

## Social Ministries

### Judith Penkert – working with the Addiction Services



Judith works with the Addiction Service which states in its mission statement that it aims to promote 'a drug free lifestyle' and 'in partnership with other statutory and voluntary agencies provides prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and aftercare programmes to minimise harmful effects of drug addiction and prevent the spread of HIV, HCV and other infections.'

Judith says 'Our clients respond to being treated with respect and treated as people not as 'addicts'. The clients have a deep spirituality themselves and welcome the link made between their own life experience and their beliefs. Many suffer huge losses

through suicide of friends or family, deaths from overdosing etc. There are often multiple deaths in one family – often at a very young age. Any kind of progress towards rehabilitation can be very slow and there is a high rate of relapse but I have great hope for them as people. I know I am not on my own: I work very closely as a member of a team.'

'This work strengthens my faith but causes me to question at times. I identify strongly with some of the experiences of the clients. This can be draining but can also be life-giving.'

'What is important is that someone listens to them and gives them time. I and the team are the voice for these 'voiceless'. We bridge the gap between them and the services which they find it very difficult to access at times.'

The service where Judith works has about 30 members of staff:

4 counsellors, 5 part-time doctors, 2 part-time psychiatrists, 4 nurses and a number of general assistants.

*'I have come that all may have life - life to the full'*

## Rosie Cassidy - working with refugees



About 7-8 years ago I was asked to go to live in an international RSHM community in Rome and work with refugees. I have spent four years in Casa di Georgia where women, referred by the Jesuit Refugee Service, are allowed to live for a year while they learn the language and get a job so that they can eventually become independent.

I worked as Coordinator in the Centre for four years – being the contact person and directing the services there. Most of the work involved ‘being’ rather than ‘doing’. Many had travelled very long and arduous journeys and needed human contact even though the language was often a big stumbling block. I learned so much about the suffering and misfortunes of these displaced people – harrowing stories. I do not think I could have survived some of the things they went through.

I tried to provide what they needed at that time – a presence, someone who was there for them, an anchor, someone they could come to. In the Centre all shared the chores. Some went out daily to a small job – learning the language and settling into their new country.

This Centre was a long distance from our dwelling place and the journey was becoming too stressful so I moved to work in a different, equally needy, Centre.

During the 18 years that the Services have been in operation the population availing of the services has changed. First there were Kurds: then Romanian economic refugees: now Afghan refugee boys fleeing Afghanistan. All have had horrific experiences before and during their journeys here.



*Rosie with some of the boys*



*Rosie with the Director Rev. Michael Vono*

This Centre – Joel Nafuma Centre – is run by an Anglican priest. The Coordinator is a Muslim. Working here also are a Presbyterian Pastor, a Franciscan Sister, a Danish lady teaching English and Italian and an Italian teacher who teaches Italian. I work as a kind of overseer.



All the Afghani boys have to seek refugee status. There is a constant flow of boys through the Centre. There is a restlessness about them. Many want to move on to England. This constant movement – coming and going – and change of population has made me very conscious of the importance of the present moment. I meet many of these once and never see them again. It is so important that I am as fully present as possible in the time that I do meet them. None of us know the future so the present is the only thing we have. I see the courage, sacrifice and struggle for freedom they have to make even at 14 years of age. All I can do is walk with them along a short part of this harrowing journey and try in a small way to make that part of the journey a little easier.

### A bit of background

The international community was missioned to work with refugees. Sr. Maria Teresa (now sadly deceased after an untimely death) worked in Centro Astalli and in Collegio Romano. She worked tirelessly for the refugees, was often their first point of contact and then referred them on to the most suitable Centre for their needs. Marjorie, the third member of the community has her own ministry but supports us in any way possible. Over my 7-8 years in Rome the International School at the Villa has helped us here at Joel Nafuma. Both the schools at the Villa and Via Nomentana have been a great support to our work with the refugees. Without their help our lives here would be difficult. It also been a great experience for me to be temporarily part of the Eastern American Province. It has taught me that no matter which Province we work in we are bound by an invisible SHM thread which unites all irrespective of language or culture

## MINISTRY WITH WOMEN AT RISK: Ellen O'Leary

Ellen O'Leary has been involved in Voluntary work with Ruhama over the past few months and has now been offered a part time post there where she will take particular responsibility for securing suitable accommodation for women from other countries who have been trafficked and have now been given refugee status. She will continue to work with the women as they settle into their new homes, linking them with appropriate education programmes and also doing practical work with them around budgeting/home management etc. Ellen was offered this post in recognition of the voluntary work she had been doing with a number of women using the services provided by Ruhama over the past few months.



Ruhama is an Organization that provides a wide range of support services to women who are currently involved in prostitution, victims of sex trafficking, women with a history of prostitution and women at risk of becoming involved in prostitution.

## MINISTRY WITH CAFOD : Dorothy Ward



Dorothy Ward will be working as a volunteer at CAFOD North West England offices, Preston. She will be helping others, as well as ourselves, keep up to date with the various campaigns!





## MINISTRY WITH IMMIGRANTS IN IRELAND

Recently the Irish Episcopal Conference requested the names of the Religious who are working/have contacts with immigrants on the island of Ireland. On making enquiries it transpired that many of RSHM Sisters, especially in the Dublin area, have constant contact with immigrants. Among those involved are:



**Maisie Hayden**

through her work with An Siol –  
a Dublin based project for immigrants

**Clare O'Keeffe**

through her parish work.

Mulhuddart has the highest immigration population in Ireland.  
There are 47 different languages spoken in the local school.



**Mary Mullins**

through Prison services: dealing with trafficked persons,  
persons with illegal passports and asylum seekers.

### **Agnes Hunt**

through her work with ICPO (Irish Council for Prisoners Overseas  
and contact with Kurdish families in the area.



### **Regina King**

through her Parish and Development work,  
especially through contact with parents who have children in the  
parish crèche and through the language classes for adults.



### **Consilio O'Regan**

who has had contact with immigrants over a number of years  
and continues to support and encourage those families  
with whom she has links since they first entered the country.



**It is a joy for us to know that our Sisters are committed to such great work,  
answering the call of our Provincial and General Chapters  
to enter into the cultures and religious experience of others.**