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PRP Newsletter

Spring 2016



EVANGELISM, EDUCATION  
& ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A JOURNEY OF HOPE

by FATHER MARTY ZLATIC

Each spring in our churches we begin Holy Week by commemorating a journey that God had planned for His people for a long time – a procession with roots in the journey of God's chosen people over 3,000 years ago across the Jordan and forward into the promised land; a journey echoed by that of Jesus almost 2,000 years ago with the triumphal procession into Jerusalem on the first Palm Sunday. This year in the worldwide church we celebrated another procession that took place on Sunday, March 13, 2016: a procession from the recently built Bishop's Gathering Place in Toliara, Madagascar, to the opposite end of the campus, to the *Cathedral of Saint Patrick* for its dedication Eucharist. Along the way, the procession



passed the new outdoor labyrinth, installed with the help of a mission team from the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd in Tequesta, Florida; it passed the soon-to-be-completed Women's Center, which will provide training and mentoring for women living on the margins of society, offering them an opportunity to no longer be on the streets; it then collected the rest of the bishops, clergy, acolytes, and faithful from

around the world who had assembled in the Educational Center, where future catechists and evangelists are being trained to share the good news of the Gospel with the people of Madagascar; it passed the campsites of people from all over south Madagascar, many of whom had walked or traveled on local buses for up to four days to join the 1,000+ who gathered for the celebration.



Then, finally, with the façade and roof beaming bright with the morning sun, the procession arrived at the entrance to St. Patrick's Cathedral, and the dedication Eucharist began. Like the Biblical processions mentioned above, the planning for this procession had also begun a long time ago. There is an axiom taught in missional church circles that "It is not the church of God that has a mission in

the world, but the God of mission that has a church in the world." Our God of mission had planned this procession, like the others, a long time ago, and it has come to fruition through the dreams and daring of many supporters and believers who have chosen to partner with our God of mission — but mostly through the dedication of Bishop Todd and Reverend Patsy McGregor.

Twenty-five years ago, a young father and mother perceived the call of God to leave the Chapel of St. Andrew in Boca Raton, FL, and embark on a journey with their two young daughters to serve God's people in Africa. As a result, the McGregor ministry resulted not just in the milestone that is celebrated in the dedication of a diocesan cathedral complex, but more significantly in the thousands of people who have been reached and given hope for living through the sharing of the Good News of the Gospel through their ministry. For certain, it was a weekend designed to celebrate the completion of a cathedral building, but the celebrations themselves showed how the church building is not the main focus.



Rather, it was clear throughout the weekend in the diocese, the dance, and the deaneries that the main focus is in partnering with the God of mission in bringing a message of hope:

- ◆ **The Diocese** – The people had gathered from all over southern Madagascar. Some walked, some took buses. There were even a few on mopeds and bicycles. They arrived on Friday – not with tents, or sleeping bags, but they simply slept on the grass under the trees. The youth had an impromptu celebration in the cathedral at night. They sang, they played their instruments, they danced, they clapped their hands. The report was that it finally ended at 3:00am, but most of the older folks had gone to bed much earlier.



Yet, there they all were the next day, prepared to celebrate with the rest of the faithful. The other “all-nighter” was for the ladies of the diocese, who stayed up to cook the 50 turkeys, 4 cows, rice and vegetables for the post-cathedral dedication dinner. As the 250 guests gathered in and around the Bishop's Gathering Place for the dinner, the larger number of campers gathered in their groups on the grass all around the campus, where they had



slept for two nights. It was a scene reminiscent of the loaves and fishes story in the Gospels, with the people gathered in groups on the grass, only this time instead of fish, it was the local Zebu beef that had been slaughtered and shared amongst the people for their feast. Though the Malagasy spoken and sung could not be translated, the meaning conveyed could not be missed. Here were people on fire with their love of Jesus and each other. Hope was given.

- ◆ **The Dance** – *Miaraka: A Time to Dance* - This modern retelling of the story of Mary Magdalene, set to music and dance under the collaboration and authorship of Rev. Dr. Patsy McGregor and Collette Maurel, had already been performed to rave reviews in Mauritius and South Africa. However, the production slated for performance in the cathedral sanctuary on that Saturday took on additional significance: the actors, singers, and dancers had been recruited from the local area. Many of them had come from the difficult life circumstances that are depicted in the musical. One participant who stood out was the lead actress who portrayed Mary Magdalene — Nolvay, a former neighbor of Todd and Patsy when they lived in their small Toliara apartment. Nolvay's father is the town shaman and priest, whose family practices African Traditional Religion. Through a relationship with Patsy, Nolvay grew in her love for Christ and, with her parents' approval, was discipled by Patsy to become not only a Christian, but also an evangelist. Even more amazing, is that she is now married to Rev. Victor, a missionary priest from Kenya serving in the Toliara diocese. Nolvay had been sent to Kenya for Bachelor of Theology studies, and now is on a path to





possibly becoming the first female priest in her province. The authenticity that came across from Nolavy and the entire cast was electric, and the audience was drawn into the story in such a way that many were able to see it as their story too: a woman on the fringe of society, who hears the voice of God, and is given hope by God through the

introduction to a loving community who nurture her and love her. The play becomes a tool of evangelism, giving hope to those who view it. Following the performance, Nolavy herself shared the story of a woman who was in the audience for the performance, and engaged her in conversation afterwards.



As a woman living on the streets, she saw her own story in Nolavy's portrayal, and through her tears said she had new courage for her future. Hope was given. And the story continues to come to life as the construction of the Women's Center nears completion on the campus. When finished, it will become a community where women can come to learn skills to make handicrafts to sell. A small shop already exists on the campus for the sale of these beautiful handmade items. It becomes another practical way of partnering with the God of mission to bring hope for a better life.

- ◆ **The Deaneries** – Because all the parishes were present for the celebration, there was an opportunity for the lead priests in the diocese to meet with Bishop Todd and the People Reaching People board members who were present. The energetic conversation itself instilled hope for the future, as the local priests themselves proactively expressed their enthusiasm for a plan so that the ministry would continue to prosper beyond the lifespan of the McGregors. As an initial strategy, there is unanimous support in the clergy for seeking more parish-to-parish partnerships between supporting congregations around the world and parishes within the Toliara Diocese. During the weekend itself, representatives present from the Episcopal Diocese of Albany, NY were excited



to finalize a new partnership with a parish in Toliara. The hope instilled by these initial partnerships gives additional hope for more congregations around the globe to choose to partner with other Toliara parishes. The hope that comes with the Gospel of Jesus Christ was evidenced in this and many other ways during the weekend.

As an unexpected coda to the experience, I was privileged to attend the events, representing Bishop Eaton and the Companion Diocese of Southeast Florida, but also representing the parish of Saint Joseph's in Boynton Beach, FL, who have partnered with Todd and Patsy for over 20 years. St. Joseph's was blessed to have donated the funds early in the Madagascar ministry that enabled the building of the first permanent church in what would become the Diocese of Toliara. Saint Joseph's Madagascar has existed as a congregation for 15 years, but because of its remoteness, it was not possible to visit there during my week. However, during my last day there, Bishop Todd discovered that the



evangelist in charge of Saint Joseph's, Good Jean Fahay, had come to Toliara for the celebration and was still in town. Good Jean, who has been leading the congregation since its inception, trekked over to the Bishop's office to meet with Bishop Todd, Betsy Wenzel (Patsy's sister who attended the weekend to represent both Patsy's family and St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in Boca Raton, FL), and myself. It was obvious that Good Jean was downhearted, and upon inquiry we heard the story of the difficulties his people face economically, and the personal struggles his family faces, especially with the



continued still undiagnosed illness of his wife. They were real and tough struggles, but during the course of the next hour, Bishop Todd helped Good Jean to remember God's faithfulness throughout

the years to him and to the congregation of Saint Joseph's. Once again, hope was restored.

Hope just seems to multiply whenever and wherever the McGregors minister. What a privilege to be able to see them partnering with our God of Mission.



*The realisation of the construction of Saint Patrick's Cathedral is testament to the generosity and dedication of the many supporters and partners of People Reaching People. A magnificent building of this nature will require ongoing maintenance; please let us know if you are interested in donating specifically to the Cathedral Maintenance Fund, and we will ensure that any contributions you make are directed accordingly.*

*Thank you.*

When our Bishop, Bill Love, invited Bishop Todd and Rev. Patsy to attend our diocesan convention in June of 2015, my husband and I had no idea that by the end of that convention the Lord would have linked the four of us together in a new friendship in Christ and that we would invite Patsy and Bishop Todd to stay with us in October when they next visited the Diocese of Albany.

On the Sunday that they visited, while Bishop Todd visited another parish, Rev. Patsy came to our parish of St Luke's on the Hill, Mechanicville where she celebrated, preached and after church showed a power point of ministry in the Diocese of Toliara. People in our congregation were deeply touched and at the vestry meeting the next week the idea of a partnership of some kind began to be discussed and we began to wonder if by any chance there was another St Luke's in Toliara with which we could be linked. In discovering that indeed there was a St Luke's and that it was next door to the apartment Todd and Patsy had first lived in when they were called back to Madagascar, and was also the church in which Bishop Todd was consecrated Bishop, we became very excited.

In November Rev. Patsy arranged for our Rector Fr. David Haig and I to skype with Rev. Noel, Rector of St Luke's Ankilafaly and our link began as we shared details about our parishes and their ministries and committed to keep one another in prayer. As a result of that conversation and much prayer, Clark and I decided to accept Rev. Patsy and Bishop Todd's invitation to visit Toliara in March along with our dear friends Fr. Chip Strickland and his wife, Beth.

On March 6, our first Sunday in Toliara, Clark and I were transported by rickshaw to St Luke's where we were very warmly greeted. As we joined in the vibrant worship, I realized that Jesus' high priestly prayer in John 17 that "they all may be one" was being answered powerfully in our fellowship, worship and praise. It was a great privilege to be invited to preach, with Rev. Hery doing a great job in translating as well as being able to talk to the congregation after the service, as I shared with them information about our parish, and showed them photos taken the week before at each of our services — which showed our congregation waving in greeting, as well as photos of our church buried in over 2 feet of snow, and still others of our church school. Gifts I brought included our banner for them to keep as a reminder of our link, as well as pen pal



letters from our children and a guitar for their youth group. A smaller meeting with their vestry after everyone else had left allowed for more conversation and information sharing.

Blessings and relationships deepened later that day as we offered a faith and fun filled VBS for 80 of the cutest and most well behaved kids I have ever had the joy of meeting! As part of the afternoon we made beaded cross necklaces and taught them a special Holy Spirit handshake. What fun it was to run into them the next weekend at the Cathedral's dedication as many of them came running up eager to shake hands and show us their necklaces!

Blessings continued further as I had the opportunity to lead a women's afternoon of prayer at St Luke's later in the week where we had the opportunity to pray with and for one another. In closing each woman was given a small gift bag containing some jewellery and a scarf — which had been given by the woman of St Luke's in Mechanicville as a sign of their love and prayers. What a joy it was to see women wearing the jewellery at the cathedral the next weekend.

On the last night we were in Toliara, Rev Noel and Rev Hery stopped by so that we could sign the official covenant of our link. What previously had been an informal joining of hearts and prayers was now an official document outlining our agreement to support one another in fellowship, communication and prayer. Since our link is brand new we are eager to see how the Lord will work in and through it in the future so we that may all become one in Christ, even as Christ and the Father are one, all to God's glory and the benefit of His dearly loved people — separated by many miles, but not in love or prayers.

**FAMINE — WHAT ARE THE CURRENT ISSUES IN MADAGASCAR?**by **BISHOP TODD MCGREGOR**

Madagascar is the fourth biggest island on earth and because of its relative geographical isolation off the east coast of Africa, much of its flora and fauna exists nowhere else on earth. It is defined as a low-income country, ranking 155th out of 187 countries in the 2014 Human Development Report (UNDP). Poverty in Madagascar has increased and today 72 percent of the country's estimated 22 million people live below the national poverty line.

Madagascar is prone to natural disasters such as cyclones, flooding and drought. Nearly a quarter of the population – some five million people – live in areas that are vulnerable to frequent natural disasters. Due to their impact on agriculture, these are a major threat to food security. The increasing fragility of the ecosystem, due to deforestation and poor land management, is a major cause of increased vulnerability to shocks and related food insecurity. Deforestation has become a major concern: 85 percent of the rainforests have been lost due to the use of wood and charcoal for cooking and, slash and burn agricultural practices.

The 2014 Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission found that 35.8 percent of the rural population in eight surveyed areas was food insecure. Stunting due to chronic malnutrition affects 47.3 percent of children under five years of age or nearly two million children (Millennium Development Goals National Survey 2012) while the average national global acute prevalence is 8.2 percent.

More than five years of political crises (2009 – 2013) and international sanctions have affected government institutional capacity, economic growth and development efforts, impacting on vulnerable people's access to basic social services and their ability to prevent, adapt to and recover from recurrent shocks.

Farming, fishing and forestry form the backbone of Madagascar's economy, accounting for 25 percent of its Gross Domestic Product and 77 percent of employment (National Statistical Institute 2013).

Agriculture is dominated by rain-fed, small-scale subsistence farming and 70 percent of smallholder farmers are growing crops on 1.2 hectare parcels of

land on average. Rice is the preferred staple and although it ranks first in national agricultural production, the country is a net rice importer. Agricultural production remains low due to the use of traditional techniques. Main barriers include limited access to agricultural inputs, credit and technical support services; gender inequality, poor farming and post-harvest techniques; lack of access of smallholder farmers to markets and market information.

### **What the World Food Programme is doing in Madagascar**

WFP addresses food security and malnutrition challenges in Madagascar through a development-oriented *Country Programme*, and a *Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation* which provides responses to shocks and natural disasters.

The *Country Programme* has three components:

1. WFP implements a **school feeding programme** in support of the Ministry of National Education. Aside from food assistance, WFP supports the development and scale-up of a national school feeding policy. WFP also supports the Government of Madagascar in designing a Home Grown School Feeding programme linked to smallholder farmer production; and continues to implement other activities such as nutritional education, promotion of hygiene in schools and the use of environmentally friendly stoves.
2. The second component aims to **improve the nutritional situation for vulnerable groups** through acute malnutrition prevention and treatment activities, stunting prevention and nutritional support to people suffering from tuberculosis.
3. Through component three, WFP **helps enhance access to markets for smallholder farmers** through local food purchases, building the capacity of farmers' associations so they can improve the quality of their crops. This is made possible by a partnership with





farmers' associations, local non-governmental organisations, the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

The *Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation* aims to provide relief and early recovery assistance to vulnerable households affected by natural disasters, mainly cyclones and floods; and nutritional assistance to treat moderate acute malnutrition in case of nutritional emergency. This is done by pre-positioning food in the country's remote and disaster-prone areas ahead of the cyclone season.

WFP will implement the resilience component through a so-called 'Three-pronged approach'. This

firstly involves the undertaking of a national assessment of the country's vulnerability to multiple shocks. The second prong focuses on facilitating and coordinating the implementation of seasonal livelihood activities in the most vulnerable districts. The final element involves participatory planning exercises identifying suitable food-for-assets activities with the community.

WFP will support the Government in re-establishing a food security early warning system and in putting in place emergency preparedness measures. WFP will use its technical expertise to support the establishment of a Vulnerability Assessment Committee in Madagascar and will develop national capacity to carry out emergency food security and nutrition assessments.

## PRAY WITH US

**Prayers** for the new Christians in Madagascar and for continued leadership development for the Diocese of Toliara.

**Prayers** for funds for ministry support for Todd and Patsy McGregor.

**Prayers** for the McGregors as they travel and explore partnership development opportunities and parish companionship links.

**Prayers** for funds for economic development and growth within the Diocese of Toliara, and for future projects such as the Women's Community Center.

**Prayers** for funding for furnishing, materials and sewing equipment required for the Women's Community Center.

**Prayers** for Missionaries for the posts of Director of Education, and Director of Discipleship, for the Diocese of Toliara.

**Prayers** for the short-term volunteer groups visiting Toliara in June, July and August; for the Youth Conference being held in August, and the Mothers' Union Conference taking place in early September.

**Praise** for growth in ministry and new Church plants.

**Praise** for the dedication of Saint Patrick's Cathedral.

**Praise** for the premier performance of 'Miaraka: A Time to Dance' in Malagasy; all funds donated to be directed to the completion of the construction of the Women's Center.

**Praise** for the many partners who make it possible to serve and make a difference in Madagascar.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

### PRAY • PARTICIPATE • DONATE

Partner with us by donating to our work — mail checks to SAMS-USA, attn: Denise Cox, PO BOX 399, Ambridge, PA 15003 (memo: *McGregor Ministry or Diocese of Toliara*); or donate by credit card/ monthly electronic fund transfer at [www.peoplereaching.org](http://www.peoplereaching.org)

If you would like to become a regular donor, please visit [www.peoplereaching.org](http://www.peoplereaching.org), click on the 'donate on-line' button, and follow the prompts. Thank you so much for your support both financially and spiritually; we could not do our work without you.

### KEEPING UP TO DATE WITH PRP

In addition to email updates, newsletters and the website ([www.peoplereaching.org](http://www.peoplereaching.org)), it is also possible to keep abreast of the ministry and work in the Diocese of Toliara on our Facebook page, and by following us on Instagram at @peoplereachingpeople.