**2023-2024 BROTHERS FIC IN SOLIDARITY WORK**

*(By Bro. Gasper Kalisto FIC)*

Let me start by quoting our constitutions which emphasizes that to live according to the spirit of our Founders, as Brothers FIC, particularly means to have a special concern for the poor and destitute, for the underprivileged and disabled, for socially weak and forgotten groups, for those who experience little love (FIC Constitutions article 17). With this same spirit, as Brothers in Malawi province, we thought it wise to embark on a charity initiative aiming at empowering some of the widows within our communities for them to be self-reliant.

When we are doing our apostolates in various areas we keep our eyes open to see the nature of environment we are in. It has always been observed that the levels of poverty in our country have been rising for the past years. The numbers of single parents have been rising too and widows have been grappling with a lot of economic challenges. Unfortunately, not much is being done to uplift their lives. So, through our communities, we tried to select some needy widows so that we can help them partially on giving them a starter pack to start their own business. We managed to select thirty-two beneficiaries who were struggling to raise their families disregarding their religious denominations.

The aim of our initiative was to equip the women we selected with a valuable skill set that could lead to financial stability while fostering a sense of community and support. Understanding that success of our initiative relied heavily on skill development, we organized a training workshop on sewing. We sent all thirty-two women to Ave Maria Resource Centre in Blantyre Archdiocese which is run by the Catholic Women Organization of St. Louis de Montfort Parish. Skilled instructors guided them through the intricacies of stitching, pattern making, and garment

construction for a month. They were also trained on how to conduct small business and making it more profitable.




*Photos taken during the sewing training workshop at Ave Maria Resource Centre*

After their training, we managed to equip everyone with a sewing machine as a starter pack for them to start their own business as tailors. The ceremony of distributing these sewing machines to the beneficiaries was held on 21st January 2024 at Bethel Community – the Provincial House of Brothers FIC Malawi. His grace, Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa of Blantyre Archdiocese, attended the ceremony. In his speech, he encouraged the women to use accordingly the sewing machines they received. He continued by saying that this should help them formulate groups to be working together as tailors, that they may enlarge their business. He thanked the brothers for this initiative as it has set an example in the diocese to attract other well-wishers to also be open to assist others that are needy. The Provincial Superior, Bro. Lawrence Sitima, thanked the Archbishop for his presence to witness the handing over of the sewing machines to the women.

It is our hope that the sewing machines will be used for the intended purpose so that the lives of these women should improve. The whole initiate was organized with support from funds received from our General Council in the Netherlands and within the province.




*(**Left:** Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa and Bro. Lawrence Sitima handing over sewing machine to the beneficiaries. **Right:** The beneficiaries standing beside their sewing machines)*



*A group photo of the women together with Archbishop Thomas Luke Msusa (sitting third from left), Bro. Lawrence Sitima (sitting third from right) and some of the instructors of Ave Maria Resource Centre.*