



Thanksgiving Mass of Fr. Fortune Gondwe, SMM

RUMPHI, Malawi - On the 20th and 21st of July 2019, Fr. Fortune Gondwe, SMM celebrated his first Masses at his home village in Nzakwacha and at St. Denis Parish in Rumphu respectively. It was a significant experience in the life of both the new priest and the people as they, for the first time, came to share the Body of our Lord presided by their own priest.

On Saturday morning, many joyful people, led by Fr. Fortune, flocked to welcome six confreres who came to be part of the memorable day. The confreres who represented the Africa-Anglophone Delegation were SMM Fathers: Samuel Satielle, Francis Muhangi, Joseph Kudzala, Paul Kumwenda, Petro Chilumpha and Deacon Innocent Mwanoka. The "borderless pilgrims" were then led to the visitors' quarters in the company of the jubilant people. Fr. Fortune, whose face sparkled with smiles, introduced the confreres to his relatives. Likewise, his mother also introduced the family to us.

The procession reverently marched in. The sweet singing, clapping and ululation of the people lifted the atmosphere. Fr. Fortune maintained the rhythm by chanting the introductory greetings of the Mass. The rest of the celebration was solemn. The many gifts that the community offered were like an appreciation of the beauty of the liturgy.

In his remarks, the parish priest was full of praise to Fr. Fortune and his family. He said, "*Bambo Fortune atipatsa chitsanzo chapamwamba*" (Fr. Fortune has given us a very good example). He further encouraged all the parents present to raise their children well by sending them to school and to deepen

their faith in God. The new priest's relatives were equally grateful for their son's choice of religious life, and his commitment to cooperate with God's will.

Speaking on behalf of the Anglophone Delegation, Fr. Samuel, among others, thanked the people of Nzakwacha for the gift of their son to the congregation. He further reminded them of the life Fr. Fortune has chosen - the apostolic missionary life. *"Dziwani kuti abambowa ndi anu, koma si anu okha. Pamenepa atha kukatumikila kwina kulikonse komwe chipani chidzawatuma. Muwapempherere"* (The Father here is not only yours but for all people. He can be sent by the Congregation anywhere. Pray for him.).

On his part, Fr. Fortune was very grateful to God, parents, formators, friends and relatives for helping him realize the call of God. He was also thankful to his companion, Fr. Petro with whom he has travelled through thick and thin in the formation process.

The following Sunday was a continuation of the celebration at parish level. There were lots of ululation and excitement in the huge St. Denis Church building. Again, Fr. Fortune presided this celebration graciously as Fr. Paul Kumwenda raised the people's soul in breaking the Word of God. It all came to a grand conclusion at the parish hall where there was eating, drinking, dancing and offering of gifts.

Together with 5 others (2 priests and 3 deacons), Fr. Fortune was ordained on the 13th of July at the Zomba Cathedral. He was missioned to serve the people of Bvumbwe Parish. We continue to pray for him that he would participate fruitfully in the Master's vineyard.

Deacon Innocent Mwanoka, SMM