

# MARYKNOLL FATHERS & BROTHERS

## AFRICA REGION



### Serving Suffering People in Africa

During a weekday liturgy at the Maryknoll Society House in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania Father Frank Flynn, Brother Mark Huntington and Father Joe Healey had a spontaneous shared homily on the Gospel reading of “Jesus Cures the Man with the Withered Hand” (*Mark 3:1-6*). Frank pointed out that while we missionaries may not have miraculous powers to cure people as Jesus did, we can reach out to the sick, poor and needy as Jesus did. He gave the specific example of reaching out to, and helping people, with AIDS in Africa.

We discussed how many Maryknollers have helped disabled people with special tricycles that have regular-size bike tires and where the pedals are up front and are propelled by one’s hands. Mark mentioned that he recently ordered ten of these special tricycles for people in Metangula Parish in Mozambique. Joe recalled how he and Don Sybertz helped Maige Jumola, a 14-year-old crippled boy in Mwanhuzi Parish in Tanzania. When we brought the tricycle on the back of our pick-up truck, everyone in the village turned out for the big event. When Maige tried it for the first time a big cheer came from the crowd. Tears of joy streamed down his cheeks as he pedaled by himself. Spontaneous clapping followed him along the road.

We mentioned Maryknollers helping disfigured and burned people with skin grafts and other types of operations. Mark gave the example of Father José Padin arranging an operation in Lichinga, Mozambique for a young man with extremely bowed legs who had trouble walking. The youth beamed with joy as the casts were taken off and he walked almost normally.

These concrete examples show that a special charism of Maryknoll’s missionary ministry in our 57 year old history in Africa has been “serving

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Please send change of address information to:

Rev. David A. Smith, MM  
P.O. Box 11246  
Mwanza, Tanzania

Or by Email to:

DASmith@Maryknoll.org

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suffering people in Africa.” This is lived out again and again in all the African countries in which we serve. In the October, 2002 *Maryknoll Magazine* two Maryknoll Sisters working with internally displaced people in war-torn Sudan explain that they came “to southern Sudan to serve a people who have no options.” Liz Mach’s story “Revisiting a Miracle” in the January, 2003 *Maryknoll Magazine* is about helping a sick Tanzanian woman at Bugando Medical Center in Mwanza, Tanzania. Maryknollers try to give innocent suffering African people new options and choices. Here are three true testimonies (real life stories) from Tanzania and Kenya.

## Helping Those in Great Need

Over the years I’ve told people that I am not a poor missionary in Old Maswa, Tanzania, who goes around begging, but a missionary who works with the poor and offers people the opportunity to help those in great need. Meet these four Tanzanian people whom we have met at the right place and the right time:

- ◆ **Felista** was badly burned at age two. Her grandmother took her out of the hospital where her parents had taken her. Apparently her arm was tightly bound to her side; the pain is hard to imagine. When I met her in 2000, her fingers protruded from her shoulder. I thought she had been born that way. I was shocked when I realized her arm was inside. At Bugando Hospital in Mwanza a visiting surgeon freed her arm where it had been captive for 14 years. A year and a half later she is able to raise her arm some and is getting strength in her fingers.
- ◆ **Ng'wasi** just popped into my life. At age 10 she developed an infection, or maybe a tumor. She was treated with native medicine, but it did not stop her from losing half of her face. In the hospital Ng'wasi had a big flap of skin that was still connected to her shoulder sewn over the gaping hole in her face. A doctor is coming who will continue her treatment. After a long period of operations, she will have a new life ahead of her. Meanwhile, I have helped her open a little store and buy a second hand bicycle so she can transport supplies to her store.
- ◆ **Paulo** is disabled with shriveled legs. We couldn't restore his legs but were able to buy him a tricycle (pedaled by hands) that he received with no advance notice. His joy was exuberant.
- ◆ **Clara**’s mother died at childbirth, sadly, for lack of simple care. Little Clara's life was in danger. I baptized her, naming her after my grandmother. I then took her to our maternity ward where she received care for many months before going home.

*True story, Father Paul Fagan, M.M., Old Maswa, Tanzania*



## Today We Are Treating 18 Watatulu Epileptics

Some Watatulu elders were sitting with me in front of my tent near Ndoleleji, Tanzania. We were discussing the Watatulu notion of who God is since they use the same word for God as they use for the sun. Some boys, shepherds, were playing nearby. Suddenly a woman, Sabena, came running from her mud hut screaming wildly. She grabbed one of the boys and threw that kid through the air at least ten feet. She began jumping up and down, thrashing her arms like a mad person. The boy was her brother. Their sheep had wandered into the neighbor’s sorghum field and she was angry. I asked the men, "Should I talk to her?" One man, circling his finger by his head, said, "Don't bother, Father, she's crazy!" "I'll go!" I said. I walked up to her, put my hand on her shoulder, and said, "Look, Sabena! If you stop this I will bring you medicine so you won't fall again." Just like that she stopped. Calmly, I walked her back to her house.

Sabena is an epileptic. That was the beginning. Today we are treating eighteen Watatulu epileptics. All have responded favorably to the treatment which is a spiritual blessing and Phenobarbital pills.

*True story, Father Daniel Ohmann, M.M., Ndoleleji, Tanzania*

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## Visiting the Sick in the Nairobi Slums

Friday is my day to visit the sick in the Nairobi, Kenya slum of Mukuru Ruben. I usually approach the village with fear and trembling. I usually leave the village with the feeling that I have passed through the wringer of one of those old wash machines. The name of the church there is St. Jude who is the patron of hopeless cases. A very appropriate name, indeed.

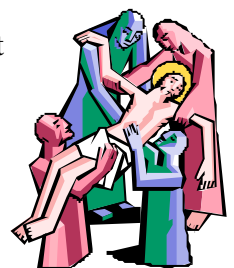
I started by first going to Kenyatta National Hospital to visit Grace Wambui who hails from Ruben. I had spent a day arranging for her transfer to a ward where she could be taken for radiation treatments (cancer). Well, she was still lying in a bed in the medical ward. She shared a bed with another woman, each lying with their feet in the other's face. Grace is too weak to feed herself and her daughter is too poor to make the bus trip to come and feed her. I prayed for Grace and gave her communion. I tried to revive my old negotiations to get her transferred to the cancer ward where she can be brought for radiation treatment, but my heart was only half in it. I told the head nurse in radiation: "I don't think she will make it. If I were the doctor, I would give her pain medicines and try to ease her last days as best we can." I couldn't stay longer for I was late for my tour of Mukuru Ruben where the health workers were waiting for me and where I know we would give out many vouchers to sick people who still had a chance to live. But I did formulate a plan to give her daughter a little money for bus fare and some money to buy a fruit drink heavily laced with sugar.

In Ruben we started off for the section called "Row A" where we would visit the sick and check on the construction of our latest "choo" (Swahili for "toilet"). We visited Ernest Chege, a 11-year-old boy who has suffered from a stroke. He was not making much progress, but he managed a smile. We prayed for a young man who was paralyzed from the waist down. He had been a guard at a factory and was shot by bandits trying to break into the factory. I gave him a voucher for Kijabe Hospital, hoping that St. Jude could somehow help him. Forget about his employer. He was a casual worker and they don't usually get much help from the employer after initial emergency treatment. He thought maybe that the employer would give him a ride to Kijabe Hospital. Next we prayed over a group of five people who were assembled together. I gave vouchers for free medical care to most of them. I refused one man who was obviously languishing with AIDS but who was following us like a shadow. The health workers pleaded that I give him a voucher so that he could at least get medicine to ease his diarrhea. The hospitals don't like to have AIDS patients taking up their precious beds.

Then we toured the older part of the village and that's where we really needed St. Jude. One young girl was supposed to go on a follow-up visit to St. Mary's Hospital, but her legs were too swollen. She couldn't walk to the nearest bus stand. I told the health workers to see the parish social worker who, I know, will push them to take her and even pass the hat to get some of the bus fare. I just don't have the toughness to do that and I refer to the one who has those gifts. We visited Samson, a young man in his late 20s, who had his arm in a cast. He was hurt in a bus accident. He got emergency treatment at a hospital, but he complained that the job was poorly done. I sent him to our social worker in the hope that she could push him to push the bus owners to get him follow-up treatment. If my friend Dr. Wend Schaefer, orthopedic surgeon, had still been at St. Mary's Hospital, I would have sent him right off to St. Mary's.

In addition to praying to St. Jude, I prayed to our Blessed Mother who had to stand at the foot of the cross, powerless to do anything to help the suffering Jesus. She will help us.

*True story, Father John Lange, M.M., Nairobi, Kenya*



**INVITATION:** Update the information on your personal pages of the Maryknoll Africa website. At any time you may send to Dave Smith via email or in May you may bring to the Assembly any new materials such as: written articles, photos, slides, negatives, etc., to add to the web pages that describe your ministry, biography or personal reflections on mission in Africa.

## To Zero and Back

By Don Larmore



Is there a way for people to live in this poverty in Africa until they are delivered from it? Preserving the will to change, in environmental chaos and social end-time-ism. Is this really possible?

Abandonment is a spiritual word, not yet a development word. It has to do with the spiritual journey in that you can benefit from a suffering and yet not submit to it. The warp of life weaves the colors of this suffering into the pattern of life at this moment. The great spiritual traditions, summed up by Ken Wilbur, is that the pressure of poverty can lead to poverty of spirit which can lead to relying on the great power of the Universe. He says we are leaving dualistic thinking and entering an age of seeing the unity of all being. He is our Midwest United States Bede Griffiths on the subject of mysticism or nothing.

Is development a spirituality? It is a spiritual stage of certain personalities when they are aware of their own or others' suffering and abandon themselves to the pressure from within to deliver others from the pain. Mwalimu Julius Nyerere was totally aware of the pain of his people, but knew that economics alone was not the full answer for developing a nation. Through the poetry and humor of his nature, he approached the development-spirituality paradox from its blind side and disarmed the violence of this paradox. The preservation of the tribal soul of a nation from blind economics and soulless privatization while bringing about development in health, education and the basics is the paradox that is spiritual in the highest sense.

This lived suffering is called paradoxing and living with the oxymoronic words of spirituality. Life in death, death in life, poverty in development, development in poverty, planting and harvesting at the same time. Zero is where the fun begins in spirituality; there is too much counting in development without spirituality. Missioning people is not mathematically correct, but spiritually astute. Zero is the philosophy of Zeromamaism (pronounced Ze-roma-ma-ism or Zero-mma-ism). A little tongue-in-cheek naming is part of the fun of "zeroing in" on an issue. Only a mother can lead a child to zero and help to remember the birthing of every moment. We have not been this naked since a minute ago and yet we are showered with a billion gifts from the divine rainmaker called the promise of Baptism in poetic Italian Roma-Catholicism.

Our African friends have already lived the painful birthing of spirituality by the environment, situations and tribal initiations in which they live. Our young people in the United States do not have an environmental force to help them birth into spiritual nakedness – no environmental initiation process, no struggle to be other than a consumer. Our present U.S. president's desire for war is possibly a hidden desire for spiritual progress of a nation; a hidden desire for someone to die in behalf of an unarticulated vision; or unconscious dualism dragging a nation into a spiritual desert.



Male spirituality has a hard time becoming conscious and men take at least 40 years in the Sahara to come to awareness. They live it but the awareness of it is beyond any male at this time. It took Charles Foucault (spelling not right on – like him) all those years to be really able to say his prayer of abandonment. He never did become aware of the feminine virtues of the divine, but that is just OK. He can do that now that he/she is in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade in his new life. Bakhita, on the other hand, went through enough initiation into poverty of spirit for all of Eastern Africa and the moment she accepted it, it was like hitting the save button for all of us. If she were a man, she would have become a guerilla general striking down the enemies with a sword of vengeance or simply been unaware, but her Bakhita became a Josephina alive to suffering as a birth into a new life of the spirit.

So in a few years a woman superior (general) for Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers? Once the spiritual journey becomes primary then saints and intercessors will be chosen from different religious traditions so that we can go there with their spiritual birthing traditions. So in what year will Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers chose a Mnata woman to be superior in order to live the birthing process without men who are out hunting for the unarticulated? When will the wife of an Imam be chosen who really knows how to live in spiritual obscurity? Maybe just regional superiors? In the foolish fun of zeromamism, will Maryknoll continue to rise from the extroverted whirl of American Eastern Catholic spirituality, and then dervish the great spiritualities of our mission people to the world?

*The Shower*, a movie in a Chinese tradition, gives an astounding view of life and death. The Iranian film, *The Color of Paradise* about a blind boy, is the living death of the young man who lights up the world in his ardor, belief and profound poverty of spirit. The videos of the Nebraska Cornhuskers in the pits of football obscurity – who can go there? In the delight of zero-mma-ism and foolishness of ze-roma-maism here is Don Lamore with one foot in the Platte River and the other in Mtoni.

# Tales Out of Africa

By Joe Healey

During the past year I have been working on a project to systematically collect, write and edit a wide variety of African stories. Don Sybertz and John Mbonde, a layman who often works with Maryknoll in Dar es Salaam, have helped. We have created an African Stories Database using the Microsoft Access software program. So far we have finished 510 stories each with one main theme and four sub-themes. Many of these stories have been written by Maryknollers over the years and have been published as "Missioner Tales" in the *Maryknoll Magazine*, "Missionary Vignettes" in *Overview*, stories in *Maryknoll News*, stories in *The Buffaloes*, etc.



From this comprehensive computerized collection we have started to publish various books. In August, 2002 Paulines Publications Africa published *African Posters to Teach the Bible – Guide Book* (English and Swahili) that uses 62 African stories to parallel 62 paintings of different parts of the *Bible*. African stories in the book are written by the following Maryknollers: Hayes, Healey, Lange, Le Jacq, Mach, McDonnell, McLaughlin, Nagele, Petronek, Quinn, Ohmann, Roers, Snyder, Smith, Sybertz and Vos. In the next three years we hope to publish two additional volumes: *African Stories Sourcebook for Preachers and Teachers* (Proposed Paulines Publications Africa Edition – English and Swahili) and *Tales Out of Africa: Collection of Inspiring Stories* (Proposed Orbis Books Edition) which we popularly call *African Chicken Soup for the Soul*.

Running parallel is a project to collect stories about former President Julius Nyerere. Art Wille in Musoma and Kevin Dargan in the Archives at Maryknoll, New York have been especially helpful. We welcome new contributions. As John Sivalon always reminds me: "Try to publish first in the *Africa Region Newsletter*." So here is an original, and never published before, story about Nyerere:

## Jimmy, You Lead the Prayer

A seminarian during his pastoral training at Zanaki Parish in Musoma Diocese, Tanzania in October was told by the pastor: "Next Sunday, you will give the sermon at the Parish Mass." It was World Mission Sunday! He worked hard all week preparing his homily.

Sunday morning he stepped up to preach. Seeing the retired President Julius Nyerere sitting in the front row a few steps in front of him, he panicked. The seminarian forgot every word he prepared. He could hardly speak. "Today is World Mission Sunday!" he began. "When we think of missionaries we think of *Wazungu* (Swahili for "Europeans" or "white persons") priests, but we are all missionaries. Everyone, every Catholic, must do something to spread his or her religion." Trembling, he made the Sign of the Cross and sat down.

Two months later a messenger arrived with an invitation from Nyerere to come to dinner. Around the table with the retired president and his wife Maria were a number of young children. "Jimmy!" Nyerere said, "You lead the prayer." Little Jimmy made the Sign of the Cross and said the prayer before meals in Swahili. When Jimmy was finished, Nyerere turned to the seminarian saying: "Frater ("Brother" in Swahili)! That is the result of your sermon. That Sunday I began to think that I have not done much to teach my religion. These are some of my grandchildren. I'm calling them here to teach them their prayers."

(True Story, Father Daniel Ohmann, M.M., Musoma, Tanzania)

Here is another original story from one of our best Maryknoll storytellers in the Africa Region...

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## Conversion on a Bus

No, not introducing to the catechumenate a fellow passenger on the bus from Shinyanga to Maswa in Tanzania but my own conversion from compliance to surrender. Huh? Yes, accepting the slogan from my forefathers in Africa, I had taken the cotton out of my ears and put it in my mouth. Receptive to all the positive and negative reinforcement offered to me. You might say that I lived the dictum *When in Rome do as the Romans do*. I may have got a passing mark in *doing*, but I was not *feeling* like the Romans.

For some weeks before that fateful journey I had already been letting go of my own way of viewing this or evaluating that. Phlegmatic, apathetic? No, rather a step from compliance toward surrender. You see, some kind soul gave me a lift from Buhangija to the bus stop. Arriving there for the 11 a.m. bus half an hour ahead of departure, I took my seat on the Ally Bus. I felt relaxed, secure about being well in time for the schedule. Well, 11 a.m. came and went. I was not amused. I only breathed a sigh of relief when the bus chugged out of the depot at 11:30 a.m., rolled on down main street past the market and (awk!) pulled into the Total filling station to load cargo into all the space underneath and down the back third of the aisle. An hour later, 12:30 p.m., saw us headed to Maswa via the Mhunze route.

Most of the passengers were joking and laughing as we hit the open road. I was not: My puritanical streak leads me to resent people "out there" having fun. The only one in my line of vision that helped me was the 40-50 year old grandma who sat looking straight ahead. All I could see of her face was half a side view. Without a twist or a turn she shifted one grandchild at a time into her lap-- equal time for both. She sat as serene as an ebony Queen Nefertiti of Egypt. Silent. A mood of a brighter hue stole over me. By the time we stopped for refreshments at Mhunze and reboarded a new and alien thought entered my mind: "Say, I'm the only one on this bus who is not enjoying the ride."

Take it from there. The first domino had fallen; others followed suit until now I am not only *doing what the Sukuma do but also being like the Sukuma be*. I must confess that there was one other grace-full factor which gave my journey a positive and pleasant twist: no one, not even one of the young bloods on the bus, was wearing his baseball cap backwards. (True story, Father Lou Quinn, M.M., Shinyanga, Tanzania)

Many of these African stories are posted electronically on websites (such as the Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers Africa Region Website, [www.MaryknollAfrica.org](http://www.MaryknollAfrica.org)) and in e-mail messages with or without File Attachments. So our African stories are reaching around the globe.

## Happy Birthday to You!

Kenneth Thesing	May 9	Richard Bauer	August 1
John Conway	May 13	William Fryda	August 12
Robert Jalbert	May 18	John Mullen	August 16
Douglas May	June 9	Richard Albertine	August 20
Leo Kennedy	June 16		
John Eybel	June 18		
Daniel Ohmann	July 6		
Peter Agnone	July 9		
Donald Sybertz	July 23		
Edward Quinn	July 26		
Howard O'Brien	July 30		



## The First Harvest: Maryknoll's Work in Mozambique

*In December 2002 in the Maryknoll administered parish of Metangula, Mozambique Bishop Luiz Gonzaga celebrated the ordination of a new deacon, Sinzotuma Leonard Dejjju. The following is a statement written by Sinzotuma:*



### Beautiful Mix of Nyanja and Burundi Culture

I was ordained to the diaconate in the parish run by Maryknoll missionaries in Metangula, Mozambique -- the very same parish that took me in when I was a refugee from Burundi. My ordination was celebrated with a great deal of enthusiasm and expressed a beautiful mix of the local Nyanja culture and my own Burundi culture.

One especially moving time occurred when my sponsors in the ceremony, after giving me good counsel, placed a beautifully carved walking stick in my right hand and placed a *Bible* upon my head. My godfather explained that the walking stick was to help me to climb mountains and to cross valleys so as to fulfill my duty to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. According to our customs in Burundi, the responsibility of being a deacon is heavy indeed. When my sponsors placed the *Bible* upon my head they put a tightly wound cloth underneath it so that I could carry its "weight" and so that I would not let it fall to the ground. Carrying the gospel is like carrying a heavy clay pot filled with great treasure upon one's head. Great care must be taken not to let it fall to the ground and thus to break.

My godmother handed me a brightly decorated umbrella. In this way she was telling me that no matter what I encounter, be it chilling rain or scorching sun, that I must continue to carry out my responsibility to preach the gospel. But the umbrella was a further reminder that I was being sent forth showered by the prayers of all my family and friends so that I would be under God's protection. A touching moment was when my own blood brother arrived from Burundi minutes before the ceremony began. I was overjoyed since I had not seen him for some years.



Our bishop in his homily also made it clear that I was a missionary to Africa. Even though I was ordained to his Lichinga Diocese I come from another country to minister to a people and in a place that are not my own. It is in this way that I'm very proud to be both a missionary and a diocesan priest at the same time.

*True story, Deacon Sinzotuma Leonard Dejjju, Metangula, Mozambique*

## Remembering our Maryknoll Ancestors

Father John J. Ridyard, M.M. died on 14 January, 2003 in Mountain View, California. He was 82 years old and a Maryknoll priest for 46 years. We fondly remember John from his years in Shinyanga, Tanzania and in Ethiopia. Here is one true story by David Smith from the chapter "Falling in Love with the Sukuma People" in *The Buffaloes* (privately printed, 1996):



Brother John Wohead recalls a commanding Father John Ridyard trying to convince a couple of women in a village near Kilulu Parish in Shinyanga Diocese, Tanzania to join the catechumenate program, but they stubbornly refused each invitation. On his days off Ridyard used his membership in the Mwadui flying club to rent a small airplane. He frequently flew around the diocese making power dives above each of the missions as his way of greeting the Maryknollers. Well, it just so happened that those two women were walking nearby when John dove his plane down over Kilulu. The women fell to their knees and cried out, "Please don't kill us! We'll start attending religion classes now!"

John Ridyard is the 49<sup>th</sup> Maryknoll Priest/Brother to die in the society who worked in Africa. In the language of African inculturation they are our "living dead." Some anniversaries of death are:

Fr. George Buckley	May 22, 1998	Fr. James Morrissey	July 4, 1982
Fr. Thomas Burke	May 28, 1999	Fr. John Quinn	July 8, 1995
Fr. Daniel Lenahan	June 1, 1977	Fr. Joseph Corso	July 9, 1989
Fr. Charles Callahan	June 10, 1996	Fr. George Egan	July 9, 2001
Fr. Joseph Reinhart	June 12, 1999	Fr. George Putnam	July, 16, 1991
Bp. John Rudin	June 14, 1995	Fr. George Haggerty	August 10, 1974
Fr. Walter Gleason	June 20, 1983	Fr. Paul Bordenet	August 16, 1963
Fr. Charles Liberatore	June 22, 1981	Br. Brian Fraher	August 21, 1996
Fr. Alden Pierce	June 27, 1989	Bp. Edward McGurkin	August 28, 1983
Fr. Edward Bratton	June 27, 1990	Fr. Denis O'Brien	August 29, 2002

### Call for Articles for Our Next Issue

**Date:** August, 2003

**Theme:** Collaborative Efforts With Other Mission Groups in Africa

**Material to Editor by:** 1 June 2003

Please send material to the Editor, Joe Healey, by Email to:

JGHealey@aol.com or by paper mail to: Maryknoll Society House,  
P.O. Box 867, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (for scanning into a computer).