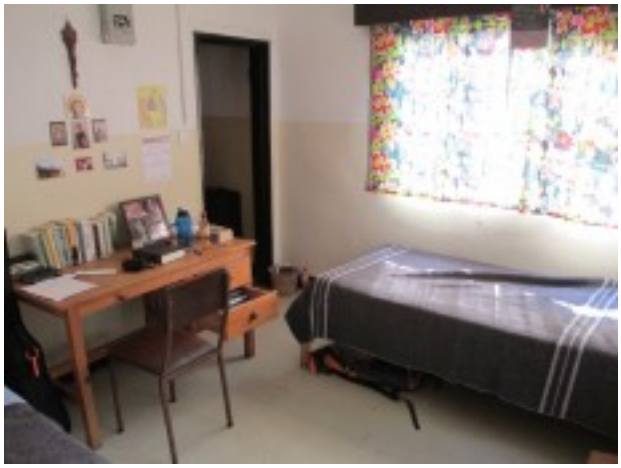


By Dan Finucane

I hope that this email finds you all well. I hope that it won't be too long of an email – I have done my best to organize my thoughts beforehand, so that I can be concise while still offering lots of insight into life here. First, some pictures of the grounds here at the mission – the first is the friary (you can see the bright red-orange jacaranda trees in the background, which bloom at the driest point of the year here) and the second is my room.



Overall, life continues to go well here in Garneton. It is hard to believe I have already been in Zambia a month! We are on the brink of rainy season, which means that we will be finished with the oppressive heat we have experienced since I have arrived (upwards of 90-95 degrees each day). The result is pleasant, overcast days, which is great for working, or just sitting, outside. I am finding myself growing more and more comfortable with the slower pace of life here, though I have to admit that I still have evenings where I look back over my day and think: "I didn't have much to do to begin with and I still didn't get it completed!" Often, this is due to receiving surprise visitors, trips to town taking more time than expected, or the electricity goes out unexpectedly, limiting any work that might be possible using the Internet. So, I am able to take

time for rest in the afternoon, or reflection, journaling, reading.

For the rest of the email, I thought it would be helpful to divide things up into sections, so that you can get an idea about some things I have experienced and been thinking about.

Liturgy in Zambia

One of the aspects of Zambian life that attracted me to coming back for a longer period of time is the passion, enthusiasm and beauty of liturgy and music at Christian services. Although there are certainly parishes and communities that celebrate the liturgy with the same passion in the US, there are an equal amount (perhaps more) that leave much to be desired and often seem to lack something. I am not talking about entertainment value, but the underlying spirit of the community gathered, expressed in song, appreciation and the unifying of the community in the Spirit of Jesus. At the communities I have been privileged to visit on Sundays thus far, I have been invited into this deeper experience of liturgy. Although the Masses are in Bemba (the major local language), I find myself connecting with the communities.

First and foremost, the singing is just incredible. The “choirs” often sit with the congregation – not off to the side, but right up front facing the altar with the rest of the community. They are truly leading the singing, and not performing for a passive community. And the singing is in full harmony, loud, and with a bodily cadence – often, the choir (and many members of the community) will sway a bit to the music, with some steps in time along with the movement. Worship is an act of the entire person – this includes the body!

Besides the music, two other notable elements of liturgy are the offering of gifts and the community’s welcoming of newcomers during the Mass. First, the offering of gifts. The communities I have visited, Sand Sales (the name is derived from their primary source of income, which is in digging and selling sand for local construction), Sabina, and Icimpi, are very poor, rural communities – their churches are very simple structures, with an altar and benches for pews. However, during offertory, almost everyone processes forward to offer some money for the collection – again, this is a bodily offering – you don’t sit on your butt and wait for the collection plate, you rise with everyone, and walk forward to offer your gift with the rest of the community. In many cases, this is followed by an offering of grain, oil, mealie-meal (from which nshima, the staple food is made), and yes, even live chickens in some cases. Again, the offering of gifts is an offering to God in thanksgiving for what we have, given back in imitation of Jesus’ offering – and of course, this includes the bread and wine which are consecrated and

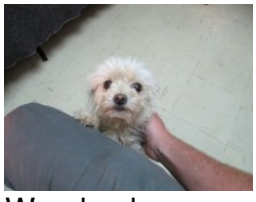
then consumed. The second element is the welcoming of newcomers. To a certain extent, the welcomes I have received have been because I am from the United States and this is viewed as something worth celebrating – that an American would come to worship with them. But at Sand Sales, a Zambian couple was introduced with me and received the exact same warm reception. The reception is: someone at the end of Mass introduces the newcomer and then every single person in the community comes forward to greet the person with a handshake. It is quite humbling to be welcomed in such a way. And in about 3 or 4 communities now!

In each community I have visited, someone has taken me with them and introduced me to others in the community, to certain customs, and has invited me back. For Catholics reading this email, when was the last time all of this happened to you in the US?

Living on a Farm



I think I mentioned in the first email that we have a small farm in operation here. Our major agricultural items are pawpaw trees, banana plants, and pigs.



We also have a couple of dogs – “Puppy” and “Dumb Dog 2” (alternatively named Pio after one of the missionaries here) – and yes, those really are the names and there was a Dumb Dog 1 at some point. “Puppy”, who isn’t really a puppy any longer, just had a puppy herself, which is

exciting. Additionally, one of the sows (mother pig) had piglets (about 12) and a couple of weeks ago, the male piglets had their teeth and tails clipped and were castrated. The 8th grade agriculture class from St. Francis School came to observe. I watched the first two and decided that once you've seen one piglet castration, it suffices for a lifetime. I did not attend the castrations that were performed this morning in the pens.

Trip to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Perhaps the most exciting part of being here thus far has been my trip to Dar es Salaam, on the coast of Tanzania at the Indian Ocean. I went with Barry, the deputy head teacher of St. Francis, and Fr. Andrew, one of the friars here at the mission, to pick up a 10-seater van that we ordered from Japan and had shipped to Dar. It is hard to adequately describe Dar es Salaam and the experience it is to be there. I'll do my best.

To begin with, Tanzania is a mainly Muslim country (although there is a Christian presence too) and so there are mosques all over Dar. In fact, there was one next to our hotel, with a minaret visible from the hallway. Something I found incredibly interesting is being present in a city where the call to prayer that occurs 5 times a day is public and observed by many. It has a parallel in the Liturgy of the Hours that religious and clergy (and some lay folks) pray each day, but encompasses a wider swath of practicing Muslims, not just clerics. I was reflecting on how wonderful this all was and then at 4 am on the morning after we got there, I was jolted awake by the call to prayer from that minaret I mentioned. It was loud – so much so that it scared the crap out of me. But it did not deter my fascination with being in a completely different culture and religious milieu.

Dar es Salaam itself is a city filled with markets that are always crowded, loud and selling copious amounts of stuff – any kind of thing you could imagine is sold. The shops range from impromptu tables set up on the street to storefronts. And if you have done any international traveling, you might have come across the need to haggle prices. This is very true in Dar and in markets I've experienced in Zambia as well. Shopping is a very different process than in the US. Here, it is an experience. The price is negotiable and both seller and buyer enter into a competitive banter to see who will get the better deal of the other. Not only this, but we met an individual at a currency exchange shop who became something of a "personal shopper" and helped us by speaking Swahili when we needed help or to help us gain leverage. This apparently is quite common – these folks know which shops are the best and which will get you ripped off and it seems like there is an immediate bond of trust established between our group and these helpers. The item in question during the haggling is often examined thoroughly – there is no return policy – and each person in the group is asked their opinion of it. Barry bought

a radio and I was asked what I thought about it. Seemed like a good radio to me. . . People from Zambia will often travel to Dar es Salaam to buy items at a low price and then resell them in Zambian markets because they can make a profit off selling the items at a higher price.

Less thrilling than the above two items was the driving, which was indescribable. Think New York City or Boston, but about 10 times worse – no exaggeration. One could take 30 minutes to only go 2 to 3 blocks. The streets are too narrow (filled with people and shops of course), there are way too many vehicles, and there is a systematic disregard for any traffic rules (if there are any to begin with). So it is offensive driving to the extreme. Somehow, we did not see any injuries or accidents. . . but it was crazy.



We also met some members of the famous Maasai tribe – they are herders who move around between the area of Tanzania and Kenya. They remain very much tied to their traditions and continue to wear their traditional clothing. However, they are some of the best pool players I've ever seen and had beers with us at a bar. Modern life meets tribal life.

The actual obtaining of the van was the most eye-opening element of the trip. It is a process which brings hundreds of cars to Zambia each week and is fraught with regulations, an 1100 mile drive, and corruption. We waited 5 hours for the van to come through the gate at the port at Dar, had to leave the city and drive 50 km to the checkpoint within 4 hours (remember how poor the traffic is) and then make it to another checkpoint within the next day, about 2/3 of the way through Tanzania. Additionally, going through Zambian customs at the border means waiting another 3-4 hours and witnessing how inefficient the bureaucratic arm of Zambian border/customs truly is. I literally watched as our customs papers went from desk 1 to desk 2, back to desk 1, then back to desk 2, to a desk 3, back to desks 1 and 2 and then over to the cashier to pay before he yelled at our agent, who called a contact in customs, who begrudgingly allowed us to take a shortcut after giving us a lecture on the virtue of each taxpayer respecting the rights of the other. And then I walked back across the Zambian/Tanzanian border to have

my passport stamped, saying I was leaving Tanzania. A strange, strange way of doing things. And utterly frustrating at times.

Life at the Mission

Life here after a month is going pretty well, though I am still adjusting and trying to figure out my place in the midst of the community life. Eventually, I will be teaching at the school, but currently, students are in end-of-term exams and then have a month's break in December. So, I wouldn't start until January. Not ideal timing, but it will give me time to prepare. And it looks like I will be teaching an art class as well as computers, which I am really excited about. I am really just excited to get to know the students and be a part of their lives.

I have been giving guitar lessons to Mary's daughter, Nomsa, who is 11 years old and is one of the cutest kids here. She comes over each day in the afternoon to learn a chord or two and now I have given her a harmonica to play around on, which I think will probably not endear Mary to me! [A recap on Mary: she is essentially the lifeblood of the mission after Br. Tony. She gets supplies for projects, helps run the pig side of things, knows all the workers, and is practically a saint – a very strong woman.] Anyway, I think Nomsa and I will eventually do some drawing too – she seems to have an artistic side! I have also struck up a friendship with one of the students at St. Francis, Emano, and that has been pretty great too. Hopefully there will be more names to share with you all as time goes on!

And with that, I am going to conclude the email. I have really enjoyed receiving emails from many of you informing me about your lives and whatnot – keep 'em coming! I'll try my best to respond, though the Internet is not always terribly cooperative here.

Also, I now have a cell phone here. I can receive calls from the US for free (all incoming calls are free), if you want to call using Skype credit or a calling card. No pressure to do this – it can be a little pricey. But I wanted to offer the opportunity. I am 7 hours ahead and will soon be 8 once the time changes in the US (no daylight savings time here). The number is +260 0966 442493. To make a call outside of the US, one has to dial 011. But any calling card will tell you this.

