



November 2004

This is an exciting month in Africa as the rains come and break the spell of heat that we are all laboring under. The hospice is hot and uncomfortable, and it makes being sick much worse. So we are sitting here in very hot weather waiting for rain.



Kasisi orphanage is such an incredible place. So many children, all growing up in a loving and caring environment. I honestly do not know how the sisters there are able to do it. Sr. Catherine and Sr. Jane (and Sr. Beatrice) are the medical sisters and take wonderful care of the children; even the sickest of children can recover under their care. Joseph for example, whose mother died at the hospice a few days after we moved him to the orphanage, is doing so well and feeling so much better. How sad that his mother was no longer able to care for him; how sad it was to take him from her arms that day. No wonder that she did not last long after taking away her precious baby. But it was clear that she was not long for this world and that the hospice is a difficult place for a sick child whose mother can no longer breast feed him. There are none of us who would have done differently, but it is sad to part a mother and child even when it is the only chance of survival for the child.



Jon Hospice is a fascinating place to make medical rounds. In addition to the unusual medical challenges faced there, we are also able to use medicine and supportive care to lessen pain and to relieve suffering. These services are delivered to the very poorest and most unfortunate of people. Of course not all Zambians find themselves in such devastating circumstances. Even village life is a complex and sustainable lifestyle (so very different from anything we know) and has been in existence much longer than Western civilization. So what has happened? Why has this sustainable system failed to support its own?

The average lifespan of a Zambian has dropped into the 30s, a shocking and alarming

statistic. We are not in famine; we have no natural disasters here. It is the sickness and death due to HIV/AIDS, which has upset an ancient way of life by taking out the healthy young working-age and childbearing-age people. The ability of families to absorb the orphans created by HIV/AIDSs was quickly saturated in this country and almost every family is looking after several children of relatives and friends who have died from the epidemic.

I am so grateful to my parents and Molly Dinneen and the good people at St. Vincent de Paul for creating this web site and for bringing the news from Africa closer to many people in the West. I have always known that people where I come from are natural givers who want to help, but often do not know how to help and do not want to give money to the large aid organizations where more than 50% (sometimes 75%) of a donation can go to administrative overhead. The promise that I can make to viewers of this web site is that nearly 100% of the money given is going directly to the medicine and relief of suffering of children with HIV/AIDSs in Zambia. We have almost no overhead costs, and we pay no salaries.

Dr. Tim Meade