



## Our Global Expansion *By Grand President Joe McNally*

**D**uring their summer months our Australian Brethren have endured record high temperatures which have caused fires resulting in loss of life and in great damage to property, to homes and to hope. On the other side of the world in the UK the brethren have faced winter weather such as has not been experienced for many a long year. Prolonged snows, short thaws, compacted ice all spelling danger. The result was accidents, loss of life, broken bones, damage to property and disruption. Such experiences impact on our wellbeing and on our outlook. We often sit looking out and are often fearful of going out again until the danger has passed. Our Catenian meetings have been less well attended for understandable reasons. An absence from our meetings however does impact on our Association's well being.

When experiencing such adverse conditions we don't seem to be able to look forward with any great enthusiasm – not even to our Catenian Conference which is planned for May at Bournemouth. The local committee in conjunction with the Grand Secretary have been labouring away, despite the weather, to bring you a fine and enjoyable conference. If the weather has made you depressed book into what promises to be a very worthwhile event and let the company of your brethren restore your spirits.

### India

I can now happily record that there are two Catenian Circles in India and the Association has been further strengthened by over 80 new Catenian Brothers in that area in the past four months. Growth to date has been remarkable and has repaid the very diligent application of our International Director Tony Godden and the work of those brothers who have laboured so hard on the ground to bring the respective Circles to inauguration. Our work in India has not ended - there are plans for further expansion in that Continent. Those of us who have been privileged to attend these first Indian circles are very excited by what we have seen and the prospect of further growth in our Association.

The international success that we have had to date gives further encouragement to our aims for global expansion. There are current membership enquiries from other lands. That potential is now being investigated.

The enthusiasm for the Association abroad gives us increased reassurance that the decision to pursue the restructuring of the Association is indeed the right one.

### Our African Brethren

As we rejoice in our developments in Australia and in India we turn with heightened concern to the plight of our brethren in Africa. There is a very difficult situation. They have stoically endured economic and political hardship over many years.

I fear we may not have always understood just how difficult their situation has been and indeed presently is.



Joe McNally, Grand President

I recently read again, with renewed understanding, a letter written in 1982 by a brother from an African Circle which is included in the final pages of Lane's History of the Association. According to Lane this letter 'gives the best resumé of the need for and the spirit of, the Association'. The brother wrote:

'We are in a Marxist state... economically, socially and religiously we are being subjected to increasing harassment. This has forced people like us to turn inward....we tend to arrange ourselves and our social lives so that we can live in an atmosphere free from petty recrimination, where our children can grow up and develop in an atmosphere of love and peace, where we can just be ourselves without having to defend the social and economic position we are in.

This has heightened our concept of family and brotherhood. We now look to our own for companionship, family contact and social activity. The Catenian Association is the perfect vehicle for this, and my joining it could not have come at a better time. The sense of brotherhood, the Catholic atmosphere of our social gatherings, the whole family feeling with other members, these are for us very precious. To know that there are others just like yourself with whom you can socialise, who care, and who want you, not for what they can get out of you but for what you are, really provides a sense of security in very troubled times. Where Catholics are in a minority, this Catholic contact is vital to give oneself and one's family an island of Catholic peace and friendship in a sea of hate and bitterness'.

Things can hardly be said to have improved for many of our Brothers since that letter was written. The troubles of Africa are well documented and many of our Brothers have been forced to flee from there, some lucky to escape with their lives. Many have joined other Circles and in doing so have helped to raise awareness of the African plight. Their absence from their original Circles and the additional burdens of life, in even more difficult times, has impacted on our members and on our membership numbers there. The quality, resourcefulness and the spirit of our African brethren has remained undiminished.

In the spirit of fraternal fellowship, I believe, we in the Association must develop a better awareness and understanding of the problems faced by our brothers in Africa wherever they are located.

To that end Past Grand President David Taylor is appointed to renew and strengthen our Association across Africa. Building on his visit there as Grand President and on his magnificent work on the CAFOD appeal, Brother David, through his regular contact with African brothers, will convey to them our continuing care and concern for their welfare and well being. He is developing a network of contacts in Africa and elsewhere and as a result of this communication we are becoming more aware of their ongoing difficulties. Brothers who have contacts in Africa are invited to advise David.

The renewal that David and others are working upon will be further nurtured and supported by Brother Vernon De Cruz and his party when, as Grand President, he visits Africa later this year.