



MISSION IN CUAMBA



Fr Brian Holmes, CSsR, reports on the first Redemptorist mission in Mozambique



Fr John giving thanks in Macua

Cuamba is a busy, dusty, colourful city in the northern province of Niassa in Mozambique. It is here that we celebrated the first Redemptorist parish mission in this country. Our Argentinean confreres, who

Toyota get us there and back safe and sound?

Despite these doubts we decided to go. While the Argentineans made three pre-mission visits, John Bermingham and myself helped out on the second

breakfast, visiting people's homes, giving first place to the old and sick. The local community provided lunch, and each afternoon we had meetings with different groups - children, youth, couples, women, men, community leaders. Finally, in the late afternoon we had the evening celebration of the mission, when we celebrated the good news of God's love and compassion for all, especially for the lost. In spite of our earlier reservations, the mission

simple, little homes. A stool was quickly produced, the bamboo mat spread out on the ground for us to sit on, and they were happy to share their story with us and to listen to ours.

On the final Sunday morning, all the communities came in procession to the parish centre for the final celebration. Fr Santiago preached and Fr John thanked the people on



An early morning procession

one, where we tried to prepare the Christian community leaders for the mission that lay ahead. Cuamba has a population of 80,000 people, about 25%

have been in the southern part of the country for 10 years, were invited to "do a Redemptorist mission." We hesitated at first to accept the invitation to join them: we still hadn't completed even one year in the province of Tete. We are still struggling with language, culture, and what it means to be a missionary in Mozambique today. Our third confrere, Brother Hélio had just arrived from Brazil. And then there were the distances to be covered. If we travelled by Mozambican roads, it would be about 1500km each way. If we were to go through Malawi it would only be about 500km, but the bureaucracy and police "road blocks" along the way would be a nuisance. And would our 14-year-old

of whom are Catholic. The city is divided into seven communities, so we formed seven teams of Redemptorists, sisters, and lay missionaries, and spent 10 days in each community. It was a big novelty, as they never had anything like this before. We had early morning processions, praying the rosary and singing beautiful hymns, mainly in the Macua language, and celebrating the Eucharist. Then, after



Fr Brian celebrating Mass

turned out to be an enjoyable and rewarding experience. We were well received by the people who gave us great support. They were very poor, but always showed joy and thanks when we arrived at their

behalf of the Redemptorists, using their own language, Macua, which made them very happy. In the final evaluation that Sunday afternoon

with the community leaders, the general opinion was that it was worthwhile. For Cuamba it was a week of renewal, prayer, joy, and looking at life, family, work, and society in light of the Gospel. For us Redemptorists it was a learning experience. We had to constantly adapt the different models we brought with us, open up new paths, learn to work within the limits of time, language, and local culture, and walk each day close to the people of God.



The Mission Mass

