

September 29, 2015

Dear IHM,

I Hope all is well with you and everyone in Los Alamos.

Our organization, Lay Mission-Helpers, asked us to write something for their annual newsletter, and I thought you might also want read the article. Of particular note, see the thank yous from students. They are thanking YOU, our benefactors. (For the record, we want to thank you too!)

Charming story:

Mission is about relationships, and sometimes you don't have to even leave your house for those relationships to grow. Our housekeeper, Ma Marcel, has a small boy named Randy, who is a few months older than Gabriel. The two infants have turned into toddlers, and they go around our house babbling and playing and squabbling. Ma Marcel speaks very little English, so it has been difficult to grow in friendship, but in many small ways our families have grown together. To emphasize this, we were pleased and amused when Gabriel said his first word, and it was the name of his playmate, "Randy."

Student quotations about Logan:

"Madam Horne has helped my with my vocabulary, spellings, and moral conduct. She not only teaches, but encourages us by giving us prizes, like stickers and holy cards, and sharing story books to read in class." -*Dilyse*

"She taught us nouns and verbs. When I take a test, I can flash back what she has taught us, and I can pass it." -*Lionel, Form II*

Student quotations about Eric:

"He helped me learn many things, like solving equations, which we are still doing now, and which will help me on the GCEs." -*Fabrice, Form III*

"He is a nice teacher-he never beats us. He is a teacher who will help us and help us to remember, like by giving us a song. He explains so children understand, not like some teachers. He showed us how to use maths in our life, like if we are a doctor." -*Pascaline, Form III*

"We are glad he came here. He taught us to multiply without looking at a times table or a calculator." -*Destiny, Form III*

Bio of a Student:

Pelkins, 12, came to St. Augustine's College in Form I during our second year here. He spoke almost zero English, and he could not read or write. He could not say where he was from or which language he spoke at home. His arithmetic skills were severely lacking, and he could only add two numbers if it didn't involve carrying. His family lives in Kumba, in the Southwest Region, but he grew up nearby in Noni, where they speak a local dialect. He is the youngest of six, with two older sisters and three older brothers. After only one year, his reading, writing, and arithmetic are markedly improved.

He says of Logan, "She helped me to learn how to read very well." and of Eric, "He made me to know more about multiplication, addition, and subtraction."

Thank yous:

"I thank you for giving us knowledge to read and to know how to write and to know how to calculate. Thank you for sending our teachers." -*John Bosco, Form II*

"I wish to thank you for your great help [in sending the Hornes], because it has benefited not only them, but us. May God continue to guide and protect you and allow you to grow in your generosity." -*Dilyse, Form III (I swear we didn't coach her)*

LONGISH story about a person we served:

"Rose" is ten years old. She is sullen, returning every smile with a bitter scowl, and is generally unlikable. She doesn't clean herself properly and can't read or even count numbers beyond the ones on her hands.

We met Rose during the "summer school" we hosted in our house over our long holiday (July-August). We invited children from around the neighborhood and had quite the time with the crew of kids who took us up on our offer of free tutoring.

Eric and I were on a mission – to teach these kids basic, very basic, math and literacy skills that so many students in Kumbo lack. We wanted to do it in a fun, laid-back atmosphere that is unlike the very rigid schooling most kids experience. We wanted to make learning fun!

The problem was Rose. Rose didn't want to have fun. She didn't seem to want to be there at all. She wouldn't cooperate, wouldn't speak or answer questions, was a sore loser, and seemed to bear all the other children a grudge. She even

outright rejected a prize we offered her for winning a contest. I finally felt fed up with her and was on the verge of telling her to leave. It's not like any of the kids HAD to come – this was supposed to be fun. Rose simply didn't seem worth the effort.

Still it didn't feel right to just kick her out, so I mulled over the issue and decided to talk to her parents, whoever they might be. I found out where she lived and was happy to discover she was under the care of a good friend of mine and fellow teacher at SAC, Elizabeth Verla. One sunny afternoon I girded up my loins and went over to confront Mrs. Verla over Rose's shortcomings.

What I discovered was sobering. Mrs. Verla was not Rose's mother but her guardian. She was familiar with Rose's attitude problem; this wasn't the first time Rose had refused to participate in school. She had been last in her class for the last two terms, and recently had been sent home from Sunday school by the sisters who found her to be just too recalcitrant.

Outside of school her story was just as sad. Rose is an orphan, and her grandmother was caring for her but couldn't deal with her any more, so cast her onto some religious sisters for care. They couldn't keep her, or wouldn't, and hunted around until they found Mrs. Verla to take her. Out of a great sense of duty the family felt they must do what they could for her, even though money doesn't flow freely for them and they have many other children living under their roof. They support Rose with board and schooling, and in exchange she does light housework and cooking (this arrangement is incredibly common here, and while it sounds shocking at first, we have come to realize that in many ways it provides the best the child can get).

Rose had been nothing but a disappointment to our friend Ellie, though she is trying her best to encourage her. As I heard complaint after complaint against Rose, I felt really saddened and ashamed. Here I am, trying to serve Jesus in the poor, rejected losers and have-nots of the world. And when I was put to the test I just wanted to drop this dirty, unlovable child and push her away from me.

I knew I couldn't send Rose away. Ellie and I talked to her that day and I told her that her attitude was a problem to the rest of the class, but I told her that she was intelligent, and I knew she could answer questions. I asked her if she wanted to come. She gave a slow nod. No words, no eye contact. I told her if she wanted to come she could, but she would need to put a little effort in for herself.

When she came again the next week. Eric and I could see she was trying. She did the work and even played in some of the games. I felt triumphant when I coaxed a small smile from her when I praised her performance in a drill. The end of our program came too soon, and we said goodbye to Rose and the other children.

Did all of Rose's problems go away because of our help? Of course not. Her problems are complicated, and run deep in her life. But, the work we do as Lay Mission-Helpers is not about solving every problem, but about being open to God in each particular moment, and open to Christ in each particular person.

In Christ,

Eric and Logan Horne, with Helena, James, Max, Isabelle, Sally and Gabriel.