

Consecration of Carlos Simão Matsinhe as the 11th Bishop of Lebombo

What a great privilege to be asked by the Diocese of London and ALMA to be their representative at the consecration of Carlos Matsinhe!

I started to get to know Fr Carlos as I worked to set up the link between Twyford School and Maciene school from 2009. Apart from the practicalities to arrange – accommodation, transport and shared project work with the school – there was the all-important relationship that needed to be brokered between schools; and ideally, as in the UK, the school and church would support each other in that relationship. As Cathedral Dean and a fluent English speaker- as well as Portuguese and Changana, Fr. Carlos was well placed to do this – but more importantly, he clearly commanded the respect of his community, had great influence locally and a desire to see the relationship between the two schools grow.



The Diocese of Lebombo is important in Southern Africa, the first of the present two Dioceses in Mozambique. Bishop Dinis Sengulane had been bishop of Lebombo for a formidable 37 years – the longest serving bishop in the Anglican Communion, the first Mozambican-born bishop and enormously influential in creating peace and justice in Mozambique. However, the province of Southern Africa is also growing in stature and confidence - and it is relevant to recall that the average Anglican is an African woman in her 20s.

I was delighted to hear of Fr Carlos' election: he had impressed me as a man who is deeply committed to his people, but also authoritative and holy – he speaks with simplicity and purpose. I believe Fr Carlos is a man who will draw people together to realise his vision for the Diocese and develop its life.



As an event, his consecration was very impressive. It was held in the sports stadium in Maputo, close to the port. Arriving for the rehearsal, there were three television cameras, a large stage at the front with digital screens on either side with Carlos' picture on it, a large number of people – and several bishops among them. Under Fr Carlos' direction, the party were taken through the service & processions.

The next day, the scale of the event continued to unfold. The president of Mozambique would be attending; walking into the sports stadium, it was almost full – members of the Mothers'

union ranged on one side of the stadium in their white jackets and black hats and there was a huge choir on the other dressed in capulanas bearing Fr Carlos' picture, there was a band with keyboards and drums and its charismatic leaders and vocalists on the other. Those attending were to number 2500. Thirty priests were gathered in the vestry – 14 bishops were attending. The Archbishop of the Province of Southern Africa presided – Archbishop Thabo.



Fr Carlos is presented for ordination by two local bishops

Bishop Dinis started the formalities, welcoming the wide range of guests representing every part of national life as well as the spectrum of international visitors present. As his speech came to a close, he handed his pectoral cross to the Archbishop and Primate a poignant moment. There were a number of messages delivered during the service by various representatives, including the President of Mozambique and Diocesan representatives. There was strong representation from the Church of Sweden, including Bishop Thomas and a priest Frederic and his fiancée Mollie who are presently teaching at the Maputo seminary. Whilst I'd expected a service of 3-4 hours, with the messages delivered, the prayerful spectacle ended up stretching to 6 hours. There are two features that contribute to the length: the character of worship – and the

messages given as addresses that are woven through the service, reflecting the reality that when a far dispersed community comes together, there is real communication that needs take place.

The Dean of Johannesburg preached with simultaneous translation emphasising the need to minister in God's strength. He memorably observed that the more a minister is lifted up in the sight of the people for their ministry, the more deeply he must be ready to give. The Bishop of Swaziland, the Rt Revd Ellinah Wamukoya was asked to give Communion to all the priests and bishops present in what looked to be an purposeful choice. Touching moments included the moment at which the a red mitre, bearing three gold crosses was lowered onto Carlos' head and then his enthronement, which drew a roar of ululations; it was moving to see how touched Bishop Carlos was as he blessed the people and priests of his Diocese one by one – after which he was visibly tearful.

It was good to bring greetings from London as part of the proceedings; these were offered threefold: from the Diocese and Bishop Richard; from ALMA London and from Twyford Church of England High school. I wore my red stole that had been a gift from staff St Paul's Cathedral for my deaconing, so was able to point out the crossed-swords of St Paul – identifying that we are partners of mission, seeking to cross boundaries, like St Paul, for the gospel.

The whole event was a gift from the people of the Diocese including hiring the stadium, the event's organization, ornamentation, TV direct broadcast. Some people gave more compared to the others but the event was a product of the generosity of the people of God out of their affection and commitment to their new bishop; the day concluded with a meal outside of Maputo.

Carlos' son Samito – a 36 year old musician gave a touching biographical tribute to his father. He recalled his father's success with a tyre manufacturing company and the offer of a post in the USA with all relocation expenses paid. Carlos had turned the offer down, seeking instead to serve his people in rural Mozambique. After a first post in Homoine, Carlos was asked to go to an even more rural location, Maciene. The family had held a meeting at which they objected to Carlos' choice to follow this relocation – and his children confronted him with the cost they would bear. Samito said that this was the only time he had seen his strong father shed a tear, but despite his family's protestation, he went ahead with the post. This led to a family diaspora – Samito going to Canada and the oldest child and talented musician, Melita moving to Cuba on a UNESCO scholarship and then Norway for further study.



Bishop Carlos with his wife Hortência and two grandchildren at the celebration following his consecration.

Samito had thought that this international separation of the family would be the end of his father's story. Instead, Melita has moved back to Mozambique to pursue a musical career there; also playing with youngest brother musician Artur. Samito could see that his father's strength, determination and commitment had borne fruit – not only through his ministry, but in recognition of his episcopal vocation. I look forward to seeing what Bishop Carlos will achieve in his ministry – and to offering him a warm welcome in London.

John Seymour

Chaplain, Twyford CE Academies Trust
ALMA schools adviser