



Cover Photo:
*Sunset photo taken at
Jesuit Retreat Center on
Lake Winnebago, WI*

MEDICAL MISSIONARIES OF MARY

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Thanksgiving
Newsletter
2019

*Some days my prayer is a rainfall of tears, other days the sunshine of joy,
and sometimes it's a sheltering umbrella — but no matter what I'm weathering
in my life, my prayer is first and always the infinite horizon of gratitude.
~ Terri Guillemets*

Dear Friends,

Since we changed the way we communicate with each of you last year, this is the first time I write a THANKSGIVING NEWSLETTER. I am delighted as this is my favorite holiday in the USA and one I have celebrated in every country where I have lived. It brings together people from every faith tradition, culture, and economic background to a place where we all have something in common... so much of our life and existence is pure gift. Would that we lived in that spirit of gratitude! How different our world would be!

Earlier in the year when we met as Leadership to look at our reality and plan for our future, we learned that 54% of the income to the Congregation in 2018 came from the good people in the USA. We are a simple office with the four of us who work here, but we are blessed with a few thousand people across this country who have decided to become part of the MMM family. And that has made all the difference. That is a huge blessing and source of Thanksgiving for us this year.

I wrote to some of the Sisters and asked them to share for what they are grateful for as we come to the end of 2019. What blessings and experiences have filled them with gratitude and a sense of hope as they worked with the people in their local communities. In this newsletter, I will share some of their responses with you. The responses come from Nigeria, Brazil, Ireland, Uganda and represent just a small percentage of our MMM reality.

By the time you receive this newsletter, the various annual meetings of MMM during the year will be finished. I am writing this shortly after returning from Honduras. Sr. Kathie Shea MMM is travelling with me for what will be her first trip to Honduras. She does manage their financial issues so this is an opportunity to see firsthand the results of the gifts that you have sent to us.

For me, Honduras is like coming home to a place that is familiar and well loved. At the same time, the degree of violence has increased so much that I ask you to pray for our Sisters, Associates, staff, and those with whom we live and serve in Honduras, South Sudan, and Nigeria. 2019 has been a very difficult year in each of these places.

As we approach the celebration of Thanksgiving, I pray each of you and your families, that, despite all that might be difficult, we will find a moment to say Thank you for the gift of being alive and for the gift of each other. From MMM around the world, we offer prayers of thanksgiving for all those who believe in our mission of healing love and are willing to stand at our side as we serve our brothers and sisters in need.



With gratitude and very best wishes,

Sister Joanne

Sister Joanne Bierl, MMM
Development Director

Reflections On A Year of Blessings



MMM Honduras National Meeting September 2019
Front: Sisters Rosalinda, Margaret, Renee and Cleide
Back: Sisters Bernadette, Joanne and Kathie

Sister Sylvia Ndubuaku MMM writes from the Family Life Center/ V.V.F. Hospital in Itam in Nigeria.

2019 has been a wonderful year for us here. We are grateful to God for the safety of everyone, no death even with the threats of violence on every side: kidnappings, armed robbery attacks, ritual killings, and the precarious economic situation in our country. There was no reported case of kidnapping or accidents among the surgeons who came for our April 2019 V.V.F. camp. They all, including the patients, returned home safe and sound.

We are happy to report that the MMM Resource Team who visited us returned home without any incident. (The Resource Team mentioned above consists of Sr. Rose Mogun MMM and Eamonn Brehony AMMM. For the last 10 years, they have travelled all over visiting Congregational missions to help with evaluations, project funding, setting up projects, human resources, and keeping alive the healing charism in difficult situations. Their work has helped enormously to develop our MMM projects in the way we can be proud of. But in recent times, with all the violence, there has to be care taken regarding their ability to travel. Thus it is something to give thanks for that they were able to spend the time in Nigeria safely.)

Sister Maria Jose da Silva MMM from Brazil has spent many years in East Africa, especially in Uganda, where we have passed over some of our projects and begun new ones. She writes about our new MMM presence in the capital of Kampala in which we have just begun planting the seeds of healing and hope!

In Kampala Ministry this year, we thank God for giving us the privilege to be together as MMM in Munyonyo (section of Kampala) where we live and for being able to know more the reality of the people in our parish. We visited some of the house/families in our parish. The three of us were involved in counseling group support for adult and children, home visits and some other activities in the Parish. We are grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Eucharistic celebration in our parish, Munyonyo Martyrs' Shrine which has just been elevated to the status of a Minor Basilica. For the Ugandan people it was a cause of great celebration and Thanksgiving.

Sister Margaret Nakafu MMM writes from Siquatepeque, Honduras:

I am very grateful for the spirit of collaboration that is expressed by different persons that I encounter within the Parish of Our Lady of El Carmen. Among those are the 6 volunteers that accompany me on the mission of bringing Holy Communion to 9 elderly persons once a week. This is one of the ways the Honduran people express the values of generosity and compassion. I am grateful to all our friends through whose generous collaboration we are able to realize the Mission God entrusted to us.

Sister Margaret Anne Meyer MMM writes about her commitment to spreading awareness of human trafficking:

For several months, I have been enthralled reading the articles of Sisters throughout the world that are,



Kampala, Uganda Sisters Betty, Rose, and Maria Jose

so to speak, on the front lines of fighting against human trafficking of persons and rescuing the victims who have been assaulted.

One of the articles particularly struck me. A Sister from Nigeria said, *“Do not think of your efforts to be as a drop in the ocean but that we are an ocean of many drops.”*

This led me to think of my own journey of trying to stop the evil effects of human trafficking and how often I felt I was only a drop in the ocean.

From the Website of Talitha Kum, in the section on Nigeria, I read that one of our own Sisters, **Sister Blandina Ryan MMM** was instrumental in bringing about awareness of the erosion of the human dignity of Nigerian women through the Nigerian Conference of Women Religious.

Upon my return to the USA, in 2002 I found some ways to help. A circular letter written by Julie Tanner of the Christian Brothers Investment Services, suggested leaving a copy of the letter at hotel and motel desks asking the man-

ager to train their staff to look out for evidence of human trafficking. After several years of this I was delighted to hear from ECPAT, an organization to end the sexual exploitation of children, that most of the hotels had complied with this and now it was time to thank them for doing so.

With help from Michele Guelbart of ECPAT, the next project was to ask if I could use the same sort of letter to encourage airlines to also sign the code to protect children from human trafficking. Delta Airlines had already signed the code and now I wrote to the CEO of American Airlines to do the same and also to train his flight attendants to look for evidence of human trafficking on its flights. They have since begun the training and signed the code. I am writing this not to say I brought all of this about but to encourage any of you who are elderly and feel that you may only be a drop in the ocean, please join with all of us to be an ocean of many drops. We give thanks for all the good that has been and is being done!

From Sister Bernadette Freyne MMM who is responsible for pastoral care in our Nursing Home, Aras Mhuire, in Drogheda, Ireland:

I give thanks that I can still be ‘a presence’ to our sisters in our Nursing Home ... do the little things that make a difference to those with limited mobility and give time to those whose conversations no longer make sense. I am grateful for my community and for their support and understanding and finally, I thank God that I am still reasonably healthy as I move on in years.

From Sister Dr. Genevieve van Waesberghe, MMM who works as a Capacitar Trainer in East Central Africa, comes a response after being part of a retreat in Barcelona for Human Rights Defenders at risk:

“When you meet Human Rights Defenders (HRD) they don’t usually speak about how they are or feel. Therefore, I don’t ask questions but presume they have had threats, were imprisoned, ambushed or kidnapped. After training, many will come and say, “Thank you! I now feel better”, and they mention briefly what they went through and symptoms that now have disappeared. One told me, “Last night was the first time in 10 years that I slept without nightmares and a lamp lit in my room!” We give thanks for these committed people and for those who are healing them, one person at a time.



Thanksgiving Wish...

This newsletter is being sent to the printers before we do the drawing of the winner of our raffle, so I am unable to share the names of the winners with you. The response to the last newsletter and the raffle was just wonderful. Thank you to all of you who were a part of that. Another reason for us to give thanks in 2019.

Each of you reading this newsletter could add your own moments of Thanksgiving in 2019. May the spirit of Thanksgiving enrich and give meaning to our daily lives. A very happy Thanksgiving from MMM around the world!



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