



THE HEALING TOUCH

The Newsletter of the Medical Missionaries of Mary



MMM Worldwide News

News from MMM Areas



Ireland: News of the proposed Hospice on the vacant site in Beechgrove, the Guest Block and Auditorium was officially announced on Friday, 23rd February. This is great news for the people in Drogheda and the surrounding areas. We in MMM are proud to be contributing our part.

The next stage is planning permission which could take several months.

Brazil: The Sisters in the new mission in Alta Boa Vista are still in the “getting to know the community” phase but alongside that they are now offering alternative therapies such as massage and reflexology, two days a week in the town and one day in the rural areas.

USA: Sr. Carol Breslin MMM sent us an update of her work with the UNAMINA social justice group at the United Nations. Read their recent Newsletter: <https://us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=8bb6ca603b91a37b4012a341d&id=3193e5d64b>

Dear Friend of MMM,



May is a beautiful time of year in Ireland, days are longer as Spring lingers and we start to get glimmers of Summer approaching which is a joy after one of the wettest winters on record. We in the MMM Communications Department are springing into action in several ways and we are delighted to share our news with you this month as many positive endeavours are blooming. It is our job to share the healing charism of the MMMs with you as much as possible.

For many years, since MMM really began in 1937, we have been committed to the wellbeing of mothers and children globally. Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, conditions for pregnant women and birthing mothers is still very challenging and giving birth in Sub-Saharan Africa is still the most risky in the world. We work hard to change with ante-natal work. We will share how we are taking our efforts to improve maternity survival rates and prevent obstetric fistula.

We are also happy to introduce other news throughout our MMM Community. This month our focus is on Malawi and Nigeria. We are also working on a new offering that will bring the MMM Sisters’ stories in their own voice directly to you! Plans for our new MMM Podcasts are well underway and will be available to you soon.

It was a wonderful success to have our Lenten Reflection Sessions this year in the seven weeks before Easter. Thank you for your feedback.

Wishing you every joy wherever you are reading this. May the light of God’s love shine upon you,

With blessings,
Sr. Sheila Campbell, MMM

A day in Outreach in Malawi

By Sr. Pauline Amulen, MMM

We visit our patients twice every week. It is always an exciting moment for the home-based care team to go and deliver their services to those in most need who are unable to reach the health centre. In every visit we often plan to visit five or six clients in a day. Below is a glimpse of what a day is like for us.

We start off our journey following bad roads, full of potholes, to one of the villages. We started by visiting our client who is suffering from cancer of the esophagus. She was lying on her bed, helplessly waiting for her granddaughter, Sarah, who is 12 years old and in primary school, close to our clinic.

Mrs. Chimwemwe totally depends on the help of her little grandchild, Sarah. Sarah is young, but intelligent and hardworking. She wakes up daily at 4:30 am to clean and arrange their house, prepare some food for her grandmother and then her day depends on the school timetable. Sometimes, if she is going for morning classes, she leaves for school very early for an 8am start, then when she returns home, she prepares lunch for her grandmother. After seeing her grandmother has eaten, she moves around selling groundnut powder to get some money to buy food for herself and her grandmother. On this day we met Sarah running back home from doing "Ganyu", short time paid labour and then leaving home again in time for her classes which were starting 15 minutes later. Sarah walks from house to house, asking people if there is anything she can do so that they pay her some money to care for her grandmother. This is her routine. She is always paid 800 Malawi kwacha after the heavy work she does, with the current economic situation, this money (about €0.50), cannot even afford one good meal for them.

It is always so much joy for Mrs. Chimwemwe to see us enter her room. Slowly as we are seated and chatting, her sad face starts relaxing and smiling by the time we depart. Whenever we are



Journey to the Outreach

taking our leave, she says, "bye but we meet next week". She keeps longing for the time we return to her house and the week we don't go she feels so disappointed, and she sends her granddaughter to the clinic to send us her greetings. These greetings act as a bell to remind us to visit her! Occasionally, her health condition is so bad, and she is unable to share food with her little granddaughter. In the beginning Sarah's grandmother's health really affected Sarah's academic journey. Sarah often slipped out of the classroom whenever she thought of her grandmother but now, she is picking up. She only returns home when her classes have ended.

Secondly, we visited "agogo" which is 'grandmother'. But, you know, I think I will leave this story for another day. There is so much to tell about a day of outreach. We will continue this story next time....



MMM Voices - Caring Hands and Healing Hearts

Do you know the Sisters? Would you like to know more? We are starting a new way for you to get to know more about MMM and the Sisters.

Soon, MMM will be launching a new initiative through the miracle of technology, a series of podcasts that will allow you to hear the Sisters as if you were sitting down for a chat, featuring interviews with MMM Sisters. Our founder Mother Mary Martin was a true innovator in technology during her lifetime and found as many ways possible to share the MMM healing charisma, so we believe if she was alive today she would have loved an MMM Podcast series.

Some of these stories were recorded many years ago, and the Sisters have since gone to their eternal reward, but most are new interviews, with MMM Sisters telling about why they decided to become a missionary, and why this kind of life

was attractive to them and what they pray for in our world today. Each interview is as unique as the MMM Sister herself.

They describe their journeys to far off places and all the wonderful people they have met and who are now part of their life's journey. So, watch out for the new podcast series coming soon. It will be available on the MMM website - mmmworldwide.org - as "MMM Sisters' Stories Podcast - Caring Hands and Healing Hearts."

It will also be posted on our social media channels so be sure to follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter for links. Also, it will be hosted where major Podcasts are found. We will keep you posted on when it starts!

We are grateful to the Sisters for sharing their stories and to the people who have helped us record their stories over the years.



The importance of Educating the Girls

By MMM Sisters, Fuka, Nigeria

Being Missionaries allows us to be channels of light in the path of others that they might discover their God-giving self and gain the freedom they long for.

Sheko, 9 and Jami, 6 (not their real names), are both girls and siblings. They are among our little friends here in Fuka, Niger State, Nigeria and they have sickle cell anemia. They come to our clinic for their monthly follow-up care. They live in one of the neighbouring communities with their parents who are both farmers.

In most families here, some children are kept at home to do farm work while others are sent to school. The choice and decision of who among the children goes to school, often rests solely on the head of the family, the father. Mothers practically have little or no say in such decisions and often, children have no option than to go along with the decision of their father.

For Sheko and Jami, they both desire to live and lead a normal life like many other children, have access to basic needs as children and go to school.

However, their father Mr. Tanko, believes that girls are not meant for school and sending them to school is only a waste of resources. Moreover, he claims that girls will misbehave when they go to school and besides, he is already spending a lot on their medical bills. On the other hand, their



mother is a submissive wife and although she wanted her two girls to go to school, she would



not want to upset her husband but accepted his decision about their children. Consequently, Sheko and Jami seemingly resented their father's decision and felt probably that he didn't love them as his children. Both became unhappy, unwell and visited the facility more often in pain crisis. The mother too became burdened with the care of the two and worried a lot about them. When we noted the two girls reporting to the clinic often in pain crisis and their mother looking stressed out, we became interested in the girls and gave them more attention. Eventually, the girls opened up to us and their mother equally shared her frustration caring for them. She expressed her desire to see her children going to school like many other children but was worried about how to convince her husband.

The sisters and one of the staff held several one-on-one sessions with the girls and their mother

Continued: The importance of Educating the Girls



and then involved them in group sessions with other parents. Eventually, the sisters and two other staff members visited the family. We had a fruitful session. At the end of our time with the family, the father was convinced of the importance of sending the girls to school and was grateful for our visit. He thanked us for helping him to realize the importance of sending his female children to school. He gave us his word that the girls will go to school and henceforth, he will give equal opportunity to his children and no longer choose among them.

Currently, Sheko and Jami have both started schooling at St. John's Nursery and Primary school. Since then, there is a drastic change in their attitude towards their father, they are both happy, healthy and excited about their new life in school. Their mother looks happier and more confident about her two girls. She shares how they are doing well in school and even teaches the other little children in the family when they return from school. When we asked Sheko and

Jami what they would like to be when they grow up, Sheko said she will be a medical doctor so that she could care for other sick children. Jami on the other hand said she would like to be a health worker in the hospital too.

Today, both no longer report to the clinic in pain crisis, they are both healthy and their mother no longer had to carry either of them on her back to the clinic looking sad and stressed. They are able to communicate a little now in English. We are privileged to witness this transformation and pray that they will continue to grow to become who they want to be in life.

Safe Birth 4 All Campaign born to help save lives



MMM will be part of a global initiative to celebrate the UN International Day to End Obstetric Fistula on 23rd May. Tragically, child birth in Sub-Saharan Africa still accounts for 70% of maternal deaths in the world. While some mothers may not die, many are wounded or injured in a horrific way that could be avoided. Fistula has not been a major issue in the Western world for the past 100 years so we know it can be overcome for all women.

Obstetric Fistula refers to a rupture or hole in the birth canal created by prolonged labour without prompt medical intervention, such as a Caesarean Section. An estimated 2 to 3 million women and girls in developing countries suffer physically, mentally and emotionally because of this as they have urine and or faeces leaking uncontrollably from their bodies.

This can be avoided by antenatal care and our goal is to educate communities about this. MMM are also active in repairing and preventing Obstetric Fistulas in Itam, Nigeria and were, in the recent past, in Kitovu Hospital, Uganda for many years! Sr. Anne Ward MMM and Sr. Maura Lynch MMM were pioneers in this area as surgeons for many years.

We will be hosting and participating in online and in-person events in May to raise awareness and funds for this important cause. We are also involved in humanitarian efforts to see Safe Childbirth acknowledged as a human right globally as it currently is not. MMM are partnering with other Religious Congregations and also with Fr Edward Flynn, Spiritan, to create a collaborative effort on this important initiative.



Meet the Sisters – Sr. Betty Naggayi, MMM

“I enjoy digging in the garden, caring for nature and breeding hens and rabbits”, said Sr. Betty with a loud laugh when I asked her what she did for pure fun. “But I also like singing, drumming and story-telling,” she added, in case I would forget.

Sr. Betty Naggayi is Ugandan, from a village near Masaka in the central region of Uganda. The middle child in a family of seven siblings, three brothers and three sisters, you could say she learnt community life from a young age.

Sr. Betty joined MMM twice. The first time was after she had worked for six months as a licenced primary school teacher, while waiting for the results of her advanced school certificate. She only stayed a few months and left before reception into Novitiate, to train as an enrolled nurse. The second time was after her nurse training. She worked as a nurse in the out-patient department of the same hospital before readmission to the postulancy program.

The idea of a religious vocation started early. Her mother was a good friend of a Sister from a local Congregation and they used to visit her often after Mass on Sundays. Betty could not get over how good and kind she was to people who were not even related to her. Could she not do the same?

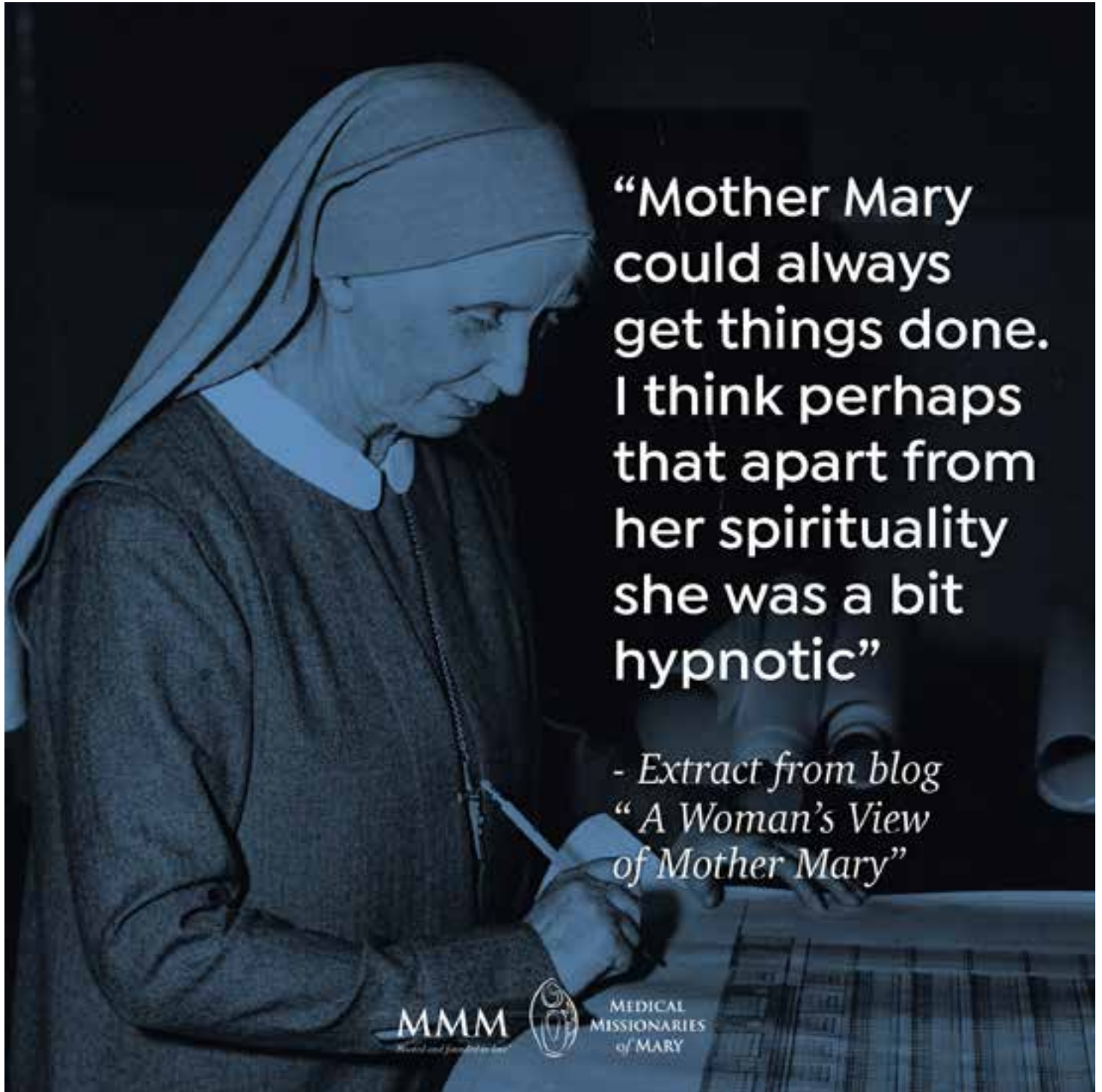
After her initial formation period, Betty upgraded her nursing to registered nurse level, did midwifery training in Kenya and her first assignment was to Malawi and she served at Chipini Health Centre. Since then, she has worked both in Rwanda and Uganda and is currently in South B. Community, Kenya, working in Mukuru slum area, Nairobi.



From her hobbies you would imagine Betty to be outgoing and boisterous, but there is a quiet side to her character too. She is thoughtful, generous and kind and direct in her communications. Life has taught her a lot. She says she has learnt to depend on God’s intervention in every situation that comes her way.



Inspiration



“Mother Mary could always get things done. I think perhaps that apart from her spirituality she was a bit hypnotic”

- Extract from blog
“A Woman’s View of Mother Mary”

MMM



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

www.mmmworldwide.org