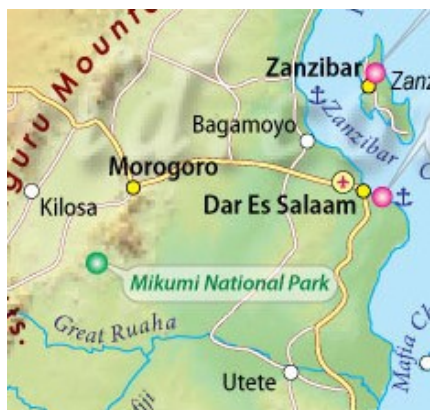


## TANZANIA: THE MISSIONARY JOURNEYS TO MAFIA ISLAND

Mafia Island is located in the Indian Ocean, and is one of 112 parishes of the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam, about 500 kilometers away from the port of Tanzania's capital city. Every year, during the missionary month of October, the children of the Pontifical Holy Childhood Society of the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam carry out a missionary journey to visit the parish on the island. This evangelizing initiative is also held in Kibiti and Ikwiriri, two towns in the mainland, under the leadership and guidance of His Eminence Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, the Archbishop of Dar es Salaam. His Eminence has been the first missionary of the Archdiocese, and is now governing it in collaboration with two Bishops: His Grace Jude Thaddeus Ruwa'ichi OFMCap, the Coadjutor

Archbishop, and Rt. Rev. Eusebius Alfred Nzigilwa, the Auxiliary Bishop. Presently, the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam comprises about 1,724,371 Catholics.



### Beginning of the Missionary Journeys of the Pontifical Holy Childhood Society

The missionary journeys to the periphery areas of Kibiti, Ikwiriri, and Mafia Island began in 2000. In the execution of his pastoral plan, His Eminence Cardinal Polycarp Pengo knew that “faith is strengthened when it is given to others”, as Pope John Paul II argued about the mission of the Church in the Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* 2. The aim of His Eminence was to evangelize areas where Christians are a small number, encouraging them to live their faith openly and without fear. His missionary campaign involved the children. In 2000, he led a procession with the children of the Pontifical Holy Childhood Society and their animators in Kibiti and Ikwiriri, carrying around the Great Jubilee Holy Cross and announcing its triumph to all the people.

In the following year, he led the children of the Pontifical Holy Childhood Society in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist. In these faithful acts, the young missionary children witnessed their faith and looked for new friends for Jesus among the unbaptized people. In doing so, His Eminence Cardinal Polycarp Pengo was laying the ground to the establishment of the new parishes that have been inaugurated recently.

### Journeys to Mafia Island

His Eminence Cardinal Polycarp Pengo knew well Pope Francis' words in *Evangelii Gaudium* 20: “All of us are asked to obey His call to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach

all the ‘peripheries’ in need of the light of the Gospel”. This Encyclical Letter was issued nine years later after the beginning of the missionary journeys promoted by His Eminence. However, he was already living the message of Pope Francis in his leadership and in transmitting the missionary spirit to the new generation of the Archdiocese and beyond.

The journeys to Mafia began in 2004, when eight animators travelled to the island in order to examine the situation and figure out whether it was possible to establish a presence there for missionary purpose. The group explored the territory, and remain enchanted by it. In 2005, the first missionary journeys to Mafia Island began. Since then, thousands of children and their animators have travelled to the island until today. They have been joined by young missionaries from the dioceses of Mbeya, Mahenge, Dodoma, Kondoa, Ifakara, Morogoro, Tanga, and other localities.

In their journeys to Mafia Island, the young missionaries are accompanied by His Eminence or his Auxiliary Bishop, priests led by the Archdiocesan Pontifical Missionary Director, religious women and men, diocesan laity leaders, animators, and journalists from Tumaini Media (the radio-tv station owned by the Archdiocese of Dar es Salaam). At times, also the National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies join the journeys.

At the beginning, the inhabitants of Mafia Island – who are mostly Muslims and traditionalists – were unsociable and showed apathy towards the young missionaries. But with time they realized that the children were friendly, and that they just wanted to proclaim the peace brought by Jesus Christ. The local people slowly opened up and now they long for their coming so that they can welcome them, motivated by different reasons: business, friendship, and the interest to learn more about Christianity.

### **Missionary Activities in Mafia Island**

The missionary journeys take three days from Friday to Sunday. The children arrive on the island with their animators on Friday evening. On Saturday, their spiritual activities include the celebration of a Holy Mass, catechism or missionary instructions, the preparation of songs for Sunday service or a visit to Kanga’s or other outstations. At Kanga, His Eminence Cardinal Polycarp Pengo has planned to build an animation center for the Pontifical Holy Childhood Society. In the evening, the children pray the Rosary altogether.

On Sunday, His Eminence or the Bishop celebrate the Holy Mass, during which the sacrament of Confirmation is given to the Christians of Mafia Island who have been prepared for this occasion. Other sacraments are also celebrated, such as Baptism, the Holy Communion, and the nuptial ceremony. After the Holy Mass, the procession of the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist goes round in the streets of Mafia town. Many Muslims and traditionalists come out from their houses to see the procession of the children adoring the Holy Eucharist in their beautiful attire.

This is a remarkable witness of faith on the part of the children of the Pontifical Holy Childhood Society.

After the procession, the children have their lunch, and usually the government leaders of the island and the friends of the local parish are invited to share the meal. The Holy Mass is broadcasted live by Radio Tumaini and Radio Maria. Moreover, the journalists shoot documentaries and interviews that are then aired in the television and radio after they return from the missionary journey. All that also attracts the children and animators so that they will join the missionary journey of the subsequent year.

### **Pastoral Impact of the Missionary Journeys to Mafia Island**

These missionary journeys have short and long-term pastoral effects. Prior, the Christians of Mafia island were afraid to profess their faith and even to say their Christians' names in public, but these fears have been dispelled thanks to encouragement received by the missionary journeys. Moreover, there have been numerous conversions to the Catholic Church. The children participating in the missionary journeys have started to take up increasing responsibilities as young missionaries in their parishes, such as church service or voluntary work, and they join in numbers religious and priestly formation. At the beginning of the missionary journeys, many parents and priests were reluctant to contribute with money to enable their children to travel to Mafia. Some parents were even afraid of their children travelling in the ocean's waters. With the passage of time, both parents and priests have got used to the missionary journeys, and they are now backing them financially. We hope that the children who have participated in these journeys will be exemplar missionaries in the future.

### **TANZANIA**

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**Supervised by Fr. Jovitus Mwijage, PMS National Director in Tanzania**