

SISTERS' JOURNEY



Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate

CELEBRATING TWENTY YEARS: HOLY SPIRIT SISTERS IN ZAMBIA

Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate

General Council

Sister Miriam Mitchell, SHSp
General Superior

Sister Marian Murray, SHSp

Sister Mary Fagan, SHSp

Sister Marguerite Connors, SHSp

Sister Gabriella Lohan, SHSp

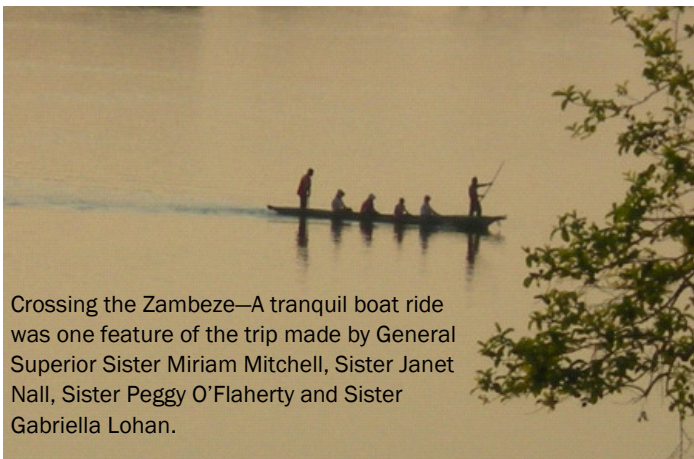


“Simple” and “solemn” were the adjectives used by Bishop Paul Duffy at the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the arrival of the Holy Spirit Sisters in Zambia on September 8, 1988.

The bishop’s homily was a heartfelt expression of appreciation for, and gratitude to the Sisters, whose missionary journey began in 1986. Sisters Anne Finerty and Christina Mitchell set out for India on the first leg of their exploration.

The seeds for this ministry were a joint effort of the SHSp’s and the OMI’s who, together, began to explore possible sites for pastoral ministry in a missionary country.

When a young girl in Kalabo, Zambia, told the Sisters that she hoped, someday, to be a member of their congregation, they took it as a sign that this was the site the Lord had chosen for their ministry. On September 9, 1988, [the 100th anniversary of Mother Margaret’s opening of St. Peter Claver Academy in San Antonio] the three “pioneer” Sisters arrived in Zambia to begin their missionary endeavors. Formation work finally began ten years later, when the Sisters accepted two young ladies into the pre-novitiate program. This year, in August, both



Crossing the Zambeze—A tranquil boat ride was one feature of the trip made by General Superior Sister Miriam Mitchell, Sister Janet Nall, Sister Peggy O’Flaherty and Sister Gabriella Lohan.

young ladies made their final profession and pronounced their Final Vows as Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate.

Throughout the past twenty years, the SHSp’s ministries have given new life in a variety of ways to the Zambian people. They have spearheaded ways to help AIDS patients and infants at risk; to secure home-based health care for those with little or no access to required medicine, to AIDS and malaria victims, and to others suffering from other diseases. Other services include housing and feeding programs for the abandoned elderly; education and care centers for orphans, as well as care for mothers and their children; and social services for individual and families.

Through the generosity of “Mission Outreach” and its benefactors several changes have come about: a formation center and decent housing for the vulnerable elderly have been built; small children through young adults are going to school, clean water has been brought to the people and provided to a village so that a neighborhood clinic, which is desperately needed, can be built.

The Twenty-Year Anniversary both marks a milestone of what has been accomplished and sets a goal for the next twenty years -- “simple and solemn” [in Bishop Duffy’s words] yet “joyful “ministry by our Sisters to a less fortunate people in one of the most neglected areas of the world.

Developing Our Past; Building for the Future

December 2008



Dear Friends,

In the name of all the Sisters of the Holy Spirit, I wish each one of you all the joys and blessings of this season as, once again, we celebrate the coming of Christ into our midst. Thank you for the way you continue to help us to bring the love and compassion of Christ to the world's poorest and most oppressed people. We are encouraged by your partnership with us as we carry out our mission to serve the poor in their need – and that need includes children, families and individuals from all walks of life and from a variety of faiths.

We, Sisters, live simply and frugally, thereby building resources to meet our own needs and the needs of others. With your support we continue to carry out Christ's work on earth faithful to the 1893 mandate of our foundress, Mother Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy: "to serve the poor and marginalized."

Long before it was popular to do so, our congregation's outreach was focused on the Mexican-American and African-American populations. Mother Margaret Mary's work began with the building of St. Peter Claver Catholic School and Church in San Antonio—the first such building for African-Americans in Texas. Today, our work takes our Sisters across the states of Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, with outreach missions in Mexico, and on the African continent, in Zambia. In the latter ministry especially, costs to our congregation are immense, as we provide support to over 1,000 destitute orphans, abandoned elderly, victims of AIDS and so many others existing on the edge of survival.

I am aware that the financial challenges we are facing at this time affect all of us, especially those who struggle for survival each day. We deeply appreciate the generosity of so many of you who have supported our work among God's poor during the past year. If you have traditionally responded to our annual Christmas mission appeal, we ask you once again to consider a gift. Every gift is very much appreciated.

I would be delighted to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to call me at 210- 533-5149 at your convenience.

My prayer is that you will experience God's unconditional love in your personal life and in all you do during this blessed season. May you have a blessed and happy Christmas and a new year blessed with Christ's peace.

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sister Miriam Mitchell".

Sister Miriam Mitchell, S.H.Sp.
General Superior

CELEBRATING GOD’S GOODNESS: TWENTY YEARS IN ZAMBIA



Newly professed Sister Matilda with Sister Miriam Mitchell and Sister Geraldine Klein.

This article originally appeared in *The Drumbeat*, a publication of the Diocese of Mongu, and was written by Sister Mary Margaret O’Grady)

August was a memorable month for the Holy Spirit Sisters, as Sisters Maimbolwa Lutangu and Matilda Chanda made their Perpetual Profession of Vows in their respective home parishes.

On the 16th of August it seemed all roads and pathways led to Sancta Maria in Lukulu, where the church was crowded with family, friends and well wishers, some of whom had traveled hours to be present for the celebration. The *Moya O Kenile* Community hired a minibus to transport

themselves, the pre-novices, the affiliates and other interested young ladies to the Lukulu profession.

Likewise the following Saturday, St. Peter’s Church in Lusaka was packed to capacity as the “Stellers” (liturgical dancers), the choir and various organizations took their places.

Sister Maimbolwa was presented by her mom and her uncle, and Sister Matilda was presented by her aunt and uncle who represented her deceased parents. The homilies at both celebrations were exceptional. The rite of profession included calling forth of the Sister by Sister

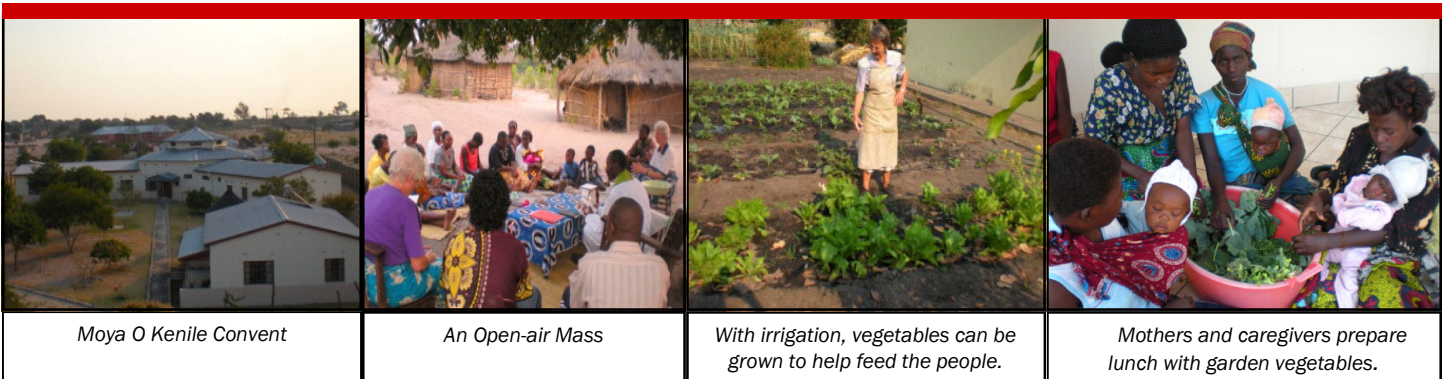
Geraldine Klein; a formal request for perpetual vows, and a response from Sister Miriam Mitchell, General Superior, who had traveled from Texas for the ceremonies. The high point of the rite was the clear pronouncement of her vows, “for my whole life” by the Sister.

As each Sister signed her vows document, the whole church burst into song in their local languages. This was the first time a Religious Profession (or Ordination) had ever taken place in St. Peter’s Church in Lusaka.

For anyone who had the privilege of being present at one or both events, the memories will last forever!



Sister Maimbolwa at her profession.



Moya O Kenile Convent

An Open-air Mass

With irrigation, vegetables can be grown to help feed the people.

Mothers and caregivers prepare lunch with garden vegetables.



Children eager to learn are taught by Sisters of the Holy Spirit in classrooms that are sheltered, in buildings, or open air!

MISSION SUPPORT IN ZAMBIA

WATER PUMP PROJECTS



WATER PUMP PROJECTS

PROBLEM: Before the Sisters' arrival in Zambia, many of the villages lacked clean water. All that was available was water from crude wells [as shown in picture]. The well was "protected" by an old tractor tire; however, it was open to all environmental realities – dirt, dust, dogs, and every variety of local pollutants. A further problem was the containers used to carry this precious commodity – often old, discarded paint cans [with residue paint inside] which were the only available vessels to carry the water back to the homes for consumption or to the fields for irrigation. Sickness and often death from tainted water are facts of life in these communities.

SOLUTION: Providing clean water. The Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate are working hard trying to



bring water pumps to the villages in order to provide clean water for drinking, cleaning, and irrigating. The neighborhood people are enthusiastic about having pumps so that they now can have clean water readily available for daily use. Health clinics cannot be built in areas that do not have a water supply; now that they have water, the villagers are now enthusiastic about making the bricks to be used in building their new clinic. [see photo]

COST OF VILLAGE WATER PUMP WITH INSTALLATION: \$8,000

NEW HOMES FOR VILLAGERS IN NEED: \$500



NEW HOMES for VILLAGERS in NEED: \$500

PROBLEM: In Zambia, many elderly, infirmed, or orphaned are often living in homes which are in a state of deterior-

ation or disrepair. Because they do not have the funds or the manpower to repair or replace these homes, they are very often exposed to the elements, to attacks from domestic animals and to wildlife in the area. Cardboard and rubble are the only available elements for repairing the houses.

SOLUTION: With support from the Mission Fund, the Sisters have been able to help have homes built for those in need. [See picture of a worker finishing a new home for an elderly woman, shown here with Sr. Geraldine Klein]



Sister Janie Jeffress' Profession of Vows

At a beautiful ceremony in the Motherhouse chapel, on June 15, 2008, Sister Janie Jeffress made her First Profession of Vows in the presence of the community and members of her family. By this profession, Sister Janie accepted God's invitation to dedicate her life to Him as a Sister.



Sister Janie repeats her vows with Sister Miriam and Sister

Sister Janie's life is a multi-faceted story. She had been a wife, and is a mother and a grandmother. But, along the way, she felt God's call to join a religious community. Having been married and having grown children did not present a major obstacle; however, it was necessary for her to obtain an annulment of her marriage before she would be free to follow her call.

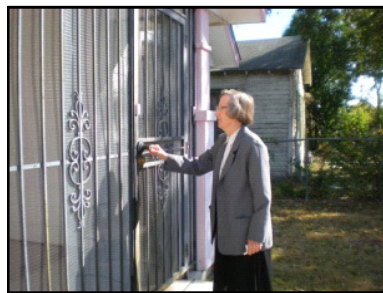
Sister Janie prayed and investigated sev-

eral communities' works and prayer life. Finally, she felt she was being led to the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate in San Antonio. During her formation period, Sister had the opportunity not only to follow an intense prayer life and religious studies, she also experienced "hands-on" ministry to the poor, the hungry, and the incarcerated in San Benito and Fort Worth, TX and also to the indigenous people of Nayarit, Mexico.

Sister Janie describes her profession day as "a happy day for me, for my religious family and for my own family. Now, I am happy wherever the Lord leads me as I strive every day to be the person the Holy Spirit is calling me to be."

Ministry to the Elderly and Infirm:

The Gift of Sister Mary Green



Visiting the homebound and the elderly in the convent neighborhood is a special gift for Sr. Mary Green. Here she is visiting 92-year-old Minna Fuhrann, a native of Germany, who is a guest at an neighborhood assisted-living home. Mrs. Fuhrann and other shut-ins enjoy a visit from Sister Mary each week.



January 16-18, 2009

5:00 p.m., Friday – 12:00 noon, Sunday

Holy Spirit Convent, 301 Yucca Street

"We believe that we, the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate, are called to be a prophetic voice for change in a world of injustice and poverty."

Learn what it means to be
a prophet in our time.

We invite any woman (between ages 18 and 45) who believes God is calling her to be a Sister of the Holy Spirit!

For More Information:
Sister Gabriel Hession
Phone: (210) 533-5149

sghession@hotmail.com

Message from Sister Miriam —

Dear Friends,

As we begin this season of Advent, we wait. Our preparation for the coming of the Christ into our lives is echoed in aspects of our individual lives and our work together as the Sisters of the Holy Spirit and Mary Immaculate.

As you will see in this newsletter, we wait for the completion of the new Motherhouse, and we wait for details great and small that will make this new home suit our Sisters and our charism.

Our waiting is mirrored in the slow but sure development of the

mission work in Zambia and Mexico such as we describe in this issue. We wait for the professions of those women like Sister Janie and Sister Maimbolwa and Sister Matilda who are called “to bring the compassion of Jesus to the poor” to continue the mission of Mother Margaret Mary Healy-Murphy.

We wait because we hope.

May you will find hope in your Advent preparations for all that is important to you and those you love every day.



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With gratitude,

The new Motherhouse is approximately four months away from completion.



*Sisters of the Holy Spirit
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