

# Lake House of Prayer

*Transforming lives through silence and solitude in Christ  
Mwanza, Tanzania, East Africa*

*Summer-Fall 2014*

Dear Friends and Sponsors,

I am writing to you from my family home in Fairfield, California. I am at the end of my sabbatical year which I started in September of 2013. It has been a very rewarding and blessed time for me and I'd like to share with you some of highlights of the year.

I started the year in the Sonoran Desert in Tucson, Arizona at the Redemptorist Renewal Center with 11 other priests, sisters and brothers on renewal from their ministries. The program was for 10 weeks in which we had different speakers that helped us bring together a holistic way of understanding our faith by giving due attention to our BodyMindSpirit. I enjoyed very much my hikes in the magnificent beauty of the desert. I learnt the spiritual virtue of being alert by watching for the rattle snakes as I walked. In my room was a plaque that said, "Build the Dream and the Dream will build you." This saying became the guide for my various experiences during the remaining time of the sabbatical, the Dream being creating a House of Prayer in Tanzania.

I made my family home in California my base after the Renewal Program for the next few months. For a missionary part of a sabbatical is spending quality time with one's family because for the past 24 years even when I visited my family it was for a very short time. I am thankful of the opportunity to be a part of my sisters, brother, nephew and nieces lives in a manner in which we got to know each other better.

I made several trips from my family home as part of this sabbatical. I visited a Hermitage in Sonoma, California three times to help me experience in depth the solitude and silence that are necessary to start a House of Prayer in Tanzania when I return. I was able to have conversations with a two Hermits (a Hermit is someone to has a vocation to live in solitude and silence) who helped me to discover how Christ is leading me into the same solitude and silence with the Lake House of Prayer in Tanzania.

The Camaldolese Monks on the coast of California at Big Sur were my hosts for two weeks during Easter. Again, I was blessed to get a room in the old monastery building which was a ranch house before the monks came. The room was traditionally called a cell there was barely enough room for a very small bed and a wooden desk. I joined the monks in their beautiful singing of the psalms at the Liturgy of the Hours. I took long hikes in the hills overlooking the expanse of the mighty Pacific Ocean. I was able to speak to a few of the monks about the Dream and received affirmation and good feedback on how to provide an atmosphere of Silence and Solitude.

I attended three weekend retreats in the San Francisco Bay Area also during this time. The first by a Trappist Monk Fr. Menninger who was one of the founding fathers on the Centering Prayer

Movement. The second retreat was given by a Veronica Rolf on the English mystic Julian of Norwich. And finally, Paula D'Arcy gave a fine weekend on facing life's challenges in faith with a strong spiritual practice. I choose these three retreats to help me personally and apostolically to be ready for the new challenges and apostolate when I return to Tanzania.

I had the unique opportunity to spend 3 weeks with 12 other Maryknoll priests and brothers as we shared our mission stories and prayed together for our future in Mission at our facility in Los Altos.

I also participated in a 10 day Zen Meditation retreat. I feel strongly that our Christian Contemplative tradition has been neglected, especially when it comes to silence. Being on this intensive silent retreat with 30 other people in which we spend 7 and a half hours a days in meditation greatly helped me to understand how vitally important it is to have a contemplative practice that helps us enter into God's Silence.

Finally, I just completed the first part of an intensive summer program at a Jesuit University of Creighton in Omaha, Nebraska. It was a very challenging experience for me to return to graduate school at my age in such an focused way. I will be returning for the following two summers to complete my goal of getting a certificate in Spiritual Direction. A skill I will be using in the House of Prayer.

What's next? I return to Tanzania on August 10th by way of Nairobi, Kenya. I will return to the parish we started, Transfiguration Parish in Mabatini, Mwanza to greet the people I lived and worked with for so many years. Then I will seek out a new place to live, probably the Diocesan Hostel. I will live there as I seek to secure the land the diocese has overlooking Lake Victoria to build a House of Prayer. I will need to build a fence and a small simple room to live in. I hope to live very simply and invite the people to join me in prayer.

As we move into a new chapter, I hope to stay in touch with you all. I will still write this newsletter, but we want to phase out of mailing a hard copy of it. For example, many of you already receive this via email. But if you'd still prefer to receive it in the mail, please send a quick note to Mary Eble, 344 E. Pacific Ave, Fairfield, CA 94533. If you wish to receive via email, please send a message to her at [mary@lakehouseofprayer.org](mailto:mary@lakehouseofprayer.org).

Another to stay in contact with me is through my new blog ([www.lakehouseofprayer.org](http://www.lakehouseofprayer.org)) where I will be making frequent blog entries with pictures to help give you--my supporters a clearer idea what we are doing with the House of Prayer. You can also contact me by email if you had any comments or questions.

Thank you for your faithful support through the years with Mabatini Parish. I invite you to be with me in this new adventure in faith of the Lake House of Prayer.

In Christ's Peace, Fr. Jim

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Please indicate in the memo section of the check that the donation is for Fr. James Eble's mission account.