

MMM  
*'Rooted and founded in love'*



MEDICAL  
MISSIONARIES  
of MARY

Christmas  
2023

SUPPLEMENT TO HEALING & DEVELOPMENT - VOLUME 84

*The*  
MIRACLE  
*of New Life*

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Medical Missionaries of Mary



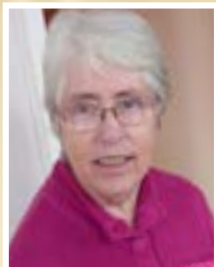
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# WELCOME

## MMM CHRISTMAS SUPPLEMENT

### 2023



*Dear Friends,*

There is something magical about this time of year when we celebrate the miracle of the birth of Jesus. Each year, we are reminded of the obstacles that Joseph and Mary had to overcome and of the saviour's humble birth and beginnings. Many people love the nativity, which brings us this scene of gentle animals surrounding the baby and his devoted family. We celebrate that

the wise men saw the star and found their way mysteriously to the beautiful baby Jesus.

Christmas brings us many gifts and hope for the year ahead. We invite you to read the pages here and celebrate with us that miracles are happening in our world all year long and not just once a year. We share our stories with you of how we experience miracles as MMMs serving people who are then empowered to then live better lives and move forward. We cannot ignore the suffering within the world, but we can continue to bring the healing charism to the world.

We could not make these miracles happen and do the work we do without the support of people like you. We are deeply grateful to you for your prayers and gifts to us that allow us to continue. We are aware that we head into 2024 with difficult challenges ahead of us, but we go forward with love, hope and faith in our hearts. We invite you to join us.

We celebrate the joy of creation and new life. Many blessings to you and your family.

Please contact us in the Communications Department if you would like to help.  
**[commoffice@mmmworldwide.org](mailto:commoffice@mmmworldwide.org)**

*Sr. Sheila Campbell, M.M.M.*





# NEW LIFE IN MMM

Last year we had ten young women starting life in MMM, this year we have thirteen women in our Novitiate in Nigeria!!

Thank God many young women are seeking the MMM way of life as their life's vocation and their response to God's call. These young women have come together from their different countries – Nigeria, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda and the Republic of Benin. They began their MMM journey in their own countries, living with the Sisters and sharing in their various ministries. In September, they came together for a year in Nairobi to further discern if it is really this way of life that they are called to. There is prayer and study, but some will also work among the poor, as well

as joy and celebrating all the different cultures. Where there are young people there is music and dancing!

The next step is the international novitiate programme in Ibadan, Nigeria. This is where the present group of ten women are studying. This is a time of more intense prayer and study of the history and charism of MMM and of the Church's mission in the world. In the second novitiate year, the life of prayer and study is combined with some active experience of ministry among the poor.

After First Profession of Vows, Sisters renew their vows annually for several years before making their Final Commitment.

2024 will be an exciting year for MMMs.





# FIRST MMM CHRISTMAS IN AFRICA

Sr. Magdalen O'Rourke, one of our early MMM Sisters wrote the story of the first Christmas MMM celebrated in Nigeria.

"In 1937, on Christmas morning, after Mass, we began our medical work. It was our first day in the hospital which, for the last few months, had been run by a German doctor and his wife. The hospital had been built by the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus in 1932. The male wing was erected on the ruins of an old school and completed by Fr. McGettrick a few months before. There were only a few patients in as the local people do not want to be away from their homes at Christmas, and furthermore, the hospital had not yet fully established itself. The people were still timid about coming in.



the lives of these poor sufferers.

One could not help feeling that the spirit of Christmas was abroad that day. Though we had little or none of the usual festivity, still we felt very near Bethlehem and could in all sincerity say that the happiest Christmas of our lives had been our first Christmas in Africa. It seemed as if we had tasted the joys of the first Christmas morning of 2000 years ago and

had welcomed the arrival of the Messiah. Here the true meaning and significance of Christmas is more easily realised. With hearts full of gratitude and joy, we thanked God for the great gift of faith and prayed for it for everyone."

## **Commenting on the above, one of our current MMMs wrote:**

*"Looking at the above how Christmas was spent during the first years of MMM it strikes me, it laid the foundations of how MMM Sisters would spend Christmas in the years to follow. The focus is on celebrating the birth of the Christ child starting on Christmas Eve with pageants/carols and midnight Mass wherever we are – often heading out to the Mission Outstations and enjoying the celebration with the local community. I still recall the joy of the Christmas pageants both in Drogheda and in Mzuzu, Malawi, as we went around the hospitals with the staff carol singing and distributing small gifts to the patients – in Mzuzu, very often a bag of sugar and a bar of soap brought great joy to the patients and indeed all of us. Christmas Day was very much about helping out in our hospitals and then gathering as MMM Community, frequently with co-workers for a meal and carols which was enjoyed by all. It was all very simple, for and among others, and a very joyful celebration. Something which continues to this day in MMM."*

A short time before, a little baby whose mother had died had been left in. She had been threatened with the usual fate that motherless babies meet with, of being left on the mother's grave to die as none of the relatives will touch it, fearing the spirit of the mother should come back for it. She was baptised and called Mary and was a real little dear. We were very glad to have a baby to care for in our first missionary labours and that too on Christmas Day. We could not say we were overburdened with work that day, but the weeks that followed brought us plenty. We made friends with our patients and gave them each a dash (a gift). The joy of giving surpasses that of receiving. Their gratitude and appreciation for the simplest things – a rosary, a picture, a necklace, makes you wish you had more to give to bring joy to



# Everyday Miracles

*Not just at Christmas time, but all through the year, we witness God's miracles at work. When it appears that the world is in a dark place, our faith lights the path before us. Our MMM Sisters and staff provide care and services for people who, without our mission work, would suffer or even die. We only go where there is great need, so in ways, the MMMs provide everyday miracles of faith and bring God's love to people in their most difficult hours.*

*We deeply appreciate your support.*

## ***The Miracle of a Healthy Birth***



For so many of the women we serve, childbirth is still a risky experience. Many do not make it, or are harmed fatally or severely by the birthing process. The United Nations report,

that maternal death rates continue to be high in the poorest regions of the world, though the conditions are preventable. Around 70 percent of all maternal deaths reported are in Sub-Saharan Africa, with even higher rates in violent or war-torn areas. Our MMM maternity clinics allow women a safe and healthy birth option that they otherwise would not have. An untrained birth attendant in the village without medical training still costs mothers their lives.

We work hard to keep mothers and children healthy and safe with antenatal care and child welfare clinics. We also treat pregnant mothers with HIV who have babies who do NOT have HIV. This is clearly a miracle that we celebrate.

## ***The Miracle of Clean Water where there was None***

Something that many of us take for granted is that we can turn on a tap in our house and



have clean, safe water running. For many women, they spend up to six hours a day collecting clean water for their families. Often water is rationed. No water makes

it impossible to live a healthy life with the hygiene needed to stay well. Access to drinkable water seems like a fundamental human right denied to many of the poor. It also prevents females in the family from being able to get educated, perpetuating the cycle of poverty for the next generation. Our MMM Sisters, working collaboratively with the communities we serve, engineer resourceful ways to bring water.

The climate crisis is making this issue even more urgent. It is a tragedy to let babies die over lack of clean water anywhere in the world, so performing the miracle of making water safe empowers and saves lives. The people are deeply grateful.

## ***The Miracle of Growing Food when People are Starving***

As climate change becomes more of an issue, the poor are being hit the hardest. Starvation is a reality for many poor people. Many of the school-age children have food while they are in school - otherwise, they would literally starve to death. For those who do not starve,





malnutrition is often present. We are creating sack gardens - planting and showing people how to grow their own foods. We are helping them to use their few resources

to create food for their families. We educate and provide small amounts of resources that will allow a family to be lifted out of poverty. As we know, if we feed people once they become dependent, but by teaching them to feed themselves and to grow food, they can become empowered. This knowledge is also used to grow food to sell, or to cook and sell food to others.

The miracle of enough food is one that we integrate into our MMM missions as much as we can, and in as many ways as we can. We are even teaching young women how to be beekeepers and gather pollen as a major nutrient to offset malnutrition.

## ***The Miracle of Saving a Family from Human Trafficking***



One of the reasons that Human Trafficking continues to thrive is that very naive and poor men, women and children are targeted. Sometimes family

members who are desperate will be used to trap younger relatives. Barika was a young woman who participated in our MMM Counter Human Trafficking income-generating programme. She was abandoned by her mother as a baby and was raised by her loving grandmother. Barika was taught to be an excellent seamstress. Her mother

returned into her life, telling her that her auntie had a great job lined up for her in another town. Barika, delighted to be reunited with her mother and auntie, packed her things and said goodbye to her grandmother. Her mother and auntie drugged, beat, and sold Barika for prostitution in a town where she didn't know anyone. One day, she managed to escape from the club and asked an Italian tourist to use his phone. She contacted her grandmother who immediately contacted the MMM Counter Human Trafficking programme. Working with the police they were able to find the young woman and bring her back safely to her grandmother.

In educating young people we give them a network of safety to protect them when even their own family will not.

## ***The Miracle of Educating the Next Generation of Medical Professionals***



It is often hard to get staff to work in the remote areas where our MMM Sisters serve. One of the solutions is to train and educate local people to become medical

professionals and to join us in caring for the poor and most needy. It is a wonderful way for local people to contribute to the care of their people too.

Mercy, a 26-year-old woman was among the first young people to befriend our MMM Sisters when they first arrived for the Torugbene mission. She began with us as an 'Auxiliary nurse', as we often call them in Nigeria. No formal qualifications, but with a wealth of knowledge on health issues having served under a health practitioner in her community. She actively worked and helped



us serve the local community. Upon noticing how intelligent and interested she was in issues related to health and well-being, she was selected for further training using a grant received. Mercy was sponsored to do a two-year course at the School of Health Technology and has recently graduated as a Health Assistant. She is back in her community now, working in primary health care. She is now more qualified, articulate, purpose-driven, a role model among young people in the community, ambitious for a better future, and a community builder. Education creates a ripple effect of benefits for everyone involved.

## ***The Miracle of Caring for Our Earth***



Our MMM Sisters and staff are often working with very poor people with few or no resources. Recently working with young people in the Zhigboda

Sauka Village, Nigeria, and through collaboration, we were able to create a series of activities in care of our Common Home. We received 30 indigenous plants of good species.

The people are migrants who escaped the Boko Haram Insurgency and were displaced from their homes in Benue State. As they begin life afresh in Sauka village, they decided to mark this occasion with tree planting as a key part of the activities. Local women benefited from the first phase of the empowerment initiative through skill training on pastry and cake making, seed grants for income-generating activities, and groundnut seed planting to enrich the soil with more nutrients. One impact of working on this project on the Care of our Common Home is the lasting bond that now exists among

the people. This is also geared at keeping the youth out of trouble. Each participant is expected to nurture the life in each plant and tend it to maturity. The tree planting contributes towards controlling the aridity of the land and the burning heat of the sun on the skin. Caring for our Earth is a way of building community and caring for one another too.

## ***The Miracle of Healing after Sexual and Domestic Violence***



A young lady of about twenty-eight years old was brought to us early this year by a good Samaritan. She has three children, a four-year-old,

a two-year-old and a baby. She told us she suffered terribly while she was with her husband as he abused her verbally and physically. She made up her mind to run away. She returned home to her family compound, but her stepmother did not welcome her and threatened to harm her and her children. She trusted her father to help her and defend her, but her father was afraid of the stepmother, so she had to leave home. She went back to the streets and slept in a nearby church with her children. The worst part of this is that she had sustained an obstetric injury some years back and was leaking urine. Many people did not want to associate with her because of the smell.

When she was brought to our hospital, the children were ill, malnourished, and not well-kept. We admitted her and invited the father who came and gave us consent to carry out the repair of her Vesico Virginal Fistula (V.V.F.). She recovered well and the leakage of urine has stopped. She is with us still, now learning hairdressing in our salon. It is joyful to see her happy and able to associate with



other young women in our rehabilitation center here. We are working with the Ministry of Women Affairs to get her a good home and protection, where the children can go to school. We do not just treat the patient, we care for the whole family.

## ***The Miracle of Palliative Care for the Dying and Destitute***



In a dark room, a mother is lying dying. She gets up to care for her children and grandchildren who tell her they are hungry. Her stomach is so swollen she looks

as if she will have a baby any day now, but she will not. She will not live much longer. Our MMM staff come into the room and the woman is elated to see them. She weeps with joy and gives prayers of thanks. Our MMM Sisters devotedly care for many poverty-stricken people who are dying, and it is often the only way these people can die with dignity. Sometimes, our MMM Sisters are the ones to provide a mattress, so the dying person is not left on concrete. They provide medication for pain relief and provide pastoral care and friendship. As family resources are scarce in poor communities, a dying person is often abandoned. The MMMs not only care for the dying person in the home but also seek to empower the whole family. It is very moving to see the relationships between the MMMs and the dying person who gets the miracle of not just pain relief, but the comfort of a healing presence.

## ***The Miracle of Protecting Babies from Disease and Illnesses***



Our MMM Sisters and staff do not wait for mothers to come to our clinics and get their essential protection and vaccinations for their babies, most

times our MMM Sisters will go to where the mothers are living. Standing at an MMM remote clinic whether in a village, at a remote church, or under a tree with a vehicle serving as a clinic office, we see women dressed in colourful robes, carrying one or sometimes more children, pouring in from all around. Some have walked for hours carrying a heavy baby, determined to protect their precious child. They wait in large crowds to have their children vaccinated and to check their weight. It is an incredible sight to behold all the babies being cared for by our MMM Sisters and the MMM Staff working tirelessly until everyone is seen and cared about. Any babies showing signs of illness are identified and referred for future care. The severely ill or sick child is cared for to reduce the rate of infant mortality, which is still a major issue in the countries we serve. Your donations make it possible for us to get a procedure or surgery done to save a child's life.

*Thank you for your support because without you we could not give these gifts all year long. Sustainable donors allow us to be agents of changes, social justice and constant care.*

***“For we live by faith, not by sight.”***

*– 2 Corinthians 5:7*



# Christmas Customs and Food

*Jabbama  
be salla  
Kirismati*

*Happy  
Christmas*

*Krismasi  
njema*

*Brazil*

Brazilian families come together on Christmas Eve to eat dinner as late as 10 p.m. Then, at exactly midnight, they exchange gifts, toasts, and wish each other a Merry Christmas. Midnight mass, *Missa Do Galo* (Rooster Mass), is a chance to meet up with neighbours and extended family to wish them well for the holiday season.

*Mexico/  
Southern USA*

All across Mexico members of the Church put on Pastorelas (Shepherd's Plays) to retell the Christmas story. The Mexican Christmas season begins early in December with Las Posadas, a religious march that re-enacts the journey of Mary and Joseph. The vibrant red poinsettia flowers are also used at this time of year.

*Feliz  
Natal*

*Nollaig  
Shona duit*

*Idara  
ukapade  
isua*

*Uganda*

Christmas in Uganda is called Sekukkulu and, as in many countries, it is about people returning home to their families and communities to spend time together. Popular Christmas foods include a barbecue which can be a goat, sheep, beef or chicken. This is eaten with rice and chapati flat bread. The big Christmas meal is called 'nyama choma'. People often buy their own beer to drink and different tribes also have special dishes they make.

*Angola*

The meal traditionally consists of 'pirão' or 'funge' (a type of polenta made of corn meal or cassava flour) with rice, spaghetti, french fries, turkey, fried chicken and dishes like 'ozido de bacalhau' (cooked cold fish with vegetables), 'calulu' (a dish of fried fish or beef with tomatoes, garlic, okra, sweet potatoes and spinach, etc.) and 'mufete' (grilled fish served with stewed palm oil beans, sweet potato, plantain and cassava).

*Ezi*

*ekeresimesi*

*Khrisimasi  
yabwino*

*Kenya*

Barbecue is the most traditional Christmas food in Kenya. The big Christmas meal — the nyama choma — includes chicken, beef, sheep, and grilled goat meat as the main courses. Rice is the most common side dish. Big families usually enjoy fresh-baked chapati, an unleavened flatbread.

*Joyeux  
Noël*

*barqa dā  
Kirsimati*

*Nigeria*

In addition to serving turkey, a traditional Christmas meal in Nigeria may include beef, goat, sheep, ram or chicken. Other dishes might include pounded yam, jollof rice, fried rice, vegetable salad and some type of stew.

*Happy Christmas to You from the MMMs  
wherever you are celebrating!*



# An Frish Christmas Blessing

*“May you be Blessed with  
the Spirit of the Season,  
Which is Peace,  
The Gladness of the Season,  
Which is Hope,  
And the Heart of the Season,  
Which is Love.”*

– ©Author Unknown



## Christmas Word Search

ANGEL  
BETHLEHEM  
BIRTH  
HEAVEN  
JOSEPH  
PEACE  
SHEPHERD  
JESUS  
DONKEY  
CAMEL  
INN  
JOY  
CANDLE  
MARY  
STAR  
KING  
HOPE  
CRIB

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



# Obituaries

## Entering into the Fullness of Life



**SR. M. CELINE  
JONES, MMM**

Sr. Celine, baptised Kathleen Mary, was born in May 1933, the youngest of nine children. Before joining MMM in 1954, aged 21, she worked in a hairdressing salon. Her first overseas assignment was to

Nigeria where she worked between 1961 - 1977. Unfortunately, Celine's missionary life in Nigeria was punctuated by a period of ill health and she returned to Ireland. By 1993, Celine's health had improved, and she desired a return to overseas mission. A change of climate was advised, and so she went to Uganda, to Makondo. Here she ran a nursery school, looking after many orphans during the HIV/Aids epidemic. This doubled with social work in the school food project and housing aid. Throughout her life, she was a great correspondent with many people, and they returned the correspondence and offered donations for the work at the same time.

Sr. Celine returned to Ireland finally in 2011. She had an active life in retirement in Bettystown and Drogheda. She transferred to Áras Mhuire in August 2022 as her health declined slowly. She died peacefully on 27th September, 2023.



**SR. MAUREEN  
CLARKE, MMM**

Sr. Maureen Clarke, baptised Maureen Margaret, was born in Leeds, England in July 1934. After leaving school, she helped her mother in the running of the family hotel for some years before training

as a secretary and joining the Civil Service. Sr. Maureen joined MMM in 1959 and trained as a social worker. In 1975, Sr. Maureen went to Kenya and was involved in social work in Eldoret. She also helped other organisations by carrying out social surveys. She returned to Ireland in 1980 and was assigned to accompany lay volunteers, helping them with their visa applications and general orientation. In 1981, she went to England to care for her elderly mother and took

up responsibilities in the Romiley community. She continued as a social worker, specialising in work with mental disability and eldercare. In 1992, Sr. Maureen transferred to London, to the Ealing community and stayed there until 2019 when she returned to retire in the Motherhouse. She was a soft-spoken, kind and gentle person, always attentive to the needs of others and had a good sense of humour.

In September 2023, Sr. Maureen transferred to Aras Mhuire Nursing Home but shortly afterward was admitted to Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital. She died there peacefully on 11th October, 2023.



**SR. M. JUDE  
WALSH, MMM**

Sr. M. Jude Walsh, called "May" in the family, was born in 1921, came from Tourlestrane, Co. Sligo. After school, she qualified as a pharmacist in Dublin and worked there for a year

before joining MMM in 1947. Immediately after finishing her initial religious formation period, she was assigned to Nigeria. There she worked as a pharmacist in hospitals in Anua, Afikpo and Obudu for ten years and then returned to Ireland, assuming leadership responsibilities within the Congregation. She had many leadership positions and in 1974, she was elected as Superior General of the Congregation, and served for 11 years in this position. She exercised her leadership in a firm but fair way, always encouraging the Sisters, especially those in war-torn areas. In 1988, she went to Uganda to work at Kitovu Hospital, Masaka for five years, was in Chicago for fund-raising for six years, and finally retired in Ireland in 1999. She became an active member of the Drogheda MMM community in Beechgrove, always the first to greet guests as they came to visit. She was known as a great correspondent with friends all over the world.

She moved to Áras Mhuire Nursing Home in 2021. There she was content to celebrate her 100th Birthday in June 2021. Her health declined slowly, and she died peacefully on 12th October, 2023.



*"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten  
that we belong to each other."*

**-Mother Teresa**

## **Work with us!**

- Pray with us  
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at **[www.mmmworldwide.org](http://www.mmmworldwide.org)**
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- Share our charism as an  
MMM Associate

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