



Dear Friend,

“Summertime and the livin’ is easy.” Porgy and Bess, *George Gershwin*

That’s what summer is all about. It is a time for fun! Ask any child out of school. This is the time for trips and cruises or backyard barbeques. The time for gathering with friends and family to celebrate the big holidays of Independence Day and Labor Day.

But summer time is also a time for transitions. Many people move from one home to another in the summer time. Children are transitioning from one school grade to another or one high school year to another. College students have closed out one set of classes only to transition to another set in the fall semester. And now we have some transitions to share with you.

*Yes, “One of these mornin’s you’re goin’a rise up singin’
Then you’ll spread your wings and you’ll take to the sky.”*

~Porgy and Bess, *George Gershwin*

That’s the core of the two stories we have for you in this newsletter. One Sister is making her commitment to God in the MMM way of life and the other is waiting on God to lead her in perhaps a new direction. They are looking to spread their wings and take to the sky.

Essentially, their stories are about commitment. One woman is making the commitment to live the MMM way of life and the other is celebrating her Golden jubilee in that way of life. The dictionary lists the attributes of commitment as faith-filled dedication to an idea or dream. It requires determination, dependability and trust. The lives of Sister Danielle Darbro and Sister Carla Simmons are good examples of these attributes.

Danielle is just beginning her life as a Medical Missionary of Mary. Everything is new and exciting. All is in the future for her. For now Danielle is in the USA visiting her family in California and awaiting her visa to Honduras where she has been assigned. The excitement of the sisters in Honduras is definitely building as they prepare to welcome Danielle.

In Carla’s article you will find that she is living all the excitement expressed in Danielle’s story. Carla is celebrating 50 years as a MMM missionary. Her life brings healing, freedom from pain, and peace to the lives of those whom she serves.

Summertime is also the season in which we bring the MMM story to parishes far and wide and offer others the opportunity to partner with us in mission, by prayer, through membership and financial support. As the song says, “from California to

the New York Island...this land was made for you and for me.” Please pray for our sisters, associates and staff as they ply the highways and byways of this great land of ours.

Other news: Last summer we were introduced to Gerard Thomas Straub, who in his earlier life was a well-known TV producer. After a conversion experience he now devotes his time, talent and treasure to telling the stories of people who live on the margins of society. Through the lens of his camera he shares what it is like to be poor. He has embraced Pope Francis’ mandate to be a missionary disciple.

Exploring different ideas with Gerry, we asked if he would go to Honduras to make a documentary of the people we serve there. He agreed and the sisters in Honduras made the necessary arrangements. Now we are waiting to see what he saw through his camera lens. When the film is completed we will share it with you.

For the people in Gerard Straub’s film, “livin” is not easy. We thank you for all the ways you help make “livin” easier for those in our world. Be assured of our prayers, especially for the commitments and the transitions you make in your life.

With deep gratitude,

S. Mary Ann MacRae, MMM

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Development Director



**Sisters Carla (R) and Ursula Cott (L)
1975 Abakaliki, Nigeria**

Finding My Passion

By Sister Carla Simmons, MMM

It is hard to believe that 50 years have passed since I made my First Profession of Vows. Born in Detroit, I am third in my family with two elder brothers.

In all twelve years of my education, I had only one lay woman as a teacher. All my other educators were sisters, IHM in grade school and Dominicans in high school so I was familiar with the idea of a vocation to religious life. I was always interested in the missions and I thought I'd like to be a doctor.

When I talked to one of the sisters in school, she suggested writing to the Medical Missionaries of Mary because they specialized in medical mission work. Immediately I composed a letter and the MMMs responded with an application which I filled out. MMM accepted me into the Postulancy, sight unseen.

In my senior year, two MMM sisters visited my school. Having met them and hearing about their work, I felt I had made the right decision.

Leaving home, I travelled to Winchester, MA and began my formation as an MMM taking my first vows in 1964. However, I needed to do professional training and because the medical school in Ireland was not taking foreign students at the time, I was sent to study occupational therapy at Tufts University in Massachusetts.

After making my final profession in Drogheda, Ireland in 1971 I was assigned to St. Patrick's Hospital, Abakaliki, Nigeria, where we had many patients suffering from the effects of Hansen's Disease (Leprosy). I loved my years in Nigeria, the work, the people, the sisters, everything!

In 1979 I was asked by the Congregation to study Medicine, my dream come true! After finishing my studies and gaining experience working in our hospital, I was ready for my new assignment.

However, the Lord had other plans in mind. Before returning to Nigeria, I went home to visit my family where I received an awful shock. Two weeks after my arrival, my mother became suddenly very confused. Upon investigation it was determined that she had dementia. My mother, 84 at the time, lived with

her sister who was 86. I didn't feel that I could go off to Africa, though I wanted to.

Accepting a position in a Family Practice Residency near to home I spent three years there, working and keeping an eye on my mother and aunt who both passed away in 1994.

It was during my residency that I had an experience working in Palliative Care. This was to become my passion.

Working in a Hospice, some of my responsibilities included the care of patients with HIV/AIDS. When asked where I would like to work, I said that I wanted to continue working with AIDS patients so I was sent to Kitovu, Uganda where we had a large AIDS program.



Sister Carla, prepares to operate in Kitova Hospital, Uganda

On arrival, I was side-tracked into working in the hospital because our sister/surgeon was going on sabbatical. Never having had a scalpel in my hand, I had to learn surgery in six months. Following my 5 year hospital service, I moved to the AIDS program.

Kitovu Mobile had a large outreach program and eventually through it, I was able to start Palliative Care. At first all of our patients suffered from AIDS. The nurses were so grateful to have Palliative Care because finally, their patients could be free from pain. Fortunately we had liquid morphine, with which I was familiar because of my work in Detroit.

Our Palliative Care program grew rapidly and included patients suffering from terminal cancer. We covered an area of over a hundred square miles. In the ten years I was there we cared for over 2000 patients.

Last year, I was brought to Drogheda with back problems and very troublesome diabetes. I have remained here for treatment and the future is a huge question mark. However, I know that the Lord must have something in mind... I just haven't discovered it yet. ■

My Life in the International Novitiate in Nigeria

By Sister Danielle Darbro



Sister Danielle Darbro (L) with Sister Joanne Bierl (R) shortly before leaving for Nigeria to do her Novitiate.

My experience in the novitiate was full of blessings, challenges, the richness of diversity, and the beauty of sharing the journey with sisters seeking to grow deeper in love with Christ. It was an opportunity to learn, to stretch beyond my comfort zone, and to see God in all things. It was truly an extraordinary and unique experience!

One of the greatest blessings was having so much diversity in our international and intercultural community. The community included sisters who are Nigerian, Ugandan, Tanzanian, and American.

This kind of diversity creates many opportunities to explore new ideas, ways of celebrating liturgy, and finding joy as we shared our selves with one another. Openness, flexibility, a spirit of service, and being ready to laugh and to forgive made us bond together during this formation journey.

To add to our diversity, our novitiate is located in Ibadan, which is in Yorubaland. Although we had many Nigerians in our novitiate community, none of them were Yoruba. Our location offered another cultural experience for all of us to adjust to Yoruba culture and try to learn and communicate in the Yoruba language. I found Yoruba culture to be very open and alive with beauty as I witnessed it in the people, liturgy, music, art, and food.

The novitiate program was a full schedule of activities which included prayer, classes, and manual labor. It could be quite a challenge to keep up! We took turns carrying out various responsibilities, and I found that even with a busy schedule, there were times of peace and recollection. Mopping a lonely corridor in the quiet of an early morning helped to bring a sense of balance to my mind. In the commotion

of the goat house, I sensed God's sense of humor as I took care of our more than 20 goats. I experienced the presence of God in many ways, in the goats and in the flowers, in the light and in the breeze, in the Eucharist and in Scripture, and in the people around me.

One of the ways Christ revealed himself was in how we used our gifts to help one another. My sisters came to my aid many times during the novitiate, notably when I was trying to cook supper or work in the farm. I found that I could serve my sisters by helping them with their English or with working the computer. I will always remember when I was working in the kitchen, and one of my sisters was clearly tired yet chose to sacrifice her siesta time in order to help me sort the tomatoes, refusing to leave even after I tried to send her away several times! It was in times of stress that I saw Jesus most clearly in my sisters, who stretched themselves to serve one another during our program. I was continually challenged by their example of love and sacrifice. It was a blessing to share the journey with such sisters!

Some of my most treasured memories of the novitiate are of the time I worked

in St. Mary's Hospital in the HIV/AIDS unit. I was doing pastoral care and helping out in the office. I loved visiting with AIDS patients on admission, being present to them, and praying with them. It was particularly touching to me when the Muslim patients gave me permission to pray with them. During the visits I would focus on what we had in common, which was always much more than any differences we had. There was no doubt that in each of these situations, it was actually Jesus who was the one lying in the bed. I am grateful for such opportunities to connect with our brothers and sisters.

I am grateful for my time in the Novitiate, and it was certainly a blessing to experience it in Nigeria. God has called us as MMM's to live as an international and intercultural witness of love and of service. As we come together from various backgrounds and experiences, we see Christ in one another and in the people we serve. The beauty and richness of my life in Nigeria served as an environment for learning and growth. It was a unique and precious time for which I will always be thankful. ■

Challenged by the *Joy of the Gospel*

In his Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Francis calls each of us to a process of conversion, remarking that “those who are truly disciples will be **missionary disciples**, characterized by the joy of the faith... Being a disciple means being constantly ready to **bring the love of Jesus** to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.”

Evangelizers, he says, “must never look like someone who has just come back from a funeral” or “whose lives seem like Lent without Easter”, but, rather, must be those who “**wish to share their joy**, who point to a horizon of beauty and who invite others to a delicious banquet”.



Novices praying in the chapel: Left to Right First Row: Natalia, Magdalene (made her First Vows), Danielle (made her first vows and assigned to Honduras), Celestina. Left to Right Second Row: Anne Mary, Leticia (made her First Vows and assigned to Honduras).

Chicago, IL 60629-5565 Tel: 1-773-735-3712

4425 W 63rd St., Ste 100

Mission Development Office

Sister Mary Ann MacRae, MMM

For more information please contact:

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Tel/fax: 276-835-9312

Clincho, Va. 24226-9702

Route 1 PO Box 329

e-mail: mmmssomerville@comcast.net

617-666-3223

Somerville, MA 02143-1515

179 Highland Ave.

773-737-3458

Chicago, IL 60629-3602

e-mail: development@mmmsusa.org

3410 West 60th Place

Fax: 773-735-4661

773-735-3712

Chicago, IL 60629-5565

4425 West 63rd Street, Suite 100

Mission Development Office

Medical Missionaries of Mary

563 Minneford Ave.

City Island Bronx, NY 10464-1118

718-885-0945

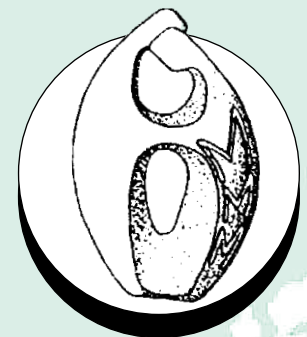
Fax: 718-885-0010

e-mail: minniefordm@gmail.com

Addresses of Houses in the U.S. www.mmmsusa.org

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