



THE HEALING TOUCH

The Newsletter of the Medical Missionaries of Mary

'Rooted and founded in love'



MMM
Worldwide News

News from MMM Areas



NIGERIA:

Lagos: A Memorial Mass for Sr. Léonie McSweeney, (1932-2019) was held in SS. Mulumba and David Catholic Church, Lawanson, Ikate on 21st May. It was organised by the Pro-life Association of Nigeria. People came from various parts of Nigeria to mark the anniversary of her death and give testimony to her work.

ANGOLA:

Dom Fernando Kevanu, Bishop Emeritus of Ondjiva Diocese in the Province of Cunene, where the MMMs worked for so many years died in May. Sr. Laurinda Emilia Bundo, went to the funeral to represent the MMMs.

TANZANIA:

On June 4th MMM celebrated 85 years of service to Tanzania with a Mass of Thanksgiving and ceremony at Ngaramtoni, Arusha. Even some MMM Sisters from Ireland, formerly assigned to Tanzania, went back for the celebration. Congratulations to all!

UGANDA:

The Sisters' present ministry covers the sick, the elderly, people with disability, the very needy in prison, and the girls that did not get opportunity to get formal education.

IRELAND:

Good news from the Congregational Centre in Rosemount, Dublin. Sr. Clara Chikwana from Malawi has finally been granted her Irish visa and joined the rest of the Central Leadership Team. Goodbye to Zoom for the present as they can now meet in person to guide the Congregation.

U.S.A.:

Some of our Sisters are scheduled to once again visit parishes to raise the needs of our missionary activities and their projects. We wish all safe travels and receptive ears of those who hear them speak.

Two years of Pandemic



Since March 2020, most of the world has been facing the Covid-19 pandemic. Some countries have been badly hit, such as the USA with over a million deaths, and some countries are reporting very few numbers. For example, the Republic of Benin has reported only 27,000 cases with 163 deaths.

How reliable are the statistics? As in most situations in life, it depends on the ability to record and generate the data. Many of our African countries do not have the infrastructure of health services and medical referrals to produce accurate figures. So, this small synopsis will not even try to guess what is happening.

One thing is obvious looking at data on vaccinations. Of the five countries in East Africa where MMM live, Uganda seems to have had the highest number of cases. Since 2020 to May 6th 2022 there have been 164,118 confirmed cases of Covid-19 with 3,597 related deaths, reported by World Health Organization (WHO). As of 30th April 2022, a total of 20,899,440 vaccine doses have been administered and 10,250,742 people fully vaccinated which is approximately 23.6% of the population. Other countries have lower rates, often less than 10%.

Latin America is doing better, but has also been badly hit by the diseases. The Sisters in Brazil personally know people who have died. Brazil has reported 665,00 deaths but has managed to vaccinate 77% of the population. In Salvador, the Sisters report that the consequences of the pandemic have been devastating. Where they live, an area of poverty, has seen an increase in social inequality, consequently resulting in unemployment, hunger, and violence. Their response has been one of practical help and emotional and spiritual support.

What are the Sisters on the ground telling us? They are still very cautious, realizing that the pandemic is not over yet. The Sisters in Angola had Covid 19 amongst



themselves as well as trying to treat those in the local community. As Sr. Beatrice says: “Although it was a trying period, we cared for each other until everyone became healthy. And even though the public use of facemask is no longer enforced, we make it a priority not to relent until the virus is totally eliminated. In this way, we try to stay safe and keep others safe too. “

In every country the Sisters are encouraging the population to get vaccinated and teaching good hygiene practices to slow the rate of infection. Everything the developed world can do to supply vaccines to the developing world we must encourage.

Covid-19 has certainly made life more challenging for our MMM Sisters. We are certainly open to being challenged and count on all our supporters and benefactors to rally around us as your support is more needed than ever.

Dareda - Passing on the Healing Charism



Moira Brehony AMMM tells the story of Dareda Hospital in Tanzania, run by MMM Sisters between 1948 and 2000. When MMM withdrew, it left the Associates to maintain the spirit of Mother Mary and of the healing charism. This has continued right up to the present.



Dareda Hospital was opened in January 1948 and the first MMM Sisters to reside there were Sr. Helena Mulcahy and Sr. Clare O'Driscoll. Mother Mary Martin visited Dareda the same year. She decided that the hospital with more MMM Sisters would develop into a bigger facility and offer more services to the poor and in particular to the mother and child in keeping with the true MMM spirit. By 1959 a General Nurse Training school was opened with Sr. Miriam O'Quigley as tutor.

Despite some unplanned events like an earthquake in 1964 the hospital grew from strength to strength and is still operational to this day. It continues to train nurses.

The staff of Dareda hospital were very influenced by the Sisters. The healing charism of MMM continues to this day. A number of staff totally committed their lives to the care of patients both in the hospital and in the outreach mother and child clinics. Many of the staff used to join the Sisters for prayer. Sr. Dolores Kelly who worked in the Pharmacy in Dareda regularly prayed with the staff and the local children and she gave her time every Saturday to visit local families and listen to their stories. MMM Sisters Theresia Samti, Aloysia Lagween, Opportuna Cypriani, Theresia Ladislaus, Lydia Kijuu, Vincent Pallotti, Jacintha Akonaay and Protegia Slaa are all from Dareda and its surrounding areas. MMM now has a new postulant Veronica Michael, from Dareda, whose parents and grandparents knew many of the Sisters.

Following the Congregational Chapter in 1997 the MMM



Dareda Hospital

Associate movement was established. In 1999, Sr. Theresia Ladislaus introduced the Associate movement to the staff of Dareda Hospital. By that time, due to a shortage of Sisters, the management of the hospital had been returned to the diocese and a new Congregation of Sisters took over the convent and the hospital grounds.

Six nurses including a nurse tutor signed up for an orientation course given by Sr. Marcelina McCarthy. She regularly visited Dareda hospital from Makiungu hospital. In the year 2000, six ladies made their Associate covenants for one year. The following year, four more staff – three female staff and one male signed up for a new orientation programme. This was facilitated by Sr. Protegia Slaa.

In 2002 Sr. Josephine Grealy revisited Dareda hospital. She was pleasantly surprised and impressed when she found



that the staff had all remained working in the hospital and training school and the healing spirit of MMM was so strong. The matron (Mary Akonaay AMMM) and nurse tutor (Bernadette Neema AMMM) were staff who had worked very closely with the Sisters. They in turn were continuing to pass on the MMM spirit to their staff and students. Sr Josephine felt that the associates in Dareda were working and living a life of commitment to the poor as the Sisters had done in the past.

Victims' Voices Lead the Way



Many people still think that slavery is something that existed long ago and far away. Unfortunately, that is not true at all. Rising numbers of especially women and girls are trapped in the vicious cycle of human trafficking each year. It does not appear to be a trend that is going away as poverty rates continue to rise and laws against Human Trafficking are unable to keep up with the trend. MMM Sisters are actively involved in giving a voice to the victims and to working in small communities to protect the most vulnerable people who are deliberately targeted for this. We have been dealing with sexual exploitation for several years, working with hundreds of women surviving sexual exploitation and providing direct support to victims, who were mostly forced into prostitution.

While there is a lot of frustration that more is not being done to help victims who often fall between laws of different countries as they are trafficked, more is needed to be done to help the victims whatever country they arrive in. Trafficked people deserve more dignity and more support. Education is also needed to prevent this from happening in the first place and to help them know what is possible if it does happen.

This year's theme puts victims of human trafficking at the centre of the campaign and will highlight the importance of listening to and learning from survivors of human trafficking. The campaign portrays survivors as key actors in the fight against human trafficking and focusses on the crucial role they play in establishing effective measures to prevent this crime, identify and rescue victims and support them on their road to rehabilitation.

Many victims of human trafficking have experienced ignorance or misunderstanding in their attempts to get help. They have had traumatic post-rescue experiences during identification interviews and legal proceedings. Some have faced revictimization and punishment for crimes they were forced to commit by their traffickers. Others have been subjected to stigmatization or received inadequate support.

Learning from victims' experiences and turning their suggestions into concrete actions will lead to a more victim-centred and effective approach in combating human trafficking.

Why a Blue Heart?

The Blue Heart represents the sadness of those who are trafficked, while reminding us of the cold-heartedness of those who buy and sell fellow human beings.

Did you know?

- In 2018 about 50,000 human trafficking victims were detected and reported by 148 countries.
- 50 per cent of detected victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, 38 per cent were exploited for forced labour.
- Female victims continue to be the primary targets. Women make up 46% and girls 19% of all victims of trafficking.
- Globally, one in every three victims detected is a child.
- The share of children among detected trafficking victims has tripled, while the share of boys has increased five times over the past 15 years.

Source: UNODC Human Trafficking

Meet the Sisters



Sr. Maria José da Silva



Sr. Maria José is the new Area Leader for the Americas and known to the writer of this article personally since she was 18 years old! So, yes, I am biased! But all who know Maria can say with me that she is a warm, friendly and

approachable person, wise beyond her years, a sincere and mature woman.

Maria comes to her new role after a wide MMM experience in mission. She is Brazilian, from the southern State of São Paulo. She grew up in the neighbouring State of Parana, but her roots come from the North and the Central Western areas of Brazil. As she says herself: "My parents were internal migrants, searching for better place to live and work within the country in order to be able to offer us conditions for school and better living conditions." Maria is one of four siblings, she has two brothers and one sister, all married with children. Maria's father, Ernesto José da Silva, has died, but she is currently involved in her mother's care; Maria's mother, Maria de Lourdes Santana Silva, has Alzheimer's.

Maria's interest in religious life began as a young teenager. She told her mother she wanted to be a religious Sister, but as there were no Sisters living locally, it didn't seem that this dream would be realized. Then MMM came to town. The first Sisters went to live in Maria's town, Colorado, in 1980, and almost immediately began vocation work among the young people while working in the local hospital. Maria liked what she saw. "What

attracted me to MMM was their simple lifestyle and how they related to people in an informal, caring way." Maria came to live with the Sisters in Colorado and then went to São Paulo for novitiate. She made her first profession in 1986 and studied auxiliary nursing during her early years in MMM and then went on to get a degree in Social Work. Her first overseas assignment was to Angola in 1993 for two years. On her return to Brazil, this time to Salvador in the Northeast, she worked as a social worker in a project for disadvantaged children in a poor area of the city. She was also involved in formation work both in Brazil and overseas. In 2001, she had the opportunity to go to Baltimore to study for a Master's Degree in Pastoral Counselling.

In 2011 Maria went to East Africa, to Uganda, and was there for eight years, right up to the time she returned to Brazil to help with her mother's care.

Maria talks of her hobbies as "taking long walks and contemplating nature", but she forgets to mention that she is a good gardener and handy with a sewing machine as well! One enjoyable thing that has given her life is aging gracefully and enjoying good health. She feels at home and true to herself. The current years of pandemic have brought their own challenges. "How do you help young people not lose values and deepen their human relationships?"

Life has taught Maria to use wisdom, reflection and prayer as guide in life. She always acknowledges that she is not in charge of the whole truth. She does not need to change the world by herself, "life is a process and transition is part of life."

Maria José, we wish you well as you take up your new responsibilities.

Inspiration



“From my point of view, God is the light that illuminates the darkness, even if it does not dissolve it, and a spark of divine light is within each of us.”

Pope Francis

Thank you for your continued support.
We hold you in our prayers.
www.mmmworldwide.org

