

# *Tom Edwards Evangelistic Assoc., Inc.*

*—a ministry of lay Catholic evangelization & mission—*

*Forty-seven years  
of  
Full time outreach*

*Special Report (Dec. 2021)*

*St. Thomas the Apostle—New Church in Ruvu Marwa, Tanzania*

*Ten years in the Making—It is Finished*

In 2011, while leading a Renewal Ministries team to the Diocese of Same, Tanzania, John Mathe and I were invited to accompany Fr. Everest, Vicar General of the Diocese to a remote outstation for Sunday morning Mass. Our destination, a peasant village called Ruvu Marwa, was only accessible by the Diocese's 4-wheel vehicle. The town of Same itself is situated in the North-eastern part of Tanzania, South of Mount Kilimanjaro. Fr. Everest explained that he could only go to his outstation once a month. The Diocesan budget for fuel only allowed one journey per month. The ride was rough as we made our way through the bush following an old cattle trail. A large part of the Diocese is surrounded by the Pare Mountains. These mountains are densely populated, inhabited mostly by small scale farmers (mainly the Pare people). Whereas, the surrounding plains are inhabited by pastoralists (mainly the Maasai people). The villagers of Ruvu Marwa are chiefly of the Maasai people. Per capita income is less than a dollar per day. The populace is a mix of Christian, Muslim, and animist.

Upon arrival, we were met by one elderly man. There was no one else in sight. The church, constructed of mud bricks and grass roof, had seen better days. The seating was made of crooked sticks propped up by more sticks, some broken. After cordially welcoming us, the man walked over to a tree. Hanging from the tree on a rope was a 3' piece of railroad track. The man began to strike the rail with a metal bar. It sounded just like a cathedral bell and the chime carried into the distance. Within minutes, the people began to emerge out of the bush, took their seat in the church, and proceeded to praise God with beautiful melody. There seemed to be an excitement about the two visitors from afar, perhaps the first ever.



*Traffic congestion—the road to Marwa*



*Village homes in Ruvu Marwa*

Fr. Everest vested and we experienced a very holy celebration of Mass. I was invited to share a teaching and John followed with a loving testimony and passed out the rosaries that we had brought. The sanctuary was filled with smiles.

The church began in 1994 when 11 people gathered on Sunday morning under a tree. Mass was celebrated once a month. In 1997, a grass hut was built by the river Ruvu, but was washed away by a flood. Again the small group met and prayed under a tree, and then for a while on the site of the lay catechists' house which had collapsed during the flood. Afterward, a second grass hut was built, then the third grass structure pictured on page 2 was built in the village in 1998.



*Church Bell (piece of railroad track) rings out and calls parishioners to Holy Mass.*



**2011—Above: Tom with some of the parishioners.  
Below: John Mathe shares.**



*A memorable morning of sharing with brothers and sisters of Ruvu Marwa*

During our visit, Fr. Evarest expressed his desire to build a new church for the people of Ruvu Marwa. He asked if we knew anyone who might be able to help with finances.

After prayerful consideration and consultation with Bishop Rogatus, Tom Edwards Evangelistic Assoc. made a commitment to seek to raise the needed funds. As the need has been made known, many of you and others have responded with generosity. The project began in 2013 and has continued throughout the years.

A young priest, Fr. Deogratius Mchagi was assigned to be pastor in 2016. He has overseen the ongoing project until now. He continues to evangelize the area with great zeal. The people of the village have participated with their hard labor and craftsmanship. With great zeal the people began to gather and prepare stones and collect sand from the river. A special collection was taken on Sunday with the goal of raising enough to purchase one more bag of cement each week (about \$6.00). Once construction began there was a contagious excitement. Even those of the Muslim faith came and got involved in the building of the church. Fr. Deogratius brought together the people in unity to support the project morally and materially. The pastoral council met with Fr. Deogratius and decided they would like to officially name the church St. Thomas More in honor of our organization. Later, because there was already a St. Thomas More in the Diocese, the Bishop decided it best to name the church St. Thomas the Apostle. Needless to say, we are truly humbled by this kind gesture.



*Villagers gather stones, chisel them down, and lay the foundation for the new flooring.*



*Throughout the construction process, villagers have gathered for Holy Mass and catechesis.*



## It is finished—St. Thomas the Apostle of Ruvu Marwa

It has been an ongoing witness and it was with great celebration that the new church of St. Thomas the Apostles was consecrated on November 18, 2021 and now stands as a beacon of light and a holy place in the tiny village. Bishop Rogath Kimaryo pours the oil of consecration on the altar (left). The sanctuary is beautifully furnished with pews made by local craftsmen.



Letter from Fr. Deogratius Mchagi, Pastor

*Evangelization began in Ruvu Marwa in 1994 with the gathering of 11 people who formed an outpost from Cathedral Parish of Same Diocese. The number increased slowly as people moved to the area to cultivate land and care for animals. 2011 was a period when the Diocese was emphasizing apostolic ministry. It was then that Tom Edwards came with colleagues from Renewal Ministries to teach on recognizing the presence, power, and gifts of the Holy Spirit in their lives. The church now manifest this power in Ruvu Marwa and the Diocese of Same at large.*

*In 2013, while Fr. Evarist Abedi was pastor, construction on the new church started after receiving an immense gift from Tom Edwards Evangelistic Assoc., Inc. from America. Fr. Evarist was moved to another parish in 2016 and I was appointed the pastor. We encouraged the continuation of building the church by urging the Christians and non-Christians to work together gathering the materials.*

*Now, our congregation has grown to 162. We conduct seminars to strengthen the families. People are working together in faith. Our choir is growing strong and we are looking to the possibility of getting a piano. We have catechism for the children, They are receiving first communion and confirmation. We visit them in school and teach religion. We want to build a house for the priest so he can stay there. Early next year we will begin to collect stones and materials. We want to drill a borehole to supply water, now people must go a long distance to get water. We will plant trees and build a fence around the church's plot for security.*



**Villagers and guests gather together to prepare and share a feast on the long awaited day of consecration.**



*We truly thank all who have made donations. You have enabled us to complete this church which is the most beautiful building in the village. Now we pray in the beautiful and dignified church.*



**Bishop Rogath and Fr. Deogratius present a beautiful Certificate of Appreciation recognizing the donors to Tom Edwards Evangelistic Assoc., Inc. who contributed to the building of the church. We regret that we could not accept the invitation to be present for the consecration Mass.**

## **No Doubt About it—It's the Giving Season**



We know what it's like. It's the Giving Season and every day the mailbox is crammed with a multitude of appeals. Most are requesting support for something quite worthy. They may even send a lot of free stuff to get your attention—stamps, money, name labels, Christmas cards, ball point pens, you name it.

Sorry, we don't send a lot of free stuff. We are a small ministry of lay Catholic evangelization and mission. We are about to mark 48 years of full-time outreach. Our goal is to **make known the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through sharing the Holy Scriptures and trying our best to be a witness to Him.** There is no place we won't go if He leads and makes it possible.

This ministry has always relied solely upon the Lord's provision. That means we are supported by those that are moved by the Holy Spirit to give. This usually takes the form of offerings, stipends, or those we know as Co-missionaries who share some form of regular support that they send in accordance with their chosen time intervals. We know that people support what they deem fruitful, in this case, souls that are saved and/or are touched.

Thus, we humbly ask that you prayerfully consider the needs of this ministry in your plan for this Season of Giving. We in turn will pray that the Lord will bless you with a fullness of His abundant grace according to His promise. Please use the enclosed envelope. If you desire to be a regular Co-Missionary with an on-going gift, please enclose a note to that effect. We will add you to our list of Co-Missionary supporters and you will receive our quarterly Co-missionary update letter along with a supply of return envelopes if you need them. All gifts are acknowledged with an end of the year contribution statement for your tax purposes.

**Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year**



Tom Edwards Evangelistic Assoc., Inc., P. O. Box 2113, St. Augustine, FL 32085

(904) 471-8672 goyetomedwards@att.net www.catholic evangelization.homestead.com