

Switzerland in Africa 1 Tanzania: St. Benedict's Abbey, Peramiho

Peramiho was founded from Pugu, near Dar es Salaam, on 31st July 1898 by Fr. Cassian Spiß of the Missionary Benedictines of St. Ottilien. Fr. Gallus Steiger (Abbot of Lindi from 1927) became the first Abbot of Peramiho in 1931 when the Territorial Abbey of Lindi was divided into two Abbeys Nullius, Peramiho and Ndanda, and he is responsible for the construction of the imposing Abbey church from 1943 to 1948.

Peramiho is set atop a hill to the west of what is now Songea, the capital of Rovuma Province, Tanzania. The approach from Malawi is either by boat (via Mbamba Bay) or by road: the turn from the main Mbeya – Dar es Salaam road is at Makambako; and the magnificent journey to Songea passes at heights exceeding 2000 m. through the Livingstone Mountains.

There is a history of Peramiho in three volumes edited by the third Abbot of Peramiho, Fr. Lambert Dörr (1998): *Peramiho 1898 – 1998. In the Service of the Missionary Church*. Benedictine Publications Ndanda – Peramiho: Peramiho. Abbot Dörr has also written a life of the founding Abbot (2014): *Abbot Bishop Gallus Steiger O.S.B. (1879 – 1966). Life and Work of an Outstanding Missionary Pioneer*. Missionary Benedictine Texts and Studies 7. EOS-Verlag: St. Ottilien. The website of Peramiho, with history and further photographs, is at <http://www.peramiho.org/>

Many thanks are due to the fourth Abbot of Peramiho, Fr. Anastasius Reiser, and his community for their warm and generous hospitality during our regrettably brief stay from 17th to 20th February 2016: they are true disciples of St. Benedict and the *Regula* in this regard.



Peramiho Abbey is seen from the turn off the Songea – Mbinga road, which continues west beyond Mbinga to Mbamba Bay, on Lake Malawi. The surrounding country is dense with former outstations (many of architectural merit), which reflect the missionary activity of the community.

The monastic complex encompasses a hospital, vocational training centre and girls' school, and is self-sufficient.

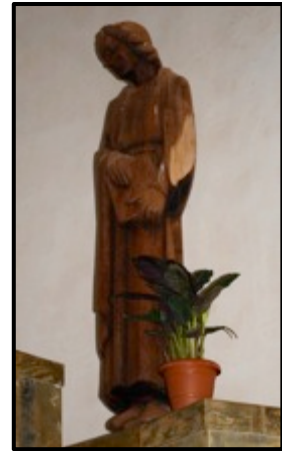


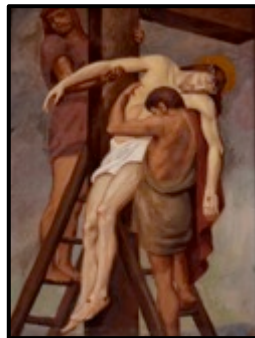
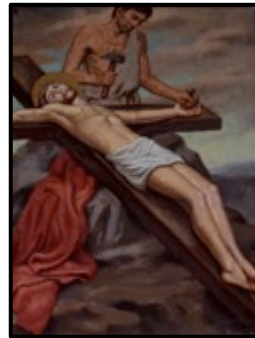
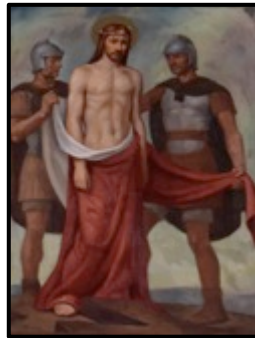
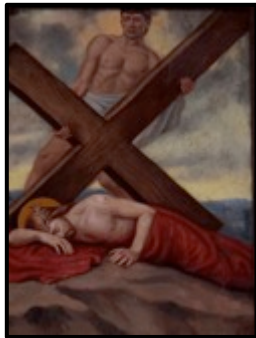
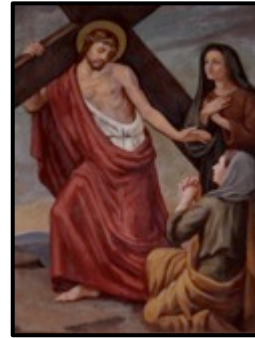
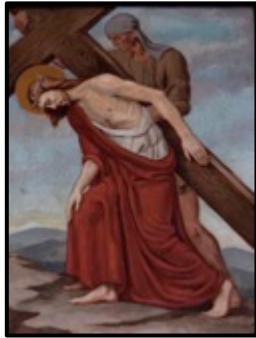
The Monastery is set alongside the Abbey church.





The East End





The Stations of the Cross



The Martyrs of Uganda and Sts. Nicholas, Lucy, Anna, Joseph and Benedict



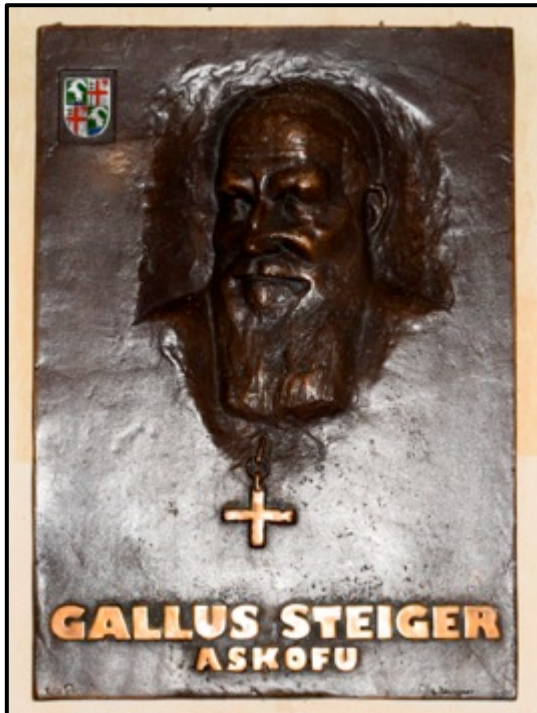
St. Francis Xavier, The Holy Angels



The West End. The Abbey church has eight bays.



Abbots Bishops Gallus Steiger (Centre) and Eberhard Spiess (Right) are buried in the Abbey church.



*Abbot Bishop Gallus Steiger O.S.B.
(1879 Bueron CH – 1966 Peramiho)
who built the Abbey church.*



*Abbot Bishop Eberhard Spiess O.S.B.
(1902 Ertingen DE – 1990 Litembo)*



The work of the Abbey includes a hospital, vocational training centre and girls' school.



Postcards from the Abbey bookshop

There are Ngoni around Peramiho. They are pictured dancing in bark cloth.



**R. L. Hewitt and Samson Phiri
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