**Background of St Patrick’s Missionary Society**

St Patrick’s Missionary Society, often called the Kiltegan Fathers because of its Mother House in Ireland, was founded on 17th March 1932, by Monsignor Patrick Joseph Whitney.

An Irish Spiritan, Bishop Joseph Shanahan, then Vicar Apostolic of Southern Nigeria, had appealed for Irish diocesan priests to work as volunteer missionaries in Southern Nigeria.

The volunteers were expected to work for five years in collaboration with the Spiritans of the Irish Province working in Nigeria. As the numbers of the Irish diocesan priests who were volunteering for the mission in Nigeria continued to increase, there emerged the need for the establishment of a permanent arrangement in the form of a society of secular priests. This led to the foundation of St Patrick’s Missionary Society.

On March 7th, 1930, the formal possession of the mother house was taken and the Society was canonically erected as a society of diocesan right under the bishop of Kildare on 17th March 1932, with Patrick Whitney as its first Superior General.

The Society belongs to the canonical category of clerical Society of Apostolic Life and of pontifical right and responsible to the Dicastery for Evangelization. Since the founding members of the society were secular priests who responded to the need for missionaries in Nigeria, they wanted the society at its foundation to be a secular missionary society rather than a religious institute.

In line with the nature of Society of Apostolic Life (cf. can. 731 §1), members of SPS do not profess religious vows but bind themselves to observe the oath or declaration of membership in the society.

The general aim of the Society is “the glory of God and the sanctification of the members”. The particular aim (- the apostolates) of the society is “missionary activity”. This missionary orientation colours where they work, what they do and how they do what they do.

Members of SPS are community men and community builders who are to live in unity with one another, and with their Christian communities. The communion of life shared by the members flows from Christ whom they celebrate at their daily Eucharist and who informs their apostolate as missionaries.

From that spirit-inspired and humble background in the 1930s till date, the Society has grown in membership and scope and continues to strive to respond to the missionary needs of the church in different parts of the world. The Society is currently present in Brazil, USA, UK, Ireland, South Africa, Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, South Sudan, Nigeria and Cameroon.