



Statement on Violence from the Religious Superiors Conference of Kenya

by [Rev. Barthelémy Bazemo, MAfr](#) | Apr 23, 2007

AFJN was shocked by the news of the murder of AFJN member, Rev. Martin Addai, M.Afr, as reported in our recent [Easter newsletter](#). Fr. Martin, who lost his life in Nairobi on March 10, 2007, was only one of many victims of violence that the Religious Superiors Conference of Kenya deplored in a recent statement. They call for all Kenyans to search their souls, to rediscover the power of the word in resolving conflicts, and for all levels of inequalities to be addressed in Kenyan society. We wish to share this statement with you in its entirety.

STOP THE CARNAGE!

NAIROBI-KENYA

APRIL 3, 2007

As Rev Fr Martin Addai, former lecturer in Tangaza College and Rector of the Missionaries of Africa (M.AFR) Theological House of Formation was laid to rest on Saturday March 31, 2007; we the Religious Superiors Conference of Kenya react to the violent death, shocking as that may be. Fr Addai was another good and innocent missionary whose life has been violently cut short by gunfire. It happened in the early afternoon of March 10th on a lonely street in of Nairobi.

As we call to action to condemn the ‘merchants of death’ in our nation, please tell us what we can say to his religious brothers shocked by this tragedy? Counsel us on the consolation we might bring to his grieving family in Ghana. Help us also stop the creeping violence now engulfing us before we reach a point of no return. Predictably, the cry has gone up for the government to do more, and so it should. But while we may relieve ourselves of responsibility by calling on the government and police on such occasions we must also look to our own role and share in the perpetuation of such madness. For violent crime is having a field day now, not just because the government should do more but also, because ordinary citizens are doing too little. The enemy among us and the demons within us are growing stronger by the day because too many among us seem to be promoting a culture of violence. We see this attitude when for whatever reason we withhold information from the police and from those who are responsible for security in this country, because we do not wish to get involved. We see it in all those indirect criminals who while they do not use a gun, harbor those who do it or refuse to cooperate with the forces of the law.

We do not have any universal remedy to deal with this situation. Nevertheless, we do believe that if the nation is to move forward, the trends that are destroying the nation must be arrested and our culture directed.

Today each of us is called to do what it takes to abolish the gross inequalities which drive people to criminal behaviour, which creates insecurity for ordinary citizens and guests of this nation, including police and night watchmen alike, which breeds hopelessness among many youth for their future, and this is just mentioning a few areas. The violence spouting from the barrels of guns is a symptom of a city and indeed a nation at war with itself. Like successes, it has a thousand fathers. While we believe that the scourge of poverty at intolerable levels is as strong contributing factor we add a deeper root: it is a loss of confidence in the power of the word as an instrument of conflict resolution. There is a profound erosion of moral authority pervading many sectors of our society and institutions today, a corruption of the mind that has entered the bloodstream of our daily activities.

The soul of the nation is at stake and the lives of many innocent people are in our hands. The barbaric, senseless killing and robbing of ordinary, innocent PEOPLE highlights the mindless disregard for the sanctity of life. These are symptoms of a society that is clearly losing its spiritual compass and, as a consequence, all vestiges of civilized living.

But just as we may be reaching alarming level of crime, it is never too late to stop and turn things around. If we call ourselves followers of a just and compassionate God then we must have that unique love that has the courage to make demands on ourselves and on others. We have to be pro-active as advocates of change lest by doing nothing we encourage the doers of evil. 'All that is needed for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.' We must never give up on each other and on our ability to do something because God never gives up on us. While many of the youth of our time search in vain for genuine spiritual and political leadership we are all challenged to engage in a culture of daily living where respect for human rights and life is considered sacred and honored.

While we reiterate and acknowledge that ultimate responsibility is squarely on the shoulders of the Government and Police Force to provide Protection and Safety for the people in this Nation, we have to become more involved in the struggle to defeat the evil forces of crime and death in this potentially great country.

The agents of evil who kill and murder people cannot be tolerated and have to be stopped by all of us. 'Leo ni Leo'. Tuamke.!

Fr. Patrick Devine SMA

Chairman of RSCK

The Religious Superiors Conference of Kenya, (R.S.C.K)

(Representing 63 International and National Religious Congregations/Orders of the Catholic Church working in Kenya

**Tribute by Fr. Patrick Devine SMA Regional Superior, Kenya, 1995-2008,
during the funeral Mass attended by 5-10 thousand people for,**

**FR. JOHN HANNON SMA (1939-2004)
-Murdered at Matasia Parish, Ngong Diocese, Kenya-**

Fr. John Hannon was born in County Clare, Ireland in 1939. He joined the Society of African Missions (SMA) and was ordained to the priesthood in December 1967.

In 1968 he was appointed to the Archdiocese of Lagos, Nigeria where he ministered for the twenty-five years – until 1993. He moved to Kenya in 1994 and served in Jericho Parish, Nairobi until 1996.

Health matters (heart surgery) forced him to spend some time in Ireland but having made a good recovery, he opted to return to Kenya where he was assigned to the Diocese of Ngong in 1998. He first served in Kitengela before moving to Matasia in 2000.

Fr. John was a genuine frontier Missionary. Not for him the more routine predictable life of a pastor in a developed parish in Ireland or in Africa. He always preferred to work at the frontiers of faith and culture, extending the community of Christian believers and the Reign of God on earth. During his time in Lagos, he was prominent among missionaries who reacted to the challenge posed by rapid urbanization, and as the city expanded, he established many churches, parish centers and Christian Communities in the developing suburbs. His contribution was immense and will always be remembered.

He was a builder, but was far more than a constructor of buildings. His aim was the building and extension of the Reign of God and this was the driving force behind the dynamism and commitment. A man of deep faith and with a spirituality of action he presented an admirable example of ‘integral development’ trying to cater for the spiritual and material needs of people.

He had a passion for truth and for justice. He hated hypocrisy. He never sacrificed principle for popularity. A man of strong views, he was not afraid to express them, even at the cost of upsetting

the civil and ecclesiastical establishment. Even when his views did not win universal agreement, nobody ever questioned his motivation.

His compassion for the poor, for orphans and street children knew no bounds and he did not hide his impatience with those he considered to be failing to provide solutions to urgent social problems.

Developing the parish of Matasia was for Fr. John, a joy as well as a challenge. He had great and imaginative plans for its future. Tragically he did not live to see the completion of his dream. However, a source of deep satisfaction for him was the level of support and cooperation he received from the parishioners. By this he was inspired and encouraged to keep striving for the realization of his hopes. He was proud of Matasia and its people.

He was faithful to Jesus Christ to the end. Even in death, he resembled the master he traveled so far to proclaim. Like Jesus, Fr. John was a victim of a most unjust and painful process. We have no doubt that on the morning of November 25th 2004, when his personal Calvary was over, Fr. John, too, heard these words: "This day you will be with me in Paradise"

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick Devine". The ink is dark and the handwriting is fluid and personal.

Fr. Patrick Devine, Regional Superior.

On behalf of the SMA Missionaries in Kenya



EWTN NEWS

Slain Irish missionary priest remembered in Kenya

The memorial Mass for Fr. Jerry Roche, an Irish priest slain by burglars in Kenya, was held on Thursday. The Mass was attended by five bishops, the entire fraternity of the Kiltegan Fathers, scores of priests and religious and thousands of other Christians.

The priest was stabbed to death last week at his home on the outskirts of Kericho town, about 120 miles west of Nairobi, Reuters reports. The burglars stole his laptop, his mobile phone and an unknown amount of money.

The 68-year-old priest had worked in Kenya for 41 years. His body was found after he failed to appear for an early morning Mass.

Bishop of Kitale Maurice Crowley was the celebrant at the funeral Mass. He called on all Christians to emulate Fr. Roche's selflessness in giving his life for the people of Kericho.

He also called on the murderers to repent and return to the Lord, the Catholic Information Service for Africa (CISA) says.

Bishop of Kericho Emmanuel Okombo remembered Fr. Roche as a "pioneer missionary" and an exemplary priest who lived his life to the fullest.

"Fr. Roche will be remembered for his prayer life and hard work in all the parishes in worked in," the bishop said, describing his death as a "big loss" for the entire Catholic Church.

Bishop Okombo also conveyed condolences from Pope Benedict XVI and the cardinal heading the Vatican's Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

All the other bishops expressed condolences to Fr. Roche's family, represented at the funeral by his nephew. The family has requested to have Fr. Roche's body returned to Ireland, where he will be buried alongside his parents in Limerick.

Bishop of the Military Ordinariate Alfred Rotich moved the congregation to tears by appealing to the Kipsigis community to repent the murder and the abominations committed in their land. Speaking in Kipsigis, the bishop called on local leaders to rally the people back to the Lord.

"Human life is sacred, no one has a right to take away life," the bishop added.

The priest was known for his hard work and good humor. His confreres eulogized him as a man who stood for the truth, love and justice.

Fr. Patrick Devine, speaking in a message on behalf of the Association of Religious Superiors of Kenya, said the priest has not died in vain and his spirit will continue living “among all those he touched by his work and love.”

“This is not a moment of fear but one of restoration, may the planners and murderers of Fr. Roche repent and return to way of love, justice and truth that he stood for,” he continued.

Reuters reports that Kenyan police have arrested three suspects in Fr. Roche’s murder.