

Mission to Liberia

By Lloyd and Nancy Greenhaw

For the past three years we have ministered in various parishes in the Archdiocese of Monrovia, but on this trip we expanded to the Diocese of Gbarnga (pronounced banga). We arrived at the Pastoral Center in Monrovia and were warmly greeted by Fr. Bobby Washington, the staff there, and Emmanuel and Jerry, our team members from Ghana.

We began our mission teaching the leaders of the charismatic renewal, the new evangelization group, and the Sacred Heart Society. The Archbishop asked us to concentrate on formation and evangelization and he plans to use this valuable resource of the various groups in the Renewal to impact his diocese. People were very hungry for the truth of our faith and took notes on everything we said. Each morning Nancy taught for 2 ½ hours on the keys to spiritual freedom and then Jerry and Emanuel led the afternoon teaching session on formation. We left at 4 pm for the three night mission at St. Anthony's, about an hour away through rush hour traffic. Nancy spoke on the topic of Forgiveness. The people of Liberia, like those in Rwanda are unable to deal effectively with the trauma, unforgiveness and bitterness from the atrocities of 14 years of war. Only God can heal their hurts. This parish held about 350 people and every night more people came and the last night it was full. The music was fabulous and they love to praise God.

The second night Father brought out the Blessed Sacrament. He lovingly placed Jesus in the Monstrance on a small covered table with candles in front of the altar. After Nancy's talk and some great praise and worship, the people came down the aisle in a very orderly manner. They formed two rows, bowing and then kneeling down in front of the Tabernacle long enough to pray and tell Jesus their needs. On the side of the church the prayer teams were also available. Afterwards, many people reported being healed or touched by the Lord and we could see the faith of the people increasing.

On Monday we attended the monthly informal gathering of the priests of the diocese. We met Fr. Sumu, a blind priest filled with the joy of the Lord. We also talked to Fr. Tony Borwah, the Rector of Sacred Heart Cathedral who eagerly told us that after receiving prayer last year, the nightmares that had plagued him for years ceased. Afterwards, we left for the Radio Maria radio station to tape an hour-long show. Due to courageous priests and the bishop, this station, despite significant damage during the war continues to be a source of inspiration for thousands.

We arrived at the Catholic compound at Gbarnga late Tuesday afternoon. Gbarnga was the home area of the former Liberian president Charles Taylor, who is now imprisoned for war crimes. There is a lot of pain and unforgiveness here. We were warmly greeted by Fr. Chris Brennan, S.M.A. the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Gbarnga and his staff. That evening a huge bus arrived at the compound, filled with all the people who had been with us in Monrovia the week before. It was impressive that they had paid for this bus trip themselves and came to hear the same topics again. They were so hungry for more! Wednesday we taught on freedom and Catholic apologetics, and that evening we conducted a large rally with people from many parts of the diocese.

Thursday morning and afternoon we taught the seminarians from the major national seminary, the diocesan Pastoral team, the catechists and the priests. That night, at the request of Fr. Washington, we taught on forgiveness and brought out the Blessed Sacrament just as we had done in Monrovia. It was very beautiful, very orderly, and very powerful. Before the Blessed Sacrament was reposed there was a time of praise and worship. Many came up around Jesus to worship and adore. Some continued to kneel in front of Jesus, praising, crying and expressing their love for Him. It seemed like these wonderful

people realized more deeply that this was the same Jesus who had walked the shores of Galilee, teaching and healing.

On Friday during the day Lloyd taught apologetics and we had a time of group discussion. Here are some of their comments:

"I thank God for our team, that they bring their knowledge, their experience, and their very lives to us. In a special way that lay people can empower lay people."

"There is power in the Catholic Church."

"I feel so encouraged."

"We were not sure what this workshop would be like. Our pastoral team canceled other programs so we could be here. 100% of the priests came. It has been like taking a hungry person to a supermarket."(From the diocesan head of catechists)

That evening we had a closing Mass to celebrate all God had done for the Church in Gbarnga. After the homily four people shared powerful testimonies.

A young man who was unable to walk without help the night before had received prayer and he was able to now walk without aid.

A woman who appeared to be in her 60s had cancer of the throat. She said that the tumor had grown so that she could not swallow her spit, drink or eat. She began to recover when she came on the first day and she shared that she no longer had a problem with swallowing, eating or drinking.

A young man said that he had been trying to build his house for three years but had no money to complete it. The night before, in front of the Blessed Sacrament, he had asked Jesus for help. That very night somebody called and was bringing him zinc for his roof. The next day another phone call came and someone was bringing him tiles and a third call brought more building supplies. He had not told anyone about his needs except Jesus. As you can imagine he was ecstatic!

A beautiful young woman prayed in front of Jesus and asked Him to get her uncle out of jail because the whole family knew he had been accused falsely. When she got home that evening she got a phone call that her uncle was found not guilty and was set free!

The Lord has accomplished a lot in Liberia these past four years and the foundation has been set for some significant formation. We have been given favor with the Church authorities and their trust in us is evident. The bishops asked if we would be willing to go to the Catholic dioceses in Sierra Leone and the Ivory Coast. Thanks for allowing us to serve Renewal Ministries and the Kingdom of God!