Thanks!

A big Thank-You to all who have contributed such interesting, newsy and thought-provoking articles to this years Narrative.

This is our biggest issue ever with 28 pages.

Many apologies for the delay in publishing this year—we hope to get back to our usual April schedule by next year.

With regards to the future publication of The Narrative, the Central Leadership Team of the MMMs in Rosemount has suggested:

“That the Narrative be sent as an e-mail attachment. For those who do not have e-mail, others in their region who do might print it out for them and ensure they receive a copy.

The cost would be less; there is a desire to be able to translate the Narrative into appropriate languages and this can be done through our internet translation services and we have the facility to do this; some countries do not have effective postal systems and the Narrative arrives months after it is published, if it arrives at all. Almost all correspondence from the Congregation is being sent as an e-mail attachment at the moment .... and it seems to be working.

For all these reasons we are encouraging that the Narrative be sent as an e-mail attachment and would be happy to send it from the Central Secretariate as we have the donor base set up.”

Some AMMMs and MMMs have agreed to receive The Narrative by e-mail. We can of course still print future Narratives in this usual format for anyone who wishes to receive it as before. Please let me know if you would like to receive a printed copy and we will be happy to send you one. (Contact details on back page).

Anne Marie Kenny, AMMM has contributed an interesting article on the history of the Narrative which we have included in this issue.

Helen McArdle, AMMM, Editor
Sixteen years ago this month, May 1998, the first edition of *The Narrative* was published. On the front cover article, I wrote about the worldwide phenomenon called the associate movement that was taking place within many religious congregations. To be honest, I didn’t know what I was getting into at the time, and knew very little about the subject! But I was able to relate some information from a conference called *Gather the Dreamers* which I attended a month earlier with Srs. Joanne Bierl and Cheryl Blanchard. In that article I wrote that “the most enlightening concept I came away with was that associates are much more than just lay people who want to help out on some volunteer basis in a religious community. Instead, this call to a new form of participation in the charisms of religious orders is a movement, a working of the Holy Spirit which is evolving and unpredictable. It is a relationship, mutual and evolving.”

Back then the associate movement within the MMM congregation was barely in the birthing stage, but the water had broken. There were five people officially requesting to become associates and we were on three different continents — Europe, Africa, and the Americas. The question was, how can we reach each other? How can we encourage one another with our own stories about what brought us, individually, to this collective desire to serve God in the same spirit of charism?

I proposed that we have a vehicle of written communication, a newsletter, and suggested calling it *The Narrative*. The title was inspired by Fr. Diarmuid O'Murcha (the facilitator of the MMM's Seventh Congregational Chapter from the preceding year) in one of his books where he described Creation as “an unfolding narrative in which all living beings are full participants.” We wanted to be full participants with the sisters in the creation of the MMM associate movement and *The Narrative* was, and continues to be, an instrument to connect associates to each other and share how the marvelous spirit of the MMM charism is moving though our lives.

In October 2009, after eleven years and 21 editions, I was thrilled to travel to Ireland and hand the project into the trusting hands of the Irish associates. Since then, Helen McArdle and her technical-savvy husband Joe have evolved *The Narrative* into a first-class production. We are all tremendously grateful to this wonderful, capable, and generous team.

Speaking from my heart, I have been profoundly touched by the lives of AMMMs whom we would never get to know except through their stories we read about. Others among us have related a sense of pride and ownership that *The Narrative* was founded and created by associates, about associates, and for both associates and sisters. It gives us not only a voice but a sense of responsibility. There has always been discussion to create an online version of the newsletter which is a reasonable idea provided it is in addition to a hand-held copy. Not only are there many AMMMs without email, but reading or printing documents from a computer screen has limitations. It will never replace the joy in opening the mailbox and reaching in to find our well-crafted newsletter with its treasure trove of articles, and being able to devour its contents as we relax in any location we please, then placing it on our coffee-tables for visitors to see, perhaps loaning it to a friend, and then preserving it for a future feast.

Again, thank you, Helen and Joe. We are beholding to you and will do everything to help!

Anne Marie Kenny, AMMM. May, 2014
“Entrusting them with the future of Mission/Charism
Go beyond confines of what is humanly possible
Create a world of Brothers and Sisters ……..”  (Pope Francis in Rio De Janero)

These words capture the Spirit/Energy of our three AMMMs, Anne Marie Ken- 
ny, Joan Gagnon and Ann Hook as they ventured forth on the first corporate service 
project. Arriving in the dark after travelling thousands of miles through cataclysmic 
thunder and lightning by plane and road, there was a deep sense of peace, grati-
tude and purposefulness, as we shared our stories of journey and arrival. Truly we 
felt the silent support of the prayers of Community as we opened our hearts to 
Whatever Would Be during the next four days.

At dawn, 6 a.m. the next morning we arose (this was a Sleep-In, as on future 
mornings we began work at 6.30 a.m.) The dormitory where we stayed was sim-
ple living and we shared breakfast and lunch outdoors with more than 1,000 volun-
teers from all over the country. Rest periods were encouraged during the day as 
the temperature was in the 90s.

As an MMM who came with Joan Grumbach and Pat Bransfield in 1978, and 
shared mission with many others over the years, I am deeply impressed and filled 
with hope by the dedication, generosity and understanding of the charism of heal-
ing that I experienced in spending time with these fine women. Each evening we 
spent time in Faith Sharing. Here we shared areas of discomfort, challenge, won-
der, questions of self, and experience of how the Lord was leading us.

More than 4000 people received services in a three day period. Dental, Eye 
and Medical. We “stepped up” by showing up each morning and doing whatever 
was needed. AMMMs’ designated title was “The Escort”, which brought many 
smiles! There is no hierarchy among RAM volunteers, each one is doing their best 
for the patient. Collaborative team work is the prevailing spirit. Those with more 
experience share in a “storytelling” manner what might work – what might not 
work. The individual is honoured and respected for being Part of the Whole.

On Sunday p.m. we came to Clinchco, had dinner at the Breaks Park, shared Eucharist together and 
slept the sleep of the Just. On Saturday p.m. we went to Mass with 13 
others in Clint Wood. On return to the dorm we saw the most beautiful 
rainbow which ended on the moun-
tain behind where we were staying. 
Truly the Blessing of Creation – no 
pot of gold. However, the legacy of 
Mother Mary is alive and well.

Sr. Bernie Kenny, MMM
The Value Of Running Water In Tanzanian Villages

By Moira Brehony, A.M.M.

Malambo Village

On a very hot day in April 2014 Moira and Eamonn Brehony A.M.M.s in Tanzania accompanied by Fr. John Gallagher SMA went on a seven hour journey to visit Pallotine priest Fr. Mike O Sullivan in the remote village of Malambo in the Ngorongoro District of Tanzania.

Two hours into our journey we reached the Ngorongoro Conservation area gate where we were expected to pay $50 each and an additional charge for the vehicle but due to our guardian angel who went ahead of us the day before we were exempt. We continued on our journey accompanied by wild animals on both sides of the vast land around us. Zebra, Giraffe, Wildebeest, Buffalo etc. and even a bold Baboon who hopped into our car and eat all our bananas.

Driving for a full four hours without seeing another human being we finally reached the village of Malambo and low and behold we found we were in a village of 10,000 people. The village is surrounded by mountains including a very vivid view of the Massai “Mountain of God” Oldonyo Longai looking splendid with views of lava from previous volcanic eruptions spilling down on all sides.

Fr. Mike took us for a walk in the village to see the local watering hole; what a sight! A long narrow trough was built here in the village in the 1940s with water flowing freely on both sides mainly for animals. It had a small separated area where the running water fell before entering the main trough and this is where the household water was collected by several young boys and girls. There is a miraculous water source originating in the mountain 10 kilometres away and piped to this area of the village. There were numerous herds of animals waiting under the sparsely covered trees around the area including cows, sheep and goats all taking their turn to avail of the flowing water. As the animals are drinking the young people collecting household water are also busy washing their school uniforms and clothes. We also saw one old man entirely naked in the trough with the animals washing his body from head to toe!!

This watering space is truly the lifeline and focus for the people of the village as without it life could not continue here. Now the village has both primary and secondary boarding schools, a kindergarten and health clinic, churches and several shops accommodating the mainly Massai community from the outlying areas and also the people of Malambo.

Matangarimo Village

If water has brought new life and energy to Malambo, MMM has been able to bring new life to Matangarimo village, an outreach station of MMM dispensary in Nangwa, Hanang District. Water-borne diseases and hygiene-related skin infections are some of the major conditions seen in the outreach project. In the light of this, MMM requested Eamonn to carry out a needs assessment. While many villages in Hanang have sources of clean water, Matangarimo is one village which has always struggled to get water. Water is and has been a strong felt need in the village. In the 1960s the Government tried to build a dam in one sub-village but it was not successful. In 2004 the district water department invested 30,000,000 T. Shs
(approximately 30,000 US Dollars) in building up the same dam again. However it was built with black cotton soil and the first rains washed it away in two hours. According to the villagers it crumbled away like a packet of wet biscuits.

It is the women and female children who fetch water. They use water for cooking, drinking, washing, watering livestock and other domestic uses. Women make the decisions on when and where to fetch water. In some households men help with watering livestock but there was divided opinion as to how many men actually help with water related activities. In some situations they claim that even if they do not bring the livestock for watering they can dig the holes with spades and shovels so that cattle can access water. Women told stories of their husbands only looking for water for their own use. Some men complain if water is not available in the household, this can lead to conflict in the households.

While there are times when there is plenty of over-ground water there is a lack of awareness on the fact that one can harvest it and also a lack of knowledge and skills on how to do it. The Medical Missionaries of Mary and the community sat down and analysed the situation and discussed the various causes and effects they could address. They decided to focus on harvesting rain water as there was already some experience in the community of harvesting water in dry river beds in the dry season.

Ten villagers (one respected man and one respected woman from each of the five sub-villages), a ward executive secretary, an official of Hanang District Council water department, two officials of Mbulu Diocesan Water Department (implementers of the project), and a representative of MMM went on a field trip to Kajiado in Kenya to see how people were harvesting rain water there. The terrain there is similar to Nangwa.

On their return each sub-village holds a one day seminar conducted by the two people representing the sub-village on the field trip and facilitated by the two staff members of Mbulu Diocesan Development Office.

In the light of their awareness in raising seminars two sub villages decided on the source of rain water harvesting they wanted to develop and Eamonn helped them to write up a proposal for submission to donors. The project was developed and two sand dams were constructed, one in Uyomo sub-village and one in Soera sub-village. About 124 households comprising 720 villagers from the two sub-villages have benefitted as well as their livestock.

Once funding was secured and it came through the congregation, the chairpersons of the sand dam committees in both sub-villages mobilised the community. They organised themselves for the digging of the necessary trench for the sand dam. Supervision was done by the water engineer of Mbulu Diocese. The community at the same time collected the sand and stones for the project. Simultaneous to this, the required materials, equipment and tools for the project were purchased and sent to the site. Once completed and ready for use the sand dam committees at the two sub-villages took over the day-to-day management and maintenance if needed.

So for the people of Malambo and Matangarimo, water has brought new life and new energy to the villagers and given meaning to the old adage that water is the source of all life.

"God is calling us to more than the material level of life and God is waiting to bring us to it. All we have to do is live well with others and live totally in God. All we have to do is to learn to listen to the voice of God in life, and we have to do it heart, soul and body. The spiritual life demands all of us."

Excerpted from the Rule of St. Benedict: Insights for the Ages by Joan Chettister O.S.B.
Our Response to the Call

For over five years now we have been sharing our lives, learning and teaching individuals and groups who are in leadership roles of their ministries. We have especially given our services in the East African region through the Associations of religious sisterhoods. Thanks to Sr. Kathie Shea MMM who opened a way for us with the Associations in Kenya and Uganda initially.

Our leadership programme develops the integrity and effectiveness of congregational and organizational leaders. We help leaders grow in their personal integrity, spiritual life, leadership effectiveness and management skills. We envision congregational and organizational leaders who demonstrate by their lives and leadership that they:

Serve as leaders to enable others to use their gifts, build effective teams, delegate wisely and cultivate servant leadership in others.

Lead effective learning organizations that have clear vision, set realistic goals and continually evaluate results in order to learn from successes and failures.

Demonstrate integrity and accountability in their personal lives and organizational ministries, especially regarding finances.

To be able to teach we challenged ourselves to first walk the talk. So in a small way we have tried to apply what we teach even in our home environment. Ensuring that our home is life giving and those in our sphere of influence feel valued and respected for who they are. At the heart of servant hood is a call to deny rights; put others interests first while acknowledging our brokeness. Real servant-hood starts with an examination of personal perceptions about others and physical indicators/status symbols that reinforce who we are. As we reflected on our leadership at home, we felt there were some leadership symbols we needed to let go of. For instance, we have a six-seat dining table with two special chairs with arm rests that were specially bought to be used by mum and dad, the other four were just normal chairs with no arm rests. At meal time it was clear we were not at the same level of power and comfort with the rest of the family. We even had special cups for dad and mum. As we thought of these small things we do innocently it became clear to us that the kind of leadership we were teaching those in our care was one of a big boss leader who sits in high places, gets the best of everything and not one who serves. Experience has taught us that children learn more from our actions than from what we tell them. You can be sure that if you visit us today, you will have access to the chair with arm rests as it is no longer reserved for mum or dad. Other benefits from this home school are to get the boys and dad to take their dishes to the kitchen and even clean-up. This is a great achievement as culturally where we were born and bred these are tasks for women.

Our teaching approach emphasises individual reflections and committing to change from the top down leader, one that is self centred to one who now yearns to serve and empower others. We trust that in small ways we are causing healing to those in our sphere of influence and those we impact through the trainings. Many leaders who have participated in our workshops have commented that the course is quite different. While they came in expecting to learn about leadership, the spotlight instead turned on them, having to reflect on their assumptions of leadership and committing to make changes as they respond to God’s call, becoming men and women with an ability to build an organization that is a source of self-fulfilment and personal integrity for its members, taking a wholistic approach – more like wholistic healing.

Hedwig Nafula, AMMM and Andrew Otsieno, AMMM,
Wholistic Leadership, EMD

Left to Right:
Back: Andrew Otsieno, AMMM, Sr. Goretti MMM,
      Sr. Joanne, MMM, Thomas Nyawir, AMMM
Front: Agnes Mana, AMMM, Sister Rada, MMM,
       Hedwig Nafula, AMMM
When I was asked to write something on what I am doing now, I did not know how or where to start.

On 21st May 2012, I woke up one morning in Pakistan to the news that one of our colleagues who was kidnapped for four months had been killed. In one week we had to close down the mission after continuous threats, we literally had to escape from Pakistan. I happened to have met Mr. Khalil when I was a child 30 yrs ago while he was working with the British Red-Cross in responding to a severe drought in Turkana in 1981.

This was the beginning of my new journey. I came back to Turkana and I had to take a break with my family. Being with them was so great, my child Solly had told me not to go back again, and that I should get some job at home. This was the turning point of my life and Mariemartin my little girl was a born a year later.

After the Kenyan election in March 2013, the Kenyan Government implemented the new constitution that was promulgated in 2010, which provided for a two-tier government at the national and county levels. This also meant that essential services like health and agriculture were to be decentralized to be managed at the county government levels.

I was hired as part of the team to lead the realization of the Turkana county dream of increasing access to and the uptake of basic health-care services. The health indicators and infrastructural facilities in Turkana County are the worst in Kenya. More than 50% of the population has no access to basic health care, the ratio of doctor to patients is 1: 282,000 with half of all health facilities being owned and run by the church organizations. The only county referral hospital is ill-staffed and equipped to attend to emergencies only. Reversing these trends to the national standards is an uphill task to me and the county health management team.

My position as the Chief Officer in the Ministry of Health services and sanitation is a demanding and challenging one. I work under the County Minister for Health who in turn is responsible to the Governor. My primary responsibility is to provide support to the County health management team in overseeing the delivery of health services through both the government and faith-based health facilities. Other tasks include coordinating the work of NGOs in implementing health-oriented programmes.

All is not lost. In the five months I have worked with the county government, very impressive development has been realized. Thirty dispensaries are being upgraded to model health center standards, ten ambulances have been procured and expansion works to expand facilities in Lodwar county referral hospital are going on.

In pursuit of partnering with FBOs, the county government developed and signed an MOU with the Catholic Diocese of Lodwar (DoL) to support five major health facilities with staff salaries, drugs and facilitation of medical out-reach activities.

I am glad to have met and worked with many MMMs who have instilled their values in me and who taught me to work so hard and also enabled me to be where I am today. Overall, it is by the grace of God that I am able to make a contribution to his people.

Agnes Mana, AMMM
tradition has it that St James the Apostle is buried in the city of Santiago de Compostela. His body was brought from Jerusalem to the region of Galicia in north-western Spain circa 44AD. Sant Iago means Saint James in Spanish and Compo Stela means field of stars, stars were seen over the area where St James was buried. Saint James is reported to have helped Spain’s Christian armies battle against the Muslim Moor army and win. Since then, many thousands of pilgrims have made their “Camino” or way to Santiago de Compostela, in search of enlightenment, spiritual growth or adventure. Hostels, restaurants and hospitals were built to cater for this river of people that has flowed almost all year long for centuries, in the tradition of St Benedict. Pilgrims start their journey in various places in Europe including Madrid in Spain, St James St, Dublin and even St James St, in my own home town of Drogheda! Pilgrims carry a scallop shell as a symbol of virtue and good works.

The most popular way is The French Route and about 800km long, starting at St Jean Pied de Port, in the French Pyrenees. It takes around 5-6 weeks to walk depending on the person’s speed. Pilgrims used to travel this in one journey and still do. It’s become more popular now to walk in stages over several years. Pilgrims who walk more than 100km for religious/spiritual reasons can qualify for a “Credencial” or certificate of pilgrimage. Many people now start in the town of Sarria which is 110 km from the city of Santiago. This can be walked in less than one week and the pilgrims queue for their “credencial” at journey’s end.

Armed with all this knowledge, my husband Gerry and I set off to walk our “camino” in May 2012. We had researched and booked some accommodation beforehand and left some nights free also. The path is well marked with yellow arrows and follows across fields, along rivers, roads and forest tracks. There is no urgency; all we have to do is put one foot in front of the other. Each person has their own reasons for walking; religious, spiritual, physical, escape from worries.
There are cafés along the route. There are no other choices; you eat what the café provides. A Spanish breakfast is a mug of coffee and a slice of toast. Early lunch is a delicious “empanada”, a pastry filled with meat and vegetables. Dinner is “menu del dia”, menu of the day for around €10, meat, vegetables, a glass of wine and maybe a small dessert. Accommodation ranges from simple hostels on a first-come first-served basis to 2 star hotels with private bathrooms. One memorable hostel we stayed in had one large dormitory with bunks pushed together. It was strange sharing this space with so many people, men and women. Everyone was so tired that sleep came quickly, that is until the village fiesta started in the field next door, playing music until 2am!

The people we met along the way are what make the “camino” special; the English man who spent his summers walking with little money, the two German women who had walked from France and whose feet were covered in blisters. One local man stood beside his cherry tree and handed cherries to those who passed by, saying “buen camino” or good way. Another woman shouted at us as we passed, we were going the wrong way but she didn’t have English to tell us. We met many Irish people too. Gerry, my husband carried my bag for me occasionally and other times I wished he could carry me too! We found a taxi company which carried my bag each day to the next accommodation which was a huge help. As the days went by though, our rhythm of walking improved and we didn’t feel as worn out by the end of each day. We enjoyed each other’s company and it was a great way to be. All worries are immediate, the sore feet, feeling hot and thirsty, sleeping well from tiredness. It was special to stop at various Churches along the way and pray, following in the thousands of others’ footsteps.

As we neared the city, we could feel a buzz from people as we approached. The Pilgrims’ Mass is at 12 noon each day. Would we reach it in time? We eventually turned a corner in the city and there was the huge cathedral, with streams of people flowing towards it. At one level we were delighted to be finished but on another we felt an anticlimax, the end of this magical journey. We prayed at Mass, giving thanks for having the health to walk and to be able to finish. We watched as the eight men swung the huge thurible, the “botafumeiro” the largest in the world, 16m in height and smelled the incense as it swung over our heads. It’s said that it was made this size to assist in masking the stench of the unwashed pilgrims. We hugged some people in the Cathedral, those we had encountered along the way. Is that not what life is about, being with people along their way? We have the camino buzz. Last year we walked another stage and this year we hope to go again. Why not? “Buen Camino”.
It’s AMMM Anne Choon here in Penang, Malaysia and although I’m only one out here and you don’t hear from me much. I’m very active and “Rooted and Founded in Love” carrying out my mission in serving palliative care cancer patients as a volunteer nurse and anyone whom God sends my way who needs help, especially the poor. Recently I have been asked to help a 17 year old girl who is very ill with anorexia nervosa so I’ve been seeing her and her family and counselling them and praying that she will recover as my own daughter, Kim did. Her name is Shu Ling and she is hospitalized at the moment. Please remember her in your prayers too.

Recently I organised a concert in aid of Penang Hospice Society where I invited world Maestro in Sarod, Pandit Debojyoti Bose from Kolkata, India, accompanied by my own Tabla Master Sri Vick Riyazi at Vickneswaran Ramakrishnan on Tabla and they played for two hours 30 mins. They got a standing ovation and played an encore for 30 minutes. God really blessed the whole event and we raised RM60000 for the Hospice Society and are planning more concerts with them in the future. I’ve so many stories to share but never enough time to sit at the computer and write. I’ll be in Dublin in December for my mum’s 80th Birthday and will definitely drop into Rosemount and would love to share them with you then. Thank you for your emails which I have been receiving and praying along with you even though I haven’t replied. Just know that I am with you all in spirit and in prayer.

I’m not sure if I’m the only AMMM who is the only one in any country where you have AMMMs. (Maybe Pat Deeney AMMM in Australia would be another?). I have very little contact with other AMMMs and contact my soulmate Sr. Dr. Maria Borda MMM in Makiungu as often as I can but both of us are usually flying about as God finds plenty of work for us to do in our different countries. Despite the lack of communication for long periods, I still feel that bond and our common mission so very strongly, so it’s all OK. Now that I have a bit of a break from my cancer patients as recently two of them whom I had been caring for over the last three years, Andy aged 48 and Ruth aged 28, sadly passed away.

I need to go for a retreat with Fr. Marshall Fernandes, a wonderful Indian priest who lives on the mainland now and was our previous parish priest and is my confidant and spiritual adviser. I’ve told him I want to go for an individual retreat to reflect, share and have quiet time for maybe one week where I will stay with him and end with a Mass and renewal of my AMMM Covenant which will be so beautiful. I’ve lost track of when I did it last but never mind ….. it’s good to do it again anyway as I don’t know when I’ll get a break again and it’s best to do it at the end of a retreat.

Anyway, just thought I’d share a little bit with you and let you know that AMMM in Penang, though very small, is very much alive and kicking and will certainly be uniting with all of you in prayer for all affected by violence and natural disasters and pray for the safe return of all the girls kidnapped in Nigeria.

God Bless, Protect and Guide you always in our united Mission of Love.

Anne Choon AMMM
WITH GRATITUDE IN MY HEART

Come the end of the month, I will be passing over the American Associates to Kay Lawlor. For the past 10 years, I have been their Director. This experience has been one of joy and excitement, as I have seen the women/man grow in the spirit of MMM. Needless to say, I also have grown, as it involved much research into what it means to be an AMMM. I was excited by the mission of communicating life to those near and far. We have all been challenged by Jesus’ words “to go forth”.

At times it has been difficult, especially in communicating with Associates who are so scattered across the country. Due to health issues, I was not always able to communicate as I would have liked, but the Associates came to the rescue and made sure everyone knew what was happening. One of my greatest joys was having our Associates come to our Area/National meeting held each year. Their contribution to the meetings has been great, edifying our MMMs who were present. They have much to give and are open to giving it. I believe our meetings with them present, have been successful and we always come away expressing how blessed we are having Associates.

So my heart is filled with gratitude over having had this wonderful experience. I see more clearly that our core values and charism provide an authentic guide during this time of MMM transformation. These enduring principles, in union with the profound calling of MMM/AMMM contain both a community’s faith tradition as well as an innate summons to forge on in creating an inclusive and dynamic ministry. Our Associates will continue to inspire and strengthen the mutual bond of MMM/AMMM. In building upon this prophetic foundation, we will journey together, far beyond what we can fully envision now, except to know with certainty that we carry within us things sacred. It is revealed in us on our many different paths and will continue to be revealed.

“See, I make all things new again!”

Sr. Anne Marie Hubbard, MMM

If I were looking for one single, simple phrase to sum up Benedict’s whole way of life, I would find it in Verse 21: “The love of Christ must come before all else” … This Christ-love is the centre of the whole Rule and the centre of our lives. If there is any one thing that is characteristic of Benedict, it is that he makes the love of Christ the focal point to which everything must lead. One should really not talk about a verse like this, but just stop and meditate on it.

Esther de Waal
MMMM Hospitality Made Manifest

The MMM’s core value of hospitality is a true manifestation of the gospel. This is evident in the gospel story of Mary’s journey into the hill country to visit her cousin, Elizabeth. In fact, this value calls us to cross borders, to get out of our little selves, our homes and our country in order to make it apparent.

On the Holy Thursday, 17th April, my wife Judy and I together with our two little children; Aaron and Audrey left for Ngaramtoni in Arusha Tanzania to visit and celebrate Easter with Eamonn and Moira together with two MMM sisters; Genevieve and Teresa who were all alone in the large MMM compound. On arrival at the Ngaramtoni bus stop, we were met by one of the staff members of the sisters and what a warm reception it was! With our reasonably heavy suitcase in his hands, he led us straight into the Brehony’s where we found Moira waiting for us. The hospitality and the warm welcome which Moira gave us made us feel that indeed we were home away from home. No sooner had we arrived at the Brehony’s than we were swiftly settled into our waiting room. Aaron, forgetting that we were still visitors, began running up and down in the corridors unconsciously enjoying the instant hospitality. The next thing was an invitation to the dining table where there was already hot lunch. I sat at the table facing the dazzling portrait of Mother Mary Martin and this instantly reminded me of the words of my MMM mentor Sr. Florence Njoku during one of our mentorship session where she described Mother Mary Martin as a woman who was full of warmth and had a great sense of humor. Amazingly, as I silently meditated of these words, I noticed the same traits in our host whose hospitality was already evident.

After the nice delicacy, Moira then took us on a brief tour of the MMM compound, showing us the still fresh grave of Sr. Opportunia (May her soul rest in peace), the sisters’ house and the magnificent newly constructed unit that had just been blessed and officially opened not long ago for the sisters who needed special care. Sadly, she mentioned that Sr. Opportunia was one of those who were to move into the new house but unfortunately she had passed on before the completion and the blessing of the house. The brief tour was actually worth it because we got to know our way around and these made us to feel more at home.

Later in the day, we left for Arusha town. Moira ‘the tour guide’ drove us through the streets of Arusha showing us some of the landmark buildings such as the Arusha Conference Centre, the UN building that houses the Tribunal for Rwanda and many others. Well, this was brief because we needed to be back at home in time to go for the Holy Thursday mass at the nearby parish.

On Holy Saturday, Sr. Genevieve and Sr. Teresa invited Judy, the kids and I for lunch. Being with the two sisters was another great opportunity for my family to bask in the MMM’s hospitality. They were so welcoming and nice to be with. While having my plate of lunch I thought to myself “aren’t these sisters the same everywhere?” This thought evoked the memories of all the MMM houses that I have visited beginning with Sports Road and Study House in Nairobi and then stretching all the way to Salvador/Bahia in Brazil and of course Ngaramtoni. In all these houses, I have received almost the same kind of welcoming and treatment full of much love and warmth. After the lunch which was of course amidst Aaron’s athletic movements, Sr. Genevieve took some time to show us an album with photos of her work. Later in the night, the two MMM sisters together with the three AMMMs, that is the Brehony’s and I left for the Easter Vigil Mass at the Missionaries of Africa to celebrate the resurrection of Christ.

On Easter Sunday, our host took us to an interdenominational Church for a service which was a whole new experience for us. After the service, Moira drove all of us to the Game Sanctuary Meru Arusha where we were treated to a delicious Indian Cuisine followed by a splendid view of Zebras, Ostriches, and Antelopes among other animals at the Sanctuary. We then headed back home to what was our last evening at the Brehony’s.
Judy and I were really impressed by the hospitality of our host family and their simplicity. Furthermore, the fact that they have committed themselves to live and work with the MMM, contributing their experiences, dedication and eagerness to bring the healing love of God to those in need is incredible! In fact, when Eamonn asked us a question on whether we would be open to working with the sisters in any of their missions like they are doing, the answer from both of us was a resounding YES.

My experience with Eamonn and Moira together with Sisters Genevieve and Teresa in Ngaramtoni Arusha taught me a lot about the richness and the value of hospitality that is at the centre of the Medical Missionaries of Mary’s core values. Since then, that is the dimension that I wish to deepen in my life as an Associate Medical Missionary of Mary as I seek to bring the healing love of God to those in need. Judy, after this experience now feels the call to embrace the charism of MMM as an Associate also. Isn’t this just great?

By Thomas Nyawir, AMMM, Kenya

Becoming Gratitude

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances .... “1 Thessalonians. 5 : 16 – 18.

“Love for life isn’t about being grateful about something, or for something, but just for Life itself; it simply is. A life of becoming gratitude is lived day by day, moment by moment, and breath by breath”.

Perhaps true gratitude is simply saying yes to Life.

Yes, on all its levels and layers.

Yes, to the yin and yang of our existence.

Yes, in an embrace wide enough to encompass everything.

Yes, to the loving invitation of the Holy.

Let’s welcome these words as our sacred benediction:

For all that has been, thanks.

For all that will be, Yes!

Linda Douty
GREETINGS AND NEWS FROM CORNWALL, ENGLAND

Mary Bradley, AMMM

As a Christian, Catholic and MMM Associate, I am very aware of the privilege I have of living in one of the most beautiful parts of England, in the county of Cornwall – the most southwesterly peninsula of our land, never far from the sea. I am also very aware of the call to work for Justice, PEACE AND THE Integrity of Creation – and hold in my heart and prayer those in need in so many parts of the world. I would like to share with you just a few ways in which I am able to join with others in "bringing about the Kingdom of God"………..which we pray for daily in the Lord’s Prayer

LENTEN LUNCHES:

Our Parish is dedicated to St. Mary Immaculate. I co-ordinate our Millennium Covenant with the Poor groups:

- This year I organised a new venture, “Lenten Lunches” (Food for Thought) on Wednesdays £1 donation (or more) for Mary’s Meals – through which 800,000 poor children throughout the world receive one good meal at school each day. 12.30 p.m. – 1.30 p.m. with Soup and a roll, then 15 minutes talk, followed by 10 minutes discussion “buzz” on the given topic and questions: Food for Thought Topics by various speakers were:
  - Food, Justice and Fair Trade Bananas
  - “Sheltering the Homeless Poor” – what we can learn from them.
  - Volunteering in Tanzania – Education a right or a privilege.
  - “I was a Stranger and you Welcomed Me” - being alongside immigrants in their experience of difficulties.
  - Street Pastors (On the streets on Saturday nights – 10p.m. – 3a.m.)
  - “The Truth will set you free ……….” Addictions.

With donations included, enough money was raised to give 30 children a meal for year.

SEMINARIAN SPONSORSHIP:

One of the first things I did 15 years ago on returning to Cornwall, was to suggest our Parish sponsored a Seminarian in a poor country for his studies for the Priesthood. Currently we sponsor an Indian student, a deacon, soon to be ordained. This costs the Parish £500 per year.

CHURCH ACTION ON POVERTY:

At my suggestion, the parish has joined this excellent and ecumenical and professional organisation which promotes and works for justice in our own country, e.g. recently campaigning against the exorbitant interest on loans, which “Loan Sharks” (moneylenders) charged, leading vulnerable people into more debt. The Government has responded to this lobbying and a law is in the process of regularising interest charged by moneylenders.

SUNDAY BIDDING PRAYERS (INTERCESSIONS) AT MASS:

Bidding prayers are offered regularly for our sponsored seminarian, and also I submit opportune prayers for special days, e.g. Homelessness Sunday, Peace Sunday, Racial Justice Sunday.

PRAYER GROUP FOR JUSTICE, PEACE, AND PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS:

In November 2012 I became increasingly aware of reports in the media the persecution Christians (and not only Christians) were undergoing for their beliefs. Pakistan, Nepal, India, Nigeria, Colombia, Chile …… the Middle East, the Holy Land ……. A proposal was made to our local “Churches Together” (sixteen Congregations) that an hour of prayer be held each month. This was started in February 2012. Numbers are small, 3, 4 or 5.
We meet in our parish hall. It is a humbling experience to respond to so many needs – to human trafficking, “disappearance” of loved one, violence, razing to the ground of whole villages, etc. We meet in the hope and in the knowledge that prayer is never unheard. As the ripples of our prayer reach out and spread, we also send occasional greetings through the organisation, Christian Solidarity.

**FOOD BANK:**

Having given up being a street pastor, I now work two hours a week as a Team Lead in our ecumenical Good Bank under auspices of the Trussell Trust. My job is to welcome clients with MMM hospitality, offer refreshments (real coffee and choc-biscuits) and having got their food vouchers into the packing room, sit and listen ........ Many clients have not been listened to for a long time. Benefit cuts and delaying rising bills, evictions, depression, domestic violence, students’ loans delayed .... These are just some of the reasons people come. In our diocese one in five mothers don’t eat so that they can feed their family. Yet England is the 7h richest country in the world. Before the Food Bank opens, we all pray and prayer is always offered to clients, many of whom respond and are glad of this. Our aim is that clients will go out knowing that they matter as individuals and that they can always drop in for a chat. Recently a “banquet” was held one Saturday evening – a lovely roast dinner provided. Twenty people came and there were beauticians, photo shots, hairdressers, face painting for the children etc. A monthly “connect” tea and cake afternoon has now been started.

**THE INTEGRITY OF CREATION:**

Last week we had brown dust from the Sahara and our water supply was brown – taps being run ‘till it cleared. Our interconnectedness is a reality. I endeavour to reduce my “carbon Footprint” by walking when I can, not driving fast, composting my own plus my two neighbours’ vegetable peelings, etc., using the recycling facilities; meatless days and growing my own fruit and vegetables, which I share with neighbours. I am about to plant seeds for a wild flower meadow to save the bees, whose decreasing numbers are giving cause for alarm.

**FAIR TRADE:**

Our Fair Trade is promoted in the parish. Falmouth is a Fair Trade town, but has seen little activity of late. I am about to write to the three town Counsellers who have responsibility for Fair Trade and I’ve become a Churches Together representative on the newly reconvened Town Fair Trade Group.

**FRIENDSHIP / PRAYER:**

Last but not least, I approached Sr. Joanne Bierl MMM and Associates’ rep on CLT, and Sr. Siobhan MMM with my wish to be linked with a particular MMM Mission in friendship and prayer, suggesting the latest MMM Mission in South Sudan. To my delight over a couple of years our friendship has blossomed and I am occasionally able to speak on the phone, and of course keep in touch by e-mail. This link spreads a little further. I now have an annual parish event in the Summer – “Mary’s Get-Together” for Sudan. Parishioners and my friends pay £2, bring a plate of food and wine if they wish, and we have a lovely social gathering together and a raffle. I spend a few minutes giving a news update that Sr. Irene kindly provides, so news of MMM spreads. Last year nearly £400 was raised.

Thank you Srs. Irene, Chinyere and Odette for our companionship, as together we walk in the tracks left for us by Mother Mary and so many wise and wonderful and holy women I have met in MMM.

*My love and greetings to MMMs and AMMs everywhere.* Mary
AWAY FROM THE OFFICE DESK AND DOWN TO EARTH

Since the year began I have had a dream and passion to transform Kyango Bigavu community into a desirable state. On January 13th I made an effort to assist this community which is located in the Nkenge parish, Kasaali sub-county, Rakai district of southern Uganda. This community is among the poorest of the poor and faces broad difficulties such as health, sanitation issues and food security.

The majority of the population is engaged in subsistence farming and up to 45% have had no formal education. The main economic activities relate to agriculture with 83% engaging solely in farming as a way of procuring income. Community members report that they eat an average of two meals per day (although less when crops are not plentiful), mostly consisting of one or two of: cassava, beans, sweet potatoes, maize, groundnuts, matooke (green bananas), or boiled greens. Rarely, they will include meats into their diet. Though they rely on these foods as staples, they only grow cassava, sweet potato, beans and groundnuts on their land. This indicates that sustainability of their diet is highly affected by their ability to purchase the foods which they do not grow, thus further endangering their food security.

When asked for their opinions of low crop yields, 38% believe a combination of infertile soil and drought causes poor harvests. Most farmers use traditional farming methods, making decisions based on previous experience and priority subsistence needs. Many of the staple foods hold low nutritional value with protein being noticeably absent. From this visit together with the community members we have developed a three year strategic plan to transform this community. In this strategic plan we envisage creating a sustainable community demonstration farm and model homestead. The demonstration farm will attempt to achieve the mission of “becoming a centre of excellence in sustainable agriculture and rural development, providing responsive and dynamic solutions to rural communities in partnership with relevant stakeholders” through providing an avenue for community members to gather, discuss, and learn about appropriate technology, innovative agriculture techniques, and additional methods of earning income.

Compiled by Matovu Charles (AMMM-Uganda)
Pat Deeney AMMM writes from Australia:

We are into our third year here in Perth and full-time ministry remains as busy as ever. Dave continues to go from strength to strength in his ministry at John Wollaston Anglican Community School and has conducted a number of baptisms for past students and families. It is wonderful to see God at work through him. I continue to work for YouthCARE as an Area Chaplain, pastorally caring for 30+ chaplains. It is a real privilege to minister to these wonderfully committed Christian people and support them in their schools. One of the highlights towards the end of last year was arranging a retreat for my chaplains at New Norcia Benedictine Monastery. None of them were Catholics but were very much impacted at being introduced to the Benedictine spirituality and we had a really blessed and wonderful time together. Being able to share different faith experiences and spirituality is one of the real joys of my ministry. I have just arranged another retreat for November this year. As of February this year I have commenced studies for a Bachelor in Theology Degree and I am just loving the learning and challenges it brings to my faith. It really is full-on though with working full-time, supporting the family and trying to meet essay and assignment deadlines! Two weeks ago, our daughter Nicole was also appointed as a school chaplain (not in my area) and is currently undergoing induction training – so another Deeny moves into chaplaincy ministry. She is very excited as am I.

In May of last year I travelled back to the UK to visit my mother and was able to visit the sisters at Ealing where, as always I was made to feel so welcome. One of the highlights of the trip was renewing my AMMM Covenant on my last day there. Somehow it felt very fitting to leave from Ealing straight to the airport. I felt as if I was being sent on my way to Australia surrounded by love and prayer. Sadly I returned to the UK in November following the unexpected death of my mother RIP. It was wonderful to have the support of the sisters from Ealing at her funeral and it meant an awful lot to me.

In September of this year, God willing, we will all be coming to the UK for Justin, our son’s wedding. He is actually getting married in Malta and then we will head over to the UK. Of course I will be looking forward to visiting the sisters at Ealing. Whilst I may be the only AMMM in Australia I continue to strive to live out the calling of MMM to bring healing and compassion to those whom I meet in my daily life.

We express our sincere sympathy to Pat on the death of her dear mother RIP

Dr. Dietrich Dettmann AMMM sends greetings and very good wishes to all MMMs and AMMMs.

I was in Cyprus recently for one week. The weather was pleasant and apart from the political division of this beautiful island into two parts – Turkish and Greek, we were not disturbed in any way by that fact.

We had a very good flight with Norwegian Airlines and a good hotel in the south near Larnaca Airport. The weather was warm and sunny, however in the mountains at 1500 metres altitude, there were already some places with snow. All in all we had a nice little break, and we returned home safely and well relaxed.
A rite of passage can be a ritual that marks the transition from one phase of life to another. It is a tradition that has existed from the beginning of time, birth, adolescence, adulthood, middle age, old age and death are all part of the tradition. My uncle used to say, ‘there are three stages in life, - youth, middle age and you are looking well.’

As parents of four boys Johnny and I felt it important to mark the stages of transition on their life’s journey. It began with the simple planting of a tree to mark their arrival into our lives. With great love and affection we watched both grow in synergy with each other.

As young adolescents aged 13 years they received the Holy Spirit before embarking on secondary level education. To mark this transition I took each of them to Station Island in Lough Derg for a day and spent some time in the area. We visited the source of the River Shannon, known as the Shannon Pot. It was possible at that time to jump across it. I used the metaphor of the river Shannon for the boys as it is the longest river in Ireland and they were able to see that it began in a very small hole in the ground but it grew wider and longer as it cut its way through our country over time to eventually reach the sea at the Shannon estuary west of Limerick city.

I explained to them the similarities with life. We begin small and then we grow and spread out and touch so many people and many will touch us too and although we have many twists and turns in life we are all heading in the one direction to our greater source.

At 18 we felt it was important to mark their arrival to adulthood by gathering their friends at our home where we celebrated with them. For us this is a significant age as they can legally drink, vote and hold a driving license and more. They are literally considered adults overnight. I believe however that age is not indication of maturity or adulthood. Look at me I am still wondering what I will be when I grow up.

Our eldest son John (27) is settled in the USA and plans to make his home there. His Tree is the Weeping Willow, it is strong and tall and moves and sways in the wind and is spread out over a large area of the lawn. Just like John, he is tall and strong and has worked in and travelled to most of the continents and can move and sway very well to adapt to whatever life throws at him.

Our second son Mark (23) is working two jobs and awaiting a visa to work in Canada. His Tree is the Canadian Spruce, tall and strong and grows slow and steady. Mark is tall and strong and takes his time and may not do things the conventional way but he is steady.
Our third son Steven (21) is at college and working during his time off. His Tree is the Tulip tree. It creates beautiful tulip-like blossoms in April for his birthday every year. It is slow growing but an amazing image in spring with a beautiful scent. Steven takes his time, he cannot be rushed and needs to know what is happening. He is so creative and sensitive to the beauty in all living things.

Our youngest son Daniel (19) is sitting his leaving certificate exams in June. He then plans to head off to college in September. His Tree is the White Cherry. It has grown very fast and offers lots of variety and beautiful blossoms in spring. A bit like Daniel, it had grown up before we knew it. He is tall and colourful and enjoys life at a steady pace, always on top of his game.

As with the boys I wanted to acknowledge my own transition so I embarked on a journey on the Camino de Santiago, 830 km. I felt I needed time out to reflect on the stage I was emerging from in a hope that I would be able to plan for my new stage. It was a journey I had been planning to do since I first heard of it in 1999, but it was only last summer that I made the time to go or gave myself permission to go, an advantage of the fifty something stage. So like the Nike Ad says ‘just do it’, ‘I did’. It was a wonderful experience and one I will always treasure. I arrived in St Jean de Pied de Port in France, stayed one night to gather my thoughts and separate myself from my life, as I know it. I was making it a pilgrimage so I attended Mass on the first night and got the pilgrim blessing and the next day I was off and just kept walking until I got to the end. The feelings of letting go, release, renewal, being refreshed and reborn were very evident. I love to challenge myself and set a different goal to aim towards each year, no matter how small.

So Johnny and I are traversing new paths, on a new journey and this is an exciting time with new adventures. I look forward to crossing to the next stage of life as we experience the boys leaving the nest to move on and find their own nesting place on their journey of life and I pray God will hold them in His care wherever they land.

Rosaleen Butterfly AMMM
When someone said to me,
‘I would like to hear your reflections on your year of living
and travelling in China. You must have been doing a lot of thinking
in between the actual doing.’

W
hilst I did keep a journal of sorts and sent monthly updates to my family
and friends they were a record of the very different culture, the value sys-
tem and my day to day survival but now on reflection that was more
about the doing but as for the thinking ....

Once I knew what was expected of me in preparing and teaching I was ‘on top of
it’ as they say. After the first semester I dumped their out of date books and winged it on
my own .... playing western songs and seeing if the students could pick up the
lyrics .... using pictures from newspapers and magazines for them in groups to create and
act out the scenario....I read stories and asked them to role play the respective parts ....
we read love poems and they choose their favourite lines .... they did presentations, we
had debates and used the term globalisation to discuss the development of China as a
world player. The teaching was the best part and I loved the challenge of planning diverse
and hopefully stimulating lessons.

As for my thoughts .... I couldn’t let myself think too much or I would have
cracked up living in such a forsaken place with nothing to do .... no cinema, no theatre,
no golf, no tennis, no bridge, no extra curricular classes .... in fact nothing to stimulate or
interest me outside of the classroom. That plus the cold, the poverty, the squalor, the
pushing and the shoving even to get into the lifts in the university, being elbowed by
elderly men, glowered at by women of my age who seemingly had been told to be wary of
all Westerners as they were corrupt, having no water, no electricity and no gas to cook
on. This was a common occurrence even though I was living in an apartment in an hotel.
One day in desperation I text another teacher and asked him if he had water .... he re-
plied, ‘you want water and the Internet .... who do you think you are .... the president?’

In an attempt to meet others I invited some groups of students to come to my
apartment for extra English practice and I gave time to some Vietnamese students who
also wanted to improve their English. I went for walks and tried to meet as many people
as I could for coffee but there were very few opportunities.

My closest friend throughout the whole time was My Father .... my constant com-
panion that I spoke to more than any other during my stay. It was to Him that I asked the
same question, ‘what am I doing here?’ His answer was always the same, ‘it’s ok you are
doing what I want you to do .... you managed yesterday and you will manage today.’

It most definitely was one day at a time. I couldn’t let myself think too much of
tomorrow .... coping on a daily basis was as much as I could manage. After the first night
when I arrived I never experienced that awful sense of despair and at times found myself
content and even happy in my solitude. I tried not to think of home and did not visualise
my home or my friends .... I knew they were there and that was enough though.
I went to visit other cities in China including Beijing, Xi’an, Shanghai, Wuhan, Dalian, Huludao and Harbin. Changchun where I lived was in the North East, very cold with 7 months of winter and day temperatures of -20° so every chance to escape was celebrated.

I never expected to see such poverty, such a lack of basic amenities including health and safety in every aspect of life and the magnitude of dirt and dust that contaminated everything. The Chinese people are heroic in their stoicism, they never complain and work at surviving in a very harsh environment. It was only in the last few weeks that I began to think how privileged I was that I was going home and wouldn’t have to endure any more but that was tinged with a sense of betrayal and guilt in leaving.

I am now home over two months and have to say that I have struggled to adapt to the Western lifestyle and have at times felt overwhelmed. I took solace in this quote by Ismail Kadare in his book, “The Accident”:

“This sort of crisis is not common but it is well documented. You are making a passage, undergoing a transition. Because this experience is over, you think you have accomplished it painlessly. You forget that even moving house is a form of stress, let alone what you are going through now. It’s like being transported to another planet.’

It also helped enormously to go back to The Motherhouse in Drogheda and have time with my dearest friends knowing that they too had to adapt to what seemed like another planet.

At the moment I am thinking about approaching the Chinese Community in Belfast to offer my services as a teacher of English .... will keep you posted!!!!

By Vera Grant, AMMM

Marianne Grisez AMMM sends:

“Let us labour for an inward stillness ...
An inward stillness and an inward healing.
That perfect silence where the lips and heart
Are still, and we no longer entertain
Our own imperfect thoughts and vain opinions,
But God alone speaks to us and we wait
In singleness of heart that we may know
His will, and in the silence of our spirits,
That we may do His will and do that only”

- Henry Wadsworth Longfellow
Drinking from the River of His Mercy
By Dr. Grace Ebhojie AMMM

Introduction: The title of this write-up is coined to depict the extrication of a downtrodden citizen by Divine Will. It is based on my singular experience in the Federal Civil Service of my country Nigeria. It is a very brief account intended to illuminate the faith of anyone who reads it.

After my graduation from the University in June 1972, I was employed by the Federal Ministry of Education as Education Officer. I was in my early twenties. I worked hard and rose to the rank of Director of Education in 1999; with most of my contemporaries at least ten years older than me in biological age. I believe in honesty and at my supervisory level in the service I led my subordinates in the right way of doing things. This was not too good for them and their sponsors, and so they would rather eliminate me. And in fact, they made both physical attempts at my life, but they failed miraculously.

I was suspended from my 32 years of meritorious service in November 2004, for reasons as flimsy as ‘you refused to die when you were physically attacked, you took Mrs. Jezebel to court, you refused to collect a letter from the Director of Administration, and etc’. No hearings from me were allowed by the powers of the day. In November 2007 I was dismissed from the same service, effectively back-dated to 2004. I was completely ostracized, starved of my fundamental human rights including means of livelihood. Devastated was the mildest I could describe my feelings. I had nowhere to turn to, except God.

My contact with the MMM sisters started in August 2004 when I came to Abuja, on a forced transfer from my Station, Makurdi. I patronized their Primary Health Care Centre where I made friends with all the sisters. Sister Cecilia Azuh suggested to me to aspire for the Associate Movement and I accepted. She gave me a lot of encouragement in continuous prayers. All the MMM sisters individually, and at various times, prayed with me and continued to encourage me to accept my challenges as a divine message. When I was finally dismissed from my work in 2007, I was able to absorb the shock. I relocated to Benin City to join my family in 2010, after obtaining a PhD degree, from The Benue State University. I took my Covenant with the AMMM in Benin City, in 2012. In my first year I participated in the celebration of the 75th Foundation Anniversary and in other activities of the MMM, to which I was invited. I was physically present at the First Profession of three MMM postulants, which took place at Ugbekun, the Administrative Headquarters of The West African Region. I was the sole representative of all the AMMMs for that event. My first renewal took place in Lagos in May 2013.

On Friday, November 29, 2013 I received a call from my daughter in Abuja saying she had good news for me. She said; ‘I have received a copy of a letter, on your behalf, from the Federal Civil service Commission. The contents read that you have been re-instated back to the Federal Civil Service, with effect from the day you had been dismissed.’ She added that she had earlier received a phone call from an officer in the Commission, requesting her to go to the Commission and collect a letter for her mother. I was very happy and I praised God. It was then I composed the following canticle:
I give thanks to God the king of creation.
He has lifted me above the raging waves
and manifested his supreme justice for all to acknowledge.
From my infancy I have come through many dangers and snares,
with fowlers who would rather devour than allow life be.
I call to the lord my God who rescues me.

Oh! What of the number of times I was beaten up by gangs,
gagged for their fear that I might cry out,
tortured further for complaining,
opressed for my nativity and denied of my fundamental human rights?
God you looked on and smiled, for I put my trust in you.
Forgiveness to them may you grant.

God of the minority, you did not abandon me when I was downtrodden
and not even when my life was ebbing away after a ghastly motor accident.
Father, you gave me strength and courage, and I lived on.
For surviving the near fatal accident while in active service,
my oppressors dismissed me from the service
of my youthful and exceptionally productive years.

But you God, my King, were on my side
Today I am alive to claim what were once taken away from me by force:
my job, service and honour.
I will sing your praise forever; O God, my King
I have drank of the river of your mercy
and I am abundantly satisfied.

By Dr. Grace Ebhojie, AMMM

I BELONG 
by Martha Acuna, AMMM

As I was driving to work this morning I looked straight ahead
and there in the horizon the sky was beautiful.
It was full of clouds, some white puffy ones,
and some storm clouds, very dark.
But the sun was huge and peeking behind them.
Golden and white and blue rays were beaming down on earth.
I counted twelve or thirteen rays of light.
And at once I thought of MMM and AMMM.
How the sun, the clouds and the rays symbolized
our spirituality and oneness with each other.
We are all over the world, and I belong.
I belong.

My thoughts were that being with beautiful and prayerful
women is a good thing, and I belong.
That’s how I feel about the AMMMs and MMMs.
We are rays of light, hope, and love.
Occasionally, my work as a solicitor representing asylum-seekers in Ireland provides me the privilege of being the witness of good news which transforms for good a person’s life. One such recent experience was receiving the letter informing a Client of mine – we will call him ‘Kabir’ - that he had been granted Subsidiary Protection in Ireland.

‘Subsidiary Protection’ is a form of international protection granted to persons who, although not qualifying as ‘refugees’ as such, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm in their countries of origin, if they were returned there. (‘serious harm’ being defined as (a) death or execution, or (b) torture and/or inhuman treatment and/or punishment, or (c) a direct threat to a person’s life or person by reason of the indiscriminate violence arising from an armed conflict).

Nothing is more fulfilling in my work than witnessing a Client’s joy and relief when learning that they are finally allowed to stay in Ireland and no longer at risk of being deported. Kabir had to wait over six and a half years since he first arrived in October 2008. During all this period, he had had to live in a Direct Provision hostel for asylum-seekers.

Direct Provision is the system by which asylum-seekers are accommodated in private hostels and fed three meals a day, not allowed to work or and entitled only to a payment of 19.10 EUR per week. When established in the year 2000, Direct Provision was meant to be a short-time ‘solution’ to what was then believed to be the temporary ‘problem’ of a sudden increase in the number of asylum-seekers reaching our shores. From virtually no asylum applications in the early 1990s, the numbers peaked at 11,000 in 2002. Since then, however, they have been declining steadily year after year until reaching a very low yearly average of about 1,000 applicants since 2011.

Most people agree that the reception conditions in Direct Provision hostels - being unable to cook your own food; being given the same meal day-in, day-out (chips, chicken, pasta, etc); not being able to work, receiving only 19.10 EUR per week, having very limited mobility and autonomy, having to share a room with other people with the lack of privacy that this entails - can be reasonably tolerated for a number of months, but can become unbearable and inhuman if endured over a number of years, forcing individuals and families to lead dependent and passive life-styles, which can seriously adversely affect their physical and mental health.

Kabir was in Direct Provision hostels for six and a half years (from the age of 25 to 31). As a young, healthy single man, he was able to cope with it better than most. Considering his personal story and the reasons that forced him to flee his country I guess helps one to understand his resilience.

Kabir is an Afghan national. He comes from an influential family in Kunar Province. His father was a high-ranking member of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), which ruled Afghanistan from 1978 to 1992. After the Taliban took control of Kunar Province in 1996 (when Kabir was about 12 years old), Kabir’s father went missing. As his mother was always ill and in bed, Kabir had to take responsibility for his two younger brothers, one of whom suffers serious developmental problems. After his mother passed away in 2001, a maternal aunt moved in permanently with the children, Kabir was unable to continue his schooling, and he stopped writing poetry.

Life under the Taliban regime (1996-2001) was very difficult, but the security situation only deteriorated further following the US invasion of late 2001. The first few years of President Karzai’s government were relatively stable, but from 2004 the Taliban insurgency started to gain strength, and by 2008 the armed conflict had reached enormous proportions. The Taliban were recruiting young men to join their cause. They would go to mosques and lecture people about the atrocities committed by the invading US Army, the killing
of civilians, etc. Many youths joined the Taliban ranks voluntarily. Many who like Kabir declined, were being pressurised to change their minds, first with polite visits at their homes, but if these failed, by direct threats.

After ignoring a number of warning letters, Kabir was eventually forcibly recruited by the Taliban. He spent a number of weeks with them during which he was ill-treated very harshly and trained to become a fighter. Following a nearby air strike by the US army, Kabir managed to escape and walk his way through the mountainous region of Kunar until he eventually reached home. From there, he took his brothers to an uncle’s home in Jalalabad, the capital of neighbouring Nangarhar Province.

In fear of the Taliban, and the general insecurity in Afghanistan, Kabir fled his country. His uncle paid an agent who took him to Pakistan, from where he travelled to the Middle East and from there he came to Ireland, where he applied for asylum in October 2008. Six and a half years later, he has finally been granted protection and residence.

Kabir’s joy however is not complete, as his heart aches for his younger brothers’ safety and he is most anxious to apply for Family Reunification in respect of them. Every now and then the Taliban still harass Kabir’s uncle in Jalalabad, asking for his whereabouts. The uncle does not let Kabir’s youngest brother out of the house as he also fears for his safety. He is a bright teenager who is eager to pursue his education. For the time being, however he only receives private tuition at home. Because of his developmental problems, Kabir’s middle brother does not go out of his house on his own. If he did, he would not find his way back home.

A person granted international protection is entitled to family reunification only in respect of his or her spouse and children (or his or her parents, if s/he is a child). As Kabir is applying in respect of his siblings, however, it will be necessary for him to show that they are dependent on him (financially, and/or on health grounds and/or emotionally dependent). Even if and when dependency is established, the Minister for Justice and Equality will still have a certain degree of discretion as to whether or not to grant the application.


“Armed conflict in Afghanistan took an unrelenting toll on Afghan civilians in 2013. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 8,615 civilian casualties (2,959 civilian deaths and 5,656 injured) in 2013, marking a seven percent increase in deaths, 17 percent increase in injured, and a 14 percent increase in total civilian casualties compared to 2012.

Escalating deaths and injuries to civilians in 2013 reverses the decline recorded in 2012 and is consistent with record high numbers of civilian casualties documented in 2011. Since 2009, the armed conflict in Afghanistan has claimed the lives of 14,064 Afghan civilians.

UNAMA attributed 74 percent of civilian deaths and injuries to Anti-Government Elements, 11 percent to Pro-Government Forces (eight percent to Afghan national security forces and three percent to international forces) and ten percent to ground engagements between Anti-Government Elements and Pro-Government Forces. The remaining five percent of civilian casualties were unattributed, resulting mainly from the explosive remnants of war."

As St Benedict taught us, *ora et labora*: I work towards and pray for the day when Kabir’s joy will be complete after hopefully receiving that further letter informing him that his family reunification application has been approved.

*Albert Llussà i Torra AMMM*
Today is a new day.
God awakens you to hear
and to listen with a disciple’s ear.

God had called you, taken you by the hand,
formed you and sent you in the power of the Spirit
to liberate, to heal, to bring hope
and proclaim the Good News.

Let the Spirit lead you.
Christ promised to be with you.
No need to be afraid when you traverse deep seas,
cross deserts, or toil up mountains.
No need to be discouraged when you meet obstacles.
Remember the past, the beginning of the MMM adventure.
Recall Marie Martin’s words when all seemed impossible:
“If God wants the work, God will show us the way”!

May this Invitation to life in communion
lead you to discern in truth and freedom
a way to create together an MMM/AMMM Worldwide Community.

See, I am doing a new thing!
Even now it comes to light.
Can you not see it?

From Anne Marie Kenny AMMM
A short history of the late Bernadette Neema R.I.P.

Bernadette was born in 1940 at Mamasara village, Mbulu and underwent primary education at Mamasara and middle school at Kibosh girls school.

In 1959 she attended the MMM school of nursing in Dareda for 3 years. She then went to the MMM Makiungu hospital for her midwifery course and graduated as a nurse midwife.

In 1969 she went to Holland for three years for her nursing diploma and from 1971—1973 worked in Bugando hospital in Mwanza. She returned from Mwanza in 1974 and joined Dareda hospital where she was assigned Clinical Instructor.

In 1975 Bernadette graduated as a nurse tutor from the Muhimbili School of Nursing in Dar-es-Salaam having spent two years there.

In 1977 she returned to Dareda School of Nursing as a nurse tutor where she worked until she retired in 2002.

She was an excellent teacher, an intelligent, hard working person willing to listen to anyone who had problems. She always treated her students equally with no discrimination toward tribe, religion etc. She had a wonderful sense of humor and was always ready for a laugh.

On March 29 Good Friday Bernadette Neema went to God. Bernadette worked with the MMM sisters most of her working life and during her time as a tutor in Dareda Hospital she became one of the first AMMMs in Tanzania in the year 2000.

On retirement Bernadette went home to Mbulu to look after her aging mother who is bedridden and without her eyesight but in fact eleven years later her mother continues to live but sadly without her loving daughter.

May our Lord keep her soul in eternal peace, Amen.

We received the sad news of the death of one of our Associates, Candido Haulay who died on April 14th, 2014.

Candido was the storekeeper of the MMM Sisters for many years in Chiulo Hospital, Angola and became an Associate of the Medical Missionaries of Mary in 2010.

Our prayers and thoughts are with the family of Candido Haulay RIP and with our Associates and Sisters in Angola.
Hello dear Readers:

Please send us “your narrative” - your story or thoughts about how your life as an Associate is enriched through this special relationship; or how you as a Sister or Lay Person are touched by the MMM Charism or the Associate Movement. Let us share with each other, to stay connected, to inspire and to get to know one another across the globe.

The AMMM Mission Statement

As members of the worldwide MMM community, in a world deeply and violently divided, we are people on fire with the healing love of God.

Engaging our own pain and vulnerability, we go to peoples of different cultures, where human needs are greatest.

Our belief in the inter-relatedness of God’s creation urges us to embrace wholistic healing and to work for reconciliation, justice and peace.