

## From the Desk of Fr. Jerry

Dear Friends,

Zambia is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. In 2012 I became friends with a Zambian priest who was studying in Chicago, Fr. Wilfred. I went to Zambia to visit him in 2014. During Holy Week that year I traveled with my host to a remote parish for the celebration of the Triduum. There are few paved roads, I saw few vehicles, some bikes and a lot of pedestrians. Most people walked to get water or food, to go to church or school, to get medical attention.

Fr. Wilfred noticed a pedestrian walking the road carrying a bundle. He surmised she was on her way to the church. (Folks from far-flung "outstations" normally visited by the priest gather at a central place for celebrations like the Triduum). The woman's bundle was food and bedding for the three-day observance. We offered her a ride. She explained that she had been walking for more than two hours. The journey would have required hours more of walking.

The image of the people walking remained in my head when I came back to the US. Then I heard an interview on NPR about an organization called "Bikes for the World." "Bikes for the World" collects and distributes bikes to communities in need throughout the world.

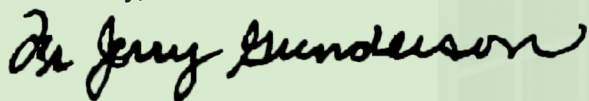
Shortly thereafter I was approached by a boy scout who needed a project to reach the rank of Eagle Scout. I suggested the bike drive. He organized it. The bikes collected filled a three-car garage. Additionally, the scout raised enough money to purchase 100 sturdy bicycles. The bicycles were constructed in South Africa and sent to Fr. Wilfred in Zambia. The recipients were priests, catechists, health care workers, teachers and students.

When Fr. Wilfred was sent to reestablish a Catholic presence in "the bush" he was sent without a vehicle, salary or an associate. Our parishes adopted each other as sister parishes. When Fr. Wilfred came back to the U.S. for a visit some filmmakers were in the congregation and proposed the idea of making a documentary film. The result is a film is entitled "Labor of Love," and is posted on the website: [www.friendsofchikwaparish.org](http://www.friendsofchikwaparish.org) When I retired, I established the independent organization named "Friends of Chikwa Parish NFP"

Some of my former parishioners also made a connection with World Vision International, a Christian Humanitarian Organization known for their work of providing clean water for areas like Chikwa. For three years they have implemented the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (W.A.S.H.) project throughout the area.

Now, ten years later, happily I am traveling to Chikwa to attend the dedication of the completed parish church. Parishioners molded each of 245,000 bricks built into a beautiful house of God. Friends of Chikwa Parish provided spiritual and material support.

Sincerely,



Fr. Jerry Gunderson