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New Spiritan Universities: Marian University College, Bagamoyo

The Spiritan Province of Tanzania Comes of Age

On May 31, 2015, the Marian University College, a constituent College of St. Augustine University of Tanzania (SAUT) located at the harbor town of Bagamoyo, was inaugurated with a sense of achievement and fanfare in the presence of an immense multitude. The Archbishop of Dar es Salaam, Polycarp Cardinal Pengo, presided over the celebration. The Vice President of the Republic of Tanzania, Dr. Bilal, deputized for the President Mr. Kikwete, who incidentally comes from the Coastal Region where Bagamoyo is situated. Saint Augustine's University is the Catholic University of Tanzania founded by the Tanzania Episcopal Conference which mothers a constellation of Catholic University Colleges spread throughout the country. It is situated at Mwanza and overlooks the awesome fresh waters of the Victoria Lake. Under its auspices, the Spiritan Province of Tanzania decided to respond positively to the invitation of the Government of the Republic to private and Religious bodies to join hands in spreading literature and higher education in the land. In order to compete in the modern world, Tanzania needs trained personnel, and science education is the preferred orientation of its current development plan. The Spiritan Marian University at Bagamoyo is science-based and is established as a Spiritan response to the government’s call for partnership. As one of the pioneer Missionary Congregations in East Africa and Tanzania in particular, the Spiritans are thus continuing their original educational services as part of their on-going contribution in alleviating the secular needs of the developing nation.

The Making of a University College

Already in 2014, a five-member task force headed by this writer was set up to recondition, refurbish, and expand the existing Spiritan Center at Bagamoyo so as to accommodate the proposed new university. It was a Herculean experiment of trust in Providence given the embarrassing financial situation at the time. The hope was, of course, that tuition and money-yielding projects would help to eventually balance the budget. Building up infrastructures and constructing science laboratories,
canvassing for library books and setting up computers, advertising for and interviewing prospective lecturers and professors, unending board meetings and consultations with government officials as well as other university colleges—such was not a task for the faint-hearted. However intimidating the task turned out to be, the preparatory group went ahead with the business, fortified with missionary zeal. After all, not giving up when facing obstacles, however apparently insurmountable, is part of the legacy of our Spiritan pioneers right from the two founders. This unflinching perseverance is silently witnessed to by the bones of the founding fathers of the Bagamoyo mission entombed in the University grounds. A five-storeyed block, when completed, would be the tallest building in Bagamoyo and will complement the seven blocks already in existence. Except for the dormitories for girls already completed, the majority of students live off-campus. Tuition respects the charges in similar University colleges. In keeping with the aims of the Congregation, efforts are made to care for poor students.

By the end of November we were ready for the inspection of facilities from the government agency. A committee was sent by the Tanzania University Commission (TCU), the arm of government responsible for accrediting new universities in the country, to evaluate the facilities at the site. The committee seemed satisfied with what they saw and made some minor recommendations. By April 2015, the new university was accredited to start. Prospective university students do not apply directly to their university of choice but through the TCU which assigns them to any of the accredited universities of the land. Normally the universities open by September/October but due to the presidential elections in October 2015, universities in the country opened their lecture halls at the beginning of November, 2015. Marian University College (MARUCO) thus opened its lecture halls for the very first time with initial 300 students allocated by the TCU which has its seat in Dar es Salaam.

A Board of Governors appointed by the Provincial Administration is entrusted with the direction and running of the University. An initial recruitment of 27 (including 3 Spiritans) lecturers and professors without prejudice to faith affiliation form the nucleus of the faculty. The parish church serves the need of Catholic students; the Anglican church at the edge of the university property is open to Protestants while the four or more mosques in the town
suffice for Muslim students.

Why at Bagamoyo?

The harbor town of Bagamoyo on the majestic Indian Ocean is situated some seventy kilometers North-East of the commercial city of Dar es Salaam, the country's largest city and former capital before Dodoma replaced it. In recent years, Bagamoyo has hosted a number of national and international gatherings, not least the last General Chapter of the Holy Ghost Congregation that elected the present Spiritan Central Administration in Rome. It’s growing prominence must be ascribed to the missionary initiative of the Holy Ghost Fathers who first landed there from the Zanzibar Archipelago in the latter half of the 19th Century. It was a slave port from where the Moslem slave traders shipped Africa's frightened youth to the lands-of-no-return. The Kiswahili name *Bwagamoyo* literally means “abandon your hearts”; forget the hope of ever returning to the fatherland. It was and is still a Muslim-controlled town but the uninterrupted presence of Spiritan missionary activity has breathed life and freedom into these people who once hibernated in the shadows of darkness. The impressive stone Cross planted in the now familiar Msalabani on the banks of the Indian Ocean is a monument to the Alsatian Spiritan missionaries memorializing their port of entry in the mainland. About a kilometer up from the shore of the Ocean is the oldest Church in East Africa and behind it the cemetery where the first missionaries lie. Their tombstones exhibit their youthful age when they died, unaccustomed, as they were, to the debilitating tropical heat and calamitous malaria fever. Medical research on the causes and treatment of malaria had not then advanced. Bagamoyo has become the focal point of pilgrimages from various parts of Tanzania and of Episcopal meetings where the fortunes of the Church in Tanzania are being discussed. The Catholic Church in Tanzania and, indeed, East Africa, has its roots here and return here where the pioneer missionaries are buried to pray for the future of the Church in the East Africa Region. Happily, the Spiritan Province under the initiative of one of its charismatic and pragmatic visionaries, Father Valentine Bayo, C.S.Sp. has erected a magnificent hotel, Stella Maris, to attract and cater for pilgrims as well as tourists. The celebrated British missionary and explorer of the late 19th Century, Dr. David Livingstone, had his dried corpse preserved here at a side chapel before it was shipped to Westminster Abbey for final internment. The period
of German occupation (Tanganyika was a German colony before it passed on to Britain) is still evident from the ruins of their administrative and commercial buildings. The architecturally impressive and newly renovated German Boma has become a German tourist destination and dominates the sky-line on the southern reaches of the Indian Ocean. The Government of the Federal Republic has recently undertaken to build a modern harbor in Bagamoyo in partnership with China to decongest the main harbor at Dar es Salaam. With the new paved road connecting Dar es Salaam with Msata through Bagamoyo, the city has grounds to look forward to a great future with hope.

The Spiritans have also invested a lot of energy in building up educational structures in the Bagamoyo district. From a town of fishermen and petty traders, the schools are turning out enlightened graduates at different levels. There are Marian Schools scattered throughout the district ranging from nursery and Kindergarten through technical and catering schools to Secondary Schools erected in Bagamoyo and its surrounding district. Spiritans have also built up health services such as dispensaries and health clinics for the people and in that way contributed to providing job opportunities for Tanzanians of all faiths without discrimination; clients come from everywhere since the Kiswahili language spoken in all parts of the country has banished tribalism in the land. Tribalism, a problem endemic to most African independent countries south of the Sahara, is through the one indigenous language spoken all over it, apparently lacking in Tanzania. Through these schools and job opportunities created by the Spiritan establishments, a sizable Christian community has sprung up in this otherwise Muslim dominated region. Happily, the Muslim majority lives amicably with their Christian compatriots. Mornings and evenings, calls to prayer ring out from the many Muslim mosques and Angelus bells ring out from the towers of the German built houses of prayer. One should not forget that it was the Muslim Sultan of Zanzibar that allotted the ground on the banks of the ocean to the first Christian missionaries when they landed in Bagamoyo. Hence it is fitting that the Spiritan Province of Tanzania has chosen Bagamoyo as the place to continue their missionary engagement with the country. The new University crowns their energies spent in the work of introducing the country to the modern world.

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Spiritans and Education in Tanzania

The murals painted on the walls behind the high altar of the gothic church built by the first German missionaries about 1878 (when the French provinces of Alsace and Lorraine were annexed to Germany under the Prussian warlord Otto von Bismarck) depict the type of work the pioneers did. They started their missionary work with buying back slaves and teaching them both to be able to read and to do hand-and technical-work. As they moved into the interior to the Kilimanjaro region, they also founded formal schools. After all, the founders of the Holy Ghost Congregation and the Congregation of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (after whom the Marian consortium is named) were moved by concern for the welfare of the Blacks. At a time when Africans were the victims of European colonialism and imperialism, when fortune-hunters, oblivious of human rights, were shipping cheap African man-power across the Atlantic to the American sugar and cotton fields and across the Indian Ocean to the service of the Muslim potentates of the Arabian peninsula, Spiritan missionaries were engaged in educating African consciousness on their God-given equality with their fellow humans and on their dignity as images of God. Establishing schools to banish ignorance was a means of empowerment and therefore a potent instrument in Spiritan evangelization strategy. One of the early Spiritan High Schools in the country, Saint Francis College at Pugu on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam, was at one time mooted to be converted into a College of the University of Dublin. Indeed the alumni of Spiritan schools are part of the foundation stones of free Tanzania. The founding father of the nation and the first President of Independent Tanzania, the ideologue of African Socialism as enunciated in the famed Arusha Declaration, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, was a tutor at the Spiritan College at Pugu. He taught history and Kiswahili and was able to translate into Kiswahili and perform some of the plays of Shakespeare like The Merchant of Venice in this school. Mr. Benjamin Mkapa, a student of this school who later became President of the Republic of Tanzania, acted the part of Shylock in that Shakespeare translated into Kiswahili. Many other distinguished players in the search for national independence from Britain, icons in the world of the academia and business tycoons as well as in the diplomatic corps, attended Spiritan schools. The recently deceased Chancellor of the prestigious University
of Dar es Salaam, Ambassador Fulgens Kasaura, as well as the former Education Minister, Ambassador Nicholas Kuhanga, pride themselves as having been educated by the Spiritans. Beyond these prominent alumni are the other innumerable *hoi polloi* of the Spiritan schools, the *Bodenpersonal* (ground crew) who do not make the limelight but without whose faithful service the nation would have been poorer for development workers. Without the educational contributions of the Spiritan schools, Tanzania would have been less equipped with educated and technical manpower. With the encouragement of the Bishops’ Conference of Tanzania, and building on the educational tradition of the pioneer missionaries from Europe, the Spiritan Province of Tanzania decided to embark on the university venture as in continuity with and in the tradition of the Spiritan Missionary Congregation. The only novelty is its ambition to establish a university unaided by foreign backing. Self-reliance is part of the goals of an independent Tanzania.

It may be worth mentioning that a fellow worker with Spiritans became a model for African politicians who are blamed repeatedly for corruption in government. The last Synod for Africa held in Rome proposed Julius Nyerere to African politicians as a model of Catholic participation in political life. The Spiritans were proud to have been associated with him and are determined to offer Tanzania people of such probity who would carry out public service for the common good.

**Motto and Vision Statement**

The University’s motto is: *Wisdom and Knowledge for Freedom*. The “Wisdom” implied here reflects Socrates’ life work of asking people to examine their lives in order to make it worth living as found in the Apology of *The Dialogues of Plato*. It also includes the best legacies found in all the philosophical and religious traditions of mankind, a legacy expected to be communicated in introductory as well as core courses to be offered by the university. As a Catholic missionary institute, the university will also introduce its students, without any imposition, to Jesus, “the Wisdom of God and the Power of God.” “Knowledge,” the appropriate information given on any given topic, is the goal of all pedagogy; it is the banishment of ignorance through cumulative and incremental enlightenment. Although the primary orientation is scientific, geared to providing the engines to stoke the government’s quest
for accelerated development, the University College will eventually broaden out into the Humanities. While specializations will be encouraged, yet Liberal Education is the goal of the learned and well-rounded individual, a model akin to the *homo universale* of Italian Renaissance. This is needed to satisfy the idea of a university in the direction enunciated by John Henry Newman in his monumental thesis of that name. The teacher has succeeded in his vocation when the disciple has been made similar to the master. “Freedom” is the fruit of the self-consciousness and self-esteem that are inculcated through the liberation of learning and instruction and the prudence produced by the experience of alternative cultures derived from the open-endedness of the University’s world-wide exposure. For faculty and the student body alike the goal is to work towards attaining a Nobel Prize in the chosen area of specialization. Hence in the town of Bagamoyo, where misery and slavery held sway at the beginning of the Spiritan missionary enterprise, light and self-confidence have arisen through the presence of MARUCO and its conglomerates. Bringing Light to the Nations continues to fire Spiritan missionary endeavor, even in 21st Century Bagamoyo.

Such is part of the University’s *Mission Statement*, namely, “To promote knowledge and skills which impart critical and independent thinking, integrity and self-respect, creativity and commitment to service”.

Its programs are grouped in the following combinations. There are programs in the undergraduate, Diploma, and Certificate levels. As the University grows so will graduate and post-graduate levels be added.

**Undergraduate Degree Programs**

**Bachelor of Education in Science**
This three year program includes the study of two academic subjects together with general core courses and professional subjects required for teacher’s education. The subject combinations include Chemistry and Biology; Chemistry and Mathematics; Chemistry and Geography; Physics and Chemistry; Physics and Geography; Physics and Mathematics; Geography and Biology; Geography and Mathematics.

**Bachelor of Science in Mathematics and Statistics**
This three year program is aimed at using mathematical
and statistical knowledge and skills to solve societal problems.

**Bachelor of Science in Computer Science (Information Systems)**

The programs here are aimed at producing professionals and technicians who will work in areas which apply computer skills in information communication technology. The degree program is a three year program.

**Admission and Entry Requirements for Bachelor (First) Degree**

The following are the general entry requirements for all degree programs:

**Direct Entry**

Must hold at least three Ordinary-level credit passes in appropriate subjects, one of which must be English Language.

Must have at least two principal passes (D and above) in appropriate subjects at A-level education and must have grade points total of not less than 3.0, where A=5, B=4, C=3, D=2, E=1 and S=0.5.

**Equivalent Qualifications**

Must hold at least three Ordinary-level credit passes in relevant subjects, one of which must be English Language.

Must hold a Diploma in the relevant field of study or its equivalent, with at least Grade A or Grade B, in the subjects they wish to study at degree level.

**Diploma Programs**

Diploma in Computer Science (2 years)

**Requirements for Admission**

**Direct Entry**

A Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (Ordinary-Level) with at least three credit passes in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, Computer Studies, and Geography including a pass in English.

**Or**

An Advanced Certificate of Secondary Education Examination (ACSEE) with subsidiary passes.
Equivalent Qualifications

Either
Ordinary Level Certificate with four passes in Computer studies or Mathematics, or Physics, Chemistry, or Geography including a pass in English and an Ordinary National Certificate qualification of an equivalent standard awarded by recognized bodies like NBAA, NACTE, IFM, etc.

Or
Certificate in Computer Science recognized by NACTE or/and TCU OR Certificate in IT/CCNA (CISCO).

Certificate Program
Certificate in Computer Science and Information Technology (1 Year)

Requirements for Admission
A candidate must have a certificate of Secondary Education (Ordinary-Level) with at least four passes (D) including physics or Mathematics or Chemistry or Geography. English is a must.

Short Courses
English Language Proficiency Certificate (4 months).
Basic Computer Skills (2 months).

Further Reflection
The Chinese say that the journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. The Tanzania Province of the Spiritan Congregation has taken a historical first step in establishing MARUCO. MARUCO is still a constituent college of SAUT. It has to set high standards of scholarship and achievement in the coming years to merit that autonomy and respect within the distinguished coterie of Universities in the land. The University is as inclusive as its missionary outreach and welcomes students of all faiths and backgrounds as required by the ethos of university education in Tanzania. It is hoped that with Spiritan international connections it will add quality and excellence. It has already locked up a Memorandum of Understanding with a University in Taiwan. Arrangements are on course to do the same with other Spiritan Universities across the globe. In keeping with the indigenization policy of the government of Tanzania, the Spiritan Administration...
decided shortly after the inauguration to set up a search committee that would appoint a Tanzanian national to lead the new university as principal/president. Meanwhile, the new university has opened its doors to its pioneer students and lectures are on-going.

The University College address is: P.O. Box 47, Bagamoyo, Pwani, Tanzania; E-Mail: marianuniversitycollege@gmail.com; Website: http://www.maruco.ac.tz.


*Bagamoyo, Tanzania*