



PEACE & SOCIAL JUSTICE
Brother Jerry's Letters from the Congo

In one of his many heartfelt letters, Brother Jerry describes his days as a missionary and shows us one man's faithful dedication to a life of social justice in the Congo.

Dear Mom,

March 24, 2002

It doesn't seem possible that Palm Sunday is already here. When one is busy, time flies. We had a very nice liturgy and the church was filled to capacity and then some. The liturgy lasted 3 hours in spite of sweltering heat and humidity. I'm writing this letter from the boys' home as they have a one hour study hall on Sunday afternoon.

I gave English tests this week and had many papers to correct. There were quite a few failures; so, this week I will spend time explaining the questions and answers. The period doesn't end for another month so they have time to improve.

Thursday was national Catholic school day which began with a Mass at 8:30 a.m. There were parades and singing followed by short plays, poems, and games. The junior English class read poems in English. One of my boys read a poem entitled "My Mother," which was very touching. Another gave Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream." He gave it with much emotion and many jests. King would be proud of him. I wish I could find a video about King, especially his famous speech in Washington D.C. My students are interested in the lives of African Americans. The day ended with a dinner for the teachers, but I didn't attend; I wanted to finish the hospital proposal.

Saturday morning we had to do a C-section. The patient walked here from the village of Kiri – 36 miles from here. She had a bleeding and premature labor. We had to operate immediately. She is okay this morning. The baby had already died and was only 6 months along. The doctor in Kiri has still not returned.

Last night there was a dance held by the family where I have a hut in Liamba. It was in honor of the man who had died in February. It is custom here that when a husband or wife dies, the surviving spouse must remain in the house for an 8 week period of mourning. When this period ends, they have a dance which lasts all night. Well the four boys from the family were allowed to participate. Eleven others snuck out at night to join their friends. The director assistant and I will meet tomorrow to determine their punishment which will be severe – hard labor of chopping logs and cutting tall grass most likely. Otherwise, others will follow their bad example.

Love and prayers, Jerry

P.S. I forgot to mention that I just received a letter notifying me that the doctor in Kiri has been fired. I've been named director of the health zone.

Saints Peter & Paul has sponsored the Pendjua Catholic Mission located in the equatorial rain forest of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There are 40,000 inhabitants divided into two races, the Bantu and the pygmies called Batoa. The Batoa are the majority, yet live in servitude to the Bantu as victims of discrimination and oppression. The Pendjua Catholic Mission is aimed at liberating the Batoa and is staffed by two priests and Brother Jerry Galloway, a medical doctor.

Next Social Justice Mtg.: Thurs.8/24/06; 7:30-9:30, Rm. 227
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