

Recollections and Reflections: The British Journey of One Former African Priest

Athanasio Dzadagu

AuthorHouse UK (Apr 8, 2016)

Softcover \$28.92 (474pp)

978-1-5246-3108-6

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Recollections and Reflections: The British Journey of One Former African Priest is the autobiographical account of Athanasio Dzadagu, detailing his experiences in Britain that led, finally, to a crisis of faith and his departure from the priesthood. Profoundly personal and packed with detail, it presents a visceral portrait of the triumphs and disappointments of one immigrant's unexpected life.

The author left his native Zimbabwe in 1996 to pursue post-graduate studies in Britain. He obtained his master's degree in theology, going on to earn a doctorate while suffering life-threatening health problems. Dzadagu taught for a short time and then served as a school chaplain. Closest to his heart was his organization of the Zimbabwean Catholic Community in England and Wales, which afforded isolated pockets of immigrant Zimbabwean Catholics a sense of comforting community, including celebrating Mass and singing hymns in their native Shona language.

The eponymous recollections and reflections are presented thematically, as opposed to chronologically, and divided into two parts. Part A explores Dzadagu's struggle to find a place for himself in an alien culture; his studies; his health challenges; and the weight of the "special relationship" between Zimbabwe, a former colony, and Britain. Part B relates the events, including struggles with celibacy and dogma and the disintegration of his relationship with the Archdiocese of Westminster, that eventually conclude with Dzadagu's resignation from the priesthood.

Recollections and Reflections is briskly paced and keeps the pages turning. Drawing on nineteen volumes of journals, letters, and e-mails, the narrative is engaging, and the issues and information are well organized and presented. Dzadagu offers a wealth of historical, geographical, political, and sociological information. A man of strong opinions, he includes thought-provoking passages on the support, and lack thereof, from the church hierarchy; racism, directed toward him as well as his prejudices toward Europeans; the Eurocentric nature of his studies; the rise of his own nationalism; and his controversial opinions regarding homosexuality and the place of women.

Dzadagu writes movingly of his personal struggles and persuasively of the reasons for his decisions. His choice to write in third-person point of view is unusual and sometimes awkward, though not disconcertingly so. "The purpose of his journey from Zimbabwe to Britain," Dzadagu writes, "was ... to acquire academic knowledge, to open his eyes to the wider world, and come back to Zimbabwe highly enriched and ready to inspire." Ultimately, it is a shame that after twenty-five years of dedication, this could not happen.

Audiences for *Recollections and Reflections* might include immigrants, resettlement workers, government officials, religious leaders, and anyone seeking to better understand the social, familial, economic, and psychological effects of dislocation.

MICHELLE NEWBY (August 24, 2016)

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