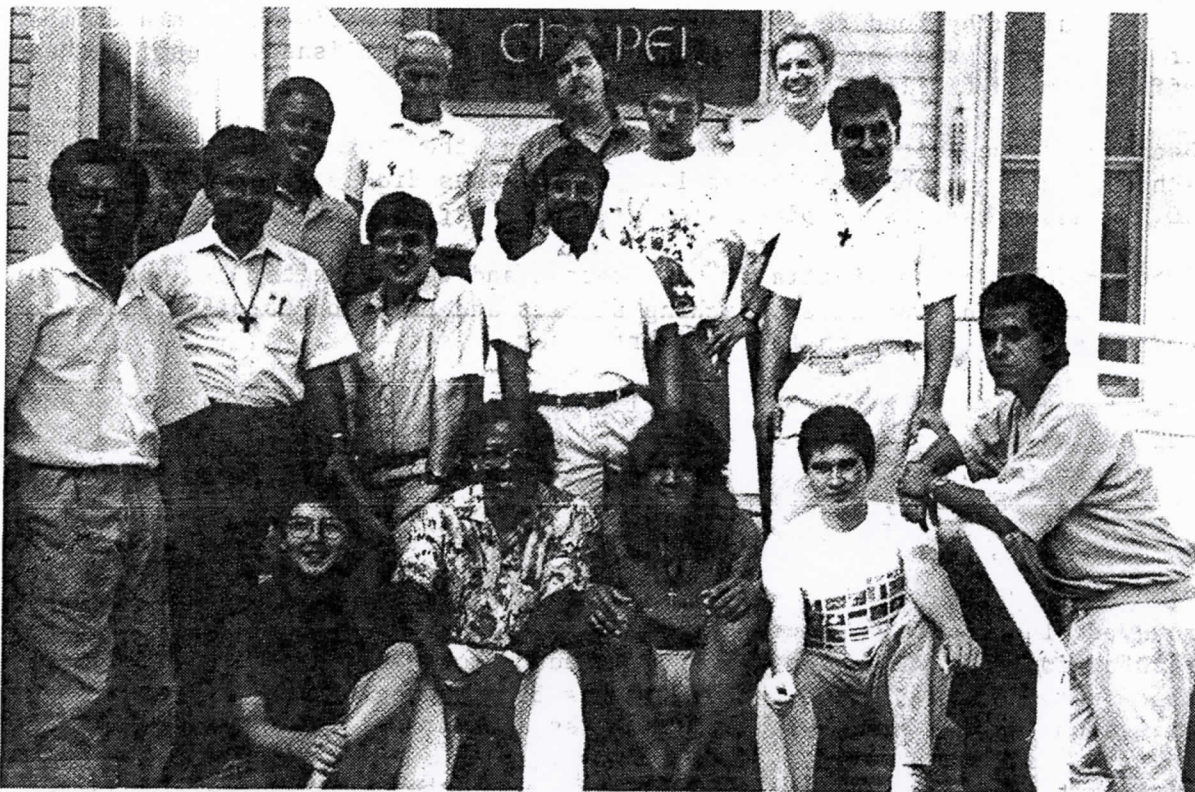


Midwest Bits and Pieces

November 1, 1990



Moreau House Community 1990-1991: front row (seated)--J. J. Moreno, Francis Sebo, Gorie Gomez, Jose Herrera; second row--Javier Pacheco, Ivan Soto, Charles Gruseck, Robert Joel LeGros, Bailey Clemens, Johnny Gonzalez; third row--Brother Joseph Barry, Brother Romard Barthel, Ted Greene, Alfredo Avila, Michael Franzen. Picture is taken in front of Our Lady of Peace Chapel on the St. Edward's University Campus.

BROTHER JOHN BENESH WRITES FROM PERU

Brother John Benesh returned to Lima, Peru, on August 8, one hour after the new government announced drastic increases in the cost of all goods and services. These price increases, along with the greatest devaluation of the "inti" in five years, meant that savings or currency in "intis" were worth 20% or less of their former values.

The immediate consequence was fear and uncertainty. Almost all stores and businesses in the country were closed on August 9 and no buses were running. There were reports of looting of markets and blockading of the Pan-American Highway in order to take food from trucks.

In the days that followed, all prices were adjusted upward, but in the weeks that have followed, many prices have come down, but remain at levels that are much higher than pre August 8 prices.

The poor people in the area where Holy Cross members live and work in Chimbote are at survival level. The price of kerosene for cooking stoves is so high that most people in the neighborhood have gone back to wood fires to prepare meals. People go to the countryside every day looking for branches, twigs, or tree stumps. The sounds of wood-chopping are common.

The eight soup kitchens in the parish have enlarged the number of families served, aided by food received through Caritas International, and a number of new, but smaller, soup kitchens have been established. Despite these efforts, many families are undernourished.

Because of the initial confusion following the August 8 announcement, schools did not open on August 13. But classes did get underway on August 20. Classes have taken place with great regularity since then.

Brother John Benesh, initially well rested and relaxed after two months of U. S. vacation, continues teaching physics and religion to fifth year secondary students and math to the fourth year students.

The tranquility of both John and Bill Persia, CSC (E.P) was shaken in late August when their residence was robbed twice. The first took place in the afternoon (when both were teaching). Someone broke out a panel in Bill's door and took only the electronic organ that Bill used to play during the parish liturgies. The thief also broke into John's room, but took nothing.

Five days later, two or more came over the 8 foot adobe wall at night and removed the "outside furniture": two chairs and a couch, made of steel reinforcing rods with seats of woven reeds, along with a few smaller items that were nearby. Since then, John has been adding height to the wall and will soon top the adobe with broken glass set in mortar.

In August, teachers were paid a week late, and then only received less than half the amount that had been announced. The remainder came two weeks later. The total amount was equivalent to \$60 U.S., below last year's average of \$75.00. It really indicates a great loss of buying power since at the same time the income has dropped, prices have increased ten fold.

But life goes on. On August 16, in the parish church in La Union, John celebrated 40 years of religious profession in the presence of Holy Cross community members (Bill Persia, Patti Dieringer, and Elenor Snyder) and parishoners of Parroquia Santa Cruz. Bill Persia celebrated the Mass and John gave the homily. A social gathering followed in the parish hall at which were served bread and coffee.

26th September (60th birthday)

John Benesh



September 2, 1990

Dear Tom,

Greetings in Christ from Cape Coast!

I must apologize for being so remiss in not writing to you sooner, but since James Newberry called some two weeks ago, and at which time I also spoke with Ray P. and Paul Kelly I was sure that essential info surrounding events leading to my recent departure from Liberia would be made known to you. It seems that I was able to continue making a contribution to help our Liberian people from all cross-sections in the city proper, principally by distributing food, until just a few days before prudence dictated my moving first to the SMA guest house out near the Catholic Hospital and then a few days later to join all the other missionaries there (15 from 6 different communities of priests, brothers and sisters) in helping the evacuation of all non-ambulatory patients from Catholic Hospital..all those who could walk were directed to return to their respective homes, wherever the latter may have been in view of the continuous fighting within the city, causing movement of dwellers from one place to another and back again as front lines shifted between rebels and gov't. soldiers. Before the UN pulled out, following the attack on some 1,000 or more refugees seeking safety on their compound, I was able to get 10 bags of rice and cooking oil, canned meat to distribute right at our own campus. I also had a half dozen bags on hand from CRS given earlier to me for distributing to refugee students who matriculated to St.Pat's after being routed from the Nimba region in the first few months of fighting, but who made a second move elsewhere when our school closed in late May with much of the rice still on hand. Then later, CRS made available some more rice and powdered milk. Distribution was fairly simple in the earlier stages, but came to be a difficult operation as the number of hungry people increased in great numbers. I found it necessary to distribute numbered cards with our school seal (to prevent duplication) on the day preceding doling out the rice..perhaps 2 lb. each in the standard plastic sandwich bags, 100 each day for a time, but this proved short lived as transportation from the CRS allotment became next to impossible..the last bag and a half of rice I transported in saddle-bag fashion on my old motorcycle. That motorcycle was my only mode of transport, other than walking, throughout my last 3 months in Liberia, the car being locked up in the shop with deflated tires and the fuse for the "engine control" being removed to prevent the soldiers from taking it. The old pickup had been borrowed as early as June to be used by Fr. Joe Brown in getting the CRS rice from the Freeport and then distributing it as well to the various other refugee centers. They had about 700 refugees at their own Arthur Barclay compound (Voc. Training Center about 1/2 mile down the road), and by end of July there were 19 refugee centers according to BBC reports. We depended on BBC, by the way, to find out how things were progressing in the civil war outside the Monrovia area. I went over to this center to help the Salesians in setting up their distribution when it was no longer possible to continue the St. Pat's program. Unfortunately, it became virtually impossible to distribute anything due to the numbers of

people coming for food assistance..some 2,000 clamoring for rice or for tickets above and beyond the 200 who had already been given tickets the previous day. When the fence around the distribution area became almost broken down we had to stop. The Salesians tried again the next morning, immediately after the 6 a.m. curfew ended, and gave out rice for about 30 minutes..the next day the bordering wall on the opposite side of the lane into the compound was pushed over (concrete block wall!) before they distributed more than a few portions. That ended completely any further attempts in organized distribution. Some several thousand were in the "riot" and this was only a dozen minutes after the curfew ended..some must have been sleeping in friends' houses or whatever close by! Due to the earlier program, people still came every day for whatever help I might be able to give. The four boys who were living with me also helped in all this, by the way. (Three were students at U. of L. and St. Pat's alumni, formerly helped by CSC scholarships, and two part time staff members at our school, the 3rd one part time at St. Michael's HS. The 4th was our school secretary, who is also badly handicapped, requiring tripod walking sticks to move about, and this painfully slowly, it seems). No stores were open by August 1, perhaps even a week prior to that as I recall. And soldiers (gov't) were looting everywhere. We were fortunate up to the time I left, at least, to have a rather disciplined company of some 50 soldiers under a commanding officer who were responsible for security around the mansion area extending all the way down to City Hall, which included St. Pat's and U. of L., Ministry of Foreign Affairs, etc. So we felt somewhat protected. There was nightly shooting all around the place, as well as during the day. This mostly part of that horrendous toll of civilians judged to be aiding the rebel cause, if not themselves rebels. Only a few times did the shooting seem threatening to ourselves, I might add. Up to the first week of August there was still a Russian charter plane making use of the local Spriggs-Payne Airfield for the short hop to Freetown, Sierra Leone. The Papal Nuncio..and apparently the US Ambassador..were concerned about my continued stay as the rebels made increasing advances into the city, and upon their advice, as well as the other missionaries who had already moved to the SMA Guesthouse, I decided it was time to move on. The day before I left, I gave out the last possible rations to a few people still coming around..small green bananas or orange-sized green pawpaws which people cooked like potatoes, one telling me that he cooked the peelings on the bananas. Hunger was slowly giving way to starvation with the usual malaria or whatever other illness encountering no resistance for survival in some instances. One woman whom I had known as being somewhat fleshy came looking so very poorly and dry..she had existed on nothing but potato greens in boiling water soup for the previous half-dozen or more days! Soldiers also came around asking for food, but only mildly intimidating at that point before I left. Clearly, to remain would have been placing both the boys and myself in jeopardy, as they (soldiers) knew the "whiteman" would need something other than wild ledoes, toads and lizards (which is what some citizens were reduced to live on). I did leave sufficient food with the boys to carry them through almost to this present time, and hopefully food channels have reopened with ECOWAS' presence. Had a fairly smooth trip out of Liberia and very enjoyable stay here with CSC in Ghana. Will assist work and live at new Center until..??

- 4 -
Your brother in Christ in Holy
Cross,

NEWS FROM JOE TSIQUAYE

Recently, Joe Tsiquaye sent out his second edition of his "Lakefront News". He asked the four novices at Saaka, Uganda, to share a bit with us of their experience in a foreign country and in the novitiate.

Patrick Quayson writes: "Matthew and myself spent 3 days visiting members of the local Catholic Church at Kyembogo and we interacted on a one-to-one basis with them. I personally was confronted with the stark reality of the living conditions of most of the people - abject poverty and ignorance. However, they still have faith in the Lord and they are patiently waiting on the Lord to turn things around for the better. They also appreciated the fact that a foreigner, a Ghanaian, was present with them and trying to identify with them and share with them...I have no regrets, and if I were asked to reconsider my vocation again, I would still prefer to be an ambassador of Holy Cross (Ghana) to Holy Cross in East Africa, for God has promised no one a calm passage but a safe landing."

Andrew Arhin writes: "During the first few months I found the place difficult, because I was not used to the weather or the food. I didn't know that knowing how to ride a bicycle was a basic requirement here. I am now enjoying myself more and more. In the shortest possible time I have learned how to ride a bike and I go out on pastorals with the bicycle...My stay here hasn't been a waste. Despite the fact that I am far from home, it has really helped me gain a lot of experience. It has given me a broader knowledge of what missionary life is all about. I pray that the Lord would continue to lead me by his spirit to do his will, and enlighten me so I can grow to be the person he made me."

Anthony Norviewu writes: "We left Virika for Butiiti in order to have a serene atmosphere for our language study. On arrival, we were lucky to meet Fr. Dick Potthast, who put us through some intensive drills which was very helpful to get us started...After a few weeks at the Parish Centre, I had the opportunity to use what I had learned during the home visitations we did in some of the villages. One touching scene was when I met a group carrying on a bicycle, a woman who was half-swollen, to the nearest clinic which was six kilometres away. I was so sad being so helpless in that situation. All I could do was offer some prayers for the woman. During one of the evening gatherings with the people, I spoke through an interpreter on the theme: 'Prayer as a tool in the hands of a Christian.' The faithful entertained us every night with drumming and dancing, so much so that I learned to do one of the traditional dances."

Matthew Arhin writes: The novitiate was really a shock to me, because the style, programme and even staff were all against the impressions I had been led to create during my brief foretaste of it in Ghana. I found a modern up to date house, run by humane persons, who obviously had a great empathy for people of our generation and hence had a very flexible programme which even allowed for suggestions from us. Just absolutely marvelous and unbelievable, but there it is! I've really enjoyed these past days, a period we've spent settling in and engaging in other spectacular events like a retreat, one for us and one for other people, a District Meeting and a final profession."

FINAL PROFESSIONS BANGLADESH

On October 2, 1990, three Brothers from the St. Joseph Vice-Province in Bangladesh made final profession at St. Christina Church, in Mohammedpur, Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Brothers making final professions were: Brother Linus D'Rozario, Brother James Periera and Brother Prodig Placid Gomes. The Midwest Province rejoices with the St. Joseph Vice-Province on this indication of God's love for the vice-province and wishes them God's blessings for their continued growth in the years to come.



Sesquicentennial foil seals, as shown above, will be available for the asking. They are pressure sensitive and can be applied to correspondence and other items. Send your request to the provincial office, stating the number of seals you wish. Seals come with gold lettering and a blue background.

Directory Update

Chester Caster wrote to say that his transition from Coalfield to Oak Ridge had gone well. His new address is: 120 Arcadian Lane, Apt. C, Oak Rdge, TN 37830. His phone number is: (615) 483 - 8165.

Colorado Ministry: AREA CODE is 719 instead of 303.

Brothers Robert Dailey & Donald Kuchenmeister: Hogar Santa Cruz, Casilla 15.238, Correo 11, Santiago, Chile. Residence Phone: 71-0536.

Brother John Federowicz: Residence: 1985 (#3) Portland Avenue. St. Paul, MN 55104. Ministry: Mailing Number #5004.

Brother Charles Gregg: 1508 Hepburn Avenue, Apt. 6, Louisville, KY 40204. Telephone: (502) 581 - 1915.

Brother Charles Krupp: Ministry is WEST 66th instead of EAST 66th

Brother Edward Libbers: Ido Avenue instead of Ida Avenue.

Brother Jerome Meyer: St. Edward High School, 13500 Detroit Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44107. (216) 221 - 2096.

Brother David Naples: Address: P. O. Box 995. Office Phone: (512) 448 - 8547

Brother Timothy O'Connell: RESIDENCE: 117 Borgess Avenue, Monroe, MI 48161. (313) 457 - 9097. MINISTRY: St. Mary's Mother House, 610 W. Elm Street, Monroe, MI 48161. (313) 241 - 3660.

Brother Francis Rotsaert: Residence phone: (517) 486 - 4891; Ministry: office is room 308; phone extension 278

Thomas Scheurer: Phone Number for Dominica: 809-448-2100.

Brother James Sullivan: 11414 S. Western Avenue, Apt. 2A, Chicago, IL 60643. (312) 239 - 1556.