

ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!

Celebrating 50 years of the SHM Sisters in Zambia

RSHM Mission to Zambia. Part III

The Religious Sisters of Charity had shown us great kindness and did not abandon us when we formed our own community. We had tests to correct that Christmas (1966) but hadn't yet been asked to mark state papers. Since Sr. Theresa Francis was still acting as economer we were happy that she would attend to supplies for the beginning of term. Sr. Marie Bernadette O'Leary RSC, the Deputy Head, would manage the timetable. These were two formidable tasks we ourselves would have to tackle very soon.

That holiday, we needed to get away on our own to grow into an SHM Community. Sr. Pauline Greene, Provincial, had sent us money for a mode of transport. The money was drastically cut in the exchange but by tacking on our own 'earnings' we bought a Peugeot 404. Now we were mobile. We planned a trip to Umtali (Mutare) to visit our own RSHM Sisters there. M. Odile was not a driver and Josepha and Veronica had only just arrived so I took the wheel. I was ignorant of the length of the journey - 520 miles. Planning the route was easy. First 30 miles of dirt Road, then 50 miles of strip (only the centre third of the road tarred), a right turn at the turnpike, then down the escarpment to Chirundu, over the Kariba bridge, through Customs and on to a sign-posted tarred road all the way to Salisbury (Harare) and on to Umtali. We had to negotiate a herd of elephants in the valley and baboons seemed to laugh at us as we sped past.



Sisters Josepha, Veronica, Marie Greene and Catherine

In Salisbury (Harare), we had difficulty negotiating the grid-patterned streets and I was being told that we had passed the same blocks more than once. Eventually, we arrived at the Blue Sisters' Hospital (Little Company of Mary). M. Odile knew a Sr. Veronica Tobin LCM from Cappoquin, who was a Past Pupil of Ferrybank and Matron at the Hospital. Sr. Veronica was thrilled to see us, treated us to tea and we shared our news. She advised us that it was not wise to go any further that day and offered to put us up for the night. We were shown to a four-cubicle male ward and enjoyed a great sleep. At 5.00 a.m. the following morning, my curtain opened and an orderly came in with a jug of water.

"Good Morning, Sir," he said, when he saw me - such was the state of my hair! 'Let's get up quickly,' said M. Odile, 'or he will be back to shave us!'

After a tasty breakfast, we set off for Umtali. Everything about S. Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) was magnificent to us bush people. The evenly tarred roads had signs and markings. The topography was extraordinary. The erratics perched dangerously, one on top of the other, were fascinating, as were the pudding-bowl hills all perfectly symmetrical. What a contrast to the flat Zambian plateau we had left! I cannot do justice in this article to the lovely welcome we received at Marymount. Sr. Denis Osterhuis and the community: Srs. Richard (Headmistress), de Lourdes, des Anges, Francis Xavier and Cecilia Crook of Umtali, and Srs. Consilia Boran and Francisca Grace of Rusape, all inspired us with their commitment and dedication- and their joviality. The signs of dedication and hard work were there before our eyes. We left Umtali renewed and refreshed and with a boot full of goodies: home baking, jams, fruits, biscuits etc and a lovely floral tablecloth to cover them up. We did the home journey in one day. As we were driving the last lap of the Chivuna dirt-road, we couldn't help feeling that we were coming home.

Back to reality and the new school year. M. Odile was Acting Head and Marie Bernadette her Deputy. The girls returned on 8 January, 1967: 4 X Form 1, 3 X Form 11, 2 X Form 111, 1 X Form 1V, about 400 in all. What excitement there was at the sight of the Double Dormitory, the 'Upstairs House'! Space for building was limited in Chivuna as the land allotted by Chief Sianjalika was hilly and rocky - hence a two-storey building. The quartz foundation rock had to be bypassed for the softer schist which would yield more easily to the pick. The girls assigned to the D. Dormitory tripped off with their boxes on their heads. All wanted to be upstairs but seniority took precedence. Other new buildings at this time were: three new science labs including a science theatre, the Admin block, a needlework room and library. Spirits were high all around and classes and extra- curricular activities took shape. St. Joseph's was growing into a first-class school.

So much for the buildings, but there were headaches too. Sr. Theresa Francis RSC, Ministress, was preparing to leave. How were we to replace her? M. Odile in her wisdom contacted Sr. Pauline Greene and requested Sr. Joseph O'Byrne if she could be spared. Sr. Joseph would be ideal for the task. M. Odile's request was granted. Srs. Cecilia Henry, Joseph O'Byrne and Mary Bermingham arrived on 20 September, 1967. Sr. Cecilia took over as Head of Department of the senior Religious Education. She also took over, from M. Odile, a Latin class for two girls interested in pursuing Medicine and Law studies. Mary Bermingham joined Josepha in the Maths Department, cared for the junior pupils in Fatima and Carmel Dormitories and set up a very successful branch of the YCS. Sr. Joseph would be responsible for the Commercial Wing and the catering.



Sisters Maureen, Cecilia and Joseph

Catering was a most difficult task for many reasons: the remoteness of Chivuna, the dearth of local farm produce, the uncertainty of school numbers and, of course, lack of electricity and water. Sr. Joseph called on Sr. Theresa Francis' expertise but had to adapt it herself as the numbers grew. Sacks of maize were brought by oxen and sledge, paid for and then drawn to a local diesel-run mill to be coarsely ground into mealie meal. This was the nsima that, in one form or another, was cooked for three meals each day. "Give us this day our daily Nsima," as in the Taata Wesu (Our Father). Accompanying the



Sisters Agnes, Josepha, Veronica and Catherine

nsima a relish of meat, vegetables or kapenta (sardines) had to be provided. Margarine, oil, salt and bread were all staples and had to be brought from afar. Sr. Joseph's task was multifaceted. Part of Joseph's ministry was to oversee the work of the ancillary staff: five ladies for the kitchen, three grounds men and the Convent cook - Stephen. Suffice it to say that we rarely lost a worker or had to let one go. Sr. Joseph undertook this complex task with great clarity, command and commitment. Of course, it didn't all come together immediately, but with wisdom and creativity, Joseph set a headline by involving the local people. We got some seeds from home, like kale, cabbage etc which Joseph handed out to locals, who lived near a stream, and then bought back the veg. when in season.

One recollection of Joseph, which will stand out in many a teacher's memory, is the sight of Stephen making his way to the staff room at 9.30 a. m., the mid-morning break, with a tray piled high with freshly baked scones, butter and jam. Such was Joseph's care for us all. My own recollection of her is hearing her voice at 4.30 pm calling out to her typists, 'Carriage Return' and the thirty carriages returned on the spot.

Agnes Hunt



CELEBRATION OF RSHM 50 YEARS IN ZAMBIA – 14 MAY 2016

Srs Ursula Canavan, Patsy Butler and Catherine Dunne will represent the NEP at these celebrations.

THE CELEBRATION IN THE NEP WILL TAKE PLACE ON
27 AUGUST 2016 IN MARINO INSTITUTE, GRIFFITH AVENUE, DUBLIN

See the invitation attached with this Exchange.



Jubilee Congratulations!

Sr Mary
O'Neill



Celebrating
75
YEARS



Sr Breda
Campion

3 May 2016

Sr Virginia
Mullane

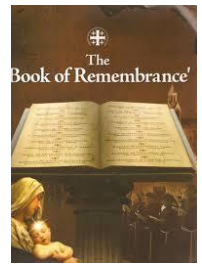


60^{years}
diamond
jubilee

14 May 2016



Sr André Dullaghan's name will be inscribed in the Book of Remembrance of the FRIENDS OF THE MUSICIANS' CHAPEL, St Sepulchre's Church, Holborn Viaduct, London, EC1A 2DQ on Tues 26 April at 6.00 pm. This takes the form of a traditional Anglican Choral Evensong and is open to all faiths and none. Any RSHM Sister who wishes to do so is invited to be present.



A big thank you for your prayers for my brother Neil during his illness and also when God called him 'Home'. Many thanks for masses offered for him and his family. We really valued your support. On 13 February, his month's mind, mass was celebrated in the Carmelite Church in Kinsale. The church was filled. His life was appreciated by his family and friends. May he rest in peace.

Gabrielle O'Regan

I would like to say a sincere thank you to all of you who had masses celebrated, said prayers and sent messages when my brother Jim died RIP. I and the family are most appreciative of all the support we received.

Esther McCarthy

Thank you to everyone who sent sympathy cards, had masses offered and who prayed for my brother Michael when he died recently RIP. We, the O'Neill family, appreciate all the support.

Mary O'Neill

BEREAVEMENTS



Our sympathies are with:

The sisters of the Brazilian province on the death of Ir Elza Cortez RSHM 14 February 2016 in Rio de Janeiro. Elza was 93 years of age and in the 73rd year of Religious Profession

The Sisters in the Brazilian Province on the death of Ir. Odette Pereira Machado RSHM 22 February 2016 in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Odette was 101 years of age and in the 78th year of her Religious Profession

Sr Mary O'Neill on the death of her brother Michael 14 March 2016. Michael has lived in New Zealand for many years.

Sr Constance O'Sullivan on the death of her sister Eileen Harrington 19 March 2016

Sr Cécile Pommier on the death of her brother Joseph 21 March 2016

Sr Sheila Morgan on the death of her sister Maureen Murphy who died 7 April at the age of 83 years

The O'Sullivan family on the death of Michael (the late Sr Josepha's brother) who died 6 March 2016

May they all rest in peace