

From the Desk of Fr. Jerry

Dear Friends,

My trip to Zambia was hosted by World Vision International and by the Friends of Chikwa Parish. World Vision International (WVI) is a Christian Humanitarian Organization that works with communities, families, and children to overcome poverty and injustice. Their mission includes emergency relief, community-based and sustainable development, promotion of justice, partnerships with churches, and public awareness. Friends of Chikwa Parish is the non-for-profit organization I established to continue the partnership with Chikwa Parish that began when I was pastor of Mary, Seat of Wisdom Parish. The integral development of the Chikwa area has been a goal for the past 10 years.

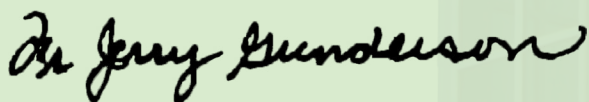
Through the generosity of some Friends of Chikwa Parish, World Vision made an initial three-year commitment to the Chikwa Parish area. They implemented a program focusing on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. (W.A.S.H.) In the last two years the project has drilled and installed 27 wells (water hand pumps) benefiting 6 health care facilities and 17 schools. By the end of this year an additional 4 more local health care centers and 8 schools will benefit.

At Chigoma Community Health Clinic we saw challenges faced prior to World Vision intervention. We visited Ruth and her family, who explained the challenges of living in the area: human-animal conflict, lack of basic resources, absence of social services. Next, we participated in a water walk with Ruth. Previously women and school aged girls rose as early as 4 AM to walk a distance to obtain water for daily use. As visitors we replicated the walk and scooped ground water to carry back to Ruth's home. Soon WV will bring running water to their village. Freeing young girls to get to school is one positive outcome. Decreased intestinal disease is another.

Next, we drove to Mangwere School to see the impact of water, WASH UP, and menstrual hygiene projects. We community members and leaders for a celebration; we listened to testimonies of the impact of clean water in the village. We cut the ribbons and dedicated a new water system which will have a huge impact.

We toured the maternity annex at Manga Rural Health Clinic built by Friends of Chikwa Parish. Health Center Staff shared the impact of running water: water borne diseases have significantly been reduced by having clean water for daily and medical use.

The new Holy Cross Catholic Church of Chikwa Parish was dedicated by Bishop George Lungu on Saturday, August 10. The bishop has a warm place in his heart for Chikwa Parish. He made it a diocesan priority to re-establish a Catholic presence there. The resources provided by Friends of Chikwa Parish and by World Vision have helped make it happen. Groundwork has now begun to erect a rectory. The priests former house will become the convent for three religious sisters who will soon come to assist with the pastoral ministry of the area.



Fr. Jerry Gunderson