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## Conferees in Malawi urged to become effective shepherds

**MANGOCHI, Malawi** - From the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 2022, conferees in Malawi over ten years in priesthood had their retreat at Montfort cottage at Nkhudzi Bay in Mangochi.

It was well attended by all the conferees in the category mentioned and was facilitated by Fr. Steve Likucha, the diocesan priest of Zomba Diocese who is the chaplain for Malawi Police.

At the very beginning of the retreat, the preacher reminded us that without God, we can achieve nothing (Lk 5:1-11). And in addition, he also enabled us to acknowledge that before the foundation of the world, God called us to Holiness (Eph 1:4). Depending on God is a must.

Priesthood is a very special vocation in which we are chosen by God to serve others. Priests are visible 'gods' in the world. Priesthood is a difficult and challenging ministry but always exciting and rewarding when God is directly involved. According to St. John Eudes, priests are called to be saintly, exemplary, good leaders/shepherds who are entirely committed to their calling. According to Lk 5:1-11 (The experience of St. Peter), the disciples failed to catch fish because they did not involve God in their affairs. After a big catch, Peter was humbled and acknowledged it when he said "Lord depart from me for I am a sinner." Therefore, we need to invite God in all our events.

As priests, we are called to be good shepherds and therefore, our character should be good. Besides, we need to be visionary, inspirational, trustworthy and leaders who are able to change. Good leaders do read the signs of the times and adapt to them accordingly, are decisive, consistent, keep commitments, work hard to remove work barriers, provide basic resources to the people they serve and are good listeners.

As religious priests, we need to show love to others all the time, become helpful and above all practice what we preach. We are called to preach the word of God with boldness and in this case, the truth should not be compromised.

More so, we religious priests are called to be sacramentally oriented, prayerful (Lk 4:18-19), develop a good relationship with our Superiors, fellow brothers and the laity. There is need to be holy with our noble vocation to Priesthood, be open to new ideas especially by reading and meditating on scriptures as part of on-going formation. Above all, we need to update our world view, be self sufficient, cheerful, joyful, happy and satisfied. For our mission to be fruitful, we are called to forgive, organise and prepare inspiring liturgies so that we can deepen our relationship with God and that of other people before God. A good liturgy drives and leads people to God and helps them to get closer to God. Liturgy also purifies us and this calls us to make it more meaningful and lively.

All in all, we were challenged to rise above the obstacles and challenges of this world so as to become effective priests serving the people of God. This is possible if we practice the seven habits of highly effective people:

1. Be proactive. To take initiative by being first to start.
2. To begin with the end in mind. To think through things and plan well.
3. Putting first things first.
4. Thinking win-win. Having a fairness mind.
5. Seek first to understand. Do not rush into conclusion.
6. Synergize. Be alert and see entry points for a better life.
7. Sharpen the saw.

*Fr. Francis MUHANGI, SMM  
Pre-Postulancy Balaka Community*