

MISSIONARY DISCIPLESHIP...

UGANDA OUTREACH

Under the leadership of young adult Ben Duphiney and Fr. Jhon Madrid, 10 missionaries from our parish travelled to Uganda this past July 11-23. Below are excerpts from a few of their reflections throughout their journey.

MASS AT MADERA... LET'S GO!

We began our week at Madera with Mass at St. Patrick's Church. It was beautiful, as we heard the Ugandans singing with their voices, but also their hearts. Fr. Jhon concelebrated Mass with the pastor, and Deacon Joe read the Gospel. They also helped with the distribution of the offertory – which consisted of not just money, but chickens, eggs, and food for the priests for the week. It was a witness to the efforts of the community and care for their parish.

- Ben



Today we had the blessing of celebrating Mass in the courtyard of St. Mary's Secondary School with the students. With the sun rising behind me and the voices of hundreds of youth praising God, we all breathed that sigh of comfort. That feeling of home.

- John

SOLIDARITY

I was initially apprehensive about traveling to Africa as I felt I would be outside my comfort zone. When I got here, I still felt a bit nervous. Then on Sunday at morning Mass at St. Patrick's Church, we were invited to walk up before the altar for an introduction to the parish. I had butterflies in my stomach.

However, after introducing ourselves we received a warm and authentic welcome by this community. The switch was thrown. I felt such a sense of peace and joy. I intimately realized we are part of the same family. I feel more solidarity with my Ugandan brothers and sisters and will advocate for them when I return home.

- Chris

For me, it is about being present. I have enjoyed meeting the people of Uganda, having conversations and listening to their stories. I have had the privilege to practice my motto: no one journeys alone. I cannot thank the people of this community enough for allowing me this grace. Also, being able to celebrate Mass every morning at a different church – all within walking distance – with different communities and our Fr. Jhon has been incredible. The beauty of our faith tradition is magnified here. The music and service are indescribable. I can only say it is such joyful worship. But in

of comfort. To me, it's kind of like the feeling of returning to my apartment after work. Returning to the comfortable and peaceful familiar. That moment when you can take a sigh of relief and recharge your internal batteries after a long day. For me this feeling revolves around celebrating Mass not in a church, but with the Church.

No matter what the name of the country is, how old the people around you are, what color their skin is, or even what language they speak,

when we come together to celebrate the mystery of the Eucharist, we are all the Church, one global support circle, one global family.



UNITED IN THE CAPITAL "C" CHURCH

Thousands of miles, one large ocean, sixteen hours of air travel; however you want to put it, we're far from home. Far away from our families, our friends, our communities and our support circles. It can be easy to feel lost or alone in a new place, regardless of the distance between the points, but the beauty of our Catholic faith is that no matter the distance, we're never far from a community, a support circle, friends, or even family.

There's this overarching feeling when celebrating Mass with the community of Soroti. Whether it's with the students of St. Ann's, the seminarians, and even the locals, there's this feeling



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they sing and clap and dance for us. They even encouraged us to participate! We sang for them, and quickly you can see how they love to learn and connect with us. These little ones are half day students, so we head back to St Ann's to return to helping teachers and working more closely with the children.

The girls gather each night to pray the entire rosary on their knees outside. We joined them before supper...then back to work! Each night there is prep time, where students continue with studies, practice singing, and doing homework. The days are long, but filled with moments of laughter, prayer, learning, sharing, love and joy. Truly fulfilled.

—Kim

malaria, the sharp rocks that the girls run on, the poverty among the students' families, the needs of the students, and the vulnerability among the students. One girl asked us if Santa was real because she said that he has never come here. All of these things, piled on top of each other like a landfill, is paralyzing. It's some things that make coming back to Uganda so painful – because these, what seem to be simple problems, still exist in their rawest form. All these heartbreaking things are extremes, and they truly take their toll on the missionaries that visit Uganda.

These "extremes" change throughout the week – growing from "There's no wifi?!" or "My shower is sooo cold!" to "A girl got malaria last month and has been out of school for weeks." and "Wow, I never appreciated all the little things that I have, like a bed and more than one t-shirt." The beauty of leadership is seeing this change among the missionaries. Sr. John Paul spoke about "bending our hearts" earlier this week; and we have been bending like a tree during a hurricane. But the fact is that none of us "broke." We all have had each other to lean on and share the weight of our heavy hearts. We are all taking part in the greater suffering of Christ, by being witness to his Living Church. This redemptive suffering is beautiful because it is leading us closer to Christ and the life that he led; it is not pointless.

— Ben

fact, the only way for you to know these indescribable Eucharistic celebrations is to come to Uganda. Thank you for supporting our mission.

—Peg

BACK TO SCHOOL

Today we started our day celebrating daily Mass at St Patrick's...and music continues to be a focal point. We were blessed to have the secondary school of

EXTREMELY BLESSED

A common theme throughout the week has been extremes. Upon arrival, we were warmly welcomed with open arms and smiling faces. At the same, we passed children scavenging for food, brick homes with corrugated metal roofs, and large piles of trash burning, adding to the dusty tint of the Ugandan air. Most of the missionaries have felt



the blind students deliver readings as well as fill the church with their angelic voices, even at a 7am service! Today, being Monday, is our first day at St Ann's where all 1,065 girls attended classes. An assembly started their day, and our team of missionaries was introduced to the entire school.

We met many teachers and were given the opportunity to observe several classrooms. We all learned new things today! The nursery school was in session as well, where we visited the 3-5 year old students.

Once again, we witness the joy and love these children have for everyone as

hopeless, yet blissfully joyful at the same time. I always feel my heart being tugged in different directions. Uganda has that effect, and it's extremely confusing to mental, physical, and emotional well being. People have been describing this trip as a drop in the bucket, climbing a mountain, and everything in between.

There were extremes that knocked all of us down many times, such as the effects of

