

in a

Word

Student shares experiences in Bangladesh
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Photo from L'osservatore Romano

Pope John Paul II meets with Sisters of the Holy Family

MAKING SOMETHING OUT OF NOTHING ...THE PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH

by Jeremy Broussard

(our youth are everywhere! In this article Jeremy Broussard who studies at Hampton University reflects on his study tour in Bangladesh.)

We had traveled halfway around the world that week in early May to finally experience what we had been preparing a year for: a three-week whirlwind stay and study abroad in the small country of Bangladesh. We were there to study and experience the culture of the country through a series of meetings and presentations to the various leaders of industry and government in that country. The trip was to culminate in our presentation to various academics on the American education system.

We spent the first semester of our 1997-98 school year at Hampton University learning the history, culture, customs, and a smattering of the language of the Bangladeshi people. A small nation wedged between India and Burma, Bangladesh won its independence in a bloody revolution in 1971 (over three million were killed in their one-year independence war) and had struggled with the democratic process since. It has had the dubious distinction of being ranked the poorest nation on earth several times in its brief history. The average income in U.S. dollars is about \$175, while the cost of living is about \$145. The size of the state of Wisconsin, Bangladesh has a population of over one hundred million people, half that of the entire United States. This results in the obvious problems of population control, starvation and disease control.

I took a particular interest in studying the problems of water purification in the rural areas. When I say "rural areas" I describe where about 90% of the people in the country live. In the U.S., we take getting a drink of water for granted. When we sip from a fountain, gargle while brushing our teeth, we have no thought of possible diseases or chemical, such as arsenic, which could get you seriously ill or even kill you. This is the just one of the problems the Bangladeshi face.

How do you describe Bangladesh? It depends where you are, I suppose. We spent most of our time in country in the capital city of Dhaka, a sprawling, congested city of over nine million people. Driving around the crowded city, we saw dozens of partially completed buildings, the constructors using large rods of bamboo instead of steel eye-beams to support the tall edifices.

The air is choked with smoke. The industrial age

is in full swing in Bangladesh, with diesel-powered cars and motorcycles belching black and brown clouds into the air all of the time. The horizon had a sickly yellowish-brown haze to it because of all the pollution in the atmosphere, and a couple of the group members needed some time to get their sinuses adjusted to the smoky air.



Getting around Bangladesh was an adventure in itself. Driving through Dhaka, we traveled in a white, Spartan Range Rover which had been stripped of all amenities some time before. Now it was nothing more than a steel hull with a row of hard seats and no shocks. The absence of those shocks is something I can still feel today as we bounced, bumped, and banged our way from town to town and from appointment to appointment. One trip I recall in particular was our six-hour return trip from the north city of Sylhet back to Dhaka. Flying down those pothole-ridden roads I don't know how many times I slammed my head into the unfinished steel roof.

We all limped away from that car trip as if we had spent a full day at the rodeo as the main attraction.

The Bangladeshi trip was also an archaeologist's dream. The country is situated at the crossroads of Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Therefore, you can find ruins of all three cultures inside that one country. We explored thousand year Buddhist temples and the remnants of monks' living quarters. To the north and northwest, we studied the ethnic origins of the Bengali people, a cross-section of Brahmin Aryan and African peoples. Truly an amazing area of study, but something we could not devote as much time to as we would have liked.

They say that you cry twice when you travel to Bangladesh: once when you arrive and again when you are leaving. After a little over a month there, it really was hard to leave all of our newfound friends. But we have managed to stay in touch and probably will for years to come. I do know that I will return to that quirky, magical place which prides itself by *making something out of nothing*.

Jeremy Broussard with study group. Jeremy is on third row far right.

AN AWESOME MOMENT, A SACRED MOMENT

BY Dr. Charles Nolan

Henriette. . . Henriette Delille. These were the words of Pope John Paul II when Sister Sylvia Thibodeaux handed the Holy Father the new booklet on Henriette Delille. It was an awesome moment, a sacred moment, said Sr. Sylvia.

It was the morning of October 21. Sister Sylvia, Dr. Virginia Gould, and Dr. Charles Nolan had just attended the Pope's Mass in his private chapel. "There were only 24 visitors, including a bishop from Africa and six priests, who attended the Mass," recalls Dr. Nolan. "We had arrived at St. Peter's Square at 6:15, were admitted to the Basilica about 7:00, and were ushered into the Pope's chapel about 7:20. We were only seated a moment when I looked up to see the Holy Father kneeling in prayer at the nearby predieu. At that moment I realized that I was praying with the whole Church in a way that I never had before."

The Holy Father celebrated Mass in English that morning. Sister Sylvia was asked to read the epistle.

"She read with such grace and ease and poise, as natural as if she was used to reading in the presence of the Holy Father," Dr. Gould recalls. "I was so deeply moved, overwhelmed, in awe. Sr. Sylvia read from St. Paul's letter to the Colossians. Paul wrote of being a servant to the church, of his mission to proclaim God's message to all peoples, of his suffering for the sake of the gospel. It was as if Henriette was saying that she, too, was called to bring the gospel to all the free and the slave, and to serve the poor, regardless of the suffering that entailed."

After Mass, the Holy Father entered the beautiful reception room, greeted each of those who had attended Mass, and gave each one a rosary.

When he came to Sister Sylvia, she presented him with a copy of *Henriette Delille: iServant of Slavesi* by Drs. Gould and Nolan. "Your Holiness, accept this remembrance of our foundress, whose Cause for Canonization has been introduced, and whom we are praying will be soon beatified." As the Holy Father touched Sylvia's hand and accepted the booklet, he said softly "Henriette ...Henriette Delille." The Pope's Mass was the highlight of a visit to Rome that included research at the International Archives of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, Propaganda Fide, the Urbanianum University, the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and the Oblate Fathers.



Henriette Delille -
Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family

Fr. James FitzPatrick, O.M.I., postulator for Henriette Delille's Cause,

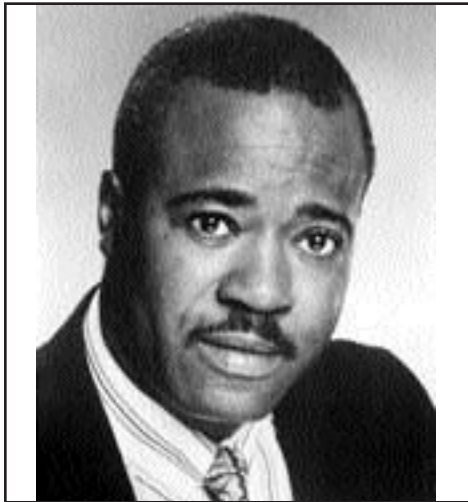
was a gracious host. The three visitors usually dined in the evening with the Oblate Fathers and had an opportunity to experience their warm hospitality and learn of their work as missionaries and teachers.

The three also visited Msgr. Robert Sarno at the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. Msgr. Sarno, a priest of the Archdiocese of New York, said he was familiar with the recent work on Henriette and had already read the new booklet on her life which Archbishop Francis Schulte had made available to the Congregation.

Sister Sylvia and her companions also spent an evening with another good friend of the sisters and the Cause, Msgr. C. Burton Mouton, a priest of the Diocese of Lafayette and now a Canon of St. Mary Major Basilica.

It was a memorable trip and one that helped further the Cause for Canonization.

in a word or two



Leon C. Roberts, highly regarded composer of African American Catholic Liturgical music, passed away January 22, only days after being diagnosed with stomach cancer. He was 48 years old.

Leon first became involved with the Catholic church in 1968 when he accompanied Grayson Warren Brown at a liturgical seminar. He was already an accomplished music minister when he was hired in 1977 by St. Augustine's in Washington, DC to conduct their gospel choir. As the choir and the church grew, Leon was drawn to the liturgy personally as well as professionally. He converted to Catholicism and began to use his special gifts to bring the essential energy and emotion of gospel music into the tradition of the Church.

Mr. Roberts made countless contributions to the advancement of African-Americans in the Catholic church. He was a major initiator of and contributor to the first *African-American Catholic hymnal*. He co-founded the Howard University Gospel Choir at the historic black college in Washington and he helped establish "Rejoice!" an ongoing series of conferences on black Catholic liturgy. Leon was honored last year by Cardinal O'Connor of New York with the Black History Month Award for his contribution to Catholic liturgy. He worked with the late Sister Thea Bowman to produce *her Songs of My People and Round the Glory Manger*.

Leon also leaves behind a rich legacy of recorded music that includes: *He Has The Power: The Mass Of St. Augustine; Deliver The Word; Lead Me Guide Me: Songs Of Faith; I Call Upon You God; God Has Done Marvelous Things the Mass of St. Martin de Porres and The Coming*. **He recently finished work on his newest collection, *Come Bless the Lord*, a concert recording with a strong ecumenical flavor which is slated for release in late March.**

In 1994 Leon accepted the position of music director of

the Union Theological Seminary Gospel Choir in New York. He was also the Florence Van Keuren artist-in-residence at Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn. Although he left St. Augustine's after nearly 17 years, it was still his spiritual home. His funeral Mass was held there on January 28. Many came to pay their respects to a prominent figure in the world of liturgical music. His gifts and brilliance will be missed.

The National Black Catholic Congress reminds us of the Pastoring XI Workshop which will be held April 11-15, 1999. Hosted by the Office of Black Catholic Ministry of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati this annual workshop is a designed as a continuing education and formation program for those person involved in ministry within the African American community.

Presentations to be included during Pastoring XI will center on the general theme of *The African American Kerygma: Preparing the Parish for the New Evangelization*. There will be general sessions and small group concentrated study areas, which will be focused around the model of the local parish and its planning for the future. The entrance in the third Millennium and Jubilee Year 2000 will form the foundation for the workshop. Keynote speakers include Sr. Jamie Phelps, OP; Fr. Cyprian Davis, OSB; Fr. Bryan Massingale; Dr. Robert Franklin, Jr.; Fr. Gregory Chisolm, SJ; Dr. Calvin Butts; Dr. Gill Bailie; Sr. Francesca Thompson, OSF; Most Rev. Joseph N. Perry. For more information contact:

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How do we prepare liturgies that are faithful to the liturgical tradition of the Church yet respect and empower the cultural diversity present in the celebrating assembly? How does culture influence us and our worship? These are the questions to be answered in gatherings sponsored by the Federation of the Diocesan Liturgical Commissions. The workshops will be held in Houston, Chicago, Orlando, Brooklyn and Los Angeles. Mark Francis, CSV, Associate Professor of Liturgy at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago will be the facilitator at these gatherings.

For more information contact the Federation by Phone at [202] 635-6990
Fax at [202] 529-2452

Divine Word Missionaries is an international missionary community of over 5,000 brothers and priests. In 1905 the SVDs began working among blacks in the southern United States. Today, Divine Word Missionaries work in over 35 parishes in Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Arkansas.

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