

Rev. Canon Huw Thomas, Locum Priest at the Holy Trinity Church Algiers writes with news of the church choir which participated in a recent Peace Event at Notre Dame D'Afrique, Algiers with a choir from a Sufi Muslim group.



On June 3 the choir will sing there again at an ecumenical service to commemorate the 19th Century Ugandan Martyrs of whom 22 were Anglicans and 21 Catholics.

Canon Huw informs us that: 'we number about 100 and manage even under present restrictions on gatherings and means of transport to muster about 40 at Friday worship, and others via Zoom. Of these say 80% are students with an additional sprinkling of people from various diplomatic and other groups, with some Algerians gradually taking on leadership roles and beginning to root us in the local soil, though this needs be a gentle and deeply sensitive process. Our average age is between twenty and thirty years : not necessarily prayer-book Anglicans(!) but with the vibrancy and devotion to the Faith and its Lord which typifies much of sub Saharan Africa. And as the only English language congregation in this largest and most beautiful of African countries one of our defining roles is to serve those who choose to pray in English. Yes, we face challenges. We constitute a tiny minority within a greater one of Christian people living in a nation where Islam is the dominant influence in all aspects of social life and structure.

In 1985, just before the cruel civil war here, John Paul II addressed the churches in North Africa. Recognising the diversity, dispersion and short stays characteristic of our communities he wrote of the primary task of assuring our people of " a discreet presence of the church in these countries as the normal expression of the faith of their members". He urged respect, the dialogue of friendship and service in goodwill in situations wherever permitted, and he recommended the strong sense of identity their particular situation brought Christian people.

" Let this not lead to a sense of inevitable marginalisation nor to a persistent minority psyche within our communities." It is in this spirit we seek to bear our witness and to wait upon God for doors to open to new opportunities. They surely will.