



THE HEALING TOUCH

The Newsletter of the Medical Missionaries of Mary

MMM Worldwide News



Dear Friend of the MMM's,

For us in our hemisphere, September sees the end of the Summer and the start of the new school year. There is a buzz in the air of change and getting back to schedules after summer breaks and holidays. We, in the Communications Department, have been working all summer to get things ready to share with the world for 2024. We are creating our MMM Annual Calendar

and also our MMM Annual Yearbook. Both take a lot of effort and time to make sure we get things right. If you would like to receive either or both of these, please just email us. We will soon start work on planning our second annual Christmas Fair to be held in Drogheda on 25 November. MMM Sisters and volunteers are already busy getting crafts ready for the Fair.

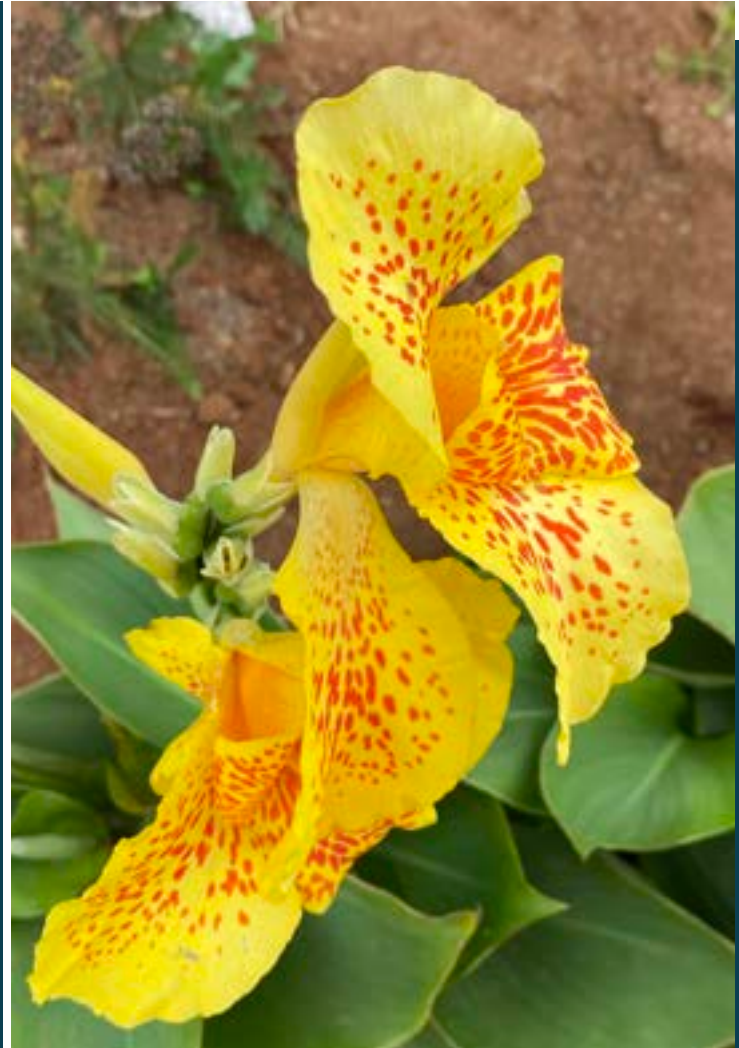
Amidst all this busy work, I pause and read the articles by our MMM Sisters in this episode. The picture painted of the worlds our MMM Sisters, Staff and Associates operate in is not an easy one. There is no denying the hardship in the world that made this a difficult time for many, with out-of-control fires, violence and limited resources to help those in most need. We are grateful to our MMM Sisters who take the time and have the courage to share their reality with us in this newsletter. We have everything from Nuns against Guns, to Sisters forced out of their health clinics due to violent unrest. These are not easy times, but our MMM Sisters commitment is strong.

As our quote this month from Maya Angelou indicates, we need to look at beauty and see what is beautiful in the world and in one another. We cannot allow hardships or problems to destroy our hope and hard work. We are so grateful to all of you for reading our newsletter, praying for us and donating when you can. We cannot do this mission work without you as our loyal and caring partners. This is the important part of being a mission and being reminded that we are not alone. We have so much when we have the love and support of one another. I hope you will take the time to read all our articles and to connect with our MMM Sisters and their heart for the healing charism.

As challenges continue, so do our efforts. We don't back down nor do we give up. As our Founder Mother Mary Martin used to say, "If God wants the work, then God will find the way." We show up and somehow our needs are provided. We are empowered to do so much for people in their hour of need. Whatever we can do and provide for the vulnerable people in most need, then we must continue to do.

With blessings,

Sr. Sheila Campbell, MMM



News from MMM Areas

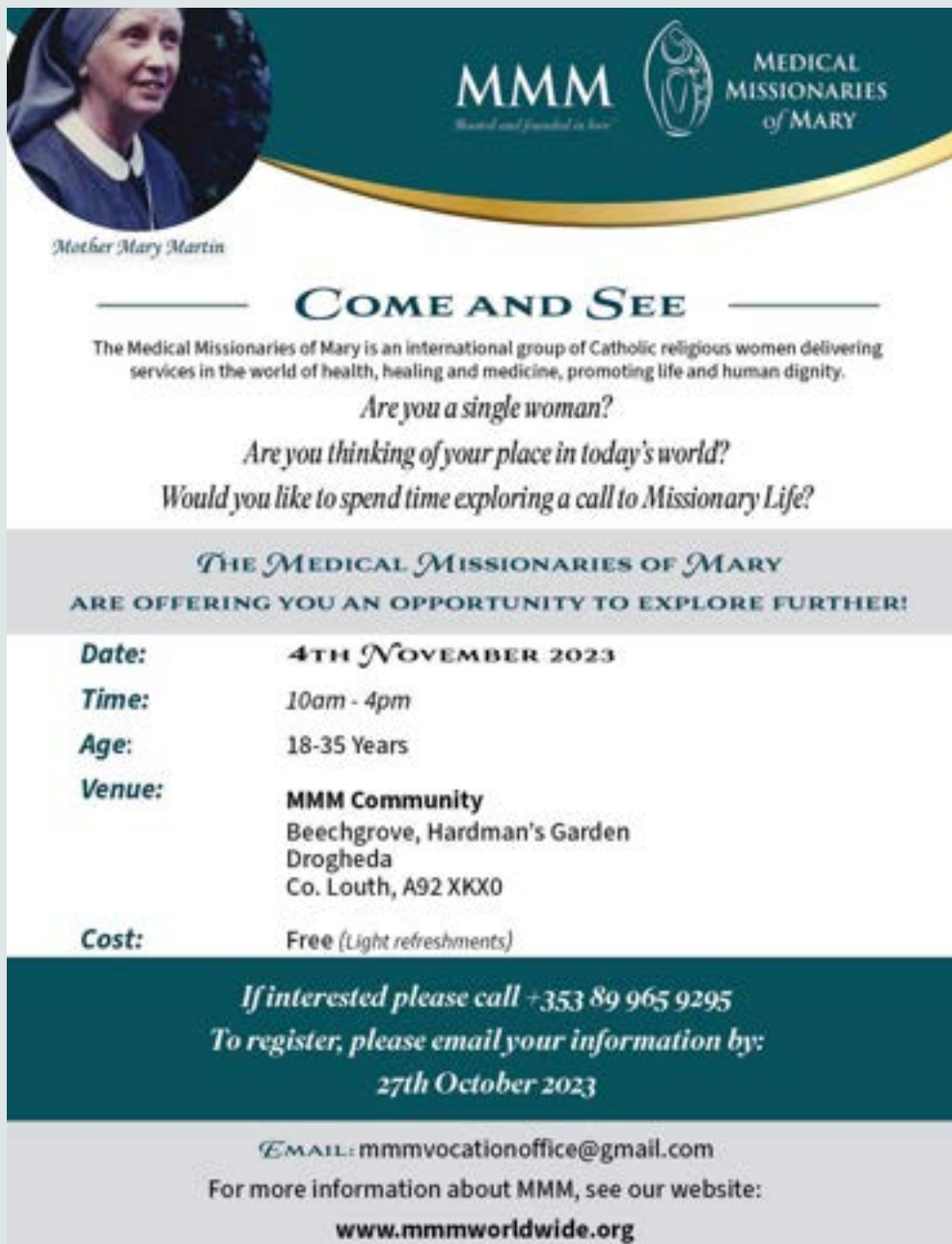
USA: This summer our MMM Sisters and Associates travelled to the dioceses of Manchester, NH; Portland, ME; Buffalo, Albany, and Rochester, NY; Springfield, Worcester, and Boston MA, where they were welcomed to tell our story of Global Mission today. The Sisters are grateful for the warm reception they received and to the Missionary Cooperative Program in the USA that gives them access to parishes around the country. They also continue their efforts with groups such as "Nuns against Gun Violence" and "US Catholic Sisters against Human Trafficking". Summer doesn't stop us working!

MMM News Contd.

Students: It is the beginning of the Academic Year in Ireland, and we are pleased to welcome four more Sisters to upgrade their Nursing qualifications at University College, Cork. They are Srs. Linda Ugwu, Chinyere Iwunze, Christine Natweta and Juliet Ezekwere. In Dublin, Srs. Jacintha Mahakwe and Cordelia Nwaokike will participate in the Religious Formation Ministry Programme.

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC): All of us are aware of the wildfires that have taken place in Southern Europe and Hawaii this summer due to the escalation of global warming. It is a call to us to look and act individually and collectively to care for our Common Home.

Ireland: The Vocation Team is inviting young women considering a religious vocation to a “Come and See” experience in the Motherhouse on November 4th. A date for your diary for those of you interested - see *details below*.



Mother Mary Martin

MMM
Healed and founded in love

MEDICAL MISSIONARIES of MARY

COME AND SEE

The Medical Missionaries of Mary is an international group of Catholic religious women delivering services in the world of health, healing and medicine, promoting life and human dignity.

Are you a single woman?

Are you thinking of your place in today's world?

Would you like to spend time exploring a call to Missionary Life?

THE MEDICAL MISSIONARIES OF MARY
ARE OFFERING YOU AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE FURTHER!

Date: 4TH NOVEMBER 2023

Time: 10am - 4pm

Age: 18-35 Years

Venue: **MMM Community**
Beechgrove, Hardman's Garden
Drogheda
Co. Louth, A92 XKX0

Cost: Free (Light refreshments)

If interested please call +353 89 965 9295
To register, please email your information by:
27th October 2023

EMAIL: mmmvocationoffice@gmail.com
For more information about MMM, see our website:
www.mmmworldwide.org

Women of Courage and Faith



By Sr. Maria Jose da Silva, MMM

During the last year, 2022, MMM in Salvador, Brazil, through the support of our donors overseas and with the local support of our lay people in the Pastoral Centre, was able to help about 100 women between the ages of 14-50 years old. These women come from our local parish and were referred to us by some of the local leaders.

We have tried to work with the most vulnerable and those in great need. We set up a dress-making course - among the group, there are some people who learn quickly, and they are very pleased when they are able to sew a dress or a skirt for themselves. One of these women caught my attention. She is Gloria Pereira dos Santos, 68 years old, and is a mother of two children; her daughter is a lawyer and her son is an engineer. Gloria herself is a social worker. When she was young, she had this dream and ambition to study and get her Bachelor as a Social Worker, as she wanted to work in this field, which she did for some time. Now she has retired from her work.

Gloria was married, but her husband became sick and died. She was a young widow and took on the responsibility of educating her children. The neighbourhood where she lived her whole life is a place which is characterised by violence and drugs. She shared with me that one of her strong beliefs was to support her children to study and become professionals so that they could sustain themselves. She is very proud of herself because her children are all working and can now take on responsibility too. She is one of many women who take their lives seriously and fight for their values. It is encouraging to interact with someone very positive towards life and her environment. She really loves her neighbourhood and the friendship she established with others around where she lives has led to a positive engagement with others.

I was touched by her contagious energy of joy, because she learned how to sew and made a few dresses for herself, but I also noticed that her self-esteem increased and her interactions encouraged others to become more positive and work on their self-esteem. By sharing her story, she helps empower other women in the group and help them become natural leaders. This is the secret of empowerment that we offer in our ministries with the people. We are deeply grateful to our donors who have their mission connected with MMM in our different countries.

I asked her if her story could be shared so as to inspire other women, she accepted and was happy to share her positive message - and her dress-making skills!



Working Amidst Violence in Northern Nigeria



In June, the Global Sisters Report published an article about MMM Sisters in Fuka, Northern Nigeria. It was entitled “After violent attacks, Sisters of the Medical Missionaries of Mary in Nigeria launch mini clinic”

and the journalist was Patrick Egwu.

He interviewed Srs. Florence Njoka and Nancy Ong’era as they worked in their small rural clinic. Before the recent violent bandit attacks, MMM once ran a hospital in Munya, a local, government-administered community about 25 kilometres from the capital city of Niger, north-central Nigeria. This changed in 2021 after several bandit attacks in the area.

MMM has been in the area since the 1980s, covering 16 villages and offering basic primary health care services. We run health education, and basic water, sanitation, and hygiene programmes. The focus is health and holistic healing for people from marginalised communities or areas with greater health needs.

Niger is one of the seven Nigerian states affected by the violent activities of heavily armed bandits and local gangs who attack villages, destroy farmlands and abduct for ransom. In the last few years, our MMM Sisters have found themselves entangled in a web of violent attacks by bandits. They have been living in fear and danger, unsure of what happens next.

Niger State remains a safe haven for the bandits who abduct villagers and kill security personnel. Since the beginning of this year, dozens of locals have been killed by the bandits while more than 100 others have been abducted.

After fleeing their community and shutting down the hospital, the sisters started brainstorming on how to start another clinic to provide health services to residents. After consultation with the relevant authorities, they

decided to focus on the important aspects of care that people needed the most, sickle cell anaemia and tuberculosis.

The area has one of the highest number of cases of tuberculosis in Nigeria and the hospital run by the Sisters is one of the best treatment centres for the disease. Government hospitals sometimes rely on their facilities to collect relevant data on the disease. The Sisters decided to open a mini designated outreach clinic that will serve as a central location for people around the area who need basic health treatment, especially those who fled their communities because of attacks by the gunmen.

To make the new hospital work, the sisters went back to their hospital to get the essential equipment and supplies. They took lab equipment, generators, reagents, tables, and computers.

From Monday to Thursday each week, the new clinic runs limited services, unlike the one they left behind in Munya. Fridays are reserved for restocking supplies.

Naturally the Sisters want to return to the main hospital. We want to go back”, they say. “When you look at families with little children and how they bounced back from attacks, that gives you the courage to carry on. They run after attacks and return the next day because that is the only home they have. They have nowhere else to go. So, you have to develop your own resilience to deal with trauma.”

By Patrick Egwu - Published in the Global Sisters Report - Read the full story at www.globalsistersreport.org/node/246951



A Young Sister Tells Her Story



By Sr. Prisca Ovat, MMM

First Published in *Global Sisters Report*, June 2023, titled **“As part of our healing charism, we work to solve health needs of others”**

Responding to God with creative fidelity, I left my home in Nigeria in 2013 to go to Kenya, trusting in the God of the missions to help me blossom wherever I was planted. Like the spring flower, I did bloom in my new home.

I am a sister of the Medical Missionaries of Mary, an international missionary congregation of religious women founded in 1937.

As our website states, as a congregation, we work collaboratively with the communities we serve by creating unique medical, human and social services to help people in challenging circumstances. To meet these needs, we “are trained professionally in (holistic) medical, social and related services with a particular concern for women and children.”



Apart from medical services, some of our other projects address food insecurity by helping people create small gardens and do seed-sharing projects. We also combat gender inequality through empowerment programs like computer training, hairdressing, tailoring and crafts. Overcoming gender-based violence and human trafficking have been two of our major advocacy programs.



In recent years, we have focused much of our ministry with the people of Kibera, Kenya. Kibera, the largest urban slum in Kenya and one of the largest in Africa, is a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Nairobi. Gender inequality is especially evident in education. Teenage girls are forced into early marriages, so their “bride price,” given by the groom’s family, goes to educate the male children.

The practice also exposes girls to the risk of human trafficking. Many girls that come to us have been tricked with the promise of a better life from young men. This promise lasts until the young girl becomes pregnant, and the man disappears, never to be seen again. The situation becomes complex with the evident reality of teenage single motherhood and the surge of street children.

In the spirit of our charism, Sr. Liana de Jesus, a Medical Missionaries of Mary sister from Brazil, engages youth and teenage single mothers in skills acquisition — such as sewing, fabric designs and painting, bottle bricks,

and wall painting. She shares her creativity with these enthusiastic young people who want to change the direction of their lives. The skills training is free, and the participants are empowered to set up small-scale businesses upon completing their training.

In Eldoret, another Kenyan city, Medical Missionaries of Mary sisters have been deeply engaged in health and medical services, targeting people experiencing poverty in the slums. As part of our healing charism, I worked in this mission, coordinating the medical outreach program. I accepted this responsibility with great enthusiasm, as I was unaware of the task ahead. It turned out to be more difficult than I had imagined, the most profound aspect being the palliative care unit. Every day of the week, I was working in the field of home-based care, listening to all the heartbreaking stories and keenly noting the devastating impact of poverty on the people. I soon established that every patient in the program suffered from one or more disabilities and needed total or supported care.

The healing charism is a broad concept that reshapes our understanding of disease and well-being. Beyond the physical and medical interventions, counselling

appears time-consuming in an attempt to convince a patient that their well-being is their responsibility and our priority. Yet, such counselling or orientation is crucial. Determined to harness all our power to convince, we get the obstinate person off the street sometimes

with a cup of porridge, especially when their health status has become a public health concern. That was the case of Moses, who recently completed his tuberculosis medications successfully, thanks to the availability of porridge and the power of words.

In the final analysis and evaluation, it appears that poor or inadequate health education can be a major root cause of noncommunicable diseases, thus contributing to fatalities within the communities. Responding to this threat, and because some chronic diseases have proven difficult to manage in underdeveloped areas and in settings of poverty, I have prioritised health education for volunteers who, in turn, teach the people about the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases in their locality; how to recognize the signs of each disease; and how to ask for help in a timely manner. We hope many of those we encounter can be helped to take responsibility for their own health.

Indeed, every success story is a challenge, but God has always shown the way as often as he wanted the work.

Meet the Sisters - Sr. Nwanneka Judith Uduh



Sr. Nwanneka Judith Uduh, MMM

My name is Nwanneka Judith Uduh and I am a Nigerian, and I grew up in Nigeria. For us every name has a significance, it could be related to events surrounding your conception and birth, your parents' wish for you and themselves, or an expression of gratitude. There is always a story attached to our names. When I was born my parents gave me Nwanneka, which means "it is better to have relatives than to accumulate wealth because wealth is only useful if there is someone to utilise". I was given Judith when I was baptised, and my grandfather's name is Uduh which means fame.

I trained as a nurse and midwife and worked for three years before joining MMM. I heard about MMM from a friend of mine who also joined MMM after me. I always admired the missionaries and I think the missionary life of MMM attracted me, with that "holy" desire to go and save, but the longer I stay in religious life the more I realise that the first person to save is me. God brought me to religious life for my sake. He is saving me through my ministries, my community, prayers, masses, challenges and so many other encounters.

My initial assignment was to Fuka in Northern Nigeria. From Fuka I was assigned to Itam, in the southeast of Nigeria and then to Shogunle in the southwest of Nigeria. Each of these places is different with different cultures, attitudes to life and challenges of life, but in each of them, I recognised Christ walking in the midst of the people. When I have time, I enjoy reading and meeting friends.

In 2022, I completed a one-year BSc Nursing studies programme at the University College Cork, Ireland, to upgrade my certificate. I am now back in Nigeria and living in Ewu, Mafoluku, Lagos, preparing for my next mission. During this time, I have been able to assist in some of our ministries and gave workshops in our facilities on "improving patient experience through respectful communication", and "improving patient safety through quality improvement".

I think the best part of being an MMM for me is being able to look into the eyes of my Sister from another tribe, country or race and recognize myself there. Accepting that, as a religious, I need saving like the people I am trying to "save" is a challenge I must battle each day. My greatest learning is that everything is a gift (Grace) from God therefore, there is no room to judge anyone.



Inspiration



“Open your eyes to the beauty around you, open your mind to the wonders of life, open your heart to those who love you, and always be true to yourself.”

- Maya Angelou

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