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Dear friends,

At the end of an old year, 2012, and at the beginning of a new, fresh one, 2013, you might expect to hear from me. And so it is. And, as you also will expect, there are a few lines of theology, which may explore our path into the New Year. Finally, news, or rather highlights of the year past. Bear with me.

Could we attempt to ponder 3 things in the weeks and months ahead:

- 1) To hold creation (God's creation) close at our heart
- 2) In God's creation, could we keep the humans, men and women, in our hearts as our sisters and brothers
- 3) To aim at achieving in our world the New Creation of God, where justice rules and mercy

"For us humans and for our salvation he became human" we confess of God in our creed at Church.

SPRING 2012



My three sisters and I were shocked, that on 1 April our mother lay unconscious in the intensive care unit of a hospital in Essen. She hadn't been eating and life seemed to evaporate

from her rapidly.

The doctors had let us know that the kidneys were damaged. We became sadly aware, that this might be her final days on this earth with us. I had brought with me the oil of the sick and I proceeded to anoint my mum while praying aloud. (The same as I had done at work, in hospital, ever week in Frankfurt.) We four left with casting sad glances at each other and at Mum. We expected the worst in the hours to come or on the next day. Yet the miracle happened: Mum picked up, went back to the seniors' residence where she used to stay. A very difficult time followed; new medication was tried out and mum's psychological balance had to be readjusted. Presently, she is just fine. Thinner, but enjoying the care and the peace of a new house, which my sister Barbara found at Hagen.

The added advantage for my other 2 sisters and I is, that Hagen is more in reach than Essen. We avoid endless bumper to bumper back ups on a specific highway.

Dad with his 87 is cared for in my town of birth, Altena, where he has lived all his life. My youngest

Sister Inge is his guardian. He is alright; however, the "greater context" escapes him. Seeing the world we live in, I sometimes think that this could be a grace, for older people, *not* to have to endure the greater context!

Visitor

Father Gerald Blaszczak came from Rome, where he is consultor of our Father General (the General Superior of the Jesuits) on matters of faith and justice and spirituality. Gerry was our beloved priest when we were still students of theology ("scholastics") at Hekima College in Nairobi. We had to prepare for his lectures on Paul's letters (And dare us, when we were not prepared!!).

I was so happy to meet with Gerry again, after so many years. When I celebrated graduation after completing my Master's in New York, Gerry happened to be university chaplain. And he arranged a nice dinner at a small Chinese restaurant. My guests hailed from all over the world (oh no, they were not millions; just 20!); from Nigeria, from Japan, Germany, USA and so on. A meal of the United Nations, we could say. Great! Truly international and thus truly "catholic" (which means just that: "world wide!").

In spring, the local diocese offered us a course in pastoral care with coma patients. And it was helpful.

Mupiwa Gorowa, my "first born" of the streets of Mbare, in Harare, Zimbabwe, now works as a printer in Johannesburg, South Africa. In his spare time he studies for a Master's in Psychology. He and his wife just had their second child. Congratulations. I am very proud of you, Mupiwa.

You may have seen him in the documentary, which Uwe Bork from SWR television station made, way back, then. Have you heard of **Little Black Wolf** yet? No? He does exist. Let me tell you. Just before I left Zimbabwe in 2002 Thomas Machaisi from Chinhoyi named his first son WOLF. Without my permission! That was in 2002. Meanwhile, little black Wolf must be 11/12 years old. Not so little any more. When can I go and baptize him? Mwari anoziva. God only knows.

SUMMER 2012

In Frankfurt I have for a long time been cooperating with an ecumenical initiative, the ÖAKS.

This project, where the catholic and the Lutheran Churches are directly cooperating, trains lay people to become voluntary pastoral workers, giving pastoral care (counseling) to the sick, the imprisoned, to palliative care patients, and to the sick and old folks. About 50 women and men offer per week

about 3 hours of their time to visit with people. The 2nd Vatican Council led to the insight, that the baptized and confirmed christians have a strong mission and responsibility in our world.

We just now experience a moving away from a “clerically dominated Church” (if there ever was one, which worked!!). By the grace of their Baptism and their Confirmation christians are enabled to carry forward the mission of the Church; especially to the poor, the sick, the old, the marginalized

True, isn't it?



Once a month, a protestant pastor and I take turns to offer spiritual guidance to the above mentioned volunteers. We meet as a group and work on a Bible passage and share our experiences from work, that is, from our ministries. I offer a guided Ignatian contemplation; there is silence and the putting of myself into the scripture passage, which I have just heard. What are my feelings? Which light do I receive for my day to day life from God's Word? Very encouraging and very inspiring, those evenings!

For all a giving and taking; as we never only “give” or “take”. Very happy I am to say that in June 2013

A group of 8 lutheran christians and I will spend a weekend at Himmerod/Eifel, a Cistercian Abbey, to

Do an Ignatian retreat together. I shall accompany them, spiritually. Anyway, I was trained at St. Beuno's in Wales 2011 to be able to do that. Great.

Our very competent house captain in the childrens' house in Zata Street, Mbare, Harare, Zimbabwe, married. He trained to be an accountant and now lives with his newly wed wife in the suburb of Avondale, a rather comfy place. However, he “took a leaf” from our efforts and finances the education of some other kids, who still need help. One last one in the childrens' house (which now, for a change, caters for street girls), Clemence, even lived with him in order to complete his O-levels.

Well done, Bukhosi Hove! Bukhosi's brother “B”, (Brightman), who used to be my parish secretary, is now manager at OKAY stores and has a lot of work; --- but also some money in his pockets, at the end of the month. Thank you to you, the donors! There are some real success stories in Mbare unfolding, in the life of disadvantaged kids from the slum.

FALL 2012 (or: AUTUMN for the English speaking!)

Different priestly activities kept me on my toes: my first-ever wedding in Germany (!), the celebration of my 25 years of priestly ministry and a very recreational holiday in Dalarna, in Sweden.

But one thing after the other.

With some reluctance I had agreed to celebrate my Silver Jubilee. “Not to be made into a big thing”, was the motto, I had given out. Yet, I later realized, that without the incessant help and kindness of my pastoral team, Renate and Deacon Clemens, I would not have managed at all. Michael, husband to Renate, is the one to prepare mega events for our Bishop. Although not of similar dignity, Michael helped us to get preparations on the way, properly, as in the end we had 50 men and women from St. Joseph's Old Peoples' Residence and about 60 other invited friends. We celebrated in the foyer of the house and it was a simple, yet magnificent common celebration. The new director, Mr. Bonath, Cancelled his own day of holiday, in order to be there.

The wedding in the hilly area of the EIFEL (west of Cologne) was great, too. Christian and Jessica, a son and his girl friend from benefactors of Zimbabwe, married. As Christian passionately drives around on bulldozers in the village, the newly wed couple was invited to sit in the scoop of a bulldozer, which was for that occasion draped with white cloth. Thus they were transported from Church to the community house of Urschmitt village (240 inhabitants), where the party followed. Unfortunately I had to miss this sight, as I was still in the sacristy, counting the collection (for Mbare!), together with the old sacristan and his wife!

Grandma Irmina, being 75+, still runs the one and only tuck shop in that village. Opening hours: negotiable; that means: if it is urgent, just ring the house bell!

Grandma Irmina ventured a few weeks later, together with our newly wed couple Christian and Jessica, to Frankfurt, to be at my celebration. Whow.

One who came too, “just for that”, was Christopher Mhike from Zimbabwe. Once a student of mine at St. Ignatius College, Chishawasha, he is now one of the very renowned lawyers in Zimbabwe and secretary of the Law Society there. I am happy to say that Chris continues to look after some of our

Young fellows from the streets. He is very respected by them and is both, a mentor and ideal to follow in life. Covering 10.000 kilometers from Harare, the next visitor, Bjorn, came from Lund in Sweden. He once was a con novice, he now serves the Church in the North as a permanent Deacon, married. Our celebration centered on our main focus in Christian life: the Eucharist.

United around the same table, breaking bread with one another and sharing the same cup, being strengthened by the Risen Lord who overflows with love, who pours himself out into our parched hearts Agape followed and we all enjoyed each other’s company, the meeting of good people and the modest celebration, bringing people together from all over the world,



Bringing together humanity, as brothers and sisters of Jesus.

Grace abounded and we all felt it. It is in ordinary meetings and in daily encounters, at work, at a meal, in community, that the Risen Lord touches our lives and sets our hearts ablaze. Truly.

Taking up the collection, (I had asked not to give me personal donations), we offered solidarity to the people of the Dominican Republic, where Father Martin Lenk S.J. works. He is the rector of the Philosophate, training young Jesuits in Philosophy in Santo Domingo. He also is pastor, at weekends, in a slum area. Martin has always impressed me. From being the secretary of Cardinal

Lehmann in Mainz, he went to the Caribbean to work with the poor. And he only joined the Jesuits, being already a priest, there. We have always been good friends.

In 1987, when I was ordained a priest at Makumbi Mission, in Zimbabwe, **all** people shared a simple meal, afterwards. That is good Shona custom. We repeated that in 2012, in Frankfurt, on the 3rd of October. The celebration and the faith and friendship of so many “boosted” my own faith and confidence. I received many graces through it. My friend “of ancient times”, Father Clemens Döpker, pastor near Münster, preached the sermon.

WINTER

Sorry, there are no notes on “winter”, as it has just begun!

A few thank you s are due: to the Venner Family in Iowa, to whom I am related and who have supported my work over the years, together with men and women from the 3rd Order of St. Francis.

The Venners even came to visit me in Zimbabwe, adding on extra days onto a touristic Africa trip.

The Beers in Scarsdale, Mr. Winnis, the Ayugais, a Japanese-German family, you supported my work and thank you for that. Keep in touch.

Ulf and Majly in Rättvik, Sweden, thanks for a relaxing and inspiring few days at your cottage in “the Bavaria of Sweden”, in Dalarna (= “valleys”), 250 kilometers north west from Stockholm, at the great Siljan Sea. Together, Ulf and I “bumped” into the Swedish Ambassador at the Vatican, a lady, who has her relations in that area.

Ulf and Majly I know from the Faroes Islands, south of Iceland, where I use to minister for a few weeks every year (well, Sister Marisa, **almost** every year!).

*To you all my kind wishes and the blessings of our new-born Saviour, the Saviour of all peoples.
I am sure he can still touch the hearts of people and set them ablaze with love and gratitude.
He did it to me.*

Your Friend

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ulf' with a stylized flourish at the end.