

# FRONTLINE REPORT

July – August 2007  
Vol. 45 No. 4



Society of African Missions  
American Province

23 Bliss Avenue, Tenafly, NJ 07670  
Ph. (201) 567 0450  
www.smafathers.org

## Mission—Walking With The Poor!

In May 2002, **Fr. Ed Galvin, S.M.A.** began his ministry at **St. Peter Claver Mission in Fort Myers, Florida.** The Mission is located in a very poor, densely populated section of Fort Myers known as the Dunbar area. There is great cultural diversity at the Mission, uniting African Americans, Africans, Caribbeans, Haitians, and Anglo-Saxon “Snowbirds” who have been longtime friends of the Mission.

In 1988 the Diocesan Office of Black Ministry, along with two Dominican Sisters, began to minister to the predominantly black population of Dunbar.

**Fr. Joseph Foley, S.M.A.,** joined the team in 1992. At first they continued very humbly. Mass was celebrated in one room of a duplex. Within a year, they had outgrown the room and moved to an available, larger space in a former auto garage. With increasing numbers and a need for space, Fr. Joe, an inspiring personality, used all his energy and “people skills.”



Above: **St. Peter Claver Mission Church** in Fort Myers, Florida serves a very diverse community.

Before moving on in 1999, he was instrumental in finding generous donors to build a Church and a Social Concerns Building, **AFCAAM** (ministering to the **African, Caribbean and American** populations.) Today, AFCAAM runs Social Welfare programs and an After School Reading Program.

At St. Peter Claver Mission, there is a congregation of about 100 members with 40 full time families and 40 regular attendants. The liturgies are lively. The congregation loves to

sing, clap their hands, play drums and lift their burdens to the Lord. They have Religious Education programs for the children and the Mission responds to the needs of the poor who come for assistance.

Fr. Ed expresses deep concern for the youth. The challenges are the same as in any inner-city Parish. The people are faced with widespread poverty, sickness, unemployment and crime. He says, “It is really difficult seeing young

people in their teens and early 20’s without hope or prospects for a better life. Poverty is the main factor. Young people really struggle. Some end up in correctional facilities. Once they have a criminal record, they can’t get a job.

I have great concern for the medical needs, such as Pre-natal and Post-natal care for the young women. People come to me in desperation. When their child is sick, they can’t afford medicines, baby food, and the basics. I want more people to be aware of the multitudes with poor nutrition. They buy noodles, because they are the cheapest, but they are not so nutritious. Some people have never had an eye exam, and buy glasses from the drugstore.

With the high crime rate, safety is a big concern. Children are picked up by the

(Continue on Page 4)

# Always a Missionary by Fr. Daniel Lynch, S.M.A.

Several years ago, while celebrating Mass in a nursing home on Staten Island, New York, I looked out at the little congregation. Many were old and dying and a few were young and incapacitated. Some were alone and forgotten. I suspect that in their eyes and in the eyes of many they had little to offer the Church and the world.

Nonetheless, I thought about the unrealized potential that surrounded me. If only they knew what they *still* had to offer; if only they knew how active a contribution they could make to the Church and the world through their **prayers** and **sufferings!** How many knew that they were missionaries?

My inspiration for these thoughts came from a young, cloistered Carmelite nun: St. Therese of the Child Jesus, more familiarly known as the Little Flower. She realized at an early age that prayer and suffering could be used to further the mission of the Church. In fact, this was an important missionary dimension of the Carmelite contemplative life that she embraced. Therese wrote, “This is Carmel’s vocation since the sole purpose of our prayers and sacrifices is to be the *apostle of the apostles.*”

Therese at twenty-four years of age and dying of tuberculosis was not much different in her suffering from many in nursing homes today, or those who are home-bound, sick or elderly. Unlike many of them however, she knew that neither lack of activity nor sickness could limit her Baptismal call to be a very active missionary. For her, to pray and to sacrifice were very important for the life of the Church. Even death would not stop her. In her words, “I would be a missionary, not for a few years only, but from

the beginning of creation until the consummation of the ages.”

But how did Therese offer her sufferings and prayer for the “apostles” or missionaries of the Church? What was her understanding of suffering and prayer in relationship to missionary activity?

Christopher O’ Donnell, O.Carm., in his book, *Love in the Heart of the Church: The Mission of Therese of Lisieux*, gives an account of how Therese offered up her suffering. It is taken from *Her Last Conversations* in which Therese was asked why she insisted on walking about in the convent garden, despite how ill she was, when it would have been easier for her to rest. Therese answered by saying: “It’s true, but do you know what gives me strength? Well, I am walking for a missionary. I think that over there, far away, one of them is perhaps exhausted in his apostolic endeavors, and, to lessen his fatigue, I offer mine to God.”

It is very important to understand how Therese looked upon suffering. For Therese, “suffering makes no sense except in the perspective of love.” And it must be understood in relationship to Christ. Her willingness to suffer was never morbid. Therese’s suffering was a way of participating in Christ’s love for others. It was willingly, joyfully and lovingly embraced by her.

In her understanding of prayer in relationship to missionary activity, Therese built on the foundation of love. She firmly believed that “it was love alone that made the Church’s members act” and that without love, “apostles would not preach.”

Therese’s prayer was an expression of her love that she joined to the apostolic efforts of missionaries. In a letter to one missionary she asked

God that through her prayers they might “work together for the salvation of souls.”

In his Encyclical Letter, *Mission of the Redeemer*, Pope John Paul II, like Therese, recognized the value of prayer and suffering for the success of missionary activity. He reminds us that St. Paul “often asks the faithful to pray for him so that he might proclaim the Gospel with confidence and conviction,” adding that prayer “needs to be accompanied by sacrifice” in imitation of “the sacrifice of Christ himself, who calls the members of the Mystical Body to share in his sufferings.”

However, prayer and suffering are not just “offered” for missionaries. They are essential activities for living out one’s Baptismal call and becoming a missionary—no different from Therese’s missionary call to Carmel in order to be an “*apostle of the apostles.*” John Paul II, in his encyclical, writes that “the sacrifice of missionaries should be shared and accompanied by the sacrifices of all the faithful. I therefore urge those engaged in the pastoral care of the sick to teach them about the efficacy of suffering and to encourage them to offer their sufferings to God for missionaries. By making such an offering, **the sick themselves become missionaries.**”



## Building Church in Pleebo

**Tony Riggio's** mission in **Liberia** began in the early 1960's. One of the first **S.M.A. Lay Missionaries**, he rendered valuable services to the local Church in skilled construction and maintenance. At 80 years of age, Tony is active in his Church and community. He continues to work in construction. His latest goal is to complete **St. Francis Church in Pleebo**. He writes: *Since coming back after the war we have made some progress, installing the ceiling and tiling the sanctuary floor but now the money is finished. The floor of the rest of the Church is rough concrete. We have painted only the outside front and the sanctuary. We need more pews and there is still more work to be done before it is finally finished. Finishing St. Francis Catholic Church has become my main interest in life.*



Above: (L-R) Front row: **Tony Riggio, Sr.** and his son **Tony Riggio, Jr.** At the front of St. Francis Church.

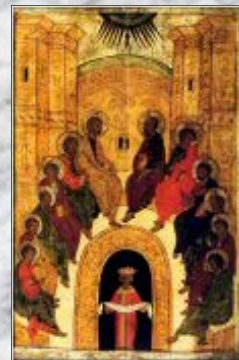
Below Top: Outside view of St. Francis Catholic Church, Pleebo, Liberia.

Below Bottom: Inside view of St. Francis Catholic Church.



On May 27th, 2007, Mass of Pentecost was celebrated in St. Anthony Chapel in Tenafly, NJ.

Descent of the Holy Spirit



We commemorated this festive day by extending our

Heartfelt Congratulations to:

**Fr. Brendan Darcy, S.M.A. &**

**Fr. Joseph Foley, S.M.A.**

on the 40th Anniversary of their Ordination to the Priesthood.

**Deacon Dermot Roache, S.M.A.**

on his Oath of Permanent Membership

**Seminarian Eliecer Sandoval**

on the Renewal of his Temporary Oath.

## Fr. Tom Wright, Elected to General Council in Rome

The General Assembly of the Society of African Missions was held in Rome, Italy April 16 to May 12, 2007. **Fr. Kieran O'Reilly, S.M.A.** was re-elected for another six-year term as Superior General. His General Council were elected on May 8th and are as follows: **Fr. Jean-Marie Guillaume, S.M.A.** was elected as Vicar General, and the two newly elected

General Councilors are **Fr. Paul Saa-Dade Ennin, S.M.A.** and **Fr. Thomas Wright, S.M.A.** Fr. Wright has been Superior of the American Province since 2001. He will now be residing at S.M.A. in Rome.

We pray for God's abundant blessings on the Society of African Missions (S.M.A.) in the years ahead!

## Mission — Walking with the Poor!

(Continued from Page 1)

*AFCAAM van to bring them to Sunday School. People do not feel free to allow their children to play on the streets.*

*Yet, in the midst of all these difficulties, there are signs of hope and encouragement. Some of the Parish Youth responded to the needs of the Katrina Victims by giving of their time and energy to help rebuild houses."*

Fr. Ed speaks highly of the Director of Evangelization in the Parish, **Dean Blietz**, who runs a prison relief house for inmates, helping them stay a few days and transition back into society. He also counsels people who need help in the Courts.

Fr. Ed feels that the problems they are experiencing are national problems. **Life in the U.S.A. is not simple.** He says that there needs to be a long-term commitment to help those caught in grinding poverty. There is a need for jobs, good affordable education for their children, and adequate medical care in order to break the cycle of poverty and to re-install **hope**.

Below: The AFCAAM Center in Florida



"Such gold the holy martyr Lawrence (The Deacon) preserved for the Lord. For when the treasures of the Church were demanded from him, he promised that he would show them. On the following day he brought the poor together. When asked where the treasures were . . . he pointed to the poor saying: 'These are the treasures of the Church.'" — *St. Ambrose*



Above: **Jen Viola, S.M.A. Lay Missionary** enjoys time with the AIDS orphans at the **Uzima Centre** in Tanzania. Her skills as a Recreational Therapist have enhanced her work with the children.

## AIDS Ministry Update

The following news was taken from the *Uzima Update*, a quarterly newsletter from the *Ilemela AIDS Outreach Project* in Mwanza, Tanzania. **Jen Viola, S.M.A. Lay Missionary** works with **Joanne Miya, Maryknoll Lay Missioner and Director of Uzima Centre**.

**The PLHA Program:** The Center's program for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) has been growing in leaps and bounds. We are desperately trying to catch up and slow it down. In the past, many people died of HIV/AIDS shortly after they became aware of their illness, so the number of clients remained small. Now, with the introduction of antiretroviral drugs (which became available in Tanzania in 2005), more people are hearing about our services and are coming forward for help. For example, in December '05 there were 30 clients; in January '07, our 100th client registered. Currently, there are around 130 clients registered. We have also expanded our program for children living with HIV. At present, nine children receive assistance. Despite all the challenges caused by our growing numbers, Uzima Centre's clients are encouraged and assisted to live with hope.

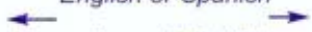
From the January-March 2007 *Uzima Update*

### HOW YOU CAN HELP SMA MISSIONS



**HELP SUPPORT SMA MISSIONS** when you use our Perpetual Mass Enrollment and our Healing Cards.

Large/Small Sizes  
Perpetuals available in English or Spanish



To order call Toll Free:  
1-800-318-1209



**WILLS & ANNUITIES**  
Remembering SMA in your will helps to ensure support for the work of spreading the Gospel. An SMA annuity provides you and your spouse with secure income in your retirement years.

For information, call  
Toll Free: 1-800-318-1209

It's easy to place your order and get information online at [www.smafathers.org](http://www.smafathers.org)