

Petifu Lokomasama
Sierra Leone
February 8, 2007

Dear Ruth,

Well, I am now one month 'old' in Lokomasama. It is almost three weeks since the formation of our new community. We are doing fine together.

Where do I begin? I think I wrote you earlier. I hope you received it. The Salesians in Tintafor, Lungi, have been very good to us. They always open their doors to us and give us a room to stay in. They also have a device that enables them to go on the Internet 2 hours at night. When we are with them we also have access. Where we are there is no service- even mobile phones have to be operated in a very limited area. Ours seems to be under the mango tree at the front of the house. The only mail I received was some Christmas cards from the States.

At this time of year food items are more expensive because of the dry season. One onion (small) costs 1,000 leones, about 30¢. We have not found any beef here so we are using canned meat from Lungi or Freetown. Fish bought here is smoked/dry and small. However, a fresh source is not too far away but we do not as yet have any transport. One day a young man came to the school with a huge fish! Mr. Timbo, the Principal, got it from him and gave it as a gift to us! What a treat! We enjoyed it immensely.

For the first two weeks we did all our cooking, etc. Last Monday we hired a lady in the parish who has children in our school to do cooking, laundering and cleaning for us – what a difference.

Nentaweh and Anne are being worked into a schedule at the JSS/SS levels at Lokomasama Sec. School. They are also working with the youth choir that sings at the Mass on Sunday.

Our home at present is a 3 bedroom house. We thought that the extra room would be a spare bedroom but we are needing space to put things as well as a place for meeting people so we have to work things out. The kitchen is small - sorry it would be hard to get a good picture of it, with a small store off it. We need shelves and cupboards to put our utensils and pots as well as dishes. Adjoining our kitchen is our sitting room/dining room. We have table and chairs but again need to find a carpenter to make us cupboards.

The bishop has given us a 4.75kv generator but we need to make a place to store it. A mason here said it would take 10-12 bags of cement @ 30,000 a bag (\$10) and a bundle of zinc - which he did not know the price. These items cannot be purchased so we have to hire a vehicle to go to Lungi/Freetown. We also need an electrician to test it and hook it up to the house.

We have no running water in the house, it is all brought to us by students at the end of the school day so we are learning to economize - this is also why we look forward to the weekend, take a trip to Lungi by public transport, stay overnight at the Salesians, enjoy a shower and go on the Internet. Of course, this cannot be done weekly as our duties are becoming more explicit.

I began meeting with Church Organizations this week: CWA on Wednesday evening, Catechist this Friday, CYO on Sunday and sometime I go to choir practice with Nenta and Anne. They go Tues, Thurs, Sat. Sometimes on Sunday I go with Father to Gbinty Walla or Bar Bara for prayer after our Mass in Lokomasama.

A lot of my time has been helping out with the midterm exams this week. It is difficult to get copies of anything because we have only one manual typewriter which is used by the secretary. A computer and printer would be helpful once we use our generator.

This week I remembered how we printed our exams on the chalkboard – that is what we did this week. Children have to use their own treasured papers from their notebooks to write the answers.

The enrollment at Lokomasama Jr/Secondary School is 839. We have a lot of girls until the end of JSS. 2/3 of the classes in SS are boys. Many of our students have to walk to school: one of our boys that I talked to was from a village 10 miles away. His father is a farmer and is finding it difficult to pay school fees. An SSI boy earns his school fees by working for a tailor. Many students are hungry by the time they reach school and do not have money to buy food at break time.

The school building is not completed. It was begun by a Sierra Leonean who lived elsewhere and wanted to help his community. He did what he could, but more is needed. He handed it over to the Paramount Chief and he in turn asked the Catholic Church to take it over. Bishop Biguzzi accepted it and it became part of St. Joseph Parish, Lungi. Bishop requested SSND for a Parish Administrator – plus outstations and Sisters to assist in the school. There is a Primary School which also belongs to the Makeni Diocese which is located behind the church named St. Paul's in Lokomasama. This school also is overcrowded and ill supplied. The

teachers do what they can, but one huge classroom was divided into 3 classes so each teacher and class can hear one another during the day.

We are a new “thing” in the area. The place is largely Muslim and Catholic Sisters are new. People are happy with our presence. We desire to serve them in anyway we can – last night we sat and listened to stories of two women and their experience in marriages. Life is not easy for them.

Will stop for now – let me know if you receive this letter with pictures.

Love,
Antoinette (Naumann)