



Lay Salvatorians USA, International Community of the Divine Savior

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Witnessing History: Lay Salvatorians' First Commitment in Tanzania

I am thrilled to share with you the incredible journey I embarked on to Tanzania to witness a historic moment in the expansion of our Salvatorian family. It was a privilege to be present for the commitment of the first group of Lay Salvatorians in Tanzania, an event that will undoubtedly leave an indelible mark on our shared mission.

As I stepped off the plane and into the warm embrace of Tanzania's vibrant culture, I couldn't help but feel the weight of the moment. The growth of Lay Salvatorians in this beautiful African nation signifies our commitment to spreading the Salvatorian charism far and wide, embodying Blessed Francis Jordan's vision of a united Salvatorian family.



Tanzania Lay Salvatorian Commitment Mass, September 2, 2023

The commitment ceremony took place in a modest but spiritually rich setting. In the presence of Salvatorian Priests, Brothers, Sisters and fellow Lay Salvatorians from the United States and the Democratic Republic of Congo, our Tanzanian brothers and sisters made their commitment. The sincerity and devotion with which they approached this commitment was truly heartwarming. It was a testament to the universality of our mission and the power of our shared faith.

The commitment of the first group of Lay Salvatorians in Tanzania not only marks a significant milestone but also opens up



new horizons for our work in this region. These dedicated individuals are now equipped to play an active role in serv-

ing their communities, spreading the message of salvation, and working towards a more just and compassionate world. Their enthusiasm is contagious and serves as an inspiration to us all. During my time in Tanzania, I had the privilege of witnessing this with my family which at times was overwhelming for all of us from our Salvatorian greeting at the airport to our final send off as well. The Lay Salvatorian commitment to the Salvatorian mission is already transforming lives, and it is a joy to see.

As I returned home, I carried with me not only the memory of this momentous occasion but also a renewed sense of purpose. Our Salvatorian family is growing, reaching new corners of the world, and I have no doubt that the Lay Salvatorians in Tanzania will continue to shine as a beacon of hope and salvation.



Newly Committed TZ Lay Salvatorians receiving a copy of the International Community of the Divine Savior Statutes

~ Bobby Pantuso

A Three Year Journey Worth Sharing

For three years we, members of the US Lay Salvatorians, have been communicating with Fr. Boniface and Sisters Yasinta and Jane in Tanzania by zoom and email. The topic was Lay Formation. We sent guidance and encouragement to the formators. Several other African countries already

have committed Lay, but not Tanzania.



They even had tests!



Candidates in Formation

When the time for their commitment came, we wanted to be there to share their joy.

The Commitment Mass lasted 4 hours, and the celebration lasted another 4 hours.

In the days after the celebration, we had the opportunity to meet with each group

and share our stories and what it means to us to be Lay Salvatorians.

When we met with each group, we shared



National Director, Bobby Pantuso addresses the assembly



Members from Sinza Parish in Dar es Salaam

our thoughts on being a Lay Salvatorian. Having a large group of American Lay people added to the stories. Each of us had a different message to share.

Many of the new Lay Salvatorians speak English, when needed there was also translation from Swahili

US Lay Salvatorians with translator sharing in Masasi



to English for us.

I wish everyone could have been there to share this experience and to see the joy in their eyes. It certainly made me consider my joy in being a Lay Salvatorian and reassess my commitment.

I was impressed with their eagerness to begin some sort of ministry. They discussed raising money for wells by baking bread and selling it. They continue to meet together for prayer and ongoing formation.

Another joy was seeing the collaboration that is growing between the three branches of the Salvatorian family. They have plans for Masses together and working together in ministry and service.

And they are growing. There is another group still finishing formation and another group that will start soon. ~ Sue Haertel

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Salvatorian Family Alive and Well!

Salvatorians first arrived in Tanzania as missionary priests, brothers and sisters from the United States and Europe. Through the decades, the local Congregation and Society took root and grew, while the West continued to provide much-needed material support. Over time, what has developed is a strengthening of Salvatorian collaboration, universality and inclusiveness ... indeed, friendship and family. It was an honor to represent the USA Province of the Society at the first commitment of the Lay Salvatorians in Tanzania on September 2. But on a more personal level, it was wonderful to reconnect with friends--sister and brother Salvatorians--and more importantly, to make new friends in the Salvatorian Family.





What most impressed me from this visit was the way the ICDS has been embraced, not only by the new

Lay Salvatorians, but by the Salvatorian Family as a true expression of our common Salvatorian charism. From the years of preparation and formation to the four-hour commitment ceremony, Salvatorians from all branches have been working together to build up the Family in Tanzania. While there is still a long road ahead for these new members, the events on and around September 2 felt like a kind of completion, as if the Salvatorian Family was now "whole" and the founding vision was being realized on a much deeper level. Now we are able to count thirty-six exceptional individuals as new friends ... as Family.
~ Fr. Jeff Wocken



As a Salvatorian Sister, I had the opportunity to attend the celebration of commitment of 36 Lay Salvatorians in Tanzania on September 2, 2023. This was truly a historic moment, a further expression of the vision of our Founder, Blessed Francis Jordan. For me personally, this trip was a deeply transforming experience, a pilgrimage. When I boarded the plane in Milwaukee on August

23, I thought of myself as a Salvatorian Sister; when I returned three weeks later, I was thinking of myself as a Salvatorian, a member of the Salvatorian Family.

Having witnessed the enthusiasm of Lay Salvatorians in Tanzania, I feel more deeply connected to our universal Salvatorian mission. We Salvatorians work alongside people in many situations to improve the quality of life in places all around the world. While we were in Tanzania, we visited the Salvatorian Sisters Pre- and Primary School in Buyuni and the Kindergarten of Mother of the Savior Parish in Nakapanya; we visited two Salvatorian parishes in the city of Dar

Novices and Sisters at Masasi



es Salaam and were welcomed at several Salvatorian parishes near Msata along the road toward Morogoro; we visited Health Centers at Lupaso, and Nakapnaya; we were welcomed by Salvatorian Seminarians at Nakapanya as well as the Novices of the Sisters in Makaluni. We were welcomed for dinner at the home of one of the Lay Salvatorians who lives near Ndanda and is very proud to be a Lay Salvatorian. The newly committed Lay Salvatorians in Tanzania are already working alongside Salvatorian Sisters, Brothers,



and Priests throughout Tanzania. Salvatorians in Tanzania work in schools, parishes, and health centers. Wherever we are, we reach out to women and men, children and families. Our work as Salvatorians is to make the Savior known in all places, by all ways and means. In 2023 Jordan's vision continues to spread worldwide. The celebration of Commitment of 36 new Lay Salvatorians in Dar es Salaam on September 2 was truly a historic moment in our Salvatorian history, and an indication of the growing importance of the Laity in the Church.

~ Sr. Barbara Reynolds



A Long Awaited Vision

After trying for 20 years we have the first Lay Salvatorians in Tanzania! 20 years ago Mark and I tried to start formation but there was no one who would take the lead. Finally, thanks to Fr. Boniface, we have a solid new group of members within the International Community of the Divine Savior.



The commitment ceremony was so very inspiring. Just the look on their faces made me so happy to be a part of this great event. The new committed were very happy to be a part of our worldwide family. Between the music and the recitation of the commitment it was a very touching moment. Also in true Tanzanian fashion it lasted just about the whole day. Finishing with food and music.

When we met with them the next day and also later in the South, it was quite evident that they were taking this commitment seriously. They are a group who are very dedicated to "making Jesus Christ known" in every way. Their hospitality was outstanding. The meals they made for us were really great. May God bless them in their road ahead. ~ Mary Jo Verke



The value of Lay Salvatorians to parishes was realized by the vowed SDS Priests, Brothers and Sisters in the Pro-Province of Tanzania, East Africa in September 2023. I am happy to have attended the 12 hour commitment ceremony with the Bishop of Morogoro Lazarus Msimbe. Blessed Francis Jordan's spirit was present.

The new lay members will provide a new community for all Priests, Brothers and Sisters to socialize with and a strong base for



parish needs. This is just the tip of the iceberg for new Lay Salvatorians in Tanzania. The Diocese of Morogoro, who's Bishop is Lazarus Msimbe, former SDS Priest, will provide the next potentially

large group of lay people that will add to the 36. I foresee 100-200 new lay SDS within the next 3 years in the Pro-Provence of Tanzania. They will become one of the largest units in the International Community of the Divine Savior because the Priests and Sisters are committed to make this happen. I can't say enough good words about their dedication to making this happen!

~ Mark E. Verke

Tanzania Experience

How do you put into words deep feelings and emotions? Feelings of joy, awe, fellowship, universality, and hospitality. This is my struggle as I reflect on the 36 Tanzanian men and women who made their Commitment as Lay Salvatorians. It was extraordinary to be a part of an historic event in the life of Tanzanian Salvatorians and the ICDS. I was privileged to walk with the formators as we met via Zoom meetings



over the past 3 years. Their achievement in the formation of the newly committed Lay Salvatorians is a testament to their faith and their belief in the important role of laity in our church. Father Jordan is truly smiling upon us.

As we gathered with the candidates at Masses prior to the Commitment Mass, the candidates greeted us with exuberant song and dance as a sign of hospitality. During the period of celebrating before, during and after, the new Lay Salvatorians excitement, their awe and their readiness to make their commitment made my heart leap and sing with joy. I wanted to dance myself! The Commitment Mass combined elation and reverence and solemnity. The choirs and congregations sang enthusiastically and joyfully, incense rose in praise of our God and Divine Savior. Salvatorian Bishop Lazarus celebrated

along with the Provincials of Tanzania and United States, priests from their parishes and deacons. Each Candidate individually proclaimed their Commitment to God before Fr. Michael

Tesha, SDS and Sr. Yasintha Kala, SDS and the community. What a blessing to be able to witness this beautiful and meaningful event.

The charism and universality of Salvatorians is alive and flourishing in Tanzania. ~ Jackie White