



You can sure tell that I am a newbie! In the last blog, I had a photo of Phillip and Leons picking out mangos. Of course, they were not mangoes, but avocados! The keen eye of our world traveler Dr. Diana Rodríguez-Lozano, Ph.D. (gently) pointed out my error. The avocados are in the photo on the left and the mangos are in the photo on the right. How could I not tell the difference????



On Sunday, September 1, Fr. Andrzej, Francis, Gervas, Peter, and I left our formation house in Morogoro to travel to Butiama where the candidates will prepare for Novitiate that begins on September 15. We took our white van for the



journey, which would take us 2 days of driving. We left after Mass and breakfast in the morning and drove 500 km on the first day. We arrived at a pastoral retreat center at about 7:30 p.m., and after a dinner of chicken and fries, we went to bed. Unfortunately, when we awoke, there was no water. We were on the road again at 6:30 a.m. and drove another 600 km until our arrival in Butiama. We stopped for lunch and took a photo with a painting of Mt. Kilimanjaro in the background.



Some of the roads are very good; others not so good! This a good one!



The trees to the left (above photo) are the famous African Baobab tree, which is often referred to as the “Tree of Life” because it stands as a symbol of life on the African plains. It behaves like a giant succulent and up to 80% of the trunk is water. Some people used to rely on the trees as a valuable source of water when the rains failed and the rivers dried. A single tree can hold up to 4,500 liters (1,189 gallons), while the hollow center of an old tree can also provide valuable shelter. It is also referred to as an “upside down” tree thanks to the root-like aspect of its branches. The *Adansonia digitata* species can reach 82 feet/ 25 meters in height, and 46 feet/ 14 meters in diameter. Baobabs are now known to exceed 1,500 years of age.

I was driving a bit while I was in Morogoro, but now I was regularly spelling off Fr. Andrzej on our journey. There are some good roads. The difficulty is that you constantly have to pass slower moving trucks and buses. The tarmacs also run through a countless number of small towns and villages where the speed shifts down to 50 km. There are also crossing strips—they are called “zebras” here—that require you to slow to 50 km. There are many local police who are waiting for small traffic infractions. On our first day of travel, we were stopped 5 times, but either we were warned about something or it was just a check to see if we had proper insurance. On the second day, I was driving and we were stopped! Oh no! I did not even see the police until he stepped out.



Fr. Andrzej said that he would keep quiet unless I needed him. So, the policeman showed me a photo of me driving 57 km as I approached a “zebra.” I commented on how clear the photo was. He said that I was wrong to have done this. I told him that I was very sorry. Then, he said, “I will have to punish you.” (I thought, like a spanking?!? Or I have to go to my room?!?) Apparently, this is just the language that is used for a ticket. I told him that it was my first time getting a punishment. He looked at my international driver’s license and he started to have



that “glazed over the eyes look!” Then, he said, “Just go.” What a relief. Fr. Andrzej asked me if I was okay to keep driving and I said “Yes!” All part of the adventure. On to Butiama!

We stopped at a town called Bunda—a short distance from Butiama—in order to drop off Peter at his home and to pick up Selestine. Peter needed to get some documents from his local priest and Selestine needed a ride to Butiama. Peter and Selestine have lived in the same village and attended school together for years.



*Peter, with his mother and father.*



Peter's family gave us a royal welcome. They were so hospitable and happy to see us. They invited other family members and friends to join us. We had a great meal.



*Back: Peter's older brother, Gervas, Selestine, Francis, Fr. Andrzej, Peter's father, Peter, a friend, Peter's mother, me; and Front: a cousin, Peter's sisters.*



*We had a great meal of chicken, French fries, and cooked spinach, with soft drinks!*





Getting things unpacked and packed was not easy. Again, I chose an “advising” role. After leaving Peter’s house, we drove through the village to Selestine’s house in order to pick up his luggage. Again, we were greeted warmly, this time by Selestine’s mother and younger brothers.





Finally, we arrived at our parish in Butiama. In English, the name of the parish is “Mother Mary of the Precious Blood of Jesus.”





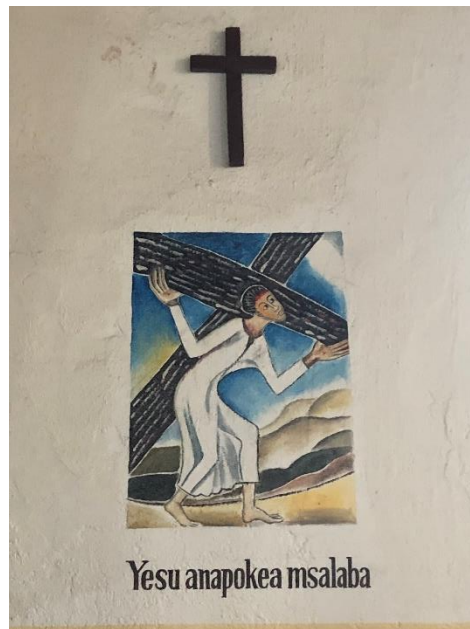
The Church is about 25 years old and it was built by the Archdiocese of Trento in Italy. They brought everything they needed to construct the church, kitchen, and rectory in ships. They also brought architects, construction workers, and cooks.



These two red chairs and kneelers were reserved for the first president of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere and his wife, Maria. He converted to Roman Catholicism in his early 20's, was a devout Catholic, and he donated the land for the church across the road from his family land. Nyerere died in 1999; his wife is still alive, but she is quite elderly and now lives in Dar es Salaam.







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