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Our Lady's Missionaries
CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF MISSION



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Our thanks for your gifts

We, the members of Our Lady's Missionaries, are totally dependent on the support of family, friends, and other benefactors. We are always grateful for your thoughts and prayers and for the monetary donations we receive from estates, donations in lieu of flowers at the time of a death, parish collections, the Catholic Women's League and Ladies' Guild annual donation, and from you who send personal contributions. All donations are tax deductible.



By Sr. Frances Brady, O.L.M.

Anniversaries are often special moments in time when we look back at the past, become more consciously aware of the present, and speculate with a mixture of hope and uncertainty about the future. This seems to be true for Our Lady's Missionaries as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the congregation.

Looking back with gratitude at the missions and ministries of the past 60 years and the many people with whom we shared the challenges and accomplishments, joys and sorrows, we realize how much has changed during that time.

The world has become a global, multicultural community. The positive effects of globalization allow us to know people of all cultures better. At the same time we see how the negative aspects of globalization help us to oppress one another and the earth. We now recognize that inclusiveness and respect for all, regardless of race, religion, and gender, are urgent goals although sadly not yet a reality.

The natural world is no longer something we can take for granted as being available for our use and misuse. Gradually and too slowly we are accepting the fact that the environment has been badly damaged, that we humans are responsible, and that we have to live differently or we will not survive as a species.

Taking a close look at the present, we have to be aware of how different the world of 2009 is from that of 1949, our congregation's founding year, and to realize how much Our Lady's Mis-

sionaries has been changing with it. The articles in this magazine will give some indication of the development of our ministries to include, for example, interfaith dialogue, environmental programs, ministry to people with HIV / AIDS, as well as the ever present victims of economic poverty and injustice. The changes so obvious now have been gradual, in response to the needs of the times, aided by a post Vatican II understanding of the meaning of mission. And, for our Sisters, along with much of the population of the Western world, the reality of increased age has had some concrete and practical consequences as well.

And what about the future? Will our past experience help us to have a hope-filled influence on the coming years? Never really sure what lies ahead, will we, with the grace of God and support of one another, welcome new situations as opportunities to respond with faith and generosity?

Our Lady's Missionaries hope to celebrate our 60th anniversary with gratitude to God for past blessings, conscious acceptance of present challenges, and a resolve to live in a way that will contribute to the continuing growth of the kin-dom of God.∞

Our thanks to Kathy Gillis, editor of Scarboro Missions magazine, and to Sisters Marie Clarkson and Patricia Kay who worked to prepare this issue. We are deeply grateful for the friendship and support of everyone at Scarboro Missions and for all of you who have encouraged and supported us for the past 60 years.



L-R: Sr. Odelia O'Shea and Sr. Mary Ida MacCormack, CSJ.

Tribute to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto

As we celebrate our 60th Anniversary, Our Lady's Missionaries look back with gratitude to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto and their immense contribution to our community's foundation. In 1949, they missioned Sr. Odelia O'Shea and Sr. Mary Ida MacCormack to Alexandria, Ontario, to begin the religious formation of young women for the fledging congregation. In 1962, Sr. Odelia was named co-foundress of Our Lady's Missionaries because the life and spirit of the new community had been developed around her. And throughout these 60 years, the Sisters of St. Joseph have sustained their interest and support of Our Lady's Missionaries.∞

Sr. Patricia Kay, O.L.M.

Dear friend of Scarboro Missions, Please remember us with your prayers and financial support so that we may witness to the Gospel overseas and in Canada. We will continue to be good stewards of all your gifts as we put ourselves at the service of others. Thank you for your faithfulness and generosity.



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Radiant sparks of God

By Sr. Therese MacDonald, O.L.M.

During our fall season, Our Lady's Missionaries was blessed with a short study on Hildegard of Bingen led by Sr. Betty Lou Knox of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Two of the quotes referred to by Sr. Knox were especially meaningful to me. They were from Gloria Durka's book, *Praying with Hildegard*: "Living creatures are, so to speak, sparks from the radiance of God's brilliance and these sparks emerge from God like the rays of the Sun," and "There is no creature without some form of radiance."

Many years ago in our novitiate, we learned several proofs of the existence of God from the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. Now I'm aware of many more. Some of my working years both in Canada and in Brazil were spent nursing in hospital maternity departments. Thus, I often observed a mother's radiant glow as I placed her newborn in her arms. It mattered not, if this woman was very rich or, as was more frequently the case, destitute. This must be what Hildegard says is a glimpse of the radiance of God and it was even more than a spark—it was a fire.

Life brings changes and I was called to take on other roles. Still God's brilliance shone out to me, only now in different ways: from the view of the mountains of Ceara in Brazil; from the gift of a blender so that I could treat myself to tropical drinks; from people accepting me in spite of my weaknesses; from satis-



Retreat day for Our Lady's Missionaries last fall at their Motherhouse in Toronto. L-R standing: Sisters Marie Clarkson, Joan Missiaen, Elaine MacInnes, Mary Hughes, Rosemary Hughes, Patricia Kay, Susan Moran, Gwen Legault, Frances Brady. L-R seated: Sisters Christine Gebel, Cecile Turner, Rosemarie Donovan, Pauline Doherty, Noreen Kearns, Doris MacDonell, Therese MacDonald.

fied guests when I served an appetizing meal; from my many friends who cheered me up when times were hard; from those impossible school children who so much enjoyed my English classes and sometimes learned nothing; from a medical student who sought my help in diagnosing an infrequently seen illness; or, as bookkeeper for our congregation, from a now balanced page of an accounting book. These and many more instances were not just little sparks—to me they were fires.

I am now, like so many of Our Lady's Missionaries, at that stage in life when recalling memories takes up a lot of time. However, sparks still fly out, even as I sit at a community

meeting and am distracted from the topic of who will coordinate the next feast-day meal. I glance around the room and see the sparks there: from Marie's love of beauty, Susan's solidarity with the homeless, Pauline's journey with illness, Frances's words of wisdom, Rosemarie's compassion, Christine's youthfulness, Patricia's shared knowledge, Myra's joy, Joan's caring, Noreen's administration, Gwen's welcome, Mary's maturity, Rosie's computer skills, Elaine's embracing of God's stillness, Cecile's mercy, Doris's good nursing care, and Norma's acceptance.

But there are even more sparks flying about. Casey, our pussycat, enters the room. She teaches me how

"There is no creature without some form of radiance."

Hildegard of Bingen

I could be loved and still be very independent. She will do whatever she feels like—isn't that a spark to contend with? That beautiful floral bouquet on the table brings life, perfection, colour, and in inanimate speech says, "I'm here to bring you joy and beauty." The candle beside it, speaks to me, "I am the light of the world." The paintings on the wall are themselves different messages from God and show the creativity of some not-well-known artist. The comfortable furniture constructed by someone, somewhere, is a gift from God that allows me to sit and enjoy music from some of civilization's best known and loved musicians. From the vantage point of my chair, I look out the picture window and see the seasons in full array: new life in spring, fullness of life in summer, life's rewards in autumn, or the soft, white beauty of winter. I see these sparks creating a great blaze.

Jesus tells us in the Gospel of Luke (7:21), "the Kingdom of God is among you." Can Our Lady's Missionaries experience this mystery in their golden years while mourning the closing of a dearly loved mission? To answer, I borrow from Barack Obama's acceptance speech on election night 2008 in Chicago. "Yes we can!"

You might say I'm a dreamer

By Sr. Christine Gebel, O.L.M.

Sixty years ago, Our Lady's Missionaries was founded on a dream. Over the years, the elemental pieces of the dream have remained the same: the bringing to birth of the kin-dom of justice, peace, freedom, and love. Yet, the dream has grown and expanded to meet the challenges of new times, becoming ever more inclusive and universal.

Like our founder, each OLM Sister and Associate is propelled by the dream, and each one has her own unique way of living it out. These days I find myself in Canada once again. What has happened to my dream of being a missionary? I suppose that other OLMs are asking themselves this same question, particularly those who have returned to Canada now that they are growing older.

However, when I look around at the OLMs in Toronto, I see every single one continuing to live mission. After years of dedicated work with dear friends in various well-loved little corners of the world, I see the Sisters turning that fierce love towards new friends in new places. Physical energy may have waned to some extent, but the dream remains strong and vibrant.

Sr. Frances Brady and I have become involved in a group called Ecologos. The dream of this marvelous group is of a society that is ecologically viable, economically vital, and socially just. The goal of Ecologos is to bring this about through a five-step experiential learning process called Image Shifting. Image Shifting makes use of the head and the heart with the hope that in turn, hands, and feet cannot help but move to make a difference. Ecologos has also partnered with another group, The Pachamama Alliance, which has developed a symposium called "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream." Both of these groups are about coming together, not just to dream, but to make our dreams reality.

Our level of involvement in these two groups is not great, but we do try to be a supportive presence and to help out in our own small ways. It seems to me that what is most important of all is the coming together; coming together to talk, dream, and make a plan of action – this encourages me and enlivens me to carry on, as I realize that even though some may say I'm just a dreamer, I'm not the only one.

For more information on Ecologos, The Pachamama Alliance, and the symposium "Awakening the Dreamer, Changing the Dream", visit: www.ecologos.ca, www.pachamama.org, and awakeningthedreamer.org



Sisters Frances Brady and Christine Gebel (left and right) with Bonnie and Dave Collacutt at the Awakening the Dreamer symposium. Toronto.



Winter months call us forth. Sr. Cecile Turner and I (left and right, with Sr. Susan Moran, centre) venture out each Monday to join the many committed volunteers at St. Brigid's parish Out of the Cold program in Toronto. At times there are up to 125 guests for a hot dinner and overnight shelter. It is a blessing and a privilege to share stories and life with our guests.
Sr. Joan Missiaen, O.L.M.



Blessings

By Sr. Gwen Legault, O.L.M.

Much like music, a trip home for me is a beautiful connection with peoples, cultures, experiences, and memories. It has the ability to place me in the present moment or bring back the past.

That is how I felt during a recent trip home to Crysler, a tiny village on the Nation River, between Ottawa and Cornwall. In spite of the record-breaking frigid weather and a serious bus strike in Ottawa, connecting with family, friends, and places was a good way to begin another year.

Stopovers in Belleville and Alexandria, Ontario, are very significant in my life, allowing me to reconnect with people and places from my younger days. In Belleville is the School for the Deaf where I trained as a teacher of the deaf. Alexandria is my home diocese where I entered Our Lady's Missionaries in 1957, the year that our founder Fr. Dan Macdonald died. A visit of gratitude to his humble gravesite recalls memories of visiting Penny McIntosh long before I dreamed of becoming a missionary. Penny was one of the first to join Our Lady's Missionaries and was missioned in Nigeria where before long it became clear that she had cancer. She returned to Canada and died shortly after at the age of 33, on May 18, 1961.

Responding to my missionary call has offered the gracious gift of sharing life with the people of Mexico and Nigeria, completely diverse cultures but both with a population of deaf children waiting to be educated. How lucky I was to have acquired the necessary skills to respond to these children's needs and to work with people who are now carrying on what I began.

Now I'm doing volunteer work in Toronto, one of the most multicultural cities in the world. I find myself looking for those who are from Mexico or Nigeria, and I meet them at Providence Healthcare and at Becoming Neighbours, the Joint Apostolic Ministry for refugees and newcomers formed by religious congregations.

Working with these new friends, I'm inspired to continue to try to live a life of compassion, hope, and healing. They are truly blessings for me. They place me in the moment and bring me back to the past.∞

Sacred circles

By Sr. Myra Trainor, O.L.M.

In 1857, the Sisters of St. Joseph opened the House of Providence, a place of welcome for immigrants, orphans, widows, and the sick. Today, Providence Healthcare provides rehabilitation and continuing care, long-term care, and community outreach support programs. As a volunteer visiting the sick in residence, most of whom are advanced in years, I notice the many photos in their rooms, photos that hold sacred memories of more vibrant days. There are images of family celebrations and reunions, awards from working days, and blessings from the Holy Father. These displays make our sharings easy and meaningful.

Another aspect of my ministry also involves photographs. I am privileged to classify and preserve the photos in the archives for Our Lady's Missionaries. These photos speak of the energy of some 60 years as a missionary community.

There are pictures of community life, religious professions, departures to mission, and work on mission. Precious to our collection are our mentors and teachers, Sr. Odelia and Sr. Mary Ida of the Sisters of St. Joseph. In 1949, these Sisters risked leaving their own community for a time in order to teach and model religious life to Our Lady's Missionaries, a new congregation founded by Fr. Dan Macdonald for mission in other lands. It was indeed a challenge for them.

It is with gratitude after many years in mission that I find myself once again connected to the St. Joseph Sisters and their rich heritage.

As T.S. Eliot wrote in *The Dry Salvages*, "What we call the beginning is often the end and to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from."∞



Participating in the Peace Garden gathering are L-R: Anne Leonard; Our Lady's Missionaries Sisters Susan Moran and Christine Gebel; Rev. Derek MacLeod, his wife Catherine and their children; former homeless man, Ed; and Good Shepherd Brother Tom Wiss. Nathan Phillips Square, Toronto. October 2008.

Thanksgiving

By Sr. Marie Clarkson, O.L.M.

The breath of life is mine. This surely must be a thanksgiving day. For those of us who can draw a breath, every day is Thanksgiving Day. For those of us who have clean water, nourishing food, and a roof over our heads, the call for thanksgiving is more powerful. We know in our heart of hearts that all people deserve these necessities of life and we want this for all. Such was the motivating force that spurred Sr. Susan Moran to call us to prayer in Toronto's Peace Garden; the name alone enticing us there.

This is the conviction and perhaps need that drew like-minded people to gather in thanksgiving last October at this memorial to peace located in Nathan Phillips Square. There were former homeless folk like Ed who pointed to a spot near City Hall claiming it as his home of several years but thankfully no more. Also joining in testimony and thanksgiving were Fr. Jon Hansen from St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Good Shepherd Brother Tom Wiss, Presbyterian Rev. Derek MacLeod with his children and wife Catherine, soon to deliver their third child; members of Our Lady's Missionaries and others from various walks of life such as author Joy Kagawa and businessman David Walsh. Throughout the ceremony, there was a palpable spirit of gratitude and resolve to make the world a better place for all.

We began with a hymn proclaiming that God hears the cry of the poor, but I will end with the words of Bishop Desmond Tutu, which were spoken at our ceremony. When asked what he prays for, Bishop Tutu replied: "Goodness, compassion, gentleness, a happy world for everyone where we recognize that we are one family, and that some parts of the family may be well to do, and other parts of the family not so well to do, but we seek to redress those imbalances. And I think that that is God's dream." Each of us who gathered in thanksgiving in the Peace Garden could do so because God's dream of a happy world for all is our dream as well.∞



L-R: Author Joy Kagawa, local businessman David Walsh, and Fr. Jon Hansen at the Peace Garden gathering.



L-R: Zoe Papathanasakis, Sr. Joan Missiaen, Sarah Papathanasakis, Alexis Ormonde and Sr. Susan Moran. After personal grief and with a desire to celebrate Christmas Day in a new way, Zoe, Sarah, and Alexis, neighbours of Our Lady's Missionaries, enquire about giving of themselves at Out of the Cold, a ministry to the homeless poor.

God's blessing to Our Lady's Missionaries is the gift of the poor and those who live in poverty. With these sisters and brothers, and all of creation crying out in suffering and death, we are united in deepest solidarity with the crucified Christ.

This is God's greatest gift to me as I journey with the homeless of Toronto. My hope lies in the belief that we shall all rise in Christ's resurrection of love and peace.

Sr. Susan Moran, O.L.M.

Friend to Our Lady's Missionaries

By Sr. Elaine MacInnes, O.L.M.

About eight years ago, at 12:15 on a hot summer's day, I was arriving home at Our Lady's Missionaries' central house on Leander Court in Toronto when I noticed a cab sitting at the curb. When he saw me, the cab driver jumped out of the car and came forward. "Are you Sr. Elaine MacInnes?" he asked. "Yes," I said. "Then you should be ashamed of yourself. I was told to be here at 11:45 to take you to the CTV studios for you to be on the air at one o'clock."

He would not let me take the time to change my clothes or gather other props I felt I might need, and off we went. On arrival, I was met at the door, quickly escorted to a room to be registered, and then more quickly passed through the make-up room where someone ran a brush through my hair, dabbed my face with some cosmetic, and pushed me through another door.



Mary Ito and Sr. Elaine MacInnes.

There sitting before the microphone, looking charming, cool, and collected, was the well-known hostess and interviewer, Mary Ito. She motioned that we were on the air, and seeing she was Japanese I said, "Konnichiwa!" (Hello).

"Konnichiwa" was her quick reply, which was immediately followed

by "and don't say another word in Japanese Sister, because I won't know how to respond." We both laughed.

And so I met Mary Ito. This was my first public appearance in Canada, for I had been abroad for 42 years. Mary went through all these years with me. What a public relations gift. I discovered she knew all about my mission in Japan where I taught violin at a Culture Centre and also studied Zen meditation under the Buddhist Sisters in Kyoto. She questioned me about the 17 critical years I was in the Philippines. I was first involved in animal husbandry in Southern Leyte. I then went on to Manila in 1986 when the revolution was brewing and taught meditation to a group of political prisoners. Seeing the inmates change from a discouraged group to one of purpose and enterprise opened up a whole new possibility for mission work.

From there I moved on to England for 10 years. As Director of the Prison Phoenix Trust in Oxford, I endeavoured to put into action what I had learned in the Philippine prison—that inmates can change with the help of yoga and meditation, two ancient disciplines.

When I left England, the Prison Phoenix Trust had meditation groups in 86 prisons all over the UK and Northern Ireland. I had even given workshops in the infamous Maze Prison, which from 1976-2000 held prisoners from the Northern Ireland Troubles.

Mary Ito's compassion made her a superlative interviewer and publicist for the difficult and misunderstood type of prison ministry I was trying to do. Since our interview, she has followed my wanderings over the



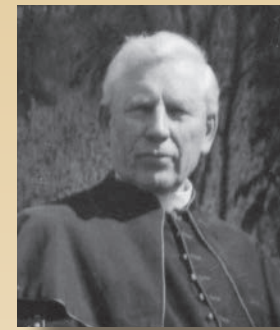
Our Lady's Missionaries Associates (L-R) Maria Teresa (Mina) Velasco, Monica Donovan, Gloria (Goya) Caronan, and Gemma Labitan (below).

Associates share in the life and spirit of the OLM community through prayer, liturgy, and celebration. In their commitment to our mission, they also participate in or support our local ministries. This OLM spirit inspires all aspects of their daily lives.



years, rejoiced when I was made an Officer of the Order of Canada, and had me on her program on one of my return trips home. After one broadcast, Mary and her staff surprised me with a splendid birthday party.

Mary always seemed to know what the public knew or didn't know, and could guide my work and thinking into appropriate action. She has taken great interest in *Freeing the Human Spirit* (www.freeingthespirit.com), an organization that I began and one that is a replica of my work in England. It now demands much of my time and energy. I have always felt Mary to be a silent friend to all those incarcerated, and since our first meeting that hot summer day, she has proved to be a great friend to Our Lady's Missionaries.∞



LETTER TO OUR FOUNDER, MSGR. DAN MACDONALD

Dear Father Dan:

Happy 60th celebration!

It has been 53 years since you bid us farewell at the Montreal Airport when Our Lady's Missionaries set off for Japan, our first overseas mission. Your dream had become a reality as you murmured, "Deo Gratias" (Thanks be to God).

Over the years the Good News has reached many parts of our world. I feel privileged and humbled to have been part of this reality, and I thank you Father Dan. My 60 years as a member of Our Lady's Missionaries has made life rich and fulfilling as I shared life with people of various cultures. How they inspired me as we grew to love one another while together we tried to understand and live out the Good News.

I remain ever grateful to our families and to the many persons who have continued to support and encourage us to make your dream an active reality all through these years.

May our daily community prayer help us to be what you had envisioned for each of us: "Like Mary may we be women of faith, truly grateful for all we have received and full of hope for the future."



Affectionately,
Sr. Noreen Kearns, O.L.M.

"Mary will show you how to bring Christ to the world."

Fr. Dan Macdonald



Our Lady's Missionaries leaving for Japan, their first overseas mission, on October 21, 1956. Founded in 1949 in Alexandria, Ontario, Our Lady's Missionaries relocated to Toronto in 1959. The group receives members universally, who participate fully in the life and mission of the Congregation and the Church. In 1957, another mission was opened in Nigeria. As requests came from various countries, missions were opened in Mexico, the Philippines, Brazil, and England. Short term support work has also been provided in Vietnam, Thailand, Mozambique, the Canadian North, and East Timor.

Reflections on the life of Father Dan

By Sr. Therese MacDonald, O.L.M.

Mystery probably abounds in most of our lives. Fr. Dan was no exception. Most octogenarians, when that inner voice seems to be calling them to do something, silence the voice with, "I'm too old to do that," or "I've had no experience doing those things, and it's too late to learn now," or "It's a great idea, but not for me at this stage of my life."

But Fr. Dan did not dismiss the genie so easily. To found a new religious community in 1949 would require the following: firstly, a number of young Canadian women with many possibilities for their lives, yet willing to enter a congregation founded by a very old man, with practically no support; secondly, permission from Church authorities in Ottawa and in Rome; thirdly, an established religious congregation that would be willing to train these heroic applicants; and fourthly—probably the most difficult of all—financial resources sufficient to house, feed, and in some cases educate these Sisters in training for several years. If no one else would take on this responsibility for the Canadian Church, Fr. Dan would. The challenges did not daunt him. As a person in his 80s, his Yes was a bit of a mystery, to say the least.

The poet Robert Browning answers some of my questions when he writes that all life is somewhat of a preparation for a person's final years. Although founding Our Lady's Missionaries was not Fr. Dan's only claim to fame, it is maybe what he is best known for today. How did his early life prepare him for this task? He was born into a family with a mother who would not have had the final say, but



Grow old along with me!
The best is yet to be,
The last of life, for which the
first was made:
Our times are in His hand
Who saith "A whole I planned,
Youth shows but half; trust
God: see all, nor be afraid!"
Robert Browning

who was very much needed by the members of the household. Hence, in his mind, women were a vital presence in the family, and therefore also a vital presence in the Church.

After ordination, he went into parish work. From that day almost until his death, his youngest sister, Agnes,

gave up all other offers in life and took care of him. He was pastor of the parish of St. Margaret of Scotland in the Diocese of Alexandria, Ontario, from 1906 to 1940. This experience taught him administration, especially handling of finances and obtaining qualified personnel, both helpful skills in setting up Our Lady's Missionaries. He gave great credit to the Sisters of Providence who gave him invaluable assistance in his parish. As he himself needed the help of Sisters in the life of a church, he believed most parish priests would feel likewise.

The work of foreign missionaries fascinated him and although he had very little personal money, he financed the education of a seminarian in Africa. This priest corresponded with Fr. Dan for years and gave him a lifelong interest in the missions. With the growth of Monsignor Fraser's Scarboro Missions, Fr. Dan questioned why he could not do something similar.

Do you not agree that in Fr. Dan's life the best was reserved for his 80s? He recommended as a motto for his new congregation this quotation from Revelations 21:5, "Behold I make all things new!" The Canadian Church was made richer by the founding of Our Lady's Missionaries. He lived to see his work completed; the first Sisters left for Japan in October 1956. Then in his own words, he "shuffled off" a few months later. Fr. Dan died on January 11, 1957. In his 80s, he had said Yes to the mysterious dance of life and saw his dream fulfilled.∞

MEMORIES OF FATHER DAN

To meet Fr. Dan, the person that many of us met in the early 1950s, was to meet a person who radiated strong emotions. He was either happy—with a boyish glint in his eye and an amazing energy in his step, the cane barely touching the ground as he pranced up the steps of Immaculata House in Alexandria—or he was sad. His sadness did not originate within himself but was born of some difference of opinion about something to do with "My Sisters."



If any one of us had had the misfortune to think she was not loved in her past, there was no doubt after having entered Our Lady's Missionaries. Fr. Dan had a very special love for each of us.

He thought we were "the very berries" and often to our embarrassment he let others know this. Sr. Odelia and Sr. Mary Ida of the Sisters of St. Joseph were "privileged," he said, to be our mentors. As were the Hotel Dieu Sisters in Cornwall, the directors and supervisors of the hospital, who taught us nursing. Fr. Dan had priorities, and we were his.

His courage and his capacity to dream in his 80s, were the gifts of the Spirit that he modeled for me, and which amazed and inspired me in the 1950s as I looked towards my future as a missionary. Over the years, that Spirit has been my strength. I am grateful to God who gave Fr. Dan the inspiration and courage to found Our Lady's Missionaries.∞

Sr. Clarice Garvey, O.L.M.

It was December 1955. I was 18 years old and had entered a missionary order because I heard that they lived in an ordinary house on an ordinary street and would one day be sent to what I thought of as a mission country. But for now I was a postulant in Our Lady's Missionaries in Alexandria, Ontario. All I felt was that it was a long way from my prairie home in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.



As a postulant it was an honour and a privilege, as well as a usual assignment, to cook and serve our founder Fr. Dan his breakfast in the parlour after Mass. Since Fr. Dan had an illness making swallowing difficult, it was also not unusual for him to be upset and displeased with the food as well as with the server. So it was with fear and trepidation that I would enter the parlour with my painstakingly prepared breakfast tray often to leave with at least a red face.

But this is not the end of that story. Monsignor Dan, so frail and elderly, would invariably call me back and apologize. This shattered my idea of greatness or should I say changed it. When I face my own weaknesses and foibles, which try as I may I cannot hide, this memory helps me to trust that God's goodness can shine through me as it did in so many ways through him. It also gives me my unique bond with Fr. Dan.∞

Sr. Marie Clarkson, O.L.M.

For some time in the late 1940s I had been discerning my future and had spoken with one of the Redemptorist priests in my parish in Saint John, New Brunswick. He suggested I make a retreat that was taking place at Villa Madonna, the renewal centre of the Diocese of Saint John.



I followed his advice and booked my attendance. There I met two young women who were doing the same discernment. To our surprise, Fr. Dan, having been contacted by our pastor, showed up at the Retreat Centre and met with each of us. He was looking for young women to join his new missionary congregation. A year later he was waiting for me when I arrived at the train station in Alexandria, Ontario, to take me to Immaculata House to begin the long road to becoming a missionary.∞

Sr. Mona Kelly, O.L.M.





Celebration

Sr. Suzanne Marshall with Doofan and baby Emmanuel. Vandeikya, Nigeria

By Sr. Suzanne Marshall, O.L.M.

December is a busy month for us here in Vandeikya with World AIDS Day celebrated on the first and World Disabled Day on the third. For many years now the AIDS counselors who work with people both infected with and affected by HIV (clients, families, orphans, volunteers), and the Primary Health Care staff, organize a week of activities to mark both events in the town and surrounding villages where home-based care is established.

The big celebration for the disabled was held at St. Joseph's Rehabilitation Centre with wheelchair races for both women and men taking place the day before. About 300 disabled people with their families and friends came to the Centre. It was a great party and one that spoke volumes about the capacity of children and adults with serious disabilities to come together and really celebrate.

For me it was a deeply moving experience. The disabled ranged in age from infants to seniors. Many came in wheelchairs, many more on

crutches or using canes. Some were blind. One baby with no hands and only one foot was obviously the joy of her mother who held her proudly.

Other disabled persons who had heard about the celebration came for the first time, some crawling through the gates on hands and knees. All were determined to join St. Joseph's Association for the Disabled where, hopefully, they would be helped with obtaining a wheelchair or with other needs.

Most of the nine staff who work at St. Joseph's Rehabilitation Centre have some physical disability and some have received their education, including skills training, through the Centre, so they are happy to be able to contribute to improving the situation of their brothers and sisters. We continue to support this training and have three workshops, welding, tailoring, and knitting, with a fourth to be opened soon in computer repair. Our goal is to equip as many disabled people as possible so that they will be able to earn their living and take active roles in their local com-

munities.

At the party, an announcement was made that free counseling and screening for HIV was being made available to all the disabled between 15 and 50 years of age in January 2009. The AIDS counselors from Pastoral Care would come to the Centre on the four days specified to carry out voluntary counseling and testing. The funding for this has been made available through Our Lady's Missionaries in Toronto. Because the disabled are so visible in the community it is hard for them to go privately to any centre where screening is carried out.

A highlight of the celebration was the presentation of a framed picture of Sr. Rosemarie Donovan naming her the founder of the Centre. The crowd was delighted to receive the picture and insisted that it be cemented into the wall of their meeting room. This was done a few days later, a reminder to both new and old members of the gift Rosemarie has been to the disabled of Vandeikya.∞

And justice for all

By Sr. Rosemary Williamson, O.L.M.

Shortly after his inauguration, Nigeria's President Yar'Adua allocated some millions of naira to fund lawyers who would visit the prisons and identify those whose cases had not received due legal process. His vision of justice, however, met with corruption by other officials who were to implement his plan. Thus only those officials motivated by a personal commitment to justice and human rights responded.

Cornelius Tamen, a member of Vandeikya's Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) and a lawyer, was one of those few who answered this call to action. Even while he was a student at Benue State University, whenever possible he returned to Vandeikya and participated in the weekly meetings of our local JDPC group which I had started several years ago. His presence always enlivened our discussions and frequently he was able to articulate what members were struggling to express. Some of the local issues we have tried to address are the lack of clean water in the marketplace; corruption that prevents access to fertilizer for sale at the government subsidized price; sale of illicit liquor containing harmful substances; and lack of employment for young people.

Our efforts have met with only minimal success, but at least they have raised awareness among some of the people of their basic human rights. While local government authorities failed to respond to the need for a bore hole well to provide clean water in the marketplace or to fund a skills training workshop for unemployed youth, at the local level the Rotary Club has received confir-



Sr. Rosemary Williamson; Mr. Teiman, District Police Officer; Sr. Mary Deighan; and District Chief Atiem. Vandeikya, Nigeria.

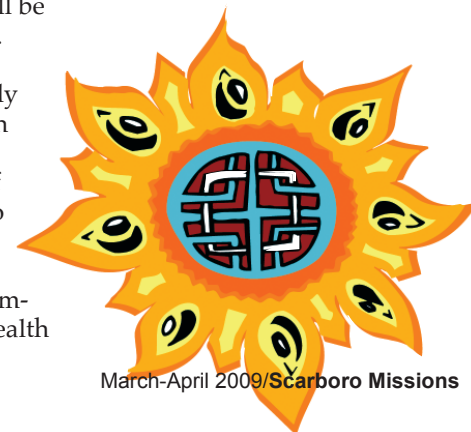
mation from their international partner for funding the well.

Our efforts to document the corruption around fertilizer distribution were prevented both at the local and state levels by those involved. However, there was more success regarding the problem of illicit liquor. Due to public outcry, a bill was passed to ban the sale of illicit liquor throughout Benue State. The next step will be to ensure that the law is enforced.

Cornelius wants to become a priest. While he is waiting to apply to the Jesuits, he has assisted us in obtaining legal title to land ownership for a woman who is one of our long time friends. He has also supervised the building of a small house for her. Left to her own resources she would be victimized as she suffers from mental health

problems.

Recently Cornelius has been offered a position with a Human Rights NGO in Lagos State. It is individuals like him who are living signs of hope for Nigeria's poor and oppressed. I believe he is only one of many more for I see the same potential and commitment to justice issues in other young JDPC members.∞



Wonders of mission

By Sr. Rosemarie Donovan, O.L.M.

Sampson is the lad from our Nigeria mission who graced Our Lady's Missionaries' 2008 calendar. Last year, he had corrective surgery on both legs, his father believing he could one day walk on his own. The operation would help Sampson to make better use of his callipers, boots, and crutches. He returned to St. Joseph's Centre to have his new leg braces and boots constructed. Our welder, who is also disabled, measured him, bending and manipulating the joints. Sampson, usually full of laughter and mischief, sobbed and cried out loudly, "Why do I have to suffer so much, I am just little."

At the age of 79 and no longer little, I understand and accept my own suffering with bouts of loneliness these past seven months. It is connected with Sampson, with my Sisters in Vandeikya, and with all the valiant and treasured friends I left behind when I returned to Canada because of illness. There will be no return; no hugs; no goodbyes, but there will always be a deep gratitude to God for gifting me with 32 fulfilling, happy years in Nigeria.

I am now sharing with many of our Sisters here in Canada the pain of transition—so different for each one. There is a sameness however, as we contemplate the wonders of mission opened to us by our founder Fr. Dan MacDonald in the countless opportunities afforded us to work with God's poor and forgotten ones in various parts of the world. And we thank you, our families and faithful friends who have believed in us and supported us in our call to mission these past 60 years.

For how are we to proclaim Jesus unless we are sent? And how without being sent were we ever to discover that all too frequently it is the poor and oppressed who show us the resurrection? They are indeed the Good News for us.∞



Photo at right: Sampson visits Sr. Rosemarie Donovan at her roundhouse on the Sisters' compound. Vandeikya.

Mother Teresa's Internet Café

By Sr. Mary Deighan, O.L.M.

When I'm in the town it often happens that someone will come up to me to say, "Thank you for bringing the Internet to Vandeikya." And indeed it wasn't Our Lady's Missionaries but rather the School Sisters of Notre Dame from Waterdown, Ontario, who have made this dream a reality. Mother Teresa's Internet Café is a terrific asset to the people living here. They chose this name because of their great admiration for Mother Teresa's work among the poor. No longer is it necessary to travel sometimes as much as 30 kilometres to access the Internet. The café is also an encouragement to many who would like to learn to use the computer through the skills training offered there.

For years we, the staff of Primary Health Care and Our Lady's Missionaries living here, have wished that we could build an Internet café to financially support our three ministries: Primary Health Care, Pastoral Care for People Living With HIV/AIDS, and St. Joseph's Centre for the Disabled. In the beginning, we had not factored in the asset it would be to the students and general population of Vandeikya Local Government who, in this 21st century, are barely aware of the world's major crises. The economic meltdown is not their concern, yet they are suffering from it as it impacts on short-ages, high food prices, lack of jobs, as well as health care and education. In this era of instant global information, many do not have a radio and cannot afford a newspaper. They rely on "bush telephone" (word of mouth) for news, a service that has improved considerably with the introduction of cell phones.

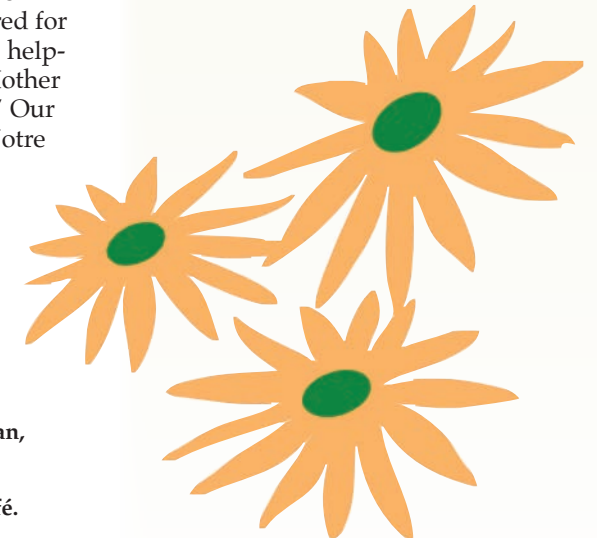
People here say, "The Sisters have always cared for the poor. Now they are helping all of us through Mother Teresa's Internet Café." Our gratitude goes to the Notre Dame Sisters and to you, our families and friends, who have contributed so that we can provide this service to the people of Vandeikya.∞



L-R: Sisters Mary Deighan, Suzanne Marshall, and Rosemary Williamson at Vandeikya's Internet Café.



Sr. Cathy Peco (inset) served 23 years in the Public Health Care (PCH) program as a caring close friend of staff and patients, well loved by all. Sr. Peco died September 20, 2006. The public health care workers of Vandeikya wanted this clinic named after her. Also shown are PHC staff Joshua Iorsongu and Judith Moji.



Creative women...

By Sr. Mary Gauthier, O.L.M.

When I reflect back on the early years of Our Lady's Missionaries, I marvel at the faith and courage of our first Sisters. They had the foresight and creativity like Mary to say Yes. Till this day Rosemarie Donovan and Noreen Kearns from Toronto, and Prince Edward Island's Myra Trainor, the three earliest members, continue to say Yes.

How many people had heard of Alexandria, Ontario, or Glengarry County in those years? Of course those of us from there were surely proud to have our town as the place for the beginning of Our Lady's Missionaries, this new group of women missionaries.

There were those who questioned how our founder Fr. Dan Macdonald could start a women's missionary congregation at his age. How many young women could really appreciate his dream? But Fr. Dan with a twinkle in his eye was able to say to his God, "Your will not mine be done." I believe that the vision that Jesus gave to Fr. Dan was the dream of the reign of God in the world, with Our Lady's Missionaries (OLMs) as one of the lights making this dream visible.

So it is with gratitude that we OLMs are living this dream with continued support from our roots. To this day the Catholic Women's League of Alexandria and Cornwall Dioceses, and the Ladies' Guild of Williamstown, remain faithful to their promise to Fr. Dan by their love and financial assistance. Whereas Fr. Dan sold Christmas cards to support us, our friends in Glengarry now gather each year to stuff envelopes and mail our yearly Christmas newsletter.



Sr. Mary Gauthier with some of the farmers who are protesting the aerial spraying of banana trees since the spray harms the workers as well as the earth. For two months they have camped on the sidewalk in front of the court of appeal waiting for a decision even as they hold prayer vigils and Eucharistic celebrations to keep alive their trust in God.

This faith and trust has followed us to Toronto and our number of supporting friends increases. In our own way, each of us tries to make real Fr. Dan's dream of the reign of God in the world.

As a young person, my own invitation to say Yes was stirring inside me nurtured by the faith of my parents and family. Seeing the first OLMs at my home parish of St. Finnan's each Sunday caused me to wonder. I followed the stirrings inside me and was able to say Yes even as I wondered like Mary how this would unfold.

When I arrived in the Philippines in 1966 I began to notice the faith of

the materially poor. From my nursing experience of seeing women birthing at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, I now watched a woman give birth in her own little nipa palm house. Her husband prepared the *lugao* or watery rice while the children climbed a nearby tree in order to watch through a window. Soon the attending nurse thanked God for this new life. It was a blessing for me to experience the gift of life in such simplicity.

On another occasion I held a newborn infant in my arms and watched as she died while her twin lived. The father accepted it as God's will, whereas I felt my anger rise at the injustice of having no hospital for

I marvel at the faith and courage of our first Sisters. They had the foresight and creativity like Mary to say Yes.

this family to go to or even nourishing food for them to eat each day. The poor taught me to trust in God when I cannot change things and to try to change the things I can.

I have accompanied women in a health program as well as parish groups struggling to obtain their rights. All have been faith witnesses for me. I remember a time when the members of the health group had organized themselves to go to the health centre to ask for medicine and were turned away empty handed. They returned to our meeting place dejected, saying that no one cared and that it was useless to keep asking. After reflection on Jesus' words, "Ask and you shall receive. Knock and the door will be opened," their fear and anger lessened. They returned to the clinic to ask once more and received the medicine.

"*Salamat sa Dios*" (Thanks be to God) was their prayer. They had felt and touched their God-given power and called upon it. This made me question whether I trust my power and how I use it.

There are so many stories of the faith of the people. Currently a group of farmers is protesting the aerial spraying of banana trees since the spray harms the workers as well as the earth. For two months they have camped on the sidewalk in front of the court of appeal waiting for a decision even as they hold prayer vigils and Eucharistic celebrations to keep alive their trust in God. Their commitment has awakened in me my connectedness with the earth and my power and responsibility to care for it.

A new experience for me is my involvement with a Christian-Muslim



Recently Our Lady's Missionary Sr. Norma Samar (far right, second row from bottom) vacationed with family and friends in the Philippines. While there, she visited OLM Sisters in Cagayan de Oro, Mindanao. She also visited Southern Leyte where the mission began in the 1960s. Now in Canada, she hopes to begin a new ministry.

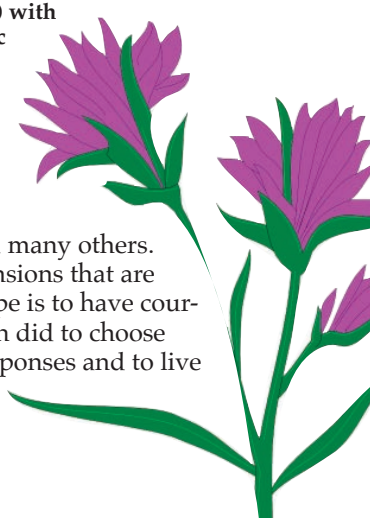


Our Lady's Missionary Sr. Anie Montejo (centre) with OLM Associates in the Philippines Joy Tumamac (left) and Nimfa Codilan.

lim group for dialogue. It is gifting me with a growing realization and awareness that Muslims believe in the same compassionate, loving God as I do. This Christmas I listened at church as a Muslim explained his understanding of Mary and of Jesus as revealed in the Koran, their holy book.

What a long way my roots have taken me. I believe the faith of Fr. Dan lives on in today's world

through Our Lady's Missionaries and many others. In spite of tensions that are mine, my hope is to have courage as Fr. Dan did to choose lifegiving responses and to live creatively.∞



Journey of forgiveness

By Sr. Lorie Nuñez, O.L.M.

After the Christmas break, classes for 2009 resumed as usual at Xavier University in Cagayan de Oro. Throughout the school, the students' Happy New Year greetings were contagious. Yet for me those greetings were disturbing in the light of world atrocities, one being the fighting and deaths in the Middle East, which was all over the news.

Forgiveness, justice, and peace are essential to our journey of life. This is the vision of the *kin-dom* to which Our Lady's Missionaries give their lives of service. Ten years ago when our community celebrated its jubilee year in Alexandria, Canada, I affirmed my saying yes to being one of them and taking part in this journey.

Since returning to the Philippines I have suffered many losses, the greatest being the death of my mother. Since I was blessed to be able to accompany her during her last struggle, I now remember the time with gratitude. I see the grace of the moment, not only because it brought a deepened sense of forgiveness, but also because my mother and I spent many hours recalling the happy memories we had during my childhood. Her journey was one of going home to God and mine was one of going home to myself.

I truly believe that we need not put emphasis on our misdeeds and whether or not we are worthy of God's love. Rather, we need to live our lives offering and receiving forgiveness as Christ and many others show us.∞



Sr. Lorie Nuñez and Xavier University students. Back row standing L-R: Rey Michael Tagarao, Jennifer Juanico, Russel Lambuanao, Diana Grace Abarquez, and Sr. Lorie. Front row seated, Nece Jean Tagam and Arniel Belarmino. Philippines.



Sr. Anie Montejo at the evacuation center with children who are victims of the war in Lanao del Norte between the Philippine Army and Muslim separatists. Philippines. Sr. Anie was there as part of her training for ministry in trauma healing.

Journey of faith

By Sr. Margaret Walsh, O.L.M.

From the early years of my life I felt a deep desire to become a missionary in other lands. I enjoyed reading *Scarboro Missions* magazine, which we regularly received in our home. In those days it was called *China* magazine.

In my later teenage years, as I was searching for information about different missionary groups, I learned from my brother Lionel about a new community of Sisters that had recently started in Alexandria, Ontario. He suggested that maybe this group would be close to what I was searching for. So I joined Our Lady's Missionaries. Lionel was ordained a Scarboro missionary priest in 1957.

Since our congregation lacked funds I remained in Canada, continued my studies in Toronto and then taught for several years. Finally at the age of 33 years I was assigned to our first Philippine mission. Since then, with the exception of three months spent in Guyana, this has been my field of mission. I have learned much from my contact with the people of the Philippines and have rejoiced to see the beauty of the land and its peoples.

The missionary desire is still with me and I hope to continue to follow the call as the Spirit leads me whether it will be in Canada or elsewhere.∞

Photo above: Sr. Margaret Walsh visits with Maria delos Reyes and husband Reno in the Philippines where she has spent most of her missionary life.



Come, follow me

By Sr. Anie Montejo, O.L.M.

In his time, when Jesus invited the disciples to "come follow me," they immediately left everything to follow him. My own acceptance of the invitation to follow Jesus has deepened in my ministry as I listen to the stories of the people.

Since returning to my own native land, the Philippines, I notice many differences in myself. I realize my awareness, concerns, and vision are broadening as I listen and share with different groups of people in my ministry. I feel comfortable once again in reconnecting with my own culture and roots.

Being part of the ecology team of the Archdiocese of Cagayan de Oro is an opportunity to meet people in different walks of life as I visit different parts of Mindanao. I was invited to facilitate dialogue with Indigenous Youth in Bukidnon. Their stories helped me to realize the importance of reconnecting with my own roots. I witnessed their courage in preserving their own native traditions, culture, the environment, and specifically their own tribal communities. This challenged and inspired me to continue my response to the environmental issues in the archdiocese.

Reflecting on these experiences has helped me to see the hope in my own people here in Mindanao. The Native, Muslim, and Christian youth here are challenging themselves to be a language of peace through dialogue and the understanding of our own history. The real challenge is to face our own prejudices and biases towards one another.

I believe that by my participation in these events, hearing the stories of different peoples as well as the cry of the earth, I am answering my call to follow Jesus today.∞



Still a sign of contradiction

By Sr. Clarice Garvey, O.L.M.

“*Eu gosto*” (I like) were the first words in the vocabulary of a two-year-old wonder who lived across the street from Sr. Janet MacDonell (now supervising this story from her privileged place with her Creator) and me. His name was Dimas and his home was not a happy one. Very early he learned where he could go to find food. Those were safer times in Fortaleza and homes were not as securely locked as they are today. We had a type of Dutch door, with the lower half conveniently easy for little folks to push and so make their way inside.

Many a morning Janet and I awoke to the sound of a small voice calling us to the kitchen where Dimas sat waiting for breakfast, and later for lunch, and always for supper. He insisted on knowing what was in each pot on the stove and to our answer he always replied, “*Eu gosto!*”

At this point, I believe that some of you may think, with good reason, that you have heard this story before. In the 1991 issue of *Scarboro Missions* magazine Janet wrote about Dimas in an article entitled “A sign of contradiction”.

Since 1991, many changes have taken place and although we moved away from that area, Dimas kept in contact with us, mostly through Sr. Mona Kelly. A few months ago he came to visit us with Natalia, a pretty young woman whom he presented as the girl he was about to marry, and invited us to his wedding.

The wedding was a delight. It took place in an Evangelical chapel, beautifully decorated with flowers donated by Dimas’s boss and arranged by Dimas himself. The



Dimas and Natalia share the joy of their wedding day with Sisters Clarice Garvey (centre) and Mona Kelly (right). The Sisters knew Dimas since he was two years old and lived across the street from them. He visited every day for meals and enjoyed spending time reading in the Sisters’ chapel (photo below, 1991).



bride, dressed in a long white gown, walked down the aisle on the arm of her father and entered a small tent-like space behind the altar. After a few minutes Dimas, now a handsome young man, looking a little uncomfortable in dress shoes, a too-large

suit, and a tie, rather strolled in, greeting his friends as he passed. He, too, entered the tent. A few minutes later the couple approached the altar and the marriage ceremony began.

When the ceremony ended, people gathered around to greet the

bride and groom and to meet the other guests. It was obvious that this young couple have very kind friends who love them and will support them in their life together. As Dimas greeted us, he said he was quite sure that Elizabete (Sr. Janet MacDonell) was hovering over all of us with a special blessing for him and his wife.

The celebrating continued in the home of the bride’s parents. When we sat down to the simple feast beautifully prepared, Dimas looked across the table at us with the same kiddish look of years ago and said, “*Eu gosto!*”

How is it that Dimas had grown to such dignity and maturity when so many young people with privileged backgrounds and opportunities have turned to drugs and violence?

How is it that Natalia’s mother, an attractive and respected seamstress in her community could say with tears of joy in her eyes that she was so happy for her daughter, so proud of her, and so fond of Dimas?

Going back to Janet’s article of 1991, it seems to me that Dimas is still a sign of contradiction.

Judy Cannato writes in her book, *Radical Amazement*, that God created and continues to create each being in consideration of every other created being. Can we imagine the depth of meaning this takes on in terms of relationships, whether in a marriage, a family, a community, a nation, or a universe?

Let us all pray for Natalia and Dimas that they may live happily and in peace together recognizing the gift that each is to the other.∞

Like caring for roses

By Sr. Mona Kelly, O.L.M.

Our daily paper here in Fortaleza recently published an article about teenagers who live and die on the streets of our city and other major cities in Brazil. The article said that 1,000 young people died tragically during 2008 in Fortaleza alone. That means roughly three victims of violence a day. Drugs and alcohol are the basic causes of most of the robberies, motorcycle accidents, gang activities, and so on.

And in the middle of it all we members of the Pastoral team of the Archdiocese of Fortaleza try to reach out to these precious ones. We want them to feel that they are loved and cared for despite their lack of capacity to care even for themselves.

Genaina is one of the young women that I met on the street some years ago. She had left her home at the age of five to live on the street with an older sister, Adriana. Her mother, an alcoholic, also lives on the street.

Our pastoral team has accompanied Genaina from the age of five to this present time. She is now 22. Caring for people like Genaina is like caring for roses. You know there is a beautiful person in there but years of abuse have hardened the roots and it takes persistence and constant care to bring out the real beauty.

This past year Genaina was literally dying on the street. We visited her regularly, trying to convince her to have treatment. Finally, her older sister, Adriana, who is still on the street with a young baby, managed to get her into a hospital that treats people with TB as well as alcohol and drug addictions. The staff in this government hospital is very dedicated and treat their patients with dignity. After just two weeks, Genaina had gained weight, was smiling, and obviously feeling much better about herself.

Scarboro missionary Beverly Trach, Conceição, a retired university professor, and Lucivania, a mother of three teenagers take turns visiting Genaina once a week. The miracle is that she has stayed in the hospital six months. The TB is under control and she has been off drugs all that time. Her doctor is very concerned about what will happen when she is discharged and will not let Genaina go until she is sure that a safe place will be available for her.

While Genaina was in the hospital, her street friend Diogo died of AIDS. Genaina was devastated. Diogo was kind and had always looked out for her. We were very concerned for Genaina because of this loss that she experienced, but she seemed to gain peace with the death of her friend. She told us she was praying to Diogo to help her. With tears in her eyes she said, “I will really, really miss him. He was my best friend.”

We are encouraged in our pastoral work, knowing that, like Genaina, it is possible for young people living a harsh existence on the streets to respond to love and with love.∞



Sr. Mona Kelly visits Genaina in the hospital. Fortaleza, Brazil.



Sr. Mary Hughes with four-year-old Paulo whom she met soon after she began working in the town of Mulungu in the interior of Brazil in the late 1970s.

Remembering friends

By Sr. Mary Hughes, O.L.M.

My first overseas mission appointment was in 1967 to Fortaleza, Brazil, where I nursed at the University Maternity Hospital for 10 years. Our Lady's Missionaries then moved to the interior to work with Basic Christian Communities in the small town of Mulungu, 140 kilometres from Fortaleza. We lived in a parish house and did home visitations in the community.

It was on one such visit that I met Maria, a woman with a very bad heart condition. Her youngest son Paulo, four years old, became my friend. On the occasions when Maria had to be taken to the hospital, Paulo would cry and beg me not to take his mother away. Each time, I would try to explain to him why it was necessary and how much it would help her. It was a difficult time for mother and son.

In 1989, our mission community moved back to Fortaleza and I never saw my little friend Paulo again. I continued my ministry of visiting the sick, especially AIDS patients in Sao José Hospital. Many of these patients were poor and lived very far from their families. As a result they were unable to see their loved ones very often. I felt it a privilege to be near them in their lonely times, to pray with them, and to try to be of any help I could.

Now that I am back in Canada, I often think of Paulo and the many friends I met in my

40 years of mission to Brazil. I pray for them and thank God I was able to assist them in their time of sickness.∞

Quest for land

An update submitted by Sr. Clarice Garvey, O.L.M.

One year ago, as we were preparing our stories for *Scarboro Missions'* May-June 2008 special issue on Our Lady's Missionaries, the word came down from the Brazilian government's Department of Agrarian Reform that the families who had camped on the roadside for more than two years, hoping to become occupants of a nearby farm, were denied entry to this land. After endless meetings with government agents in their two-year quest for land, they were informed that all negotiations with the landowner had ceased.

With the courage that only people of great faith and conviction have, they divided into three smaller groups, each moving separately to other areas and continued their negotiations with the government. During all this time they never ceased to plant and harvest, and to sell their produce, no matter how small the strip of land available to them.

They are still displaced, but the legal processes that will give them the right to the land are now well advanced and their right to these lands confirmed. With this good news, there are three wonderful celebrations of thanksgiving in the offing; celebrations like only Brazilians know how to put on.

There are many groups of landless families camped throughout Brazil. Over the years, agrarian reform has not been a priority of any Brazilian government. It is regretful that President Lula's government has not chosen to be an exception.∞



Sr. Clarice Garvey with members of a group of landless farmers and their families who have been struggling for years to gain ownership of land in Brazil.

Lucy's celebration

By Clarice Garvey, O.L.M.

For some years now Brazil has been known as one of the countries to have carried out advanced research in the area of treatment and care for people with HIV/AIDS.

In Fortaleza, a group of Brazilian Sisters operates the Centro de Convivência, a highly integrated day-care service to individuals as well as to their children. People are given the opportunity to continue their ordinary education, as well as take courses in various types of crafts that they could make and sell in order to earn a living.

In November 2008, the Centro de Convivência celebrated 15 years of service to the people of Fortaleza and among those awarded for their contribution to the excellent reputation of the Centre was our Sr. Lucy Lee. Our Lady's Missionaries in Brazil are proud to have one of our members involved in this ministry to people who are so often excluded and ostracized. Their gentle acceptance teaches us the importance of living each day for its own beauty, and the healing power of a pleasant smile and a kind word is part of that everyday beauty.∞

Sr. Lucia Lee entered Our Lady's Missionaries in 1978 and first went to Brazil in 1995.

The World Social Forum

The annual World Social Forum was once again held in January in Brazil, this time in Belém, in the state of Pará. This Forum, organized nine years ago, is a counterpoint to the annual World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland. Since its beginning in Porto Alegre in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, the World Social Forum has been held in several countries, always with the same theme, "A Better World is Possible", and continues to sow seeds of hope and excitement in all who participate.

According to Candido Grzybowski, the director of the Brazilian Institute for Social Analysis, the present international crisis in the economy and the breakdown of the current model of economic development makes Davos look like a cemetery of the hopeless in comparison to the event in Belem, which is developing possibilities for huge changes in terms of social and economic equality.

Our Lady's Missionary Sr. Yolanda Cadavos attended the 2009 Forum as a member of the Archdiocese of Fortaleza's Pastoral for the Protection of Children and Women Against Trafficking. Sr. Cadavos was impressed with the numbers of people from so many countries with the same concerns and hopes.∞



Andresa and her grandmother Eracilda enjoy a visit with Sr. Yolanda Cadavos. Brazil.

The joy of sharing

By Sr. Lucia Lee, O.L.M.

A few days before Christmas I asked Antônia, the coordinator at the children's library, if they were going to have a Christmas party. She said that because there was no money available it was not likely that they would. The library is one of the "Little Libraries" started by Canadians Ben and Doreen Wicks to promote the importance of education and to provide an opportunity for children in the community to learn to read and write.

I offered to provide snacks for the children if Antônia would organize a small party. She was grateful for my offer because the children had spoken to her about a party and made it very clear that they wanted the opportunity to exchange gifts "like big folks do."

With this strong plea from the children, Antônia went to the parents and asked them if they would each donate 50 centavos (about 25 cents) for a Christmas party. They agreed.



On the day of the party, the library was nicely decorated in Christmas style. On one side of the room was a table with many small baskets made by the children from plastic pop bottles. Each basket contained two candies, a small bag of popcorn, and a piece of cake. In the middle of the room was a Christmas tree with 30 gifts beneath it, all wrapped in shiny Christmas paper and green ribbons. Around the tree sat 30 excited children, waiting to see what was in all those presents.

The party began with everyone singing Christmas carols, and this year because a German student is doing fieldwork at the library and likes to practice English, the children were taught to sing *Silent Night* in English, the universal language. Next came the gift-opening. When the children arrived they had each received a small paper on which was written the name of a companion. Now, one at a time, they called out the name of their secret friend and then pranced over to present him or her with a gift. The more outgoing givers were free-spirited enough to try to kiss the receiver, as adults do, but for the shier ones, the presentation was more discreet.

The excitement reached its peak when all had received their presents and opened them. The fact that each present was exactly like the other took nothing from the joy of having a secret friend with whom one could exchange a gift at Christmas. The delight of the moment made even the few treats in the baskets seem like a feast. Oh the joy of Christmas.∞

Sr. Lucia Lee with some of her younger craftmaking students.



L-R: Sisters Gwen Legault, Rosemarie Donovan, Mary Deighan, Patricia Kay, Rosemary Williamson, and Suzanne Marshall. March 2009 marks the end of a long missionary journey, or rather multiple journeys, of Our Lady's Missionaries and their friends in Nigeria, West Africa. From 1972 and the staffing of St. Elizabeth's Maternity clinic in Vandeikya, Benue State, to the final closing of the doors of the Sisters' compound, their love and energy poured out, particularly on their Tiv sisters and brothers, in an astonishing variety of ministries often among the most vulnerable. And their own lives were enriched forever by the experience.



*Thank you for your continued interest
and support.*

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