, some families were upper-middle-class. I am not sure if they paid full rent or whether the apartments were subsidized to some extent, since only workers at the airport could live in them. There was a good primary school in Embakasi and the Combonis had built a church there as well.

In contrast, Soweto was classified as a slum and nothing could be built with permanent materials there. We used the community center for Mass on Sunday and that was the only quasi-permanent building in the whole slum. Here life was more tenuous. It was never known whether people would be allowed to

continue living there or whether the slum would be torn down for future planned development. I would classify the people in Soweto as upper-working-class. Practically everybody was working in some way or other, such as those who walked to the Industrial Area to work in factories, although many were doing small business at road-side kiosks, such as selling charcoal or vegetables or whatever. Despite the class differences, there was a lot of interaction between the people of Embakasi and Soweto, including traversing back and forth, visiting people in the other place, and between the Catholics of the two churches. In fact, the choirs of Embakasi and Soweto would go to sing at the Mass at the other church on one Sunday a month. In the 1980s class differences were not divisive.

Umoja Estate was definitely middle-class and most of the people were the same as in Buru Buru, professionals, businesspeople, and government workers for the most part. They were people with good salaries, their children all went to secondary school and many could afford to buy cars.

Both Keefe and Gleason worked in Umoja full-time, until Keefe was assigned to the U.S. in May, 1983, to work on promotion. There was a good organizational nucleus for parish ministry already in place when Maryknoll came, such as the churches, a parish council and a catechetical program. There were catechists teaching children and adults, a good beginning that the priests built up over the years. Things were not quite as advanced in Soweto, thus Jalbert had to help set up the catechetical program and other structures in this place. Throughout the time that Maryknoll staffed Umoja Parish and its two sub-parishes, each place had its own parish/sub-parish council, own catechetical structure, and its own balance in the parish account.

Matters were going smoothly until June of 1983, when the Maryknoll team was struck with tragedy, the sudden death of Walt Gleason on June 20th. Jalbert narrated this ordeal:

We had just concluded the Kenya Regional Assembly and Walt and I had returned to our house in Buru Buru. That Monday morning neither Tom Burke nor Tom Keefe were in their house. Walt got up and came to the breakfast table, but complained he wasn't feeling well. After breakfast he moved to the couch and then suddenly slumped over with a heart attack, and died almost immediately. I phoned the Maryknoll Center House, where Bill Madden was still Regional Superior and Brother Ron Rak was in charge of the house. They drove right over to Umoja, through the morning hour traffic jam, and began helping with arrangements for the funeral and burial. The funeral was held on the following Thursday at Umoja Church and Walt was buried at the Maryknoll plot next to the St. Austin Church in Msongari, a kilometer from the Maryknoll center house.

The Kenya Region was thrown into a quandary, for two reasons. Gleason had just been elected to be the new Regional Superior beginning in several months, and now Umoja needed another priest as soon as possible. Another election was held, and Joe Glynn, who was still in Juba, Sudan, was elected Regional Superior.

As for Umoja, a succession of priests revolved in and out for the rest of 1983, usually only for a short time. The first was Fr. Dan Boyd, who was in Mombasa. He

came to Umoja to help out for the months of June to September. At that time, Jalbert and Boyd moved to a rented house in Buru Buru Phase Five, which was much closer to Umoja than Phase Three. In September Joe Reinhart came to Kenya and was assigned to be pastor of Umoja, allowing Boyd to return to Mombasa. Reinhardt had previously worked in Tanzania and Zambia, where Maryknoll had just closed out its work.

Matters became even more complicated, though, since Fr. Mike Callanan, the pastor of Jericho Parish, was returning to the U.S. to do Promotion Work. It was incumbent on Maryknoll to assign a pastor to Jericho. Joe Glynn had just become the new Regional Superior and asked Bob Jalbert to be pastor of Jericho. Jalbert responded, "I told Joe that I had not even finished a year in Umoja, was doing very satisfying work in the two estates of Embakasi and Soweto, and with all the things that had happened that year I would not feel right leaving Umoja." Fortunately, a solution soon presented itself when Bob Vujs returned to Kenya after doing Promotion for three years. In December, 1983, Vujs was made pastor of Umoja and Reinhardt was named pastor of Jericho Parish, where he remained for two more years. Vujs moved into the house in Buru Buru Five with Jalbert, and he remained pastor until 1989.

As has been mentioned before, Vujs was an excellent builder. Now that he was pastor of Umoja Maryknoll budgeted to construct a large two-floor rectory with sufficient bedrooms on the second floor, and offices and rooms for meetings and catechetical use on the ground floor. After completing this construction at the end of 1985, he began planning for another major building project, construction of a Montessori Training Centre.

By the late 1980s the Montessori Program had become so well established, not only in the four Maryknoll-started parishes but in other parishes of Eastlands as well, that Vujs thought it both necessary and the opportune time to establish a Montessori Training College. He requested permission for a one-year sabbatical, from mid or late 1989 to early 1991, to both complete construction of the buildings and set up the college, in terms of registration, hiring a qualified principal and staff, and putting in place good administrative procedures. The college was an important step in making the Montessori method a professional yet localized Kenyan approach to preparing children for primary school. After his sabbatical, Vujs was made pastor of Doonholm Parish, which was next to Umoja. He remained in Doonholm until the end of 2005, but stayed in close relationship with the Montessori College.

As of 2010, over two thousand Kenyans, mainly women but some men, had graduated from the Montessori College, which is now named the Child Development Program (C.D.P.) Montessori College. They come from all over the country and there are now hundreds of bona fide Montessori Nursery Schools teaching thousands of three-to-five-year-old children in Kenya. (There are also many copy-cat nursery schools calling themselves Montessori, started by untrained and unqualified businesspeople. These charge lower fees, but provide sub-standard childhood preparation.)

In 2010 the principal of the college was Mrs. Alice Chege, who had been with the program and Fr. Vujs since 1973, back when it existed only at Jericho church. In July, 2010, Mrs. Helen Maingi, one of the teachers at the college, was briefly interviewed about the Montessori Program.

The parents appreciate the nurseries very much. Every parish in Eastlands Deanery has a Montessori nursery school, usually in the multi-purpose church building. For example, the church here at Umoja has 175 children and the church in Dunholm has over 300 children.

The nursery school has three years, starting at age three. The children progress from Baby Class, to Middle Class, to Pre-Unit. These children go into Standard One (i.e. First Grade) as the best prepared and most advanced in their primary schools.

The children's daily schedule is learning sessions in the morning, lunch at noon prepared by the school and paid for by the fees, a nap after lunch, and then more learning in the afternoon. Learning is done via educational games appropriate for very young children. These are activities that they enjoy and which also help them to learn in a progressive manner. Each child chooses the specific learning game that he/she wishes to engage in at a specific time. The teacher, of course, helps the child to choose and will give necessary instruction to help the child.

Students at the college spend one year in academic learning and then two years in field practice, which is supervised. Part of their instruction is in how to make by themselves all the implements that will be used by the children in learning activities, implements which should be made from locally available materials. After the three years they graduate with a Certificate in Child Development. Plans are now being discussed to further develop the college program, in order to be able to grant a Diploma in Child Development.

We are very appreciative of the hard work and determined effort of Fr. Bob Vujs in starting the nurseries and this college. Maryknoll has done a lot in Eastlands Deanery and the priests and Brothers are remembered and very much appreciated.

In addition to building, Vujs also worked hard as pastor to build up the Umoja parish compound as the center of the parish. He oversaw the catechetical programs and worked regularly with the parish council. Vujs discovered that, as had been the case in Jericho, most of the people in Umoja were away during weekdays, the adults at work and the children at school. He resumed his teaching, at secondary schools and at the Nursing School when needed.

At that time Small Christian Communities had not yet come into prominence, and Vujs and the other priests put much emphasis on two well-functioning groups – Marriage Encounter and the Legio Maria. Jalbert says:

Marriage Encounter was very important and we had a good group in Umoja, plus a small group in Embakasi. When I arrived there were eight couples in Embakasi who were very active. I myself got very involved with Marriage Encounter and one Sunday a month in the afternoon I would join them to visit one or another parish to give short courses on being a couple. Just in the three years I was in the parish, the number of couples doing Marriage Encounter in Embakasi increased to about thirty. The Legion of Mary was also very strong in Umoja at that time. Their purpose was to go around visiting households to encourage

people to come to church. They would also pray with people in their houses, for whatever needs the family had.

Jalbert adds that in addition to these two groups he also worked hard to build up a parish council in Embakasi. These groups were also encouraged in Soweto.

In the two outstations of Embakasi and Soweto Jalbert's main focus was on visiting people in their homes, trying to visit every Catholic family in his first year. At least two days a week he was walking around the various neighborhoods, going into homes of Catholics to visit and get to know them. "The Protestant pastors called me the Mzungu priest, who knows all his Catholic flock, since they always saw me walking around the two estates." (Mzungu is used in Swahili for a White person, but it derives from the word to 'go around' or 'turn around;' in the colonial era Whites always seemed to be going round and round the country in their cars.) "Soweto was not too far from Embakasi, and I could leave my car at the church in Embakasi and walk over to Soweto. Many more people were in Soweto in the daytime than in Embakasi, so I did visiting in Embakasi more at night."

All the churches received Mass every Sunday. There were two Masses in Swahili at Umoja every Sunday morning, and one Mass each in Embakasi and Soweto, at 8:30 and 10:30 AM respectively, also in Swahili. There was a training center for Administration Police near the airport that also received Mass one Sunday a month. At Soweto one of the Catholic women was physically handicapped and could not get to church. Thus, one Sunday a month Mass was held at the compound of her house rather than at the community center.

Jalbert goes on to add:

My constant visiting of people reaped its rewards beginning in my second year. By 1984 it was already clear that the church in Embakasi was not large enough to cater for the growing congregation. Space was also needed for catechetics, offices and other needs. The Kenya Regional Council agreed and referred Brother John Walsh, a trained draftsman, to design the expansion of Embakasi's church building. He designed an L-shaped building that was built before the end of 1984.

The two large churches, in Umoja and Embakasi, were officially termed multi-purpose buildings, similar to those in Jericho and Buru Buru. This terminology was never considered a point of contention in either place.

Unfortunately, nothing could be done to expand Soweto's community center, and the parish likewise could not build any kind of a church there, as construction of a permanent building in an informal settlement is strictly forbidden.

A second reward began being realized in late 1984, as explained by Jalbert:

As a result of visiting people in their homes, I realized that people could contribute more to the church collections. I started to inform the people that Maryknoll would be reducing subsidies, particularly for catechist salaries, liturgical supplies and utilities such as electricity and water. In just one year, the people of Embakasi doubled the income for that church and were able to pay for

forty percent of the expenses of their church. I believe the prime factor in their willingness to increase their offerings was my knowing them all personally. Personal relationships are key to development in Kenya.

However, at the end of 1985 there was another transition in Umoja, as Jalbert had been assigned to the U.S. in October, 1985. Some years later Jalbert commented that:

I felt at home in Embakasi. In subsequent years, whenever going from or coming into the airport in Nairobi I was always met by people of Embakasi Church. The food suppliers were the first to enter an airplane when it landed and they would meet me on the plane, take my passport and luggage, and whisk everything through immigration and customs. I could just leisurely walk through the airport and watch all this happening.

At times the choir of Embakasi would meet me in the waiting lounge and begin singing for me. Other passengers seeing this would ask who this VIP is and who I was. I would tell them that this is my parish choir; they just want to sing for me.

Most of the airport workers he knew in the 1980s have retired, making large gatherings of workers in the waiting lounge less likely. In any event, the Immigration and Customs sections of Jomo Kenyatta International Airport have streamlined their operations, since close to one million tourists arrive in Kenya every year, and disembarking passengers find the airport very pleasant and efficient.

With Jalbert's departure a replacement was needed. Fr. Don Donovan had been working with Luo people in rural Tanzania for over twenty-five years, and was looking for a change. He came to Nairobi in 1986, and was assigned to Umoja, replacing Jalbert, and doing most of the ministry in Embakasi and Soweto. After so many years working in a tribal language in rural Tanzania, Donovan initially found adjustment to Nairobi difficult, in contrast to what Jalbert had experienced. Rural East Africans are friendly, welcoming and hospitable. In the city, according to Donovan:

People are busy, much busier than rural people, and they would just go about their business. We interpret it as lack of friendliness. But after time they warm up and begin to show affection. But there was that certain difference for me in the beginning.

After Mass, in a rural parish, people would stand around talking for a long time and we would talk with them. But in Nairobi people would scatter as soon as Mass finished. They all had places to go and things to do. I suppose this is the normal difference between rural and urban people anywhere.

Vujs and Donovan continued ministering to the three churches up till 1989, at which time Vujs requested permission to take his sabbatical, in order to complete establishment of the Montessori College. A new pastor was needed at Umoja and the logical choice would have been Donovan. However, Tom Keefe, who had returned to Kenya in 1988 and was at the parish in Athi River in Machakos Diocese, agreed to

become pastor of Umoja and take Fr. Tom Pesaresi as assistant. The latter was a young priest who had expressed interest in working at Umoja. So, Donovan left for Athi River in September, 1989.

From 1989 to 1997 Maryknoll maintained a good ministerial presence in Umoja. Keefe was pastor up till 1993 and then replaced by Fr. Ed Phillips, who was pastor until 1997. Pesaresi stayed at Umoja only a year or two, going to the U.S. to take a course in Psychology, but was replaced in 1990 by two priests, Phil McCue and George Egan. In 1992 Fr. Joe Trainor was also stationed in Umoja for a few months. McCue had been in Kilifi Parish in Mombasa Diocese for nine years and was happy to come to Umoja. He remained there until serious health problems forced him to return to the U.S. in 1995. Egan served until 1993, at which time he retired in the U.S. However, he then went on to become a chaplain at Lourdes, France, for a number of years. When Egan left, he was replaced by Fr. Tom Petronic, an Associate MM priest from Ohio. Two of the priests who worked in Umoja had made a practice of helping people who came to the door begging. This was proving unworkable and a nuisance. After these priests left, Phillips had a monumental task convincing the many beggars that the parish was no longer providing this type of service. Many beggars in Nairobi are, in fact, con-men.

Two Maryknoll Brothers also were assigned to Umoja in the early and mid-1990s, first John Mullen and then Tim Raible in 1994. In 1996 Jose Padin, a seminarian on OTP assignment, also came to Umoja for one year.

Mullen had done OTP from 1990 to 1992, first in Sengerema, Tanzania, for six months and in Makadara Parish in Nairobi for a year and a half. He had a Bachelors Degree in Nursing and while in New York for his final year of formation from 1992 to 1993 he obtained a Masters Degree in Theology. He returned to Kenya in July, 1993, and was assigned to Umoja to continue doing nursing work. For three months he participated in a training program for volunteers in the Korogocho slum, a part of neighboring Kariobangi Parish, which was run by Medical Mission Sister Jill Horschfeld, originally from England. Horschfeld had a masterful program of “training trainers,” as Mullen put it, training certain people from the slums who would in turn train slum residents to be community health workers. Mullen learned this program well and put it into practice in his future assignments.

From late 1993 to late 1994, while still living at Umoja, Mullen became the de facto parish nurse at four parishes: St. Theresa’s in Eastliegh, run by Missionaries of Africa, Shauri Moyo, run by Mill Hill Fathers, Dandora, under Holy Cross priests, and Kayole, which was staffed by SVD priests. He went to a different parish each day for four days in the week, left his car at the parish, and then accompanied the community health volunteers in visits to the sick. Fridays he usually wrote reports, but some weeks he would pay a second visit to Eastliegh because the huge Mathare Valley slum was within this parish and needed extra time. None of the parishes had a parish clinic, although eventually Eastliegh did build one. Mullen used a small office containing a desk and a couple of stools, and in which he kept a box of medicines.

At each parish there were twenty to thirty volunteers, who took Mullen around to ten to fifteen homes each day. This was very time-consuming work. The weather also can be a challenge right on the equator. The mid-day sun at Nairobi’s high altitude is enervating and can cause severe sunburn without thorough precautions. At other times in

the year heavy rain can come day after day, making the slums extremely muddy and sloppy. Mullen says that crime was not a serious factor in his work, although all he carried into the neighborhoods and slums was his box of medicines. Seldom if ever do criminals bother a person known to be doing works of mercy. However, he had so many people to visit every day that it was becoming an impossible task.

Mullen says, "At that time the priests in the deanery thought they could get other nurses to volunteer in the slums. But volunteerism is not a concept known in East Africa, such as in America. We were able to get residents to volunteer to visit the sick in their homes and to take me around. But eventually we realized that we would have to hire nurses for each parish." In 1994 money became available to hire more nurses. Mullen then became nurse in only one parish, St. Theresa's in Eastliegh. He remained there until June of 1996.

His work in Eastliegh remained the same, going with volunteers to the homes of those who were sick. AIDS was not the only disease; many had TB and venereal diseases. There were also many handicapped children, for whom Mullen gave referrals to good hospitals. His small clinic did not do any pre- or post-natal work. "We merely encouraged the women to go early in their pregnancy to the natal clinics. I also discouraged people from going to any of the private clinics in the area, which are just businesses set up by men looking for an easy profit. The government clinics are very good and I always told people to go to these, particularly for STDs." While he was at Eastliegh, the government subsidized a tuberculosis laboratory at the parish compound, enabling Mullen and his co-workers to test for this.

The rectory at Umoja was always full while Mullen was there. In fact, at one point there were six Maryknollers living there, one of whom slept in what was supposed to be a small office on the ground floor. The other bedrooms and living spaces were on the second floor. Brother John Walsh gave Mullen his car, although being a well-used, second-hand car it often needed repairs. He had a good community life at Umoja and also went to the Maryknoll center house each Sunday evening for sundowner and meal with the large group who usually came together. Due to his heavy work load he was not able to put into practice any of the theology he learned at Maryknoll. "I used this just for my own personal faith development."

Throughout 1996, Brother Frank Ten Hoopen had been requesting Mullen to relocate to Mombasa and do his AIDS ministry there. Ten Hoopen had taken care of two priests of the Archdiocese of Mombasa who had died of AIDS and he felt that both education and outreach by church institutions to those infected with HIV was needed. Ten Hoopen also thought it would be beneficial to establish a Maryknoll Brothers' community in Mombasa. In July, 1996, Mullen moved to Mombasa.

Tim Raible had been in Mombasa Archdiocese for three years, primarily in Kilifi Parish. In 1993 he went to Israel for the spiritual program there, took a short vacation at home in California, and then took another renewal program in Attleboro, MA. On his return to Kenya in January, 1994, he was assigned to Umoja, where Ed Phillips was now the pastor. He was asked to do youth ministry in the parish. According to Raible:

At that time the youth were struggling, since there was no one to work with them. We got leaders chosen and gave them training, and then scheduled a

number of programs for youth. The Youth Program went very well for a long time as they were appreciative of anything we could provide for them. Whenever we had programs at the parish on weekends, we would have 100 youth in attendance. It went so well, in fact, that other parishes came to see what we were doing.

However, he soon realized that this was a ministry for only two or three days a week and looked into other possibilities of ministry. The Eastlands Deanery AIDS Program was just getting started then and Raible discussed how he could make a contribution. The Soweto slum was recommended to him.

Soweto was no longer in the same place that it was in the 1980s, when Jalbert and Donovan were working there. Around 1990 the son of President Moi took possession of the land and had all the residents evicted to another plot, located much further away. There was no direct road to the new slum, which retained the same name of Soweto. Raible did not have a vehicle, and travel to Soweto entailed taking two *matatus* (passenger vans), one five miles out on the tarmac road and another three miles on a dirt/gravel road heading back towards the airport. In 1990, around 25,000 to 30,000 had been relocated to the new Soweto, but when Raible went there in 1994 he estimated the settlement's population to be 40,000. Some estimates also stated that fifty percent of the adults were HIV positive. These estimates may have been exaggerated due to alarm at the rapid growth of AIDS in Nairobi. National statistics for Kenya in 1994 were that ten percent of the population were infected, a figure that grew to fourteen percent by the year 2000. By the late 1990s, about 100,000 people were dying of AIDS each year in Kenya. Urban areas have a higher prevalence of HIV infection, indicating that Nairobi's percentage of adults infected with HIV/AIDS was probably fifteen to twenty percent in 1994. Whether Soweto had a significantly higher prevalence than this is only suppositional, but in any event AIDS was a very serious epidemic, for which there was no cure. Soweto's poverty and lack of access to medical treatment made it a logical choice for parish outreach and presence.

The Medical Missioner Sisters were administering the deanery AIDS program, and there was a nurse stationed at Umoja Parish. There was one woman living in Soweto doing home visiting of people suspected to have AIDS, called Mama Waithera (i.e. the mother of a girl named Waithera). She came to Umoja to see the Sisters, which led to Raible joining with her two days a week.

This soon expanded to four days a week, since there was a lot visiting to do. I would go out there at 8:30 in the morning and be there until early evening. We would go to any house where someone was sick and the family had requested that we come. We generally visited four to nine new people each day, in addition to follow-up visits to those we had previously contacted.

Raible had training in counseling but not in medical treatment. But even though he did not treat anyone, he did do an examination and tentative diagnosis.

I first did an assessment of the illness of the person, wrote down their symptoms, asked in which parts of the body they were sick, for how long and for how bad they were sick. I then tried to ascertain what help they needed, what else

needed to be done and could be done, and what the family needed. I also tried to evaluate their psychological condition and whether counseling could help. There was no way we could test them locally and so we had to make a decision on whether we thought it was AIDS or not. In any event, there was no cure and all we could give them were medications for their symptoms and palliative care.

In the beginning, it was only Raible and Mama Waithera going around and he recognized the need to train others. Two women soon joined them, out of gratitude for help they had received. One was the mother of a boy with epilepsy, whom Raible took to a special clinic which permanently alleviated the boy's condition. Over the next two years Raible was able to increase the number of trained volunteers in Soweto to about fifteen.

Raible also arranged for those suspected of being infected with HIV to go to Kenyatta Hospital to be tested. This was an excellent test, run by British personnel, and fully confidential.

All those we took to the hospital turned out to be HIV positive, except for one woman who had a serious case of tuberculosis. Practically all of these people lived for only one year to eighteen months at the most after the confirmed diagnosis. The nurse at Umoja prescribed medications for each person, which we delivered to them at their homes. We taught them how to properly use these medications and accompanied them on their final journeys. But we basically buried every one of them.

In mid-1995 Raible moved to a house in Buru Buru to live with Lay Missioner Frank Wayne, who was also doing volunteer work in Eastlands Deanery. When Wayne terminated his contract in 1996, Raible moved to the Gleason residence next to Maryknoll's center house, from which he commuted to Umoja and Soweto for the rest of that year. In January, 1997, he returned to the U.S., as his mother had just had a massive heart attack, and then took an assignment doing Maryknoll development work in Seattle.

Those who were assigned to Umoja in the 1990s were impressed at how well established the parish was. There were many parish activities, the Montessori Training College was on the parish compound, the adult catechumenate had thirty to forty each year preparing for the sacraments of initiation at Easter, there were many infant baptisms, and the parishioners had a good, strong faith. The Youth Program had some very good leaders among the older youth, who were able to do much of the leadership themselves. The two Masses on Sunday morning were both totally packed, with hundreds standing throughout the Mass.

As 1997 began Ed Phillips and Tom Petronic were the only Maryknollers remaining in Umoja. The older priests who had been there in the early 1990s had all long since retired in the U.S., McCue had passed away, both Brothers had moved on to new assignments, Padin had completed his OTP, gone back to the U.S. for ordination and on his return to Africa had opted to go to Mozambique, and Petronic was completing his five-year commitment as an Associate Maryknoll priest. Phillips himself had been requested to return to Kenyatta University for a second term as chaplain. As Maryknoll

had no other priests available to go to Umoja, the Society turned over Umoja Parish to the Archdiocese. Umoja had become a self-reliant parish, like Jericho Parish earlier, with very good lay involvement.

Umoja Parish continued to grow and in 2010 there were three diocesan priests living at the parish. There are now three Masses celebrated at the main church each Sunday, the early one in English and the other two in Swahili. The parish has three outstation chapels where Mass is celebrated each Sunday, making a total of six Masses each Sunday within the parish. In the meantime, both Embakasi and Soweto have become parishes in their own right. The number of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) is not known; presumably there are many, as SCCs are understood by urban Catholics as essential structures in each parish.

The three concentric circles of Umoja have been long completed as of the end of 2010. Almost unrecognizable from what it was in 1982, today it is an endless concatenation of multi-story buildings, sprawling out in every direction, with no apparent plan. The buildings, many of which lack clear evidence of meeting standard building codes, have been built in black-cotton soil, which does not provide a firm foundation. Earthquakes, a potential danger in an area so close to the Rift Valley, could someday wreak havoc on northeastern Nairobi's working-class/middle-class estates. Umoja is often choked with automobile traffic throughout the day – due to narrow, pot-holed roads and the aggressive, chaotic driving of passenger vans. Thousands of people ply the roads on foot at all times, along sidewalks – if there are sidewalks – filled with kiosks selling a myriad amount of diverse products. The population of Umoja is not known, but it has to be over 100,000, in an area at most two square miles.

In the 1980s, when Umoja Parish had just been started, it was the last parish in northeastern Nairobi. Just beyond the parish compound were huge, vacant fields. Today there are six more parishes, all in densely populated areas: Doonholm (started by Maryknoll), Kayole, Embakasi, Soweto, Njiru, and Ruai, and there are plans to start two other parishes, in Tasia (between Doonholm and Embakasi, adjacent to the airport) and Utawala (on the northern boundary of the airport). The city of Nairobi continues to expand rapidly, although almost every vacant space northeast of the city (where Eastlands is located) is now taken. The current expansion is now taking place in the neighboring Eastern and Rift Valley Provinces (Machakos and Kajiado Districts). (Nairobi is also expanding to the north and west, whereas in the south the Ngong Hills are blocking further urban expansion in that direction.) In 2010 the citizenry approved a new constitution, which will divide the country into new administrative districts, called Counties. There is serious consideration being given to expanding the boundaries of what will be called Metropolitan Nairobi, taking significant chunks of land from neighboring Districts where huge population increase is occurring. Exactly how this metropolis will be governed and administered is not yet stated in detail, although it definitely makes sense to govern de facto urban areas with urban style governance. Change in government boundaries may also entail changes in ecclesiastical boundaries, although this has not been mentioned yet by church leaders.

Christ the King Parish, Embakasi

From 1982 to 1997 the Maryknollers in Umoja Parish served Embakasi as an outstation, especially Bob Jalbert, Don Donovan and finally Tom Petronic, who is remembered as the last of the Maryknollers to work in Embakasi. In the 1990s, members of President Moi's family obtained much of the vacant land in Embakasi and put up flats, three-story houses and apartment complexes, which led to a steady rise in the number of Catholics in the church. It was perceived that it should become a parish, but Maryknoll did not have sufficient personnel to staff even its ever-dwindling commitments.

In 1997, just as Maryknoll was leaving Umoja Parish, the Archdiocese of Nairobi made an agreement with the St. Patrick Society, popularly called the Kiltagan Fathers, to start a new parish in Embakasi, called Christ the King Parish, and they have been there ever since. In July, 2010, there were three priests stationed there, with Fr. John Joe Garvey the pastor. The parish plot is still quite small, as are the rectory and the church. Garvey says that the church is still basically what the Comboni Fathers built in the 1970s, plus the cruciform extension built by MM Brother John Walsh in the 1980s. The church was widened in 2003, but still is not sufficient. The plan is to raise the roof about ten feet and put balconies around three sides of the church. There are currently two Masses on Sunday at the parish church, plus two Masses outside, at the Administration Police Training College and at Utawala, north of the airport about five miles from Embakasi. Utawala is growing very fast and may need to become a new parish in a few years.

Embakasi is no longer the small village accommodating airport workers as it was in the 1980s. After the new housing was built in the 1990s anyone was able to either buy or rent in Embakasi. Many of the airport workers still live in the original village, but that is now a minor part of the area and the parish. Despite the increased numbers, Garvey says that Embakasi is the smallest parish in the Archdiocese, in terms of both territory and population. But they are busy none-the-less: during the week there is daily Mass in the church, Mass said four days at the Sisters' convent in Utawala (six miles away on a very rough, pot-holed road), and Masses celebrated at SCC meetings in people's houses.

A half-mile from the parish is a twenty-foot high wall that runs unbroken for a mile or two, completely separating Embakasi from a new estate (called Pipeline), where mammoth apartment complexes are being built. By 2012 or 2013, there could be close to 100,000 people living in these apartments and presumably tens of thousands of new Catholics in the area (usually 25% of the population). Because of the wall they will not be able to come to Embakasi church; the wall prevents not only automobile but also foot traffic from passing from one place to the other. The Pipeline Estate is not far from a semi-slum area called Tasia, which is an outstation of Doonholm Parish (more mention of this will be made when the section on Doonholm is treated). Garvey says that Tasia will very soon have to be elevated to parish status, to cater for the influx of so many Catholics.

Despite the small area of the parish plot, only two acres, two large school buildings were built in 2003/04 that contain a primary school, a non-residential Special School for mentally and physically challenged children, and a computer school on the fourth floor of the largest building. MM Fr. Bob Vujs, when he was pastor of neighboring Doonholm Parish, gave advice on construction of the school buildings and also bought dozens of computers for the computer school (three classrooms). Garvey was initially wary of starting such a large computer school, but it has brought in so much money that it

not only pays for schools costs and additional computers, but has paid for expansion of the school buildings. Location on the top floor, with limited, dimly-lit access, and in a small, tight compound, has kept the computers secure from potential thieves (so far).

Garvey would like to open a secondary school, but there is no plot available. In 1990 Embakasi was still a tiny, isolated place, with plentiful land available, but neither the parish nor Archdiocese was interested in buying an additional plot for the parish. (Maryknoll administered Embakasi at that time, but its priorities were lay training and formation, a strong catechetical program, small Christian communities, and creating a self-reliant parish; building and running schools has not been a Maryknoll goal in Kenya.) There were several four-acre plots for sale, but other faith denominations bought them in the early 1990s.

Bob Jalbert had worked in Embakasi from 1982 to 1985, and felt very welcomed and much at home there. Over twenty years later, in 2008, he visited Embakasi but found it very much changed. Jalbert said, "I had trouble finding the church, the area is so built up." Embakasi is emblematic of what has happened in Nairobi as a whole. Fortunately, the Church has been able to keep up with the growth and it remains actively present in all the new residential developments.

Sts Joachim and Ann Parish, Soweto

The current location of Soweto is tucked in between Doonholm, Embakasi and Kayole. It is a large area of maybe one or two square kilometers but at present an informal settlement, although some people must have been allocated private plots since they have put up large cement (permanent) buildings. As of 2010 there was not only no tarmac road going in to Soweto but no decent road of any kind, just several deeply rutted, muddy dirt paths. Soweto is typical of all of Nairobi's slums, an urban area requiring four-wheel drive vehicles.

After Maryknoll left Umoja in 1997, the SVD Fathers in Kayole Parish accepted responsibility to serve Soweto, since it was the closest parish, only two miles away. At the beginning of the 2000s the Archdiocese was able to obtain a huge plot of three and a half acres and in 2004 Archbishop Rafael Ndingi elevated it to parish status. Since the SVD priests were serving Soweto they agreed to assign two priests to the new parish. In July, 2010, they were Frs. Arata Sato, from Japan, and Albert Fuchs, from Switzerland, who had previously worked in Laikipia with the Maasai people.

A multi-purpose hall had been built in the 1990s and that is where two Masses are celebrated every Sunday, one in English for the youth and the other in Swahili. Both Masses are packed. A new and very large church was under construction in July, 2010, and was expected to open in 2011. Since Soweto is growing, the priests foresee that they will need three Masses every Sunday and expect all the Masses likewise to be packed. Being close to three other parishes there is no need for an outstation chapel in the parish, leaving the priests free to concentrate on parish development. At the opposite end of the compound is a two-story Catholic primary school and on another vacant section of the compound the priests have plans of building a dispensary and clinic.

Fr. Sato says that Soweto will eventually become a formal residential estate, with thousands of houses built, but the go-ahead for this has been delayed. He has a map showing the demarcation of all the plots in the formal settlement, plus the roads and extension of utility lines. The future name of the place has not been determined, such as

Kayole Phase Five or Soweto Phase One. If and when the plots are allocated and sold, it is hard to imagine that the squatters currently living in Soweto will have sufficient resources and income to purchase them. That will raise another question of where the squatters will go. Nairobi is rapidly reaching the point at which there will be no vacant land left.

The SVD congregation intends to remain in both Kayole and Soweto for the indefinite future. In fact, just across the road from the parish in Soweto an SVD Brother runs an SVD Formation House for their candidates from East Africa.

St. Jude Parish, Doonholm

Early in 1990 Fr. Joe Glynn left El Obeid, Sudan, and returned to Nairobi. Despite his health problems he accepted an invitation from Cardinal Otunga to begin a new parish in the Doonholm section of Eastlands. This estate is more like Buru Buru, in that the houses are one-family houses and occupied by the owner for the most part. Although middle-class, many of the residents were of the educated, professional class and had a slightly higher income than those in Buru Buru. In 1990 the estate was not large, so in the beginning the parish had fewer people than Buru Buru III, but as was true of every new residential development area in Nairobi it was growing very quickly.

By September, 1990, Glynn had been able to have a foundation dug for the church, when he suddenly died. His death did not come, though, as a total surprise, since he had been getting progressively sicker in his final year. He had obtained funding for building a church and, as no one else was available, Fr. Bob Vujs took on this responsibility even though he was still on sabbatical. Fortunately he was living in a rented house in Buru Buru, very near Doonholm, and he was an excellent builder. Over the next two years he oversaw construction of both a large, multi-purpose church, and a spacious, pleasant rectory (only one floor this time). He became pastor of Doonholm Parish as soon as he completed his sabbatical, and moved into the rectory in 1992.

As was the case in other parishes started by him, a Montessori School was started in the multi-purpose center on weekdays and it continues to function today. The center had retractable walls enabling it to serve as a large church on Sundays. Formation of a parish council, development of a strong catechetical program, and fostering of Small Christian Communities became Vujs's goals, as was the case in other parishes where he worked.

(It is not clear today whether it was perceived in the 1990s as a church that could be used for a variety of purposes; or a multi-purpose building that could be used as a church. Although there was little practical effect on the building's use, it is important to point out that how it is phrased very distinctly changes the definition of the building's formal purpose. By 2010 it definitely had become clarified that it is a church first and foremost.)

In 1998 the Carmelville Sisters Congregation living in a large compound on the edge of the parish two kilometers from Doonholm, in the neighboring Jacaranda Estate, desired to build a Catholic primary school and asked Vujs for his assistance. He sought funding from Maryknoll and from 1999 to 2000 he oversaw construction of a three-story school. The Sisters run the school, which provides an excellent education not only to the upper-middle-class, but also to many poor children from the neighboring Kayole and Soweto estates.

As was always the case, he was looking towards the future expansion of the city and where it would be necessary to obtain land, build a large multi-purpose church building, and begin formulating plans for establishment of a new parish. The place chosen is called Tasia, east of Doonholm heading close to the airport. Tasia is a formal housing development, but there were (and still are as of 2010) many slum dwellers living close by in the area called Pipeline. Vujs obtained the land for the Archdiocese and put up a very large church. He began spending much of his time in Tasia, developing the church structures (parish council, catechetical program, etc.) with the intention of eventually raising it to a new parish. His plans had not yet come to fruition when he retired at the end of 2005 and even as of the end of 2010 it has not yet become a parish. However, priests of neighboring parishes all foresee it becoming a new parish within a year or two. The Pipeline area is also being built up massively and with an expected influx of tens of thousands of Catholics another parish will soon be needed.

In his final five years at Doonholm Vujs also oversaw the building of two other large three-story primary schools, one at Doonholm itself and another on the compound at Tasia. Vujs reached the age of seventy in 2002, and in late 2005, after fifteen years in Doonholm, he returned to the U.S. and retired. Doonholm Parish was by then self-reliant, and was handed over to the Archdiocese.

In 2010 there were three diocesan priests living at Doonholm although, as is the case in other parishes in the city of Nairobi, one of them has another full-time position, Vocation Director for the Archdiocese, which entails his travel throughout the diocese every week. The parish is now very large, with the area fully developed. In addition to the one-story houses in the formal Doonholm housing estate there are many multi-story buildings renting space for business and residential purposes. The main avenue is always crowded with traffic and a drive up this pot-holed, dusty road is an exercise in patience and Nairobi-driving savvy.

The priests are kept busy with Mass and sacramental services. There are three congregations of Sisters within the parish boundaries, one of whom is the Sisters of Charity, and each congregation requests daily Mass, even if the Mass is not at each convent every day. There is also daily Mass at the parish and at the Small Christian Communities on occasion. On Sunday there are three Masses at the parish – two in English – two Masses at Tasia, and one Mass at the Carmelville School, where there is the intention to build a church. As one of the priests stationed at Doonholm stated, “The parish is humming along nicely.”

In July, 2010, an Eastlands Deanery meeting was held at Doonholm Parish, attended by twenty or so priests representing most of the parishes in the deanery. Of these, all but two were African priests, mainly Kenyan diocesan priests but a few who are members of religious orders staffing parishes in the deanery. Two or three of the African priests were from other countries in Africa, such as Tanzania, and one of the expatriate priests was from Japan. The make-up of the deanery is a startling but concrete manifestation of the radical changes in the Church, both in Nairobi and in Kenya as a whole. In 1990, there would have been twenty or more European or American priests at an Eastlands Deanery meeting, with maybe one or at the most two African priests in attendance. Expatriate missionaries set the agenda. Today it is the indigenous African Church that sets the agenda. Yet, missionaries are very welcome, as was one Maryknoll

priest who walked in unexpectedly at the end of the deanery meeting. This exemplifies two good trends: the Kenyan Church has become truly local; at the same time local clergy consider themselves very much connected to and a part of the universal Church.

Vujs's retirement from Doonholm ended Maryknoll's parish ministry in Nairobi, except for Kenyatta University, which, although it is technically a parish, is primarily a university chaplaincy and classified in Maryknoll as a specialized ministry. In fact, Doonholm was not only the last Maryknoll-staffed parish in Nairobi but in all of Kenya. Lack of personnel was the main reason for this, along with changed regional priorities, which in the new century were focusing on non-traditional places in Tanzania, such as Mwanza and Dar es Salaam, and Namibia. It is startling and sobering to recollect that in 1992, just thirteen years before Maryknoll gave up its last parish, Maryknoll was staffing five parishes (including Kenyatta University) in Nairobi, two other priests were assisting a sixth parish (Makadara), and another was doing ministry in the slums adjacent to Eastlands. (In addition, as we will see, Maryknoll had responsibility for five parishes in three other dioceses of Kenya.) From 1970 to 2000 Maryknoll had been extensively involved in parish ministry and formation in nine of the twenty or so parishes in Eastlands Deanery. For many years this was a dynamic deanery, discussing, initiating and implementing a number of innovative deanery-wide programs, in which the Maryknollers played an integral part, such as in matters of social justice and ministry to slum-dwellers – and in the new century with the Deanery AIDS Program, run by Fr. Ed Phillips (as will be mentioned in Part Seven).

While doing pastoral work in Eastlands for over thirty years, Maryknollers collaborated very closely with the other religious orders there: Missionaries of Africa, Benedictines, Comboni, SVD, Mill Hill, and Holy Cross. (Consolata priests work mainly in rural parts of Nairobi Archdiocese, except for the Consolata Shrine Parish in Westlands; Holy Ghost and Jesuit priests work in central and western parts of Nairobi, so were not part of the Eastlands Deanery. Maryknoll priests and Brothers had good relations with these orders as well.) They also had a very good relationship with diocesan priests, and in fact it was Maryknoll that advocated strongly that Kenyan priests be made pastors of these large, wealthy, urban parishes. Some parishes in the Eastlands section of Nairobi are among the wealthiest in all of sub-Saharan Africa.

Cardinal Otunga had adamantly desired that Maryknoll remain in the parishes it started. But he never recognized the coming change in Maryknoll's demographic (i.e. aging and a rapid decline in number of personnel). Maryknoll had a vision different than other religious orders, which recruit men locally in East Africa and plan to have these native priests of their congregations become the pastoral agents in the parishes they staff. Their presence in these parishes is open-ended. Maryknoll, however, preferred to create self-reliant parishes with very strong lay involvement in all facets of the parish, and after a period of time present the parishes to the Archdiocese. As the Society slogan states: "Maryknoll comes into a place with the intention of working itself out of a job." All the parishes in Eastlands that Maryknoll staffed were more than ready to be administered by African diocesan priests.

One critical component of the changes that have occurred is perhaps worth noting. There may be a major distinction in the meaning of self-reliance between Maryknollers and leaders of the local church. For Maryknollers, self-reliance meant parishioners having responsibility and authority at the parish level, not only in terms of finance but

leadership and outward mission. As we move into the second decade of the new century, there are indications that local church leaders, Bishops and priests, interpret self-reliance as meaning large lay contributions to maintain a western style institution at the diocesan level, such as seminaries, including high school seminaries, diocesan secretariats, offices and programs. Parish needs are seen as secondary to the needs of the diocese, to the point that parish programs analyzing causes of social problems or providing on-going adult faith formation are coming to a halt. The main events in parishes today are sacramental and devotional, plus the management of Catholic primary schools. The role of Small Christian communities has also undergone change. Maryknollers forbade Small Christian communities from raising money for anything; now these are seen as prime fund-raising instruments, to the point that faith enrichment has almost ceased to be a part of SCCs.

Nairobi itself is undergoing fundamental change. In the 1970s Maryknollers were working with first-generation urban Africans, whose worldview was of the rural milieu they came from. Today's children are third-generation or even fourth-generation urbanites, whose worldview while still primarily African is very different from that of rural Africans in the 1960s and 1970s. This is an enormous challenge to the Church, which is supposed to be committed to giving meaning and instilling values in the very confusing and exploitative situations that urbanization creates. It is to be hoped that many Catholics in the Eastlands area were given sufficient faith foundation to discern, evaluate and make sound judgments on where the Spirit is active in their lives and communities as history unfolds in new, unexpected ways.

Machakos Diocese, Athi River Parish

At the end of 1988, Maryknoll agreed to take over St. Jude Parish in the town of Athi River, located seventeen miles east of Nairobi. This parish had been started by the Holy Ghost Fathers in 1969, and long-time pastor Fr. Niall McCauley, having reached the age of seventy, wished to retire to the Holy Ghost residence in Nairobi. Maryknoll was responsible in 1988 for three parishes in Nairobi plus the Kenyatta University Parish and in just two years would take on a fourth parish, and was also responsible for three parishes in Mombasa plus one in Garissa Diocese and another in Lodwar Diocese. There were five priests in Sudan, and no one expected then that they would soon be forced to leave. A half dozen or so others were doing special ministries in Nairobi. The Region was also on the cusp of beginning its unstoppable decline in numbers of personnel. Yet the Region calculated it had enough personnel to take on another parish. Fr. Tom Keefe was the first one assigned to Athi River but went to Umoja Parish in Nairobi after a few months. He was followed in the first year and a half by three other priests who also stayed for only a few months: Frs. Jim Collignon, Joe Trainor and Don Donovan. Finally, in early 1989 Fr. Tom Donnelly was made pastor and remained there to the end of 1993. In late 1991 he was joined by Associate Maryknoll priest Ted Metzger, from Rochester, New York, who stayed in Athi River to early 1996.

Athi River gets its name from the small river that passes through the town and eventually winds its way to the Kenya Coast. Further downriver other tributaries flow into the Athi making it a fairly large river, but at times it becomes almost completely dry at its source. The town abuts the Nairobi Game Park, the only wildlife reserve in the world that resides wholly within a large metropolitan city. The park has abundant impala,

giraffe, buffalo, zebra and antelopes, plus a small number of lions, rhinoceros and cheetah. There are crocodiles and hippo at one spot in the river (not in the town, only in the game park), plus some aggressive monkeys and baboons. The fifteen-mile trip through the park can be a fascinating way to go to Nairobi – albeit an expensive way.

The town is at the junction of two main highways, the Nairobi- Mombasa highway and the road to Arusha, Tanzania. The highway to Nairobi is full of lorries, buses, matatus, tourist vans and small cars every day, and even at night. Around 1980 toll booths had been placed on the highway to Nairobi, providing sizeable revenue for the government but proving a nuisance and psychological hindrance for car-owners in Athi River, including the priests. In 1994 the government removed all toll booths in the country, replacing them with a one shilling tax on each liter of petrol. This eased travel responsibilities for the priests, who had four Mass stations on the opposite side of the toll booths.

Athi River is located in a dry savanna plain stretching from Nairobi Airport to sixty miles east of Nairobi. The town would not even exist were it not for the availability of two resources: lime for cement and Maasai cattle for tinned beef production. Additionally, its proximity to the International Airport, presence of good infrastructure such as paved roads, water and electricity, and an unlimited supply of cheap, unused land made it ideal for industrial investment. In 1950 the Kenya Meat Commission was formed and built a large meat processing plant on the eastern edge of town. The East African Portland Cement Factory was commissioned in 1958, on the western edge of town, and currently produces 1.3 million tons of cement per year. (Cement production was greatly increased in Athi River in 1998, when Bamburi Cement Company built a clinker grinding plant, which produces one million tons of cement clinker per year.) The two original factories were the anchors for the town, spawning other enterprises such as a meat training institute, an abattoir, and several dozen factories engaged in light industrial production. Leather tanning factories sprung up along the river north of the Mombasa highway. These were followed in the 1990s by another fifteen to twenty factories built in the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) in neighboring Kitengela. Additionally, several private companies opened enterprises producing cut flowers for the export market. These were not in the town itself, but five or so miles away.

From the 1950s to around 1980 social conditions in Athi River were good. The two large companies used a labor intensive model of production in order to provide employment to as many people as possible. These companies also built housing for most if not all their employees, although by the 1990s many of the low-skilled workers at Portland Cement Company were renting rooms in the town. For decades, these workers were assured of permanent employment, with decent wages and benefits. Their children went to good high schools and most could go on with post-secondary education. Two large primary schools were built, one by the government and the other by the Catholic Parish, which produced good results for students from families that valued education. The municipal government also employed many workers, for whom the government built simple but decent cement housing.

However, the subsequent companies that mushroomed in Athi River did not provide housing, nor did they pay what Pope John Paul II referred to as a ‘family wage.’ Almost all workers at these factories were men, but few lived in Athi River with their wives, who remained at their rural farms. Women without husbands moved into Athi

River, many to do small business but others to engage in more illicit endeavors, such as selling unlicensed alcoholic beverages or engaging in prostitution. Women also were the main employees at the cut-flower industries and at the EPZ factories. The vast majority of these women were unmarried. By the 1990s social and economic conditions were becoming more convoluted; some were prospering whereas poverty was growing, with all its accompanying social problems. Despite the addition of two primary schools in the 1990s, fully one-quarter of children in the town did not go to primary school.

Compounding these social problems, in mid-1993 the Kenya Meat Commission factory closed, putting 1,500 people out of work. Former employees continued living in the housing, and even today there is a case by the workers against the company for severance pay. The company wants to rent out that housing but can not evict the people until this case is resolved. Export of tinned meat is a highly competitive enterprise internationally, since countries such as Botswana and Brazil have ultra-modern factories. In 2009, however, the KMC factory opened again, with 150 employees.

The town of Athi River is not only at the junction of three major roads, but also of three Provinces – Eastern, Rift Valley and Nairobi. Although within Machakos District, populated almost exclusively by the Kamba ethnic group, Kenya's fourth largest, Athi River has had a multi-ethnic population from the beginning. Kenya Railways, which has a large station in Athi River, has many Luo and Luhya employees. The two main companies' senior and mid-level management are of multiple ethnicities from all over Kenya, as are many of the workers. Kikuyu have been prominent in the retail and wholesale trade. Despite this, the Kamba ethnic group makes up over fifty percent of the town's population and dominates the open air market operations carried out mainly by women. Swahili is the normal language in the town, although many management people prefer English. Swahili is also the usual language of children over the age of six, after they have begun schooling, although the Kamba language is used quite frequently by young children, even of other tribes.

This confluence of factors made St. Jude Parish in Athi River unique in the Diocese of Machakos. All other parishes except the town of Machakos itself were in rural areas solely populated by Kamba people. The Kamba language was and still is the language of liturgies and pretty much all other church-related matters. Few rural people could speak Swahili and high school graduates could speak English better than Swahili. Only in Machakos town parish were there Masses in Swahili and English, in addition to Kamba. In contrast, Athi River was an urban, multi-ethnic parish, with poverty, slums and disturbing social conditions, and in which everything was done usually in Swahili. It far more resembled the parishes in Nairobi Archdiocese than those in Machakos Diocese. The latter diocese was erected in May, 1969, divided from Nairobi. Prior to that Athi River was served as an outstation from Nairobi, only twenty-seven kilometers away, much closer than Machakos, forty kilometers distant. However, dioceses follow government district and provincial boundaries, so the new parish in Athi River was put within Machakos Diocese – an orphan without a true home.

Most Maryknollers had driven by Athi River while going to Mombasa for vacation, and never paid it any attention. From the 1950s through the 1970s it was just a sleepy little town nestling on a slight hillside that took only a minute to zoom by. No one ever thought that Maryknoll would one day work in the parish there. However, Bishop Urbanus Kioko, who had become Bishop of Machakos Diocese in 1973, was looking for

a missionary group, after McCauley left, which would be suitable for working in this growing town. There was no Holy Ghost priest available and he had very few diocesan priests, whom he wished to assign to Kamba-speaking parishes. Thus, in 1988 he approached Maryknoll.

After Maryknoll withdrew from its two parishes in western Kenya in the early 1980s the Kenya Region sought only places where its personnel could use Swahili, as very few were interested in learning a tribal language. The complex and singular set of conditions – urban, multi-ethnic, Swahili-speaking, beset with social problems and injustice – made Athi River Parish a seemingly perfect place for Maryknoll to work. But as Tom Donnelly said:

It's a completely different work again. Athi River is different from all the other places I have worked. It has taken a great adjustment. I see problems; I don't readily see the answers.

One thing I discovered is that people don't consider Athi River their parish. This is where they work, but for funerals or marriages they go to their rural homes, and that is also where they intend to retire. One of the striking features is Christmas and Easter; the parish choir goes home and on the biggest feasts of the Christian year we don't have a choir. Those two feasts also coincide with school vacation months. Half of the kids have gone upcountry, meaning we can't have the catechumenate in those months, as we did in rural parishes.

Donnelly decided that his first goal would be to know the people, to be organized by means of a file-card system containing the names of almost every Catholic family in the parish.

There was no card system with names of people from the different parts of the parish. I started walking around neighborhoods, a different one each evening, trying to meet people. Because of their work, in different shifts, it meant I would miss at least half the people in any given visit. Daily Mass was at 5:30 in the afternoon, which I changed to 7:00 AM. No matter what hour it was, only a handful of people came to daily Mass. But I wanted to set aside the late afternoon and early evening for home visiting. Eventually, I had all the names of most families in the parish.

Another important goal of mine was to have a good parish council. There was a high caliber group of people in the parish, the most educated parish I have ever worked in. So, we had a good parish council and even though a few seldom showed up for meetings those who came were faithful and very serious.

One matter that I found perplexing, though, was regarding the mindset of the parish council. At Mass we would have 500 people but only fifteen percent received Communion. I did not think that lack of canonical marriage was the only impediment. Perhaps the catechesis was wrong, that without Confession one can't receive Communion. I asked the parish council to choose two priorities one year, but they mentioned only the physical plant of the parish – such as putting in a sign at the front gate. They missed the point completely about the condition of the people.

Fr. Frank Breen, who succeeded Donnelly as pastor in 1993, observed a similar pattern. He wanted the parish council to discuss the social conditions in Athi River, but the councilors thought only of physical improvements, such as expanding the church or increasing parking space.

With regard to what is referred to as the ‘Eucharistic Famine,’ that is the lack of adults receiving communion, several things changed in later years to increase the number. First of all, more and more youth were receiving the sacraments of initiation, and they all received communion. Many elderly people received communion. Another phenomenon became noticeable: at least one-third of church-going adults in the town were single women. Those not in a physical relationship with a man also regularly received communion. (This social phenomenon will receive further discussion below.) Another innovation was the encouragement of group marriages, in which the parish paid for a celebration in the hall, which resulted in many middle-aged adults receiving communion. The parish started having thirty to forty marriages a year, very few of which were for young couples just starting out on their marital journey. The two biggest impediments to marriage for young adults were and are the bridewealth system, still insisted on by older parents, and the cost of the wedding reception. The priests tried to convince prospective grooms that marriage could be done simply, without a huge reception, but the men were concerned about their reputation and status in the wider community, and saw no way to avoid an expensive celebration. Since they did not have the money, they kept putting off getting married.

In preparation for the 1994 African Synod, the topic of Eucharistic famine was discussed extensively. However, that Synod did not come up with any significant recommendations to address it. In Kenya, Archbishop Rafael Ndingi of Nairobi suggested that priests could accompany the groom to the bride’s parents when they bring out the initial bridewealth payment (for Kamba three goats, but this varies from tribe to tribe), bless this ceremony, and declare it canonical marriage. This has not yet been promulgated. African parents of young adults are still insisting on bridewealth payment, possibly less today for economic reasons than for fear of loss of standing in the community if they relent too easily. And Catholic parents are able to use Catholic doctrine about the necessity of canonical marriage to receive communion as a lever to force prospective bridal couples to pay bridewealth.

In many parishes, priests are refusing to baptize infants if the parents are not married in church. This rule was put into effect in Athi River, although when Breen came he relaxed it somewhat, allowing the first two children to be baptized. However, even this rule is not increasing marriages – just reducing the number of infant baptisms.

By 1989, the parish had already developed its Sunday Mass schedule at the town church, a schedule which remained in effect while Maryknoll staffed the parish: Mass at 8:00 and 10:00 AM in Swahili, and an 11:30 AM Mass in English for the secondary school students from nearby schools. When Donnelly arrived he noted that the parish had good buildings, “a church that seats 450, a very fine rectory, and a large parish hall. However, because of the black cotton soil the buildings continually settle lower, causing many cracks. Only the hall seems to have avoided this problem.” After a year or two, he asked Maryknoll for funding to buttress the pillars of the rectory, for fear the walls were in danger of falling down. His efforts seem to have permanently solved the problem.

The parish had very few outstations, another new wrinkle for Donnelly to adapt to. “The outstations are across the main Mombasa highway, but do not have many people. The town itself has ninety percent of the Catholics.” He started with three outstations, but this gradually grew. By 1997 there were eleven places where the priests were traveling to for Mass every month, the bigger ones on Sundays and the others on weekdays. These were an eclectic bunch of Mass stations, such as a university, a private primary school, a railway station fifteen miles out in the bush next to Maasai country, and the Kenchic chicken hatchery just a few miles up the Nairobi highway. One outstation, Mlolongo, very small in 1989, eventually became a new parish, which will be considered below.

The semi-arid area where the outstations were located was a former colonial cattle-ranch, called Lukenya Ranch. After Independence the government took over control of the land, selling it in large parcels of over a hundred acres. Wealthy urbanites purchased most of the land, but some small-holders were able to buy about five to ten acres each and moved into this area. The urban absentee land-owners never developed their land, which is not conducive to farming. The small-holder farmers eke out a very poor existence, in many years seeing their crops dry up and shrivel. The former workers of Lukenya Ranch remained in the area, living as squatters on land they farmed or in the small village of Kinanie, the main rural outstation of the parish. Kinanie’s centrality made it the locus for parish seminars for catechists and youth groups from the rural area.

After living in Athi River for four years, Donnelly discussed the area’s dryness:

This area is prone to drought, unlike Nairobi less than twenty miles away. Athi River is seven hundred feet lower in altitude and does not capture the rain. Every year people plant small gardens of corn and beans all over the town, wherever there is a vacant space. But for three consecutive years now the crops would reach knee high and die. Every year, though, they keep planting; their persistence is incredible.

In addition to getting to know people, Donnelly made catechetics another priority. He found a program for adults in place, which he continued. This was on Saturday afternoon for an hour, taught by an untrained male catechist who was paid a small stipend. Those in the course were seeking Baptism, Confirmation and/or First Communion, and the course ran about eight to ten months. Some had been baptized in a non-Catholic but Christian religion, and were seeking to join the Catholic Church.

We begin announcing the new course weeks in advance of its start, although there can still be some who come a few months later. Others have a tendency to miss some sessions, which I want recorded. Those who are weak in the grasp of basic Catholic Doctrine have their Baptism postponed for a couple of months until they are ready.

Generally there were fifteen to twenty adults in the course every year. Many of them, in addition to the above named sacraments, also received church marriages at the same time. In the mid to late 1990s, the morning of Holy Saturday became the date of these marriages, all done together, followed by a simple ceremony in the hall – including

several wedding cakes provided by the parish. Then at the Holy Saturday Mass, they would receive the Sacraments of Initiation.

In his first year at Athi River, Donnelly also started a baptismal course for a group of five elders at one of the poorer sections of Athi River. "I did it partly to keep busy, since at first I didn't have so much work to do. After eight months I scheduled an examination, and then baptized them the following month." Adults normally received Confirmation with Baptism, whereas school children were expected to wait to receive Confirmation from the Bishop.

For school children the catechumenate was a real difficulty, because I don't believe in paid catechists. Tom Keefe had set up the schedule, which I kept, of two hours on Saturday morning for children, grades four and up, wishing either Baptism or First Communion. This was a year-long course, from January to November, with the sacraments received in November. Many of the children would be going to their rural homes in December, so they had to receive the sacraments before then. The problem with this set-up was there were only two women who volunteered for this and sometimes they would not show up. That is the problem with volunteers.

Eventually, Donnelly devised a system of small monthly stipends for the catechists, both in Athi River and in the outstations. This came from the parish income, and was not subsidized by Maryknoll. As the number of children for the Saturday program increased, the number of catechists gradually increased as well. Some were primary school teachers, and all remained very faithful to teaching.

"We also continued a program for young children, who had their own liturgy, although called Sunday School, in the parish hall during the 8:00 AM Mass. That was mainly just prayers, bible stories and singing." Adult women volunteers were leading this at first, but it eventually evolved to having girls, from upper primary to lower secondary school grades, leading the Sunday School. The girls were not paid, but seemed to appreciate the responsibility given to them. The leaders and the young children all came up to the church during the Offertory for the remainder of Mass, enabling the older ones to receive Communion.

Donnelly also was interested in doing something for women.

I would very much like to have a strong women's group. Unfortunately, a women's group had been started back in 1982, which engaged in several businesses – selling charcoal and sewing school uniforms. But the women who did the work didn't get paid, leaving a bad taste. Also, the Kamba language was being used, causing women of other tribes to drop out. Eventually the group just broke up.

So now we are trying to start a group that will do only church work, a bit like the Legion of Mary. They can go in twos to visit people, regarding children who need sacraments or couples whose marriages aren't regularized, going to homes where there's a death, or praying at the home of people with someone sick. We have a lot of very poor people living in slum conditions and occasionally money could be raised for a specific need, such as clothing or food.

Donnelly found it difficult getting this group started, although about sixteen women were coming for the initial meetings. He commented:

I think we really need African Sisters in the parish. One could be full-time in religious education and one or two others could be full-time in home visiting. They could also be key figures in the women's group.

African Sisters have never come to Athi River, except briefly in 1997, when two came for practice ministry. They were so exceptional, that they proved the truth of what Donnelly stated.

Instead, in 1991 two Filipino Lay Missioners, both women, were assigned to Athi River. In 1993 they were joined by a third woman, but for less than half a year. The Filipino lay missioners had worked out very well in Buru Buru Parish in Nairobi, which was discontinuing its need for them. Both Maryknoll and the FLM program saw Athi River as a good alternative, since the program wished to remain in Kenya. Donnelly oversaw construction of a very suitable house for them, behind the rectory.

According to Donnelly:

They came basically to develop Small Christian Communities (SCCs). But their most significant contribution has been to give a feminine dimension to the Church in Athi River. This has never been the case in any other parish where I have worked. Now in our parish women are active, they're interested, and they are in the parish council. They are very involved in the SCCs and in helping the poor. The Filipinos have also trained primary school girls to be readers in the first Mass on Sunday, which is for school children, and trained women to be readers in the second Mass. They are all excellent readers. They also trained the girls to form a great choir for the first Mass and recruited secondary school girls, from different schools, for a choir for the third Mass. So, women are realizing that Catholic Church leadership is not only for men. The secretary of our parish council is a woman and two former chairpersons of the parish council were women.

The Filipinos have established rapport with women at the most fundamental level. The women feel they have somebody to talk to when their husbands are beating them, someone who understands. The Filipinos are not Sisters, they're lay people, which is a very strong point in their favor.

The Filipinos also developed good relations with the non-African, non-Christian populace of Athi River, specifically Muslims and Hindus of Asian nationality. Several of these families lived near the parish. The Filipinos would visit them, and receive them as visitors in return. The Asians were owners or supervisors of the factories in Athi River, and one Sikh man was headmaster of Athi River Secondary School, the large school next to the parish. The Asians tended to abide in their own community separate from everyone else. Only the Filipinos were able to immerse themselves within this community, possibly because they too were from Asia.

There were several other matters of concern to Donnelly. One was alcoholism in the town. “We badly need a branch of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). I invited Fr. Laurenti Magesa out, who gave a fine talk at Mass and in the afternoon met with about fifty people. But after that, nobody wanted to start a group.” Unfortunately, the AA group in Athi River has never functioned, even though there are many functioning groups in Nairobi.

Donnelly also wondered what to do with the large plot of land behind the rectory and hall, about four acres. He thought it could be used eventually for a convent and maybe a technical school. Some African Sisters, however, cautioned him against starting a tailoring school. “They said that women with tailoring skills have flooded the market. But perhaps a school having something to do with computers could be started.”

From 1993 to 1995 this land was used by the parish social concerns committee started by the Filipino Lay Missioners for growing corn and beans. In conjunction with the SCCs they identified about 120 very poor families, called special families, which were given bags of maize and tins of cooking oil at Christmas. They were also allowed to farm in the parish plot, each with his/her own small section. In 1995, though, Breen stopped the farming project. After discussing it with people in the parish, it was discovered that leaders of the committee were taking most of the harvest, even though they were not doing any of the farm work. Those doing the work were getting very little. Parishioners were also concerned about the squatters’ rights’ issue. They feared that the people doing the farming would claim these plots as theirs after five years, and the parish would not be able to remove them. The land has remained mostly unused since then, with one or two minor exceptions.

Donnelly also visited the primary schools. A third one had just opened when he arrived in Athi River. “I help them with religious education books, but initially I didn’t find the same cooperation as I found in Marafa.” However, by the end of his time in Athi River Donnelly had established good relations with all the schools, and was able to visit the primary schools from time to time.

At that time, little was done for secondary schools, except for the Mass on Sundays and trying to improve relations. In 1992, two of the catechists started a catechumenate for secondary school students, and usually taught groups of twenty to forty. The course ran from February to October, so the students could receive the sacraments before school exams started in mid-October.

In 1993 when Breen arrived, he was astounded to see the parish surrounded by four secondary schools, three of which bordered the parish plot: the huge Athi River Secondary School for boys and girls, boarding and day; the relatively new Mavoko Secondary School, a government day school for boys and girls; and Star Sheikh, a Muslim-sponsored private school for girls. The fourth school, Athi River Academy, was a quarter-mile down the road and was not well run. The priests and Lay Missioners were able to cooperate with the first three schools, but found cooperation with the academy impossible. Proximity to large secondary schools can come with a risk, since secondary school students in Kenya sometimes riot violently over perceived abuses (these are mislabeled strikes in Kenya; they are so mindless and destructive that the word riot is more accurate). Athi River Secondary did have a riot once, but fortunately it did not spill over to the parish compound.

Another important ministry of the Filipinos was to start SCCs. Donnelly said in 1992, "We have eleven SCCs functioning now, but since the Filipinos will be leaving next year I am skeptical that the SCCs will continue afterwards. I doubt that three years is sufficient to begin something like this." The following year, when Breen arrived, he found sixteen SCCs. Throughout his six year stay in Athi River, almost all continued to meet weekly, although attendance can go up and down. As has been observed in other urban parishes, urban Catholics have a felt need for gatherings like these. Cities and large towns have a mix of people from different ethnic groups, different social classes, and from different parts of the country. They can withdraw into small ethnic enclaves and ignore their neighbors. The Swahili word for SCC is *jumuiya*, a word which strongly implies coming together in a group to relate and cooperate with one another in a social way. It does not directly imply taking action to improve the general area nor to confront injustice, but these can be additional purposes if religious leaders educate SCC leaders and members about these gospel values.

By 1999, when Maryknoll turned the parish back to the diocese, SCCs were an intrinsic part of the structure of the parish. Members of the parish council were chosen from the SCCs, each one having a representative. Each weekend a different SCC was given the responsibility of cleaning the church, choosing the readers for Sunday Mass, and counting the money from the three collections. This direct work imparted a real sense of ownership of the parish to the people. During the Lenten Campaign each year, some SCCs prepared short dramas that they performed at Mass in place of the homily, to elaborate on the theme of the campaign for that particular Sunday. SCCs were located in the various neighborhoods of the parish, although two drew membership from throughout the parish: one made up chiefly of members of the senior choir, and another for older youth (i.e. those aged about nineteen to twenty-five). Breen said that:

I tried to attend SCC meetings, but the difficulty was that almost all met on Sunday afternoons. The few which met on weekday evenings were much more convenient for me. Mass was celebrated in the SCCs on a regular basis and sometimes infant baptisms also took place during SCC Masses. One important rule that Tom Donnelly put in for SCCs, which I followed completely, was to never use SCCs for fund-raising. Parishioners should know that the purposes of the SCC are to enrich faith and create community. Fund-raising can destroy the SCCs.

Other factors that impeded Breen's attendance at SCC meetings on Sunday afternoons were parish council meetings at that time, seminars in the hall on Sundays on occasion, which Breen often had organized, and saying Mass in distant outstations after saying a Mass at the parish.

The social justice conditions of Athi River also were a concern to Donnelly. He feared that industrial production from the factories may have been polluting the air, soil and water. A Dutch medical researcher came to Athi River to examine children and was communicating her findings to Donnelly and others on the parish staff. However, when the purpose of her research became known the Kenya government forced her to leave the country.

Donnelly started a Justice and Peace committee in the parish, although not all the members understood properly what its purpose was. They saw it more as a group that identified people in need, to whom aid could be given. One concern they had, though, was lack of a cemetery in Athi River. Despite education about this issue, and presenting their concerns to government officials, the town of Athi River has never allocated land for a cemetery. By the 1990s, land had become too scarce and valuable in Kenya, and especially in Athi River. The term 'land-grabbing' became popular, referring to powerful, politically-connected people who would arrange for land to be irregularly allocated to themselves. (Sons of President Moi were alleged to be prime culprits in the land-grabbing game.) Despite the good intentions of some town councilors, they did not have sufficient political clout to allocate any of the little land left for a cemetery.

The lack of a hospital in this growing town was also a concern to Donnelly. Several nurses at the Health Clinic were good Catholics and they informed him of various health issues. They were the first to acknowledge that the clinic was far too small for Athi River. Lack of progress in this was perplexing to all the Maryknollers who worked in Athi River. AIDS had become a critical national issue by the early 1990s, and with so much extra-marital sexual activity in the area this was an urgent public health issue. Donnelly said in 1992, "The two figures I've heard are ten and twenty percent HIV positive for the adult population. One of the nurses told me that she knows of ten deaths in the last eighteen months absolutely due to AIDS. But they don't have equipment to test for AIDS." As of 2010 there is still no hospital nor cemetery in Athi River, and this is despite the fact that it had been raised from a Division to a District in 2005. Normally every District has a District Hospital.

In April of 1993 the Filipino Lay Missioners returned to the Philippines. Donnelly said, "The Bishop refuses to support them. He is interested only in priests. But the Lay Missioner Program is interested in having others come in their place." The Kenya Region agreed to support two more Lay Missioners and in September, 1993, Margarita (Marge) Inhumang and Alice Marianito started language school. They arrived in Athi River in December, 1993, for a three-year term (Marianito left after two years, due to the death of her father).

In 1993, Donnelly also decided to terminate his stay at Athi River. He always felt insufficient in Swahili, an opinion not shared by the people of Athi River. More importantly, he also thought that the parish should be returned back to the diocese. He once said, "The roads to the outstations are very difficult on an older priest. This parish needs a young African priest with a motorcycle, who can easily get around to all the rural places." Relations with Bishop Kioko were never the best, either with Donnelly or Breen, since he showed no interest in the social conditions of Athi River's urban context. However, the Kenya Region thought it best to retain the parish and sought a new pastor. Metzger had a serious hearing problem and never learned Swahili. He was limited in what he could do, and he could never be a pastor. That year Breen was finishing up a five-year commitment to the Maryknoll Magazine and became available. Breen came in October, 1993, and Donnelly stayed to the end of November showing Breen all the matters pertaining to administration of the parish. Donnelly then went to Hawaii, where he did parish ministry for another ten years.

The change of pastor occurred just as population growth was starting to really take off. Donnelly surmised that the next stage of growth would be along the Mombasa highway, and that eventually the town would need another parish. This has not happened yet in the direction he anticipated, and in any event two new parishes were started: Mlolongo (cf below) and Kitengela. The latter is only two miles from Athi River, along the Arusha highway, but in the separate Diocese of Ngong. These are the two towns that have seen rapid growth, whereas Athi River's has been more moderate. Land in Athi River had already been allocated for industry and government purposes, such as schools. There was little land left in Athi River for housing development. Official statistics bear out the slower rate of growth in Athi River: in 1990 there were about 20,000 in the town, and in 2010 there were 25,000. That is growth of 25%, but not as much as was feared when Donnelly first arrived. (If one factors in the two towns near Athi River plus the rural parts of the parish, there were probably 30,000 in 1990 and at least 100,000 people in 2010.) However, residential growth along the Mombasa Highway has begun and the population of Athi River town may rise explosively in the next five years.

When Breen began as pastor his first overall task was to get to know the people of the parish, both in the town and the outstations. Since so many things were already in place, he said that "I did not want to change anything, but just follow all the procedures that Tom had shown me. Of course, Christmas was looming, so I also had to prepare for that." He started visiting SCCs in the town and the outstations according to the schedule that Donnelly had arranged.

Regarding outstations, Breen remarked:

There was a lack of church buildings in the outstations, except for a small mud-walled, dirt-floor building in one place. In the two parishes where I was in the 1970s and 1980s we had built many outstation churches, permanent cement-block buildings, and coming to Athi River was in a sense like going back to a pre-1970s church. I was surprised that it would be like starting all over again in this parish, at least as regards the outstations.

Four other new-comers arrived in the parish just as Breen became pastor, the two Filipino Lay Missioners mentioned above and Maryknoll Lay Missioners Dick and Bernadette Grant, social workers from Massachusetts. The latter were on a six-month assignment to practice Swahili prior to working in Nairobi. It was opined that they would have more need to use Swahili in Athi River than in Nairobi where English is very common. Of course, many people in Athi River also know English. The Grants rented a house very near the parish, which was located in a middle-class section of town. They took their supper meals at the rectory, which had a cook, and often Breen and the Grants went out at night for drinks. Beginning in January, 1994, Breen and the four lay missioners also toured the neighborhoods of the town together, and rode in Breen's pickup on one – very rough – tour of the outstations. In April, 1994, the Grants asked Breen if there was need for parish social workers, since they had grown accustomed to Athi River and liked the people they had come to know. Breen's response was, "I had been pastor for only five months and did not know all the social conditions of the parish, certainly not good enough to write up a job proposal. Several years later I could easily have done that, as there are many social needs in Athi River." The Grants went to Nairobi

in May, 1994, and worked with the committees providing assistance to and advocacy for slum-dwellers.

The Filipino Lay Missioners picked up from the work done by the previous group, working with women, with the social concerns committee – which was handing out food assistance to the special families that month of December – and with the girls' choir. They informed Breen that every year the girls' choir and the altar servers (all boys) are usually thanked in a special way, such as a trip somewhere. Breen arranged to take three groups on short trips, one to Machakos town (which he had never seen) and two to Nairobi. This led to the annual tour for the whole parish youth group, which included those in secondary school. Each year Breen rented buses from the Kenya Bus Service to take large groups, with chaperones, to places such as Nakuru National Park, Hellsgate Park near Naivasha, the Masinga Dam, Lake Magadi, and one long trip by train to Kisumu in his last year. The youth were charged a nominal fee of about one dollar, and he subsidized the rest. The Filipinos also went on these trips.

With regard to the phenomenon of single mothers in Athi River, Breen stated:

It was not till I had been in the parish two years that I started becoming fully cognizant that there were so many single women in the town and in the parish. In church men and women sit separately, so one cannot know who is single and who is married. In 1996, because we were totally involved in setting up school programs for out-of-school children, there was no way we could begin some kind of social outreach to women. The Filipinos had a great relationship with women, but Alice left at the beginning of 1996 and Marge at the end of the year.

They were a strange pair. Marge was the organized one and did a lot of work in the parish. I could depend on her for many things. Alice was the opposite. Every month she changed her mind about what she should do. She never learned Swahili and did not speak English well either. But she seemingly knew the name of every woman in the town. I was in awe of that ability.

There is a gnawing need for the Church to have people, probably women social workers, to work full-time with the single mothers and the many other single women in towns like Athi River. They are the most disadvantaged and exploited humans in the world and their children have the least opportunities to advance in society. I wish I had known this in 1994, when Dick and Bernadette Grant asked me if there was something they could do in Athi River.

Work with catechists became one of Breen's priorities, over the course of his six years.

Establishing good personal relations with each of them was important in the beginning. I started organizing seminars for them, for education purposes and to give them opportunities for discussion. The parish also had a special thank-you party for them each year and I remember once taking them to Thika for a tour and meal at the hotel there. I always enjoyed home-visiting and visited the homes of each of the catechists.

We also started sending catechists to catechetical training centres, such as Kitale, which was a long way from Athi River, and to another in Machakos Diocese. One famous highlight was a one-day retreat for all the catechists held at the Maryknoll Center House in 1998, conducted by Fr. John Lange. Twenty-five catechists attended that retreat, more 'catechists' than I think we actually had. In my final two years in Athi River I offered a monthly seminar in the outstation of Kinanie for all the catechists of the rural outstations, plus for any from the town who wished to go out with me. About ten to fifteen would attend and the day would include a very good lunch at a small restaurant. These lessons were on the upcoming readings for the next four Sundays and were really scripture lessons.

Donnelly had said that few people received communion in Athi River, but that was not the case by the time Breen came. He estimated that 200 to 300 people were receiving communion at each of the two Swahili Masses on Sunday, and at least 100 at the English Mass. The priest was alone at the Mass since the other priest had gone to an outstation and distributing communion was taking up an inordinate amount of time. Even though he did not wish to bring changes, Breen asked the parish council to recommend worthy parishioners who could be Eucharistic ministers. They had to be people married in church, receiving the sacraments and respected in the community, both men and women. They were given seminars on Eucharistic theology and Vatican II liturgical recommendations, and publicly installed at the 10:00 AM Mass. Each was given a Crucifix and chain to wear while distributing communion, and they normally donned albs as well. The only condition that the parish council requested was that the women ministers wear a veil on their heads, in accordance with traditional African culture.

Visiting people in the evenings also became normative for Breen in all the years he was in Athi River.

We had an electricity problem in the town. The electricity would go off at 7:00 PM, just when it got dark, and would not come on till about 9:00 PM or later. So I would go out. Sometimes it would be to a Small Christian Community, often it would be to visit families, and sometimes I would just go out to have a drink somewhere and read a book. Later, when Jim Roy came to Athi River, we would go out to a place in Kitengela where we could have a cappuccino.

The parish hall was seen as a great asset and Breen tried to schedule as many seminars or meetings as possible. The school vacation months were opportune times for seminars for youth. During the rest of the year a variety of seminars and talks were scheduled for adults. Occasionally, movies were shown in the hall, using a television set and video player. This had limited effectiveness since the TV was not big, and anywhere from fifty to a hundred people would come to try to watch the movie. Breen said, "We had a video of the movie version of 'Sarafina,' the Broadway show about South Africa, and we scheduled showings of it to all the secondary school students from the four schools, although Athi River Academy refused. I think it took about ten showings to cover all the students." The hall was also used for dramas put on by the parish drama troupe, and for various special celebrations during the year.

Two annual celebrations were noted by Breen:

One was the St. Jude celebration, held on the fourth Sunday of October, as close to the feast day of St. Jude as possible. The whole parish would turn out for a big 10:00 AM Mass and hundreds of people would come from Machakos and Nairobi. After Mass everyone was invited to the hall for soda and cookies. The collections from this Mass and from a parish October collection were used by the Social Concerns committee to give out food and clothing to the poor at Christmas.

The other annual celebration in the hall was on Christmas Day. My first Christmas I noticed that many youth were wandering around that afternoon. I was leaving for a few days off, which was my routine when in rural parishes. In the rural area people have their own family celebrations on Christmas and for a few days afterward. But in Athi River those who stayed in the town had no party and nothing to do. So, beginning on Christmas of 1994 we invited in people from the town and especially from the slums to compete in fun-filled games, like sack-racing or blind-folded attempts to break a gourd filled with candy. Then everyone would go into the hall for tea, cookies and cake. This usually drew four or five hundred people, mainly children and their mothers, and mostly from the slums. I was greatly helped in this by the Filipino Lay Missioners and some of the older youth. I also had several very good women whom I hired to prepare food in the hall.

The hall was also used by the youth a lot. There was a basketball court there, and games for them to play in the hall. When Fr. Dave Lemkuhl, a Maryknoll Associate priest from Cincinnati, came in 1997, he put in a full schedule of youth activities in the hall every weekend, and every day during vacation months. The youth activities would be temporarily suspended, though, when other activities were scheduled.

Setting up a systematic course on scripture, a deep interest of Breen, proved more difficult.

People work, which meant weekdays were out, and they did not want to come at night. Weekends were difficult for me, because of all the other things I had to do. There were just a few times I taught something on scripture in the hall, for a few hours only. The exception was the ongoing course for catechists in rural outstations. I had very good commentaries on the bible and used these for my sermons on Sundays. So the Sunday sermons were where scriptural teaching took place.

I think my most long-lasting contribution was my preaching on the bible and social justice. It was obvious that people paid attention to these sermons and appreciated a new understanding of the bible's relevance to modern times. I remember seeing once while preaching that one man had notepaper and a pen. He was taking notes of my sermon, which was a good compliment.

Meeting with the Justice and Peace Committee of the parish was a priority for Breen. They informed him of the town's need for a cemetery and hospital. In Lent of 1994, and in each subsequent Lent, this group spearheaded the Lenten Campaign in the parish, which was a series of readings and discussions for SCCs. To introduce the topic

for the week, different people would either talk at Mass during the sermon time or a group would put on a short skit. Prior to Lent each year, several people from this committee were sent to the Leadership Centre in Thika, run by a German priest who gave excellent lessons in matters of social justice, to get input on the new Lenten Campaign. This centre had other two to five-day courses during the year - for women, for catechists, for SCC leaders – and Breen sent many lay people there from Athi River. This centre was actually for the Archdiocese of Nairobi, but there was nothing comparable in Machakos.

When Breen came to the parish, the Social Justice committee gave him the names of two students who had excellent marks in primary school, but were about to leave secondary school due to lack of money for fees. Both were girls and they were in the best girls' schools of the province. The committee asked Breen to pay for these students, which he agreed to. He said, "I have always paid fees for a few students in parishes where I worked, but didn't want to get caught up in this. I unfortunately relented to the request of the committee, which led to my assisting scores of students in subsequent years. Once you help one or two from the parish, it is hard to say no to others."

Up till 1994 growth in the outstations was going very slowly. Only one place had built their own church, a small mud building on the edge of a farmer's plot. Others used school classrooms, or whatever room they could get. But the number of Catholics kept increasing in the outstations, and by 1999, when Maryknoll handed the parish back to the diocese, four places had built churches, in addition to Mlolongo, and had experienced a healthy growth in the number of Catholics. Daystar University, which is within the parish boundaries, also got its own Catholic chaplain, removing that responsibility from Athi River Parish. A wealthy Catholic woman who lived next to Daystar helped build a beautiful chapel for the Catholic students.

The roads to the outstations can be terrible, particularly in heavy rains. Maryknollers who have worked in very rural parts of Tanzania can find it hard to believe that a parish on the outskirts of Nairobi can have places that are unreachable for several months at a time. This might have been the original factor thwarting development of the outstations by the priests. When Breen arrived with his four-wheel drive pickup, which he had used in Bura Parish previously, he was able to go out to the outstations more frequently. He and the Filipino Lay Missioners in the parish offered seminars for Catholics in the outstations, and on-going instructions for the catechists. This regular outreach and dependable Mass service cemented the outstations' attachment to the parish.

In addition, Breen says, "We tried to start an outstation council, since representatives from the outstations seldom came in to the parish council meeting. This proved very unwieldy, since it was seen as a duplicate council. At one meeting of the outstation council the Chairman of the Parish Council came. The Outstation Council also had its own Chairman, and each of them kept referring to the other as chairman. This was a clever way of showing me that there can be only one parish council." The outstation council was abandoned, but due to lack of dependable transport from the rural areas representatives from the outstations only rarely came to the parish council meeting.

What turned out to be the biggest outstation started out very tiny, a place called Mlolongo on the Nairobi road halfway between Athi River and the airport. There is a weighbridge there, and all lorries have to stop to be weighed. For policemen, this is

considered the most lucrative police posting in the country. Lorries persistently overload, even by many tons, ruining the paved roads. However, they avoid penalties and expensive fines by paying handsome bribes to the traffic police. One bribe can be equal to a month's wage. A parishioner of Mlolongo once told Breen, "A policeman working here can retire after six or eight months. He has made so much money he can buy a big plot of land back home in the rural area and build a nice house."

When Breen took over from Donnelly in 1993, saying Mass in Mlolongo had only just begun. There were only a few stores and other buildings off to one side of the road, and only about twenty Catholics. Mass was said in a small room of a dispensary. Mlolongo was growing quickly, though, and more Catholics began showing up, most of them men working in the many factories that had sprung up in the area. A former Member of Parliament, a Catholic who lived in Mlolongo, helped Bishop Kioko to obtain a sizeable plot of land next to the primary school, and Breen started saying Mass in the open field – wearing a large hat throughout to avoid sunburn. An Indian man, also a Catholic, who owned a factory in the area, donated a very large sum of money to augment a local fund-raising effort, and a church, sixty by twenty feet, was built in short order. The Indian man also connected the church plot with the town water supply. As soon as the church was built, the congregation increased exponentially, filling the church to the brim every Sunday. The priests declared it a sub-parish (which did not mean too much in actuality) and agreed to having a priest come from Nairobi to say Sunday Mass when the priest from Athi River did not come. In 1999, Bishop Kioko was able to bring in a missionary order from India to open a new parish in Mlolongo. Today, 2010, Mlolongo has grown so large it is like a separate town. The Kenya government has also recognized that it needs to be separated from Athi River's municipal authority, and be given its own town council. The extremely rapid, and unplanned, growth of Mlolongo would make a good case study of African urban growth dynamics.

There was a need for something in Athi River also since the St. Jude Church had become too small for the congregation by 1995. The 10:00 AM Mass had close to 600 people crowded in the pews and another 150 sitting outside for the whole Mass. Breen and Fr. Jim Roy, who replaced Metzger in 1996, thought that a second church, in a different part of Athi River, would be of benefit. Parishioners had collected over Shs. 200,000/- (about \$4,000.00 at that time) to expand the church, but questions about the viability of this surfaced because of the black cotton soil. A plot of land was being sold in the opposite end of Athi River and the priests recommended that they buy this plot and put up a moderate-sized multi-purpose building. The parish council was not in favor, and preferred expanding the church. More money would have been needed for church expansion, and the priests were wary of having a large fund-raiser (called Harambee) since this often means inviting a wealthy politician who might have been implicated in corrupt gain of government money. When Breen and Roy left in 1999, this issue had not been resolved. The diocesan priest who replaced them agreed with the parish council and a huge Harambee fund-raising was held, led by Minister George Saitoti, who had been implicated in the Goldenburg scandal in 1992. Over a million shillings was raised and the church expansion was done. There is now sufficient seating for everyone at Mass and there do not seem to be any structural problems with the church building

Breen's final four years were consumed very much by a school program he oversaw. In late 1994 a Catholic woman from one of the SCCs informed Breen of five children who were not in school. They were going to someone's house during the day trying to do some learning of school subjects. Breen paid for them to go to the KMC Primary School, although the oldest boy left school some months later. Physical punishment was regularly meted out at this school, but this boy told the teacher that under no circumstances would he agree to be beaten. The teacher responded that the boy had no alternative but to leave school. The other four remained at this school for another year or two, but eventually Breen had to take them to St. Paul Primary School for the same reason – excessive physical punishment at KMC Primary School.

Because of these experiences Breen organized a course of six sessions about non-violent methods of maintaining discipline in schools, given by a social psychologist from Amani Counseling Center to a group of twenty teachers at the parish hall. Each primary and secondary school chose several teachers to attend, many of them young, educated men and women. They greatly appreciated this course, and they received certificates showing they had completed the course. The only exception was KMC Primary School, where physical punishment was so rampant. The Headmaster chose himself to take the course, seldom attended the sessions, and rejected non-violent methods of maintaining school order, claiming they were not applicable for Kenya. Changing fundamental attitudes is a generational matter.

Awareness of out-of-school children led to a much larger program. In 1995 Breen went around to all the poor areas of the parish doing a survey of children not in school, writing down names of them and their parents – usually a single mother. He also asked a university student home on vacation to find out how many children were not in primary school. The results were that of 2,800 children aged six to fourteen only 2,100 were in school; fully one quarter of the town's children had either not enrolled or dropped out. That year Alice Marianito was also overseeing a nursery school in a slum across the Mombasa highway, and she begged Breen to find a way to enable these children to join Standard One (First Grade) the next year. They decided to start an informal school, similar to schools in the slums of Nairobi, and Marianito was asked to be in charge of the school. They went to the Division Education Office to register the school, which would use the parish hall and have only the first grade in 1996.

According to Breen:

The Education Office knew of the problem but was not in favor of a free school on parish property. They preferred that the parish take the children to the government schools. The office recommended a compromise: they would register the seventy-five students in the hall for one year, but the parish was asked to build additional classrooms in St. Paul Primary School to cater for the additional students who would be joining Standard Two in 1997. This was agreed to and I budgeted for a new block at St. Paul's, containing three classrooms, an office and a school library, which were built in 1996.

It was in January, 1996, that Marianito's father died in the Philippines, and she returned there. Breen hired three women, all with some teaching experience, to teach the children in the hall, which had extra rooms that could be used as classrooms. These

women did an excellent job, and the children were all prepared to go to Standard Two at the government school in 1997.

Breen also related a very bizarre incident that happened prior to the school being opened in the hall.

I was informed by the local Education Office, which supported us, that my name had been taken to the District Security Committee, claiming the money for the free school came from the Safina Political Party of Kenya, which had been started by an outspoken politician opposed to President Moi's regime. One of the women in the local education office was a good Catholic and a former Parish Council Chairwoman, and she and the head of the local office assured the District officials in Machakos that the money was coming from Maryknoll, from the U.S.

It was only a year later that I found out what happened. In 1996 the Chief of Athi River and some Town Councilors had started a fourth government school, called Kanaani, and thought the parish free school was started to compete with them. School committees are notoriously corrupt and they wanted as many students to go to Kanaani School as possible, to increase the amount of money available. It was the Chief who took my name to the District Commissioner.

Since my sermons often connected the scripture readings of Sunday Mass with themes of social justice, both in ancient times and in the modern world, there were people who thought I was talking about politics. There are political inferences that can be drawn from themes of social justice, but I never talked about political parties or candidates. Confusion on this made it possible for the Chief to take charges against me to the District. But in the end, nothing came of these charges.

In 1997, we took not only those seventy-five children from the parish hall, but over two hundred other out-of-school children, who went into Standards One to Seven. When I found out about Kanaani School, I built two classrooms there and another two in 1998, meaning that the Catholic Church in Athi River built seven classrooms in government-run schools. I took close to 100 children to Kanaani School, almost as many as to St. Paul's. Suddenly the Chief saw me not as a competitor but an ally. He gave me the symbolic key to the town of Athi River!

Breen visited Kanaani Primary School in July, 2010. The four classrooms made of tin sheets are still being used, but several new classrooms made of cement blocks have been added to the school in the ensuing years. In addition to the four government schools, there are also several private primary schools, usually called academies, in Athi River.

In all, three hundred children were assisted by the program, which continued to 1999. Parents were informed that they would be responsible for paying fees for their children in the future. Breen said, "Some of these children later dropped out of school, but almost all of them finished Standard Eight." In 2003, the new administration of President Mwai Kibaki abolished fees at primary schools, and over one million additional children enrolled in schools all over the country. In spite of this, there are still many children who either do not start primary school or drop out before finishing. This is usually due to the cost: school committees charge fees for other things, teachers charge

exorbitant amounts for private tuition, which is mandatory, and all students have to have uniforms.

To any American observer the practice of mandatory private tuition outside of school hours, forced by almost every teacher in Kenya, both in primary and secondary schools, is the most blatant injustice corrupting the educational system. Yet, for reasons that an American can not understand, Kenyans do not object to this. Teachers make as much, or usually much more, from the private tuition than from their government salaries. However, Kenyans are used to paying bribes or private payments (which in fact are also bribes) to government officials, including to doctors and nurses in government hospitals and health clinics, and seemingly view paying for private tuition as just the Kenyan way. These payments, though, which range from \$20.00 to up to \$40.00 a year per student in primary school, and from \$25.00 to \$50.00 in secondary school, are beyond the means of millions of Kenyans, resulting in many children still not attending school and making a mockery of official statements that school fees have been abolished.

Another school assistance program had been started in 1995. A Catholic woman from the parish, Jillian Brown, who was director of a dispensary and nursing home five miles away, approached Ted Metzger about starting a school lunch program in the hall every day for about 100 children from St. Paul Primary School. She came to the school and weighed each child, using objective criteria to choose the pupils. Two women were hired to cook the food every day, and Brown insisted that on Friday meat be added so the children could have a very substantial meal. She said that some of these children would not eat again over the weekend. For many of the children, the lunch in the hall was the only meal they ate all day. This program continued until Maryknoll left the parish, after which it could not be continued. Although Brown raised money from wealthy people in Nairobi whom she knew, the priests provided most of the funding for this program. In 2003, four years after Maryknoll had left Athi River, word was received in the U.S. that Brown had been murdered by armed robbers at her home.

In all parishes staffed by Maryknollers financial self-reliance is an important objective, and this was true in Athi River. Breen began producing full financial reports every three months, listing all sources of income and the various ways money was spent. These were placed on the bulletin board outside church, and were carefully read by many, many parishioners. There were probably many factors in the increase of parish income from 1994 to 1999, but Breen believes that full financial disclosure was a major factor. Total income in 1994 was Shs. 300,000/-, and by 1998 that had tripled to 900,000/-. Construction accounted for a significant portion of the expenditures. Building projects included outstation churches and expansion of the parish hall to include a storeroom, an office, a kitchen with running water and adequate space for cooking food for a hundred or more, and two extra classrooms. The classrooms were used after the Maryknollers' departure for a tailoring class for women and computer studies.

Another area needing attention was water delivery to the parish. The town was getting water from the Mount Kilimanjaro water system three hundred kilometers southeast – and about three thousand feet lower in altitude. By 1995, water was coming to the parish sporadically and with little pressure. The priests budgeted for larger pipes and reserve tanks in 1996, which solved the problem. The town also switched to the Nairobi water system and began receiving water from the Ndakaini Dam sixty kilometers

northwest of Nairobi. From late 1996 to the middle of the 2000's first decade there was plenty of water for the parish. Around 2005, however, Athi River was cut off from this source of water and since then the town has experienced serious water shortages.

Lack of water led to a misunderstanding with the diocese in August, 1995. Breen explains:

I was in the U.S. on furlough and was not involved in planning a huge, overnight youth rally that the diocese wanted to hold at our parish. I returned to Athi River to learn that in a week or so one thousand youth would be coming for a youth festival that would last all day and all night and that our parish had to provide all the food and water. That was when we were completely out of water and furthermore we had no pit latrines on the compound. I sent word to Machakos Parish and to one or two other parishes to send only twenty-five youth from each parish. That was all we could accommodate. But this was misunderstood. They thought I was trying to prevent the youth rally. They ignored my request and hundreds of youth came, as well as some diocesan priests. It was embarrassing because we had no water at all.

The topic of AIDS came up in discussions from time to time, and in 1997 a number of people of the parish recommended that something be done to educate the youth about this scourge. More importantly, they wanted to find a way to enable young people to avoid contraction of this sexually transmitted disease. After discussions with catechists and school teachers, they decided on a new course of action.

We decided that the Confirmation course would be a full-year course, with two of the terms devoted to teaching the psychology of sexual attraction, of boy-girl relationships, and all the physical changes taking place in young people. Before this, the course was just three or four classes on the sacrament itself. We also pushed the age to Standard Five or ten years old. Several catechists were chosen to teach this course and given special training. We bought a number of teaching aids and books to help them in their preparation. Furthermore, during the year we invited in various people, such as a nurse, a psychologist and some others, to give the children special talks. I had at first thought that the level should be Standard Seven, about twelve or thirteen years old, but teachers told me that many children are becoming sexually active at age ten or even earlier.

The third term of the course was on the Holy Spirit and the sacrament itself.

It is not known if this course continued after Maryknoll left the parish in 1999. In July, 2010, Breen visited Athi River and found a Confirmation course being taught to about sixty children of about age eleven to thirteen in the hall every Sunday after the youth Mass.

In 1998 the new Chairman of the Parish Council informed Breen that he had retired from his very good job working for the food catering company at Kenyatta International Airport. This gave him time to do something for the parish, and he

suggested he could obtain the title deed for the parish plot, since he took trips to Nairobi once or twice a week and knew people in the Ministry of Lands. This ministry can be one of the most aggravating and corrupt of all the ministries in Kenya. Over the course of six or eight months he took fifty or more trips to the Ministry building, with the parish subsidizing some of these trips. The parish also paid for an official survey of the land, and for other necessary expenses required by the Ministry. However, Breen adds, "We never paid a bribe. Finally the Chairman came to the parish with the Title Deed. We put it in a glass frame and took photos of members of the parish council holding the title deed. We put a large copy of one photo on the wall outside the church and then the Chairman took the title deed into Bishop Kioko to officially present it to him."

In 1996 Jim Roy was finishing up at Marafa Parish in Mombasa Archdiocese. Breen felt that another priest who spoke Swahili was needed in Athi River, and because of their previous good relationship he asked if Roy could replace Ted Metzger in Athi River. Metzger was good working with small groups in English, and Breen recommended that various assignments could be found for him in Nairobi. Metzger worked in Nairobi for the rest of that year and then retired in his home of Rochester, NY.

Roy made the deepening of faith his priority in Athi River, visiting SCCs, conducting seminars in the hall on faith, and going around the parish talking with people. He was the one who celebrated the 7:00 AM Mass most mornings, and increased attendance from ten to about twenty or more. He had a four-wheel drive vehicle, which enabled him to go to outstations. Prior to his coming Breen had done almost all the outstation work.

In 1997 another Associate priest came to Athi River, Fr. Dave Lemkuhl from Cincinnati. He made work with youth a priority, in part because he found it difficult to pick up Swahili well. He devised many programs and activities for the youth, and sent many to the National Youth Centre in Nairobi. He also began a large program of paying school fees for secondary school students of Athi River, with donations from his home diocese. By 1999 he was assisting over a hundred a year and it necessitated him asking for a spare room in back of the church for office use. Youth came by the office almost every day, and he established very good relations with them. Because of his language limitations, he usually took the third Mass in English at the parish and went to Daystar University for Mass. Community prayer was also important for Lemkuhl and Roy, and they read the breviary together each evening.

Lemkuhl also re-started the young adult group, those in their twenties, who formed a Small Christian Community that met in the hall one evening a week. That group attracted more than twenty young adults, who appreciated the opportunity to discuss their faith together, often talking for two or more hours.

Lemkuhl also had an interest in gardening, and started two small farming projects which included youth involvement. One project used crates in the back yard of the parish, in which he put soil and plant nutrients prior to planting various vegetables. For the second project he asked if he could extend irrigation piping to the unused field behind the parish hall. He demarcated a plot of about one acre, and helped the youth to plant many different types of vegetable and grain crops. The irrigation insured good crop yields.

In 1999 both Breen and Roy decided to return to the U.S., due to personal and family situations in the U.S., and they felt the parish was ready to be turned back to the

diocese. In his final four months in Athi River Breen helped a local slum-dwellers' group raise money, which they hoped to use to buy land. In all, about \$5,000.00 was raised, which Breen deposited in a savings account at Kenya Commercial Bank in Kitengela. To prevent misuse of the money after his departure from Athi River, he gave the Account card and deposit information to Kituo Cha Sheria (Swahili for the Legal Aid Society), to which Lay Missioner Christine Bodewes was attached. In 2004, Breen was informed by the social worker in Athi River that the group bought land along the Mombasa Highway and that some of the slum dwellers had moved there.

Maryknoll's decision to withdraw from Athi River caught the diocese by surprise, but they had four months to prepare. Beginning in 1994 the Diocese of Machakos was having thirteen or more ordinations each year and had greatly increased the number of young Kamba priests. After Easter of 1999 the new pastor came to Athi River and Breen spent a week helping him adjust and learn all aspects of running this large parish. Since then there have usually been two priests assigned to the parish and often a third living at the parish but doing full-time ministry at Daystar University.

Lemkuhl remained in Kenya for three more years, and was made Director of the National Youth Centre in Ruaraka, Nairobi. He ran many different programs there, and in 2002 arranged for about forty Kenyan youth to travel to the Catholic World Youth Festival in Toronto, Canada. When his contract ended he returned to the Diocese of Cincinnati.

In July, 2010, Breen visited Athi River Parish, officially named St. Jude Catholic Parish, for a weekend and was warmly welcomed by the priests stationed there. The parish was on its third group of pastor and assistant pastors since Maryknoll left the parish eleven years previously. A seminarian in theology at St. Thomas Major Seminary was also doing pastoral work in the parish. The parish is a huge, flourishing parish, with three Masses at the main church every Sunday, all totally full. The schedule is slightly changed, with the youth Mass first, followed by two Masses for adults (many adults also go to the youth Mass). Each Mass has its own choir, all superb, and groups of girls who rhythmically perform the various processions of the Mass. On Sunday mornings there are large groups of children receiving instructions in the hall for the sacraments of Baptism, First Communion and/or Confirmation and another large group of very young children attending the so-called 'Sunday School' Service. The adults also have their catechumenate on Sunday mornings. A committed group of catechists, including some members of the youth group, do the teaching.

Parish income has continued to go up and in Kenya Shillings is now triple what it was in the year 1999. There are fewer outstations in the parish today than in 1998, but several have large churches built of cement blocks, and all of the outstations receive regular service. The priests asked the people to donate food for the priests' upkeep, which the parishioners have faithfully complied with. Two major construction projects were done at St. Jude: the expansion of the church to hold about 1000 people, and the addition of a special chapel to St. Jude beside the church. Church matters are conducted in Swahili in Athi River, but Kamba language might possibly be used in the rural outstations where all the Catholics are Kamba.

There are now more than twenty Small Christian Communities in the town, all meeting regularly every week. Many of them have bought their own insignia or uniform

clothes to use when performing official duties at the church and have also bought their own bibles and other books to use during their meetings in people's houses. As has become commonplace in other parts of East Africa, fundraising has become a major aspect of the SCCs in Athi River. The primary purpose and most important accomplishment of SCCs have been the building of community and increase in participation by the Christians, in their own neighborhoods and at the parish level. The priests come to the SCCs to celebrate Mass on regular occasions, enabling relationships between priests and people to be personal. However, the extent to which the SCCs facilitate greater faith enrichment is not clear.

The town still has some slum areas and its share of social problems, although not close to the scale of Nairobi. Much of Athi River itself is either working class or middle class, with a few wealthy people living in the town. Since 2009 the government has been building an extension of the divided highway, two lanes on each side, from the airport to beyond Athi River. This may be completed in 2011 or 2012 and will improve the traffic conditions heading to Nairobi. Given the enormous and rapid expansion of middle-class housing developments out to and beyond Athi River, it will be interesting to see if the government puts it within the envisioned Metropolitan Nairobi. Athi River was raised to District status a few years ago and can be easily culled off from Eastern Province, once the new County administrative structure and new borders come into effect. However, there will be ethnic politics to deal with regarding Athi River, which remains predominantly Kamba. The other two towns of Mlolongo and Kitengela can more easily be made part of Nairobi, since the first is multi-tribal with no dominant ethnic group and the latter is predominantly Kikuyu (with some Maasai). Whether the parishes in these three towns would then become part of the Archdiocese of Nairobi is a question that so far is not being asked.

The new century has brought with it a new set of challenges unforeseen when Maryknoll began in the small, sleepy town of Athi River in 1988. There is no question that the Church has been firmly established in this area and that the parishes are serving the people's religious needs. It will be fascinating to observe how the Church responds to the broader questions of societal change and demographic tensions in the coming years.

It is unfortunate that Maryknoll can only be an observer of how the Kenyan Church addresses critical issues in coming years, since almost every Maryknoll priest and Brother in Kenya is either retired or at retirement age. Maryknoll can look back with pride at its efforts to firmly establish the Church in over a half dozen parishes in and around Nairobi, but in 2011 we are talking about work that took place ten to thirty years ago. The local Church has come into its own, is definitely in charge, and has many more personnel in the former Maryknoll parishes than Maryknoll ever had. Maryknoll now places its faith in the Kenyan Church to discern the Spirit in the urban situation and enable the Kenyan people to benefit rather than regress from the complex and ambiguous conditions and opportunities being created by the constantly burgeoning growth of the City of Nairobi.