

Liz Leach, Karen Chaney, Maureen Foster and I want to thank you for your prayers. We spent over a week with Father Melchior Kambona, pastor of our sister parish in Marambo, Tanzania, and with Sister Rita Marie Tofflemire from Cameron, who administers a hospital in Nyangao.

Last year our parish purchased a grinding mill for these people. And now Father Melchior has bought a corn husker with the funds you gave last month. The women of the community used to pound out the grain and grind it into flour. Now this back-breaking work can be done by machine. It doesn't solve all their problems. Farming continues to be done by hand, and last year brought a small harvest due to lack of rain. But the people are happy with our mill, and it is making a difference in their families.

So, when we arrived in Marambo, we were greeted like rock stars. Hundreds of people ran out from the village to escort our car. They cheered; they applauded; they sang songs; they played music; they danced. We shook their hands, and they took us to some tables and chairs for a ceremony that included speeches, cheers and more songs. We each spoke a few words of greeting, and then they gave us gifts: wood carvings, baskets, vessels, fresh pumpkin and eggs. One woman danced up to our table and revealed her gift, cash in the local currency worth about 40 cents. It was all she had, and she gave it all. We also received two live chickens and a small goat. This scene was repeated at the main parish and at their six outstations. We were overwhelmed by their welcome.

We spent several nights without electricity or running water. We slept beneath mosquito netting. The people took care of our needs. After we saw how little they had, it was easier for us to live with less.

We were very impressed with the hospital that Sister Rita administers. It does not have modern technology, but it is a clean, professional place with a variety of clinics where people can receive loving care.

At the start of the trip I spent a few days in Uganda visiting Father Aloysius Kasoma. I brought him your greetings, saw his parish church and rectory, met his family at a meal in his mother's home, greeted his bishop, and spent a couple hours with the retired bishop, who attended the Second Vatican Council with Bishop Charles Helmsing of our diocese. Father Aloysius had a serious financial setback about a month ago, and it will take him a while to recover. But he is grateful for your gift, he seems himself and he still has lots of energy to devote to the parish and schools he loves.

Today's responsorial psalm is about people caught in a storm on a boat. Every day they saw the wonders of God below the waters. When the sea got rough they prayed for help and God brought them safely to shore, where they offered thanks. In Africa we met people who went about their daily lives amid the storms of disease, bad roads, and unspeakable poverty. In the simplicity of their lives they trust in God, who preserves them and brings joy to their hearts. Even if you don't have much – especially if you don't have much, you realize how good God is.