SPREADING THE GOSPEL IN TANZANIA



Each afternoon, crowds of people from across the Diocese of Morogoro attended a FIRE Rally with preaching, worship, and praise through singing and dance.

BY TOM EDWARDS
Country Coordinator for Tanzania

Tom Edwards is Renewal Ministries' country coordinator for Slovakia, Taiwan, and Tanzania. He 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's wife, Jean Marie, is a retired teacher and life-long missionary of the Gospel of Life who now serves with Tom, teaching the dignity of the human person and human sexuality all over the world with great effectiveness. They make their home in St. Augustine, Florida.

This was our twenty-fifth year of outreach in Tanzania. The Church in Tanzania is growing exponentially through fruitful evangelization, and there is a great thirst for Catholic teaching. At the invitation of Bishop Lazarus Vitalis Msimbe, S.D.S and with a team from Canada, Slovakia, Tanzania, and the United States, we ministered in the Diocese of Morogoro in eastern Tanzania at the base of the Uluguru Mountains. The Diocese of Morogoro is the twenty-fourth diocese in Tanzania in which we have ministered.

Our outreach included large, outdoor Catholic rallies each afternoon for eleven days, retreats for priests and religious sisters, outreach to university students, daily workshops on healing and deliverance, and pro-life and natural family planning workshops.



Each day, more than seventy people attended a pro-life workshop focused on the dignity of the human person, marriage, and sexuality.

FIRE RALLY

There are similarities between preparing for a rally and preparing for a rock concert. In Morogoro, a field with very tall grass was rented and mowed, a platform was built, and tents, chairs, and a powerful sound system were rented. A typical afternoon rally included preaching, worship and praise through singing and dancing, and a time of prayer with an invitation to commit their lives to Jesus. Each day, as the sun disappeared in the sky, a priest gave the final blessing and the participants returned home, ready to invite their friends and neighbors!

PRIEST RETREAT

Professor André Villeneuve from Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan, Tom Edwards, and Sebastian Chisuga led a three-day retreat for priests. Ten priests and two religious brothers attended and heard presenta-

tions on the principles of Biblical leadership, the importance of preaching the Kerygma, the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the role of charisms in the Church. During the retreat, the priests prayed for a greater release of the Holy Spirit in their lives. One priest noted that he has had a charismatic prayer group at his parish that he had never attended but, after the retreat, he now plans to attend!

RETREAT FOR RELIGIOUS SISTERS

One hundred thirty-five religious sisters, representing thirty-three different religious orders, attended a three-day retreat led by Sr. Mary Justin of the Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and Bohdan Nowak. Sr. Mary Justin and Bohdan were blessed by the sisters' receptivity to the Word of God and their openness to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Sr. Mary Justin reflected, "Toward the end of the retreat, we could sense the transformation and joy the sisters expressed by praising the Lord. Some sisters were interiorly set free, others received inner healing, and others experienced physical healing. Praise be Jesus!" Bohdan noted, "The time spent with the sisters was deeply blessed, and I believe that they have carried these graces received from God into all thirty-three congregations. Amazing!"

PRO-LIFE WORKSHOPS

The pro-life workshop is a crucial part of our outreach in Tanzania. Pro-life advocates in Tanzania have very minimal support and few resources as they preach the Gospel of Life in a culture with an abundance of foreign-funded clinics and propaganda that strongly advocate for population control. Each day, more than seventy people attended the pro-life teaching, led by Jean Marie Edwards and Mona Jordan. They taught on the development of the human person during the nine months in the womb connecting insights from God's Word and scientific development to each month before explaining why taking the life of a baby in the womb is so deeply against God's plan.

The pro-life workshop also teaches participants about Natural Family Planning. Jean Marie shares, "As we moved into Natural Family Planning, the questions they asked showed a real desire to fully understand how it works, and they had a new appreciation for the gift God gave us when he created us male and female."

MINISTRY TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Because there are several universities in Morogoro, we decided to try an outreach to university students, proposing one or two evening events and hoping a few students would attend. The results were a surprise! Seventy students attended four evening sessions on Theology of the Body led by Dr. André Villeneuve, even though it was their final exam week!

Dr. Villeneuve shares, "The most unexpected highlight of the mission was a series of four evening teachings on Theology of the Body and God's plan for love and sexuality. Although it was exam week, what began as one evening of ministry expanded into two, then three, then four evenings of teaching, questions and answers, and prayer as the students kept asking us to return. It was edifying and encouraging to see how the people of Morogoro—young and old—were hungry for the transforming power of the Word of God!"

"A TREMENDOUS SPIRITUAL TRANSFORMATION"

Mrs. Zitta Victoria Mnyanyi, a longtime mission team member, serves as the Deputy Dean of Students at Mzumbe University in Dar es Salaam. She shared the following:

"Based on the Catholic Faith and African culture the teachings served to exalt God and to uplift faith and divine love among his people; yet they also touched people's hearts in a unique way because they met the needs of their hearts. Tom Edwards, Professor André Villeneuve, and other preachers were effectively used by God to reveal the Gospel and the Love of God in a way that it came alive and transformed people's lives. The experience showed that every time Renewal Ministries comes to Tanzania, a tremendous spiritual transformation takes place."

As the Church continues to grow rapidly in Tanzania, evangelization efforts are fruitful; anything we can do to assist the advancement of the Church in this region will bear the promise of much fruit in the future. What a privilege it is to labor in this abundant vineyard. Plans are already underway for ministry in our twenty-fifth diocese in 2027!



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