



THE HEALING TOUCH

The Newsletter of the Medical Missionaries of Mary

Dear Friend of MMM,

September sees the end of the summer for us in the Northern Hemisphere. It has been a mixed summer weather-wise, but this has not stopped us getting out and about and enjoying our holiday breaks.



In August we in Drogheda had the privilege of hosting Sisters from all over the MMM world. They came together to reflect on our life and ministry and set the directions for the future. We enjoyed the new life and vigour they brought and were sad to be bringing them back to the airport for their travel back to their places of mission.

This summer too we had a new initiative in Ireland when the Associate MMMs (AMMMs) spearheaded the Mission Awareness programme in the Diocese of Cloyne. They are still working hard visiting all the churches of the diocese as I am writing this to you.

We will soon start work on planning our third annual Christmas Fair to be held in Drogheda on 23rd November. MMM Sisters and volunteers are already busy getting crafts ready for the fair. We hope those of you in the Drogheda area will come and enjoy the day.

One of our stories this month comes from Benin City in Nigeria. Often, we respond to needs that turn up on our doorstep, often literally! This is exactly as our Foundress, Mother Mary Martin, would have wanted, as she always urged us to "go in haste" to those in need as Mary did at the Visitation.

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 missionary and being reminded that we are not alone. We have so much when we have the love and support of one another.

With blessings,

Sr. Sheila Campbell, MMM



MMM Worldwide News

News from MMM Areas

MMM Worldwide: Great buzz around Drogheda with the visit of Sisters from East and West Africa, Brazil and USA for a Congregational level meeting. All reported on the increased levels of violence in their countries, the cost of living affecting the poorest in society and the effects of climate change. All the local news was passed around verbally in small groups!

Nigeria: Days of Celebration in our Formation House in Nigeria. Recently ten young women from East and West Africa made First Profession of Vows and eight others have joined the Novitiate programme.

Kenya: We are looking ahead to the start of a new venture in the Ngong Diocese. As they say, watch this space!

Thinking Ahead: In Advent we will have four weeks of short email reflections to help us on our preparation for Christmas. If you would like to subscribe to these reflections, please use the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/7pky4t8d>

MMM Sister Invited to Speak at Conference in Oxford



Sr. Rita Kelly, MMM, who travelled to Oxford earlier this summer.

This summer, Sr Rita Kelly, MMM gave a presentation at a significant conference at Las Casas Institute for Social Justice at the University of Oxford. The Las Casas Institute brings together a growing academic family or community of scholars, mainly lay women and men, who draw on the

rich tradition of Catholic social thought, teaching, and practice.

Sr Rita presented her paper at the conference called “Forgotten Voices in Literature and Religious Conference, Blackfriars Hall. It was organised by the Las Casas Institute for Social Justice, a Dominican foundation.

Her presentation, “Wounded Healers, Narrating Our Personal Experiences,” was based on her vast experience working with returned missionaries in the Irish Missionary Union (IMU). She initiated the IMU-REAP team in a response to their needs and as an acknowledgement that many missionaries experience stress and trauma in the field. Her presentation was well received and created much interest.

In addition to delivering her paper, Sr. Rita met the members of the Las Casa Institute through the MMM Communications Department when they were doing research on “Recovering the voices of Sisters who have conducted challenging ministries in conflict zones.”

Sr. Rita is the former MMM European Area Leader. She is currently gathering oral histories of local people who knew Mother Mary Martin, MMM Founder. She is also co-authoring a children’s book on Mother Mary’s life. The book will be completed by the end of the year.

Annual Craft Fair on the Way!

Our third Annual Craft Fair will be held in the MMM Auditorium on Saturday, November 23rd.

It will be the last one in this venue as the MMM Auditorium will be part of the new Drogheda Hospice which is being built around this site. It will not be the end of the Craft Fair - we will just change venue!!

So, those of you who are “crafty” are encouraged to participate in the ways you feel best. Those less talented can come along and enjoy other people’s work. Hopefully we will have visiting choirs with Christmas music, and of course “the wee cup of tea”. It is also a chance for anyone who wants to learn something of our MMM heritage to visit the Mother Mary Room.

All are welcome!

Indoor Market **Admission Free**

MEDICAL MISSIONARIES of MARY

The Medical Missionaries of Mary (MMM) are hosting

A CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR

To Benefit the MMM Sisters' Missions in Africa and Brazil.

Join us for a festive day of fun
With handcrafted gifts and decorations

Have a good time for a good cause!

Saturday, 23rd November, 2024
10.30 am – 4 pm

The Auditorium
MMM Convent,
Beechgrove
Hardman's Garden
Drogheda, A92 XKX0

Christmas cafe with yummy treats

FREE PARKING
at the Lourdes Church
(next door to venue)

Live Christmas Music

If you are a crafter and would like to take part in the event, email us before **Friday 25th October** at commoffice@mmmworldwide.org

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A Story of Care *By Sr. Cordelia Nwaokike, MMM, Benin City, Nigeria*



Sr. Cordeila Nwaokike, MMM



Ikechukwu Onyenuma

Ikechukwu Onyenuma, 29 years old, is a naturally talented and vibrant young man. He comes from the eastern part of our country, Nigeria. You can sense, from the first conversation with him, that he is somebody who loves life and the people around him. He has a lot of energy for many kinds of physical work. We met him the day we went for



Ikechukwu Onyenuma

a burial in the eastern part of Nigeria. He came to the burial ground begging for alms from people. We were with a Sister of another congregation when we saw him. He looked emaciated, anaemic and a bit sad.

We stopped to greet him. Further conversation revealed that he had had a motorcycle accident and had suffered bruises and wounds. The bruises dried up, but the wound on the leg escalated to a huge leg ulcer. He had been three and a half years in this condition. He went to several hospitals for treatment, but all in vain. He said his father died long ago, and his mother has been struggling to help him but she ran out of money to continue. Many people promised to help, but all disappeared at the sight of the wound. It frightened them. I asked his permission to photograph him and to use his name and he agreed. When we returned to our community, we told the Sisters about the young man and, after some investigations, the community decided to help.

With a grant from our donors, he has been in the hospital for the last two months. Some investigations were carried out, but the doctors were not able

to save his leg and an amputation was done. He is receiving treatment and daily dressings are being carried out, waiting for the wound to heal. Presently he is using crutches for mobility, and he is happy with himself, and the help given to him. MMMs have indeed given him hope to live again.

When the wound is healed, we are hoping to find him an artificial limb.

Now Ikechukwu is so happy that his problem is almost fully solved, and this has given him the opportunity to see and think clearly. He is thinking of his future which has been compromised by his former condition. He is working towards independence and living life to the full. This was only possible through the support of the charitable people of God. His mother will be helped to establish a small business to enable her to put food on the table.

We are grateful to our donors, to the Medical Missionaries of Mary Congregation and to all who have contributed to ending the long and painful suffering of our young man, Ikechukwu. May God bless all our donors and reward you all, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Why did you choose such a place?

This is the exclamation of many overseas visitors to MMM communities in Africa and Latin America. Often MMMs can be found “at the end of the road”. Why? MMMs tend to go where no one else is willing to go. We go to remote rural areas, like Turkana or Maasailand, and inner-city slums like Sao Paulo, Lagos or Nairobi. In these places there are no proper roads, often no water or electricity, and generally poor infrastructure.

These are the areas where the poor and neglected are. MMM has a special gift for working with mothers and children. That was the need Mother Mary saw in Nigeria just over a hundred years ago. We pay attention especially to areas where women’s lives and health are under-valued.



But we do not stay forever! We hand over and leave when services are established, when local people have more opportunities. We live by the maxim:

“Go where you are needed but not wanted.

Stay until you are wanted but not needed”

Update on Malaria :

“Many of us have had malaria”, one seasoned missionary declared recently.

What is malaria and how do you get it?

Malaria is a life-threatening disease, usually spread to humans by some types of mosquitoes. It is mostly found in tropical countries. It is preventable and curable. The infection is caused by a parasite and does not spread from person to person.

Symptoms can be mild or life-threatening. Mild symptoms are fever, chills and headache. Severe symptoms include fatigue, confusion, seizures, and difficulty breathing. Infants, children under 5 years of age, pregnant women, travellers and people with HIV/AIDS are at higher risk of severe infection.

Malaria can be prevented by avoiding mosquito bites and with medicines. Treatments can stop mild cases from getting worse.

The 2023 World Malaria Report, published by WHO, examined the link between climate change and malaria. Changes in temperature, humidity and rainfall can influence the behaviour and survival of the malaria-carrying Anopheles mosquito. Extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and flooding, can also directly impact transmission and disease burden. Catastrophic flooding in Pakistan in 2022, for example, led to a five-fold increase in malaria cases in the country.

The disease burden is felt highest in Africa. In 2022, Africa was home to about 94% of all malaria cases and 95% of deaths. Children under 5 years of age accounted for about 78% of all malaria deaths in African countries. The number of infections worldwide was slightly higher in 2023 than 2022.

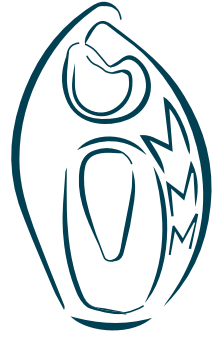
Why are things not getting better?

Progress in malaria control is threatened by emerging resistance to insecticides among Anopheles mosquitoes. These insecticides are used on mosquito nets and for indoor spraying. Other threats include insufficient access to treated nets due to the stresses of day-to-day life outpacing replacement, and changing behaviour of mosquitoes, which appear to be biting early before people go to bed and resting outdoors, thereby evading exposure to insecticides.

Signs of hope

Two new anti-malaria vaccines are being tried out for young children. Preliminary results show great promise, but a good public health system needs to be in place to make any change long-lasting. Often this is difficult in conflict torn areas such as Niger, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Meet the Sisters - Sr. Francisca Maduike, MMM



Sr. Francisca Maduike, MMM

“A real extrovert” is how her friends call her!

Sr. Francisca Maduike comes from Anambra State, Nigeria, and grew up in a polygamous family with two wives. Of the ten surviving children, seven boys and three girls, Francisca is the fifth child. Perhaps this explains her comfort in being around people and making friends easily.

Francisca was attracted to religious life early, and this was encouraged in the missionary-run school she attended. But she encountered MMM through a Church magazine given to her by her stepbrother who was already a missionary priest.

Before joining MMM, Francisca worked as a community nurse in a hospital and later trained in public health. Her early years

in MMM were spent in clinics in Lagos and in Abuja, but she was also assigned to be the contact person for other young women wishing to join MMM. She had a wide area to cover – the whole of West Africa!

In 2015, MMM started a new mission in the swampy Niger Delta area called Bomadi, and Francisca was called to be one of its founding members! There was no better woman to rise to the challenge of this new venture in an area where, in the early years, roads were few and canoeing was one of the main ways of transport.

Francisca’s hobbies are singing, dancing gardening and being around people.

“I just enjoy being around people, offering to help, chatting with people, visiting people. This gives me life and energy. I find it very easy to make and keep friends.”

Currently Francisca is in Benin City, back in community

and public health work. Her current challenges are around the insecurity the country is facing. Sometimes this makes it difficult for people to access health care and for the health workers to be out among the people. They try to go in teams.

Her philosophy of life? “Life is nothing and vague when lived alone without sharing or connecting with others, especially those on the margins of life.”



Sr. Francisca working away at her desk

Inspiration



“A wonderful gift to cultivate for your work ... patience and a great sense of humour.”

— *Mother Mary Martin (1952)*

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

www.mmmworldwide.org