

# Mission to Zimbabwe

By Nancy Greenhaw

AFTER A VERY LONG TRIP, we arrived in Zimbabwe and were picked up from the airport by Fr. Maximilian Colombo, an amazing priest who had his cross handed to him at birth. He is an albino and in the Zimbabwe culture albinos and twins are considered a curse, and many are simply carried to the bush to die. Witchdoctors and other agents of darkness often kidnap and kill them in order to use their body parts to curse others. This childhood cross made him a fighter and has given him an unusual perspective as well as a great tenderness for families. After receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit he has a desire for greater holiness for himself and others. For three consecutive years he has driven from Harare to Mutare to be with us and he is convinced of the effectiveness of the Unbound model of healing prayer and deliverance. He shared with us that after receiving prayer, his life changed. He now has inner peace and a newfound patience with others. The Bishop noticed the change and has put Fr. Max in charge of many things in the diocese.

Fr. Max took us to his parish in Bindura to eat and rest until we left for Christ the King, a small parish in nearby Chipadze. We spent a day and a half there teaching 50–60 lay leaders from the Charismatic Renewal. The next evening we were taken to a conference at a school in Chiwaridzo, a place that accommo-

dated the 1,000 participants. Mass was supposed to start at 5:30 PM but due to logistical problems it didn't begin until nearly 8:00. African Masses, typically at least two hours long, are impossible to describe, you really need to be there! The sounds, the colors, the faith of the people are so beautiful. We were enjoying all the singing and dancing as the priests processed to the altar, and then a woman dressed in black came up and slugged Fr. Max in the face! A short ruckus ensued and he ordered her to sit on the floor. The ushers came up to take her out, but Father said to let her stay. Throughout the consecration she stayed on the floor, with her back to us. It was quite a display of the opposing forces of good and evil. Father kept his eye on her the entire time, never turning his back to her. At the end of Mass she came out of nowhere and slugged an altar boy! More about her later...

The next day I began to teach on Freedom in Christ in the morning sessions and we returned for an afternoon session and I taught until 5 PM. During all the breaks lines formed for people who needed prayer. Some had family problems and some had sickness such as AIDS. I prayed with a mother who got AIDS from her husband and her daughter was born with it. Later in the afternoon I walked outside to find

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Father Maximilian Colombo distributes communion at the Catholic Charismatic Renewal Conference in Chiwaridzo.

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Lloyd praying with the “slugger.” She was pretty violent, was being restrained and would not look at Lloyd. Anger is generally a sign of unforgiveness and Lloyd apologized to her for any harm a man had ever done to her. After Lloyd repeatedly told her she was safe and that we loved her she began to respond. We led her through a prayer of forgiving, renunciation and accepting Jesus as her Lord and Savior. She began to change right before our eyes. The next morning we saw her, dressed up and sitting at Mass like all the others. We were amazed at the transformation. Father said that she was taken to the witchdoctor many times and was steeped in it throughout childhood. Jesus had set her free.

Monday the husband traveled 30 minutes to the Pastoral center to tell us how that morning his wife received five job offers!

Saturday evening the Mass started late again and Fr. Max invited a very important politician, the governor of the province, to give a reflection on his new found faith in Jesus. He was so excited; Jesus was now important to him. By the time we finished it was nearly 10 PM and no one had eaten yet. So Father suggested that we go back to our houses and eat and come back so Lloyd could begin teaching around midnight. All 1000 people would still have to be fed at the conference! We made the executive decision that the evening could

go on without us. The Africans seem to have no problem staying up all night, but we wanted our teaching to be clear and concise. I began the Sunday morning teaching on Blessings of the Father, and either most participants were sleeping or sprawled on the chairs or almost asleep because they stayed up very late! It was Mercy Sunday and a procession with Divine Mercy pictures of Jesus big and small, dominated the procession.

The next day we started teaching at the Catholic Centre of Manhenga. From Tuesday to Thursday I taught on Freedom in Christ and Lloyd taught

apologetics. Every day at our host's house we prayed for Faith who is blind. Faith has a tumor pressing on her eyes in front of her brain and they are afraid to operate and make her worse. One of the days she smiled and said the “mist” was lighter and her face was filled with hope.

On our last day we attended the Zimbabwe Independence Day Celebration put on by the locals. Father thought it would help relations between Church and state and would be a chance to evangelize. Some of the teens and



**The participants of the couples' retreat at Odzi were attentive and eager to learn about having Christ as the center of their marriages, as well as how to defend and explain their Catholic faith.**

Lloyd prayed with a couple involved in litigation in the courts for many years. They had won a large settlement, but the company continually appealed and they were out of money. The wife had been trying to get a job for months, but to no avail. They were complaining about all this. Lloyd said, “You need to stop complaining and start thanking God for what you have. To heck with money, rejoice in your wife!” They both laughed and said they would do it. They left and you could see their joy and peace. On

I put together a skit on Freedom in Christ to perform at the celebration. We walked to a soccer field with waist high grass and performed the skit. Afterwards, they ask us to sing and we all got up and lifted Jesus higher in the overgrown field.

That evening we had a healing session and prayed for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Father left Jesus on the altar, wrapping the Chalice like a shroud. Many great things happened! The last session began with three testimonies of healing from the night before. One “young” lady in her 70s said, “I’m going to show you something I have never been able to do.” On the day she arrived she walked in great pain and discomfort. This morning she began marching, her knees raised to waist level with the cheers and applause from everyone. She then ran around the Centre to the delight of all. A seventeen year old boy who had a severe hearing problem came forward and testified that God had done a miracle and he could now hear clearly. Another older woman who had walked with a crutch came forward and no longer used it! She too ran around and gave glory to God.

After we finished teaching we drove six hours to Mutare. We arrived after dark and the youth from rural areas, ranging from pre-teens to late 20’s were waiting for us. During our session with them they were open and the Lord quickly broke through.

Our next event was a couples’ retreat in a school house. The little 15x35’ room seemed perfect for the amount of people, but with each passing hour more trickled in. In Africa the couples do not sit together. The women, some with babies, took up most of the benches and the men sat in the back. A school teacher with very good English interpreted for us and the participants sat on backless benches originally made for children for four hours with total attention. American Pentecostalism is big business here; the prosperity Gospel promises a way out of poverty and is readily accepted. Catholics are leaving the Church and these Catholics wanted to know how to defend their faith and how to answer family members with answers from the Bible. Of the many Africans I pray for, most come from broken homes. Most fathers are never available to their kids and parents don’t outwardly express love to the children or each other in public or even in

their home. In the afternoon both Lloyd and I talked about marriage and having Christ as the center. At the beginning of the next session, one husband came up and whispered to me, “We would like to sit with our wives but we are too shy, so would you tell everyone that they have to sit together?” We did just that and they loved it.

Sunday began with Mass with Fr. Maringe, the Bishop’s personal secretary, the Vicar General of the Diocese, the Liaison of the Charismatic Renewal, and the Spiritual Director of the Franciscan Sisters, whom we had met when he came to the Ugandan Priests’ retreat. On Monday afternoon we departed for Emmaus Centre at Rusape for a conference for youth and charismatic renewal leaders. Emmaus Centre, a small Catholic charismatic community was inspired by the original Emmaus Centre in Uganda. These young people are tremendously committed to evangelization and they have an incredible gift of praise and worship that is used all over Zimbabwe. We led a small evening session; there were about 100 people in the small courtyard and it was very cold.

In the morning I spoke to the youth, and Lloyd was with the charismatic leaders at a nearby school. In the afternoon we switched. After Mass and dinner we began the evening session with singing. There was only one musician on a keyboard but after the worship leaders started singing he played along and then drums joined in. The dancing rose to a fevered pitch and people began to sing in tongues and it was beautiful. Lloyd saw that God was doing something special and these young people were being touched, so he cancelled his talk. Fr. Max brought “the slugger” to the youth conference and she sat through all of the talks and wholeheartedly joined in the worship. The next day we continued teaching to both the youth and the adult leaders. Even a major storm couldn’t dampen the people’s spirits, although the driving rain made it hard for people to hear.

Fr. Maringe asked me to meet with his diocesan staff, a religious sister and two lay women from the Social Communication Department to teach them how to edit movies on Windows Moviemaker. Working for several hours we made some trial movies, and I am confident they can continue and grow. We can only thank God for what He did in Zimbabwe to bring healing and for using us to write His love on the hearts of His people! This was a very fruitful trip. +

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