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*Maryknoll is Looking for Dreamers and Visionaries*



**Mt. Kilimanjaro and Mt. Meru, Tanzania East Africa**

The missionary life takes us to so many cool places in the world! I took this photo from a plane while flying from Nairobi, Kenya to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and I have shared it in several newsletters. It was a very clear day and having spent many years serving in Tanzania it was a special treat to see snowcapped Kilimanjaro early in the morning standing majestically over East Africa at 19,341 ft. As you can see it has two peaks.

The tallest one with snow is named Kibo while the second on the lower left is Mawenzi. In the distance on the upper left of this photo there is Mt. Meru at 14,967 ft. located some 60 miles away.

The sight of snow on a mountain near the equator in East Africa has always amazed me. To me it symbolizes a major characteristic of the missionary vocation, namely a spirit of adventure. When we leave the familiarity of our homelands we venture into new territory with different languages, cultures, customs and ways of life. We go to share our faith with others in a spirit of love and, at the same time, we open ourselves to learning so many new things from the people we encounter there.

And, as we adapt or enculturate in this new setting we establish friendships and learn so much about ourselves in the process. We are always on a search to discover and cherish God's face in the faces of others. Centered in the Catholic faith we give of ourselves and receive so many graces in return. This is the gift of Maryknoll's participation in God's Mission, the gift of a missionary vocation and ultimately the gift that brings great joy.

In the Acts of the Apostles chapter 2:17 St. Peter is preaching and quotes the prophet Joel stating: "God says: I will pour out a portion of my spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams."

Seeing visions and dreaming of a better world, a world filled with God's love for all humankind; this is the vision of Maryknoll. So we are looking for visionaries and dreamers.

Give the dream a chance and recognize that perhaps God is trying to speak to you. When you think of spending your life in other cultures, learning new languages, and giving of yourself in service to others, I hope you feel both excitement and some trepidation because you will be forging out into something new.

Never be stymied by the challenges presented in life. Rather, be close to God in prayer, follow the teachings of Jesus and take the steps necessary to find the place where God calls you!

You and so many others like you are needed in today's world. The message of God's love for all people is so important. It needs to be preached not only in words but in the actions of our daily lives. Each of you is a messenger wherever you go and in whatever you do. But, you still need to take some steps in the direction that will fulfill the dreams that have brought you in contact with us. So, don't be stymied by the challenge. Rather, dream on and make the dream a reality! - Fr. Mike

As always we look forward to hearing from you at ([vocation@maryknoll.org](mailto:vocation@maryknoll.org)): Fr. Rodrigo Ulloa-Chavarry (Vocation Director), Fr. Mike Snyder, Fr. Cuong Nguyen and Mr. Greg Darr.

**Senior Missioner Fr. Dan Ohmann spent 50+ years serving in Tanzania including several serving at refugee camps for people fleeing the Rwanda genocide in 1995. Fr. Dan relates a story here.**



Fr. Dan with a family of refugees

In 1995, I was serving people who flooded into improvised refugee camps in Tanzania after fleeing genocide in Rwanda. On Holy Saturday morning I decided to see how the new camp was coming along. The bulldozer had made a road into the woods for about two miles and I followed it until the end.

I parked my pick-up. Very soon I was surrounded by people. I told them I was a priest. A man came forward. He said he was a catechist in Burundi. He invited me to his shelter, a tent-like structure made of tree limbs covered with U.N. plastic sheeting, where he lived with his wife and two children. Then, for several hours, we visited neighbors in the same situation.

It was late and had begun to rain when I got back to my truck, so I decided to stay the night. I set up my Safari cot and sleeping bag in the back of the pick-up, which had a canvas cover. But there was no sleep. All night it rained. All night I heard babies crying and old men and women coughing. I couldn't imagine a more miserable night. I didn't sleep a wink. I felt so sorry for the poor people.

With dawn, the rain ended. It was Easter Sunday! The catechist returned. "Would you have Mass for us, Father?" he asked. "Of course!" I agreed.

Word had passed around that a priest would say Mass. People came from all sides of the woods. I don't know how many — maybe 5,000, 10,000. I don't know. It was the largest crowd I've ever had at a Mass.

The clouds were breaking up, and rays of the sun broke through the mist in the trees. It was quite a lovely day by the time I began Mass.

Before beginning, I stood on the unsteady bench they had made to say a few words.

"You are having a very difficult time right now! All last night I heard your children crying, the old men and women coughing. It is a difficult time. But, you know, Friday — the day before yesterday — it was Good Friday, the day they crucified Christ on the cross. From that we learn by offering our suffering to God, it is not for nothing. It will be the way to a new life. The ones we really have to feel sorry for are those who don't believe. Where can they go? For them, all the suffering is complete hopelessness.

Today is Easter! Today Jesus rose from the dead to a new life. No more suffering like you are going through now. Today is Easter! No matter how bad it seems, today we have to sing alleluia. We are alleluia people."

Suddenly, a man in the crowd began to sing an Easter song, a joyful melody, full of alleluias. It seemed that everyone knew the hymn. Soon the whole woods was filled with the glory of alleluia. A group of young girls came and danced before the altar; soon many other young girls joined them. The people clapped their hands, and the men broke sticks to beat in rhythm. They danced and sang.

I sat down on my bench in utter amazement as I watched this scene unfold, unprepared, unrehearsed, all a spontaneous praise to God. I felt so close to the people, to my parents and sister, long dead. I felt the whole Catholic Church was there. I was so grateful for our Church, for the Mass, the Eucharist. I was so grateful and humbled that I was a priest who could be there. Nothing else in life could come close to this. Who else but Christ could bring such joy to people in such miserable conditions? It was the greatest moment in my 67 years as a priest. Only in heaven could I imagine a greater joy.

**Our Fruit Orchard**  
**Maryknoll Initial Formation House**  
**By**  
**Sem. Joshua Mutende Maondo**



**Ministry of Acolyte Ceremony**

Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi” (which translated means Teacher), “where are you staying?” He said to them, “Come, and you will see.” So, they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. (John 1:38-39).

I will start with a quote from one of our formation directors, Fr. Brian Barrons. Or as some would call him, *Shenfu* BB. "Do not go to a doctor who has dead plants in his office." Yes, we do have daily morning prayers and Mass that makes us open to receive the graces and the challenges that come during the day. Yes, we do have plants in our house. Yes, all our plants are alive, and for those that seem sickly, we have a plant clinic close to our chapel. One among us is gifted with plants and all of our plants are lovingly cared for.

Why are we talking about plants? The Maryknoll community is like a fruit orchard. Every fruit is different from the next yet quite similar. We are a proud international and intercultural community, under the hands of our formation directors; Frs. Russel Feldmeier, Brian Barrons and Br. Mark Gruenke. We enjoy being with one another, learning from each other and accompanying each other as we grow together to produce good fruits that will benefit the people in missions where we serve/will serve.

This is way more fun than you can imagine, and it is more amazing than it sounds. Our day together begins by gathering in the chapel for Morning Prayer and Mass. And as our Bolivian friends will say, "*de la Misa, a la mesa*" /from the Mass to the table/. We gather for Mass followed by breakfast. Then we disperse for classes or ministries. The next community activity will be evening prayer followed by dinner. But that is not always the case. Breakfast and lunch are meals that are open for personal and communal enjoyment. They are multicultural. It is not just toast and butter, but we do often enjoy mandazi and samosa from East Africa. How about the delicious Hong Kong noodles from Singapore and Singaporean noodles, wait for it, from Hong Kong. How about that!

It gets even better when we are surprised with delicious tamales and enchiladas from Mexico. One may ask, who prepares all these? The answer is that we are an international community. Each member does something for others and before you know it, you are hooked up to ugali with carne asada or orange chicken and, certain types of foods that you may never have imagined because of their awesomeness. And as you leave the fruit orchard, you have an entire basket of fresh and delicious fruit. Fruit that fills us and refreshes us. We are refreshed for our commitment to mission. The fruit orchard is always alive.

Thursdays are days we share as a community and reflect on the ways we understand each other. It's a time of discovery. It's a time to answer questions like "why do you always prepare ugali? Why do you always bow when you greet people? Why is your accent like this? And so many other questions. And as we grow together, we learn to take care of each other. Some members are given coordinating responsibilities like caring for plants in the house, shopping, sacristy, liturgy, music, library and many other things dealing with community living.



**The Formation Community Working Together**

The weekends are always my favorite. Here, there is a grandeur of awesomeness. Since members have a little more time, that means, there is enough time to prepare a great meal, or there is enough time to cooperate in doing more items in the liturgy. During the weekends, we enjoy multicultural meals and multicultural events. We learn to prepare and serve different meals from different cultures. We get to know why each meal is very important and the history behind the meal. This is how the fruit salad from the Maryknoll orchard tastes.

That is not all. We have our own great celebrations that make us stand out. We can't let any celebration pass us by just like that. This orchard attracts the best of the butterflies and the best chefs like to come to us to get the best fruits. We cannot miss great celebrations like the Lunar New Year, Dia De Los Magos and Cinco de Mayo, a member's birthday, the day of the dead, our countries' independence days, Thanksgiving and many other celebrations.

Come and experience this orchard, full of life, full of awesomeness. Come and be part of the great orchard!



**Singaporean Noodles**



**East African Ugali**





# Night of Reflection with Young Adults By Fr. Rodrigo Ulloa



The prophet Hosea was commissioned by God to preach to the Israelites because their faith, disconnected from God, were separated from the covenant and were lost on their own accord. There is a liturgical song that is titled, *Hosea* which ponders on the meaning of coming back to God. On Friday, March 31 a group of young adults gathered at Ascension Catholic Mission Church in Houston with the purpose of having a night of reflection & fellowship. Maryknoll priests, Fr. Rodrigo Ulloa, Fr. Rafael Davila and the team leaders of the young adult group welcomed all participants who totaled 40, an auspicious number for Lent.

We were blessed to have young adults who are registered in the neighboring parishes around the famous Bellaire Blvd. here in Chinatown, in the western part of Houston. Using the lyrics of the *Hosea* song, Fr. Rodrigo led a small talk using three key points: **bend, heart and wait**. The second line of the first verse in this song says, “Trees do bend.” When he visited Africa as a seminarian, Fr. Rodrigo learned an African proverb, “The wind does not break a tree that bends.” Every young adult discerning a vocation needs to be flexible and adaptable when understanding God’s ways. What holds the tree in place under so much wind pressure? The roots that are underneath. Young adults need to root themselves in Jesus.

The second verse of this song talks about the wilderness “leading you to your heart, where God speaks.” We all experience the wilderness in some way or another. We will be thrown out of the nest at some point in life. But the wilderness is not a problem, but a place where we acquire character and strength. The wilderness helps our hearts learn to detach from temptations. Jesus says, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” The prophet Hosea was persuaded to speak to the hearts of the Israelites who were lost in the wilderness. Discerning a vocation should not be confused with going through the wilderness. Above all, we must remember to take heart and to draw strength from our prayer life.

The final key point is found in the refrain of this song. It reads, “Long have I waited for your coming.” There is a part in Mass when we pray, “deliver us Lord from every evil and graciously grant peace in our days that by the help of your mercy we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress as we await... the blessed coming...of our Savior Jesus Christ.” In the life of every young adult, waiting with quality is a precious tool to have.

After the talk, we had an hour of Adoration and everyone was encouraged to re-visit those three points. The sacrament of reconciliation was offered throughout the night. After benediction, we thanked all participants for coming. During the final announcements, each participant received a miraculous medal; we announced the 2023 Maryknoll mission trips and a follow up adult reflection night near Pentecost.

I take this opportunity to encourage you to keep praying to unpack, discern and discover your Vocation as a Priest or Brother in Maryknoll.



## VOCATIONS FACEBOOK AND YOU TUBE PORTAL

We understand that not everyone is a Facebook user. However, if you take the time to visit us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/mklvocations>) you will find several short video testimonies of Maryknoll Missioners speaking about their vocations and experiences in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

We also have a private Facebook Vocations Group for men expressing greater interest in a missionary vocation. The group meets regularly to watch interviews with Maryknollers and have the opportunity to dialogue with us and with each other about missionary life. Please visit our Vocations Facebook page and if you are interested in joining this group then just contact Fr. Rodrigo at [vocation@maryknoll.org](mailto:vocation@maryknoll.org) or follow the instructions online for membership.

Also, visit our Vocation You Tube portal: <https://www.youtube.com/c/MaryknollSociety>  
Here is a sample by Fr. John Siyumbu:

[https://www.youtube.com/embed/qQl\\_rFCN4m8](https://www.youtube.com/embed/qQl_rFCN4m8).

## MARYKNOLL VOCATIONS WEBSITE

We are also proud to introduce you to our newly revised website. Please check it out and let us know what you think about it!

<https://maryknollsociety.org>

<https://maryknollsociety.org/vocations/a-path-with-us>



Maryknoll Center, New York

## Former Superior General, Fr. John Sivalon

### Once Described God's Mission This Way:

A tangle of twigs lies drying in the sun,  
And then a spark catches one, and she,  
Astonished by divinity, topples and tumbles and ignites  
Another and another and another and  
Soon the whole tangle is aflame  
Gibber jabbering in many tongues!  
Chattering and blabbering until babbling comes  
Singing – in so many harmonious parts even the twigs can't count them!

