

Mrs. Spesia: We have just had a lovely dinner at Shire in Lilongwe, Malawi and we were very honored to have the president of the Blantyre Rotary Club, Peter Nkata and I would like to introduce him all to you and would like him to tell you a little bit about himself.

Peter Nkata: Thank you very much. I am Peter Nkata, the president of Rotary Club of Blantyre. I've been in the Rotary for sixteen years now. Most projects in the Rotary in Malawi involve four areas. These areas are water and sanitation, areas of retaining the earth, areas of education, especially children education and the need to, the separate drinking water. In the last few years, we've had to resink a lot of boreholes in a lot of places in Malawi. Mostly the deep boreholes, which are more than fifty-five meters deep, so they make water available throughout the year because some boreholes which can be very shallow, are dug about twenty meters deep and are only functional for six or seven months of the year. The most critical part of the year would be when it's dry and that's the time when people would be looking for water. Otherwise, they walk long distances to fetch the water and therefore I suggest that if there is any project to be done in this area, which is quite dry, a deep borehole is needed. I always say cheap is expensive. You may get a really shallow borehole, which might be much much cheaper than the borehole we're looking at but in the long term it becomes expensive. It's not functional, it's not working and it defeats the whole purpose. And during the dry season, if we don't have water, people walk long distances. It's better to provide an expensive, borehole in an area of that nature, which will be up to fifty meters deep and you are sure they are going to have water throughout the year. I have experience of boreholes. I've been involved in providing boreholes to a lot of schools, a lot of homes and a lot of communities.

MS: Through your job.

PN: Through my job and also through the Rotary Club and therefore I know what's the generally good price and generally good product. In this case, this project was to be done through the Rotary Club of Blantyre, to be supervised through the community and to be coordinated by what we call the local community, which works on the project and the additional community to look at the money coming in and they have to hand it over to the local community who got the project and I would be involved in supervising the project. I stepped down as president of the club in July but I'm still in the club and I'm an advisory to the club and to the incoming team. I will make sure that, in terms of this project, our personal interest is to try and succeed because it has been discussed in my time as president and my presidency and I will make sure this project succeeds. It should be supported with about eight thousand U.S. dollars and I think it's worth double the money to go into and to serve a good area in that place for the year. That's all I need to talk about at this point. I hope it's enough.

MS: No, that was very good. A few things we were interested in knowing is about your Rotary Club in Blantyre.

PN: Yes

MS: So you have about thirty members?

PN: Yes

MS: And there are five Rotary Clubs in Malawi.

PN: Yes the five Rotary Clubs in Malawi are spread through out the country and the biggest is in the center region of Lilongwe, which is big and was of the diplomats. But the Rotary Club of Blantyre has got about fifty members. It is the oldest club in the country and probably the oldest club in this part of Africa because the Rotary festival came to Africa, then it came into Zimbabwe and from there it went into North Africa. It's coming back into Blantyre, Malawi. So, it's a very old club.

MS: What is the make up of your club members?

PN: The make up of the club members is really varied but mostly people in business, people in banking, the lawyers, academics. It is a club of thirty members, which is very unique in its spray of the membership but it works very well.

MS: Father Philip and I were honored to be guests at the Rotary meeting and we were very impressed with your members. I think that Malawi is kind of a land of contrast so you're not expecting when you're out in the mission, out in the countryside, in the bush, and then you come to this big city of Blantyre and this beautiful hotel, and all these very professional people at the Rotary Club. It's just kind of surprising. I think you said an interesting thing at dinner about how many million people there are in Malawi. Twelve?

PN: I would say there are twelve, thirteen, fourteen million people in Malawi. And of the two million, probably one million don't pay taxes because of the tax limit and of that I would say a good half.... So it's a very small congregation of people which is working to be in the position to pay taxes and support the government. But yes, you're right. The composition of the Rotary Club of Blantyre is quite varied and it makes it very interesting on terms of the various ideas coming in and the suggestions on the various projects. So there are experts involved with water, experts in education, experts in health, experts in ... which is what the Rotary encourages and that's what the Rotary wants to see happening in this country and with all the knowledge within the club to much better the projects.

MS: Well, I think that's what is impressive about Rotary, worldwide. You can go anywhere to any club and you would find people that are dedicated and really working for the good of the people.

PN: True. It's a big family and I think it works very well. As a Rotary Club you're allowed to do four projects at a time. So for the sake of speed, certain projects have got to be done directly from the Club so they won't pass this number four. Otherwise, we're going to be working for many many months or the year if we're going to get to the end of the project. If a club were to raise the money for a project, they could directly, on their own, do the project. So, what is to oversee the project is to help put it into the system of those four projects, which I think is another thing that you have to do for speed of the work to do.

MS: Thank you so much. We appreciated meeting you and spending the time with you both at the Rotary meeting, tonight at dinner, learning more about Malawi and especially about this project. We're looking forward to Joliet Rotary working with Blantyre Rotary and making our world a little bit smaller.