

ZANZIBAR

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the minority population of 10,000 Catholics during a two-week trip.

"It seemed like there were so many people helping us (recover from Katrina) that it was time to help somebody else," said Laura Borchert, an attorney. "It was time to pay it forward."

"We had an extremely open mind when we went over there," said Bill Borchert, a member of the Slidell City Council. "We came back with two or three pages of ideas. Now it's really trying to coordinate the talent from here with the needs there."

"So often mission trips have been construction-oriented. Here, it may be as simple as finding someone who is familiar with computers. The right person with computer skills could solve 90 percent of their computer problems in a day."

The connection between Slidell and Zanzibar began in 2003 when Father Thomas Kilasara, a native of the Mount Kilimanjaro area in northeast Tanzania, came to St. Margaret Mary as a parochial vicar in 2003. Father Kilasara had ties to the Diocese of Zanzibar, located several miles offshore from Tanzania.

Well project was the start

The Rotary Club of Slidell Northshore provided funding for the Zanzibar Diocese to build a well that provided drinking water for a school and church. However, because the well became overtaxed, the saline content of the water has increased to alarming levels.

"The well is now drawing sea water, and that's no longer good for human consumption unless it is purified," said Bishop Shao, who was in Slidell last week to talk to parishioners and Msgr. Lanaux Rareshide, pastor.

Bill Borchert said one dream would be to install a self-contained, solar-driven desalination unit capable of processing 4,000 gallons of sea water a day. That piece of equipment sells for \$77,000. While he doesn't know if



Photos by Laura Borchert | ST. MARGARET MARY PARISH

The Nazareth School in the Zanzibar Diocese started as a pre-school and kindergarten beneath the mango tree, and has now grown to include elementary and high school students in separate buildings.

that project will be possible, he knows there are projects that can be accomplished in the small school that has expanded under Bishop Shao's tenure from a kindergarten – which met outdoors under a mango tree – to an elementary and high school in solid buildings.

After a revolution for independence in 1964, Zanzibar

went through 30 years of Soviet-style socialism during which all private property was confiscated, including the diocese's schools, hospitals and other institutions. Bishop Shao said the only church property left untouched was the cathedral on the main island, built in 1860.

In 1994, a new president allowed foreign investment



and opened the islands to tourism. However, the public schools were largely reserved for Muslim children, leaving Catholics without quality educational opportunities.

The loosening of government restrictions allowed private schools to operate, and Bishop Shao is pleased to have seen his school expand. However, the \$300 annual

tuition represents about three months' wages for the average Zanzibar worker. Although Catholics are forbidden to proselytize, the school is open to children of all faith. The Muslim students receive separate religious instruction.

Under the branches

"We started on the ground level underneath the mango tree," Bishop Shao said. "Our main need is education. When we meet with majority Muslims, then we build up a friendship. I find that in the high school, the majority Muslim children are now becoming friends of the non-Muslims. We believe the only way to build a peaceful existence in Zanzibar is by educating the young people."

For his interreligious efforts, Bishop Shao was presented with an honorary doctorate by Duquesne University in Pittsburgh.

The Borcherts will host an informational meeting Feb. 22 at 7:15 p.m. at the St. Margaret Mary Evangelization Building. Those interested in donating to help defray the cost of the trip or buy badly needed school supplies can contact Laura Borchert at (985) 649-1881 or e-mail LAMBorchert@aol.com.

Donations may be made to St. Margaret Mary Parish, 1050 Robert Blvd., Slidell, LA 70458 (note "Zanzibar Mission" on the memo line). Schools that have surplus desks, library books, science lab equipment, backpacks or other supplies can also donate.

Peter Finney Jr. can be reached at pfinney@clarionherald.org.

Order of St. Louis nominations due March 1

Pastors/administrators are reminded that nominations for the Order of St. Louis IX Awards should be sent no later than March 1 via e-mail to Mrs. Jonelle Foltz at the Clarion Herald at jfoltz@clarionherald.org; or by fax to (504) 596-3020. They may also be mailed to: Mrs. Jonelle Foltz, Clarion Herald, 1000 Howard Avenue, Suite 400, New Orleans, LA 70113. The awards ceremony will take place on Sunday, May 2, at 3 p.m. in St. Louis Cathedral.

Parishes of fewer than 1,000 families may nominate one parishioner, and parishes of more than 1,000 families may nominate two persons. Husband and wife are consid-

ered one nominee. Please check carefully the spelling of each name, and forward it together with the nominee's address, zip and phone number. In the case of a married woman, please indicate her given name, e.g. Mrs. Joan Williams (not Mrs. Charles Williams). Only lay Catholics in good standing are eligible for nominations.

The medallion may only be received once in a lifetime of service to the Archdiocese. The official notification letter to recipients from Archbishop Aymond will be mailed on April 1, a copy of which will be mailed to their pastors/administrators.

Call (504) 596-3035 with questions.



Pontifical Mission Societies

HONORING THE YEAR OF THE PRIEST SOCIETY OF ST. PETER THE APOSTLE

In 1889, mother and daughter – Stephanie and Jeanne Bigard – answered a desperate plea for help from the Missions. The French missionary bishop of Nagasaki, Japan wrote to the two women asking for help to keep his seminary open. The bishop just did not have the funds to train these young Japanese men whom, he judged, would make excellent priests. The Bigards came to his assistance and started a small group for this purpose in their native Caen, France. From these humble beginnings emerged the Society of St. Peter the Apostle.

Within five years of sending their first donation to Japan, the Bigards, and those whom they enlisted to help, were sending funds to seminaries in India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Korea and China. The goal of the Society of St. Peter then and now has been to invite individuals to support candidates for the Catholic priesthood and the formation of men and woman candidates for Religious life in the Missions of the Developing World.

Today, many dioceses receive an annual subsidy of \$700 per student supporting 30,000 seminarians. The society also maintains two houses for priests and one for women religious in Rome. Priests complete further studies to return to their diocesan seminaries as professors. Women religious are in formation to return home as catechists and directors of catechists.

Here in New Orleans, we have been served very well by several priests and religious from developing countries. Some are here completing further studies and formation, while others have made New Orleans their home. Notre Dame Seminary accepts two seminarians from Tororo, Uganda each year free of charge. As the local Pontifical Mission Societies office we encourage each of you to pray for vocations in developing nations, learn more about the Society of St. Peter the Apostle (onefamilyinmission.org/index.php), and consider supporting this great work of our Church.

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