

Keeping in Touch

SSHJM



January 2024

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Front cover photo:- Sister Comfort with grandmother Cecilia

A Word from the Editor

Dear Sisters, Sacred Heart Companions and Friends,

We come together at the start of this New year with hope and anticipation in our hearts to carry on the great mission of bringing love and compassion to our World.

This mission is very much in evidence in many of the articles that you have sent in and witnessed to with powerful photos that accompany the words. Today more than ever we are called to prove that what say is true and not merely 'fake news'. It is so good to hear from beneficiaries like Komailech Wilfred who writes to us from Pabo in Uganda, also from Michael Hilton and his wife who remember times past with the Sisters in Carlisle and in Knock.

We are called more and more to be seen as counter witnesses to so much war and hatred in our world—starting of course with ourselves and our communities.

There is much to celebrate as we remember the long lives of Sisters Mary Ignatius and Mary Simeon and at the same time we recognise and encourage the enthusiasm and commitment of our younger members.

A special mention goes to Sister Siobhán who always gives us food for our spirits in her reflections. Not only applauded by us but also by UISG for her wonderful contributions and courses.

There were one or two other articles that should have been included but as time was going on I decided that the most important part was to share with you all these great writings - another edition can be started again soon and I am looking forward to hearing from you the news throughout the Congregation.

We keep in mind very specially our Sisters in France these days, as they live through their own difficulties. May the Lord bless them and guide them.

With love and prayers to you all

Anne



LETTER FROM PABO

Komailech Wilfred (*right*), is a young man who boards in Guadalupe House in Pabo, Uganda during term time.

On a recent visit to the houses in Uganda Sister Yvonne met this young man who is so grateful for the support that he receives that he decided to write to the whole Congregation to express his gratitude.

*Before I transcribe the letter for you (it is difficult to read the writing) I can explain that Komailech has a wasting condition known as Muscular Dystrophy, a condition that gradually takes away a persons mobility and agility to the point of permanent need of a wheelchair. Komailech lives very far away from a school and therefore resides in Guadalupe House under our care and is transported to school daily by 'boda boda' (motor cycle).
n.b. English is not his first language.*

TO ALL THE SISTERS OF THE SACRED HEARTS OF JESUS AND MARY

Hi! GREETINGS TO YOU ALL

First of all I would like to sincerely thank the Almighty God for allowing me to write to you as per the above mentioned subject. I have to say I have more good news pertaining to my life in Guadalupe House. I do humbly tell you that things are all OK because we receive good food, good medication and there is good care. At the same time I am being taken to school always, to study.

Currently I am in Senior Four at Pabo Senior Secondary School which is approximately two kilometres from Guadalupe House.

While at school I am building my career in the area of politics so that I can become an active politician in this country of Uganda.

I also participate in the school debating club.

The support from the Officials (Project Staff) at WACFO office have helped

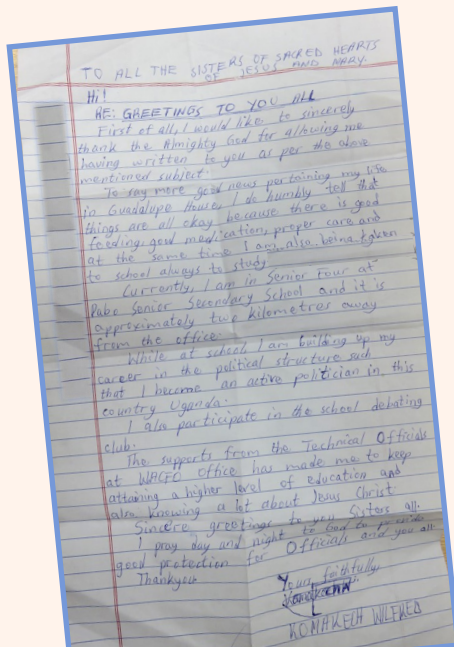
me keep attaining a high level of education and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Sincere greetings to you Sisters all. I pray day and night to God to provide good protection for Officials and you all.

Thank you

Yours Faithfully

Komailech Wilfred



With Sister Sylvia Mulenga (Pabo) who kindly travelled out to his far away village to take these photos for us as the schools are closed at present.



Experiences in Uganda; Mukono and Pabo

Sister Comfort Mwenya.

After two year of Religious Profession (11 June 2021) in Zambia, I was given the

Sisters Mary Gorreth and Comfort with grandmother Cecilia who is showing them her dried rape for use in the dry season to help feed the children good nutritious food.



opportunity to study for a Diploma in Agri-Business Management which I started one year ago in the Cooperative College (in conjunction with Mulungushi University) which is located in Lusaka. This is a three year course so still quite a way to go.

I am learning a lot in the course and

particularly enjoy topics like crop production and livestock management. There are 58 students along with me on the course. Four days of the week are spent in the classroom and every Monday we go out to the farm to have practical experience in e.g.; milking cows, digging and planting crops, caring for the pigs, and poultry production. The tractor driving will come at a later stage (wait for the photo).

In December I was invited by the sisters in Uganda to visit and have a short practical experience with them in both Mukono with Sister Mary Gorreth and in Pabo with Mr. Bosco (agronomist in our project there). With Sister Mary Gorreth I loved visiting the beneficiaries of the project and was moved by their love of agriculture, I remember one widow who shared with me how she supports her children by growing vegetables to feed the children and selling some of the produce to pay for school fees and other essentials. She showed me how dedicated she is to agriculture to keep her family alive and healthy. Sister Mary Gorreth taught me a lot and how to share my knowledge to help others—especially those in greatest need.

While with the sisters in Mukono we celebrated Christmas and I enjoyed the different culture of Uganda. It surprised me that there were no Christmas Carols but the Mass was beautiful. Christmas dinner was goat meat, matoke (cooked bananas), yam, posho (a bit like mealie meal) and of course, chicken. We were all full up at the end of that banquet!

After Christmas on the 27th I travelled to Pabo with Sister Jane Frances where I was welcomed by the community there, Sisters Mary Costello, Sylvia Mulenga and Sister Novices Rita and Mary Florence, who are on pastoral experience. While there I spent time in the field with Mr. Bosco and Sr. Rita where the people showed us their way of life and how they cultivate their crops, breed animals, sell and manage their produce. I was amazed by their dedication to work especially so far away in the villages with little to help them.

I learned about the importance of community development in agriculture—how they work together to share resources, knowledge and skills.

Sister Mary Costello was like a grandmother to me in Pabo, I miss her greatly now and pray for her daily.

I brought all this back to my community here in Zambia and I wish to share it all in community.

One thing that struck me

was the importance of water preservation to prevent famine. Farmers have to work hard to collect and preserve the water. I learnt different methods of irrigation and water conservation e.g. drip irrigations systems, this technique not only helps farmers to grow good crops but also prevents using too much water when a constant little drip will do very well.

I would like to express my gratitude for the opportunity granted to me by the Leadership Team



Mr Bosco, Field Officer in Pabo showing off his great crop of maize to Sister Comfort.



*The best place to learn agriculture is out in the field applying good practices. Here the Sisters, Novices and beneficiaries all teach and learn.
Below; learning in the Centre (looks pretty chilled out)*



and for the welcome and hospitality received from the Sisters and Mr. Bosco in Uganda. I look forward to applying what I have learnt in my work and in my studies.

*Thank you and
God bless you all.*

Official Visit of the Lord Mayor of Cork to our Sisters in Sacred Heart Convent



Sisters M. Clare, Bridget McC., Margaret G, Catherine K. (standing), L. Mayor McCarthy, Sisters M. Majella and Sarto. (behind) Srs. Sheila and Margaret Shanahan.

Thursday 11th January 2024 was a very special day for us here in Cork Convent when we were treated to a VIP visit from our Lord Mayor – Councillor Kieran McCarthy.

Many of us waited with excitement in the front hall to welcome him on this his first visit to our Convent. Anne Murphy, one of our members of staff explained to us what to expect. The Lord Mayor is a parishioner of her Parish where he is a Minister of the Word and a member of the choir.

The official car eventually drove through our gates and his driver kindly pulled up right in front of the main door. A very tall and distinguished looking young man stepped out of the car and was warmly welcomed by Sr. Annie Mary and all of us gathered there to greet him.

As he was ushered into the Community Room, where more Sisters were gathered to greet him, he remarked on the beautiful 'space' as he passed from the front hall through the

atrium of the Chapel which he would later see in more detail.

Once inside the Community Room he was again warmly welcomed by all gathered and was invited to take a seat at the front of the circle of Sisters and staff.

Sister Annie Mary and Anne Murphy made the formal introductions and welcome of the official visit. The Lord Mayor then explained a little of his role and in particular he explained the significance of the chain of office and the main medal on it which he wore with obvious pride as he recalled its history and that of Cork City.



In fact the Lord Mayor, Kieran McCarthy, is quite a historian and often gives guided tours around the City which are apparently very interesting as he recounts many historical facts along the way. He has written many books on the history of Cork and perhaps on other parts of Ireland but ashamedly we haven't read them – yet!



Having a cuppa with the Lord Mayor are Sisters Austin and Sarto

Tea and cakes were then offered to us all, including the Lord Mayor's driver who joined us. Anne Murphy who knew him from her parish and of his talent of singing, asked him if he would please sing for us.

This he very kindly did. As he stood tall, all six foot and more of him, he looked and sounded very much like a professional opera singer. He obliged us and entertained us with a number of his favourite songs. He loves Rodgers and Hammerstein musicals and so sang; 'Oh What a Beautiful Morning' from Oklahoma and 'Some Enchanted Evening' from South Pacific. He is also a fan of John Denver and sang, 'Perhaps Love' and 'Smile' one of Nat King



Standing; Sisters. M. Jo, Sheila, Margaret S, M. Majella, M. Gerald, Annie M., Celine de Jesu, Anne Murphy (staff) and Sr Austin. Seated; Sisters. Sarto and M. Laura

Finally, he couldn't end without singing a much loved Irish song – 'The Banks of My Own Lovely Lee.' The Sisters joined in at times but were too awed by his very beautiful voice and delivery!

Sadly the time arrived for him to take his leave; after shaking hands with each individual Sister as Sister Annie Mary introduced each one, he gave a welcome invitation to the Sisters to join him one day for Tea in his Offices.

On his way to his car Sister Annie Mary took him to visit the Chapel where he spent a moment in wonder.

Thank you Lord Mayor of Cork, Councillor Kieran McCarthy for all you do for the City of Cork and for giving of your time to be with us and so generously singing for us.

Nothing happens here without the support of our wonderful Staff— special thanks to Anne Murphy.



An article about The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

By Michael Hilton.

The Congregation originated in Europe mainly in Germany and France. Then expanding to England in 1872, setting up a convent in Stratford it quickly spread throughout England and into Scotland and Wales, and on into Ireland with a large number of houses. These communities primarily looked after the poor in their homes and orphans. The work then developed to education then into Mother and Baby care. All in all, this was a very successful expansion program. A large convent was established in Chigwell near London, which became the Mother House and still operates in that way today.

In 1953 the decision was taken to open a house in Zambia, which has also proved to be a great success with many young sisters joining the order and carrying out an immense amount of good works. In America unfortunately there is only one Sister left, but the order is still quite strong and vibrant in the Philippines.



*Patricia with Sister Gerald Outside
Fatima House Knock*

Turning now to Ireland a large house was established in Cork at BlackRock in 1922 for the care of Mothers and Babies and now caters for retired sisters, at present there are approximately 25 sisters resident. A further house known as Fatima House was in Knock this house had 4 resident Sisters some of which worked at the shrine in the prayer guidance Centre.

Patricia' and my association with the sisters at Knock began in April 2018 when Sister Mary Gerald moved from Carlisle, our home city in England, to

Fatima House in Knock, to retire after 31 years of service in Carlisle:-

On Easter Day as the people of the world celebrate the resurrection of Jesus-it was fitting that the Mass of thanksgiving and farewell to the Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary in Carlisle should take place within the octave of Easter. Therefore on Easter Tuesday 3rd of April 2018, all roads led to the Church of Christ the King, Carlisle, to rejoice and give thanks to God and the Sisters for their ministry of love in this beautiful border city.

A church packed out to overflowing heard how the Eucharist was fleshed out in the Mission of the Sisters in this area for 106 years. Our Sisters had walked and talked with God and his people in many different ways. They had reached into and helped heal the hearts of the most vulnerable, first of all in the Durranshill Home: raising up: the lives of girls and women with Special Needs and later within a variety of parish pastoral ministries.

True to our mission statement they did this through a ministry of compassion and empowerment often going where no one else had trod.

On this Easter Tuesday, the Lord was now asking our Sisters to spread his word and love in new pastures and not be afraid. A Special tribute and gratitude was expressed to Sister Mary Gerald who was Bidding Farewell to the people after 31 years of loving service in our city. Like St Patrick, she was responding to Gods Call to return to her native land here in Ireland, to retire and make her home in the beautiful Marian Parish of Knock.

A most enjoyable social took place in the Parish Centre immediately after the Mass. Tributes of thanksgiving continued as a slide show of the Sisters work in Carlisle was displayed. A surprise SKYPE chat linked to Sister

Maureen Gavin from her new home in Marian House, Uxbridge. All were delighted that Sister Maureen was able to participate in this very important celebration and receive the gratitude and prayers of the parish.





Above; from the left is My Wife Patricia, (Bottle in hand) Sister Catherine McLaughlin, Sister Mary Gerald, Sister Marie Majella and Sister Genevieve RIP

Note; Sister Maureen was a long standing companion of Sister Gerald in Carlisle who also gave many years of service to the parish. No celebration is complete without the cutting of a cake. It was beautiful delicacy, depicting Sister Mary Gerald sailing across the sea to Ireland and had been baked by a lady of the parish for this special occasion. A backdrop of Daniel O'Donnell's music broadened a smile on Sister's face as she is related to Daniel. A beautiful chapter in the life of our congregation was drawing to a fitting close.

But not for Patricia and I, we arrived in Hollymount a year before Sister Gerald arrived in Knock, and have been lucky enough to have become closely associated with the Sisters over the last five, now bordering six years. We have got to know many Sisters during this time who have come to visit and stay at Fatima House at Knock.

Christmas has always been a very special time for us, and a real privilege, especially these last few years, when we all gathered together at Fatima House for Christmas dinner which always

turned out to be a very special occasion.

On a sad note for us during these years three sisters we came to know very well passed away (And were called home by the Lord) May the Lord have mercy upon them and may they rest in Peace.

Sister Maureen, who I have previously mentioned, passed away Last Year in Marian House.

Sister Eileen Hennebry having moved to Cork sadly passed away 2 Years ago.

Sister Genevieve who lived at Fatima House in Knock who was a lovely lady, as were they all and was someone we were proud to have been friends with, passed away two years ago.

To Conclude I am sure everyone you have touched throughout your lives would wish you all, the best of happiness for the future and may your mission continue.

Thank you all

Michael and Patricia.



**Sacred Heart convent, Durranshill, Carlisle where we missioned and lived
for over a hundred years**

Mission Appeals 2023



I started my Mission Appeals on the 12th February 2023 in Scotland in the Dioceses of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Galloway, I also did eight mission appeals in Westminster Diocese, finishing on the 24th September.

It was quite a job trying to get dates from all the parishes but eventually I got them programmed and so it was 'down to business'.

Most of the Parishes have three churches others just one, every weekend I would speak at the Saturday evening Mass and three Masses on Sunday. Between all the Parishes I spoke at sixty-one Masses. After the Mass some parishioners would come to speak to me and tell me how much they enjoyed the talk and especially my 'accent', some would have tea or coffee ready which was lovely and if there was time I would chat with them.

During the appeals I would speak about my time in Zambia and tell them about my work in the Women's Prison and how I receive funding from Mission Cara to build a bigger Dormitory. The following an extract of one of my talks:

We were quite fortunate as we had the Men's Prison next door which provided all the labourers and even an Architect was there who drew up the plans for us and

kept the building work on track. We would give the men doing the building work their lunch, and sweets. They really enjoyed working on the Project and I enjoyed it as well and learned a lot from them. On Christmas Day my Community in Lusaka would spend the day with the women prisoners as they would not have any visitors that day. We began with prayers and carols then games with the Children who were in prison with their mothers. Then we would share lunch with the them which we mostly prepared and the women prepared the vegetables, they really enjoyed it and so did we. Before we left, we would give them a gift wrapped in nice Christmas Paper. Some of the Woman were more interested in the wrapping paper which they would put up on the wall to decorate their dormitory. The Sisters continue to visit the women in the prison and to give donations of different kinds.

After listening to my experiences in Zambia, the parishioners they would tell me how it touched them to the point of tears. They were impressed with the great work the Congregation was and is doing, working with the poorest of the poor. I was very encouraged with their kind words and also for their generosity, it was unbelievable.

I would finish my talk in the parishes with quotes from both St Mother Teresa and Pope Francis

“We can do no great things only small things with great love, being present to others, listening to them and hearing their story is the greatest respect we can give them” Mother Teresa

“Do not be afraid to go and bring Christ into every area of life, to the fringes of society even those furthest away, the Lord seeks all, He wants everyone to feel His warmth His love and His mercy.” Pope Francis

The work for the Mission Appeals for 2024 has already begun!

Sr Pennie

*Sister Beatrices Akwero from Uganda now a member of
Mbala Community, Zambia.*

With Sister Muda and Sunsuntila students.



I first arrived in Mbala last August for a three month experience before returning to Pabo to write my college exams in Finance and Accounting. Earlier this month I returned once more to Mbala. The college that I attend is not yet doing online study but the lecturers prepare notes for me and send them to me via WhatsApp and/or email. I still have four months further study before sitting my final exams in April or May (so please pray for me).

I made my first Profession of vows in 2020 in February so I am about to complete four years.

In Mbala I am learning the practical application of accounting in our Households in Distress project. This is a large complex project which covers Sunsuntila Centre for Orphans, Inclusive Education in the Victor Braun School (for main stream children those with disabilities), Livelihood, Food Security as well as Health and Nutrition programs.

In the project office I work alongside Chuma Mwalula who is one of the Accountants (as well as Roland Botha who is at present on holiday). Chuma is helping me learn about the exact payment and accounting of funds that we are responsible for. At present, as I am new to the process, it is a little difficult but as I learn it is becoming clearer and more enjoyable. In the past I did not consider myself very good with numbers but now as I learn the formulas to put into the programs I find it more interesting and easier as time goes on. There is still a lot that Chuma has to teach me and I look forward learning. At present I spend most of the time in the office but look forward to visiting the different parts of the project. Of course, as the office is near to Sunsuntila, I enjoy meeting the children every day and trying to speak to them in

Mambwe. The staff are very kind and good to me and most patient especially when I am unable to pronounce certain words. They are so good to have around me.

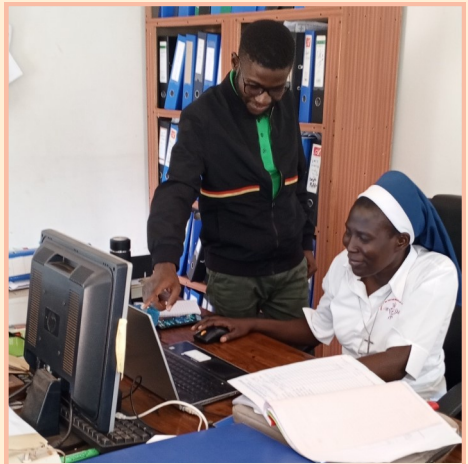
There are big differences in our cultures as here in this part of Zambia the languages and peoples are Bantu whereas the languages in northern Uganda are Nilotic (the area of the Nile river), my language is Acholi. Understanding the local languages here are difficult for me and we rely mostly on English but I do try very hard to learn both Bemba and Mambwe. The dancing also is very different as in my tribe (Acholi) we use a lot of energy and jumping.

I am enjoying the experience here very much in spite of missing all that is 'normal' for me in Uganda; my friends, language, food and others things. The Sisters particularly welcome me and many of us were together in the community in Pabo. In fact I can say that it is a bit like home from home.

At the Parish Church the people welcomed me and are happy to include me in the different programs and in the choir where we sing in English, sometimes and in Mambwe and Bemba. I try to join in even if it is only to clap my hands. The learning will come.

In the town the people quickly realised that I am not from here but they are very friendly and greet me warmly.

**Mbala Community;
Sisters Sylvia Luundu, Beatrices,
Precious and Muda**



**Sister Beatrices with Chuma Mwalula
in the project office**



New Year Reflection

In the Gospel of Mark 1:40-45 a leper comes to Jesus and pleads with Him on his knees for the healing of his leprosy. Shunned by the crowd, crushed in spirit, he bows low before the God whom he knows has the discernment to understand his anguish of soul and body. In utter humility he places the outcome of their encounter in the hands of God, 'if you want to, you can cure me.' A wisdom born of a life of faith and suffering have schooled his soul in the ways of God. He believes that Jesus wishes to fulfil his messianic mission of wholeness and to offer him fulness of life today. The words, 'I have come that you may life and have it to the full' John 10:10 echo in his soul as he steps forward.

Jesus' affirmative response to his request is without hesitation; There are no 'ifs, buts or other conditions placed on his loving, compassionate response, 'Of course I want to!' he said. 'Be cured.' Scars of soul and body are immediately healed, and the man is sent on his way to fulfil the prescription of Moses as evidence of his recovery.

Unable to contain his joy the man breaks the silence requested by Jesus and begins to tell all whom he meets of his encounter with the Lord. In so doing, 'the Almighty who has done great things' for him is glorified and people who previously shunned him are now invited to a deeper faith in the living God.

As a new year unfolds, we too are asked to fall humbly on our knees and place the many forms of social and moral leprosy that plague our world before God. May we stretch out our wounded hearts, broken lives and trembling spirits so that all people may hear the same liberating words, 'Be cured.' May peace enfold our world. May God be glorified this day and always.

Amen.

Sister Siobhán



Sister Annie Chomba from Zambia to Cebu

Sister Annie Chomba is another of our younger Sisters who has travelled to far off places, but always within the Congregation, to spread the Love of the Sacred Heart.

Sister Annie writes;

I entered the Congregation in 2018 from Kasama, Zambia. I made my First Profession of Vows last year on the feast of St. Joseph. Two days before I was asked by Sister Julie to go to Cebu for community and apostolic experience, specifically to get experience in occupational and physical therapy. This is an area carried out in our Center in Blessed Sacrament Parish. I live in Basak community with Sisters Luela, Odette and Esther. It is not very far from the second community in Bulacao and we usually



celebrate feast-days and birthdays together.

Sister Marissa taught me how to measure vital signs so I can also help with this part of the program. I enjoy working with the children and the elderly, helping with physiotherapy and on some First Fridays I lead a day of recollection for the elderly patients.

I really love working with the people here who made me so welcome, particularly the elderly, in spite of not understanding the language which is Visaya. I have learnt how to greet the people and some basic phrases.



Sisters Marissa and Annie, Learning is fun

Earlier this month I commenced training in occupational therapy. I now attend Velez College on a daily basis and hope that in four years I will have a degree qualification and have even more to offer those in greatest need.

I hope to be able to continue to attend our Center when there are some free moments from school so that I can be with the Children, and elderly persons especially the post stroke patients.

As the entry requirements to College here require an apostille (authentication) of my Grade 12 Certificate from the authorities in Zambia I had to return to my native home to do this. It was great to take the advantage of celebrating Christmas there and I spent most of the time in Lusaka with both communities together for Christmas. Afterwards I was able to visit my family in Luwingu and in Chililabombwe, returning to Cebu on the 8th of January.

Some parts of the culture can be challenging especially as it is so very different from Zambia. The people can be very direct and sometimes ask quite personal questions i.e. my age, about boyfriends etc. The food here is also very different and mostly sweet— I am so used to mealie meal and vegetable relish (definitely Not sweat) and here it is rice, pork and chicken but all sweet.

I enjoy Cebu and am so grateful to the Sisters here who make me welcome and are helping me settle into a truly different place. I ask for your prayers, Sisters, to support me in my studies and in my community living so that I can always do the will of God wherever I am asked to go.

Sisters Anne Healy, Annie, Sheila and Odette celebrating with the staff at the Center— those who work hard deserve their just rewards.



Living with Vulnerability

Life is fragile....and we sometimes feel its fragility at the most unexpected moments.

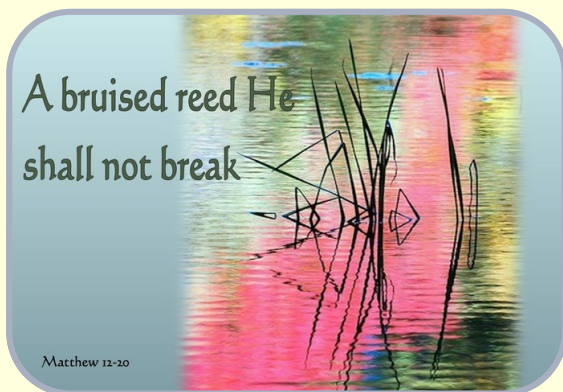
It may be something as ordinary as an incorrect name on a computer generated document that causes distress and unexpected extortionate penalty charges.

Technology glitches occur leaving people vulnerable and unsure of where they stand when dealing with large corporate organisations. An increasing number of people are referred to websites, chat boxes and automated telephone lines. Queues of hundreds of people may be waiting and a robotic voice says, 'you are number 106 in the queue.' There is no human person to listen and relieve distress and to provide a positive and helpful solution. The person may be left feeling invisible, frustrated and angry before the might of the computer. On the occasion when a member of staff is available at a 'Help Desk' negotiation can be extremely difficult when staff are left to deal with distressed customers and seemingly inflexible company policies which appear to serve the best interests of the company, not the customer.

This form of 'service' is contrary to the Gospel of compassionate care expressed by Jesus in all of his ministry. He reached out in sensitivity and love to listen, respond and restore to fulness of life all who called to him. For him there was no on-line form filling, chat boxes or social media. His response was, "What do you want me to do for you?" so that the felt expressed needs of the person could be met and their spirit restored to fulness of life.

As his followers we are asked to be respectful in our dealings with each other, to be gracious and compassionate and to challenges all forms of injustice. He who was vulnerable will show us how to live in this way so that the crushed reed is never broken. (Matthew 12:20)

Sister Siobhán



Sister Mary Ignatius RIP

December 22nd, 2023.



We gather today to celebrate the long life of Sister Mary Ignatius and to thank God for the person she has been to us. She was the oldest member of our Congregation at the time of her sudden death on 15th December 2023, and she was proud of her great age of 97 years.

Welcome to all you members of Sr Mary's family especially her brother Patrick from

Canada and Brenda from Fermanagh.

Sister Mary Ignatius was born on 13th April 1926 in Enniskillen Co. Fermanagh. She was the eighth child of her parents Annie and Hugh McManus. It was in her home that her Catholic faith was nurtured, laying the foundation for her faith journey as a Sister of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. We thank the McManus family for the gift of Sr Mary to our Congregation and for your support to her over the years. She frequently spoke of her family; she obviously loved you all.

The McManus family were farmers. Mary loved walking through the farm often assisting with the care of the cows. She would row over to the family island of Inishkeen, a place where in the silence and beauty of nature she loved to go and pray from an early age. She had a head for business and her advice was always respected particularly on family financial matters. Her infectious, hearty laugh will be a lasting memory in the family.

She entered the Congregation of the SSHJM in 1945. spending most of her Religious Life in Ireland, the greater portion that these years were lived here in Cork. In 1984 she was asked to go to South Uist (the Outer Hebrides) but even the rugged beauty of the Island and the friendly nature of the people there could not hold her, and she returned to Cork after three years to pick up her mission where she left off.

Living through the war years she understood from an early age the struggles of life for many. Her mother taught her the importance of helping people in need. From an early age she cultivated an acute listening skill which prepared her for her mission/ministry as a SSHJM.

We all are aware of her mission to save life and to restore life for the many vulnerable and marginalised especially girls/women who came her way needing a listening ear. Her mission in life reflected the mission of Jesus who said, “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full” Jn 10:10 and it also fulfilled Fr. Victor Braun’s mandate to us as SSHJM to “do the work others are not doing”.

History tells us of the harsh reality of life in Ireland after the civil war, which was created by the widespread poverty. For a young pregnant girl/woman with no family or any other support, life was very daunting . SSHJM played a pivotal role in providing shelter, health care and guidance for her and helped care for her baby. Sister Mary was one of the Sisters who met the challenge of providing that care. It was demanding work, but they were dedicated women, faithful to their calling to bring the love and compassion of Christ to everyone seven days a week.

Over many years there were long-drawn-out negotiations with local authorities asking for support, not for themselves (the sisters) even though they got no salary, but to help them provide loving care for the girls/women who came seeking help. It took many years to get a modest favourable response.

Cork may have been the epicentre of your work, but we all know that all the good you did, cascades far beyond the borders of Cork and even beyond the borders of Ireland. You travelled long distances, occasionally at night to support individuals and families. All encounters (visits) were requested and were conducted with the utmost discretion. Confidentiality was guaranteed to everyone supported, to ensure the dignity of the person and ease anxiety.

The generosity of many people in Cork was an immense help. Sister Mary with her very gentle, caring personality made many friends who came on board voluntarily to help. A very resourceful fundraising committee was formed which helped further the vision for the young women.

A vision that is not discerned and, in some cases, refocused to remain relevant in meeting its objective, will stagnate and die. Sr Mary did not allow SSHJM's vision stagnate. She was always on the alert for new ways to give the young women/adults' new skills and opportunities, empowering them to become self-supporting. One such venture was the FAS scheme, which she introduced for the young adults and through that scheme many qualified/skilled personnel were available to educate and bring further professional dimensions to the care provided.

In scripture Acts 5:39, we read that Gamaliel a respected Pharisee tells a crowd who wanted to stone Jesus and His followers "If it is from God you will not be able to stop them" When the time came that SSHJM for many and varied reasons discerned that they could no longer carry on the mission of empowering vulnerable/marginalised families and individuals, negotiations began to ensure that the work continued. Today we see that in the Childhood Matters Project, families and individuals are supported in many ways to enable them to enjoy a better quality of life. So, the seed that you Sr Mary and other Sisters helped to nurture and fulfil for many years continues to flourish in its life-giving mission. We pray for God's blessings on all associated with the Childhood Matters project.

Today we thank God for the person you were to us Sr Mary, and for all you have contributed to our mission. Our Christian faith assures us that you are now enjoying eternal rest in the presence of the Lord, whom you loved and so faithfully served in this life.

Farewell, Rest in peace Sister Mary.



Eulogy for Sr. Simeon:

Sister Mary Simeon was born on 24th July 1929, the eldest of six children to Margaret and Paddy Pilkington and the niece of Sisters Redempta and Kieran Marie. Like all of us, her spiritual pilgrimage began a few days later when she was baptised Anna Carmelia. Her faith was nurtured in a loving Catholic family and she soon developed her love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of Our Lady.

Sister Simeon entered our Congregation in July 1947 and made her first vows on 1st February 1950. At her reception into the Novitiate her father gave her a card with this motto : “I have chosen the way of fidelity. I have set my heart on your rulings”. (from Ps. 119) She often referred to this motto and her frequent prayer was, “Lord let me be faithful to my Father’s motto which gathers ever new and deeper richness”. Sr. Simeon developed a deep faith through her prayer life and through her personal relationship with Jesus. From her earliest years until recently, she kept a personal spiritual journal and at the end of each entry, she signed herself ‘Anna Simeon!! Obviously the Presentation of the Lord in the temple had great significance for her.

The fruit of her deep prayer life overflowed into her ministry of teaching in the UK, in California and in Zambia with children of all ages, from Primary school age through to A 'level at Secondary school.

Later, she used her knowledge of Canon Law when she worked with the Diocesan Marriage Tribunals which again showed the great compassion Simeon had for anyone who was suffering in any way.

Sr. Simeon was very gifted in many ways and sincere in all her encounters with others. She was clear thinking and an avid reader. She retained what she had read,

and was able to remember where she read it for easy reference, and could quote chapter and verse! She had a great love of the Scriptures and was very conversant with the writings of Fr. Victor Braun, St. Francis de Sales, St. Augustine and the history of the Congregation and also with Canon Law and its implications for our own Congregational Constitutions. Such knowledge was shared with others who respected her wisdom and were unafraid to ask for her opinion on such important Congregational and Church matters.

St. John of the Cross, and his poetry, were very familiar to Sr. Simeon and there was much about his spiritual journey that she could identify with and that very few would have known about.

After her teaching career came to a close, Sr. Simeon took courage to actually travel to Versailles and to Germany to spend time with our Austrian and French Sisters in order to perfect her skills in both languages. This was a great asset in helping with our involvement in Congregational issues concerning the Victor Braun Federation.

Simeon learned to play the piano while at school and was very proficient by the time she studied music as her main subject when training for her teaching career. She later learned to play the violin and joined an orchestra in California. She generously played the organ for Community liturgies in the various houses where she lived adding to the richness of the Liturgy which she loved so dearly and faithfully.

Sr. Simeon had a great love for her family and a great interest in the activities of each one as the generations grew. She was delighted to hear of the baptism of her latest great grandniece, Julia Rose, and said 'that's wonderful!'

It goes without saying that Sr. Simeon will be greatly missed by her family, the Sisters and staff here who have cared for her with such patience and love over the years, months, weeks and particularly during these latter days.

It has been an inspiration for us all to see Sr. Simeon surrender peacefully to the Lord her life that has been so full of learning and of sharing. May she now bask for all eternity in His presence and love. Amen.

Congratulations

Dear Siobhán,

I want to thank you for your wonderful contributions to the 6th panel of THE LIFE. I only worked with some of you towards the end because I was working as a Spanish editor and didn't start working with the English-speaking Sisters until after Sr. Michele's retirement. I started editing THE LIFE in July of 2023 and I have been blessed to learn from panellists all over the world.

Please continue writing for us as a columnist. Columns are 900-1200 words and the best thing is, we already have your author's page and payment form, so, there's no need to do that again! So, please continue to write!

Thanks again and hope to receive a column from you soon!--

Sr. Helga Leija
Columns Editor



Dates for your Diary

- ◇ February 2nd
 - Platinum Jubilee Sister Christina Doona
 - Diamond Jubilee Sister Anne Kieran
- ◇ February 25th
 - 80th Birthday Sister Elizabeth Dawson
- ◇ June 7th
 - 90th Birthday Sister Mary Pierina
- ◇ July 21st
 - 90th Birthday Sister Mary Gerald
- ◇ August 28th
 - Diamond Jubilee Sister Mary Mangan
- ◇ September 8th
 - Silver Jubilee Sister Pennie MacInnes and
Sister Mary Dargie
- ◇ December 30th
 - 80th Birthday Sister Catherine McLaughlin

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