

MMM

Rooted and founded in love



MEDICAL
MISSIONARIES
of MARY

SUPPLEMENT TO HEALING & DEVELOPMENT — VOLUME 80 — EASTER 2019



*Wishing our readers all the
blessings of the Easter season*

That All May Have Life

In 2018, MMM was asked to assist in research about Sr. Dr. Maura Lynch and Dean Mary Frances Crowley, in a campaign called Women on Walls. This initiative of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) and Accenture, a global management, consulting and professional services firm, involved the commissioning of portraits of eight women.

Part of the RCSI and Accenture Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda, the portraits highlight the outstanding achievements of these women in health care. Artists submitted proposals to Business to Arts, the project managers, and six were chosen. The official unveiling took place in the RCSI Board Room in Dublin on 5 March 2019.

Granted a charter in 1784, today the RCSI is a leading academic institution in medical education and training. Its first honorary fellowship awarded to a woman was given in 1966 – to MMM foundress, Mother Mary Martin – ‘in recognition of her singular achievements in the field of medical missions and to the lustre she has added to Irish medicine in many parts of the world’.

Biographies of the eight Women on Walls were prepared by various contributors. The following are only brief summaries of their many accomplishments. We are grateful to the RCSI for the images of Sr. Maura and Dean Crowley and for permission to use them.

Dr. Victoria Coffey (1911 –1999) was one of Ireland’s first female paediatricians. A founder member of the Faculty of Paediatrics at the Royal College of Physicians, she pioneered studies in birth defects and disorders in the newborn. She was director of research for the Foundation for the Prevention of Childhood Handicap.



Mother Mary Martin at the RCSI ceremony

Dr. (Emily) Winifred Dickson (1866 –1944) was the first female fellow of the RCSI. Obtaining her M.B. with first-class honours, she practiced in Dublin and obtained a doctorate in medicine and a master’s degree in obstetrics, both with honours. On marriage in 1899, Dickson gave up her medical career. She later returned to practice because of her husband’s incapacity (*History Ireland*).

Dr. Pearl Dunlevy (1909–2002) graduated first in her class from the RCSI and did research on TB. A BCG vaccine programme that she began in Dublin was expanded nationwide, helping to virtually eliminate a major cause of 20th century mortality. Her monitoring of vaccination schemes ensured a dramatic drop in mortality from diseases such as diphtheria and whooping cough.

Dr. Mary Josephine Hannan (1865 –1935) was the first woman to both train and qualify at the RCSI. In India she worked in ‘Lady Dufferin hospitals’, which provided health care for women. In South Africa she joined the General Committee of the South African Medical Congress and was a medical officer for local women. She championed women’s rights and founded the Girl Guides in Pretoria.



MMMs and Lynch family members at the unveiling

Dr. Barbara Maive Stokes (1922 –2009) studied medicine at Trinity College, Dublin. Unable to be an epidemiologist because married women were barred from public service positions, she turned to paediatrics. She eventually managed the present St. Michael's House for people with intellectual disabilities. She lived with multiple sclerosis for 35 years.

Dr. Mary Somerville Parker Strangman (1872 –1943) graduated from the RCSI. She practiced in Waterford, supported female charities, and did research in alcoholism and morphine addiction. She joined the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation and co-founded the Waterford branch of the Women's National Health Association. Mary became Waterford's first woman county borough councillor.

Dean Mary Frances Crowley (1906–1990) earned her nursing and midwifery certificates in Britain. Returning to Ireland in 1941, Mary took up a senior position in Sir Patrick Dun's Hospital. She soon learned that Mother Mary Martin wanted to establish a midwifery training school but there was no approved midwifery teacher available. Mary Crowley went to Drogheda to help. Her resulting mandate established a school, affiliated with Holles Street.

Appointed assistant matron of the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital in 1944, she later founded the nursing training school and was director of nursing studies. After World War II, she was matron of the Irish Red Cross Hospital at Saint-Lô, France. In 1974 she was a founder member and first dean of the RCSI Faculty of Nursing. In 1990 the title was amended to include midwifery. She is shown in her dean's gown and with the faculty medal.

Sr. Dr. Maura Lynch (1938 –2017) joined MMM in 1956 and qualified in medicine at University College Dublin. Assigned to Angola in 1967, she spent 14 years there, mainly as medical director of remote Chiulo Hospital, the only hospital functioning in the area during a time of war.

After obtaining her fellowship in surgery, Dr. Lynch was assigned to Uganda in 1987. She established an internationally-recognized centre in Kitovu for women affected by fistula and for training medical personnel. On the very day marking 50 years since her first arrival in Africa, Sr. Maura died unexpectedly from complications following surgery. Many spoke of her as a mentor, a true religious, a feminist, and an advocate for women's rights. She is seen in front of Kitovu Hospital.



Staff with MMMs who knew and lived with Sr. Maura and Dean Crowley



Dean Mary Frances Crowley



Sr. Dr. Maura Lynch, MMM

Celebrating 50 Years – Brazilian style!

In February 2019, MMMs, Associates (AMMMs) and friends gathered to mark 50 years of MMM life and ministry in Brazil, South America's largest country. Sr. Sheila Campbell, who served for many years in Brazil, said that they celebrated 'not with Carnival and football, the Brazilian stereotypes, but in warm, intimate and joy-filled ceremonies in the parish church of *Santo André* (St. Andrew) in the crowded, noisy neighbourhood of Nordeste de Amaralina, Salvador, and in a small semi-rural chapel of the basic Christian community of Planaltino, Capim Grosso.'



Mother Mary's concern for mother and child

Sheila said that *Santo André* is in a poor part of Salvador, surrounded by wealthier districts, so parish priest Fr. João Pedro and parishioners were delighted that we chose to celebrate with them, rather than in a more affluent and accessible church.

The weekend of 14 – 17 February included the perpetual profession ceremony of Sr. Miranilha dos Santos, from Capim Grosso, 267 kilometers from Salvador. 'Nilza' spent several years of her formation in Salvador and is well known in the parish. The Sisters decided to prepare for the ceremony with two days of vocation promotion.

Gathering, story-telling and commitment

Ten MMMs assembled on the first day. Four live in Salvador: Srs. Gladys, Jacinta, Liana and Nilza. Srs. Siobhan and Mary Ann came from our Congregational Leadership Team, based in Ireland. Srs. Kathie and Sheila came from the USA. Our first Brazilian Sisters, Cleide, now serving in Honduras, and Maria Jose, based in Uganda, were also able to attend.

Fr. João offered Mass that day. After communion, local children dramatized the story of Mother Mary and the foundation of MMM. An eight-year-old girl was dressed as Mother Mary in full MMM dress, including grey veil and white collar! When the narrator came to the part describing Mother Mary suffering from ill health all her life, the actress slumped in her chair and gave a whimpering cough - very realistic!

Fr. William, from a neighbouring parish, presided at Mass on the second night. Again the parish youth prepared a drama, this time on the life and mission of MMM over 50 years, in São Paulo and in



The first MMMs arrive in Brazil in 1969.

Bahia. Actors represented Srs. Brigid McDonagh and Sheila Lenehan, the first MMMs to arrive in Brazil, and Srs. Cleide and Maria José. Photos of the early Sisters and their ministries had been placed around a huge paper map of the country. One by one, small children broke through the map and held up posters of all the ministries in which MMM have been involved while a narrator described them. It was an impressive list and we were humbled to realize the wonderful contribution we have made to the Church in Brazil.



Breaking through! Showing our different ministries



Celebrating memories with Fr. Tony Terry

On the third day we celebrated Sr. Nilza's perpetual profession (See the following article).

Our Associate MMMs outdid themselves in organizing everything!

Reflection and thanksgiving

The next day, Sunday, Fr. Tony Terry came to our house in Amaralina for Mass with us. It was truly a moment to celebrate history because Fr. Tony was one of the Kiltegan (St. Patrick's) priests who visited Drogheda in

the late 1960's, requesting MMMs for the Brazilian missions. He reflected on the contribution MMM has made over the years. He emphasized the empowering of women and our contribution to health care when the government was unable to provide it.

The last event was a week later in Capim Grosso, in the small community of Planatino where MMMs lived for over 30 years. Again the AMMMs organized the day. Frs. Xavier and Alexandre, SJ, celebrated the Mass. It was yet another joyful reunion for many MMMs and local people and an occasion to congratulate Sr. Nilza at home. During the liturgy an old Volkswagen Beetle, the car in which the first MMMs arrived, was driven right into the church! It had been borrowed from the family who bought it from us.

We MMMs who arrived from outside of Brazil were honoured and humbled to be present for these ceremonies. A deep sense of gratitude pervaded the whole time, as well as hope and optimism for the next 50 years.



*Our 4 MMMs from Brazil: for many years to come!
Bençãos de Deus (God's blessings)!*

‘I will sing of your steadfast love’ (Ps 89, NRSV).

The climax of the events marking 50 years of MMM presence in Brazil was the perpetual profession of Sr. Miranilza (Nilza) Nascimento dos Santos.

Originally from Capim Grosso, Nilza joined MMM in 2006. She completed her novitiate in Nairobi, Kenya, and following profession in 2010, received her first assignment - to Salvador, Brazil. She was a founding member of *Projeto Consolação* (Project Consolation), an MMM response to the trauma many families experience following the assassination of a family member.



Nilza with her mother, sisters and nephew

Nilza returned to Nairobi In 2012 and completed a B.A. in sustainable human development, doing her field work on Project Consolation. After pioneering a new mission in Geolândia, Brazil with Sr. Ito-ro Etokakpan in 2016, Nilza joined about a dozen other MMMs for the School of the Lord's Service in Tanzania. This was part of her preparation for perpetual commitment. She then returned to Salvador and rejoined Project Consolation.

A joyful celebration

And so on 16 February 2019, Nilza made her perpetual commitment to God in MMM. The Mass for the ceremony, in Portuguese, was led by Dom Marco Eugênio, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Salvador. He concelebrated with Frs. Tony Terry, SPS, and Xavier and Alexandre, SJ. They were joined by MMM Associates, family, friends and other MMMs, including two members of our Congregational Leadership Team.

Nilza's mother, two sisters and a nephew were present, as were parishioners from Capim Grosso. There were even representatives from São Paulo, over 2000 kilometers away! The choir was from Capim Grosso and Nilza spent many hours teaching the young people the music for the occasion.

Two of our MMMs from Brazil did Scripture readings and Sr. Gladys Dimaku, from Nigeria, received Nilza's vows on behalf of the MMM Congregation.

The cake was cut in the parish hall after the ceremony, amid the usual mix of hugs and kisses, finger food, lemonade and shouts of joy as old friends met and new friendships were forged.

The meaning of mission

As she finished her B.A. course, Nilza wrote for our 2014 MMM Yearbook: 'Pope Francis tells us, "Evangelization is done on one's knees. Without a constant relationship with God, the mission becomes a job." ... The challenge comes when I get things done for God and not with God; things done *for* the poor and not *with* them.... The call to me, and perhaps us as missionaries, is to evangelize on our knees and with our feet, being able to sit on the chair of knowledge and life. Only then will the studies have meaning and evangelization be realized through us.'

To Sr. Nilza and MMM in Brazil: *Receba seus bons votos e orações!* (Receive our good wishes and prayers!)

Editor: Sister Carol Breslin, MMM

Designer: Judi Lennon

Photo credits: MMM Sisters

Cover: Batik by Hanna Varghese: 'He was received up into heaven.'



Nilza pronounces her vows before the congregation.

We have seen the Lord!



Sr. du Sacre Coeur (Mary) Byrne was born in Dublin in 1927 and joined MMM in 1952. After profession she worked in the magazine office. In 1958 she went to Nigeria and was secretary and bursar in Ogoja. She later served at Afikpo.

Sacre Coeur was a secretary for the Patrician Congress and helped prepare for our 1962 and 1969 General Chapters. After helping with fundraising in the USA, she was secretary in the Motherhouse and magazine office, in Airmount Hospital in Waterford, and at the midwifery training school in Drogheda. She was assigned to the *Áras Mhuire* office in 1998.

Sr. du Sacre Coeur moved to *Áras Mhuire* in 2006. She died there peacefully on 6 January 2019.



Sister Genevieve (Patricia) McCrea was born in Rutland, England in 1928. She had moved to Dublin before joining MMM in 1952. After profession she worked in Drogheda in the Lourdes Laundry, the convent sewing room, and in the hospital cafeteria, reception and switchboard.

After helping with the Dublin Sale of Work and serving in the Apostolic Nunciature, Genevieve returned to Drogheda and again worked in the sewing room. She was also a phlebotomist in the hospital.

For many years Genevieve was a driver for the Motherhouse and was responsible for maintaining the house cars. She moved to *Áras Mhuire* in April 2017 and died there peacefully on 14 December 2018.



Sr. Marion Therese (Mary) Reynolds was born in Dublin in 1930 and was a nurse before joining MMM in 1957. She then trained as a midwife and public health nurse. She was assigned to Tanzania and served in a number of hospitals and also worked in Malawi and Kenya.

Sr. Marion did mission awareness work in Ireland. She worked in the hospital in Drogheda; as a public health nurse in Dublin and Clonmel; and helped in Rosedale in Co. Kilkenny. Sr. Marion Therese then helped in the Motherhouse in the infirmary and as a chiroprapist.

She moved to *Áras Mhuire* in 2015 and died there peacefully on 29 December 2018.



Sr. Helen O'Brien was born in Fermoy, Co. Cork in 1938 and joined MMM in 1958. She trained as a doctor in UCD and was assigned to Nigeria in 1967. She served for 15 years in several mission hospitals.

After briefly joining the Cistercian community in Glencairn, Sr. Helen returned to MMM and helped in the Motherhouse. She moved to Dublin in 1997 and worked on research projects. She was also involved with pro-life work.

After some years of ill health Sr. Helen was admitted to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in July 2018. She moved to *Áras Mhuire* in August and died there peacefully on 29 November 2018.



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