

Emaus Mission Station 1904

Time Travel event, Ora et Labora or Labora et Ora

Goal

Make people realize the work of Abbot Francis Pfanner, the foundation of Emaus Mission Station and the relations to the local communities

Introduce the Time Travel method, as a way to reflect and learn

Reflect on the needs of the community in a rural area and the role of the mission station

Facts

The Zulus and other tribes have been living in Natal for hundreds of years. In early 1800s the Zulu kingdom was created under the lead of King Shaka and dominated in the mid-1800s. The British defeated the Zulus in several battles in 1870s. The Colony of Natal existed 1834-1910.

The British started to import Indian labour in the sugar industry from 1860 and onwards. When gold was found in Witwatersrand many Zulu men had to leave their homes for work in the mines. The European missionary work expanded in the 19th century, first in the towns and along the coast, later in the rural areas.

The Zulu ways of life was deeply threatened in the end of the 19th century and the rural areas was lacking behind. There was a lot of dissatisfaction and unrest.

Franz Pfanner (1825-1909), from Austria was educated as a priest and joined the Trappist Order in 1863. He was severely ill but the Trappist discipline with vegetarian food and daily routines saved him. In 1880 Pfanner came to South Africa and started a monastery in Mariannhill, Durban and became their first abbot in 1885. 1890 he was appointed Vicar General of the Trappist Order for South Africa. At that time Mariannhill was the largest monastery in the world with 285 monks. Abbot Franz (Francis) also started the Missionary Sisters of the Precious Blood, the Red Sisters, to engage more women in the mission work.

The Trappists have strict rules, including regular prayers and work of the hands. They are expected to be silent and speak only when necessary. Pfanner was a little bit different with strong will and lots of energy. In 1892 he was suspended from Mariannhill because he had broken the rules too many times. He went inland and stayed at Lourdes mission station.

In 1894 Abbot Francis Pfanner, 69 years of age, left Lourdes Mission station and travelled the two hours to Shimper's Neck. He wanted a place to continue his missionary work but also for his retirement. He called the station Emaus. After a couple of months his two loyal sisters, Angela and Edmunda, from the Sisters of the Precious blood, joined him. In the beginning they stayed in tents, but quite soon they built a wooden hut and small houses of corrugated iron. Already in 1894 they started a brickyard to make bricks for more proper buildings. There were some arguments of the payment with local workers, so Pfanner and the two sisters continued the brick making themselves.

Another task was to make a Station of the Cross, called Cavalry, to the top of the hill.

A farm was soon connected to the mission station with stables, barns, granary and a cheese factory. Wheat, oats, barley, maize, potatoes, peas, beans, vegetables were produced as well as cheese and butter. Every day at the mission station was the same for Pfanner and the sisters: getting up at 3 am, praying, mass, climbing Cavalry Hill, breakfast, manual work, reading and writing in the afternoon, check the farm, supper, meditation, bed.

Pfanner could not stand discrimination between the races. "What matters is what we are before God, not the colour of your skin", "When cats and dogs get used to each other, why not black and white?"

Abbot Pfanner had friends, but also those who opposed his ideas. Many thought he had left the contemplative ideal of the Trappist order for more manual and community work. Pfanner was busy writing articles, letters and documents, published in Christian magazines. Many articles were about expanding Christianity to new surroundings and new countries. Also visitors came now and then to discuss agricultural, technical, social matters and improvements in the communities. The last years Pfanner was sickly and he died 24 May 1909

Scenario, Celebration of the new brick building and new church in 1904

Ora et Labora or Labora et Ora

The people in the local communities have seen Emaus mission station growing for many years. Now they have been invited to the mission station to celebrate. A new brick building for Abbot Franz Pfanner is finished. Also the small chapel has been replaced by a larger church. It has taken the Abbot and his two loyal sisters of the Precious Blood, Angela and Edmunda, many years to make all these hundreds of thousands of bricks for the house and the church. When Abbot Pfanner came to Emaus in 1894 they stayed in tents and later in small wooden huts. But now the abbot can move into the large brick building. And in a few weeks the first mass will be celebrated in the new church.

Community members not always see the benefits of the mission station. And not everybody in the Trappist order is happy with Abbot Pfanner. There are arguments in meetings and in articles in Christian magazines. Many say: Ora at Labora, that is, first you pray and the time that is left you use for work. Abbot Pfanner says Labora and Ora. Work with your hands for the mission and the local community and then you pray for the success of the work. The question is how to combine the needs of the community with prayers and services. It is an issue both for the missionaries and the community.

Anyway, today is a day to celebrate. People from the local communities are coming to the mission station for the celebrations. They are curious to see the brick house and enter in the new church. Maybe they will also have a chance to express their needs. Even the local chief and a few persons from other churches, some that have travelled far, are coming to the remote place of Emaus today. Abbot Francis Pfanner expects to receive them during the day.

“We cannot achieve great things, but we must try to do the small things as well”

Abbot Francis Pfanner

Roles

The learners are young people from local communities

Most of the adults are people from local communities

Sister Angela, Sister Edmunda

Visitors from church organizations and from local chiefs

Abbot Francis Pfanner

Key Questions

Ora and Labora or Labora and Ora. What comes first? What is most important?

- What are the needs of the local community? How to address them? The Labora?
- In what way can prayers help? Ora?

Activities

- Make decorations – Flowers. (pick up flowers from the garden, 5 dhothis)
- Clean the house
- Playing games
- Celebration sign
- Carpentry – making of small cross for the official opening.
- Prepare a speech/ prayer for the needs in the community
- Prepare some food, bread, cheese

Time Plan

- 08.00 Set up
- 09.00 Learners and other participants arrive
Welcome, background, dress up, characters
- 09.30 Time Travel starts, song and prayer
- 09.40 Activities
- 10.45 Abbot Pfanner arrives
Celebration (also some criticism), small meal
- 11.10 Walk into the church, songs and prayers
- 11.25 Time Travel ends
Reflection
- 12.00 End

23 February 2016

Ebbe Westergren, Kalmar läns museum/Bridging Ages
Gulshera Khan, Port Shepstone Twinning Association