Celebrating Life & Joy in Angola

“In Angola, the birth of a child is a special event in the life of the village, and everyone rejoices,” said Father Joaquim Lopes. Father Lopes, a missionary priest, is now Bishop of Viana, Angola. “Here, people celebrate life and joy.”

Bishop Lopes also told HCA a story about a very special baby he met while working as a missionary priest in St. Anthony Parish in Luanda, Angola.

“One morning, we heard a knock on the door of our rectory,” he said. “Outside, a young man named Manuel was holding a newborn baby.”

The baby’s mother had just died. Manuel was sent to St. Anthony’s Parish by members of his village to get help. The missionary priests took the child in, and with Manuel, they prayed for guidance. As the day began, more people began to find out about the baby. Although she was very poor, one of the teachers at the mission school told the priests that she would adopt the baby and care for him as one of her own sons.

“We could see that God was present among us at this very moment,” said Bishop Lopes. We thanked God because on that day a child had been saved!”

St. Anthony is one of the many parishes throughout Angola that receives support from HCA. Recently, HCA provided financial help for the building of sanitation systems at the parish school. Lack of clean water and good sanitation cause most illnesses among children in Angola. HCA has also helped to provide supplies for the parish school, including materials for religious education.
A Letter From the Missions

Dear HCA,

I’m writing to you about a very special request for elementary school students in grades one to three in Angola. I am asking for your help to build two classrooms for the primary school, St. John Eudes, in Kicolo, Luanda.

As you probably know, the general living conditions in the slums of Angola’s capital are very poor. After almost 30 years of devastating war, access to education is an opportunity only for a lucky few. Thanks to the courage and the perseverance of our Sisters, 500 children from the poorest families of the slums receive regular formal education each year.

Wishing you all the best in Our Lord,
the Good Shepherd,

Sister Rita Lourenco Luis,
GOOD SHEPHERD SISTERS

Thanks to you, HCA is helping to build two new classrooms so more children will be able to attend school and experience the love of Jesus through the care of these missionary Sisters.

Did You Know?

Conflict or “blood” diamonds are gems mined in war zones. Rebel groups use money from selling diamonds to buy guns and other military hardware. During Angola’s civil war, “blood” diamonds were exported from the country in great numbers.

What is a diamond? A diamond is a mineral composed essentially of carbon, crystallized at extremely high temperatures and pressures; in nature, diamonds form 93 to 124 miles or more below the earth’s surface. Diamond is the hardest of all known natural substances. Its color ranges from colorless to yellow, brown, gray, orange, green, blue, white, black, purple, pink, and, extremely rarely, red.

A Diamond Quiz

The value of a diamond is measured by its weight. What kind of weight measurement is used?

A. Grams | B. Ounces
C. Carats | D. Kilograms

The word “carat” comes from the word “carob,” and is used in the Middle East in 900 BC when merchants weighed diamonds in comparison to the weight of a carob tree seed. One carat equals 2/10 of a gram.
Making Music and Finding Peace

Do you live a peaceful life? Peace can mean many different things to different people. To some, peace is something you feel inside. To others, peace is freedom from stress, freedom to express yourself or to choose who governs you. What does peace mean to you?

Many people in the world — especially those who live in “mission territories” — live without peace. The people of Angola lived without peace for 27 years.

Angola is located in Southwest Africa, along the Atlantic coast. European explorers from Portugal arrived in the 16th century, colonized the country, and set up a government there. Settlers used the country as a source of slaves.

During Portugal’s centuries-long rule of Angola, the native people protested against the government and fought for freedom. One of the most prominent was Bonga Kwenda.

Kwenda was born in Luanda, Angola, in 1942. As a young man, he dreamed of being an athlete. Kwenda first became a successful track runner. This success led to an invitation to move to Portugal to join a Portuguese soccer team. While Kwenda found personal success, he longed to see his country at peace and governed by its own people.

Kwenda’s status as an athlete allowed him to travel freely. He used this privilege to pass messages between freedom fighters in Portugal and Angolans trapped at home. However, because of his activities and the growing independence movement in Angola, Kwenda was forced to leave Portugal for the Netherlands. It was there that he turned to music. In the Netherlands, he recorded his first album called Angola ’72.

The album was considered dangerous by Angola’s government. The government issued a warrant for his arrest, so Kwenda stayed on the move. For many years, he lived between Germany, Belgium and France. He stayed on the run until Angola finally won independence in 1975. The struggle for independence and Portugal’s quick departure from Angola left the country in a terrible state. A civil war followed, bringing Angolans even more misery.

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Africa is the richest continent for diamond mining, accounting for almost half of the world’s production. African countries with large amounts of diamonds are: Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Botswana, South Africa, Angola, Namibia, Ghana, Central African Republic, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and Zimbabwe. See if you can identify each of these countries on the map above. Write your answers on the lines that correspond to the number of each country.

Making Music

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Today, Kwenda continues to record music and to bring the message of peace to all who listen. In Kwenda’s own words, “We must live without harming others.”

Time to test your memory about the story you just read. See if you can answer the questions. If you are not sure about an answer, ask your teacher.

1. Kwenda’s songs were considered dangerous.
   A. True
   B. False

2. Angolans were once ruled by what country?
   A. France
   B. England
   C. Portugal
   D. Spain

3. Kwenda started his career as a
   ________________
   A. Politician
   B. Writer
   C. Athlete
   D. Musician

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Mission Snapshot

Meet the children of Immaculate Conception School in the Diocese of Benguela, Angola. These are just some of the thousands of children you help through your prayers and the pennies (and quarters and dollars too!) you offer to HCA. Some of these children have dads who work in diamond mines. Others are orphans. Together, they learn that we are all a part of God’s family and that we are called to help each other and to teach people about Jesus.

Attention Book Worms!


At A Glance

Issues Facing Children in Angola

• Less than 40 percent of the population has access to clean water and sanitation.

• Almost half of all children under the age of five who live in Angola are malnourished.

• Millions of children do not attend school because they cannot afford school fees or because they are too sick as a result of water-related illnesses.

• More than one-third of all children between the ages of 5 and 14 have to work to help support their families.

• Lack of clean water has resulted in an increase in the number of children who die from cholera, a disease of the small intestine that can cause dehydration.

• Angola was engaged in a civil war from 1975 to 2002. The country remains filled with unexploded landmines. These mines have killed or injured thousands of Angolans.

Source: The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF)
Don’t Forget!
October is Mission Month, and October 19 is World Mission Sunday. Does your parish or school do something special for Mission Month or World Mission Sunday? If so, let us know! Mail pictures and information to the Holy Childhood Association c/o Polly Parrot, 366 5th Avenue, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10001. Your story may be included in a future issue of It’s Our World or on our website for kids at: www.hcakids.org.

Saints for All People
Patron saints are chosen as special protectors or guardians over areas of life — jobs, churches or countries. Some historical records show that people and churches were named after Apostles and martyrs as early as the fourth century.

Today, patron saints are often chosen because of an interest, talent or event in their lives. For example, St. Francis of Assisi loved nature and so he is patron of ecologists. St. Francis de Sales was a writer and so he is patron of journalists and writers.

Mary, the Mother of God, is the patron saint of Africa. Angola honors the Immaculate Heart of Mary as its patron. Honoring Mary’s Immaculate Heart recognizes Mary’s holiness and the great love she gave Jesus as His mother. Who is the patron saint of your parish Church and of your diocese? Learn more about them!

HCA Prayer for Children of the World
Dear God, You sent us Your only Son, Jesus, to teach us how to live and how to love. Help us to follow His example by sharing what we have with our brothers and sisters all over the world and by taking care of all that You have created for us. We pray in a special way for our friends in Angola and for the missionaries who help them. Please send the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us share the “Good News.” We ask this in the name of Your Son, Who is Lord forever. Amen.