



For We Are GOD'S HELPERS

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Giving Thanks and Planning for the Future

From Janice England, Executive Director LMH

As we enter this Season of Lent, we are grateful for God's many blessings in 2005. We celebrated the 50th Anniversary of Msgr. Anthony Brouwers' founding of the Lay Mission-Helpers Association. We honored the dedicated service of over 700 men and women in 36 countries around the world. With the support of you, our faithful donors, we continue Msgr. Brouwers' vision and legacy.

The Lay Mission-Helpers Association trained and sent six adults and five children to the Missions last year. You'll meet these dedicated lay missionaries in this issue.

We welcomed our newest and youngest member of the Lay Mission-Helpers family, Grace Knight, on January 15th. Grace's parents, Joshua and Rachel Knight, have been serving in the diocese of Kumbo, Cameroon for over a year. You'll read about how their work is changing the lives of thousands of people.

Our call to mission continues when we return to the United States. Veteran Julie Szolek-Van Valkenburgh tells us how being a Lay Mission-Helper in 1983 set the foundation for her continual living out her baptismal call to be a missionary.

With a new year before us, we are both excited and challenged with recruiting qualified candidates to fill the numerous requests made by bishops for Lay Mission-Helpers, while securing financial support for the increased costs of training and supporting our Lay Mission-Helpers overseas.

Please consider a donation to underwrite the costs needed to support one of our new Lay Mission-Helpers. A gift of \$100 would help defer the costs for medical coverage. As you know, medical insurance is essential for all of us, even more so for those serving in the missions. A gift of \$60 would cover the cost of one child for a month. A gift of \$15 covers 10% of one month's stipend for an adult. Every gift, large or small, is appreciated and goes a long way in changing the lives of thousands of people through our dedicated Lay Mission-Helpers.

We are confident that through God, and with your help, we can continue the vision begun by Msgr. Anthony Brouwers over 50 years ago.

Janice England

Meet Our New Missionaries

Our newly commissioned Lay Mission-Helpers have arrived overseas. They are married couples with children, single persons, young, old (er), and from a variety of educational and professional backgrounds. We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce them to you.

Jeff and Courtney Caiola and their children, Ellis (6), Marie (4) and Gabby (22 mos.) are serving at Karoli Lwanga Hospital in the diocese of Kabale, Uganda. Jeff will serve in administration and his experience will help provide for the smooth running of the hospital and better healthcare for all. Courtney's expertise in nursing and healthcare will help educate future Ugandan nurses, ensuring continued professional healthcare in the Kabale Diocese.

Aaron and Tara Condon and their sons Ocean (5) and Cana (2) are serving in the Apostolic Prefecture of the Marshall Islands. Aaron's experience in filmmaking will help provide the outer atolls with access to religious education workshops and infor-

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Commissioning of the LMH Class of 2006.

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Missions On the Move

FOR WE ARE GOD

New Missionaries

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mation that they otherwise would not have. Tara's assistance in the Prefecture's office will ensure the smooth running of important activities, as well as lend much needed support to the continued ministries in the outer atolls.

Kathy Sheppard is also serving in the Apostolic Prefecture of the Marshall Islands. Kathy will accompany the Maryknoll Sisters to the outer atolls where she will serve as a Pastoral Associate. The communities on the atolls depend on these visits for support, encouragement, and further religious education. Kathy's prior involvement in numerous parish ministries will be a huge asset.

Rachel Sybor, a recent college graduate, is serving as a teacher at St. Sylvester High School in the Diocese of Kumbo, Cameroon. Rachel's youthful enthusiasm and expertise in mathematics will inspire and encourage countless students who will be the future leaders of their communities.

While the skills they share are of great value, sharing their faith is what makes them missionaries. As Msgr. Brouwers once said, "[Lay missionaries] are not just



Newly Commissioned Lay Mission-Helpers (Clockwise from top right) Rachel Sybor serving in Cameroon, Kathy Sheppard serving in the Marshall Islands, the Caiola family (Courtney, Marie, Ellis, Jeff and Gabby) serving in Uganda and the Condon family (Ocean, Aaron, Tara and Cana) also serving in the Marshall Islands.

Catholics working in mission lands. They are first of all witnesses for Christ, with thousands of critical eyes watching their every action, appraising their every word, and seeing that lay men and women can and do live the same high ideals as their clerical and religious associates." ■

Clean Water Saves Lives

By Joshua Knight

After working for several months with the Catholic Social Welfare Office, I finally have my first new water project! While I have been assisting with the projects currently on-going, this will be the first one that I'll be the main project manager. This will be a fantastic experience for myself as a project manager. Additionally, because the project will be a Catholic Kumbo Diocese Social Welfare Department project, the senior project manager will really be able to teach me a lot, and hopefully he'll be able to learn something from me as well.

Today I went to give the community of Kikoo our first estimate on the cost of their new water project, and to tell them what they needed to do to



make this project happen. Maybe I should back up a bit.

Two months ago a group of people came to our office from the village of Kikoo, about 20 minutes drive from our office. They came to us because they have no source of clean, reliable water. They are just like many other villages in Cameroon. Other big infrastructure holes include electricity, paved roads, health centers and schools. Where they have dropped the ball, many churches have filled in the gap.

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Joshua and Rachel Knight and daughter Mary have been serving in Cameroon since 2005. Grace joined the family on January 15, 2006.



's Helpers

Mission – A Lifetime Call

I followed God's call to serve overseas as a volunteer missionary with the Lay Mission- Helpers Association for three years in Saipan shortly after I graduated from college. The experience, while the most difficult experience I have ever had, still remains the most life-changing experience. The Jesuits use the term "ruined for life" to describe what happens to a person as a result of volunteer mission experience. I can relate, having been ruined for life myself long ago.

Through allowing God to lead me into unknown territory with people and cultures very different from my own, I became changed. All of the choices that I have made since that time have been a result of that change . . . the man I married, the bi-racial children that my husband and I adopted, our intentional choice to live simple, my choice of ministry as a career.

I have been involved in professional ecclesiastical ministry within the Roman Catholic church for over 20 years. I've worked as a Parish Youth Ministry Coordinator at St. Rose of Lima Parish in Simi Valley, CA., Associate Director for Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Diocese of Orange, CA, and Director for Youth, Young Adult and Campus Ministries, Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Currently I am the Director for Providence Volunteer Ministry for the Sisters of Providence in Saint Mary of the Woods, IN.

...my call to mission work and the adventure that God had placed in my heart was not just a call to serve overseas for three years... the time of missioning never ends; it only changes as life goes on.

After an emergency ectopic pregnancy in which I almost died, I learned that I would be unable to conceive children naturally. Although invitro was an option that would work for me, because of my husband's and my deeply held religious beliefs, we said no to that and opened ourselves up to God's plan of adoption instead. Due to my experience overseas, I was open, as was my husband, to children of mixed descent . . . we adopted our beautiful bi-racial daughter Juliana and then the agency contacted us a year later to ask us if we would be open to adopting mixed twins. Of course, we responded, and three weeks later, Sean and Matt were born.



The Szolek-VanValkenburgh family: Bill, Julie, Sean, Julianna, and Matt were brought together in part as a result Julie's first mission experience.



What I came to realize after my volunteer mission experience had ended and I struggled to find my place again, was that the origin of my call to mission work and the adventure that God had placed in my heart was not just a call to serve overseas for three years, but it was a call that began in baptism and was heightened by a time in mission. It continues to be a call to discipleship for life. In other words, the time of missioning never ends; it only changes as life goes on. ■

Julie with her students in Saipan where she had first volunteered to be a Lay Mission-Helper shortly after graduating college.

LMH Mission Statement

We are Catholic lay people, single men and women, married couples, and families, called through our baptism to walk with the poor of other countries sharing our gifts, living our faith, and learning from one another. We are teachers, nurses, social workers, computer technicians, administrators, tradesman, and others who work together and strive to live a simple life close to the poor.

Please remember LMH in your will. For more information contact the Lay Mission-Helpers Association at (213) 368-1870 or visit our website at www.laymissionhelpers.org

NOTE: THE LEGAL NAME FOR LMH IS THE LAY MISSION-HELPERS ASSOCIATION.

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Lay Mission-Helpers
Association, founded in 1955
by Msgr. Anthony Brouwers

Clean water

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In many villages, including Kikoo, the only available school is a mission school. The only hospitals in the entire subdivision are the Catholic and Baptist ones. Sadly, no church has decided to tackle roads, so they are still deplorable!

But anyway, back to Kikoo. These folks came to us because they heard we helped communities with water, and they really needed water in their village. Well, about two weeks ago, my colleague, our technician, and myself



Joshua with a co-worker at a newly installed clean water outlet.

visited this community to see if they were serious about taking us on to sponsor them in making their project come to life. We told them all of our requirements in taking on a water project, because we want to make sure that the water system doesn't fall apart after we leave. We make them take ownership of the project. They must provide for 30% of the project cost (5% in cash, 25% in kind, like labor, local materials and room and board for technicians), which is extremely difficult to do for a community which is 99% made up of subsistence farmers (one is a Catholic primary school teacher, two are traders in the Kumbo market).

We are also asking them to create a water committee which is 50% women. This is asking a great deal in a place where women have no part in any of the decision making process. As I am explaining in my project proposal, decisions are made by the village council, which is made up of land-holders and elders of the community, but no women. The problem is, women do all of the water-fetching, which takes up a very large part of each and every day and much of their energy. If they aren't included in the decision-making, there will be many problems overseen and possible solutions not thought of. So, we'll see how that goes! We also had some other boring requirements, but the long and short of it is — they want us, so now we're on the project!

Not only will this village eventually receive access to the clean water they desperately need, but we will be able to witness Christ's love by our presence and extending a helping hand. ■

Your support for Lay Mission-Helpers makes you a missionary, too as you pray and sacrifice so that the poorest in the Missions may know the love of Christ.

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