



Vitalis returned to the formation house a few days after Christmas to join Peter and me in Morogoro for the inauguration of the New Year. Vitalis and Peter invited a few guests for New Year's Eve. We had dinner and then we watched *The Fellowship of the Rings*, which ended at 11:45 p.m. At midnight we wished each other a happy and blessed New Year. Then, I went to bed! The next morning, everyone looked very tired. I thought that we had enough sleep until they told me that when I left to go to bed, they stayed up to watch *The Two Towers*! I guess this is what you can do when you are young!



*New Year's Eve dinner: Vitalis, Peter, and guests Andrew, Zubari, and Steven. Our night watchman, Abraham, is standing near the food.*



*Some people—notably Peter—really shine when it is time to take photos! (Notice the Heinz Ketchup!)*



*Zubari in forefront.*



I did not know until that evening that it was also Zubari's birthday. So, we sang "Happy Birthday" to him, a song that includes much more zest and clapping than I was used to. You might remember that Zubari works for the Blessed Sacrament Sisters, mainly herding their goats. I found out more about Zubari over the last while. It turns out that he was one of the (many) young men that overwhelm you when you pull into the market with the van. They are hoping that they will be picked to help carry things; this is how they earn a living. Usually, you end up with the same boy or couple of boys; it is difficult to "abandon" them after they have helped you. A few years ago, the Blessed Sacrament Sisters regularly had him help them at the market. One day, they noticed that he looked terrible.



*Zubari with his friend Steven, who also works for the Blessed Sacrament Sisters.*

Instead of shopping, they took him to the hospital in Morogoro. After a diagnosis, they found out that he had a rare condition that comes from being infected by a parasite that comes from snails. They could not treat him in Morogoro, so the Blessed Sacrament Sisters drove him to Dar es Salaam and stayed with him at the hospital until he got better. Then, they adopted him. What a story!

The Blessed Sacrament Sisters invited us—Vitalis, Peter, and me—for lunch on New Year’s Day. They had quite a group of Sisters present, as their General Leadership group was conducting a visitation to Tanzania. Altogether, there were probably about 40 of us. The Sisters knew that it was Zubari’s birthday, so after grace, they led us in singing “Happy Birthday” for him. At first, he was smiling, but all of a sudden, he started to cry and he ran out of the room. Sr. Lucia, the house superior, looked at me with that look that said, “You go!” So, I went outside and this poor young man was sobbing uncontrollably. I gave him a hug and told him that everything was fine. I told him that I understood that this was all a bit much, but that people really loved him. He looked at me and said, “It is hard for me because this is so new, being loved.” I have been teaching him English, and one of the things that I taught him is to reflect upon himself and his gifts. So, I said, “What have you learned about yourself?” He started to smile and said, “I am good. I am smart. I am loveable. I am a super cool dude!” Then we laughed and hugged and went back inside. Sr. Lucia told me that they love him and care for him, but that I have brought something to him that they could not. She told me that he never stops talking about me and our English classes. She told me that she did not think that a man had ever done anything positive for him in his life and that she thinks that God sent me for Zubari. I told her that I think God sent Zubari for me.



After our New Year’s Eve dinner, we gathered in the seminarian’s lounge to watch the *Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Rings*. This viewing came with a



New Year's Eve cake and ice cream; we had chocolate ripple and strawberry ripple to choose from! They had never seen these movies before—we had previously watched the three movies of *The Hobbit*—and they thoroughly enjoy them.

For dinner on New Year's Day, we went to the Pizza Place. The pizza is very good, as they have a wood fire oven. Vitalis, Peter, Zubari, Steven, and I had a good time together that evening.



Zubari is giving the “super cool dude” sign...maybe I should not have taught him this!

One great development since the New Year began is that some of the bananas have gotten to the point where we can harvest them and eat them. Phillip was able to bring one of the stems of bananas over to the kitchen. Phillip, in particular, loves bananas as you can cook them and also eat them the way we usually do at home. He told me that at his home, they have cooked bananas every day. We have two more stems of bananas on the trees. It was amazing how heavy



they are. I could barely lift this stem of bananas off the ground. (Of course, I am old and weak now!) We had so many that we shared them with the Gemma Sisters, the Blessed Sacrament Sisters, and the Charlotte Sisters.



The combination of the hot sun and the rain has also yielded good crops of corn for people in the area.





The guys really like corn and I see them eating it for breakfast, lunch, and dinner!



On my walks, I usually pass by a group of men who make cement blocks for construction. It is amazing how hard and how long they work each day. About once a week, I will buy some Pepsis for them and then stop by and chat. They told me that some of them are Catholics and some of them are Muslims, but they all get along and respect each other. They never ask for Pepsi, but they appreciate it when I bring some. They see me coming with a bag and start clapping! 😊😊😊







*These cement block are used to build foundations and walls to enclose property.*





They always try to get me to shovel some sand or carry some of the blocks, but I usually bend over and grab my back and tell them that I am in great pain. One day, Max the leader said, “You can carry all the Pepsi, but you cannot shovel the sand.” I said, with a laugh, “Exactly!” So, now they all mimic a bad back when they see me! It is amazing how you can communicate without a common language!



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