

tides and tidings

my maritime misadventures on the mv doulos
april 2003 Other newsletters

BACK FROM BEYOND

A very belated Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I am embarrassed at how long it has actually been since I last wrote. So I have resolved to pen these letters once a month, even if it means reducing them to only one page each.

FINAL PORTS OF CALL

In the New Year, since Christmas, the Doulos has visited 6 West African ports. These included ports in Ghana, Togo, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Senegal. After leaving Ghana, we left Christian West Africa, and moved into countries where the vast majority are adherents of another global faith, one which is also in high profile in the news these days. Of course, there are many highlights and experiences – too many to relate in such a short letter. But I must relate a couple of stories that had particular impact upon me.

ROOTS

On the coast of Ghana, there are many castles. All of them were built for the same purpose; the holding and trafficking of African slaves by European powers. The top picture is of Elmina Castle, held in turn by the Portuguese, Dutch and English. Our Ministry team went together to this castle, and experienced the full harrowing tour of what the slaves endured. It was a very sobering and thought provoking thing; to see what humans could inflict on



other humans, and yet continue to believe that they were conducting themselves according to biblical principles.

AS SURE AS FOLK...

Another special aspect of our visits to West Africa was the opportunity to meet and fellowship with many of the WEC folk who work in these countries. It

was an excellent chance also to see their ministry; the labours of love that they have been so faithful to in these difficult places. I truly felt that this time was very special, after hearing about and praying for so many of these WEC people for so many years. It was also very exciting to see how after so many years of work without apparent fruit, things are finally beginning to happen, the harvest is beginning to come in!

WEST IS WEST

Senegal was a wonderful country, full of significances for me. Here, we were able to go to the westernmost point of Africa. Many of my WEC colleagues, many of my friends, served or grew up here. Also, Senegal is home to mbalax, an African style of music that is probably my favourite genre, and some of my favourite food. It is also home to some unique flora, such as the baobab tree pictured here. But the highlight was definitely worshipping together the same Lord with people who are the first or among the first believers from their ethnic groups.



A SAD FAREWELL

While Dakar, Senegal, was a superb port for both ministry and relationship with the WEC family, it was also a very sad port for many of us. After 14 months and 20 ports, we have had many trying and difficult times. Spiritually, physically, psychologically this past year has been very draining – Africa is not an easy place to minister the good news, and there are so many needs, so many obstacles to seeing congregations planted, growing and moving outward. But at the same time, it was an unforgettable year. So many believers here are, as we say on the ship, “fully fire”. They believe and serve with all their heart, and are really going for it; working to see His Kingdom come in their cities and countries. It has been an amazing privilege to be a part of this historic move.

THE BIG TRANSITION

Now we have made the big switch; from West Africa, one of the poorest and needy areas of the world, to Southern Europe, one of the wealthiest. Part of the big challenge is convincing people here that they have any needs at all! Gone are the days of wall-to-wall bodies in the book exhibition, as pictured above. More common will be quiet days on the ship, and picturesque scenes such as below. People with beachfront condos, private boats, and golden tans are definitely not the easiest to reach with the good news – most think they’re already Christians based on rites and rituals attached to their religious culture, rather than a relationship with their Creator. The ship’s company will have to make a big mental, cultural and spiritual transition to be relevant and effective in Europe.

FOR THE BIRDS

Our first European port is technically not even in Europe. The Canary Islands



It's not called Las Palmas by accident

are known as ideal holiday locations, full of sand, surf and sunshine. The tourist atmosphere and liberal European mentality regarding bedtimes, propriety in dress, and food/drink consumption have been a bit of a shock to some on the ship from more conservative cultures! There is some encouraging news, though. Many of us see the tiny numbers of evangelicals in countries like Spain, and

pity the believers there. I can attest that, while small, the churches here are not wallowing in self-pity and fear. In fact, many are full of faith and growing, with ambitious outreach programmes, directed towards locals and tourists alike.

INTO THE JAWS OF DEATH?

I am embarking on what some would say it a foolish quest. On the 14th of April, I'll be joining a team for 2 weeks to recruit personnel, support and prayer for the ministry of the MV Doulos. Not too dangerous, you say? Well, the team will be working in Malaysia and Taiwan, and most of you will know that Southeast Asia is the hotspot for SARS (the latest killer flu virus). Over 100 have died thus far, and thousands have suffered from the sickness and been quarantined. But we are going to two pretty safe areas, and we are going in faith and assurance from God of His vigilant care. We will have a very busy programme, visiting many churches, Bible Colleges, and other groups. I will let you know how it goes...

ALL FOR NOW, BUT...

...please continue to pray for...
⇒ health, especially in Asia
⇒ effective ministry in Europe
⇒ the ability to coordinate the ministry teams of the ship well
⇒ a passionate relationship with God in the midst of it all
⇒ continued wisdom regarding Operation World and its future

In Christ and for the Harvest,

Jason Mandryk
Revelation 7:9,10