

Ship Report

24 May 2006 | Monrovia, Liberia



President of Liberia visits Mercy Ship to thank crew

A week before the scheduled departure of the Mercy Ship *Anastasis* from Monrovia, Liberian president Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf visited the hospital ship to thank the crew for their seven months of service. Nearly 100 guests – representing various groups involved with the service of Mercy Ships in Liberia, as well as members of the nation’s government – were also in attendance.

Her Excellency Madame Johnson-Sirleaf also came onboard the Mercy Ship in January 2006. During this second visit, she spoke of how moved she had been when she toured the ship.

“I had the opportunity to ... walk through the areas where our young people are being treated, and to just be awed by what is happening in their lives. I was overfilled with gratitude and appreciation to those who have given so much to be able to share with us,” she stated.

Madame Johnson-Sirleaf added, *“We can connect to humanity by the little that we do, and we want to thank the Mercy Ship for what they have done, for this sacrificial service. They have given up everything they have to come to a faraway place and to be able to render to those in need. We do thank you.”*

Solfrid Quist, Executive Director of the *Anastasis*, addressed the president, saying, *“We want to thank you from the depths of our hearts for the warm welcome we have had into this nation, to Liberia.... We are also leaving with gratefulness in our hearts knowing that the leadership of this nation will continue to work [in] every possible manner to bring hope and healing and restoration to the people of Liberia.”*

The Mercy Ship first docked in Liberia in 2005, completing a three-month stay and promising to return later that year. In late October, just four months after leaving, the *Anastasis* came back to Liberia. The nation was at a critical point, two weeks away from the run-off presidential election that would determine its future. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf received the majority of votes and was sworn into office two months later, on January 16, 2006.

The crew was privileged to be in Liberia during this historic time to see transformation happening all around them, as they also saw lives being changed every day onboard the ship.

President Johnson-Sirleaf highlighted this: *“We look at the examples that they showed – young people – ostracized, unaccepted in their community, ashamed to go around because of their disfigurement, because of their disability. And see the difference after this service – they can walk out, proud; they can once again regain their self-confidence; they can once again become a part of their community, their church, their school, their work.... And I sometimes see this as a microcosm of the transformation of our nation.”*

During this second phase of work in Liberia, 350 volunteer crew members and 95 Liberian day volunteers focused on the areas of health care, community development, and church empowerment. They completed 16 official

projects, 1700 surgeries, and thousands of dental treatments.

“To all of you Mercy Ships, we want to thank you,” Madame Johnson-Sirleaf concluded.

“It’s sad that you are leaving, we are going to miss you, the community, those you have served, the country, the government; but we take hope that as the Africa Mercy ship comes back next year, some of you – as many as could make it – will once again remember this great land of liberty, this place of a friendly people, with all its problems [and] that you will come back and once again join hands and bond with us. Give us an opportunity to work with you, to appreciate you, to thank you, and to share God’s blessings with you.”

