At Home in Homa Bay

A group of 20 delegates from throughout the St. Cloud Diocese traveled to our partner diocese of Homa Bay, Kenya for fourteen days this past March. The following are reflections from three delegation members about their experience and what touched them.

Fr. Mark Stang, Pastor of the 5-Parish Community in Holdingford, Opole, St. Anna and St. Wendel: A heartfelt moment that I experienced in Kenya was as we were traveling along the road getting close to Homa Bay. Faces lit up and hands waved to greet us. I felt so comfortable, as if I was at a family reunion even though I had never met these people before. The first day in Homa Bay I was honored to celebrate the Mass at the Cathedral; 600 excited faces greeted me. I said, "My brothers and sisters in Christ, the Lord be with you." They responded back with such strength that each one of you reading this may hear the echo in your heart now, "and also with you!!"

Jim Rudolph, parishioner at St. Michael’s Parish in St. Cloud, employee of Catholic Charities for the Diocese and member of the Homa Bay Leadership Team: My first trip to Homa Bay was in 2004 and then again this past March. I was fortunate to be able to return to the same parish. When I arrived at Blessed Sacrament parish for the second time I admitted to my hosts that I felt as though I was returning home. It did not seem as though I had been away for over four years. I suspect that much of this feeling was the fact that I saw very little change in the people or places I re-visited. In our culture we move quickly through our life experiences and change is seen as positive. In the Kenyan culture change happens more slowly and there appears to be a greater respect for the past and for history. Change is good but there is something to be said for how cautiously the African culture approaches change. There is much to be learned by both our cultures in how we travel through our life journey; neither is totally correct.

My trips to Homa Bay have taught me to look at my life and my relationships with other people differently. I find that I am able to give more of my time to those around me and I am no longer "on the clock" as much as I used to be. Our culture values how much we are able to accomplish in a given period of time and we are always looking for ways to do more in the time given us. My trips to Homa Bay have taught me to look more closely at the quality of the use of my time. These trips have truly helped me to slow down a little and really experience my life and the people around me rather than running through it and past them. I have many good friends in Homa Bay to thank for this.
Olivia Klemek, high school student and parishioner at St. Boniface Parish in Cold Spring: No words can adequately explain the beauty of the land or the people much less the whole of Kenya. My eyes were opened in a way they have never been before as I attended classes at local high schools, talked to people, as well as in prayer. To see that God created everyone in his image and likeness as I held a baby, or spoke with the oldest member of the church, was a true gift. I have been changed because of this trip. I am more aware of my surroundings and of what needs to be done in the world. Minnesota, the United States, or even North America is not where the world ends, but where global solidarity begins.

Additional Photo Highlights from the 2009 delegation:

Jim Rudolph (right) with little Jim, born and named after Jim during his visit to the parish in 2004.

Fr. John Odero (left) receives a set of Liturgical vestments donated by the St. Cloud Children's Home as a gift to the Diocese of Homa Bay.

Sarah Rudolph tries throwing the way her Kenyan friends have taught her.
Kayley Lain with a baby at Mass in Homa Bay

Tracy Skłuzacek receives a calf from her hosts in Rapogi parish