

Various notes from visit to Ethiopia 10-21 June 2002

Discussion with Archbishop Berhanejesus, Archdiocese of Addis Ababa, 11 June 2002

Those present

Fr Aidan, Jonathan, Abuna Berhanejesus, Abba Kidane Mariam, Abba ?? (Cathedral Parish Priest)

Church was originally working in the W and SW border areas. It has now been invited to the highland areas, given land by regional government and asked to build schools.

Aid to the Church in Need. Without this there is no support for youth who then turn to Protestantism and may then become disillusioned and turn to Islam.

On a practical level, the Archbishop had three suggested projects, both relating to the Catholic school in Bahar Dar, Gojam.

The school currently has an elementary section run by Sr Abeba of the Daughters of Charity. The Church is trying to complete a secondary section.

1. Furnishing of the priests' house (the Director of the school will be a priest)
2. Equipping the science laboratory
3. Building (??) a wing of classrooms

Meeting with the Papal Nuncio, 11 June 2002

This was a somewhat ad hoc meeting arranged by the ever active Abba Kidane Mariam.

The Nuncio had several ideas:

1. The Catholic school at Bahar Dar, as proposed by Abuna Berhanejesus, but the Nuncio did not see this as an immediate priority.
2. Something to help support the development of the clergy, e.g. along the lines of the original 'Blackfriars Ethiopians'.
3. Volunteers with specialist experience in school teaching and/or management.
4. Theological training in theological institute run by the Capuchins in Addis Ababa. Eg a 2-month stint, supported by the fund.
5. Need a diversity of disciplines and quality of training for Ethiopians which *they* can then transfer (with quality)
6. Books in residences where students live. Contemporary, good, theological magazines - but not too radical. Biblical, patristical but avoiding theology which might emphasise separation or distance from Orthodox theology. Aidan commented that 'neopatristic theology' might be the thing and that the best country for this was Italy. However, the language needed is English - even Eritrea is moving towards English. The Nuncio said that there is no collection of the Fathers of the Church available in Ethiopia and that some old English translations of the Fathers would be valuable. Aidan suggested Fr Edmund's work 'Augustine for the 21st Century' (and I seem to recall AN suggesting he might be able to find a cheap copy??). There is no one volume of the Fathers, but have to start somewhere.

The Bishops are putting more effort into the formation of the clergy, both spiritual and intellectual.

There are 30 million Ethiopian (50% of the population) below 19 years of age. Grandmother is not there to teach them traditional prayers. They are all in 'new' families and the Nuncio questioned whether they would have roots within a Christian tradition.

Meeting with Abuna Tesfasellassie, Bishop of Adigrat, 13 June 2002

There is a lot of work taking place in the normal running of the Church. There is also pressure for the Church to go into new areas at the invitation of the Orthodox church.

