

The ALBANY CATHOLIC WORKER

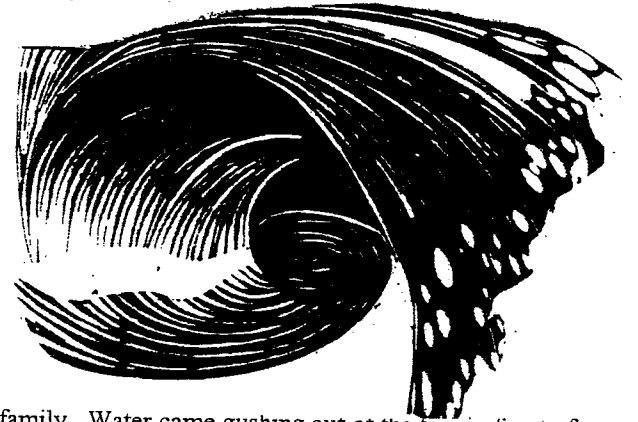


Newsletter of Emmaus House of Hospitality

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Water Flows in South Africa



(Editors' note: During October 2002-July 2003, Mpume Zondi and her son, Nhloso, graced us with their presence at Emmaus House. Upon returning to their home in South Africa, Mpume began Catholic Worker-inspired efforts to improve the lives of her fellow villagers. Combining Zulu values with Catholic Worker personalism, Mpume shares about the success of the first of four programs.)

by Mpume Zondi

Running Water in My Village

I am very happy to let you know that our first program -- providing running water in the homes of fifteen families -- will be finalized by the end of September 2003. I have been meeting with Umgeni Water Board and the Area Manager for Magwenyana local sub-branch. Mr. Majodwana (the Area Manager) told me they are giving our people top priority because of the overwhelming generosity offered by strangers outside of Africa.

On Friday, August 15th, the water pipes and meters were delivered to my home for my mother to keep until Tuesday when the work would begin. (You will remember that I pointed out that the Water Reservoir has been there since 1997. So these connections are not completely starting from scratch). I was so glad to see that even though I was not home, someone from the water office took some photos when the material was off-loaded at our premises.

Yesterday (August 19th) I spent the whole day at my village. It was so beautiful to see a local plumber giving the material to the family representatives that were gathered at my home by 10am. My mother said they had been waiting for me since 8am. We quickly gave them some tea and sandwiches; thereafter the recipients of the material had to sign a form. At least five of the representatives were not able to sign their own names, so they used their thumb prints instead.

We moved to Mrs. Ngcobo's station where the meter was connected about 10 meters from her house. Everyone helped to dig trenches for the pipe that will go directly to her premises. The local plumbers were there the whole time to insure everything was done perfectly.

Within five hours everything had been completed for

this family. Water came gushing out of the tap, in front of Mrs Ngcobo's house. Pictures of this event were taken. In the next newsletter we'll be able to share some with you. The work is going to continue, with all the families helping each other to dig trenches for everyone's homes. This will be completed by the end of September and all the families will have clean water. I will be driving there from time to time to see the progress.

I cannot stress enough the joy that I saw yesterday. I was sad to notice some very old faces gathered in my mother's house. My mother told me that they go to the river on their own to fetch water "because we do not have anyone that we can send to do it for us." Three other men there said they are unemployed. They fetch water for themselves in the river if they are not helping their wives with working in the fields.

Siyabonga! (Zulu -- Thanks!)

People showed their gratitude: some sang and danced, others were in tears; others said that they do not believe that it is really happening to them. These are some of their comments, translated from Zulu:

- + *My child, God bless you and those people over there who love us so much even though they don't know us.*
- + *As for me, I knew that I'll never be like my neighbours [those with running water] because no one is working in my family.*
- + *I still cannot believe this. It feels like someone is going to shake me and say, "Wake up from your sleep, this is not happening.."*
- + *Just the other day I went to the river and there were human feces just above where we scoop water. I had no choice but to clean the area because if it rained it would go into our water.*
- + *Siyabonga, Zondi uNkulunkulu akubusise. [Thank you God bless you.]*