

HISTORY OF OUR LADY OF CONSOLATA CATHOLIC PARISH, SUGUTA MARMAR

A Journey of Faith, Education, Service and Community Development

Our Lady of Consolata Catholic Parish, Suguta Marmar, holds an important place in the history of the Catholic Church in Samburu and in the development of the Catholic Diocese of Maralal.

The parish traces its origins to **1961**, when Suguta Marmar became the first outstation of Maralal Parish. The missionary work was pioneered by **Fr. Lawrence Rosano, IMC**, who established the first prayer house and began a sustained Catholic presence among the people of the area.

Over the years, the small outstation developed into a vibrant Catholic community. Missionaries, catechists and local Christians worked together to establish Christian communities, schools and other institutions that would serve the spiritual and social needs of the people.

The journey reached an important milestone on **11 April 1982**, when Suguta Marmar was officially established as a parish by Bishop Ravasi, with **Fr. Peter Tallone** appointed as its first parish priest.

Today, Our Lady of Consolata Parish continues its mission as part of the **Maralal Deanery of the Catholic Diocese of Maralal**, serving the people of Suguta Marmar and surrounding communities.

1961: The Beginning of the Catholic Community

The Catholic history of Suguta Marmar officially begins in **1961**.

At the time, Suguta was not yet an independent parish. It became an **outstation of Maralal Parish**, then one of the principal Catholic centres in the region.

Fr. Lawrence Rosano, IMC, was instrumental in establishing the first prayer house at Suguta.

The early missionary presence required priests to travel from Maralal to serve the Catholic community. The people gathered for prayer and Mass, and gradually more families became interested in the Catholic faith.

Fr. Rosano's missionary work extended beyond pastoral ministry. He understood that education was an important part of the Church's mission and worked to establish schools in the surrounding area.

Fr. Peter Ronchi and the Expansion of the Mission

The development of the Suguta community involved several missionaries.

Fr. Peter Ronchi assisted in the missionary work and established a chapel at **Lolmolog** in 1964.

The work of Fr. Rosano and Fr. Ronchi demonstrated an important characteristic of Catholic evangelization in northern Kenya: the Church had to go to the people.

The Catholic community was scattered across a wide geographical area, and many people lived a pastoral way of life. Missionaries therefore travelled to outstations and communities to celebrate Mass, teach catechism and strengthen the Christian faith.

Education as Part of Evangelization

Education became one of the defining features of the Suguta Catholic mission.

In **1964**, Fr. Lawrence Rosano established the first school at **Longewan**.

Fr. Peter Tallone also contributed significantly to the development of nursery schools in the area. Some of these early nursery schools later developed into primary schools.

The missionaries understood that education could transform the lives of children while providing an important environment for Christian formation.

The schools became places where children received academic instruction alongside moral and spiritual formation.

This missionary commitment to education has continued throughout the history of Suguta Parish.

The Growth of the Christian Community

As the Catholic community expanded, the need for a permanent church became increasingly evident.

The early development of Suguta involved the collaboration of priests, catechists and the local Catholic community.

Among the catechists who served the early community were **William Lekimencho, Gideon Lekirapash, Michael Loltolo, Peter Lekaishira and David Losenke**.

Their service was particularly important because catechists provided continuity between the visits of the priests.

They taught Christian doctrine, prepared catechumens, organised prayer communities and helped families grow in their understanding of the Catholic faith.

The growth of the community eventually made it possible to construct a permanent church.

1979: The Dedication of Suguta Church

A major milestone came in **1979** when the church at Suguta Marmar was dedicated to **Our Lady of Consolata**.

The church was blessed by **His Grace Archbishop Agostino Cacciavillan**, the Papal Pro-Nuncio to Kenya.

The dedication marked an important stage in the development of the Catholic community.

The church became a permanent spiritual home for Catholics in Suguta Marmar and a visible symbol of the missionary work that had begun eighteen years earlier.

The construction of the church was made possible through the contributions of the local Catholic community and support from other well-wishers and leaders.

11 April 1982: Suguta Becomes a Parish

The decisive moment in the history of Suguta Marmar came on **11 April 1982**.

On that date, **Bishop Ravasi** officially established **Suguta Marmar as a Catholic parish** and appointed **Fr. Peter Tallone** as its first parish priest.

The elevation of Suguta from an outstation of Maralal Parish to an independent parish reflected the growth and maturity of the Catholic community.

Fr. Tallone, who had already played an important role in the development of education and the church at Suguta, became the first priest to lead the newly established parish.

The establishment of the parish also strengthened pastoral structures and allowed the Catholic community to organise its evangelization and development activities more effectively.

The Visit of Mother Teresa

Another memorable event in the history of Suguta Marmar was the visit of **Mother Teresa of Calcutta** on **7 August 1985**.

The visit became an important part of the parish's historical memory.

Mother Teresa's presence brought attention to the Church's mission of serving the poor, vulnerable and marginalised.

Her visit was also connected with the presence and work of the **Missionaries of Charity**, whose sisters later moved to Maralal town, where they continued their ministry of evangelization and charitable service.

The visit remains one of the significant historical moments associated with Suguta Marmar Parish.

The Missionary Years: 1986–1996

Between **1986 and 1996**, **Fr. Luigi Andeni, IMC**, served as Parish Priest of Suguta Marmar.

His ministry formed an important chapter in the parish's missionary history.

Fr. Andeni had a strong reputation for serving the poor and vulnerable. His missionary work in northern Kenya extended to several missions, and his service at Suguta contributed to the continuing development of the parish.

During his tenure, he was assisted by several priests, including **Fr. Alex Moreschi, Fr. Benedict Lubega, Fr. Gilbert Forese and Fr. Paul Tablino**.

At various times, priests including **Fr. Joseph Gorzegno, Fr. Joseph Etori and Fr. Gigi Anataloni** also provided pastoral leadership while Fr. Andeni was away.

The presence of several priests strengthened pastoral outreach and enabled the parish to serve its growing Christian population.

1996: The Last Consolata Parish Priest

In **1996**, **Fr. John Gasparini, IMC**, was appointed Parish Priest of Suguta Marmar.

He became the **last Consolata missionary to serve as Parish Priest of Suguta Marmar**.

His tenure marked the final chapter of the parish's direct leadership by the Missionaries of the Consolata before the parish was handed over to diocesan clergy.

1999: A New Chapter — The Arrival of Diocesan Clergy

A significant transition occurred in **June 1999**.

Under the leadership of Bishop Ravasi, Suguta Marmar Parish was handed over from the Missionaries of the Consolata to the **diocesan clergy of the Catholic Church in this region**.

Suguta consequently became the **first parish of the Diocese of Maralal to be served exclusively by local diocesan clergy**.

This was a historic milestone in the development of the local Church.

The transition represented the gradual movement from a Church largely established and staffed by missionary congregations to a local diocesan Church increasingly capable of taking responsibility for its own pastoral mission.

The First Diocesan Leadership

Following the handover, **Fr. Isaiah** was appointed Parish Priest, assisted by **Deacon Peter Nderitu**.

After Fr. Isaiah's period of service, Fr. Peter Nderitu became Parish Priest.

He was assisted by priests including **Fr. Samuel Simile** and **Fr. Marko Lopetet**.

Other diocesan priests who served at Suguta during this period included **Fr. Dominic Lesayon**, who served briefly as Parish Priest, and **Fr. Daniel Lesurmat**.

The arrival of diocesan clergy marked the beginning of a new era in the parish's pastoral development.

2001: The Growth of Local Vocations

One of the fruits of the Catholic faith in Suguta Marmar has been the growth of priestly and religious vocations.

On **21 June 2001**, **Fr. Paul Maina**, identified in the parish's historical account as a son of Suguta Marmar, was ordained to the priesthood.

His ordination was a source of joy for the parish and demonstrated the growing maturity of the local Catholic community.

A parish that had once depended on missionaries from outside the region was now producing its own vocations to the priesthood.

Fr. Paul Maina later returned to serve his home community as Parish Priest.

2005: Fr. Paul Maina Takes Leadership

In **2005**, Fr. Paul Maina took over as Parish Priest following Fr. Peter Nderitu.

His tenure continued the parish's work of evangelization, catechesis, education and community development.

Among the priests who served as assistants during Fr. Maina's period as Parish Priest were **Fr. Joseph Lengolos**, **Fr. Samuel Simile**, **Fr. Raphael Lolosoli** and **Fr. John Dida**.

Their combined ministry contributed to the pastoral growth of the parish.

2013: A New Church and New Vocations

Another major milestone came on **22 June 2013**.

The Catholic community of Suguta Marmar celebrated three significant events on the same occasion: the **blessing and consecration of a new church**, the **ordination of Raphael Naukot to the diaconate**, and the **priestly ordination of Peter Musau**.

The celebrations were presided over by **Bishop Virgilio Pante, IMC**, then Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Maralal.

The occasion was a powerful demonstration of the growth of the local Church.

The completion and consecration of the new church reflected the growth of the Christian population, while the ordination of new clergy demonstrated the fruits of the parish's vocation ministry.

The occasion was particularly significant because both the new church and the new vocations represented the continuing development of a Catholic community that had begun with a small prayer house in 1961.

A Parish of Education

Education has remained one of the strongest pillars of Suguta Marmar Parish.

The missionary commitment to education that began with the early schools established by Fr. Rosano and other missionaries has continued through several Catholic-sponsored institutions.

The parish has historically been associated with **three major Consolata educational institutions**, which have contributed to both academic and Christian formation.

Among the institutions associated with the parish are **Consolata Primary School**, **Suguta Marmar Girls Rescue and Education Centre**, and **Bishop Perlo Girls High School**.

The parish has also supported Catholic formation in public schools within its pastoral territory.

Through these institutions, the Church has continued to promote education while ensuring that Christian values remain an important part of the formation of young people.

Consolata Primary School

Consolata Primary School is among the institutions that grew from the Church's commitment to education.

The school was established under the parish's support and has provided education to generations of children from Suguta Marmar and neighbouring communities.

Its development reflects the long-standing missionary conviction that education is an important instrument of evangelization and community transformation.

The school continues to contribute to the academic, moral and spiritual formation of children.

Suguta Marmar Girls Rescue and Education Centre

The Church's concern for vulnerable children and young people led to the development of the **Suguta Marmar Girls Rescue and Education Centre**.

The centre provides protection, accommodation and educational support to girls in need of a safe environment.

The ministry has been supported by the Catholic Diocese of Maralal, the Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Nyeri and other well-wishers.

The centre represents the Church's commitment to protecting children, promoting education and giving vulnerable young people opportunities for a better future.

Bishop Perlo Girls High School

Another important educational institution associated with Suguta Marmar is **Bishop Philip Perlo Girls High School**.

The school was established to provide girls with access to secondary education while promoting holistic formation.

The school is run by the **Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Nyeri**, who have contributed to education and pastoral ministry within the parish.

The institution continues the educational tradition established by the early missionaries.

Health Services

The parish has also contributed to healthcare provision.

A dispensary has served the parishioners and surrounding community, while mobile health services have reached communities in areas where access to health facilities is difficult.

Places such as **Amaya and Lolmolog** have benefited from outreach services.

This commitment to healthcare reflects the parish's broader understanding of evangelization: caring for both the spiritual and physical wellbeing of the people.

Peace and Reconciliation

Peacebuilding has become another important dimension of the mission of Suguta Marmar Parish.

The parish serves an area where different pastoralist communities interact and where competition over resources can sometimes create tension.

The Church has therefore worked to promote peaceful coexistence, dialogue and reconciliation.

The parish has participated in peace meetings and seminars in areas including **Longewan, Churo and Amaya**.

In December 2012, the parish organised a youth festival centred on the theme of **peace**, bringing together young people from different outstations.

The Church has also supported initiatives that promote relationships between communities, including educational opportunities for children from neighbouring communities.

Through such activities, Suguta Marmar Parish has sought to demonstrate that faith must also contribute to peace and unity.

A Parish of Vocations

The growth of vocations is another important part of the Suguta story.

Fr. Paul Maina became the first son of Suguta Marmar to be ordained to the priesthood, on **21 June 2001**.

He was followed by **Fr. Peter Musau**, who was ordained in 2013.

On the same day as Fr. Musau's priestly ordination, **Raphael Naukot** was ordained to the diaconate and later became a priest.

These vocations are a visible sign of the maturity of the Christian community.

The parish's vocation ministry has continued to encourage young people to consider the priesthood and religious life.

The Parish Today

Our Lady of Consolata Catholic Parish, Suguta Marmar, is today a well-established Catholic community within the **Catholic Diocese of Maralal**.

The parish belongs to the **Maralal Deanery** and continues to serve the people of Suguta Marmar and surrounding communities through evangelization, sacramental ministry, catechesis, education, healthcare, youth formation, vocation promotion and peacebuilding.

The parish's present pastoral leadership is under **Fr. Raphael Naukot**, who continues the work of the missionaries and diocesan priests who served the community before him.

His leadership represents another stage in the continuing history of Suguta Marmar: a community that began as a small missionary outstation has developed into an established local Church with its own priests, vocations, institutions and lay leadership.

The Patroness: Our Lady of Consolata

Suguta Marmar Parish is dedicated to **Our Lady of Consolata**, also known as **Our Lady of Consolation**.

The devotion to Our Lady of Consolata is closely associated with the **Missionaries of the Consolata**, who played a central role in the evangelization of northern Kenya and the establishment of the Suguta Catholic community.

The title "Consolata" expresses Mary's role as a mother who brings consolation, hope and encouragement to God's people.

For the people of Suguta Marmar, this patronage carries a special meaning. The parish has journeyed through periods of difficulty, social challenges and the hardships associated with life in a pastoralist environment.

Under the protection of Our Lady of Consolata, the faithful continue to seek God's consolation while becoming instruments of hope and service to others.

The feast of **Our Lady of Consolata** is celebrated annually on **20 June**.

The feast is a major occasion for the Catholic community of Suguta Marmar.

It brings together parishioners, neighbouring Catholic communities, clergy, religious, friends and well-wishers to give thanks to God and honour the parish's patroness.

The celebration is also an opportunity to remember the missionaries who planted the Catholic faith at Suguta, the catechists who sustained it, the priests and religious who served the community, and the generations of Christians who built and strengthened the parish.

The 2026 parish celebration was scheduled for **20 June**, confirming the parish's annual observance of the feast of Our Lady of Consolata.

The Missionary Legacy

The history of Suguta Marmar is ultimately a history of continuity.

The journey began with **Fr. Lawrence Rosano** and the establishment of the first outstation in 1961.

It continued through missionaries such as **Fr. Peter Ronchi, Fr. Peter Tallone, Fr. Virgilio Pante, Fr. Fiorenzo Canzian and Fr. John Gasparini**, among many others.

The missionary period also included the long service of **Fr. Luigi Andeni**, who served as Parish Priest from 1986 to 1996.

In 1999, the parish entered a new era when it was handed over to diocesan clergy.

The leadership of priests such as **Fr. Isaiah, Fr. Peter Nderitu, Fr. Paul Maina** and other diocesan priests strengthened the development of the local Church.

The parish has since continued to produce vocations and develop institutions that serve the wider community.

A Heritage to Preserve

The history of Our Lady of Consolata Parish is more than a record of dates, buildings and priests.

It is the story of people.

It is the story of missionaries who travelled into communities far from established centres.

It is the story of catechists who carried the Gospel from one community to another.

It is the story of teachers who educated generations of children.

It is the story of religious sisters who protected and educated vulnerable girls.

It is the story of families who embraced the Catholic faith and passed it to their children.

It is the story of priests who devoted themselves to pastoral service.

And it is the story of a Christian community that has continued to grow despite the challenges of its environment.

Looking to the Future

From the small prayer house established by Fr. Lawrence Rosano in 1961 to the established parish community of today, Suguta Marmar has travelled a remarkable journey.

The church dedicated to Our Lady of Consolata in 1979 became the centre of a parish officially established in 1982.

The parish witnessed the historic visit of Mother Teresa in 1985, experienced the transition from Consolata missionary leadership to diocesan clergy in 1999, celebrated the growth of local priestly vocations and consecrated a new church in 2013.

Today, under the pastoral leadership of **Fr. Raphael Naukot**, Our Lady of Consolata Parish continues to proclaim the Gospel and serve the people of Suguta Marmar.

As the parish celebrates the Feast of Our Lady of Consolata, it gives thanks for the missionaries who laid its foundations, the priests and religious who served it, the catechists who carried the faith, and the Christian community whose commitment has sustained it through generations.

The parish looks to the future with confidence, carrying forward its enduring mission of **faith, education, peace, unity and service**.

From the first prayer house of 1961 to the parish of today, the story of Suguta Marmar is a testimony to God's faithfulness and to the power of a community united in faith.

Our Lady of Consolata, pray for us.

Our Lady of Consolata, bless the people of Suguta Marmar.

Our Lady of Consolata, guide our parish and strengthen our faith for generations to come.

Amen.