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# MEDICINE

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# A New Creation

Imagine landing on foreign soil and hearing that your country has just been bombed. You have no way of getting additional information because you don't have access to television or radio. All that you know is hearsay. Your heart sinks for a minute. Then you remember

that you are on a mission. You realize that you are here for a purpose, and God will take care of the details. This revelation is the source of your strength for the duration of the trip.

Such is the setting for the journey that changed my life. I landed in Nairobi, Kenya, on 9/11, and my life has forever been changed.

I went to Kenya and Tanzania in East Africa and Zambia in Central Africa in 2001 on a 16-day mission trip with **Fr. John Judie**, the pastor of my church at Mother of Good Counsel. My goal on that first tour was to survey the medical needs of the people in those countries so that I could plan how to provide for those needs on future missions.

Instead, that trip transformed me—What an unexpected blessing. Amid the destitution and disease, I found joy and gratitude. These people were amazing to me. Their condi-

tion was the source of their strength and deep faith.

These people were so welcoming and generous. They were truly a beautiful people. While each place that I visited had its unique customs and cultures, the underlying sentiment was the same. As a visitor, I was a blessing from God. That's just the way Africans see it.

What these people did not realize was that *they* were a blessing



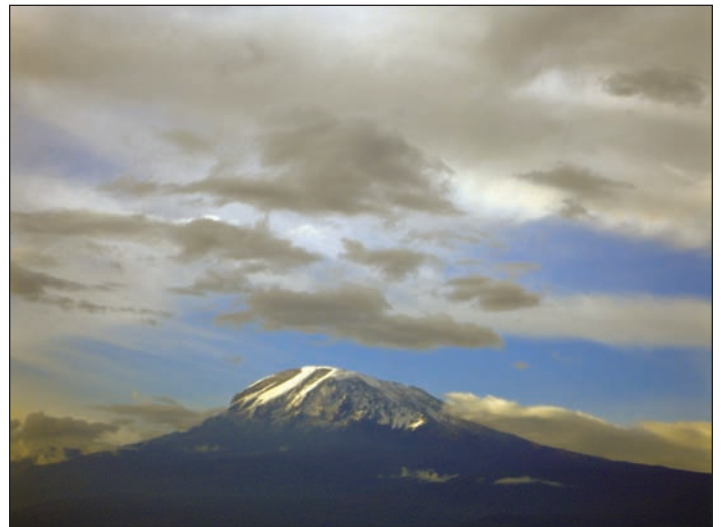
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**1.** Children at Mwasani Compound in Lusaka Zambia. **2.** Children at St Monica Primary School Kihonda Parish Morogoro Tanzania. **3.** Tawa Primary School in Tawa Tanzania. **4.** Mt Kilimanjaro Tanzania. **5.** Kessy children in the jungle in Kilema Tanzania.



to me. I learned so much from my new friends. I was honored and humbled. Each country offered unique and life-changing experiences.

The “revelation” that I was there on a mission and that God would take care of the details provided me with a new level of faith. I felt completely safe and carefree. While I felt compassion for the plight of my fellow countrymen, I was not consumed with despair and uncertainty. I had gained a new level of trust in God’s providence.

In Kenya, I got a chance to visit with the sick poor and offer some minimal medical services. There were no fancy hospitals or equipment to do much else. I was truly humbled by what little I could offer in terms of medical help, but I was honored by how



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6. Jungle in Kilema Tanzania. 7. Orphans at Mgoole Orphanage in Morogoro Tanzania. 8. Funds for these desks for St Monica Primary School in Tanzania were provided by HHHM. 9. Margie and Kelly Sweeney at Mgoole Orphanage in Morogoro Tanzania.

much respect and love I received in return. These were a people with an “attitude of gratitude.”

Culturally, the Kenyans are a people of faith, hope and love. They are generous and very hospitable. Some speak English, and there are many tribal languages, Swahili being the predominant language in the areas that I traveled.

I did get a chance to visit a hospital in Machakos, Kenya. It was the hospital for the indigent and while it had laboratory and x-ray services, these were primitive. The surgical suite was also very primitive. The anesthesia machine appeared to be from the 1950s, and they only performed a few surgeries per month when surgeons came to visit.

The next country that I visited was Zambia, which is in Central Africa. Zambians are an equally beautiful people.

In Zambia, I visited Ndola Diocese where the bishop was very proactive in helping the indigent. He had set up a homebound program where a nurse and some assistants would visit the sick poor in the compounds to provide medicines and take those who

were critically ill to the hospital. They would also bring formula for the infants.

**Bishop Dijong**

also had set up an AIDS program to educate the people on the modes of transmission of AIDS, AIDS prevention through abstinence and chastity and AIDS treatment.

However, there was not much money for many AIDS medicines.

Zambia is where I had the



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most intense “God experience,” and so I nicknamed it “God’s country.”

One example of God’s love for His people that I experienced was in a young girl whom I visited in one of the compounds. She sat on a dirty towel on a dirt floor. Open sores on her legs were attracting flies. She was orphaned, malnourished and in pain. We gave her some ibuprofen tablets for her pain and scheduled to pick her up in the morning to take her to the clinic for an examination.



The next day when I saw her at the clinic, she was beaming, her face radiating joy and gratitude. I realized that even the smallest act done with compassion can be transforming. On that day I learned about compassion on a new level.

The last country that I visited was Tanzania. I visited the Diocese of Morogoro, which is in a mountainous area. The peoples of this country also showed us what true hospitality entails.

Here again, there was no chance to practice medicine as I am accustomed to providing. We used a room on the parish grounds to serve as a makeshift clinic. There was no pharmacy or nearby hospital so all I did was examine patients and make some minor suggestions. It was quite difficult to get good histories because the translator did not know enough English to help me decipher symptoms yet the people seemed truly grateful for any assistance that they received. Another humbling experience!

So how am I a new creation?

I have gained a new level of faith and trust in God.

I have experienced God's love for me, and I believe it to be true. This has opened me up to living out the two greatest commandments—love of God and love of neighbor.

I have a new awareness of suffering and how it can be turned into joy.



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I have a renewed "attitude of gratitude."

I am feeding my "wants" less and learning my true needs.

My eyes have been opened to look for the needs of others and to offer a helping hand.

I have the desire to do more with less and have put that desire into action by starting a nonprofit, "Helping Hands Healing Ministries" to accomplish that desire.

Yes, I have truly become a new creation. The following words from the Bible are true. "We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28) And "I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete." (Jn 15:11) **L<sub>M</sub>**

**10.** Marketplace in downtown Morogoro Tanzania. **11.** Massai women in traditional garb in downtown business district of Morogoro Tanzania. **12.** Villagers in the jungle of Kilema Tanzania. **13.** Maternity ward at Kasarani clinic in Nairobi Kenya. **14.** Anesthesia machine at Bishop Kioko Catholic Hospital in Machakos Kenya.

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