

# EASTER NEWSLETTER

Christ is risen! Sending our prayers, gratitude, and love this Easter season!

## AN ODE TO JOE SEHNERT

With deep admiration and gratitude, we thank Joe for his many years of guidance, service, and Christ-like presence to everyone at Liberia Mission and Franciscan Works. Joe Sehnert has decided to move on from his role as Board President with Franciscan Works, a position he held for 5 years. Following the announcement of his transition, the Board established an Interim Executive Committee to ensure continuity in leadership and operation, and looks forward to carrying on and magnifying Joe's vision for our support of Liberia.



Prior to serving as Board President, Joe dedicated 5 years of his life to serving as the Director of Liberia Mission (2011-2016). For four of those years, Joe lived on the Mission grounds, working directly with students and staff, and spent another year back-and-forth from the U.S. as our Interim Director. Under his leadership, Liberia Mission became a place driven by deep faith and centered on "God-Education-Work." It was during Joe's tenure that Liberia Mission created its piggery micro-business, raised its overall reading score, made renovations, and advanced in spiritual development. And, it was under Joe's faithful perseverance that the Mission survived the Ebola crisis of 2014, and the children continued to have a place to call home.

Stateside, Joe's commitment as President of the Franciscan Works Board of Directors ensured that we not only weathered ups and downs, but created new partnerships and sustainability plans thanks to his moxie and the Grace of God.

Joe tirelessly and creatively developed solutions to address funding needs and operational challenges. He invited new partners into the ministry of Franciscan Works and always inspired sponsors, volunteers, donors, staff and Board members to continue keeping "God-Education-Work" at the center of our mission in service of the children of Liberia.

When Joe heard the call to serve in Liberia more than a decade ago, we could never have imagined the profound impact his hard work and faithful service would have on Liberia Mission, Franciscan Works, and the countless people whose lives have been transformed by the Mission and the Grace of God. We are so grateful he said "yes." We will miss Joe tremendously and wish him well wherever God calls him next!

## TRAVEL TO LIBERIA MISSION

Join us this November 2023 as we travel to Liberia to celebrate Liberia Mission's 20th anniversary! Experience life on the Mission, meet members of the Franciscan Works + Liberia Mission teams, and celebrate with the children of Liberia Mission! The estimated cost (including airfare, inoculations, insurance, food, and lodging) is \$3,500. All visitors must obtain a travel visa and undergo diocesan child protection training prior to traveling to Liberia Mission. **All interested travelers should contact our Stateside Coordinator, Emily, at [emily@franciscanworks.org](mailto:emily@franciscanworks.org) by May 15.**



## WALK/RUN FOR LIBERIA MISSION

Register for our virtual **Walk/Run for Liberia** fundraiser taking place in May! Donations will be used to support Liberia Mission's education fund for Liberian students attending college and trade school. Scan the QR code to register or visit [tinyurl.com/WalkForLiberia](http://tinyurl.com/WalkForLiberia)



SCAN ME



**WALK OR RUN 3.1 MILES ON SATURDAY, MAY 20, 2023**

## HOLY WEEK AND TRIDUUM

There are so many special days filled with prayer, preparations, and processions during Holy Week on Liberia Mission. Traditionally, various celebrations throughout Holy Week are divided among Liberia Mission's St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Chapel, St. Francis Xavier Outstation, and Immaculate Conception Catholic Church, our mother parish.

**PALM SUNDAY:** To accommodate over 400 faithful from our entire parish, many preparations are made to transform the assembly grounds at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School into an open-air chapel. Prior to Mass, everyone assembles outside for the Palm Sunday procession marking Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. Liberians from all walks of life wave their palms while singing, "Hosanna! Jesus is the King of Kings!"



**HOLY TUESDAY:** In Liberia, the Chrism Mass is celebrated on Holy Tuesday. Each year a group of students and staff travel to Sacred Heart Cathedral to witness the blessing of the chrism oils.

**MAUNDY THURSDAY:** The whole day is devoted to preparations toward our traditional Seder Meal that takes place before Mass. Our students gather in the dining hall to re-enact the Passover. Directly following the Seder Meal is Holy Mass and the washing of the feet, another activity that the students engage in with genuine faith and interest.



**GOOD FRIDAY:** Silence is practiced throughout the day, and the Mission joins its brothers and sisters at St. Francis Xavier Outstation for a living Stations of the Cross, processed along the highway for over a mile before reaching the church. A Good Friday Liturgy follows the Stations, and then students return to the Mission, continuing their reflective, prayerful silence.



**HOLY SATURDAY:** Holy Saturday is another quiet day on the Mission. Throughout the day, preparations for the Easter celebration are made. The Easter Vigil is celebrated at 8:00pm, and suddenly it's Easter! After Mass, students and faith community members sing and dance, celebrating the risen Lord!



**EASTER SUNDAY:** Alleluia! Christ is risen! After journeying through the season of Lent, we celebrate the Resurrection. Holy Mass begins the day. Young children rush out of the chapel for the Easter egg hunt that immediately follows Mass, and the lucky person who finds the Golden Egg receives a special prize! The Mission and faith community then join together for a feast that includes food, music, and dancing. **Watch this video to see what Easter is like on the Mission!**



## CATECHISM

After setbacks caused by COVID-19, catechism and Sunday School are back on the mission! Each Sunday after Mass, a group of young boys and girls (mission students and local children from the surrounding community) convene together in the palava hut for Sunday School. This effort, guided by our pastor, Fr. Yao Louis Awoudja, was developed with the goal of preparing the youth to receive the Sacraments. Liberia Mission has never forced a student to become Catholic. Rather, God has worked through the Mission and school to touch the hearts of His children and ignite a passionate desire within them to become part of the Catholic Church.



It has not always been easy to organize the catechesis necessary to obtain the Sacraments, but with the help of our local faith community and resources acquired through the generosity of our donors and benefactors, we will be able to aid the Church in spreading the Gospel to the peripheries. There are three former beneficiaries actively pursuing their vocation to the priesthood and religious life, and several current beneficiaries seriously considering it. We give thanks to God for bringing catechism back on the Mission!

## GRADUATIONS



Various graduations are taking place this year, from St. Anthony of Padua, to Booker Washington Institute, and all the way up to the University of Liberia! **Elijah and Gabriel** are graduating from St. Anthony of Padua in June. Elijah and Gabriel came to the Mission eight years ago and have come a long way from where they began. They are both contemplating going to Booker Washington Institute (BWI) so that they can learn a trade and get a good job, whether they decide to go to university or not. **Roberta** graduated from BWI and received both her high school diploma AND certification in Secretarial Science. She hopes to study Information Technology at the college level.

**Kainly** will graduate from the University of Liberia in May with a Bachelor of Science in General Agriculture. A former beneficiary, Kainly is an excellent, hard-working employee on the Mission, dividing his time between his responsibilities on the farm and those surrounding the operation of the Mission's multiple generators and water pumps. He often participates in morning and evening prayer with his younger brothers and sisters on the Mission. We at the Mission are confident that, with a character, work ethic, and spiritual life such as his, he will succeed in whatever comes next!

## REMEMBERING MR. TUOPLEYEE

It is with heavy hearts that we inform you that our beloved School Principal, Mr. Andy S. Tuopleyee, passed away on January 22. Mr. Tuopleyee joined St. Anthony of Padua as a classroom teacher in September 2013 and taught English and Literature to the 7th through 9th graders. He was promoted to the Vice Principal position during the 2020/2021 school year and, on August 1, 2022, he was promoted to Principal. Well-loved by students and staff alike, Mr. Tuopleyee was a shining example of humility, honesty, and hard work. In the wake of this tragedy, current Vice Principal for Instruction, Mr. Theophilus Cooper, has been promoted to the position of Principal; and long-tenured junior-high teacher, Mr. Enoch K. Nuah, has become the new Vice Principal for Instruction. We will honor Mr. Tuopleyee's memory by continuing the standard of excellence he worked so hard to create. Thank you, Mr. Tuopleyee!



## TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: YASSAH B. KORBOI



*Yassah teaches 3rd grade at St. Anthony of Padua. Thanks to Yassah's hard work, her students took the West African Examination Council (WAEC) exam last year for the first time and the entire class passed. This achievement is a testament to Yassah's dedication and teaching ability. We are so proud of her! Our Mission Director John Young recently interviewed Yassah:*

**How did you come to St. Anthony's?** I heard about the opening through some friends of mine. I was checking on a piece of land that I had bought around the mission, and so I applied for the job. I had heard so many good things about St. Anthony's: how good the educational system was, the rules and regulations, how there was no bribery and all teachers worked hard throughout the day, etc. It seemed like a place I would want to work at, and it was ...it is.

**What's your favorite part of working at St. Anthony's?** I love working as a team with my other colleagues to maintain a high standard of education. We have a lot of children from different backgrounds attending this school, and so it compels us to come together and put aside our differences in order to work for the greater good of all students.

**In 2022, your 3rd grade class took the WAEC exam for the first time and received a 100% pass-rate. How did that make you feel?** I was impressed! It was the first year ever that my students took the WAEC. I felt proud because the students had really learned the material, and so, of course, it made me feel a great sense of accomplishment. We will do it again this year!

**Anything else?** I just want to say thank you to all here in Liberia and in the United States for making St. Anthony's the best! We get the materials we need, pay is on time, and the whole system is functioning as it should. I know that a great deal of that comes from the generous support we receive from our generous donors and benefactors. So I just want to be grateful. - Yassah B. Korboi



Support the children of Liberia Mission!  
Your donation helps us empower Liberian youth to break the cycle of poverty through faith and education.

[www.franciscanworks.org/give](http://www.franciscanworks.org/give)

## NEW CHAPEL WINDOWS

"Let Us Rebuild the House of the Lord!" That was the theme of the local faith community's harvest program this past November at Liberia Mission. Their goal was to raise funds to replace damaged and missing windows in St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Chapel. The fundraiser was a huge success, and today St. Michael's can boast of 19 brand-new windows! The faith-filled perseverance and determination of the members of our faith community, guided by the Holy Spirit, has made this act of gratitude possible! They desired to give back freely and joyously as a concrete sign of thanks for all that Liberia Mission has done not only inside the walls of the Mission, but also throughout local towns and villages.



Now the House of the Lord is more beautiful than ever! Additionally, they used extra funds to paint the interior of the chapel and sacristy. Having members of the faith community take full ownership of a project of this scale has been a beautiful development of local leadership and signifies a major step of collaboration between the Mission and the people it serves.

## FARM UPDATE FROM JOEY NEUHAUSER

"It's been said that one loves the morning smell of freshly cut grass, or of coffee, or even of napalm (that's a reference to *Apocalypse Now* if there are any younger readers). However, few have ever said they love the smell of pig manure in the morning, and yet, when I wake up every day, a small part of me welcomes the wall of offensive odor that invades my defenseless nostrils. Yes, for the past 3 months, I, a formerly upper-class Jew turned Catholic missionary, have found my way to the pig pens of Liberia. This truly has been a life-changing 3 months for me, as I endeavored to understand what it means to raise pigs, cows, and sheep in Liberia. My misadventures have led me places I had never imagined such as: negotiating fruitlessly with Fullah men from Guinea; waiting for hours at the port of Liberia to have someone come back from their lunch break; taking a motorcycle in the rain to buy ear tags; even slaughtering a pig with nothing but a steak knife and a lot of help from my fellow farm workers.



For many Americans like me, Liberia is a whole new world and farming here is no exception. It is a place where it rains 6-9 months a year, but we must go to the river to find any water. A place where if you work too hard you will get malaria, typhoid, skin rashes, pink eye, and any other disease I have been trying to forget about in my many sojourns to the hospital. Most importantly though, it is an adventure and one that I am happy to be on." *-Joey Neuhauser*

## WATER TOWER

Thanks to the generosity of our donors and benefactors, Liberia Mission will soon have a brand-new water tower that will help to supply it with a reliable source of clean water. The harsh dry and rainy seasons of Liberia had worn down the old structure with extreme heat and constant rainfall, and the ever-increasing size of our operations revealed the need for more water storage.



The brand-new, reinforced concrete water tower is projected to provide over 3,170 gallons of clean water – twice the capacity of water delivered by the old tower! In the Liberian setting, the importance of a capable, elevated water tower cannot be stressed enough. The water tanks must sit high above the Mission's buildings in order to provide them with adequate water pressure.

Flowing water is necessary to maintain proper hygiene practices, such as hand-washing, dish-washing, laundry, and bathing. It also frees students and staff from the burden of drawing water from a well by hand. As always, we are grateful to God and to all of you who have made this project possible. Thank you, O!