

Pater Cas Paulsen CMM schreibt zu Weihnachten aus Südafrika (ENGLISH)

Dear Everyone,

Well, here it is, almost Christmas again. Where does the time go!!! Here is a general picture. I am up at 4am, usually (sometimes I get decadent and sleep in till 4:30—Ha.) I take a shower and do my physio on my back with really hot water and loosen up the muscles in my crooked back and am then ready for the day. A bowl of bran flakes (keep the pipes clean) mixed with a bit of Muesli, check the emails and the latest news headlines and by this time it is now almost 5am. I have read the readings of the day the evening before so I have time to reflect on them for Mass the next day. I do my meditation till almost 5:30 and then head for the hospital for a 5:45 Mass. This is most mornings up until the end of October. If there are patients who want to receive communion, I take it to them and then, after Mass visit them to find out who they are, where they come from and get a picture of how I may help them in the healing process. Up until the end of October I joined the Sisters for breakfast and then went back home to Mater Dolorosa (shortened to MD---the retirement home where I stay). Then the day starts and can take me anywhere. I am often asked to visit the sick in the hospitals in and around Durban. I think I have been to them all at one time or another. I am also the unofficial-official barber and have had as many as a dozen customers. The don't all come at once and there are a variety of heads of hair. Some, well, you know, not much to do. Others, holy moses, like shearing sheep. I need a wheelbarrow for some, and age has nothing to do with it. One of the really hairy guys was 84 yrs. old. I could have used the weed eater. When I get a chance, I wind up the weed eater and try to tackle the ever growing weeds here. Most of the year it was drought, but since I got back from my home leave at the end of August, when it isn't raining, I am out there for an hour or two of more. The weeds, no joke, are up to my waist, and even more. A normal lawn mower couldn't do it. That is usually three or four days a week. That is not counting chopping the thorn bushes and other things overgrowing the place. I usually help out at a branch of Charles Luanga Parish called Savannah Park (St. Therese of Lisieux). The last two Sundays of the month. The first Sunday was the hospital where the sisters had a day of recollection and I usually prepared some material for them to reflect on. The second Sunday was often Savannah Park again when the parish priest wasn't able to be there and I helped out at several other parishes from time to time. Sav. Pk. Is mostly Zulu, e.g. my Zulu, mixed with my Xhosa and some English. When I help out at an English speaking parish I am happy that I can tell jokes in English. Trying to translate a joke into Zulu is a real loser. It becomes a joke as everyone just sits there and looks. Flat, flat. I am fairly often asked to take funerals, mostly in Zulu, and when I had one in English, I had to hunt around for a booklet to clue me in as to how they do it in English. I have forgotten, but I hardly ever had a funeral in English for the last 50 yrs. I have given several workshops, the best one being on Laudato Si, Pope Francis' encyclical on the environment and the seriousness with which we should take climate change and global warming. It was hard work but I learned a lot. I had a wedding on Jan. 2nd that was almost a tragedy. I don't have a marriage officer's licence, so I got Fr. Henry to meet the couple and fill in the forms, etc. and thought that all was well now. Well, on the day of the wedding I went to him to get the marriage certificate so that I could give it to the couple at the wedding ceremony, and he said that he had to be there to do it. Holy Moses. How could I know that. So I begged him to please come with me so that they could be legally married. He changed other plans and came along, and then also played the organ (Here comes the bride...) and did some of the singing. Thank God he is a musician and was right at home in both jobs. He saved the day. He died shortly after and we will miss his music and his great sense of humor, among many other things.

Of course the main happening this year was my home leave. When asked how it was I could only describe it as a healthy, delicious, nutritious well balanced meal for the spirit. It was just super. From East Coast to West Coast, family and friends and time to share and get to know one another better. It couldn't have been better. I got to see almost everyone but missed a few but not many. I drove for over 9000KM. (about 5600 Miles) Me and cars are made for each other. I also had a chance to meet friends for a week in and around London and later, at the end of the journey, a week in Zambia where I had the opportunity to baptize two lovely young children, whose parents were the children of the parents who were members of our youth group in Kabwe, Zambia, way back in the 70's. The love and connections are still there and have been inherited by the next generations. On the way back I spent a week in Joburg with a family related to those in Zambia and Zimbabwe and visited other friends I don't get much chance to get up to Joburg any more. My soul was overflowing with happiness and joy. I still feel it. The BOM (board of management ) of Sabelani Home continues well even though Fr. Guy has gone. The young men are doing well and getting on with life, a life whose basic training was given to them by Fr. Guy. I am still grappling with the cell phone that Katrina picked out for me while I was home. The Nokia I had was too old and was being discontinued. Ha. I need an 11 yr. old kid at my side to show me how to use the thing. It is called BLU and looks like a Samsung but I know I can get on the plane with this one. The first thing I did when I got to Detroit was to make sure I was registered to vote. Ha. I have voted absentee since 1966, and almost always it was a choice between bad or worse. Well, you know the story about Trump. The fact that he is a billionaire businessman already puts me off. I guess I am prejudiced. But the immorality of the man disgusts me, as good a businessman as he is and that is also questionable having had so many bankruptcies where he cancels the debt and many people are left with nothing and he gets off scot free to continue his "business". He scares me. If his aim and the aim of what is left of the Republican party (what sycophantism, to castigate him before he is elected and then to try to brownnose him once he is elected) is only to try to undo whatever the Obama administration did, I find it difficult to accept that as the way forward. The one good thing that came, as a by product of the horrible election campaigns ( I hope that this never happens again) is that we now get a true picture of the America we love---racism, bigotry, anti-black, anti-Hispanic, anti-Muslim, building walls instead of bridges, etc. etc. etc. (not to mention his appreciation of women as sex objects---I really don't see how they could have voted for him if only for that reason. Maybe some of you women can explain that to me. We have our own president who has such a bad track record that even some of his most faithful veterans in the struggle (100 of them ) have asked him to step down. But he is a survivor and has a thick skin and is also a populist and knows how to turn on the crowds, who don't realize what he stands for. Then there is Aleppo, and Mosul, and Afghanistan, and Syria and Israel (continuing to build more houses in the West Bank) and Iraq, not to mention Africa with the Boko Haram and others making peace impossible. Lots of challenges for 2017. I thank you all for your support over the years (50 yrs. now, and 60 yrs. of vows) and I wish you all a blessed Christmas, new life, and a New Year filled with enough blessings to deal with all the surprises that are bound to come next year. Lots and lots and tons to love to you all. Stay connected to the One to whom we owe everything. Fr.Cas.