Vicar General: Safeguarding Minors is not an Option

MANGOCHI, Malawi – The SMM Africa Anglophone General Assembly was concluded on the 26th of September with a presentation by Fr. Wismick Jean Charles, SMM, the Vicar General.

The presentation was entitled "Reflecting on the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Persons" that aimed on three areas: understanding the reality of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct, responding to sexual abuse and sexual misconduct, and preventing future abuse.

Fr. Wismick shared passionately the important roles of all confreres to understand the presence of sexual abuse globally and the steps taken by the Church, our congregation, entities and every confrere in order to protect the vulnerable and to prevent future abuse. On the new approaches taken by the Church, he mentioned about four main documents, namely: 1) *Apostolic Letter «Motu Proprio» by The Supreme Pontiff Francis: As a Loving Mother, Vatican, 4 June 2016.* 2) *New Ratio Fundamentalis: The Gift of the Priestly Vocation, Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis, December 8, 2016.* 3) *Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to the People of God, Vatican City, 20 August 2018.* 4). *Apostolic Letter Issued Motu Proprio by The Supreme Pontiff Francis, "Vos Estis Lux Mundi", 7 May 2019.*

We then looked at how we have responded as a congregation and entity. The Vicar General was pleased to know that the Africa Anglophone Delegation has a policy on protecting minors and vulnerable persons with the document signed by every confrere. He called upon formators to seriously be keen on quality of formation in addressing the issue of protecting minors and vulnerable adults. The Vicar General concluded by emphasizing that safeguarding minors is not an option. It is an integral part of the mission of the church.

The General Assembly was concluded with the Holy Mass presided by Bishop Montfort Stima of Mangochi diocese. The Provincial Superior and the Council of the Daughters of Wisdom also graced the closing Mass.

Fr. Jailos Mpina, SMM