

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER FROM MAISON KWETU, DR CONGO

PEACE AND JOY TO YOU ALL

International Collaboration

Greetings to you all and thank you in advance. We want to start today with some good news for you and for us. As you know we are trying to find locally the persons or institutions that will eventually support our Maison Kwetu (Our Home). Even though we are far from reaching that goal, there are some very good signs of recognizing our existence, of appreciating our work and of a desire to give us a hand. We saw this at Christmas time. We had 16 visitors (individuals or groups) who came at times from afar in order to see what we are doing and in order to get to know the children. Others from Italy and the USA contacted us by internet. You might be interested in the list of these local people:

- Mama Anny - Mariapolis
- Honorable Tshizainga, provincial deputy
- Mr Patrick Mikombe, agent Mumi
- Mr Nawej, KCC (mining company)
- Pastor Ivon, Eglise le Jourdain - Musonoie
- Mr Germain, Business man
- Pastor Aaron-Mbuyu, Minister of Prayer
- Pastor Erman, Church Colaja
- Mr the Journalist RTV (Blessing)
- Mr Fidel et Mr Paulin, agents of KCC
- Mr Christiano, Mariapolis (English)
- ASBL Un Don pour Sourire, Cathédrale St Barbara
- ASBL AGC (Jeunes Etudiants)
- ASBL Jeunes Ambassadeurs d'Afrique
- Eglise Christ-King, Dilungu
- Leo Imbiens, Roff Congo (store)

Excuse us if we have forgotten others or if we badly wrote you names, your correct names are written in heaven.

What did they bring? (See chapter 25 of St Mathew's Gospel, verses 25-36)

- Cookies
- Sugar, Soft Drinks
- A whole living cow
- Palm Oil
- Sacks of Rice
- Sacs of Flour
- Clothing for the children
- Soap for showers and for washing clothes
- Shoes,
- Toys
- Soccer Balls

We have no fotos of these wonderful people so this letter is one way of recognizing their gifts. Because of them we are enlarging our prayer life; Catholics and other religions are praying together for the kids. What you are doing in your countries, your fellow believers are starting to do here in the Congo.

Bumpy transition to adulthood via Marijuana

Some of our former angels are proving to be little devils. One of them is hooked on the weed and will probably have to leave professional school in order to be helped, above all by our psychologist.

Dr Kabulo, our psychologist, has already begun to work with sub-groups in our home (pre-adols, adolescents, young adults). We all go to a room in the local church where we meet for one to two hours then we all sit around a long table to eat together. The kids seem to enjoy it. Hope the messages pass into their hearts.

Epilepsy attacks our John

During the evening and night, John had more than 10 seizures, which prompted us to take him directly to the psychiatric hospital. He spent four days in sleep and when he came back to consciousness and was ready to return home the doctor warned us to follow a strict regime of food for him in order to avoid the seizures. How are they treating epilepsy where you live?

One Boy returns

We sent 16 boys to a boarding school in a village where the older boys can study and learn a trade, masonry and wood work. Two are not adapting well, the smoker of weed and another boy who simply could not take the life of the village. He returned to us and to his family. May God be with him, and he with God.

Our Former Prisoner

He spent about two weeks in the mental hospital where the final diagnosis was that he was not mentally unbalanced but is suffering the shock of his five years in prison. Thanks be to God, his family welcomed him back and is helping him adjust to normal life.

“Our restaurant”, a first step

When we find the children on the streets they are hungry. My friend who has a restaurant has welcomed us for years and I can feed the kids and pay later. We have a good relationship and the kids love his food.



A Big Event: Marriage

One of our dreams is that our kids will grow up healthy in order to marry healthy. EDDY is one of our volunteers who grew up in our former home, Maison Wengi. When he joined our team as an adult, we knew we made a good choice for the kids took to him immediately. He has begun the African way of preparing for

marriage with a girl who is also a seamstress. We hope to open up a small shop for her in our center. Here is a foto of them both.



Just received the bad news

Yesterday, Sunday the 10th of February, we received the bad news that one of the boys with whom we have been working for two years is once again in prison in his home town. He and two others had restrained a girl in her home and then stole \$250. We do not have all the details yet we know that there is more suffering in his future. He needs the prayers of us all. Thanks to the Police for the Protection of Children and our excellent team, we succeeded in getting the boy back into our center.

Franciscans lose their Pigs

Last month we had more than 60 pigs and this month we have none. All have died of some sickness. This is our first failure with pigs. This will mean less meat on the table. I convey this information for I remembered that the doctor told us to give a lot of pork to our epileptic boy.

A Promising artist

At times some children reveal their talents and leave us all astounded and grateful. For Christmas one of the children made out of mud statues of Joseph, Mary and Jesus. I asked our photographer to take its picture, for his St. Joseph is completely original. We are searching someone to help develop his talents.



A Child Died in a Hole

In these last months, hundreds of young “miners” have streamed to our village to dig for minerals. They come with no discipline and they leave deep open holes behind them. Our village is filled with children and last month a child fell into a 30 meters deep hole and died. We are waiting for the authorities to put some discipline into this exploitation. Here is a foto of how these artisanal miners live.



A Sister in Lubumbashi, Sr Helene

Sister Helene had already taken in two of our street girls from Kolwezi. One stayed but the other one ran back to Kolwezi. She seems willing to take charge of a home for these girls if she can find help. We know a benefactor who is working for this goal and hopefully we can put him in touch with this sister. What a gift.

Violence against street children

Two of our children were attacked by a local man and a foreigner because they were bothersome and probably trying to steal. The foreigner took a bar of iron and broke one boy's arm in two places. The other worked with accomplices to cut images with a razor in the back of the other boy. Both criminals disappeared.



Come and go

Here is a foto of our most recent children of whom some have already run away. We are trying to understand why they do not want the security that our center offers.



Closing Words

We are sure that you caught in this bulletin a groan of pain for those children who are growing up badly. It is true as St Paul say, “we are groaning like a woman giving birth”. But without that groaning there would be no births. At times we have to spend a lot of time with problem children and others feel that we are paying favoritism. Slowly they are understanding that “Jesus came not for the healthy but for the sick” and at times we have to be with the sick. We told the story of our epileptic boy, John. As soon as we put him in the hospital, we announced in the local radio this event and we invited the parents to come to the hospital. No one came. Our Kapenda was there 24 hours a day caring to John. Like Kapenda, we try to be caring for all. So we do not complain but we have certainly focused our prayer in their direction. There are certain zones of their lives that we have not yet discovered so we need great patience and great gentleness. The children fear violence because many have known it in their families. We know that you have similar experiences, at times in your own families. For this reason let’s keep one another in prayer.

If you want to participate in this project for the children you can contact Bro Joe, Franciscan Missionary Union, St Louis, Missouri 63118, or if you want to address us directly, use Western Union, to Fr Lawrence Damien Isabell, resident in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Thank you from us all.