

MISSIONARIES OF COMPASSION

DIOCESE OF KABWE, ZAMBIA · DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS, OHIO



Fr. M. A. Alex with the children of Mpula — the heart of a young parish

When a Mother from Columbus Taught a Baby Parish to Walk

A Mission Story from Mpula, Zambia



"I was thirsty and you gave me drink."

— Matthew 25:35

ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE QUASI-PARISH · MPULA

*Made possible through the Bishop Iruthayaraj Foundation, by the generous donors
of the Catholic Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, USA*



BISHOP IRUTHAYARAJ FOUNDATION



DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS

A Child That Needed a Hand

Every child needs someone to hold its hand when it takes its first steps. Some children are fortunate to have a mother close by. But what happens when the child is thousands of miles away?

On 23 August 2024, a new parish was born at Mpula, in the Diocese of Kabwe, Zambia. St. Maximilian Kolbe Quasi-Parish began its journey with 12 outstations scattered across a vast and remote area. It was a baby parish — full of faith, hope and dreams, but with very little to stand on.

Most of our people are peasant farmers who depend on seasonal rains. Many families had lived for years with only occasional access to a priest. Now, for the first time, a priest would live among them — to celebrate Mass, visit their homes, hear their confessions and accompany them in their struggles.

But this young parish needed help to stand. And God sent that help from far away. Through the Bishop Iruthayaraj Foundation, and the generous donors of the Catholic Diocese of Columbus, Ohio, USA, a mother from across the ocean reached out and took the hand of this little parish. And Mpula began to walk.



The faithful of St. Maximilian Kolbe Quasi-Parish, Mpula — 12 outstations, one family of God

PROJECT ONE

Water: A Gift of Life



The 5,000-litre tank above the new borehole



Children draw the first water of a new era

The first step was water. A 100-metre-deep borehole, a 1.5 HP hybrid pump and a 5,000-litre water tank were provided at Mpula. For many people, clean water is ordinary. For the families of Mpula, it is a blessing.

Mothers come with their containers. Children come for water. Elderly people no longer have to travel as far in search of it. The water flows — and with it comes a quiet message: “You are not forgotten.” Where there was thirst, there is now life.

PROJECT TWO

A Home for the Shepherd

A parish cannot flourish when its shepherd must live far away. For almost two years, the priest could not live at Mpula because the priest's house was too small and incomplete. He stayed 22 miles away with the Conventual Franciscans – travelling out and back each day by motorbike, through heat, cold and rain. To reach the most distant outstation could mean about 87 miles in a single day. It was exhausting, and he fell sick frequently. But the people were waiting.



The road to the outstations after the rains...



...up to 87 miles a day by motorbike to reach the flock



The extended priest's house at Mpula



A 6.2 kV solar system brings light to the home

The Bishop Iruthayaraj Foundation helped extend the priest's house and provided a 6.2 kV solar system. Now the priest lives at Mpula. At night, a light shines from the house – and that light means something. When a family comes seeking prayer, the priest is there. When someone needs confession, he is there. When a sick person needs pastoral care, he is there. The Bishop Iruthayaraj Foundation did not simply build a house. It brought the shepherd home.

PROJECT THREE

Dignity for Our Mothers and Children



Rt. Rev. Clement Mulenga, Bishop of Kabwe, unveils the plaque – 23 August 2026



The blessing and opening of the new ablution block

The people of Mpula had begun building an ablution block, but could not afford to finish it. The Bishop Iruthayaraj Foundation helped complete it with sanitary ware, plumbing, electrical work and tiles. Today it is the first and only water-borne ablution facility in the surrounding area.

When hundreds gather for Mass, mothers, girls and children have a clean, private and dignified place to go. For some, it may seem a simple building. For the people of Mpula, it is a statement of dignity: "You matter. Your dignity matters. The Church cares for you."

PROJECT FOUR

A House of God in the Forest

Far from Mpula, in one of the most remote outstations, a small church stood unfinished among the trees. The people had prayed there. They had hoped there. But the building still needed so much. Again, Columbus came alongside them.



Inside the little church in the forest — simple, prayerful, and now finished with love



The new wooden altar



Plastered, painted, consecrated to prayer

The Bishop Iruthayaraj Foundation helped with external plastering, painting, doors, windows and a wooden altar. Today, that unfinished building has become a House of God in the forest. People who once felt forgotten now enter through its doors, kneel before the altar, celebrate the Eucharist and pray. And the little church whispers a powerful truth to everyone who enters: God has pitched His tent among us.

Thank You, Columbus

Dear friends in Columbus, you may be thousands of miles from Mpula. You may never know the name of every mother who comes for water, nor meet every child who enters that forest church. But your love has reached them. You did not merely fund projects — you helped a baby parish learn to walk. You gave water to the thirsty, a home to the shepherd, dignity to our mothers and children, and a church to people in the forest. Above all, you gave the assurance that we are not alone. This World Mission Sunday, your mission is alive in Mpula: it flows from the tap, it shines through the priest's window at night, and it rises with the prayers of God's people from the little church in the forest. A young parish in Zambia has taken its first steps — and somewhere across the ocean, a loving mother from Columbus is still holding its hand.

Twatotera sana — Thank you, from Mpula.

St. Maximilian Kolbe Quasi-Parish, Mpula · Diocese of Kabwe, Zambia · Missionaries of Compassion
Written from the field by Rev. Fr. M. A. Alex, Missionary Priest · With the faithful of Mpula



Visiting the families of the parish



Pastoral care, door to door