

Mission to Ghana

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MATT LOZANO AND I WERE INVITED by the Archbishop of Tamale and the Bishops of Navrango-Bolgatanga and Yendi to facilitate *Unbound* healing and deliverance training, along with catechists and Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) leadership formation programs to the Northern Ecclesial Province of the Archdiocese of Tamale in Ghana. In 2007 Renewal Ministries visited the Archdiocese of Tamale to conduct a CCR leaders' formation program, but this was our first venture into the dioceses of Navrango-Bolgatanga and Yendi. In addition to Matt and me, Emmanuel Tamakloe and Aseidu Augustine, two staff members from *Adom Fie* the National CCR office, joined the team for this mission. The northern regions of Ghana are rural and experience more poverty, and we were asked to reach these areas because they often receive less formation and are often isolated by the growth of Islam in surrounding areas.

Upon our arrival in Tamale we immediately went to visit Msgr. Christopher Bazaanah, the Vicar General of the Tamale Archdiocese who welcomed us in the name of the Archbishop. Msgr. Bazaanah indicated that the Archbishop was returning from the US and hoped to see us at the end of our sessions in Bolgatanga (Bolga) and Yendi. After a short rest in Tamale, we proceeded to Bolga to begin the *Unbound* training session. The team was warmly received by Most Rev. Alfred Agyenta, the newly installed bishop, and the leadership of the Renewal in

the diocese. I presented the bishop with a CD of Ralph's talks entitled, *Called to Holiness, Called to Mission*. The Freedom in Christ conference began in the evening at the Bolgatanga Senior Secondary School with about 130 passionate participants drawn from four of the five dioceses within the Tamale province. Matt Lozano from Heart of the Father Ministries shares his reflections on the event at which he gave nine talks in two days.

“As we opened the conference, my friend and worship leader Emmanuel

Tamakloe gave a testimony about our American friend Joseph Marchese, and how he had renounced the fear associated with his diagnosis of cancer, living in freedom and joy until his last days on earth. Two years ago Joe travelled with us to Ghana and was remembered for spontaneously shouting, “FREEDOM!” during his testimony. The conference attendees (about two hundred) had responded wholeheartedly with voices and hands lifted, shouting “FREEDOM!” Throughout this conference, it also became our anthem and a fitting memorial to our friend Joe. I could sense Joe's pleasure watching over us as we lived out the call to freedom that he so joyously shared with us and especially the people of Africa, whom he loved so much. We danced, prayed, and wept together, embracing the power of the gospel to repent for sin, renounce lies, forgive those who hurt us, and stand in the authority of the sons and daughters of God. I also led a training session for about seven key leaders and ministered to the wife of a leader of the Renewal, and she experienced freedom.”

The team also took time to minister to more than 1,000 Marian devotees who were gathered on retreat at the Spiritual Renewal Centre in Congo in preparation for the month of the rosary. To conclude our visit to the Navrango/Bolgatanga diocese our team had the opportunity to minister to over 600 people at a city-wide prayer meeting at the Sacred Heart Parish on Sunday afternoon.

The next day we traveled to Yendi via Tamale and met with the bishop, Most Rev. Vincent Boi-Nai, in his residence. He welcomed us warmly and expressed his delight and gratitude for the visit, which was a fulfillment of a promise made in February 2007 when Renewal Ministries and the team from the National CCR Office first visited the diocese.

From there we continued to St. Martin's Pastoral Centre in Sunson to begin the catechists' formation session that evening. During the next two days the team shared with the 40 catechists gathered from the four dioceses in the province, with focus on the call to freedom through *Unbound* prayer ministry, the call to love, and the call to mission. Some of the catechists were not involved in the Renewal, but all of them showed great interest and zeal in what they received from the sessions. Matt took the catechists through an abbreviated version of



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By Brent Heiser

Unbound and many experienced freedom and the healing power of Jesus. Moses, a catechist and convert from Islam said, "Because of what I have learned here, the love of God has grown in me, and I am leaving here better equipped to share the Gospel with others." Vida, the first woman catechist in the Archdiocese of Tamale, shared, "After these sessions, I am stronger in my prayer life. I am free and have received the Holy Spirit! These teachings have transformed and changed my life." Matt led one man to forgive a friend who had betrayed him, and another a younger man who had tried to seduce his wife. Both experienced a great release as they renounced bitterness and resentment. One young lady came up to him as we were leaving and said, "I know now that I can forgive my sister because of the testimony you shared with me about the woman who was able to forgive an abusive stepfather." It is amazing how God can use the story of someone living thousands of miles away to touch another's heart!

After the formation session ended we departed for Tamale to meet Archbishop Philip Naameh. We dined with him in his residence and had the opportunity to clarify some issues about the mission of the Charismatic Renewal and the position of Renewal Ministries with regard to the Catholic Church. It was a laughter-filled evening with hot and spicy Ghanaian food and rich conversation. I presented the archbishop with a copy of Ralph's book, *The Fulfillment of All Desire* on behalf of Renewal Ministries.

The next evening the CCR leadership formation session began in Tamale at St. Mary's

Vocational Institute with about 95 participants. The leaders were reminded that they are, first and foremost, servants in the leadership model of Jesus, who passed on His mission to the apostles. They must lead not only by what they teach, but by example. Leadership at any level is a call, and leaders must strive for holiness in their lives daily, especially through prayer. This servant leadership should be the mark of their call to lead God's people. On Sunday the team had the opportunity to minister to about 200 people at a city-wide prayer meeting at Holy Cross Parish. It was a day of encouragement and great joy!

Arriving home, we received these emails from some of the participants:

"Praise the Lord! I want to say thank you, for my life has not been the same after listening to you on your teaching and may the good Lord continue to bless You in all that you do."

"I want to personally give thanks to God for your family and ministry. In fact the formation has not only brought us your love in Christ but also *His power to defend our faith from our many cultures of slavery and deceptions*. I'm filled with joy and strengthened, and I can't wait to be a channel of this new found joy to my community when school reopens. Thank you and God bless your ministry."

God is working powerfully in Ghana to set hearts free. Praise God for His "incomparable riches for us who believe"! We are so grateful to be a part of the Father's plan to share His loving kindness and mercy to all through Jesus Christ.+

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Forty catechists from the four dioceses in the province gathered at St. Martin's Pastoral Centre in Sunson for two days of training and formation. Many experienced freedom and the healing power of Jesus.