

## **St. Emmanuel Parish—Landsend**

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Dear Everyone,

Would you believe, it has been a whole year since the last “dear everyone” letter. We are now approaching Christmas of 2006. As you can see from the letterhead, I have changed location and jobs. My term as Provincial came to an end on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April, 2006 and the new Provincial, Fr. Siegfried Jwara has taken over the responsibility of leadership in the Mthatha Province. I tried to make it plain that I was going on 71 when my term came to an end, and if I were to be re-elected, I would be 74 when I finished the second term. By that time I would have trouble remembering my own name, much less anyone else's.

Fr. Siegfried is more than 20 years my junior but has had experience as Provincial of Mariannhill, has worked with students at our Seminary for 6 years, has been novice master, and was a part of the international team in Rome for some years. Besides that, he specializes in “inculturation”, is an African born and bred here in South Africa, and, has a background in psychology, and, I believe, is eminently qualified for the task at hand.

I really felt the stress of the job and am happy that someone much younger was willing to take it over, although his condition was that he continue to be the parish priest of Port St. John's, a parish right on the Indian Ocean, but with several rural outstations. He needed that parish respite to get away from total administration, which has been his cup of tea for the past too many years. It also happened, just recently, that our Kenya outreach, which was ably looked after by Br. Yvon Bourret, was taken away from the Mthatha Province, for many reasons, and was made a region on its own, directly under the Generalate. That lessens the load of responsibility so that to be parish priest of Port St. John's and Provincial at the same time are handleable.

As for me, when I met our Superior General, Fr. Damian Weber, at our Provincial Council in February, I asked if he had anything in mind for me when I was freed of the Provincial responsibility at the end of April. When he said “no”, I went to the Bishop of Mthatha, Oswald Hirmer, and told him that I would be available wherever he needed someone. He assigned me to St. Emmanuel Parish, here at Landsend, a rural parish, and I was delighted.

I would have liked to have taken time off for a mini-sabbatical, but the dates didn't coincide with any reasonable courses that were taking place, and the people of Landsend had lost their priest, a young man, who died in January, and were anxious to have someone come to be their shepherd. So I just asked the Bishop if I could take off for the month of May and hide out somewhere and go through all my papers and photos and get them in order, something that I haven't had a chance to do in all these years.

A family was good enough to allow me to use their cottage for at least three weeks, but, as I discovered later, the cottage was just at the foot of the Drakensburg Mountains and it was very coocold. The temperature, outside was usually as low as minus 4 degrees (centigrade), and inside, I don't think that it ever got above 10 degrees inside the house. But I worked most of every day and got done much of what I wanted to do, e.g. all the papers, articles, clippings, etc. but I ran out of albums for the photos and still have much to do there.

I arrived at St. Emmanuel's here at Landsend on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June and since then have been supremely happy with the pastoral work and with the work of trying to get the mission back in shape after having been neglected, maintenance-wise, for many years now. I began using picks and shovels

and sickles and have been doing a lot of physical work, and, in the process have one from 75 kgs. To 64 kgs. My pants are falling off and I have had to make new holes in my belt. But, I think that I have never been so fit and am thinking of entering the Mr. Universe contest next year. Apart from carting away rubbish, 30 van loads of it, to a donga behind the mission, we installed new electric cables, painted several buildings, repaired fences, repaired the damage to roofs and drainpipes done to the mission by miniature hurricanes, poured a concrete slab at the entrance to the mission which had become eroded to the point where a normal car had difficulty entering, removed the old windows from the old hall and installed new ones, etc. etc. etc. This was in between the pastoral work which is mostly with the small Christian communities which I have fallen in love with as they are more informal and give a chance to all of us to grow in Christ and his spirit while getting to know one another better and sharing our life experiences better. Sr. Paulus Maria is my right hand woman, and has been breaking me into the job. It has really been a joy. However, God has not cooperated very well. Since July, it has rained and rained and rained, to the point where we could not get the work we wanted to do done, and the whole place is water-logged. We haven't seen more than a few days of sunshine in the past few months. I blame Bush, of course, for not signing the Kyoto Protocol. I have never seen rain like this in all my 40 years here.

I just heard on the news today that the US government has already spent more than 350 billion dollars on that stupid war in Iraq, and Bush is determined to fight to the finish, even if it means that every last Iraqi will be dead, but we will have "won". At the rate of 120 a day, it shouldn't take too long. Excuse me for being cynical. I am happy that the Democrats have taken over both the House of Representatives and the Senate, but, honestly, I am not sure that I trust that they will do much better in any case.

We have been plagued by our Vice President's cases, here in South Africa, and there is still more to come, but, over all, we are not doing too badly. Church-wise, we are struggling here at Landsend as it is difficult to make contact with the youth, all of whom are spending whatever free time they have, studying, even Saturdays and Sundays. It is too much, but our education system still has many flaws and all need whatever extra help they can get.

Nomonde is still struggling to study for her degree and at the same time to run her Montessori Pre-School at the edge of town (for kids who can only afford 30 or 40 rand a month—(about \$5.50 a month) as well as another 12 or so schools in the deep rural areas. It is ridiculous and mostly she is starving but the new law says that she must have a degree if she wants to hold her post as director of the school. 1<sup>st</sup> world rules for 3<sup>rd</sup> world conditions.

I have a request for any of you who are able to help. Her vehicle, which she uses to fetch the kids and bring them back home after school, is ageing and will soon need replacing. I am just guessing but another vehicle that can handle the back roads and at the same time can haul the kids will cost about R300,000. (roughly \$43,000). What I am proposing is that each of you start some kind of project to raise some money (bake sales, raffles, sponsored walks, flea markets, general fund raising, etc.) and we will open a kind of trust fund, so that, as funds are collected, we can deposit them in the fund over the next year and have enough to get another vehicle when this one decides to give up the ghost. I just had a look at her tires today and they are as smooth as a baby's ----. (bottom!) That alone is about R800 per tire (\$114). I have been given some money to help to cover some of those things, but not for a new vehicle.

Otherwise, I have many reasons, you all being among them, to be grateful to God for so many blessings. So, once again, I want to wish you all a very blessed Christmas and a new year full of appreciation for the many blessings we have been given. When I think of Iraq, DRC, Darfur, Zimbabwe, Palestine and Lebanon and the whole middle-East situation, not to mention the ongoing debacle after Hurricane Katrina in the States, I see that there is enough for any committed person (Christian, Muslim, Hindu, whatever) to devote him/herself to for the new year 2007. I love you all and may God bless you all abundantly this Christmas and in the New Year. Love and Peace, Fr. Cas.

(There is so much more but let this suffice for the time being)