God of Mercy,
You that went out to encounter
The disciples on the way to Emmaus,
Grant us a missionary spirit
And send us forth to encounter
Our brothers and sisters,
To walk along beside them,
Listen to their hopes and dreams,
Rekindle their faith
With the fire of your Word,
Prepare them to recognize you
In the Eucharist
And send them as missionary disciples
To share the joy of the Gospel
To present and future generations
Of every race, language and culture.

We ask you this
From our burning hearts
Filled with the Holy Spirit,
In the Name of your beloved Son
And through the intercession of our Mother,
Mary of Guadalupe,
Star of the New Evangelization.
Amen.

~ Prayer for the Fifth National Encuentro ~
The following is a reflection from Molly Minnerath, a parishioner at St. Mary’s in Alexandria and a 2016 College of St. Benedict’s graduate, currently serving in Bolivia.

“So, you want to spend all your time in Bolivia in the walls of this disgusting prison?”

This was the question a woman at San Sebastián’s Prison for Women in Cochabamba, Bolivia, asked me last week. I had just gotten up from sipping Coca-Cola at a table in the courtyard with one of my friends who lives in the prison. I saw this particular Bolivian woman approaching me, with determination, and was startled when she greeted me in English. Our conversation primarily consisted of basic questions, until she looked at me speculatively and told me she saw me in the prison a lot—why, she wondered, would I want to spend my year in this prison and not exploring Bolivia?

I responded to this question with what felt totally natural and completely honest: I wanted to spend my year in Bolivia within the walls of that particular prison because my best friends in Bolivia lived there, and I wanted to be with them, wherever or however I could.

As I was graduating from college last spring, I knew I was being nudged toward a year of service. I applied to multiple programs, and after months of tough discernment, I have come to find myself in Cochabamba, Bolivia, serving with the Maryknoll Bolivia Mission Immersion program. My time here so far has been the most challenging, yet fruitful, times of my life. I work with two specific organizations in Cochabamba. I work at Niños con Valor, a home that offers holistic and renowned care to children from around Bolivia who have been orphaned, abandoned or removed from high-risk home situations. Niños is an especially unique place as it was the first—and remains one of the few—orphanares in Bolivia to offer adequate care to kids with HIV/AIDS. The other volunteer site where I find myself passing most of my week is with an organization called Manos con Libertad. Manos is a cooperative of women in, and transitioning out of, the women’s prisons. The program runs a catering service and bakery that the women work in as a transitional job out of prison. They also offer a plethora of classes, all aiming at empowering the women to make a fair wage and support their families, while giving them a place to foster stability, strength and community.

Before moving to Bolivia, I had never stepped foot in a prison. Now, I spend about half my week in one. This experience fosters an almost constant breaking open of my heart that I didn’t know was possible before, and allows me to enter into a space of humbling accompaniment, gracious listening and incomprehensible loving. I know I can offer very little to the women I spend my afternoons chatting and sipping Coca-Cola with—and this reality plagues me with deep questions and constant reflection. But I still believe in the power of conversation, friendship, solidarity and vulnerability—values I hold dear and values that propel me forward into each new encounter I have in Bolivia.

Of course, I didn’t wake up one morning and magically find myself thinking deeply about questions of justice and peace, thinking of ways I can serve and what it means to be a disciple, like I do now. I had some very formative experiences in my youth and young adult life that I can clearly see shaped me for the adventures I am on now. Experiences like growing up in an incredibly supportive parish where I could partake in service trips and volunteer opportunities, as well as one that enriched my personal spirituality with profound liturgies and mentors with whom I am still in contact. I had formative summer jobs and attended summer camps that I still reflect on often too. Similarly, I grew up with incredibly enthusiastic parents, who have always been my most loyal supporters and have encouraged all of my life-changing experiences without hesitation. I owe much of the woman of faith and passion I am today to them.

My commitment to my program officially comes to an end this summer and I have few plans of what might be next for me (perhaps more time serving abroad or living at a Catholic Worker in the States or something of the sort). However, to me, this next transition doesn’t feel like an end as much as it does a continuation. Mission has come to mean so much more for me than just this one year in Bolivia. Mission is a way that I have come to orient my life. It is an attitude, a way of being and interacting with the (Continued on page 5)
Way back in eighth grade at Sts. Peter & Paul School in Gilman, Sister Ralph gave us an assignment; I’m not sure exactly what it was, but for some reason I became connected with the Medical Mission Sisters. They sent me some literature and even a reel-to-reel presentation to share with my classmates. Ever since then I have had an interest in mission. Then I got married and the thought went to the back of my mind as I was raising a family. After my mother died in 2007, my thought of going on a mission trip came forward once again. In 2013 the Holy Spirit guided me to apply for the office manager position at the Mission Office, which was offered to me and here I am. Since I started I have had opportunities to meet several missioners, and in 2014 I had the great opportunity to spend time with the delegation from Homa Bay. So delightful.

I also enjoyed getting to know Father John Odero, a missionary priest from the Diocese of Homa Bay, and getting to know a little about his home country. On September 6, 2016, while traveling with Father John as he prepared to depart for his home diocese after serving in Saint Cloud for five years, he told me I need to come to Homa Bay. My response was, “If it is God’s will, I will come.”

Then I was offered the chance; in December I was asked to participate in a work trip to Homa Bay. So, over the Christmas break I did a lot of praying and talked to my sons and my husband. With the responses I received, I guessed it was “God’s will,” which I didn’t expect so soon after saying it to Father John.

The afternoon of February 22 we were flying off to spend ten days away from Minnesota. I was able to attend 6:30am Mass with the Sisters at Rosa Mystica Spiritual Centre, where we spent one night in Nairobi. I felt really one with them and they were very welcoming. Later that day, we were greeted at the airport in Kisumu by Fr. Abraham, who had been with the 2014 delegation. We headed to Cardinal Otunga Pastoral Centre in Rongo, which would be our base station for the next six days.

On Saturday we attended the ordination of a Mill Hill Missionary. The three and a half hour liturgy was so beautiful with lots of singing, dancing, and celebrating. Thousands of people attended including many children dressed in their school uniforms and so well behaved for that length of time. On our way back, we stopped at Rodi, a parish of only two years. The choir was practicing outside and we were able to join them in song and dance. Loved it! We also stopped in Rongo, where we visited with the Small Christian Community who was meeting and again joined them in a song and dance. So welcoming.

Sunday found us in Oyugis for Mass with Bishop Philip for the start of the parish’s 50th anniversary year. I was honored to be asked to do the second reading. Again, this Mass was well over three hours with so much lovely singing and dancing that it didn’t seem that long. Everyone, men, women and children were dressed so well. Reminded me of my younger years when the people always dressed up to go to church. After Mass we enjoyed a big meal with many different types of familiar meats, fish, potatoes, vegetables and fruit. You would think we were royalty, but that is how they treat visitors in their culture.

Monday the Diocesan Leadership Team met at the Pastoral Centre for over four very good hours of discussion about the partnership. It was great to meet so many from the team, some who were with the 2014 delegation. Lights were out early, literally, because the power went out and didn’t come back on before I drifted off to sleep.

The next day found us on the road early for the drive through beautiful hill and valley country, as we made our way to multiple meetings, visiting three different parishes on various ends of the diocese. And with each visit was at least one delicious meal. I guess you could call this day our Mardi Gras in Kenya with all the food we ate the day before Lent began.

We took part in Ash Wednesday Mass at the Homa Bay Cathedral, packed full with many school children. It was all so beautiful and spiritually moving. After Mass I had the opportunity to meet Mill Hill Missionary Father Lawrence, who was inspired to become a priest by our own hometown Father John Kaiser.

The trip was very worthwhile and I’m glad I was given the opportunity to go. I’ve always wanted to experience the Mass in another country because from what I have heard they seem to have such great spirituality and love for God, and they do. Their hospitality and friendship are out of this world. I pray God will continue to bless my brothers and sisters in Kenya abundantly.
2016: A Year of Blessings

As you can see from the charts to the right, it was another great year of ministry for the St. Cloud Mission Office. Here are a few highlights:

**Income**: It was an extra generous year in 2016! Exactly half of our income for the calendar year came from very generous estates of those whose love for mission and support of their global brothers and sisters will now live on long after their leaving us in this world. In addition, we had great support for our many missionaries and mission organizations all over the world. All told, your generosity brought in over one million dollars for mission!

**Out-Going**: With the tremendous generosity this past year, the Mission Office was able to give some extra support to our mission connections. At Christmastime alone, we sent out $53,000 to various people and programs serving the poor and vulnerable both locally and globally. This was in addition to our usual year-end contributions to great organizations such as Catholic Relief Services and the Pontifical Mission Societies, the two of which combined received a total this year of over a quarter million dollars of our out-going funds.

**Time**: With a delegation to Homa Bay, Kenya in 2016, a great deal of time was spent dedicated to the solidarity work of CRS and our partnerships. But we also found time to offer 60 different Mission Education events, put on a fantastic Solidarity in Mission Workshop, host another successful Mission Rally and Barn Dance, join in conferences and prayer events, improve our social media and build new and improved relationships with our missionaries. The results of which have been worth all the hours involved!

**Favorites**: Here are a few thoughts from the Mission Office staff on their favorite things about the past year:

“So many times last year it felt like Christmas over and over again as we opened up letters and contributions that were unexpected. I am forever grateful for the generosity from people throughout our Diocese and beyond who help to make our ministry thrive.” (Beth, director)

“The 2016 delegation to Homa Bay was one of my highlights; I love watching delegates come back with a glow on their faces and hearing their stories, even long after their return. And this year was very special, because one of those stories included a delegate whose time and experience in Kenya helped her discern her vocational call to religious life. It reiterated to me that global solidarity can and does change lives!” (Kateri, coordinator of mission education)

“I feel so blessed to have the opportunity to greet the people as they come to our door and especially blessed when people whom I have never met feel comfortable in sharing so much of their life with me. I know that God has put me here for that purpose.” (Lora, office manager)

Thank you to all who helped make our year such a successful and joyous one, and who continue to fill our ministry with blessings of all kinds!
Finding Joy through Micro-Credit

Father Tony Kroll, priest of the Saint Cloud Diocese and returned missioner, shares below about his passion in retirement, and how you can join him.

God loves me, so I love you.

In my retirement I volunteer to promote micro-credit. It is my apostolate. I enjoy it. I think it is the best way to help the immigrant before he/she becomes an immigrant. Almost everyone knows they are suffering too much.

The Native American Indians were here, then came the Spaniards, the Hispanics were here, the colonists came, the Africans were forced here, then came my European ancestors, and more immigrants came, and still come. And still we have too much abundance. Let’s share it. The immigrants bring jobs and help our economy. They buy cars and trailer homes and shoes. Most of them are like you, good people who love their children. But they would prefer to stay in their home country if given the chance.

Micro-credit is making a small loan possible to a responsible person for a short time. Generally, about $1000. It is a little jump start. The one getting the loan can set up his/her business, make some money, send their kids to school and put screens on their home. Then they don’t have to travel to far away places looking for a job.

I have been investing some money in WCCN, Working Capital for Community Needs, since 1999. I invest in Central American Countries. I get 3% interest. And when I need it for my assisted living, I can pull it out. It is not charity. Maybe it’s love. I am just using my money for the common good. And it gives me joy!

It gives others joy too. Blanca recently graduated college, and she is ready to help the world through micro-credit:

For more information on Micro-Credit or how you can get involved in WCCN’s work, contact Father Tony Kroll at:

tonykroll@hotmail.com
320-493-7873

Mission is an Attitude, Cont.

(Continued from page 2)

world. Just as much as I am committed to “mission” here in Bolivia right now, I am committed to “reverse mission” and “continued mission” when I get back to the States. I am committed to coming back to the Diocese as a changed disciple and carrying with me all that I have felt and all that I have learned for my lifetime. I feel called to share this experience, and to find ways to live on the margins wherever I find myself next. I believe wholeheartedly that the Gospel calls me to live out the values of accompaniment, generosity, simplicity, faith, humility and perseverance, and ultimately, that the Gospel calls me to mission—to being “sent”—in

unique and challenging ways a million times over. By committing to this I am sure I will always be diving deeper into the questions of justice and peace, questions that were most definitely poised in my early formation, but have taken on greater cross-cultural meaning during my year in Bolivia.

Sister Ita Ford, a Maryknoll Sister and hero of mine who was martyred for her unceasing love and concern for the poor in El Salvador said: “I hope that you come to find that which gives life a deep meaning for you. Something worth living for – maybe event worth dying for, something that energize you, enthuses you, enables you to keep moving ahead. I can’t tell you what it might be – that’s for you to find, to choose, to love. I can just encourage you to start looking and support you in the search.”

Each day I am in Bolivia I realize that this time on mission has given me deep purpose; my life in mission continues to energize and enthuse me. I am confident in the call I feel on my heart to live and love deeply and to be an active, engaged, contemplative, hospitable, and faithful women in our ever-messy, yet beautiful, world for the rest of my life.
There are countless mission activities happening all the time in the St. Cloud Diocese, ranging from parish mission groups, to fair trade sales, to mission education and service. All these activities are important to the work of celebrating our global Church. In this issue we highlight the Watatulu Education Fund, a project begun in 2002 by Father Dan Ohmann, MM. With the help of his family and supporters, Father Dan continues to help make incredible things happen for the Watatulu people of Tanzania, whom he lived and ministered among for over 20 years before returning to the U.S. in 2016. Below, his niece, Ruth Meyer, shares about the fruit of the project and Father Dan’s love for the Watatulu people.

Greetings, we wish you many blessings in this new year. As we plan for the future of the Watatulu Education Fund, we share stories of the students, Francisca, Mattiasi and Susanna, who have been with the program since the beginning.

In September, Francisca graduated from a three-year Catholic Nursing Program in Mwanza. Father Danny has a long history with Francisca and family. When she was in public primary school, her teacher recommended that Father Danny sponsor her. Unfortunately, her father had passed away and the decision was up to her oldest brother and mother. Both said no and threatened a case against Father. Francisca’s teacher stepped in, and said that according to law, if a student passes the government exams and has a sponsor, parents cannot deny the right to an education. Francisca currently works at the Ndoleleji Mission Hospital waiting for a government assignment. She is requesting an assignment with her people, the Watatulu.

Father Danny heard about Mattiasi when his father had agreed to pay one cow for a year at a primary school, but later refused to pay. On the recommendation of Mattiasi’s teacher, Father paid the fees, and sponsored him beyond secondary school. He received a Teacher’s Certificate, and is teaching in a Catholic School north of Mwanza. He wants to enter the Seminary.

We’ve written about Susanna, the Watatulu who was diagnosed with Type I diabetes as a young girl. She is in a three-year medical program at the university in Dar es Salaam. She continues to take insulin.

Following a Christmas break, the Watatulu students are beginning a new school year. We’ve agreed to pay for nineteen students in primary and nine in secondary schools. Like Francisca, Mattiasi and Susanna, we expect that more students will request money for further education.

Thank you for your donations to Father Danny. All donations are used to support the Watatulu people.

“Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection not in books alone but on every leaf of springtime.” (Martin Luther)