

Keeping in Touch

SSHJM



TALKING WITH OUR HEART

April 2023

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A Word from the Editor

Dear Sisters, Sacred Heart Companions and Friends,

We send Easter greetings to you all and rejoice at this time when new life is bursting all around us (especially here in the UK where we have had a long cold and wet winter.

We thank God that, once again, we have much good news to share with you all which I hope is a pleasant relief from the constant barrage of bad news that we see and hear daily in social media. Through our prayer and support we respond to what we can, in order to change sorrow to joy.

It is certainly a great joy to see that young women are responding to the call to follow their vocation in our Congregation. We recognise that it is through the good example of many who have gone before us and so we celebrate our history and many of those who are still with us. Although retiring from some physically challenging apostolates they take up others that are equally important – especially the apostolate of prayer.

As some of our history seems to be forgotten, I took the opportunity to write a little of the early days when our sisters went as pioneers to places where Catholics were not often welcome and ministered with the very poor and vulnerable (as we see in the short history of Aberdare).

A special note to ask you all to pray with and for our Sisters Clara, Sheila, Annet and Sylvia who are preparing to make final Vows in the coming weeks.

I hope we can arrange a Congregational celebration around the 18th of May (but not that day as Sheila and her community will be very busy with final Vows!)

With love and prayers to you all

Anne

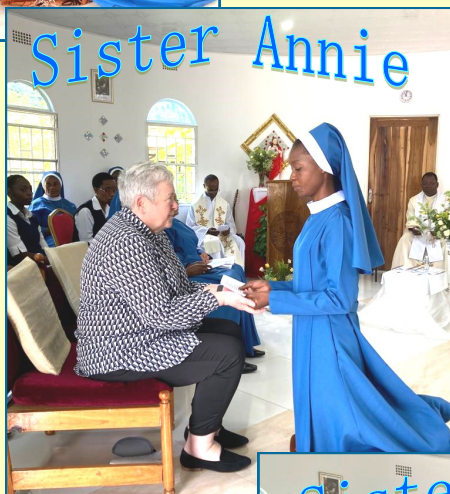
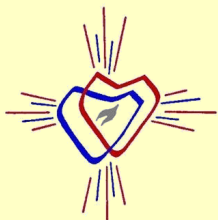
LUSAKA HOUSE OF FORMATION



Feast of St. Joseph 2023

With grateful thanks to the Sacred
Hearts of Jesus and Mary :

Sisters Annie Chomba, Monica Mbao
and Joyce Asingua professed vows of
Chastity, Poverty and Obedience, in the
hands of sister Julie, Congregational
Leader and in the presence of their
Sisters in Zambia.





Above: Sisters Annie, Julie, Joyce, Monica and Yvonne celebrating after the ceremony

Below: with some of the priests who helped in the initial formation.



Welcome Sister Cotilda

The day following the celebrations for the First Profession of Vows, we were blessed to receive another addition to the congregation, Sister Cotilda who travelled from Uganda to join the Novitiate community in Lake Road, Lusaka



Sister Julie,
Congregational
Leader and Sister
Mulenga, Unit
Leader, welcome
Sister Cotilda after
her long journey
from Uganda.

Awaken me Lord to your light:

Open my eyes to your presence.

Awaken me Lord to your love:

Open my heart to your indwelling.

Awaken me Lord to your life:

Open my mind to your abiding.

Awaken me Lord to your purpose:

Open my will to your guiding.

David Adam

Sisters in the Novitiate



Sisters Monica, Paula, Agnes, Cotilda, Mary Florence, Precious and Ritah

You can see here that there are many comings and gowings in the House of Formation. We pray for them all especially the formators.



MY EXPERIENCES AS DIRECTOR OF SSHJM HOUSEHOLDS IN DISTRESS (HID) PROGRAMME MBALA.

My name is Mattias Elasto Kunda, former Director for the Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (SSHJM), Households In Distress (HID) Programme based in the Northern Province of Zambia. I joined the Households In Distress (HID) Programme in April, 2008 as Programme Coordinator. In January, 2016 I was promoted to the position of—Households In Distress (HID) Programme Director, a position I held up to 9th April, 2022 when my services to the organization came to an end. In all, I served the organization for 14 years.



As Director for the SSHJM-HID Programme, a large part of my job mainly involved managing, coordinating and facilitating the smooth implementation of project activities and preparing proposals for the purpose of sourcing funds from donor agencies. I reported to the Board of Trustees through the SSHJM-HID Programme Country Representative. I acted as the link person between the HID Programme and donors, other partners and stakeholders in the five Districts (Mbala, Mpulungu, Senga, Kasama and Mungwi) where the Programme operates in the Northern Province of Zambia.

I would like to share my experience as follows:

When I joined the SSHJM-HID Programme, I learned for the first time in my life how to contribute towards improving the living standards of the vulnerable members of our communities. Throughout my time working with the SSHJM-HID Programme, my heart was filled with joy when I saw how my efforts and the efforts of other members had contributed to improving the lives of vulnerable

members of the targeted communities (PLWHA, OVC, Children and Young Adults with disabilities, widows/widowers) in the five Districts where the SSHJM-HID Programme works. For example, when I first joined the organisation, many People Living With HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) were chronically ill as most of them were bedridden. But with the interventions that I and other members of the SSHJM-HID Programme put in place (with financial support from donors), the situation improved and we later had to



deal with improved People Living With HIV and AIDS (PLWHA), who did not require food supplements for their daily living but were given economic empowerment to enable them improve their household income and food

security. The Sisters always emphasized to me and other members of staff to treat PLWHA and other vulnerable people we interacted with respect and dignity as God loves them as He loves all other human beings. This approach to working with vulnerable members of the communities has helped me to always respect people regardless of their status in life; thank you very much Sisters for instilling this



important value in my life. I also adopted a positive approach towards my work which I regarded as a 'Calling' rather than mere work and I always tried to do my level best which could not be measured in monetary terms. I did my level best to serve the vulnerable people in the SSHJM-HID Programme as God called me to.

The other experience I had while working with the SSHJM-HID Programme is that of having respect for all staff. The Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary always emphasised that, while all employees had different job functions and titles, there must be respect for other members of staff because each one of us is important and contributes to the normal function of the organisation. The Sisters organised regular interactive meetings and functions which involved senior and junior members of staff participating together. For example, some monitoring of project activities were deliberately planned in such a way that senior and junior members of staff worked together. This was a unique experience because in most other organisations I had worked with previously, the 'Boss-Subordinate' relationship was greatly emphasised.

The emphasis to develop the Human Resource component of the organisation was another good experience I had while



working for the SSHJM-HID Programme. The organisation placed a lot of emphasis on Staff development by encouraging staff to undergo long term training at institutions of Higher learning and also by organising in-house training for all staff. I personally benefitted from the staff development programme put in place by the SSHJM-HID Programme, which helped me

improve my work performance.

The other experience I can attribute to the SSHJM-HID Programme is the ability to organise exchange visits. The organisation brought in the practice of organising staff exchange visits to selected relevant institutions as a way of exposing and improving the knowledge base for staff. During my exchange visit to Uganda in 2009, I had the opportunity of meeting Sister Mary Costello in Pabo, from whom I drew inspiration on how to run a project even



under dangerous circumstances as the project she was running then was situated in the war-torn part of Uganda. Sister Mary is quite a strong woman and it was an experience I will never forget.

The setting up of the Mission Project Coordination Office headed by the Project Coordinator based in Dublin Ireland, aimed at providing technical support to the SSHJM-HID Programme was another unique experience I had while working with SSHJM-HID Programme. This arrangement enabled my office as Director to work well in the process of accessing funds from donors as the Mission Project Coordinator did everything in his power to help our

organisation to obtain money from the donors to whom we applied for funds. This kind of arrangement does not exist in many NGOs. It is an experience worthy commending the Sisters for.

The support I received from the two Congregational Leadership Teams I worked under (headed by Sister Elizabeth Dawson and the one Headed by Sister Mary Mangan), the Country Representative (Sister Yvonne Mwila Mwalula) and Local Leaders (Sisters Mary Ita and Muda Chirwa) based in Mbala, was another experience worth mentioning as it made my work an enjoyable and memorable one. It was good to hear words of encouragement coming from senior Congregational leaders like Sister Elizabeth D, Sister Mary Mangan and Sister Mary Ita (when she was appointed the Counsellor for Zambia) urging me to continue working hard in order to help the poor people in our communities. Your



words dear Sisters really inspired me to work hard as I was pleased that I could get some good and encouraging words from such senior and important people from the Congregation. Thank you very much to all of you Sisters.

Sisters Brigid, Margaret Shanahan, Simeon and Gabriel had a great big together-day to celebrate their Feast days and birthdays in our Community in Cork Ireland. Congratulations to you all and may you be blessed to celebrate many more!

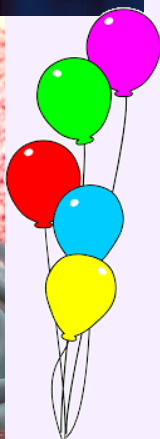
Srs. Brigid, Margaret and Annie Mary



Sr. Simeon



Sr. Gabriel



Chigwell Celebrations



80th Birthday
Sister Catherine



70th Birthday Sister Mary D



The Feast of Saint George.

Seated; Barbara and Elizabeth D, Standing; Gillian, Lorna, Lynn, Mary D & Pierena. We had fireworks on the cake but (thankfully), no Dragon!



MINNIE AT 100 !



Mrs Minnie Monaghan celebrated her 100th birthday on 25 October 2022. She is one of the original members of our group - and need I say, the most senior.

She has been a most faithful Sacred Heart Companion over the years and an inspiration to all of us.

In the 1960's and 70's she worked in St. Mary's Convent for about 20 years and was very well thought of by all the Sisters in the Convent at that time and the girls and women who lived there just adored her.

Her late husband Tom also worked there for some years tending the grounds and gardens.

She was actually born in Rothesay on the Isle of Bute, but her family came to live in Paisley when Minnie was 5 years old.

She came to live in Barrhead when she married and has been here ever since and now lives comfortably with her very caring family.

BARRHEAD SHC'S CELEBRATE



Left and below: Sister Patricia joins in the great celebrations with the SHC's group in Barrhead inviting Minnie to cut

Congratulations



SSHJM SENDS LOVING THANKS TO MINNIE FOR THE MANY YEARS OF WORK, PRAYER AND SUPPORT

Love Your Ghost People.

Ghost people are people that we see, but don't really look at. We see them through a lens which only shows us a general outline of them.

Whoever you see only in a generalized way and don't stop to see the individual within is a ghost person for you.

We all have our own ghost people - the people we see but don't look at as individuals.

Before I started working with them the homeless were ghost people for me. I saw them – you couldn't help but see them - but I didn't look at them. I had a lens which said – homeless people are weird, a bit crazy and dangerous - so when I saw them, I didn't look at them because I didn't want to be involved with weird, crazy and dangerous people.

But now I see individuals who are struggling to survive and make sense of a world they don't fit into. Of course, there are some that are dangerous, some who are very sick, but I see them too. I know they are beloved children of God just like you and me.

Sometimes we even see ourselves as ghost people. We stop seeing ourselves as wonderful unique children of God but instead begin to see ourselves in terms of what we do instead of who we are. Then when something changes - we don't pass that exam, we don't get that position or we are no longer able to work - we feel we are nobody, we are ghost people.

When you only see people as ghost people and don't see the real human being, terrible things can happen. In South Africa the Reconciliation Commission demanded that the people who had tortured and killed the Black South Africans - and those who gave the orders for them to do these horrific acts – sit down with the victims or the families of the victims and really see them and hear what harm the results of their actions had caused to real people – not ghost people.

Like the disciples on the shore after the Resurrection, we gather to share a meal with Jesus. Bread is broken, and the Risen Lord is among us and again he turns to each one of us and asks each of us by name – Do you love me?

And when we answer, 'Lord you know all things, you know that I love you', and Jesus asks us to love the ghost people in our lives. To love the annoying people whose habits try my patience, to love the people who are difficult to communicate with, to love the lonely people it is easier to ignore.

And when we fail - and we do, and we will continue to fail - may we have the courage to try again.

Because we know that to Jesus we are never ghost people.

Jesus really sees each one of us,

*And loves us much, much more than we can ever imagine,
and will never stop loving us.*



Sister Lorna

Safeguarding

We finished our first article on Safeguarding with a few questions for you to ponder. I wonder how many of us have done so?

Have you asked yourself how you feel about Safeguarding?

Have you taken the time to look again at our Safeguarding Policies?

What do you do to implement them in your community, homes, schools and projects?

Have you asked yourself - Do I help to create a safe environment wherever I am? Is my community, home, school, project a Safe place for all who live in, or attend? How do I create a “Safe Space”?

Structure:

If you were asked, could you describe the actual structure of safeguarding within our Congregation?

Congregational Leader:

The Congregational Leader holds ultimate responsibility for Safeguarding throughout the Congregation. Some issues and cases can be dealt with at local level, but all major issues must be referred to her. She is kept updated on all issues pertaining to Safeguarding.

Congregational Safeguarding Coordinator:

A member of the Congregation is appointed to the post of Congregational Safeguarding Coordinator by the Congregational Leader and her Council. A summary of her duties is spelled out in the Congregational Safeguarding Policy. These include:

- **Reporting verbally and in writing to the Congregational Leader and her Council and Trustees on all matter pertaining to Safeguarding**
 - **Ensuring that appropriate policies are prepared and then approved**

by the Council and Trustees and also regularly reviewed and updated

- Having due regard for the Congregation policy on confidentiality by setting up and maintaining in Chigwell Convent appropriate systems for the secure storage of records (We have a Safeguarding Office in Chigwell, access to which is restricted).
- Liaising with the Congregational Link Coordinators throughout the Congregation
- Informing the Bursar, insurers and lawyers of any impending cases
- Ensuring that all members of the Congregation, staff and all those with access to our clients are properly vetted by the police in accordance with local safeguarding requirements

The above is an account of some of the Congregational Safeguarding Coordinator's responsibilities. Please see the policy for further details.

Link Coordinators:

In each area of the world where we operate a Safeguarding Link Coordinator is selected and approved by the Congregational Leader and her Council. Her duties are also in our Congregational Safeguarding Policy, page 23. The duties include:

- Hearing all safeguarding issues; recording and reporting; ensuring the secure storage of records and restricting access to those who have a right to such information
- Managing all cases and all associated documents and policies and ensuring that the documents are available to those who need to/are entitled to see them
- Conducting internal inquiries, ensuring confidentiality
- Passing on all safeguarding issues/concerns to the civil authorities and the Congregational Safeguarding Coordinator
- Ensuring that an annual review is carried out of the status of Sisters, staff and volunteers, and all with access to children and vulnerable people in the Congregation's care in the Link Coordinator's country

- Ensuring that all media statements and contact with the media is undertaken in consultation with Congregational Safeguarding Coordinator
- Being responsible for the training needs of the local Safeguarding Officers
- Visiting the projects/schools and making a report to the Congregational Safeguarding Coordinator

Local Safeguarding Officers:

The Local Safeguarding Officers are in each location in which the Congregation works to ensure the safety of all service users; to act as a designated officer for receiving initial reports of actual or suspected abuse; and to be the link between their location and the Link Coordinator. Their duties include the following:

- Raising awareness of what Safeguarding is
- Circulating all relevant material and information
- Ensuring that the contact details of the Link Coordinator and all civil authorities and organisations are widely publicised in an appropriate age and ability format (Please speed up the translations into local languages.)
- Being available to provide advise to all of the senior staff in our Services in their locality

Our Communities:

How do we implement Safeguarding in our Communities?

Unfortunately, abuse in Religious Communities is coming more to the fore at Religious Safeguarding meetings.

Do we respect each individual in our Community whatever their stage, Candidates, Novices, ALL professed Sisters? We are all answering the same 'CALL' to the same loving God in whose image we are all created. Abuse can be attitude, putting people down, verbal, silence, emotional, physical, financial, spiritual. If we are aware of someone being abused, either in the community or outside it, do we take action to stop it, or do

we collaborate with the abuser? If we are in a position of responsibility, do we use the power delegated to us to abuse others? If we are responsible for the finance of the community, do we distribute money fairly to meet the needs of each person?

Is Safeguarding part of our Formation Programme, starting with Candidacy and continuing in the Novitiate and into Professed life?

I leave you with a quote from a recent UISG Safeguarding Zoom meeting:

Unspoken Topics: Topics we never speak about in community - Abuse/Safeguarding .

People leave because of abuse, we blame them, not the perpetrator. Look at ourselves, what is happening with us?

Remember Pope Francis – ZERO tolerance for abuse.

Sister Angelo Roncalli – Congregational Safeguarding Coordinator





Sister Euphemia
(Mary Collins)
1918 ~ 1966

Sister Euphemia was the Head Teacher of our newly founded School in Lwitikila in the Northern Province in Zambia. She died in a car accident on the poor dirt roads while returning from Lusaka with teachers to start the new term. Sister Euphemia was buried in the school grounds and even though her grave was simple, she was never forgotten.

Last month several of the sisters travelled from the North and the South to give her a more dignified grave. Together with the LSMI Sisters, (who now administer the School) and Father Chomba, who knew Sister Euphemia well, attended a beautiful prayer service at the grave side .



**Sisters Muda, Comfort, Sylvia Luundu,
Christabel and Margaret Katabwa**



Here we see the LSMI Sisters Father Chomba and our own Sisters tending the grave. Sister Yvonne (wearing a cream blouse), and a wrap (as are all our Sisters) —this is traditional mourning wear and shows respect for the dearly departed.



The Sisters and Father Chomba placing candles around the new grave. The original gravestone has been preserved with the new marble stone placed on top.

Note; Sister Euphemia had a sister in the Congregation, Sister Brigid Collins (right). Sadly Sister Brigid also died tragically, in a fire in our House in Leyton (London) in 1975. She is buried in Leytonstone. May they both now rest in the peace of our Risen Lord.



Thank you Sister Maria Goretti



Sister Maria Goretti has been very involved with our Sacred Heart Companions movement for many years. She took over the role of Coordinator from Sister Mary Paul. When she was appointed to Scotland, Maria was indeed very involved with the Sacred Heart Companions there and still has contact with many of our Scottish Companions.

When she moved to Herne Bay, she continued to promote our Sacred Heart Companions and formed a very vibrant and enthusiastic group. I think it would be fair to say that Maria had a great passion and love for the Companions and what is more they all love her!

Sadly, there comes a time when we have to move on and perhaps look differently at how the Companions will continue in Herne Bay. While Maria will no longer be responsible for them, the Companions will continue in a

different way as individuals.

Because of the great contribution Maria has made to our Sacred Heart Companions it was felt that we wanted to thank her for the great work she has done to support our Companions over the years. On behalf of the Congregation and the Companions I thanked Sister Maria and gave her a little token of appreciation as well as a Mass for her intentions and a nice plant (which may find it's way to the garden).

As Sister Maria is no longer able to drive, we had a little ceremony of her handing over the keys of her car!

I am acutely aware that this is a very courageous discission for Maria to give up her car as well as not being responsible for the Companions.

Thank you, Maria, for the great example you are to us all. I ask the Lord to continue to bless you and please know how much we appreciate your wonderful example and enthusiasm.



Time to put her feet up? Well we all doubt that. But Sister Maria Goretti has the admiration of us all. Pictured here handing over her car keys to Sister Elizabeth Dawson with Sister Angela (Maria's own sister) looking on.



SEE WHAT'S GOING ON IN CEBU



Thanks Giving Mass for Sister Joyce With her family and friends in her hometown



Recollection for Staff and Sisters by Fr. Joseph, Missionary of Africa



Search-In Vocations—facilitated by Sr. Esther



SUGOD Group

(Surrender to God)
/narcotics anonymous



Home visits
during the
holidays





Open House at SPED Learning Center





DASIG Medical Mission



Aberdare; from the Archives

I am nearly sure that many of our present day Sisters will not associate the name of Aberdare (a small mining village in south Wales) with our Congregation. I have therefore decided to remind us all of a little of our history.

In the 1850's and 60's Catholics were a minority in Wales and mostly poor Irish immigrants seeking work in the coal mines. The first resident priest in Aberdare in 1866, Father Dawson who set to building the first Catholic church, St. Joseph's, with the help of one or two kind parishioners and in 1868 the church was completed.

In 1877 Father Armand Hamelin a 'genial little French Abbe' arrived and (I hope you are beginning to see connections to our own Congregation which only arrived in the UK a few years earlier).

Father Hamelin's dream was to have large convent in the parish and that same year an agreement was drawn up between himself and the Mother Superior of the Sisters in Homerton, London (with the approval of his Bishop) as follows:-

- ◇ The community undertakes to teach the Catholic Elementary schools at Aberdare, Mountain Ash and Hirwaun
- ◇ The community undertakes to provide at least two English speaking Sisters who, as well as assisting in the schools, should also, as far as possible, visit the poor and sick in their homes in the three districts mentioned.....
- ◇ The community undertake the Religious instruction of the children and will aid in all mission work. Also if wanted, they will undertake all kinds of instructions, night schools, industrial schools etc.....
- ◇ The sisters shall make no collection whatever among the people for their own benefit, or without the approval of the Priest.....
- ◇ All offerings received from benevolent friends shall be accounted for in the books of the community....
- ◇ The sisters shall give their services gratis to the poor and sick whom they may be called to attend But by no means shall they be obliged to attend:

- Confined women until the end of their confinement;
- Cases of syphilitic disease
- ◆ The sisters are under the jurisdiction and authority of the Bishop.....

(Note: There are many more details in the agreement, including financial support for the Sisters and the convent and with details of who is responsible for the upkeep and travel costs etc. even to burial arrangements)

This agreement was signed by Father Armand Hamelin in Aberdare on October 21st 1877.

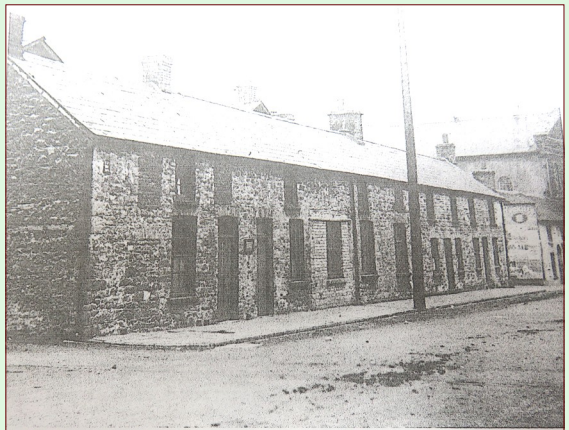
The first Sisters who arrived in the parish were those involved in nursing and visiting the poor sick. In 1881 The Bute Hospital was founded and supported by Lord Bute (a person with whom the Congregation collaborated for many years both in Wales and in Scotland).

The hospital was under the able nursing and untiring care of the Sisters. The Reverend Mother Anselm started the work of the hospital.

We know from our own records that in the 1881 census Sr. Gonzaga was registered a 'Novice resident' at the Pitt School,

Abergavenny. This same Sister Gonzaga went on to teach for nearly 25 years in Aberdare (arriving in 1885), she was Head Teacher for many of those years.

The sisters did outstanding work in the parish for some thirty years from 1881 to 1912. Usually five in number, they lived for some time in Glannant Street and then moved to the Cottage Hospital, nursing and also teaching in the school.



Aberdare Cottage Hospital (or Bute Hospital) Aberdare

A plaque on the wall of the Sacred Heart Chapel bears tribute to the work of one of the Sisters, the inscription is as follows: "The two windows of this Altar ere erected by the congregation of the church, in thanksgiving to almighty God, for the work of Sister Gonzaga in the school, church and mission during the 25 years from 1885 to March 1910."

In 1911 the new Roman Catholic Schools were opened by Bishop Hedley of Newport with Sister Gonzaga headmistress, the Parish priest and other local dignitaries. The new school was built at a cost of £1,700, Mr G. Kenshole was the architect.

Sister Gonzaga retired in 1915 and returned to Chigwell where she died on June 2nd 1922.



First catholic School, Elizabeth St. Aberdare



Sister Gonzaga entered the convent in Homerton in 1878 and professed first Vows in 1883. She had spent some time as a novice in the Pitt School, Abergavenny which is about 40 km from Aberdare and was resident there.

**St Margarets Catholic Church,
Aberdare**

Dates For your diaries

May 14th

Sister Pius , 90th Birthday

Marian House

May 18th

Sister Shiela - Profession of Final Vows
In Cebu

Sister Mary D . Is travelling to Cebu on the 15th and Sister Julie on the 11th, and will be happy to take small greetings, cards etc. with them

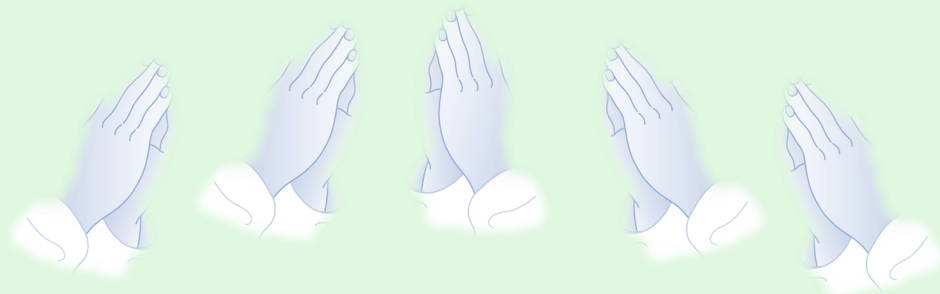
June 17th

Sisters Clara and Sylvia Mulenga -
Profession of Final Vows in Zambia

June 24th

Sister Annet - Profession of Final Vows
In Uganda

Sisters Elizabeth M. and Julie are travelling to Zambia and then on to Uganda at the beginning of June and will be happy to take small greetings, cards etc. with them.



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