

**Address to Brothers and Edmund Rice Network**  
**17 March 2007**  
**Moonee Valley Racecourse, Melbourne**

Brothers of St Patrick's Province,  
Brothers from different Provinces and Regions in Oceania.  
Members of the Edmund Rice Network,  
Co-workers and friends of the Brothers

I greet you on behalf of my Brother Charles Majaliwa, and on behalf of all the Brothers of East Africa.

It is a privilege to be among you tonight. Charles and I have been made so welcome in many of your communities, schools and ministries in Melbourne, Ballarat, Geelong, Colac, Warrnambool, Glenburn, and in Tasmania.

We were very much overjoyed to receive the invitation of St Patrick's Province to attend this function. Personally for me it is a dream come true. I have always been interested to visit places like Treacy centre, Amberley and so many other places which our Brothers in East Africa kept talking about, like Skilled Stadium where we have been initiated into the **Club.... GO CATS!!!!**. This for me has been like a pilgrimage, to visit places of our ancestry. It is like coming home to a home I have never been to before. Here is where our foundation started. Tonight is a special night for me representing my Brothers in East Africa who all would love to say to you very sincerely '**ASANTENI SANA**' meaning **THANK YOU VERY MUCH**

Why do I want to say thank you?

Firstly I thank you Brothers of St Patrick's Province for bringing the Good News of Edmund Rice to East Africa. The story goes back over 20 years and some of the men involved were Bert McGregor, Frank Chappell, Mark O'Loughlin and Paul Noonan. Then the story of Edmund took root in Tanzania with Peter Hudson, Gerard Bennett, Frank Lloyd, Mick Podbury, Rex Elmer and the ever-young Peter Cole. You were certainly moved by Jesus who appealed to you through our people in East Africa to provide them with the new hope, to bring them the gift of brotherhood which is and was badly needed in our Church and society.

We Africans were touched by this gift of the good news of Edmund Rice, and we responded. We too desired to take part in the vision which Brothers brought to us, a vision in which all should be liberated from poverty and oppression through holistic education.

Secondly, we thank you for opening your doors for us, and welcoming us to share this Brotherhood. I remember when I was in Form 3 back in 1990, a certain Br Peter Cole who was teaching us Religion struck me as having something special, and I wanted to know what he was all about!!! I was touched by the ways in which he related to us, he had a sheer interest in all aspects of our life as students. He attended our evening prayers, he even knew our names. I then hesitantly told him on 9 February 1991 that I wanted to be Brother. Then the story continued, it then seemed to me like being engaged. The relationship kept growing through various visits and writing of letters. I familiarised myself with the Brothers where I met Br Frank Lloyd and Rex Elmer regularly in Sinon community. I remember visiting the Brothers House in what has been popularly known as Sombetini and read the Mission Statement which said something like "We struggle to form Gospel communities" Those words struck me; I said to myself this is a group I want to belong to. I want to live my life in a community which lives the values of

the gospel. I could see those values being lived out in the lives of Peter and the other Brothers whom I met. I saw that there was something special in the Brothers, a spirit that was active and alive. Community life which was quite vibrant and hospitable. I was attracted by the call to serve the poor, after my own experience of living in poverty. I was just fascinated by the possibility of being Brother to everyone, even in my possible old age as I saw in those Brothers whom I met.

I am now finally professed, the first one in our growing East African District. In my discernment of whether I should give my whole life to God through this vowed commitment, what came to be very strong for me was not really whether I should remain a Brother or not, but my desire to be in strong relationship with God. When that became clear, I realised that throughout my journey of being Christian Brother that search has been and is still possible. My life as a Brother supports that search. I have experienced God in so many ways in my journey as a Brother, either in ministry or in community.

As a Christian Brother in Africa I am able to touch people's lives and be good news to those who are stricken and oppressed by poverty. We are able to provide them with good education and enable them to see that they are Brothers and Sisters of Jesus Christ, equal citizens of this world. I am very happy today and grateful for my vocation as a Brother. If it was not you Brothers of St Patrick's Province, maybe I wouldn't have been able to receive this gift.

Thirdly, I thank the Brothers of St Patrick's Province for the great formation we have received, especially formation in the spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice. Over the last fifteen years the great effort in our District has been in the area of Formation. Formation towards Christian Brotherhood, formation in and for Ministry, formation of Brothers in Temporary Profession through regular accompaniment and quality, supportive community living. You sent us mighty men who gave themselves so wholeheartedly in enabling us to inherit the spirit of Blessed Edmund Rice. Tonight we remember Bob Aron and Gerard Bennet who accompanied us in our early years of formation in Sombetini community now known as Shamsi. We have been mentored and invited into responsibility and leadership, and in turn we are now part of the running of our ministries in East Africa in Schools, Formation and various Projects within the District. The future is obvious that soon we will be the ones to take all those responsibilities.

St Patrick's Province has invested generously in our academic formation for ministry. Our biggest numbers of Brothers are in training and study. We sincerely thank you for this gift and for this vision which our East African Leaders have been able to facilitate through your assistance.

A fourth thank you is for the generous financial support which we have received from St Patrick's Province over the years; You have generously given in supporting us in our -Formation houses and programs -Places of ministry Sinon, Ruben, Embulbul, Edmund Rice Centre Kibera. I thank here especially the Schools who helped build those facilities, the Foundation and the work of so many generous benefactors. Your assistance is good news for our people, who can now receive new hope and new opportunities for their lives. We are now capable to take risk, to enter into new ventures to help our people. All these have been possible through your generous support. We thank you most sincerely.

We thank you for the support in the upkeep of our communities in East Africa

Fifthly I thank so many of you who have come to be with us: for 6 days, 6 weeks, 6 months or 6 years, your visits and presence were always a great support for us. We felt that we belong to something greater than ourselves in East Africa. I have mentioned the pioneer Brothers from this Province. After them came many Brothers, your youngest and most energetic, Gerard Bennet, Gerard Brady, Tim Moloney, Bob Aron, Frank O'Shea, Tom Kearney, Peter Hudson, Frank Lloyd, Rex Elmer, Sean Mc Manus, Gerard Ellul, Laurie Collins and Tim Lockwood whom we novices nicknamed Br Lock. Some of

your older men in whom the sap is still running: Frank Chappell, Peter Mzee Cole, Chris Shearer, Peter Ellis, Michael Stallard and other Jubilarians such as Barry Callan, Kevin Delaney and Russell Peters... And you have been joined by Brothers from New Zealand, Holy Spirit Province, Ireland, Canada and the United States, all inspired by the generosity of the Brothers of St Patrick's Province. You have come and given your best. We thank all these Brothers for coming to us and share with us this great gift of brotherhood of Edmund Rice.

We have been blessed too by the generous volunteers, men and women of the Edmund Rice Network, who have given of their time to be with us in ministry. They have shared with us many of their gifts and talents. Tonight I want to thank you all very sincerely.

We know that for many of you who came to be with us, your lives were not the same again. Brothers and colleagues have fallen in love with our land, our people. Our situations have touched their hearts. Some are ready and willing to die and be buried there. We in turn are touched and changed by their presence and their walking with us.

We thank the PLT for inviting us to come to Australia, for visit and to specifically attend this event. This shows vividly the connection between St Patrick's Province and East Africa. We were very much overjoyed when we received this invitation. The experience we have had will remain in our hearts for a lifetime. We have visited your great country; we have visited some of your Cities and some villages like Collac and Ballarat!! We have had the taste of your life in all its aspects – ministry and community. We go back enriched, we might even be able to understand our expatriate Brothers who live and work with us in far better ways. Conversation on sports could also now get much animation!!!

I have personally been touched and inspired by meeting the older and retired Brothers of the Province. When I think of them, the words of St Paul to Timothy come to mind "I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith" II Timothy 4: 6-8. I thank you, our older men for this inspiration to us younger Brothers. We know that we are joining a group which has passed the test of time, there is tradition here, there is something for us to inherit.

I want to thank you Brothers and friends in St Patrick's Province for your support in ways that are intangible, that cannot be measured in dollars or buildings or airline tickets: your support in HEART MATTERS:

Your emotional encouragement has meant so much to us

You have shown us that someone is interested in us

We have received your encouragement and communications at times of profession, Christmas phone calls, and even on our birthdays. Even Kevin Woodruff whom we have never met, communicated to us, we thank you!!!!

We are very conscious of the prayerful support of so many, especially the older men

Together too we have mourned the loss of colleagues, especially Paul Noonan, Selestino Mgala and Ambrose Purcell. And only since coming here, have I appreciated the enormous letting-go that Australian Brothers must experience when they come to Africa.

Bringing and managing resources are very important. But there are some Brothers who will never build anything, who none-the-less have made enormous impact just by being Brother to us and to the Africans they live amongst and meet. We could be mighty social workers, money-givers, administrators, but something greater is needed: spirituality, touching peoples lives, being part of a faith community, Brotherhood.

And that is your most precious gift to us: through you we have become part of something much bigger, Brotherhood in Edmund Rice. And that then is your gift to our fellow Africans: Brotherhood. St Patrick's Province on behalf of Charlie who is here tonight and of my all my Brothers back in East Africa, we thank you.

George Massay CFC