



SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN TANZANIA



BY TOM EDWARDS
Country Coordinator
for Tanzania

Tom Edwards is Renewal Ministries' country coordinator for Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Tanzania. Tom began full-time ministry in 1974; it soon evolved into an international outreach of lay Catholic evangelization and mission with an emphasis on preaching and teaching Scripture. Tom and his wife, Jean Marie, make their home in St. Augustine, Florida.

This marked our twenty-third year of outreach to Tanzania. The Lord has opened doors for our ministry in twenty-three dioceses in this large country, some of them multiple times. At the invitation of Bishop Joseph Roman Mlola, our outreach this year was directed toward the Kigoma Diocese.

These missions require intense planning. Gathering an experienced team; coordinating with our faithful Tanzanian friends and clergy; preparing teachings; and organizing travel, lodging, and food is a year-long venture. Communications to remote areas are often frustrated by a lack of services. Also, travel to Tanzania requires almost forty-eight hours without a bed! Nevertheless, the Lord responds to the multitude of prayers that underlie every effort. God faithfully accomplishes that to which He calls us.

We were very blessed to have Archbishop Josaphat Louis Lebulu, Archbishop Emeritus of Arusha, join our team. The archbishop traveled with us, joined our presentations, and shared his preaching and teaching skills in a two-day retreat for priests and seminarians. At age eighty-one, Archbishop Lebulu is fully committed to fighting the good fight of faith and proclaiming the Gospel. He stayed with our friend Polycarp Cardinal Pengo, who shared wise advice when we met during my first trip to Tanzania. He said, "Go to the far away dioceses, where we need it the most!" That counsel has borne immense fruit!

RALLIES

One highlight was a large-scale, outdoor rally. People came by the thousands, often walking great distances. Some built little fires to cook on and slept in areas of church property or school yards. As is often the case, this was the first time such a rally had been presented in these towns. People came with faith and expectancy. That's pretty much all they have, but somehow, it's enough. We gave workshops and retreats for three hours each morning. Then, the rallies began at 2 p.m. and continued until sundown. The crowds grew throughout the day.

RETREATS FOR SISTERS AND SCHOOLS

Sr. Mary Justin and Sr. Mary Gianna conducted a retreat for religious sisters and did outreach to schools. Below, they shared about their experiences:

"Thirty sisters from about ten different religious communities attended our two-day retreat. They were very attentive and open to receiving the teachings. There was an awakening of faith, a new assurance that God is real, renewal of love, healing, and an experience



Sr. Mary Justin (left) and Sr. Mary Giana (center) led a retreat for religious sisters.

of joy and peace. Most of them had never known inner healing. Several experienced interior freedom and a new beginning with Christ, their Bridegroom.” (Sr. Mary Justin)

“For the students, I discussed God’s plan of fulfillment for each of them. I shared my personal testimony of discovering God’s plan for my life, responding to his plan one step at a time, and experiencing God’s fulfillment of the desires He placed on my heart. I told them about my ‘yes’ to God, and they were invited to also say ‘yes’ to God’s plan for their lives. Their response was overwhelmingly positive. It was powerful to see so many students stand with arms raised to God, give their lives to Christ, and decide to live for Him.” (Sr. Mary Gianna)

MASSIVE PRO-LIFE WORKSHOPS

When we began hosting pro-life workshops, some bishops and priests told us abortion was not a problem in Tanzania. Afterward, their opinion changed when people rushed to confession because of the sin of abortion. Bishops instituted pro-life teaching in some seminaries and requested more teaching on the development of the baby and Natural Family Planning. Some people resigned from their jobs in foreign-sponsored “health-care centers” that promote abortion and implant contraceptive devices into people with no real knowledge of what they are getting. This dimension of our outreach now outpaces healing and deliverance workshops.

Jean Marie Edwards continues to develop, improve, and disciple others in the presentation of these workshops. She wrote,

“Our African brothers and sisters postponed all other workshops so the people would hear the pro-life message—which speaks strongly to the horrors of abortion they are experiencing. Thankfully, our Lord prepared our team and the participants. Five hundred people came and absorbed every bit of infor-

mation. Each team member read a Scripture passage on life in the womb, walked through the people with life-sized models and posters, and shared how a baby grows. We discussed Theology of the Body in a way that they can bring into their marriages, and smiles covered their faces. My explanation of Natural Family Planning sparked deep interest and rapid note taking.

When we spoke about abortion methods and what happens to the baby and the mother, we saw people’s hearts break as they couldn’t restrain their tears. Sister Mary Gianna, a trained nurse, spoke directly to the five main contraceptives used in Tanzania. People had many questions, and the team was grateful she was there to answer them. Team member Jacinta led us in a gentle prayer of opening ourselves to the heart of our Lord and the breath of the Holy Spirit, and then asking for forgiveness. Many participants cried out to the Lord. The team surrounded the people in prayer and, slowly but surely, peace came.”

Fetal models powerfully impacted our pro-life workshop participants.



Two members of our team from Tanzania will continue the pro-life and Natural Family Planning teachings with two additional visits this year. We left them with the funds, fetal models, and teaching materials to carry on.

‘GOD IS BEGINNING A NEW THING’

Team Member Bohdan Novak, a full-time lay Catholic evangelist from Slovakia, shared the following testimony:

“From the first day, I strongly felt God’s presence. After arriving, we held a workshop for young people, and more than 250 young people and adults came. The hunger for God’s Word was great. Young people were writing down every verse of the Scriptures, and some of them recorded the talks on their phone so they could listen to them again. God acted powerfully in the hearts of many, and the Holy Spirit gently but powerfully touched everyone’s hearts. Men came to the afternoon rally and asked for prayers for problems they were experiencing. God came in a powerful way with healing and deliverance.

“I was very touched by the openness of a man whose son had unexpectedly lost his speech for an unknown reason. After praying for healing and deliverance, the boy’s speech returned. God also powerfully touched his father, who had been looking for help from a sorcerer but now surrendered his life fully to Christ. In the following days, more and more men came to the program. It was indescribable. I believe that even though Kigoma is one of the poorest places in Tanzania, God is beginning a new thing here.”

This outreach to Tanzania allowed us to make Jesus known in his Word and all of his ways. We pray that his Church in this beautiful country will continue to grow in grace and wisdom that overflows bountifully to a world in need.