News
Q&As



Sr. Perpetua Namasiku Mutonga, a member of the Little Sisters of St. Francis and the founder of Tumelo Catholic Media, evangelizes and shares messages of faith at Livingstone's Radio Musi-O-Tunya. (Derrick Silimina)



by Derrick Silimina

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As the rumbling of Victoria Falls roars across Zambia's tourist capital, Livingstone, a different kind of frequency begins to ripple through the colonial-era streets and its sprawling suburbs.

In a quiet corner of the city, tucked away from the tourist gaze, a sacred media mission hums along, shaped by the vision of Sr. Perpetua Namasiku Mutonga, a member of the Little Sisters of St. Francis. Mutonga is the founder of Tumelo Catholic Media and one of the pioneers of the Catholic media landscape in Livingstone, about 470 km south of Zambia's capital, Lusaka.

Mutonga's story began in a remote village in western Zambia, where she anchored her life in Catholic faith, music and mission. Inspired by the many missionary sisters and Spiritan priests she saw growing up, a young Mutonga dreamed of serving God.

In 1985, she joined the Little Sisters of St. Francis, but her mission did not stop within the convent.

***Global Sisters Report*: Can you tell us about your work and ministry?**

Mutonga: The vision for a media apostolate dates back to the 1990s, when members of our congregation expressed a desire to produce communication materials. In 2001, the congregation, in partnership with the Diocese of Livingstone, supported this vision by sponsoring my studies in communications.

After completing my studies, I began my professional work in 2005 at Yatsani TV Studios in Lusaka. Later, I served in various social ministries, including working with children with disabilities at Livingstone Cheshire Homes and supporting vulnerable women through Kwenuha Women's Association.

As a religious sister, journalist and communications specialist serving in the Catholic Diocese of Livingstone, I trained in social communications in Rome, Italy (2001-2004), and I now dedicate my life to faith-based communication and community service.

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What inspired you to consider the media as your channel of mission work?

My mission-driven approach to media is rooted in viewing media as a powerful tool for evangelization and social transformation rather than merely a profession. My focus has been on sharing the Gospel, amplifying the voices of the marginalized, and providing vital information to underserved communities, reflecting a commitment to leveraging media for positive social impact.

Describe your experience thus far.

My journey in media has been both dynamic and impactful. As the founder and driving force behind Tumelo Catholic Media, I am motivated to see a growing communications initiative comprising print media, social media, digital platforms, and broadcasting (with a vision of establishing a community radio station). Our media house aims to promote evangelization, share stories of faith and highlight the mission of the congregation.

I established Tumelo Catholic Media as a sustainable communication platform. Its outreach extends beyond the district, reaching broader communities, especially in rural areas where high levels of illiteracy limit access to information.

Tell us about Radio Musi-O-Tunya. Why does it stand out from the rest of the media outlets in the tourist capital?

In 2013, I was appointed director of Radio Musi-O-Tunya, a community radio station in Livingstone. During my eight-year tenure, I strengthened programming, trained staff and volunteers, and expanded outreach through community engagement and outside broadcasting, supported by BBC training initiatives.



Sr. Perpetua Namasiku Mutonga enjoys a light moment at the Zambezi River in Livingstone, Zambia's tourist capital. (Derrick Silimina)

Through Radio Musi-O-Tunya, our efforts effectively reach rural communities, enabling the dissemination of the word of God, addressing social issues, and providing a vital platform for community voices to share their stories and challenges. This demonstrates our commitment to leveraging media for social and spiritual development in Livingstone.

My missionary work in the media is a direct, modern expression of the Franciscan charism, which is rooted in the life and teachings of St. Francis of Assisi. The well-known Prayer of St. Francis begins, "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." This makes me view the microphone and the camera as these "instruments."

Where do you see your work in the years to come?

My priority is to establish another community radio station in rural areas, where access to information is limited, and the potential for impact is greatest. Focusing on rural regions where access to information is limited underscores our commitment to fostering greater community engagement, spreading messages of faith and addressing social issues through media.

The media sector hasn't just been a platform for broadcasting; it has been a "digital cathedral" that has fundamentally reshaped how I approached my missionary calling in Zambia.

By embracing radio and digital media, I transitioned from speaking to a few hundred to engaging with thousands. This shift allows me to fulfill the Catholic mission of "evangelization" in a modern context, reaching the youth where they spend most of their time: online.

What challenges do you face in your quest to reach hearts with messages of faith?

Despite its growth, Tumelo Catholic Media faces significant challenges, including limited financial resources for the printing department, a lack of raw materials, and insufficient funds for operational and staffing costs. Other challenges are insufficient funding to expand into a full radio station and a lack of essential equipment for livestreaming and video production. These constraints have slowed the expansion and full realization of our media house's potential.

I envision Tumelo Catholic Media as a vital platform that will bring these works to light and inspire greater community awareness and support.