



THE HEALING TOUCH

The Newsletter of the Medical Missionaries of Mary

'Rooted and founded in love'

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www.mmmworldwide.org



MMM Worldwide News

News from MMM Areas



IRELAND:

Drogheda: Our first Christmas Craft Fair will take place in Drogheda on November 26th. All in Ireland welcome! We thank the MMM Sisters overseas who sent us their crafts.

MMM COMMUNICATIONS:

Congratulations to Sr. Chinyene Lumenze MMM who has created a new Video Instructional Series "Let's Talk Family" to promote healthy parenting! It is hosted on our new MMM Youtube Channel - Medical Missionaries of Mary Worldwide.

Please watch and share this for us and let's support families! Sr Chinenye will release a new episode each Tuesday so stay tuned!

NIGERIA:

September was a busy month for MMMs in Nigeria this year. Four young women made First Profession of Vows and ten more started the Novitiate programme.

BRAZIL:

The Sisters are excited about the second visit to the Prelazia of

Sao Felix do Araguaia, the place we feel called to offer our MMM Healing presence among the most vulnerable. It is in the Amazon area of Brazil. On October 10th three sisters travelled to the Prelazia to spend time among the people in order to see their needs and prepare for next year 2023, our new beginning.

USA:

The Peace and Care of the Earth Ministry is getting off the ground and the jail ministry is resuming after Covid lockdown.

New MMMs - First Professions



Four new MMMs made their First Profession of Vows this year after completing their formation programme in the International Novitiate in Ibadan, Nigeria. Each one comes from a different background and life experience, but all were attracted to serving the poor and needy, using their gifts and talents. Let us introduce them to you.



Sr. Pauline Amulen (29) comes from Uganda, one of a family of eight children. Her father was a catechist and started a small Christian Community under a mango tree near his house as there was no church! It grew and eventually a church was

built. This is what stimulated in Pauline a firmness in faith and planted the seed of a missionary vocation. Times were hard when she was young as Uganda was going through a period of civil unrest. When she was small, she lost her home, but the family managed to stay together. Her mother was involved in a serious car accident when Pauline was only seven years old. "It forced me to be a mother at a tender age", she recalls, as she set about caring for her siblings. Because she did well at school, she was able to benefit from scholarships which brought her right up to university level and she graduated in 2017 with a degree in Business computing. Her early life experiences taught her to reach out to the suffering. Now she is assigned to Malawi for her next step in her missionary journey.



Sr. Mary Ogana (32) is from Cross River State in Nigeria. She is the second youngest in a family of five children. Sadly, her mother died when she was only 13 years of age. Her youngest sibling, Precious, was still a baby and Mary was left

looking after her as her older siblings were off schooling. Thankfully her father is still alive. Her parents, she says, "were generous, hard-working and peaceful". After her initial schooling, Mary went to a College of Health Technology and trained as a Community Health Extension

Worker (CHEW). Having worked in the health field before she joined MMM, this helped her decide which religious Congregation to join. She is starting her missionary life in Eleta, Ibadan, Nigeria.



Sr. Anastasia Onukafor (26) comes from Abia State, Nigeria. The fifth child of seven, she knew from an early age she wanted to give her life to God as a religious. The family used to joke about it! After finishing school and a course in Computer training, she began working as a nurse's aid in

MMM Hospital in Abakaliki. She tells the story that really impelled her to join our Congregation:

"There was a man lying helplessly outside the hospital gate. He bathed himself with his faeces, looking so weak and abandoned. People were by-passing him but some Sisters of the Medical Missionaries of Mary who came for vocation promotion in Abakaliki picked him up and brought him in. They took care of him, treated his sore, fed and handed him over to the leprosy unit until the relatives came for him. I was touched by this act of compassion, and I felt that I have seen what I was looking for in a congregation. I felt then that it was time to join."



Sr. Julia Iwuala (38) is from Imo State, Nigeria. Her family were business people and she is one of eight children. After her schooling, she worked with a company as a cashier for a short period and then decided to enter religious life in another Congregation. Around the

same time, she lost her mother and found the loss difficult to cope with. So, to give herself time to go through the grieving process, she left the other Congregation and went back to her studies and work. She qualified in Business Administration and worked as a school secretary before joining MMM in 2018.

The Hidden Treasure - The Gift of Life



By Sr. Cornelia Udoka, MMM

When we think of a treasure, we think of something we cherish so dearly, something valuable that is precious to us and we want to acquire it. Merriam Webster uses the following related words for treasure: blessing, Godsend, goody, windfall and valuable.

I think of Love and Life Natural Family Planning as a Hidden Treasure. This method of Family Planning is derived from Billings Ovulation Method, and it was founded by Sr. Leonie McSweeney in Ondo, Nigeria in 1973. I first heard about Love and Life Natural Family Planning, when Sr. Leonie visited us in the Novitiate of the Medical Missionaries of Mary in Eleta in 1981, Ibadan to teach us about natural family planning.

After learning the method, I did not think about it again until my junior sister, who had three girls, shared with me that she wanted a baby boy. I went and retrieved my book from the cartons, and I started teaching her. She bought her own copy of the Love and Life book. Thereafter she had three boys. For me it was a first-hand witness that this method actually works.

In 2017, I was asked by the West Africa Area Leader to work with Sr. Leonie as she rounded up, in preparation for her retirement and return to Ireland. This was initially meant to be a short assignment after which I would hand over to her successor and move to Angola where I had originally been assigned. Little did I know that God had another plan for PLAN and that I was that successor.

Initially for me, Pro Family Life Association Nigeria (PLAN) seemed to be an office with five staff, located in Eleta, Ibadan guiding married couples who wanted to use natural family planning. Sooner or later, I discovered a new horizon. The small office had a whole network throughout Nigeria serving many families. Each Diocese has a Regional Director with trained Instructors working

voluntarily at Parish and village level to serve the needs of married couples and families in their catchment area. Every year PLAN Instructors reach out to about 7000 families teaching them the Love and Life Billings Method or



supporting them with counselling during their moments of crisis. The head office continues to support those at the grassroots with ongoing refresher programmes and training of trainers in Dioceses, different groups and training schools. This is to ensure that they have enough Instructors at all levels. The accreditation of this method in 2016 by the Federal Ministry of Health, has encouraged more couples to avail of the method.

What are the benefits of the Natural Family Planning method as taught by Love and Life Billings Method? The Love and life method helps married couples who are having challenges with pregnancy to have babies. It helps married couples who want to avoid pregnancy to manage their fertility according to the number of children they want, and it also helps those who want to pre-select the sex of the baby to make their choice. This method can also be used in monitoring reproductive health. A woman who knows her normal pattern of body signs will be able to spot abnormality if it occurs and she will be able to seek medical attention on time.

Love and Life is more than fertility management. For the past five years I have had the privilege of journeying with married couples who come to PLAN to look for help. As I teach them the Billings Method of Natural Family Planning, I am also learning from their married life experiences.

This is what I term the Hidden Treasure. I am using the word Hidden Treasure for the Billings Method of Natural Family Planning because it is not easy to see all the benefits from afar. It can only be discovered by married couples who



use it. It is a way of life because both couples must be committed to it before it can work. Just like the Hidden Treasure in the bible, the person who finds it, is ready to offer anything in order to get it.

From one User of this Method who is also an instructor: "Love and Life has helped me and my wife to live our married life to the fullest and it has helped us to have a better understanding of each other. People think that it does not work. We have lived it and we confirm that it has worked as the research says 99.8%."

Another instructor recounting his experience of this method:

"Starting marital life from day one with Love and Life was for me a divine gift. Unknown to us till years later, we realised why God showed us the path of marital sanctity. My wife and I learnt Billings together. We wanted a baby but after attending the course for a full year, we started teaching other couples, while still expecting our baby.... For 20 years of constant questions, visitation and tensions all around, God kept us in Love. Then the boy came when we had lost hope. I remember telling my wife, if couples achieve pregnancy through our work, and we ourselves cannot, then God is at work. Then let us wait"

As they continued, it was their belief in the Love and Life method that kept them united for the 20 years.

"The knowledge of the Billings was at the centre of our holding unto God. When inability to conceive cannot be explained, the knowledge of Love and Life helps to keep the couple going. It gives couples the sense of direction"

Having a child in Nigeria is so important that a marriage without a child can often be shaken. Even if the husband

cherishes the wife, pressure from the family members can make life unbearable for the woman. Thanks to modern science that has shown that the infertility is not always from the woman. That is why in PLAN, we give special attention to infertility cases. In many cultures, the parents are usually addressed with reference to the first child. Thus, you have Eka Affiong, Baba Kunle, Mama Amara etc. It is as if the marriage is in existence for that child. This is how Rossy (not her real name) was feeling when she could not conceive. She got married in 2008, but they had difficulties having a child. For her, their blessing came when she was invited to join the training to become a teacher for Love and Life Billings Method. As well as the learning from the class, she was required to chart her personal body signs. Through the method, she was able to identify her fertile phase and thus became pregnant in the middle of 2021. In March this year, Rossy delivered a bouncing baby boy after twelve years of marriage. She said, "I cannot describe the joy in my heart because I have been able to hold a child of my own through this method". What is more, "it has helped my husband and I to experience real intimacy in our marriage". This is the hidden treasure that Rossy is describing.

This indeed is the ultimate purpose of the Pro Family Life Association of Nigeria: to promote love and harmony in families. Achieving pregnancy, avoiding pregnancy or sex pre-selection is the means to that end.



In a world that is full of challenges for families, we will continue to reach out to couples who want to uphold the family values because family is the nucleus of the society. Many thanks to our benefactors for enabling us to reach out to families.

Stamp Collecting



Is it still worth collecting stamps for the missions in a digital world? Yes, definitely.

Stamp collecting is among the most popular pastimes in the world. It has been called “the hobby of kings”. As we are curious by nature, it is easy to understand why many collectors take an interest in stamps of other countries, or to be more precise, the stamps of certain other countries. The cheapest and most affordable way for these collectors to acquire stamps, from selected countries, is to buy stamps from that particular country. On average, a parcel of stamps contains about 1200 stamps, with many duplicates. These parcels are not sorted or picked by the dealers, as labour costs are prohibitive. This fact benefits the collector as he can do his/her own sorting, falling upon stamps that can be added to his collection, an interesting postmark and on the rare occasion, an exciting error! Duplicates can be swapped with other collectors or with stamp clubs so there is very little wastage. To collectors, most of the excitement is in the search and the sense of discovery, stumbling upon a stamp not encountered before. It is obvious that the Dealer must have large quantities from any one country to weigh out small parcels for sale. The question is where can he get such quantities in the first place? The answer is mainly from Religious Orders and certain Charitable Organisations who receive small to medium quantities of stamps from many well-wishers. Any single offering may be a “widow’s mite”, but added together, these offerings gain considerable weight. Dealers buy from these sources and apart from the weight the factor that determines the price is the quality of the stamps.

If you have been collecting stamps for MMM, please continue the good work; if you have not, would you please consider doing so now. The following simple, but golden rules go to help maximise your contribution.

GOLDEN RULES

1. Never try to peel a stamp from an envelope. You will damage the stamp, making it useless.

2. Clip the stamp and surrounding piece of paper from envelopes, etc. Leave about ¼ inch of envelope paper clear around the stamp. This is to ensure the stamp is not damaged.
3. If the envelope has a neat circular postmark, try to include all of the postmark in the clipped piece. Many collectors are as interested in postmarks as they are in actual stamps.



Please send your stamps to:
Sr. Breeda Ryan, MMM
Stamp Department
Beechgrove
Drogheda, Co. Louth A92 XKX0)

Meet the Sisters - Sr. Joan Grumbach



Sr. Bernadette Heneghan

Sr. Joan Grumbach spent over forty years in East Africa, and it is her experiences there that have reshaped and moulded her personality. But her origins are on the other side of the world.

Sr. Joan was born in Connecticut, USA, and she has one older sister. The family had lived in the same area for a long time, in fact, Joan went to the same Sisters of Mercy School that her parents had attended many years before. As a young child she thought about her future and decided that teaching was not for her. She wanted to be a nurse! She had aunts who were nurses, and they encouraged her to get a college education as they could foresee that nursing education was heading for university level. So, to help defray the expenses involved, Joan worked part time and with summer jobs, to see her through her nursing degree at Boston University.

After qualifying, Joan worked as a Visiting Nurse in Arlington, MA, a neighbouring town to Winchester where MMM lived at that time. A friend indicated “a great bunch of Sisters” lived there, as they were driving past one day. Curiosity aroused, Joan found an opportunity to visit and was warmly welcomed by the community and the novices. Although attracted to their life, Joan had set other plans in motion! She had signed up for the Naval Nurse Corp. and drove across the country to San Diego, California. But MMM did not let go so easily. There were MMMs in California at that time too, so connections were made, correspondence continued and finally Joan drove back East to join the Sisters in Winchester in 1975.

After her initial religious formation, Joan went to a new mission in Clinchco, Virginia. The area was a poor coal mining region with not many Catholics. The Lutheran pastor and his wife were very helpful and the sisters and priests formed a support group that met on a monthly basis. After a few months, she got a job in a clinic in the next town. But this assignment did not last long. Joan was asked to go to Ireland and study midwifery, preparing her for her future ministry in Africa. She enjoyed Ireland, meeting so many more MMMs and hearing their stories.

In 1981, Joan arrived in Tanzania, which was to be her home for the next thirty something years. Her work was mostly in Maternal and

Child Health and it took her to some remote places, where resilience and adaptability were required. She worked in Namanyere in the southwest, in Loolera among the Maasai nomads, and in Nangwa in the centre north. For two years she actually went to “the big city”, Nairobi, Kenya, where she worked in a slum area. She only returned to the USA last year, 2021.

Joan is a likeable, sociable person, an introvert by nature. People notice her kindness, her willingness to go the extra mile, to be helpful. She certainly is a woman of faith. One of her hobbies (when she gives herself time) is reading mystery stories.

Life in Africa brought its challenges, learning languages, understanding other cultures. But Joan says it has broadened her world view and taught her tolerance. She loves new challenges and certainly adapting back to life in the USA will be a new one. Joan, we wish you well in the years ahead.

Autumn Leaves

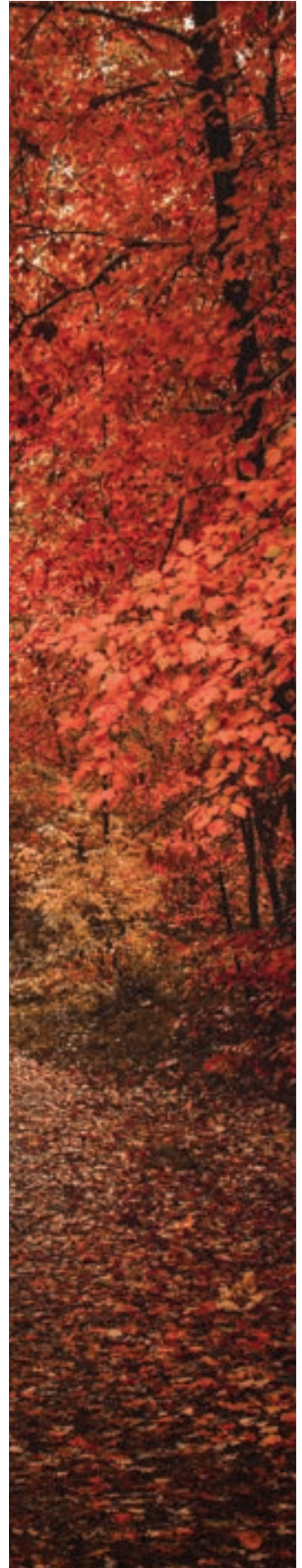


By Sr. Noleen Mooney, MMM

Autumn does not wait for leaves to fall.
is more hurried, more perceptible than Spring.
Summer glory has revealed
unfolded splendour – shatter spreading.
Now, greens and gentleness
taper-like, burst into flames –
Red for sacrifice,
Gold for offering.

We cannot bear its brilliance.
We need strength of wind to blow
unburden baring branches
until nothing now remains
Save stark and splendid signs of solitude –
content to wait for Spring and Resurrection.

The leaves lie helpless, huddled into heaps
for comfort - carpeting the land.
They soften silently, let us crush them to dust,
Reminding us of the glory of the wheat grain –
falling, dying, changing, growing,
bursting forth in cycles bound by seasons
but eternally designed.

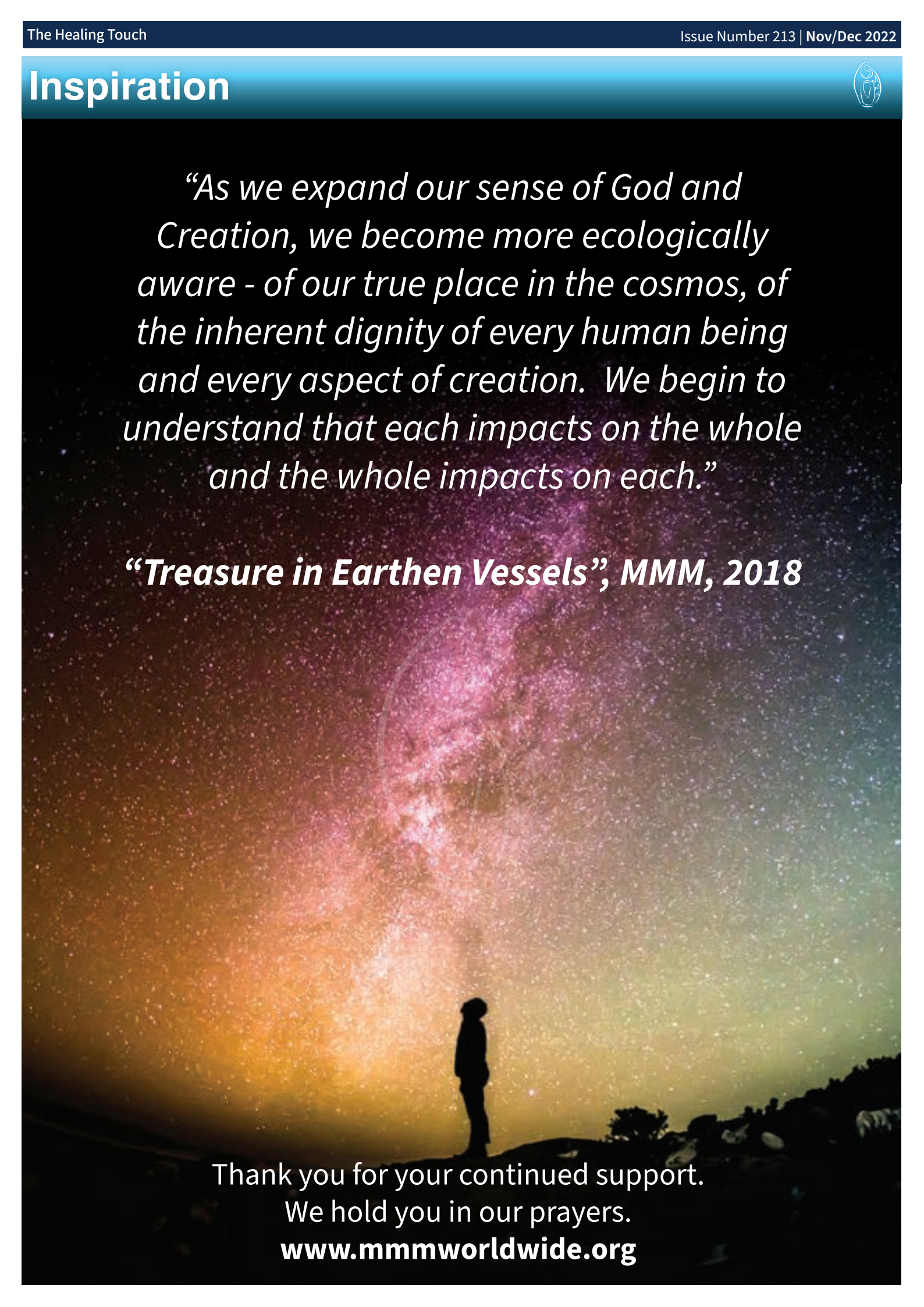


Inspiration



“As we expand our sense of God and Creation, we become more ecologically aware - of our true place in the cosmos, of the inherent dignity of every human being and every aspect of creation. We begin to understand that each impacts on the whole and the whole impacts on each.”

“Treasure in Earthen Vessels”, MMM, 2018



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