



Rehab Refrain: “I Thank God for Life!”

The Ganta Rehabilitation Center for Leprosy and Tuberculosis (T.B.) in Ganta, Liberia is known as **Rehab**. It has been a Center for hope and healing for many years to those who felt rejected by their families due to their illness. There are centuries of fear and stigma attached to leprosy. The organism *Mycobacterium leprae*, which causes leprosy, attacks the nerves and skin, resulting in a loss of feeling to the affected limb. When the patients can't feel, they may burn themselves when cooking, step on a thorn, or injure themselves unknowingly, often resulting in an infection which causes destruction of the tissues. The good news today is that leprosy can be cured with medicine and good management of inflamed nerves.

Protecting the patient's feet is



Above: (R) **Consolata Sister Patricia, Rehab Director**, visits with a patient (L).

important to prevent any more damage. A foot mold is taken and each patient is measured and fitted with shoes. Some amputees need a prosthesis. These too are provided.

When the medical needs of the patients are taken care of, they are encouraged to learn a skill to help them become self-supporting. Patients are busy farming and making baskets, mats, greeting cards, and wood carvings.

Feeding Crisis: Since Liberia is stable with the presence of International Peacekeepers throughout the country and the war is over, things are returning to normal. However, the Consolata Sisters in charge of the Center were very concerned when they were notified that the food supply to the Center, which had been provided by an NGO during the war, was being discontinued as of December 2007. **How would they feed the 100-plus hospitalized Leprosy and T.B. patients when the supplies stopped?**

(Continued on Page 2)



Lay Missionary Ann Seliskar with patient.



Hallway in the Hospital



Shoe shop workers

Rehab Refrain: "I Thank God for Life" (Continued)



(Continued from Page 1)

They are taking steps to revitalize the farm at the Center, to work towards providing enough produce to feed the hospitalized patients at Rehab. But this will take time.

In the interim, Sister Patricia is looking for the funds to feed the patients a nutritious diet, which is very important in their healing and recovery.

S.M.A. Lay Missionary Ann Seliskar joined the Sisters in the ministry at the Ganta Rehab in March 2007. She enjoys making daily rounds, visiting the patients and encouraging them in whatever way she can. In return, their unconditional love, acceptance and warmth is an experience of God's love. **Truly, God lives in each one.** It is a privilege to have this chance to serve her brothers and sisters at Ganta Rehab.

People of Faith: Liberia is recovering from years of civil strife. Everyone has a story: Stories of life, death,

loss, faith, dire need, sorrow and through it all, trusting God. Daily, you hear Rehab residents say, "I thank God for life!"

Willing, Able and Qualified:

In the early 1980's, **Henry Momo** came to the Ganta Leprosy Center in need of treatment. He had been diagnosed with Lepromatous leprosy. He came under the care of **Sr. Dr. Margaret Chambers, Medical Missionary of Mary**, a Leprologist. Under her care and supervision, Henry was treated and recovered. Enjoying good health, Henry became interested in helping at the Center and became a Lab Technician. **Betty Palfy, Lab Technician**, over the years has encouraged, trained and supervised Henry and others, and now they too are serving as skilled, well-trained technicians. Henry has a wife and family and they live in Ganta. He is a member of the Catholic Church, and gives a great witness to his faith in his daily life and service at Rehab.



Above: **Henry Momo**, a former patient and now a trained Lab technician (*inset*), uses his skills to help at the Rehab Laboratory.
Left: Patient with **Ann Seliskar** pumps good, clean water from covered well.



Above: [1] Skilled wood carver shows a crucifix he is carving. [2] Display of woven crafts made at Rehab. [3] (L-R) **Josiah** making a variety of cards at the Rehab with **Betty Palfy** (Lab Tech) looking at some cards.

S.M.A. News

New S.M.A. Priest



Above: **Fr. Dermot Roache, S.M.A.** with his parents, **John and Mary Roache**. This photo was taken at the reception following Fr. Roache's Ordination on December 29, 2007 at the main chapel at S.M.A. Headquarters in Tenafly, NJ. Fr. Dermot said his first Mass on December 30th at St. Anselm Catholic Church in Brooklyn, NY. Fr. Dermot thanks all who supported him in his journey to priesthood.

New S.M.A. Lay Missionary



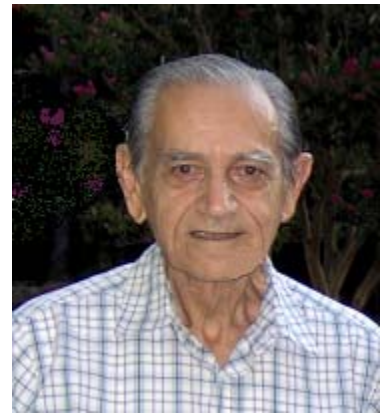
Above: (L-R) **Fr. Michael Moran, S.M.A. Provincial Superior**, **Jadwiga Figula (known as Iga), S.M.A. Lay Missionary**, and **Fr. Frank Wright, S.M.A.** attended the Commissioning Mass for Iga on December 16, 2007 at the S.M.A. Lay Missionaries Formation House in Takoma Park, MD. In mid-January 2008, Iga began her mission assignment in Liberia.

In Memory of Tony!

Tony Riggio, 85, went to his eternal reward on December 16, 2007, in Liberia. His life was fully lived in love and service to his family, the Church and the Liberian people. In 1960, when he was 38 years old, Tony heard **Fr. Phil Bagnasco, S.M.A.**, speaking at his parish, **St. Aidan's Church** on Long Island, NY. **That changed everything!** Tony wanted to help in whatever way he could and volunteered his services. While in New York, he helped Fr. Phil raise funds to help in the building of schools, churches and clinics in Liberia.

On *Thanksgiving Day* in 1960, along with three newly ordained **S.M.A. priests**, **Fr. Jim Sullivan**, **Fr. Frank Giffether**, and **Fr. Archie McCrory**, he set sail for Liberia on the ship *African Dawn*.

From that time on, Tony's life was dedicated to Liberia. When he arrived in St. Francis Parish in Pleebo, he met **Fr. Nicholas Grimley**, **Fr. John F. Murray** and **Fr. Ed Biggane**. From 1960-1966 he worked as an **S.M.A. Lay Missionary** in the Diocese of Cape Palmas. Tony helped in planning and building a church, Priests' residence, two schools, a hostel for boys, and in his free time managed the mission rubber farm. After completing his service with the mission, he stayed on in Liberia. He met Martha and got married,



Above: **Tony Riggio in 2007**

and together they raised a beautiful family. He worked many jobs, managing his own maintenance company (1967-73), working for a logging company (1974), and for Firestone (1978-89). Always ready and willing to help the Church he loved so well, in 1976 he planned and built the residence, chapel and clinic for the Sisters in Sinoe and renovated the Sisters' convent in Harper.

During Liberia's civil war, Tony served as Coordinator for Catholic Relief Services in the Southeast region of Liberia and was able to bring food and distribute it to the starving multitudes in the region.

Tony's life was spent in love and service to his family, the Church and the people of Liberia. He will be greatly missed!

Tony is survived by his wife Martha, his two sons Tony and William, and daughters Marie and Celestine. He also has many grandchildren, and a host of grateful friends.

The Curse of Oil? A Reflection by Steve Price



These days, the price of oil is going through the roof. Recently it surpassed the \$100 per barrel record, far from the \$11 price of ten years ago. In response, gas prices at the pump seem to be rising permanently to new levels.

This is bad news for the U.S., but should be good news for African countries which are major oil producers. Africa already provides about 22% of the oil imported to the U.S. On average, Nigeria sends 1.2 million barrels of petroleum to the U.S. every day. Large deposits of oil are in Angola, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Chad, Sudan, and other countries. Competition for oil among the world's users is skyrocketing, in part because of vast new markets in China and India. A single city, Beijing, is expected to put a million additional vehicles onto its streets between 2005 and 2008.

Yet for many reasons, oil is seen by many ordinary Africans as a “curse” rather than a “blessing.” Often the revenue from oil production is lost or stolen through misrule and corruption. Its benefits are never seen by most of the citizens, who remain in extreme poverty. This situation gives rise to instability and rebel movements, with violence and economic disruption quickly following. Threatened African governments use oil money to buy arms. Yet oil companies and foreign governments cooperate with oppressive regimes in order to keep the precious oil flowing to their own oil-dependent economies. Sometimes the U.S. government even helps strengthen these regimes to maintain stability. Too often, oil companies allow local pollution of air, land, and water on which ordinary people depend for livelihood. Meanwhile, these companies make fantastic profits in Africa as well as around the world. The bottom line: Almost no benefits, and a lot of violence, pollution, and misery, come to the places where the oil is extracted.

As Christians in the U.S., what can we do about this? First we can educate ourselves about conditions in oil-producing African countries, and about the economics of oil. We need to watch our own country's actions in Africa—for example, policies about trade, aid, and the use of

Encyclical Letter: On Social Concern

“One of the greatest injustices in the contemporary world consists precisely in this: that the ones who possess much are relatively **few** and those who possess almost nothing are **many**. It is the injustice of the poor distribution of the goods and services originally intended for all.”

John Paul II

U.S. influence. It is important also to learn about oil company revenues and activities. Once we are informed, we can ask our own leaders to make oil more of a blessing for Africa. Finally, we need to restrict our own use of energy in order to avoid waste and to reduce our extreme dependence on oil. The Gospel tells us that there is a higher priority—that of seeing Christ in our African brothers and sisters.

We wish you a very blessed and joyous Easter Season! The Lord is truly risen! Death, where is your victory—Death, where is your sting? Let us live in the Light and Love of our Lord, Jesus Christ! He has freed us from our sins and opened heaven to us all. He shared fully in our humanity, so that we might share fully in His divinity. Truly, we are God's children. Happy Easter!

from the S.M.A. Family

He is Risen!

