



If We Traded Places . . .



Photos from Fr. Joe Nyanti's Collection

In a time when people in the West are feeling the pinch from rising gas and food prices, we know the challenge of cutting costs where we can and doing without some of the non-essentials. It is a much harsher reality in so many other countries. It is a day-to-day struggle for survival. Where is the next meal coming from? Parents are concerned how they will provide for their children's needs, such as medical care and education.

Many Liberian students are desperate—"jammed" by their schools to pay the balance of their tuition and the \$40 U.S. required of Grades 6, 9 and 12 students taking the National Exam. Where does a young Liberian get that kind of money? An employed person might earn only \$1 per day—but there is 85% unemployment.

One student's story: Junior Tear lost his father during the Liberian Civil War. At 18, he is the eldest of six children; the youngest is 12. His mother is too sick to work, as is his

grandfather who also stays in their house. Cecilia is in Grade 6 and is the only other child going to school. The other four—Emmanuel, Mary, Josiah and Moretta—do not have the opportunity for school as the family lacks the means. Junior tries to get some money by going around the neighborhood and doing jobs for people, such as cleaning, collecting wood, or carrying water, and the money he earns he brings back to the house to feed the family. Junior needed to find funds to pay the balance of his tuition, \$100, and the National Exam Fee, \$40, or lose the year. When Junior returned home, he found his little sister Cecilia had been sent home from school because she hadn't paid her own school fees. She was in tears. She needed to pay \$75, the balance of her tuition and her National Exam fee, or she would not be able to complete Grade 6.

This is the situation many students are facing. When the funds cannot be found, the student is put

out of the school—and that ends the opportunity to get an education and improve their circumstances. In the West, where it is taken for granted that every child has the right to get an education, this situation would be unthinkable.

The need is real and urgent. As rising food costs affect the world, the poor really feel it. In the West, the rising costs are a big inconvenience, but so far—it is manageable. In developing countries, it is life and death. So many are in extreme situations, with no way out—unless... we respond. What if I could help one student complete his schooling? Or, could I make a sacrifice and commit to sponsoring a Grade 12 graduate through college, or a 3-year Nursing Training Program, or some other specialty that will serve their people in years to come? Yes, today we are faced with overwhelming problems, but we can be a part of the solution to these problems by doing something!

See Fr. Hayden's report from Liberia on page 3.

Not by Bread Alone . . .

by Fr. Daniel Lynch, S.M.A.

In his encyclical letter, *Mission of the Redeemer (Redemptoris Missio)*, **Pope John Paul II** wrote, “I express gratitude to the missionaries who, by their loving presence and humble service to people, are working for the integral development of individuals and of society through schools, health-care centers, leprosaria, homes for the handicapped and the elderly, projects for the promotion of women, and other similar apostolates.” He goes on to say that “it is in fact these ‘works of charity’ that reveal the soul of all missionary activity: *love*, which has been and remains *the driving force of mission*.”

However, he adds that “it is not right to give an incomplete picture of missionary activity, as if it consisted principally in helping the poor, contributing to the liberation of the oppressed, promoting development or defending human rights. The missionary Church is certainly involved on these fronts but her **primary task** lies elsewhere: **the poor are hungry for God, not just for bread and freedom**. Missionary activity must first of all bear witness to and proclaim salvation in Christ, and establish local churches which then become means of liberation in every sense.”

He adds that “it is not the Church’s mission to work **directly** on economic, technical or political levels, or to contribute materially to development. Rather, her **mission consists essentially in offering people an**

opportunity not to “have more” but to “be more,” by awakening their consciences through the Gospel.

Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical, *God Is Love (Deus Caritas Est)*, writes that **the Church’s charitable activity must “not become just another form of social assistance.”** He adds that “while professional competence is a primary, fundamental requirement, it is not of itself sufficient. We are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity. They need heartfelt concern.”

For Benedict XVI, love expressed in the Christian tradition must always be rooted in Christ. He writes in his encyclical on love that **“practical activity will always be insufficient, unless it visibly expresses a love for man [humanity], a love nourished by an encounter with Christ.”** Repeating the words of St. Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians (5:14), Benedict writes that in all our charitable activities **“the love of Christ urges us on.”**

In speaking more specifically to missionaries in *God and the World*, Pope Benedict XVI writes that “as long as we only send money or know-how, we are giving too little. In that sense the **missionaries were an example for us, by giving God, by making love believable for them; their gift to people was a new way of life; they gave themselves wholly and entirely.**”



To illustrate what this Christian charitable activity looks like, Benedict offers a little story told by the German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke. He writes, “The poet tells how, in Paris, he used always to pass a woman into whose hat someone had thrown a coin. The beggar woman was always quite unmoved by this, as if she had no feelings at all. One day, Rilke gives her a rose. And in that moment her face glows. He sees for the first time that she does have feelings. She smiles, and then for a week she is no longer begging, because someone has given her something that is more than money.”

Pope Benedict, commenting on this story says, “I think that it is such a lovely little incident, in which you can see that **sometimes a rose, a little act of giving, of affection, of acceptance of the other person, can be more than many coins or other material gifts.**”

Fr. Edward Richardson, S.M.A.—RIP

Fr. Ed Richardson, S.M.A. was born February 6, 1919 in Philadelphia, PA. He earned a BA degree in 1943 from St. Mary's College in Pennell, PA and did advanced studies at Villanova University, Catholic University and Notre Dame University where in 1964 he received his MA in Philosophy. He obtained a Doctor of Ministry from San Francisco Theological Seminary. He entered S.M.A.'s Queen of Angels Seminary in 1947. On February 9, 1950 he was ordained to the priesthood and was assigned to Immaculate Conception, an African-American Parish in Augusta, GA, where he taught in the High School and also coached the varsity basketball and baseball teams.

When the Korean War broke out, Fr. Richardson was sent to Navy Chaplain's school in 1952 and served with the 9th Marine Regiment in Japan. A long career in the military (Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard) followed, during which he rose to the rank of Captain and received more than 20 medals and ribbons, including the Bronze Star, Combat Action Ribbon, Meritorious Service Medal and Navy Commendation Medal. He also served as chaplain for the military at locations in the United States. At the time of his retirement from the Navy in 1981, he was Chief of Chaplains.

Fr. Richardson listed "the conversion of 642 adults to the Catholic faith" as the most significant accomplishment of his military service. His mother played a major role in his life and he referred to her as his "personal hero."

He joined the Knights of Columbus in 1939 in West Phila-

*O Captain! My Captain!
Our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack,
The prize we sought is won.*

Walt Whitman



Fr. Edward Richardson, S.M.A.

delphia and rose to the Fourth Degree. He was appointed K of C State Chaplain in Virginia in 1985 and as a resident of that state, was reappointed regularly in subsequent years. Fr. Richardson also served as a Chaplain for numerous other groups and has been recognized for his humanitarian work. In 1990, he became the first Catholic priest to receive the National Brotherhood Award from the National Conference of Christians and Jews. In 1997, the city of Augusta, Georgia recognized him for his service in the early 1950's at Immaculate Conception School.

In February 2000, Fr. Richardson celebrated his 50th anniversary as an S.M.A. priest. For his entire life, Fr. Edward was guided by this motto: **"Build bridges with all people, never build fences."**

On April 26, 2008, the Divine Captain called this faithful soldier home to his eternal reward.



A Child Chooses— Food or School?

by Fr. Ted Hayden, S.M.A.

Fr. Ted Hayden, S.M.A. is serving in rural Barrake, Liberia. He writes: In my first ten years as a missionary in Liberia no one ever asked me for food. Now it is a daily occurrence. Food is very scarce. Many Liberian children face a daily challenge. Income is scarce. Children often have to choose whether they will have a daily supply of food or if they will use the money to pay for school expenses. Almost always they will choose school—even if that means that some days, they go without food. They willingly bear the pains of hunger. Almost every day one or more students arrive at the mission in Barrake asking if there is any bread left. Most days there is, but sometimes they go away hungry.

Older students often seek a part time job on the St. Anthony Parish Farm. Often they will use the proceeds from their work to buy a half bag of rice, which will provide food for the family for two weeks.

One high school student told me that he trained his stomach to go without food. He stated that sometimes at recess a friend would offer him a piece of bread. He said he refuses because if he eats a small piece of bread—the hunger pangs will come. Sometimes he goes two days without taking any food. He does not complain because he is strong and can bear the hunger pains. His primary goal is to graduate from high school. Only one student in ten would receive enough daily food to meet international standards for nutrition.

The struggle continues. Education is the top priority for children. They will make any sacrifice including going without food in order to stay in school. **Grinding Poverty** is a constant challenge for Liberians: The 13-year civil war in Liberia destroyed the

(Continued on Page 4)

Pope Benedict XVI

—Journey of Hope!



On April 19, 2008, **Pope Benedict XVI** spoke from his heart to the seminarians and youth gathered at St. Joseph Seminary, NY: “Proclaim the Lord Christ . . . and always have your answer ready for people who ask the reason for the hope that is within you” (1 Pet 3:15). With these words from the First Letter of Peter I greet each of you with heartfelt affection. He goes on to say, *I wish to share with you some thoughts about being disciples of Jesus Christ—walking in the Lord’s footsteps, our own lives become a **journey of hope.***

Referring to six American people (St. Elizabeth Seton, St.

Frances Xavier Cabrini, St. John Neumann, Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha, Venerable Pierre Toussaint and Padre Felix Varela), he says: **“In front of you are the images of six ordinary men and women who grew up to lead extraordinary lives.** *The Church honors them as Venerable, Blessed or Saint: each responded to the Lord’s call to a life of charity and each served Him here, in the alleys, streets and suburbs of New York. I am struck by what a remarkably diverse group they are: poor and rich, lay men and women—one a wealthy wife and mother—priests and sisters, immigrants from afar, the daughter of a Mohawk Father and Algonquin mother, another a Haitian slave and a Cuban intellectual. Any one of us could be among them, for there is no stereotype to this group, no single mold. Yet a closer look reveals that there are common elements. Inflamed with the love of Jesus, their lives became remarkable **journeys of hope.** To the crowd, he asked, *What about today? What are you seeking? **The hope that never disappoints is Jesus Christ.****

Grinding Poverty

(Continued from Page 3) economic, health, education and agriculture infrastructure in Liberia. Businesses were burned down and destroyed. At the present time the unemployment rate is 85%. In the city, the unemployed seek daily contract jobs, hoping to earn enough to feed their family for a day. Salaries in Liberia are low. The average teacher makes less than \$30. It doesn’t go far. A bag of rice which will last a family of six for a month costs \$60.

Buying a ballpoint pen, pencil or a copy book is often beyond the means of many families. Children come to the mission asking for these items. They know they will work for their money—cutting grass or weeding the garden. They are always willing to work for their money.

In rural areas, families plant gardens or work on family farms. Cash income is a rarity. Families are large and the elderly who cannot work must be cared for. When women shop, they buy one onion, one tea bag, one ounce of sugar and a two ounce tin of tomato paste. If they can put food on the table for their family for one day, they are grateful. The following day **the struggle begins again.**



Dear Friends,
Thank you to all those who have contributed to the Shaloom Preschool Program in Mwanza, Tanzania. Some children walk two miles to come to the program. Your donations help us to feed the children some good nutritious snacks before their long walks home. The children say “Asante sana” which means a heartfelt “Thank you!”

Lawreen McBride, S.M.A. Lay Missionary