

A New Mission Place

Tete, Mozambique

The opening of the Notre Dame mission in Tete, Mozambique sprang from the meeting of two desires, associated with the grace of God. On the one hand, the Bishop of Tete, Most Reverend Diamantino Guapo Antunes (IMC), dreamt of having women religious in his diocese who could help with the evangelization of his flock. On the other, the Sisters of Notre Dame wanted to extend their mission to yet another diocese now that the entry of young native women into the Congregation had made this expansion possible.

On February 11, 2021, the three Sisters arrived at Bairro Mateus Sansão Muthemba, Tete, MZ: Sister M. Leondira F. Lazaretti, Sister M. Domingas B. Benate, and Sister M. Aida M. Nhampenza to begin their ministry with the people, especially those belonging to St. Peter's Parish. The Bishop of Chimoio, Most Reverend João Carlos Nunes Hatoa, Sister M. Nilse Eidt, and Sister M. Lori Steffen accompanied the Sisters to the new mission. When the sisters arrived in Tete, they went to the Diocesan Curia. From there, Most Reverend Diamantino Guapo Antunes and Father Vital Conala, St. Peter's Parish priest, accompanied the sisters to Bairro Mateus Sansão Muthemba where a group of people from the local Catholic community, were awaiting the arrival of the new religious community.

The Bairro Mateus Sansão Muthemba is considered the poorest neighborhood in the Tete Province. It is very populous and has a significant number of minors linked to child labor and many other problems resulting from poverty. The residents come from different parts of the country, but mainly from the neighboring country, Malawi.

As soon as the Sister's house was organized and the Our Lady of Grace Community established, the Sisters began visiting the families, at the same time observing the restrictions imposed by the Corona virus. The sisters first introduced themselves, prayed with people, and asked: "What do you expect from the Sisters of St. Peter's Parish?" The main responses were: "Please, help us to raise our children; teach our girls how to do sewing, embroidery, and cooking; educate our children in our small school." The Sisters are gradually responding to the expectations of the families.

On Saturdays, the Sisters teach embroidery to two groups of girls. At the same time, they are making the necessary referrals to start classes at Mana Rosa School. Already 60 children have enrolled and the sisters are waiting for the government to allow classes in person, once the country's health crisis is controlled. Providentially, all the necessary documents for the opening of the school have already been obtained.

When visiting families, the Sisters assure the people that their home is always open for any need. They also provide the people with the telephone number so that they can contact them if necessary or to ask for prayers for any intention. The Sisters have also felt very welcome by the religious man and women of the diocese and by the people themselves. This was expressed in concrete ways, especially, by the generous donations and when the people say: "The Sisters have not yet visited my home!"

Another significant aspect related to this mission is that some native women have already entered the congregation from this diocese, sent by pastors who knew the Sisters of Notre Dame. Moreover, even though the Sisters have been in this diocese for only two months, several young women interested in entering religious life have been in contact with the sisters and, the sisters, have already visited their families.

May the presence of the Sisters of Notre Dame in this Diocese, their witness and apostolic service "assist our sisters and brothers to direct their lives to God in faith so that all may experience God's love" (Const. Art. 3).



Arrival of the Sisters of Notre Dame in Tete: February 11, 2021

From right to left: Sr. M. Lori Steffen, Sr. M. Aida Manuel Luís Nhampenza, Sr. M. Nilse Eidt, Rev. João Carlos Hatoa Nunes, Serafino Piras, Rev. Diamantino Guapo Antunes, IMC, Fr. Vital Conala, Sr. M. Leondira Fatima Lazaretti, Sr. M. Domingas Baptista Benate



The Tete community: Sr. M. Domingas B. Benate, Sr. M. Leondira Lazaretti, Sr. M. Aida Nhampenza



Visiting a family: Sr. M. Leondira Lazaretti, Sr. M. Aida Nhampenza, Sr. M. Domingas Benate



On the way to visit families

Sr. M. Domingas Benate (with the blue shirt, in the water)

Sr. M. Aida Nhampenza (With a mask)



Girls from the Parish learning embroidery

Sr. M. Domingas Benate (far left)

Sr. M. Aida Nhampenza (with the second group, green shirt)



On Palm Sunday, Mass was celebrated in the Sister's house. Mass was recorded and broadcast through the Diocese's radio station.