



## *From the Roof of Africa*



***Sisters of Notre Dame  
Holy Spirit General Delegation***

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***Jubilee Bells are ringing!***

### ***Mpala, Uganda***

The Notre Dame Education Center Mpala community was opened in 2009. There were two senior Sisters, Sister Maria Ruthilde Haferkamp from Germany and Sister Mary Regina Robbins from the USA. They had three lay workers. Two men worked as grounds men and gatekeepers and one woman who worked as a house keeper. As with most beginnings, it was hard and our Sisters needed more support in setting up the house. Sisters Mary Janet and Juliet Namata came to assist them. They helped with the kitchen set-up, making curtains, sorting keys and helping to form a homey community.



Hospitality marked the first weeks of the new convent. Many visitors from within and outside the country started flowing in. Rev. Fr. Richard Kayizi was so generous to our Sisters and was their tour guide in the area. In that same year, due to the illness experienced by Sister Mary Regina, she returned home to California. Sister Mary Colette came from Buseesa to oversee the building of a new big convent. In June of 2009, Sisters Mary Colette, Juliet Namata and Ruthilde became the Mpala community.



One of the reasons this property was purchased is because of its closeness to universities. This would become a house of studies for the students. Sisters Mary Immaculate and Mary Amony became the first students to be assigned to the Mpala Community. They both attended Uganda Martyrs University of Kisubi. Presently there are eight Sister students living in Mpala and attending various higher level educational institutions.

When this land was bought from Mr. Paulino Sseddugge it had two houses. The Sisters lived in his former house while the convent/ formation house was being built. In September 2010, though the entire structure was not complete, the Sisters were able to begin moving into the new convent. In 2010 the Sisters received the approval to have the Blessed Sacrament in the convent chapel and later the young women interested in religious life joined us and the formation house began.

Notre Dame Nursery School began in 2011. It is housed in the original two houses on the property. Sisters Mary Colette and Ruthilde were co-directors. Sister Mary Sunday and two other ladies were the teachers of 52 children. Sister Mary Tina became the Director in 2014. The school now has 225 students in nine classrooms.



Missioned to the Mpala Community at present are eleven Sisters including Sister Mary Prerna who is the Postulant Director for the eight postulants living with the community. Praise our good God for the blessings and growth that continues to happen in the fertile soil of Mpala. *By Sister Mary Tina Petrick, SND*

### **Simanjiro, Tanzania**



From the annals of Simanjiro we read: *The history of Notre Dame Osotwa Boma began much earlier than the actual date of inauguration which was June 16, 2012; let's begin there. Osotwa means perfect harmony. The word in Maasai language means the umbilical cord that unites the mother and the babe. Boma means the home of the Maasai people made in a circular shape using twigs and clay.*

*The Sisters of Notre Dame visited Simanjiro for the first time with Fr. Karduni, our assistant parish priest. Fr. Karduni wanted us to visit the Maasai area where he came from as the need for education was great. We expressed our desire to work with the Maasai people.*



*Rev. Fr. Tenges, the Vicar General of Arusha Diocese who is also a Maasai, accompanied us with Fr. Karduni to many areas where Maasai people are settled. We felt right at home soon after we reached Loiborsiret, Simanjiro. The people received us with warm hospitality. We saw children shivering in the severe cold with their thin Maasai blanket hanging around their necks. We encouraged the village community to make a classroom for the children. When we visited them again on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September, 2008, we were encouraged to see that they had started making a mud house as a classroom.*

*In June of 2009, Fr. Karduni accompanied Sisters Mary Sreeja, Shobana, Rashmi and Roshini to Emboret Parish and then to Irmangwa, Loiborsiret. Breakfast was arranged in the Area Officer's house in the traditional Maasai way with meat and milk. We were welcomed by a large crowd of people and a goat was slaughtered in our honour to express their acceptance and hospitality.*

*In March of 2010 we again visited the village to let the people know that we had the approval of Archbishop Lebulu to work with and among the people. In June of 2010 the Maasai Boma of Fr. Karduni's mother was arranged for the Sisters to stay as we prepared for the Day of the African Child. Sisters Mary Mukti, Rashmi and Magdalene Musila fixed the pictures of the Sacred Heart and one of Mary and put a cross in the house to give it a religious look. We also fixed a name board which said: Notre Dame Osotwa Boma. Needless to say the celebration of this day was well received.*

*In August of that same year we began our relationship with Mr. Ernst and Mr. Peter of the Dialog Projekt in Germany as they visited the site and began to make plans with the parish priest so that a convent could be built for the Sisters. We also established a relationship with Dr. Anita Boling from Village Network Africa (ViNA) to look into a water supply for the convent and school. So much happened over the next few years that it would be hard to capture everything.*



*When the New Year began in 2012, a meeting was held with the Elders to discuss the beginning of a nursery which presently was being held under the trees. By March 1 the Notre Dame Osotwa Nursery began with 25 children. What a historic day! We cannot begin to enumerate all the challenges Sisters Mary Rashmi and Susan met from the very beginning many delays, cancellations, breakdowns with vehicles, no water, land surveys and just the great cultural diversity. Not being able to have the Eucharistic celebration every day was also a challenge. Through it all, our Sisters had a tremendous amount of courage, patience and determination in beginning our ministry in Simanjiro.*

*When the Inauguration and Blessing took place on June 16th you can image the joy that was experienced by all. The blessing of Notre Dame Osotwa was truly an "Osotwa" (harmony) celebration. The little children presented an impressive programme.*





*We thanked the Good God who was present with us and in all that happened. The cooperation couldn't have been better. It was an assurance to us that it was God who called us here and God will continue to be with us. God be praised!*

### **Kiomboi, Tanzania**

As with Simanjiro, Kiomboi also had a history before the actual Inauguration Day on July 12, 2012. The annals state: *It all started with a question from Fr. Mrewma to Sisters Mary Celine and Jacinta who stopped at the Bishop's House on their way from Shinyanga to Arusha in May of 2010. When Fr. Mrewma met us and heard about our Congregation, he asked us, "Why don't you come to the Singida Diocese?"*



*On July 19, 2010 we were given an invitation from Bishop Rwoma Desiderius of the Diocese of Singida to begin a mission in his diocese. The people of the diocese approached the Bishop several times requesting for some Sisters for Kiomboi especially in the area of education. There were only four secondary schools in the entire diocese and we were being welcomed to develop activities there including an orphanage. The diocese was asking us to begin a secondary school as that was the great need. After discussions with the Bishop, the Sisters of Notre Dame indicated that they would begin with a nursery school and*

*build up the primary school first. We also saw that this was a good site to build the cottages we had hoped for so we could begin to accept girls living in difficult environments or whose parents had died from HIV/AIDS. The site was visited by Sister Mary Sreeja and it was Sister Mary Sujita, the Superior General at the time, who gave the permission to accept the invitation of the Bishop, which was the offer of land owned by the diocese and then to begin to make plans for our mission and ministry in Singida. Many meetings took place over the next few years and then a Memorandum of Understanding had been written, agreed upon, and signed on June 5<sup>th</sup> 2012.*



*Much happened between the years of 2010 and 2012, but what finally took place was the blessing of the convent we purchased and the school that had been built. Sisters Mary Kusum and Magdalene Mukonyo took much time and effort to make the plans for a wonderful celebration. The people could not have been more welcoming and generous in their gifts for the Sisters. Our school officially opened on January 23, 2013 with 55 students in Nursery 1 and 2. Sister Mary Christine was welcomed as the first Head Teacher, Sister Mary Magdalene Mukonyo as Teacher along with Ms. Salome Dulle and Sister Mary Kusum as Local Superior and Bursar. God has surely blessed this new beginning and this year 2017 we have up to Class 4 who took their first National Exam this month.*



*May God continue to bless all our efforts to proclaim God's goodness and provident care with and among God's people.*

### **Formators' Workshop**

"Called to be Joyful Witnesses" was the theme of the workshop for the Religious Formators of East Africa. It was held at Dimesse Sisters House of Spirituality in Kenya from 6<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017. The opening Liturgy was celebrated by Fr. Agbonkhianmeghe Orabator, S J. He emphasised the theme and challenged us to be martyr, model and medium. Different topics were addressed each day such as *The Influence of the secularism and its Impact on Religious Life in Africa Today, Christian Anthropology A Guiding Tool For Formators, The Role of the Holy Spirit in The Formation Ministry, Holistic Growth in Leadership and Conflict Management in Formation Houses*. These topics were presented by well qualified persons. We had time for personal reflection, sharing and clarifying some of our doubts and issues. It was a time to re-energize and refresh ourselves. We also met some of our classmates from our formators' course in Chemchemi. This workshop was attended by more than 120 formators working in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda. We are grateful to Sister Mary Roshini and the council for giving us this opportunity as part of our life-long learning in our ministry. We are also grateful to our Local Superiors and Sisters from our respective communities for taking care of our ministries in our absence.

May God bless you all. *By Sisters Mary Prerna, Immaculate and Susan, SND*

### **Special Classes in Uganda**

With great joy and pleasure, the pre-postulants and candidates from St. Julie Formation House in Buseesa, Uganda are happy to share with you the SND Fraternity. What Sister Ethel Maria taught us was a hidden treasure that we found in her teaching during her three-months stay with us in Uganda. In her joyful and simple way she proclaimed to us God's goodness and provident care through the scriptures. She helped us understand St. Julie's Motto "Oh how good is the good God" by helping us move into a deeper personal encounter with the Word of God.

Moved by the power of the Holy Spirit, Sister Ethel Maria demonstrated to us in a practical way the stories in the Bible using some materials she had prepared. Sometimes she used music and often we danced and had fun in the class. We met the prophets, apostles and other holy people who were inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit under the influence of God; she read, narrated and acted the Bible stories to us. It was real; we felt the freshness of the scriptures being revealed to us. In brief she taught us the following stories in the Bible: From the Old Testament, she began with the first creation story where God created the universe by *word*, while by *action* in the second creation story and all the details that entailed the whole creation. It enabled us to contemplate the wonder and the beauty of creation.

She continued with Gen 3: 1-7 Roots of Evil, Gen 4: 1-16, A drama between the brothers Cain and Abel, Gen 6:9-22, the just man (Noah) who saves the living, and the story of Abraham from Genesis Chapter 12. In the story of Exodus which explains how God called Moses and sent him to save the Israelites from slavery, we learned how to have complete trust and faith in God, coupled with virtues such as obedience, humility and forgiveness. We saw God's mighty power and how God exults the lowly and the humble, not the proud hearted.



From the New Testament: she explained about the four evangelists who wrote the Gospels, the years when the gospels were written, why the similarities and differences in the gospels appear and their main messages. She focused on each author in the gospels and how each gospel is relevant to the African Culture. She spoke about the parables, their meaning and why Jesus used to teach people in parables, how parables are useful in the present day and we were inspired to write our own parables that would fit our present day situation.

Sister went ahead to teach us the Lord's Prayer and how Jesus teaches us to glorify and praise God, forgive self and others and to offer our needs to our loving Father. She taught us about Church History and the Reformation and how, when, and why the Great Schism happened i.e the separation of the Eastern Church from the Western Church, separation of Martin Luther from the Catholic Church and the forming of the Lutheran Church, and the separation of King Henry VIII from the Catholic Church leading to the beginning of the Anglican Church.

Besides our classes, we enjoyed many social moments with Sister Ethel Maria. Sister had the enthusiasm to learn many domestic chores, she was taught how to dig, weed and harvest crops from the garden. We shared meals together and she learned how to eat different kinds of Ugandan food and how to prepare them such as peeling Matooke and cassava, shelling ground nuts, etc. Together we visited the people in the villages and she was warmly welcomed. Sister participated in traditional dances and we had fun together.

Many thanks to you Sister Ethel Maria for your total self-giving in sharing your knowledge and skills with us. We are grateful for your willingness to come to Africa as part of your experience of "Sisters Without Borders" and to our Congregational Leadership in Rome for providing this opportunity. Abundant blessings to you and to our Sisters in Germany who made it possible for you to come and share your life experience. We look forward to your return!!!!  
By Sister Mary Immaculate, SND



### First Parish Youth Camp



After much planning with our Parish Priest, Fr. Anto, CMI, the CMI Brothers and Sisters Mary Jescah and Winfred Mbatha, our First Parish Youth Camp began taking shape. Children were invited from the ages of 10-17 for one week beginning November 11-18, 2017 and a second gathering for another group from November 15-December 2<sup>nd</sup>. At first only about 50 children and youth registered, but by the end we were over 100. What a blessing to be one of the facilitators of the programme. The opening of the week-long camp was held in the school hall with an opening Mass celebrated by Fr. Anto. The theme chosen was Vibgyor: Seven colours of the rainbow-violet, indigo, blue, green, yellow, orange and red.



The enthusiasm and responses of the children and youth gave us motivation. The sessions for each day were well-planned with presentations from resource persons including Sister Mary Jescah, myself and some youth. Sessions began at 9:0 A.M. and ended at 4:00 P.M. each day. At the end of the day, the CMI Brothers who were involved, the youth coordinators and the two of us Sisters had an evaluation to see how we can improve or make the next day better. This really helped to improve our sessions, games and other areas. Some of the topics were friendship with God, Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Humanity, Vocation and other careers, Discipline and Time Management, Social responsibility for the needy, prayer, Mary as our Model, sexuality, drug abuse, and more.



A special booklet had been prepared for the children and youth with the meaning of the colours, the schedule, songs they can sing and an explanation of the topics for each day. Our youth cooperated so well in bringing different types of games for each day and following this, the children had to share what they learned from the game relating to the sessions of that day. The success of the seven days camp experience was because of the hard work of the CMI Brothers, our resource presenters, the Sisters of Notre Dame and the whole-hearted participation of the children and youth. It was indeed a good experience of planning, interacting and learning and I am grateful for the experience.

*By Sister Mary Winfred Mbatha, SND*

### ***Congratulations!***

At the time of this printing, the results for the Kenya National Primary Exam were announced and our CMI Mt. Sinai School did so well. Hearty congratulations to Sisters Mary Aruna, Kellen and Sicholastica Marie and all the teachers for a job well done!

### ***Thank you to Shobha as part of newsletter team***

*Our dear Sister Mary Shobha will be returning to India at the end of December. She has been so active and instrumental in proof-reading these newsletters and making such a positive contribution to them. We want to thank her in a special way and express our appreciation for the gift she has been to our delegation and to the "newsletter team." May God bless you dear Sister and bring you back to Africa as God wills. On another note, look forward to our last issue for this year in December when we will highlight our Silver Jubilee celebration in Arusha, Tanzania. A blessed Advent to everyone!*