

SR Lenten Project - Dormitory Malawi



Harris Catholic Secondary School

In 2004, Fr. Philip Mbeta, a Catholic priest from Malawi, came to study at Benedictine University in Illinois for three years. While there, he met my brother-in-law's father, Doug Spesia. They became very close friends and in the ensuing years, the Spesia family "adopted" Father Philip, created a charity called Warm Heart Ministries and began the process of raising money to fulfill his dream of improving education in Malawi, a country where only 20% of the population graduate from high school. With the help of the Joliet Rotary and Warm Heart Ministries, Father Philip purchased land and built a nursery school in 2012 and on the same property built an all-boy Catholic boarding high school - Harris Catholic Secondary School - that began with 40 boys in 2020 and now has over 140 young men who live at and attend the school.



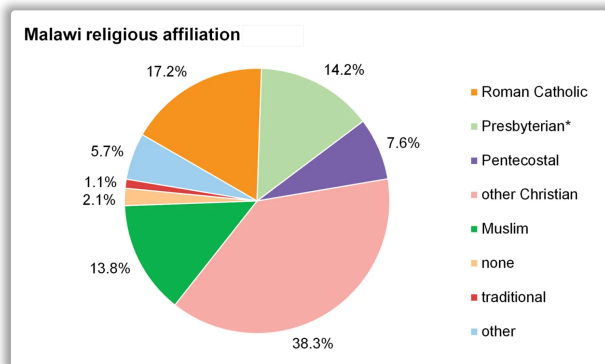
Fr. Philip and I

Teaching English

After I (Rick Horas) retired from teaching last year, my brother-in-law, John Spesia, asked me to teach at Harris Catholic Secondary school. From September (2022) until December, I taught 60 Grade 9 boys English and fell in love with a country and a people I had never heard of. Currently the school consists of six classrooms, with 3 of them serving as "housing" for the boys. Father Mbeta hopes to raise \$30,000 with the help of Warm Heart Ministries to build a dormitory this spring for the boys so he can turn the three classrooms the boys live in into two science and one computer lab. Warm Heart Ministries has agreed to match any funds St. Raphael raises.



One of the Current "Dorms"



A Few Facts

Malawi is also affectionately known as “The Warm Heart of Africa” due to the kind and hospitable nature of its inhabitants. Around 85% of the Malawian population live in rural areas. Malawi is the fourth poorest country in Africa and over 40% of the population live on less than \$1 a day. Christians make up about 80% of the nation’s total population with Roman Catholics comprising 17%. Fr. Philip Mbete teaches at Catholic University in Malawi. Over 6,000 students attend.

Warm Heart Ministries

Warm Heart Ministries was founded to help spread Catholic education in Malawi. Recently, the charity donated 60 bicycles to high school students at Adoloratta Catholic High School, located 4 miles from Harris Secondary School, to help improve the attendance of those students who have to walk over 3 miles to school. Most of the recipients were girls. Warm Heart Ministries also began a 6-month sewing program to help women improve their job prospects.

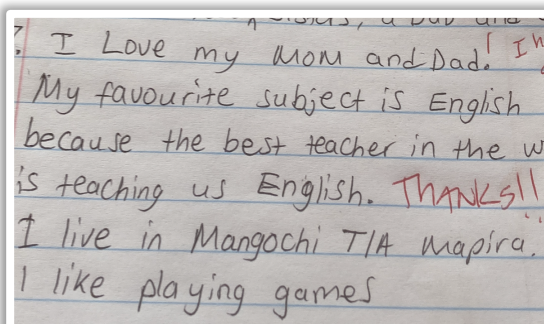


Just Boys

My sons, Matthew and Gabe, both St. Raphael graduates, came to visit my students (and me) last December. My students were fascinated by my sons’ favorite musicians, football (soccer) players as well as who they thought would win the World Cup. My students, who have no internet access and who love soccer, were overjoyed when I showed them highlights from World Cup games (of course, after class)!

Words from Fr. Philip

“This is Father Philip Mbete from Malawi writing to thank St. Raphael parish in South Saint Louis for reaching out to help us build a dormitory for our students here at Harris Catholic Secondary School in Thyolo, Malawi. Thank you for helping me realize my lifelong dream of improving the education of our boys. May God bless all of you during this Lenten season.”



Thoughts from my student, Morris Mambi.

For more information on my stay in Malawi, visit <https://warmheartofmalawi.blogspot.com/>