



***Be present to the peoples of today.  
Share their joy and hope, their anguish and struggle.  
Live in solidarity with those who suffer.***

(MMM Constitutions 3.6)

Dear Friends,

During this jubilee year we are called to be “Pilgrims of Hope,” and our world certainly needs men and women who are faith-filled with deep hope and trust that God will unfold the future in ways that will surprise us! And the arrival of Spring always brings with it new signs of life and hope! These days I am reminded of the work of Margaret Wheatly who writes of creating “islands of sanity.”

These are places of possibility and refuge, a cohesive community of people who know they cannot survive these violent tsunamis alone, who know that staying together in healthy relationships is the only way to accomplish their good work.

With that in mind, this newsletter is a simple sharing of stories of two MMM sisters who are trying to bring alive the words of our MMM Constitutions by “being present to the peoples of today.

***Sharing their joy and hope, their anguish and struggle  
and living in solidarity with those who suffer.***

(MMM Constitutions 3.6)

Sr. Angela Katalyeba, MMM, who is presently assigned as our Congregational Secretary residing in Dublin tells us her story of creating an “island of sanity” when she was on her home leave in Tanzania. Sr. Liana de Jesus, MMM, who is presently assigned here in the USA shares her story of creating an “island of sanity” with her childhood friend in Salvador, Brazil, and the MMM community working among the poor in the favelas of Salvador. In both of these simple stories, what struck me and why I am sharing them with you in this newsletter is the genuine joy in seeing each person as having their own value and dignity. In 2025, that is the greatest witness we as Catholic Christians can offer our world.

As well, we have just completed the Convocation of the Justice Conference of Women Religious, which brought together in Columbus, OH, the men and women working as Justice Promoters in Religious Congregations across the United States. Certainly, an “island of sanity” was created among us and the energy of that gathering will bear fruit in the months and years to come as we struggle to be credible witnesses of the social gospel whose basic truth is that *all* of creation has dignity and value, and we are all interconnected. It is easy to say, but the challenge of a lifetime to live.

The effects of the current freeze on funding for international programs serving the nutritional, health, and economic needs of the world’s most vulnerable communities remain devastating. Of course, it is affecting MMM programs and many others. As is usual in our world, those who are poor and seemingly “voiceless” suffer the most, but our God calls us to be their “Voice” and to proclaim by our lives, our actions, what we say, and what we write, that God made each person, and each has their own story and dignity. So, for the moment, that is the challenge of MMM . . . to live that reality, and we are grateful you choose to be with us.

With deepest gratitude,



*Sister Joanne*

Sister Joanne Bierl, MMM  
Mission Development Director

**Spring Flowers by  
Sr. Kathie Shea, MMM**

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Spring  
Newsletter  
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# Children's Christmas Party in Morogoro, Tanzania

*By Sr. Angela Katalyeba, MMM*

This year I had an opportunity to be home for Christmas. My home is in a rural area, 25 kms from Morogoro town in the Eastern part of Tanzania. We used to live in Mzumbe University campus where my father was a lecturer. During that time, my family had a tradition of organizing a children's party at Christmas time commonly known as "Christmas Toto Party" (Toto means Child/Children). Due to the fact that these children's parents were lecturers and worked in the University they could afford to contribute to the party. The aim is to engage the children and make the Christmas celebration meaningful for them.

When I got home in December 2024 my mother and I were reminiscing about the "Christmas Toto party" we used to organize in the past. We recalled the value it had of bringing children together, having fun with them but also a moment of education for them as we broke the word of God for them, explained to them the meaning of Christmas. This year, we thought of organizing a children's Christmas party for the less privileged children in the rural area that cannot afford to contribute nor have the opportunity to celebrate Christmas. We shared the idea with the rest of my siblings. They were all excited and happy and each wanted to support this idea. They contributed what they could. So, the planning started and we decided to hold a children's party on Monday, December 23, 2024, for 65 children between the ages of 3 and 10 from Christian and Muslim families. We arranged the venue in a nursery school classroom, which was decorated with red and white balloons, prepared the gifts that Santa will give to each one of them, prepared the timetable, prepared a little crown for each child, and much more.

Each child received a hand-crafted invitation card from Santa inviting them to a party on the December 23 at 12 noon. They were dressed in their best outfits as they arrived looking forward to this day as they never had such an opportunity or experience. The excitement was palpable and it was wonderful to be part of this. The nicely decorated venue created an atmosphere of



The children enjoying the party

Christmas by our rural standards. The DJ was already there so music was set and could be heard from a distance. I was at the door to welcome each child as they arrived. They proudly walked to me and showed their invitation card, I crossed checked that with the list to ensure that we have the right name and also ensure that we had enough gifts for each child. As always, we had some that came and said they heard children coming so they decided to come as well! At the hour, a child was asked to volunteer to lead us in an opening prayer. This was a very easy task as many hands were raised showing they wanted to do that. One was selected and she led the prayer.

The program then started with music where they were all invited to stand up and dance. There was dancing, singing, and playing assorted games throughout the afternoon. There was great fun and joy. We taught them songs such as "We Wish You a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." This was sung in English and Swahili. We sang some Christmas carols. The prizes for the games were assorted and practical for a child living in the rural country such as small toothpaste, Vaseline, mathematical sets, exercise books, rulers, erasers, socks, hair combs, shoe polish, pens, pencils, sweets, biscuits, etc. It was a joy listening to them and an educational session as well. This was followed by a scrumptious



Sr. Angela and her mother





Santa Tanzanian style

meal. The children were so happy when they saw the catering team arrive on the premises, pitched their tents, and set tables ready to serve the food. The children were invited to line up, wash their hands, and go to receive their food. The children ate and drank to their heart's content. I shed a tear

when a young boy came to me holding a third helping of food on his plate and said to me, "Please Aunty may I have a plastic bag to put my food in." I was curious and I asked him, "What do you want to do with this food?" The little boy looked at me and said, "Aunty, I would like to take this food to my mother and father at home. They are hungry." Honestly, I held my breath for a second. Imagine this little boy thinking of his parents at home. I was challenged by this act of love, care, and concern for his parents. The remaining food

was shared among the poorest families and this family got some food too.

The awaited moment came when we ushered Father Christmas into the room. They looked at him with a lot of admiration, curiosity, and expectation. Some little ones were scared of the beard we made from cotton wool, but with time, they got used to him. As always, Santa has a gift for everyone. They all came to him to receive gifts and were very delighted.

What a memorable day for these disadvantaged and less privileged children. "Granny, please let's repeat the Christmas party on New Year's Day. I never thought I would be invited to such a wonderful celebration. If my parents were asked to pay for me, I would have missed this occasion as I know they don't have money." The celebration was brought to close with a prayer by their Granny, Mrs. Katalyeba. St. Paul says, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving (Acts 20:35). We, the Katalyeba family feel fulfilled, truly blessed, and equally happy like the children to have been able to share something this Christmas with these less privileged children in our neighborhood and brought so much joy to them."

## MMM Sisters in Salvador Ease Woman's Burden

The uneven distribution of wealth enables Brazil to be a wealthy country that has millions living in poverty. The wealthiest one percent of Brazil's population controls approximately 50 percent of the nation's income, while a substantial amount of the country's population lives off of one percent of the country's wealth.

Salvador, the capital of Bahia state, serves as an example of how this distribution of wealth creates poverty. The capital of Brazil is considered to be one of the most impoverished areas of the country, with approximately 2.4 million people living on less than \$1 a day. Among those people live three MMM Sisters sharing life with them in the favelas outside the city. They are engaged in the ministries such as Vocation Animation, Youth Ministry, Women Empowerment, supporting needy families, Home Visits.

In 2023, when Sister Liana de Jesus, MMM, traveled to Brazil, she heard about her childhood friend, Eidiliar Santos Sacramentos, who was suffering from severe complications from diabetes.

This friend had lost one leg to amputation, and the other leg had become numb. Moved by her situation, Sister Liana decided to visit her. After discussing her needs with Sister Margaret Nakafu, MMM, they went to her home where she explained her current difficulty affording both medication and food.



Eidiliar recovering after her second amputation

Sr. Margaret was able to include Eidiliar as a client of our MMM Project in Salvador, so she began receiving assistance from MMM to address her needs. Recently, over a year later, she called to express her gratitude to the sisters for all the help she had received. Eidiliar mentioned that she no longer required assistance because she had successfully obtained a pension for the disabled. Although she had to undergo a second amputation, the government provided her with a prosthesis. These are two simple stories of how kindness and a bit of extra effort deeply affected the lives of persons in need of some support. This is how we create the world we want to live in!



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### **BEQUESTS: Gifts That Keep on Giving**

Your bequest will ensure that those you love and the institutions you care about receive a portion of your estate when you are gone. Please consider the MMMs as you prepare your will. If you already have a will, contact your attorney about adding a codicil (amendment). The Medical Missionaries of Mary, Inc. (legal name) is a tax exempt entity in accordance with section 501(c) (3) of the IRS code.

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