

# MMM

*'Rooted and founded in love'*



MEDICAL  
MISSIONARIES  
of MARY

Easter 2023

SUPPLEMENT TO HEALING & DEVELOPMENT - VOLUME 84

# *New Beginnings*





# Welcome

The thought of Spring brings a lighter step to our stride. Days begin to lengthen; the low winter sun is not so blinding now as you are driving on the roads. It is as if we come out of our burrows and begin to make plans for the year. When will I take some holidays? Where will I go? I think it is no coincidence that the feast of Easter comes during Spring. The resurrection was a sign to us that, in God, new life is not alone possible, but certain, just as Spring follows Winter.



So, in this Supplement we want to honour new beginnings, new life in all its forms. Nature gives us new growth in plants and trees, the birds begin to make their nests and hatch the eggs, and over in our local Maternity Hospital, babies are being born even as I write. Our job is to be protectors of this new life, cherish it, help it grow and develop.

As Medical Missionaries of Mary one of our areas of special concern has been that of Mother and Child. We celebrate the opening of the new Maternity Unit in St. Kizito's Health Centre in Lilongwe, Malawi. We are excited about the possibilities of new MMM life both in Ireland and in Brazil.

Care of new life is our mission, our passion and our privilege. Come and join with us in our efforts to promote and protect life.

**Sister Sheila Campbell, MMM**

# New Beginnings in Drogheda

*In February this year, Sr. Renee Duignan, Margaret Hogan, Jacinta Okechukwe and Nwanneka Uduh began an intentional international community on the outskirts of Drogheda. Sr. Renee reflects on the experience.*

“As you start to walk on the way, the way appears.” Rumi

The bare branches of various types of trees have gripped our imagination for months. Sun, rain, frost and snow made them magical. Stripped of their leaves reveals in them a world of wonder. No cover up but designs that open up a new horizon, a landscape that changes before our eyes depending on the climate. We can perceive so much from the exterior, but deep within a whole new world is taking shape. Hope wells up within us as we see the buds burst forth. The birds and all the animal world are raising their voices in praise and joy.

Reflecting on what is happening in us, in the world and in this springtime of our lives, we are aware of this new life being born. It is particularly significant this year for four of us Medical Missionaries of Mary who have moved into a new home on the outskirts of Drogheda. We are in the process of forming an intentional

# nings.. ogheda

intercultural community, hoping to journey with some of the many people from different cultures who have made their home among us. Our home is in St. Peter's Parish, but far from the church. Our vision is to be an outreach of the Church in this newly-settled district and to promote the Church as a welcoming, community space.

We are getting to know our neighbours who hail from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe. We are looking forward to discovering and experiencing what unites us and the gifts we can offer one another. We ourselves have been blessed to have lived in Nigeria, Benin Republic, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Honduras. These cultures have touched us deeply, gifting our lives with richness and diversity. We feel called to a new way of sharing our Healing Charism and pray for openness to respond as "the way appears", as Rumi teaches us.

Our home is in a new estate in Newtown Wood off the Termonfeckin Road. It was interesting to learn that, in Irish, Termann means a place of refuge or church land



*Srs. Jacinta Okechukwu and Renee Duignan receiving a gift of a tapestry from Sr. Rosemary Mohan for the new community*

offering sanctuary. Fechin was an Irish saint of the 7th Century who founded a monastery there. How interesting that centuries later this area has become a place of refuge for people from far and near.

These extracts from the poem "Begin" by Brendan Kennelly resonate with us:

*Every beginning is a promise  
born in light and dying in dark  
determination and exaltation of springtime  
flowering the way to work...  
Bridges linking the past and future...  
Though we live in a world that dreams of ending  
that always seems about to give in  
something that will not acknowledge conclusion  
insists that we forever begin.*

# *New Beginnings..* **in Maternity Care in Malawi**

Spring is a wonderful season for new births and Easter is a time of miracles and new beginnings. We are happy to share a new MMM initiative that is helping to save lives of mothers and babies in a very poor area of Malawi, Africa.

The St. Kizito Integrated Health Centre is situated on the outskirts of Lilongwe. It has a catchment population of 75,203. (Source: District Health Officer). It all started back in January 2014 when we carried out a comprehensive needs assessment with the help of the local people. Among all the needs expressed was a Health Center with maternity since people here had to walk for more than two hours to access their health needs. Walking so far for a pregnant woman made antenatal care difficult if not impossible. This led to complicated births or even fatality for mothers or babies.

Up to that point, the Mtsiliza community was served by two small private clinics, beyond the means of most people.

Even as the Centre was opening in 2016, maternal health care continued to be our concern. Health services are often difficult to access here in Mtsiliza and women give birth to many children. Many women were going



*Sister Grace Akpan with baby Francisca, first girl born*

to traditional birth attendants, who had little or no training, or travelled far distances to have their deliveries. The community was particularly vulnerable to maternal deaths. In May 2021, a relative of Fr Frank Taylor (SPS), our former Parish priest, purchased a plot of land beside the Health Centre and built the new maternity unit. It has seven rooms and a toilet area shared with St Kizito Health Centre. Generously, all was handed over to our ownership and management.

On October 3rd, 2022, inspectors from the Medical Council and the Nursing/Midwifery Council of Malawi were invited for inspection of the new maternity unit. They were happy with the new development and our services.

The inspectors, seeing that we have fulfilled all their requirements, gave us approval to immediately start the maternity services.

### FIRST BABY

We are glad to inform you that we started maternity services on January 5th, 2023 and we had the first baby on January 17th. The second arrived on January 18th. We are still expecting more as we have registered 476 mothers for antenatal care.

The first baby is a boy and he is named Francis, a name given after

Fr. Francis Taylor, the backbone founder of the maternity wing and the second baby is a girl named Francisca.

The recent donation from the money raised at the MMM Craft Fair of December 2022 in Drogheda will go a long way in helping us to buy an ultrasound machine. We are very grateful to all involved.



*Baby Francis, first boy born*

## Memories of Mother Mary



There are no shortage of interesting stories about Mother Mary Martin, founder of the MMMs in 1937 in Nigeria. Her life was a fascinating journey that took her from Dublin to World War I as a nurse to founding a medical missionary Congregation. We want to capture the memories and stories of those people who actually met Mother Mary in her lifetime during her many visits to places around the world. The MMM Sisters, with the assistance of academic scholars, are beginning a journey to capture as many of these stories as possible. The project is being coordinated by Sr Rita Kelly, MMM who will be working with the communications department and the scholars to gather as many memories as possible, either in writing or through interviews. Details about the project will be launched soon and available on our MMM website.

[www.mmmworldwide.org](http://www.mmmworldwide.org)



# Studying the Role of **MMM Sisters** in Conflict Areas

As we celebrate Easter each year, we cannot overlook the suffering Jesus endured. It is hard for many of us to think about the relationship between faith and hardship, but there seems to be a direct connection at times in our world, especially where there is political strife.

In the life of a missionary, there are challenges and difficulties that go unspoken, not only in history or in the media but by the missionaries themselves. We rarely speak about the difficulties we face and the situations we endure.

Three scholars recently began researching and documenting oral histories of our MMM Sisters who have worked or currently work in conflict zones. Drs Briega Rafferty, Maria Power and Dianne Kirby share a concern that the important work of women religious in conflict zones, (with the term conflict broadly defined) have been overlooked in mainstream history and media. The scholars, working under the auspices of Las Casas Institute for Social Justice, University of Oxford, are interviewing some of us and conducting focus groups. As we begin this work, we notice that Sisters are very reluctant to actually say something positive or brave about what we ourselves did but are



*Nadia and Sister Sheila pictured with Prof. Dianne Kirby and Prof. Briega Rafferty.*

quick to point out the accomplishments of other Sisters.

We are sad to say that some Sisters currently in the field on a mission are unable to participate because it may not be safe for them to do so. MMM, since our Foundation in 1937, strives to serve the people in the areas where we are needed most and where other services are unavailable. We work with the local people to identify what is most needed and then build the resources so that the people of the community can become independent. Then when possible we move on to another project where we are needed next.

# *MMM in the West – Central Brazil*

In February 2023 two MMM Sisters, Sr. Cleide Daniel da Silva and Sr. Bernadette Fadegnon travelled north from the city of Salvador to begin a new mission in the Central West region of Brazil. They went to the town of Alto Boa Vista, in the north of Mato Grosso State which is part of the Prelature of São Felix de Araguaia.

Sr. Cleide shared with us the challenges they will encounter. Both in urban and rural areas, there is a high incidence of domestic violence, a high level of rural urban migration—especially among the youth—and a high investment of agribusiness, which has resulted in skin problems and lung cancer related to the high pesticide usage. Other problems include increased drugs, substantial pressure from drug traffickers and dealers (called Red Command), and prostitution brought about by the increase in truck drivers. Church pastoral agents offer guidance to the women but have suffered intimidation from both truck drivers and some members of the police force, which has made progress difficult.

Three movements within the church in Brazil, land, human rights and the Indigenous Missionary Council, try to work in the Prelature, but they have a lot of challenges to face every day.

• **The Land Pastoral Team:** The team works with the reforestation of the trees and

motivates people to plant vegetables and fruits as a way of self-sustenance. They are doing very good work and have the support from the church as well as the people.

• **The Human Rights Team:** The team gives workshops about violence especially for women who suffer a lot of violence in the Prelature. There is a psychologist who accompanies the team and supports the groups. They have many challenges however, due to the long distance between places and poor roads. The Catholic Church tries to support these groups, but it is a long process. There is a lot of tension between agribusiness and the church, especially when the church speaks out about the pollution and the effects of pesticide use. It is into this environment that MMM is bringing our own healing charism.



*Brazil arrival in Alto Boa Vista Srs. Cleide and Bernadette, Fr. Edycarlos and Dom Adriano Ciocca*

# Walking for *Health*



This year MMM promoted the Steps of Hope Challenge 2023. It is a fund-raiser for our work in health promotion, but more than that. The challenge itself promoted the health of its participants. We do all we can to spread the healing charism!

Walking is a great way to improve or maintain your overall health. Just 30 minutes every day can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen bones, reduce excess body fat, and boost muscle power and endurance. It can also reduce your risk of developing conditions such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers. Unlike some other forms of exercise, walking is free and doesn't require any special equipment or training.

Physical activity does not have to be vigorous or done for long periods in order to improve your health. A 2007 study of inactive women found that even a low level of exercise – around 75 minutes per week – improved their fitness levels significantly, when compared to a non-exercising group.

Walking is low impact, requires minimal equipment, can be done at any time of day and can be performed at your own pace. You can get out and walk without worrying about the risks associated with some more vigorous forms of exercise. Walking is also a great form of physical activity for people who are overweight, elderly, or who haven't exercised in a long time.

## **Benefits**

You carry your own body weight when you walk. This is known as weight-bearing exercise. Some of the benefits include:

- increased cardiovascular and pulmonary (heart and lung) fitness
- reduced risk of heart disease and stroke
- improved management of conditions such as hypertension (high blood pressure), high cholesterol, joint and muscular pain or stiffness, and diabetes
- stronger bones and improved balance
- increased muscle strength and endurance
- reduced body fat.

Try to make walking a routine – for example, try to walk at the same time each day. Remember, you use the same amount of energy, no matter what time of day you walk, so do what is most convenient for you. You may find that asking someone to walk with





you will help make it a regular activity. Some people find that keeping an activity diary or log also makes it easier. (Dept of Health, Victoria State, Australia)

### **Stay motivated**

Starting a walking program takes initiative. Sticking with it takes commitment. To stay motivated:

- Set yourself up for success. Start with a simple goal, such as, "I'll take a 5- or 10-minute walk during my lunch break." When your 5- or 10-minute walk becomes a habit, set a new goal, such as, "I'll walk for 20 minutes after work."
- Find specific times for walks. Soon you could be reaching for goals that once seemed impossible.
- Make walking enjoyable. If you don't like walking alone, ask a friend or neighbour to join you. If you're energized by groups, join a health club or walking group. You might like listening to music while you walk.
- Vary your routine. If you walk outdoors, plan several different routes for variety.

If you often walk in your neighbourhood, consider walking somewhere new, such as a city or state park. Try taking routes with hills or stairs as you become used to walking more. Or walk faster for a few minutes and then slow down for a few minutes and repeat the cycle. If you're walking alone, tell someone which route you're taking. Walk in safe, well-lit locations.

- Take missed days in stride. If you find yourself skipping your daily walks, don't give up. Remind yourself how good you feel when you include physical activity in your daily routine, and then get back on track.

Once you take that first step, you're on the way to an important destination — better health.

Thank you to everyone who joined us for Steps for Hope this year. You may still have time to join us a walker! If you would like to donate to any of our MMM Step for Hope walkers visit our sponsorship page: <https://www.idonate.ie/event/stepsforhope2023>

# Obituaries – Entering into the Fullness of Life



## **Sr. Jeane Lynch, MMM**

Sister Jeane Lynch was from Saginaw, Michigan, USA. After school she did an Arts degree and then entered MMM in 1955. Her flare for music and ability to play the organ were welcomed gifts. After her initial religious formation, Jeane studied for a degree in Biology. Then she spent a year at the MMM International Missionary Training Hospital (IMTH) in Drogheda, Ireland (now Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital), gaining more experience in biochemistry before being assigned to Dareda Hospital in Tanzania.

Jeane lived a full life mostly in Tanzania and the USA with stints in Sudan and Ethiopia. Later, she earned a master's degree in Epidemiology and then a Dr. of Sc. in Hygiene (Epidemiology) from Tulane University. Jeane administered numerous projects in nutrition education, supervision of village health care workers while also engaging in social services for the poor. In later years, after caring for her mother, Jeane transitioned to the ministry of pastoral care/counselling.

She spent the last years of life at Sancta Maria Nursing Care Facility, Cambridge MA, grateful for the skilled and loving care she received. Her death there was peaceful on December 11, 2022.

## **Sr. Rose Gunn, MMM**

Rose Gunn was born in Edinburgh in July 1930. She joined MMM in 1951, trained as a nurse and midwife and



was assigned to Nigeria in 1959. Here she worked as a ward sister in Ikom and Anua before finally assuming the responsibility of Matron in Urua Akpan. After only four years, she was asked to return to Ireland. Mother Mary was undertaking a new project in Italy and Rose was to be one of the founding members.

In 1964, the new venture in Rome was started. Due to administrative concerns, MMM withdrew in 1966 and at this time Rose moved to Naples where the MMM was already staffing Clinica Mediterranea. Rose loved Italy. She spoke Italian fluently, with a Scottish accent, no doubt! Rose continued in Naples for eleven years until MMM withdrew from Italy altogether. By this time, Rose's parents were elderly and, as an only child, she felt she had a responsibility of care. She did this for some time and still managed a short time in Lagos, Nigeria, pioneering a Community Health Care Project.

Sr. Rose returned to the Motherhouse in Drogheda in 1987. She was active in the Stamp Department for many years and looked after guests when they arrived. As her health failed, she moved to Aras Mhuire in 2020. She died peacefully on 30th December 2022.

## **Sr. Ann McLaughlin**

Sr. Ann McLaughlin was born in Derry, Northern Ireland, in August 1931. After attending a local primary school, she went to St. Louis Convent, Monaghan. Sr. Ann joined MMM in 1951 on



completion of her Leaving Certificate when she was 19 years of age. When she finished her initial formation period she was assigned to Naples, Italy, a new foundation. During her time in Naples, Sr. Ann studied Nursing and afterwards worked for a year in England to be accepted on the British Register. She then trained in Drogheda in Midwifery. In 1974, she went to Kenya, to the Turkana Desert, where MMM had originally coped with a famine situation and by then were setting up rural health centres. She spent almost twenty years in Kenya, working mostly in Kakuma, Kipsaraman and Subukia. In 1993, she specialised in Public Health. She was known for her innovative ideas and

the ability to carry them through and for her kindness. She returned to Ireland and began work in the Communications Department in Dublin doing promotion work and fund-raising. Her other responsibility for a time was as Vocation Directress in Ireland.

For many years in her later life, Sr. Ann did not enjoy good health and suffered from arthritic pain. But she still managed to do some volunteer work in prison ministry and kept the books for her local community. She finally moved to Drogheda in 2017 and to Aras Mhuire in 2018. Her health further deteriorated slowly, and she was finally called home to God on January 9th, 2023.

## *Easter* Word Search

LOVE            SPRING  
JOY             LENT  
EASTER        GRACE  
PRAY          SISTER  
KIND          REBIRTH  
BASKET        IDEA  
FLOWER        CHOCOLATE  
EGGS          MMM

X	Q	Y	U	B	L	O	V	E	F
E	T	A	L	O	C	O	H	C	D
Z	F	L	O	W	E	R	L	A	N
J	W	K	M	M	P	V	E	R	I
O	P	M	S	P	R	I	N	G	K
Y	M	T	I	C	L	U	T	X	L
P	O	D	S	E	A	S	T	E	R
R	E	V	T	T	E	K	S	A	B
A	O	C	E	G	G	S	P	E	N
Y	J	V	R	E	B	I	R	T	H

*“In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” – 1 Peter 1:3*



## **Join with us!**

- Pray with us  
We remember you each day.
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