

MISSIONARY

F O U N D A T I O N

A First-Time Perspective of Africa

by Brother Joe DiBattista

Upon taking my first missionary trip to Africa, I had many thoughts and expectations of what I would encounter throughout my journey. I knew the conditions were not going to be consistent with those that I have become accustomed. With the Lord's direction, our goals were to teach, preach, train, and encourage the saints in central and southern Malawi and Mozambique. I traveled with Evangelists Lyle Criscuolo, Nephi DeMercurio, and Frank Natoli. We visited a number of missions where the saints gathered and were blessed as we felt the spirit of the Lord. At each location visited, we formed relationships with the saints attributed to the same love we share for the Lord.

On one particular visit we were going to worship with the saints in Mwanza. Mwanza is located in the southwestern part of Malawi near the border of Mozambique. The night before our visit the brothers held a ministerial meeting in our hotel. The hotel had no running water and we were required to sleep with mosquito nets over us. From our hotel, the village where the saints gather is less than five miles away, however the ride to get there took close to forty-five minutes. The driving conditions were challenging with the combination of dirt roads, hilly terrain, and rain, which caused us to be very cautious. Some roads are closed or impassable during the rainy season, primarily November through March.

As we drove through the village where the saints live, I couldn't



The Church shelter in Mwanza

help but think how blessed I am to have the simple necessities of life. Many things I have taken for granted, such as electricity, running water, a roof on my home, food, and clothing. These items were lacking with most of the individuals I encountered.

Even though there were challenges in reaching our destination, they were quickly dismissed as soon as we pulled up to the church and heard the saints singing praises to the Lord. The saints gathered under an outdoor shelter, similar to what an outdoor pavilion would look like. The roof was constructed of thatch - a combination of banana leaves, cornstalks, and branches. We were told that because of our visit they were putting a tarp over the thatch. There were no walls except for a lattice siding along the

back of the pavilion; therefore the shelter is open to all the elements of nature (rain, heat, and insects). There was no flooring, just the dirt we stood on. Other than some wooden chairs for the elders, there were no other seats except a couple benches in the back for the brothers. The women and children sit on the ground in the front. I felt a tremendous outpouring of love from the saints and the spirit of the Lord was with us.

The service started with singing and could have ended with singing - it was that beautiful. The saints poured their hearts into every word that was sung. They sang with much vigor and enthusiasm and, since there were no musical instruments, they clapped their hands in rhythm with no one missing a beat. Once they start

singing they won't stop until they are told to, so basically, if you don't stop them they won't stop singing. Some songs are ten to twenty minutes long. Everyone participates in the singing, young and old alike. With some of their songs they act out what they are singing. Even though they were singing in their native tongue and I couldn't understand what they were singing, to me it sounded like a chorus of angels.

This day was special for the saints in Mwanza as Brother Master Sato was to be ordained into the priesthood. A strong spirit was felt by all in the congregation as the ordination took place. It rained throughout the day and many parts of the roof were leaking. In fact, the roof was extremely bad towards

Continued on page 4



A New Country, A Humbling Experience

by Evangelist Frank Natoli

As an outgrowth of the church in Malawi, The Church of Jesus Christ now has 75 members in the southeast African country of Mozambique. On November 16th 2006, a team of American and Malawian brothers crossed

Nyanda, where the church was located.

Given the time of day, safety concerns, and the washed out bridge, the plan for the day changed. The three Malawian brothers would continue the journey in search of the village, hoping to find Brother Manilero Nyadaufe and return to Malawi with him. Finding the village wasn't the problem, but getting there was! The brothers had to negotiate torrential cloudbursts, clear fallen banana trees, and

generate any income. Although they do not go hungry, they are very poor in every other aspect of material wealth. We learned that he owns one shirt, one pair of pants, and one pair of shoes. Brother Manilero was 15 years old when father was killed in a war. With his father's violent death, Brother Manilero escaped into the bush and lived there until his uncle found him, took him in, and raised him. He has lived what we would call a 'hard life'; giving him reason to be angry and hard; however we found just the opposite - a humble, soft spoken man with a strong faith in Christ.

We asked him to tell us about the church in Mozambique and he responded by saying that the church has 75 members in his village and approximately 40 or more who desire baptism. He said that they are in the process of building a church building with hand-made bricks molded by the brothers of the branch. The walls are almost complete however the building does not yet have a roof because it is so costly to purchase metal sheets. We asked Brother Manilero about fasting and praying. He responded by saying that, "They fast and pray, seeking forgiveness and to draw closer to God". Once a month they meet in the church building on Friday evening to study scripture and begin their fasting. They continue into

service. They end their fast on Sunday evening with a meal. As I listened to this account, I was humbled, comparing my life of "sacrifice" to his! As if I couldn't feel any worse, he then asked, "Is this the right way to fast and pray?" The American brothers all looked at each other and simply said, "yes", feeling humbled by this account.

We were all impressed with Brother Manilero's meekness and desire to learn. We spent a number of days together - in training, giving seminars, and in conversation. We encouraged him to remain humble and close to the Lord. Brother Nephi DeMercurio told him that he was a "wealthy man because of his humility". He responded by telling us that he didn't know how he would ever explain to the brothers and sisters in his village that he sat and ate dinner with four white men, brothers from the US. We were, to say the least, again humbled by his respect for us and for The Church of Jesus Christ that has changed his life. This humble experience caused me to recall the question asked of Jesus "... who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven ..." (Matthew 18:1-4). I pray that we find this humility in our lives that we might enter into the kingdom of heaven.

New works like Mozambique offer new opportunities for The Church of Jesus Christ and offer

*"They fast and pray,
seeking forgiveness and to
draw closer to God".*

the southern border of Malawi and set out to meet with this congregation and assist them in evangelizing the surrounding area.

The team traveled approximately 3.5 hours into a remote area of northern Mozambique. In comparison to other African countries where the church is established, we found conditions to be very poor. Even though the war for independence ended over ten years ago, the country appears as though the war ended yesterday. Bombed-out buildings remain standing, military vehicles sit rusted on roadsides, and even the border town appeared rundown and lifeless. It reminded me of a black and white movie - blending an old 'western' and a 'World War II' movie into a scene of poverty and depression.


After leaving the border town, we found only dirt roads and rough terrain. With the rainy season just beginning, hard down pours followed by scorching sun of 95+ degrees, made travel challenging. Driving into the interior of Mozambique, we eventually were told by local villagers that a bridge had washed out, requiring us to backtrack and travel an additional few hours to get to the village of

avoid mudslides in order to reach the village. Seven hours later, the brothers returned to Malawi with Brother Manilero.

Brother Manilero is not able to speak English so all of our conversations were through an interpreter. As we spoke with him, we learned a great deal. He is 31 years old and married with five children. He lives in a very remote, rural area of northern Mozambique. His home is a small hand-made brick house (approx. 16' x 12') with a thatch

roof. His family of seven has no electricity, no running water, and no bathroom. He is a farmer and grows corn (a staple crop) but, because the area is so remote, he is unable to sell their corn to

Saturday, but because the church building is near a loud, busy road, they go to the mountain to pray throughout Saturday and then return to the church building on Sunday morning for their worship

each of us a reminder that the pure in heart exist throughout the world. Please continue to support the new works of the Church through your prayers and ongoing generosity. 

*This humble experience caused
me to recall the question asked of Jesus
"... who is the greatest in the kingdom of
heaven ..." (Matthew 18:1-4)*

Healing Power Demonstrated in Nigeria

By Evangelist Frank Natoli

Like many third-world countries, Nigeria's streets are filled with people, animals, cars, vans, buses, trucks, and motorcycles. The 100 degree temperatures, near 100% humidity, and equatorial sun, together with the dusty roads, thick fumes of vehicles, and what appears to be total chaos regarding who has the 'right of way' and who doesn't, poses an amazing challenge. With over 3,000 members in 54 villages, many of the Church's elders are required to travel in these conditions. Most walk, some ride a bus or "catch a ride" while a handful have church motorcycles because of the many miles between locations and the need for an elder. Recently, I received a letter from the church secretary of Nigeria, Brother Sunday Udofia. The letter read as follows:

Dear Brother Natoli,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It thrills me to write and intimate you on the reason why the May 2006 conference minutes had not been dispatched to you earlier before now.

After the conference in May 2006, I was involved in a tragic motorcycle accident on June 10th, 2006 at Abak main market square where I was walking. All of a sudden I was knocked down by a motorcyclist. I hit my head against a rock and I fell into the gutter. This accident occurred by 2:30pm and the eyewitnesses carried me to the hospital thinking that I was dead. They said that the cyclist saw my condition and found his way to escape the scene even till today. They further remarked that between the hour of the incident and 9:30 pm, the doctors said there was no hope of my survival. But as the elders came to pray on me, the Lord performed His miracle on me and I started breathing



Photo of a busy Nigerian street, seen through the windshield of a vehicle

normal; and after some time I began to regain consciousness. This was so serious, my brain was upset, my eye sight and hearing were seriously affected. I was in bed in the hospital, but was soon discharged.

I am thankful unto God Almighty because He did not allow me to die so untimely. The situation is now abating. My concentration and reasoning ability is now better. Please remember me in prayer,

that I would be entirely healed.

I really thank God.

For now I say Adieu.

Your brother in Christ,
National Church Secretary
Sunday I. Udofia

Letters like this cause us to be reminded not only of the importance of the Lord's daily protection, but also for His healing power that is demonstrated.

Current political events in Nigeria have caused the cancellation of two scheduled trips over the past years. Skyrocketing inflation, poverty and riots have led to a state of constant concern for safety. Kidnappings and upcoming presidential elections place even greater burdens upon our brothers and sisters in Nigeria; but through these trying times, the saints continue to gather for weekly fast and prayer meetings, the ministry continues to evangelize the restored gospel with regular outreach efforts and the young people grow increasingly excited through the MBA, because they are confident that the righteous need not fear, that Christ will carry them through.

Brothers and Sisters, although our economic and political conditions may not be ideal, comparatively we realize that we live in a blessed land, so please consider making a special donation through this Newsletter, to the work in Nigeria, that we might raise funds to translate the Book of Mormon into the Efik language, for the church of today and for future generations. **MF**

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

MISSIONARY

F O U N D A T I O N

I would like to donate to the following:

*"What shall I render unto
the Lord for all his
benefits toward me?"*

PSALMS 116:12

Please fill in the amounts for each work that you
want to donate to and return in envelope provided.

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:
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P.O. Box 80, Fairless Hills, PA 19030

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Continued from cover

the back where some brothers huddled under an umbrella during the service. The rain didn't stop Brother Master Sato as he served the Lord's Supper for the very first time. The communion table was drenched from rain and we actually were kneeling in mud. As I reached for communion I thought how this pales in comparison to what Christ sacrificed for us.

At the end of the service the chief of the village thanked us for visiting and one of the sisters from the branch also thanked us for visiting. She then humbly asked if we could consider asking the saints back home if they could remember the saints in Mwanza and some of their needs. She went on to list Bibles, Books of Mormon, song books, and a new




The Saints continue to sing

roof. As we prepared to leave the saints again began singing. They sang with the same spirit and enthusiasm as earlier however, this time, one of the songs had a familiar sound to it. Instead of

singing in their native tongue, they were singing in English, "Come on back to Mwanza, come on back to Mwanza". Tremendous love was felt by all and the unity we enjoy by being Brothers and Sisters in

Christ far out weighted the miles between us.

Over 15 village locations like Mwanza face the same challenges. In Malawi there are no permanent buildings, no metal roofs to protect them from the heavy rains, and very few Bibles or song books; but they all share the same joy and love of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. Please consider helping with these needs if you are able. May God bless you. 

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