

**St Joseph's Theological Institute**  
**Opening Mass: 28<sup>th</sup> January 2010**  
**Homily: Fr Sylvester David OMI, President**

This is a special year in many respects. In terms of the world sporting community this is the year of the soccer world cup. The various nationalities comprising the community of SJTI will undoubtedly focus on the progress of their national sides or their favourite teams. Africa loves soccer and will undoubtedly celebrate this event in grand style. But before you rush off to buy your vuvuzelas there are some other considerations.

For us here at St. Joseph's we celebrate 20 years of existence. This is also the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the existence of the Cluster. All this came about because of a vision – mainly the vision of one man, Fr. Paul Decock. Last year he celebrated 40 years of life at Cedara and we mentioned his immense contribution to this place. We once again acknowledge his contribution and thank him for his courageous vision. He not only saw what was – he also saw what it could grow into. And herein lies a lesson for each of us. To see what we can become. In one of the primary call and response dialogues in the Bible (Is 43:1) God tells us that he is continually creating us and continually forming us. Whilst **creating** means calling into being, **forming** means becoming more than what one presently is; in other words being open to growth and to change.

The relevant question at the start of this year is what can I grow into this year? How can I fit into the vision of St. Joseph's? Can St. Joseph's become all that it can be because of me or will it do it in spite of me? Each one has a contribution to make. The running of St. Joseph's is not dependant solely on the Board of Directors, or on the staff. It is dependent on all those who associate with the place. It is dependent on the formators, the students, the staff, the Board of Directors and the Board of Members. It is dependent on our benefactors and also dependent on the agencies of State with which we engage. Together we form the tapestry of the Church's education ministry – though I wonder where the State departments fit into such an arrangement.

The attitude of King David in our first reading is particularly applicable as we start our academic year. His prayer embraces a vision which God has for the chosen people and he humbly acknowledges that it is God who is doing great things among the people. This text describes God as the God who accompanies his people. This is the God who accompanies us still. Just as he accompanied Israel through her victories and through her failures, he accompanies us through our troughs and valleys. What is more astounding is that God actually works through us. This is the consequence of the Incarnation. We have been given gifts which actually become the means by which we collaborate with God. Jesus refers to this in the Gospel when he reminds us that the amount we measure out will be the amount we get back. Each of us has been given at least one gift and we are encouraged to let that gift shine not under the bed but on the lamp stand. Keeping the gift to oneself becomes counterproductive. The mole which today is blind once had sight but it refused to use that gift and chose instead to grovel under the earth and Mother Nature, as if seated in judgement, said *take the talent away* – and so the mole goes on grovelling in the dark in bowels of the earth. So let us see at the start of this academic year what contribution I can make to God's education project here at St. Joseph's?