

We are not quite sure why the Lord has given this magnificent gift to us in Malawi, but we do believe it is a strong call to prayer and penance ... a call to turn back to God through His Son, Jesus Christ. Whilst members of the Catholic Church were called to bring this to completion, we are very mindful that the Virgin Mary, in Her many apparitions, has always stated that in God's eyes there are no divisions of faith – we are all one. We therefore wish to make it known far and wide that ALL ARE WELCOME, and furthermore all are encouraged to climb this route in prayerful communion with the Lord. We pray this 'Way of the Cross' in reparation for our sins; praying for the sick and the dying; praying that all hearts may come to know the joy of Christ's love; and praying that peace may always reign in Malawi. Please do come and make your own pilgrimage of prayer.

#### Directions

To reach the entrance to this Way of the Cross cars should proceed past Ryalls hotel, past Namiwawa Filling Station and follow the winding Chilomoni Ring Road. At the T-junction turn right and proceed past the Chilomoni Catholic Church which is clearly visible beside the road. From that point there are yellow signs 'Njira wa Mtanda' or 'Way of the Cross'. After the Church the road turns to the right and signs further on indicate a turn to the left up a dirt road. Following these signs with one more turn to the right the entrance will shortly be visible. There is a fenced area where cars may be left under 24 hr guard.

PLEASE JOIN US IN PRAYING THAT WE  
MAY FAITHFULLY COMPLETE THIS INCREDIBLE  
GIFT OF GOD TO MALAWI.

*Praise be to God!*

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The Story  
of  
God's great gift  
to  
Malawi.

Following is a full and accurate account of the events that led to the completion of our 'Krizevac' in Malawi. For those who wish to publish the story in their local Medjugorje magazines but find this too long and detailed we give full permission to reduce it as you will, providing that none of the details are changed.

## **Introduction**

Many people are now aware that there are fifteen 'Stations' of the Cross winding up Michiru mountain with a large Cross on the summit. Groups or individuals can be seen every day quietly making their way up the mountain, stopping at each station and praying before the cross or meditating the scene depicted on a beautiful bronze plaque beside each cross. Others can be found at the top - sitting at the foot of the main Cross deep in prayer. But few people are aware of how it all came about and who initiated this great and beautiful gift to Malawi. For that reason I have been asked to share my story, which I do in obedience and with deep humility, in order that all will understand how this is truly a gift from God. It was initiated by God and not by any human being. God merely used some of us to put his plan to action and we were all delighted to do our bit. I am therefore happy to explain how it came about....

## **The story goes ...**

In September, 2000 I was given a ticket to make a pilgrimage to Rome and Medjugorje together with a dear friend. It had been ten years since my last pilgrimage and I was overwhelmed with the chance to go again. When I was preparing before the Blessed Sacrament I was agonising with Jesus for three days saying, 'Why me, Lord? Why am I blessed to go again? What about all the Malawians who can never go?' and then on the third day this question was so strong in my heart that I raised my hands and surrendered saying: 'Lord, I leave it all to you' and I continued with my prayer.

When I had finished, about an hour later, I was at home getting ready to go to the office when the phone rang, and a voice, obviously long distance, said to me - "Is that Gay Russell ... You don't know me. My name is Tony Smith. I love Medjugorje and I want to talk to you about this idea I have. If you need to check me out you can ring Bernard Ellis in the U.K. I have this idea that has been developing for some years. Originally I was hoping to build a replica of Krizevac (the big Cross on top of a mountain in Medjugorje) for all the people in England who could not go, but I've never managed to find a mountain. Then last night I heard clearly in my heart: 'Build it in Malawi for all the Malawians who can never go.'! Having seen you

on a video some time ago I have spent the morning tracking down your number, and now I am asking if you could find a mountain near Blantyre on the summit of which we could build the Krizevac Cross and then place the Stations of the Cross up the mountain just like in Medjugorje. I hope you don't think I am crazy, but it could become a Medjugore for the Malawians." After nearly dropping the phone I told Tony that I didn't think he was crazy, but an answer to my prayers. In that split second the project was conceived and begun. Tony asked me to go ahead, find the mountain and begin the work. Well, as you can imagine I was totally stunned. I COULD NOT BELIEVE the coincidence. And I was so dazed that instead of just quietly accepting his offer I told him we also needed a sanctuary to pray since we keep having to borrow school rooms or halls to have our monthly Mass!

To cut a long story short Tony asked me to go ahead and find a hill with a good area at the base ... and for the rest of the day I was walking on air, SO excited and overwhelmed at the power of God. But later, in the deep dark hours of the night, I began to feel the pressure and suffer anguish, realising how much there would be to organise ... However, just the next afternoon (Sunday) I slipped down to leave some papers at our printing room in the Cathedral hall and I bumped into one of our group whom I hadn't seen for EIGHTEEN months - a marvellous young man who is now the Chief Blantyre Town Planning Officer in the Civic Centre! I told him what had happened and he immediately said he would contact some faithful members of the group and find a mountain and a site ... so I was again HAPPY and relieved!

The next day I had to fly away for three days and when I returned this young man phoned me with incredible news: It just HAPPENED that there was a tender in the newspaper for the lease of a Forestry Hut (with a hectare of land) at the foot of Michiru Mountain. He said that he and several others had walked up and down the mountain and chosen a path. Since the tender was closing whilst I was away this young man put in our application (mid-September, 2000). I told him I was delighted and would be very happy if he continued working with the Forestry department, but just to send me a copy of the tender/application for our records. Well, that was when I really knew that God was in control of the whole project. I couldn't believe

my eyes when I read the paper he had submitted. With all my education I could never have done anything like it - I am not trained in Government language and have no experience of this sort. John, on the other hand, has been with Government for years and is highly experienced ... he even found that he had a map of the mountain in his computer!

The interesting thing about Michiru Mountain being chosen is that of all the Medjugorje groups in the country, the one in Chilomoni Parish (which is at the base of Michiru mountain) is the only group that has faithfully prayed the Way of the Cross every Friday for FOURTEEN years!

In December, 2000 our benefactor came for his first visit to the site in Malawi, and during his stay we decided to visit the Archbishop to explain the sequence of events and seek his approval. His response was an emphatic NO—we could not build a Way of the Cross or a replica of Krizevac! Tony was somewhat shaken and disappointed at the Archbishop's attitude and asked me what I was going to do.... but I cheerfully responded: "Nothing! I am so convinced that this is God's project and if it is then doors will open ..!" Three months later I was proved correct when the Archbishop prematurely retired from his position quite some months earlier than expected ... And his replacement turned out to be Bishop Tarcisio Ziyaye who had been a member of our prayer group when he was only a priest! Shortly after his consecration as Archbishop I visited him and told him the whole story and he was DELIGHTED, saying it was so obviously a work of God .... and promptly accepting to bless the foundations of our Cross!

As it happened, some months later, after much reflection and prayer we had to accept that the majority of men in Malawi are not as strong as their Croatian brothers ... Many are suffering from HIV/ Aids, Bilharzia, Malaria or just plain hunger ... and it wouldn't be fair to expect them to carry everything up the mountain. So I decided to contact our next door neighbours, S.R. Nicholas. I then e-mailed Medjugorje for the dimensions of the Krizevac Cross, and from their drawings and some photos that we had, we were able to make detailed plans ...

Meantime we were waiting for approval from the Forestry Department. For eleven months we struggled with them... meetings

in Lilongwe, meetings in Blantyre; more reports required; inspections and more reports; negative comments and more meetings ... but there were always moments of joy! Would you believe that in one meeting we were advised that in their constitution the Malawi Forestry Department has a clause stating that forestry is not only for education and appreciation of nature BUT ALSO FOR SPIRITUAL UPLIFTING PURPOSES!!

Finally, at the end of August, 2001 we were given the clearance to go ahead. I was absolutely thrilled, as you can imagine, but again I was about to leave for Australia to visit my aging mother, and before my departure the first week of September, 2001 I knelt in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament feeling the terrible weight of responsibility. To me this is so obviously God's project and we have so far received clear directions, but I had begun to lose the feeling that everything was being guided by God ... So I picked up my Bible and asked the Lord to speak to me through His Holy Word (something I VERY seldom do) to give me some guidance or assurance. How my heart sank when I opened the Bible at 1 Chronicles 28 ... I thought: 'What can I ever get from this?' and then my eyes fell on verses 11-14, and 20-21:

*"David then gave his son Solomon the plans for the portico, the plans for the buildings, its storehouses, its upper rooms, its inner rooms and the room for the throne of mercy as well as the plans for everything that he had in mind: for the courts of the house of Yahweh, for all the surrounding rooms, for the treasuries of the house of God and for the sacred treasuries, for the orders of priests and Levites, for all the duties to be carried out in the service of the house of Yahweh, and for all the liturgical objects to be used in the house of Yahweh. David then said to his son Solomon, 'Be resolute and courageous in your work, do not be afraid or disheartened, because Yahweh God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you before you have finished all the work to be done for the house of Yahweh. And besides, there are the orders of priests and Levites for whatever is needed in connection with the house of God, and you have at your disposal every kind of craftsman for whatever has to be done, as well as the officials and the people entirely at your command.'*

Reading this I am sure you will understand why my heart LEAPT for joy, and I left for Australia TOTALLY convinced that this is truly God's project and HIS gift to Malawi.

There was only one problem that was bothering me at that stage ... We had learned some months previously that the Diocese was planning to move the Chilomoni Church and build a larger version on a site they had purchased some two or three miles away. The deal for the land had gone through and it was only a matter of time before building began. But to me it didn't suit our plans - it didn't seem right... Surely we would need the church near our Way of the Cross and our Shrine for the pilgrims to attend Mass and Adoration and Confession etc. So I went to the Parish priest one day, very downhearted, and told him of my thoughts and concerns - and he replied: "Do you know, I just received instructions yesterday to dispose of the new site and make plans to enlarge this church here - so we will not be moving after all!" Well, again I was overwhelmed. SURELY this was God's intervention... SURELY this was strong confirmation that HE was arranging everything as promised.

### Conclusion

There are so many stories to share about the events that keep happening ... the spring of water at the top of the mountain just when we needed water for digging the foundations ... the wooden carvings that were produced the day we were blessing the crosses and which were subsequently attached to each cross ... the accommodation for pilgrims ... the bronze plaques, from Carmello Puzzolo in Italy, which are identical to those on Krizevac in Medjugorje. We are keeping a record of all the details and we know they are not finished yet. There is still plenty being developed and we feel God's hand directing all ... The Parish church at the foot of the mountain that was being enlarged has now been converted to an enormous community hall, and on the school site nearby a new church identical to St. James in Medjugorje is currently under construction and due for completion in June, 2006. Meanwhile a new primary school is nearing completion on the alternate church site which was due for disposal! Plans to develop the Shrine site into a centre for pilgrimage and prayer are with the Town Planning Department, but these are all plans that may take many years to bring to fruition. In the meantime we are delighted to report that the Way of the Cross - the huge concrete Cross on the summit of Michiru mountain plus the fifteen 'stations' which are positioned along the winding path from the foot of the mountain to the summit, - are now completed, and all are most welcome to walk this