



# THE HEALING TOUCH

The Newsletter of the Medical Missionaries of Mary



## *Dear Friend of MMM,*

Here in Ireland, autumn is very much underway and our days are getting shorter and darker telling us that winter is just around the corner. The leaves are an array of lovely colours and many have already fallen to the ground. In this newsletter we are glad to share a variety of stories with you from around the many ministries of the MMM. We are happy to introduce our MMM Sisters to you and share their actual challenges and accomplishments with you in their own voices.



As you will see, many of our MMM Sisters are working in the very poorest and most remote areas of the world. In order to meet the needs of the people they serve, the MMM Sisters and staff often have to take risks in making the journey – whether by road or by river, they find a way to show up for those most in need. We are grateful to them for all they do and for how much they have to overcome to keep showing up. We are constantly finding new ways to serve those most in need and working with the community to empower the local people.

If you happen to be in Ireland, we want to be sure to invite you to our **MMM Christmas Craft Fair** which will take place in the MMM Convent in Drogheda on **Saturday, 28th November**. We would love to have you come along. We also welcome any handmade crafts or art that you might want to donate for us to sell and make money to support our MMM Sisters in the missions. This is a wonderful way to come and meet the MMMs and sit, have coffee and a lovely chat.

We are very grateful to you for your ongoing support of our MMM Missions. We could not do what we do without your prayers, love and generosity. We are praying for you and your family too.

*Stay well,*

**God bless you,**

***Sr. Sheila Campbell, MMM***

# Lessons From A New Ministry



by Sr. Eunice Okobia, MMM



**Sr. Eunice and an assistant with 'Anna'**

*"I still remember the first elderly woman we visited. She was sitting on the floor of her small room. Beside her was a broom, a cooking stove and a few cooking pots – everything arranged so she would not have to stand because she couldn't. As I watched her sweep the floor without leaving the spot where she sat, I wondered what this ministry was going to do with me."*

I was reassigned to Eleta community from Torugbene in Delta State in 2024. When I first arrived in Eleta, Ibadan in 2024, I expected to continue working with mothers and children. After settling into the clinic, I was asked to join the elderly outreach programme. To be honest, I wondered what I would be doing there. My experience had always been with younger people, although I had completed a few online courses in palliative care. I still could not see how caring for the elderly would become part of my ministry.

As we began visiting elderly people in their homes, I discovered that many of them had no one to care for them. Some had children living far away. Others had simply been abandoned. Many struggled with chronic illnesses, but what struck me most was not their medical condition. It was their loneliness.

I remember saying to myself, we care for mothers and children, but these elderly people

have become like children again. They too need someone to care for them.

One woman – Anna stays with me. She had suffered a stroke and could no longer walk. Everything in her small room was arranged within reach. Sitting in one place, she swept her floor, cooked

her meals and tried to care for herself as best she could. Her blood pressure was dangerously high, her roof leaked whenever it rained, and despite having children, no one came.

We started visiting her regularly. We checked her blood pressure, searched for her family, shared food whenever we could and helped her access medication. Many of our phone calls went unanswered, but we refused to give up.

Then, slowly, something beautiful happened. A grandson visited. The roof was repaired, her room was re-painted. A new mattress appeared. The changes were simple, but they reminded me that sometimes people only need someone to speak on behalf of those who have been forgotten.

Today we care for seventeen elderly people in similar situations. The greatest challenge is finding enough food and medicine, especially for those living with hypertension and diabetes. Yet every visit reminds me why this ministry matters.

I once wondered what I could offer the elderly. Now I know that healing is not always about curing illness. Sometimes it begins with sitting beside someone, listening to their story and helping them believe that they have not been forgotten.

# Cast Out, Then Welcomed

by Sr. Flora Phwandaphwanda, MMM

During our Lenten visit to the leprosy centre in Agok, together with the priests and religious of the Catholic Diocese of Wau, South Sudan, I met “Samuel,” whose story has stayed with me.



In his words, he had been a soldier in Ethiopia before he became sick, and everything changed. The disease did not only affect his body, it stripped him of belonging. No one wanted to come near him. Even his own family rejected him. In that loneliness, he chose to return to South Sudan his home country, setting out on a journey that seemed almost impossible. But he persevered. At one point, he threw away his gun. It had become useless. In that moment, it was as though he was laying down not just a weapon, but an old life – choosing survival, choosing hope.

He walked through the bush with no food. Hunger pressed upon him. Then he came across an animal and managed to kill it, yet he had no fire to cook it. So, he ate only what he could, the liver, just enough to keep going.

Throughout the journey, he survived on the kindness of strangers: food, water, milk, offered by people who owed him nothing. Each act of help became a sign that God had not abandoned him. Finally, he reached Agok. What he found there was more than a place, it was a family. Though cast out, he was now welcomed.

Visits like this one to Agok remind us that so much of our vocation as Medical Missionaries of Mary is not about the places we run, but the people we choose to walk alongside, even, and especially, in places that are not our own. We go to be present: to sit with those the world has cast out, and to remind them, as Samuel discovered, that welcome is still possible.

Stories like Samuel's also remind us that this mission is never carried out alone. It is made possible through the generosity of those who support our work and walk alongside us. Your partnership enables us to be present in places of suffering, to witness stories of hope and to continue sharing Christ's healing love across borders.

## Calling All Writers!

Our Sisters, Associates and friends regularly write blogs on our website, from life as an MMM, to reflections on daily life. If you enjoy writing, please email your blog to [mmmcomm@mmmworldwide.org](mailto:mmmcomm@mmmworldwide.org)

To read our blogs please visit: [www.mmmworldwide.org/mmm-blog/](http://www.mmmworldwide.org/mmm-blog/)



# Stepping Into The Boat *By Sr. Modesta Okha, MMM*



**Sr. Modesta going on a community visit by boat**

Fear has a way of asking endless questions. What if I fail? What if things do not go as planned? What if I am not strong enough? We have all heard those questions at different moments in our lives. They often come when we are about to begin something new, standing on the edge of the unknown.

I met those questions on the banks of a river in Torugbene, a riverine community in Delta State. It was my first journey by boat, and I was terrified. As I waited to board, my imagination was already painting frightening pictures. What if I fell into the water? What if the boat broke down in the middle of the river? I cannot swim. What if strong waves overturned the boat?

For a moment, fear almost won.

Then, beneath the noise of my anxious thoughts, I sensed a gentle reminder: *Be courageous. God has not given you a spirit of fear.* Those words did not make the river disappear or guarantee a perfectly smooth journey. They simply gave me enough courage to take the next step.

I climbed into the boat.

As the engine started and we glided across the water, my heart gradually became still.

***“I found myself  
thanking God for  
the beauty that  
fear had almost  
prevented me  
from seeing.”***

The cool breeze brushed against my face, the river stretched peacefully before me, and the quiet beauty of creation unfolded all around. I watched women casting their fishing nets with confidence born of familiarity, while children and families went about their daily lives along the riverbanks. What had seemed frightening only moments before became a place of wonder. I found myself thanking God for the beauty that fear had almost prevented me from seeing.

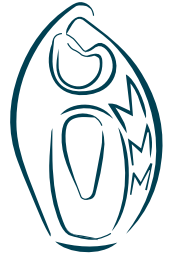
That journey taught me something I continue to carry with me. Fear often exaggerates the dangers ahead and blinds us to the possibilities waiting on the other side. If I had allowed my fears to keep me on the shore, I would have missed not only the experience of travelling across the river but also the deeper lesson God wanted to teach me about trust.

Life presents each of us with moments like that. Our “boats” may look different. They may be a new ministry, a change of career, a difficult conversation, an unexpected diagnosis, or a call to serve in an unfamiliar place. Standing on the shore, the unknown can seem overwhelming. Yet growth rarely happens where everything feels comfortable. It begins when we choose to trust God enough to take the first step.

Courage is not the absence of fear. It is the quiet decision to move forward despite it, believing that God is already present in the journey. The river may still be wide, and the destination may not always be visible, but we never travel alone.

Perhaps today you are standing on the edge of your own river, wondering whether to step into the boat. If so, remember that fear does not have to make the decision for you. Sometimes the most beautiful discoveries, the deepest peace, and the greatest encounters with God are found only after we have found the courage to leave the shore.

# Meet the Sisters – Sr. Laretta Chifundo Zakalia, MMM



*Sr. Laretta Chifundo Zakalia, MMM*

When you first meet Sr. Laretta Chifundo Zakalia, you encounter a warm, friendly person with a beautiful smile who enjoys making new friends.

Sr. Laretta comes from Nkhata Bay District in northern Malawi. She is the eldest of three children, with a younger brother and sister. Her vocation journey began when she was only eleven years old. After her mother was seriously injured in a car accident, Sisters from their local parish prayed with and supported the family. Their compassion left a deep impression on Laretta and planted in her the desire to serve others.

Later, at a Vocation Sunday programme, she first heard about the Medical Missionaries of Mary. With the help of her aunt, who worked in a bookshop, she eventually met Sister Clara, an MMM, and was invited to visit the MMM community. The warm welcome she received from the sisters confirmed that this was where she belonged.

Before joining MMM, Laretta completed a computer programme and worked as a patient attendant at an MMM facility in Lilongwe. She assisted patients, translated between a Nigerian doctor and patients, helped with pharmacy orders and dispensed medication.

She joined MMM in Tanzania in September 2017, completed her postulancy there and later travelled to Nigeria for her novitiate. She made her first profession in September 2021 and was assigned to Benin City, Nigeria. There she assisted in patient care and served as administrator while the acting administrator pursued further studies.

Sr. Laretta is now studying Accounting at the Catholic University of Malawi. She enjoys music, films, card-making and travelling. She especially treasures the international and multicultural life of MMM, where unity, diversity and faith are lived each day.

***We wish Sr. Laretta well as she continues her MMM journey.***





## Tribute to *Sr. Chinyere Priscilla Anyaorah, MMM*

A rare gem has gone to her eternal rest. For many years, she walked the soil of Malawi, touching countless lives with compassion and courage. She reached places where luxury cars could not go, allowing God to use her hands and heart to heal, and to hear the cry of the poor. She dared to reach out and touch.

Tireless, she washed untouchable wounds, sat on dirty mats and sometimes completely on dusty grounds. She brought smiles to faces that had forgotten joy. She gave nothing but selfless and unwavering love. She carried the very spirit of the Medical Missionaries of Mary ***‘going in haste where the need is greatest’***.

For Sr. Chinyere, indeed, ***‘nothing was too hard for those who love’***. Generously she gave her health, moral and spiritual support to everyone. Sr. Chinyeres’ service to humanity was wholistic at its best. To the people of Malawi, she was a gift of presence, a healer, a guide, a mother and agogo (*grandmother*). Who will prepare our beloved ‘Chidede and Chisoso?

Your legacies will be forever cherished.

Sr. Chinyere, you have left behind a story of an MMM that touched lives which will continue to inspire many generations to come. You showed us that true greatness lies not in wealth or power, but in humble service to the people of God.

***Heaven has gained a faithful servant.***

***May her example continue to guide us to love and serve.***

***May the soul of Sr. Chinyere rest in eternal peace.***

**Sr. Laretta Chifundo Zakalia, MMM**

*Sr. Laretta is an MMM, a Malawian.*



MEDICAL  
MISSIONARIES  
of MARY

*Save  
The  
Date!*

# Christmas Craft Fair

FREE ENTRY

LIVE MUSIC

INDOOR MARKET

VISIT FROM SANTA!

**SATURDAY 28<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2026**  
**10.30am – 3.30pm**

Music from the  
*Loving Life*  
choir & more

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

*Have a good time for a good cause!*



**FREE PARKING**

at the Lourdes Church  
(next door to venue)

If you have any questions, please contact us @

**commoffice@mmmworldwide.org**

**www.mmmworldwide.org | Follow us on:**     Medical Missionaries of Mary

# How Do You Explain

*By Sr. Irene Syomiti, MMM*

How do you explain peace to a child born in war  
How can I talk of safety's shore when bombs shatter the mornings cries?  
Women are weeping and children's screams echo more?

How do you talk about trust when hatred is all she knows  
How do you talk about RIGHTS when WRONGS abound  
How do you describe tomorrow when today is such a mess

How do you describe a home to a child living in war  
When life in temporary camps is so routine and real  
In tents of sorrow, they lay their heads  
Numbers, not names, where their stories are dead

How do you describe trust  
When trusting no one is a matter of must  
What do you say about friendship  
when the best friend is the weapon they carry

What do you tell her about hope  
When all her life feels like sliding down a slope  
How do you tell her she is a child, beautiful  
when her beauty and age have brought her so much pain

She is still a child who deserves lullabies not sirens  
Should be learning to write her names not learning to survive  
We will not let their stories end in silence  
We will speak their names in prayers  
We will build the peace we pray for  
Because a child born in war still deserves a world born in love.



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

**[www.mmmworldwide.org](http://www.mmmworldwide.org)**