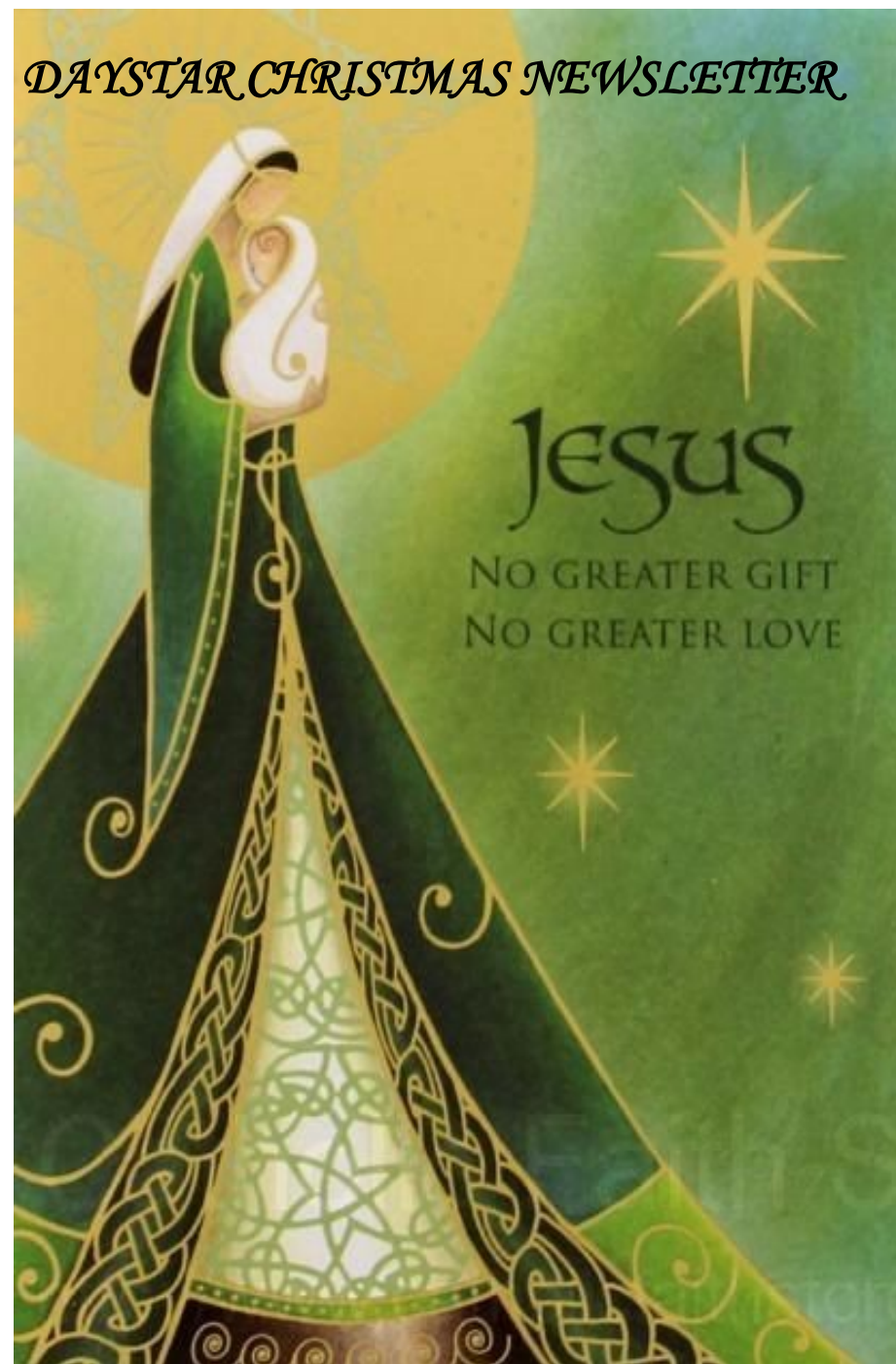




Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa
Daystar Office
Dundalk
Co. Louth

DAYSTAR CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER



Travelling in a strange land

Since the onset of the Covid pandemic, we seem to have been like people travelling in a strange, uncharted land. Lockdowns and curfews disrupted our plans and routines and also the demands we face. It's as though we have been on a journey - "and such a long journey". We have all been fundamentally affected and, in many ways, the pandemic has turned the world, as we knew it, upside down. Every aspect of life has been impacted, including how we work and interact, how we communicate and how we move around and travel. We have had to employ 'virtual' tools for activities that were once done face – to – face.



There have been catastrophes and the devastation of illness and death, including the grief of dying alone. Many people have referred to the experience of the pandemic as 'these strange times'. But there has also been a silver lining for us, including the need to slow down and have more appreciation of things that matter. Many people have shown a great willingness to help others and great appreciation is due, in particular, to all the healthcare and frontline workers who played a crucial role in the lives and wellbeing of people during the pandemic.

Now that Winter is coming upon us, we anticipate the Joyful Season of Christmas. Jesus was born a stranger and also identifies with 'strangers' "I was a stranger and you welcomed me". But he welcomes all people and has room for everyone. So, in the midst of all our uncertainties, there is Emmanuel - God with us. We welcome his coming and there is no need for masks or social distancing because it is very important to stay connected! Pope Francis says: "My hope is that everyone will feel God's closeness, live in his presence, love him in a new and profound way this Christmas. The Son of God abased himself, made himself poor to walk along the road with us..." May He accompany you on all your journeys this Christmas and throughout the coming year



NOTICE

Dear Readers,

Due to the unexpected death of our Editor, Sr. Ann McColl, The DAYSTAR Magazine will be suspended for the time being.

We hope you have found the articles interesting and inspiring.

We thank all those who have supported us over the years and we wish you and your families a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

FRANCISCAN MISSIONARY SISTERS FOR AFRICA



Sr. Ann Catherine McColl

It was with profound sadness that we announced the death of Sr. Ann Catherine McColl on 12th September 2021 at our convent in Mount Oliver Dundalk.

Sr. Ann was an exceptionally gifted woman. For many years she edited our “Daystar Magazine” bringing it to life in colour and content as well as keeping our readers abreast of news and ministries of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa.

After many years nursing and training nurses in Africa, Ann trained as a counsellor and gave service in the Church of Scotland Wynd Counselling Centre in Paisley, Scotland where she was also Director. She was a talented musician and as a member of the Columban Music Group, she played at many weddings, funerals and other parish events over the years.

As Regional Leader of our North Atlantic Region, for the past 11 years Ann cared mostly for our retired missionaries keeping us all interested, active and as involved as possible in the Congregation and its mission. We will miss the love, dynamism and generosity of this committed missionary. May God reward her abundantly.

Sr. Helena Doyle

After a long illness, Sr. Lena Doyle, died peacefully in St. Francis Nursing Home on 11th July 2021.

Lena was a seasoned missionary and had served in Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia where she was mostly engaged in teaching. In later years while she was in Ethiopia, she became more involved with social development organising the provision of clean water and communal latrine facilities in very deprived communities.

Lena also served the Congregation as Regional Leader in Kenya and Ethiopia as well as taking on the role of Sister-in-Charge of Mount Oliver. She was a very committed, responsible and gifted woman who used her talents widely and wisely.

We give thanks for a life lived generously for the Lord. May she rest in peace.



OUR COMMON HOME—THE CHALLENGE

The forthcoming UN Conference on Climate Change is a powerful reminder of the challenges we are facing. Extreme weather and natural disasters of recent months have shown the urgency of the matter.

The 26th UN Conference on Climate Change, is the first time that leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Anglican Communion have jointly warned of the urgency of environmental sustainability, its impact on poverty, and the importance of global cooperation.

Thomas Berry, a Passionist priest, discerned that Western industrial society had constructed a story of itself that both separated humans from the rest of life on Earth and rejected the inherent sacredness of all of creation seeing it only as a commodity to be used. Society to him needed a new story which acknowledged the interdependence of all creation and respected its sacredness.

There is only ONE story embracing everything that has emerged and reveals this interconnectedness; “*the earth is a communion of subjects not a collection of objects*”. (Thomas Berry). This story has a spiritual dimension; it is the story of the creativity of Divine energy from the beginning.

Francis of Assisi knew this intuitively, to him all was sacred; he referred to creation and creatures as brothers and sisters. Pope Francis is the first Pope to address ecological concerns in an encyclical, Laudato Si.

Our ancient ancestors lived in harmony with the earth; to them all of creation had a spiritual dimension as exemplified by Chief Seattle :

“The earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected like the blood that unites us all. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.”



We are each confronted with the need to help restore our home aided by global cooperation.

Kariobangi Cheshire Home Diaries: The case of John Maina & the cats

John Maina, a 78-year-old man, came to Kariobangi Cheshire Home after losing his home during the clashes. He was traumatized and kept to himself so by way of therapy he accompanied the driver on errands 4 days a week. During this time nobody noticed his 'other activities' as he is a silent, private person! With the advent of COVID 19 John had to cease going out with the driver so he spent his days with the other "wazee" (elderly) lazing in the sun. It was then that his 'other activities', his affinity with cats, came to light.

On close observation from my favorite sitting spot, I saw something very interesting. Any time John sat outside, the cats would be lying around him. When he stood to move, they rose and followed him to wherever he was going, entangling themselves in his feet, making it difficult for him to walk.

I asked John what happened when the cats followed him. He said if he went to his room, they got to the door and waited outside. If he did not come out, they just went their way. They followed him to the showers and waited for him till he came out. They followed him to the dining room as well, sitting expectantly at his feet, waiting for titbits. The staff asked him to stop feeding the cats in the dining room for hygiene reasons so he devised a new discreet way. He would eat some of his food and hide the rest in a bag in his pocket. On leaving, the troop of 4 cats would follow him to a place at the back where he fed them from his pockets. When the staff realized the extent that John went to feed his 'friends' they provided 2 big plates of food for them. Since then John openly and comfortably feeds the cats and he is very happy.

I asked him why he had a penchant for cats and he said that as a young man of 25 years, working on a construction site, he was taking a nap after lunch only to be woken up by a fierce fight between a cat and a snake. The cat won and saved John's life! Since then he has always befriended cats. During the Covid 19 shut-down when visitors were not allowed in, the cats kept John alert and interested! He now communicates better with the other elderly residents as they have something to talk about – the cats!

By Moses Ndura, also a resident at Kariobangi Cheshire Home.



A Christmas Blessing Adapted from Joyce Rupp's Out of the Ordinary

*May there be harmony in all your relationships.
May sharp words, envious thoughts, and hostile feelings be dissolved.
May you give and receive love generously. May this love echo
in your heart like the joy of church bells on a clear winter day.
May each person who comes into your life be greeted as another Christ.
May the honor given the Babe of Bethlehem be that
which you extend to every guest who enters your presence.
May the hope of this sacred season settle in your soul. May it be for you a
foundation of courage when times of distress occupy your inner land.
May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children be awakened
within you. May it lead you to renewed awareness and appreciation
of whatever you too easily take for granted.
May the bonds of love for one another be strengthened as you gather
with your family and friends around the table of festivity and nourishment.
May you daily open the gift of your life and be grateful
for the hidden treasures it contains.
May you keep your eye on the Star within you and trust
this Luminescent Presence to guide and direct you each day.
May you go often to the Bethlehem of your heart and visit the One
who offers you peace. May you bring this peace into our world.*



May God's Love, Joy & Peace be yours this Christmas.

Formation

We rejoice and congratulate our sisters Memory Zulu and Josephine Nayiga who made first profession this year, Leonidah Mokua, Rumbidzai Mafuu and Josephine Mutyembu who recently made final profession. A lot of adjustments had to be made to organise these professions and we now understand what it means to say, "Let your will be done". We appreciate the achievements made, the innovative responses to situations regardless of the covid -19 restrictions that have rocked our way of thinking, We continue to pray for our sisters as they embrace the challenge of Missionary life.

The Lord continues to bless us with young women who desire to share in our charism and spirituality and have taken the bold step of embracing religious life. Currently we have 4 Novices, 8 postulants and 8 Temporary professed sisters



Leonidah Mokua



Josephine Mutyembu



Rumbidzai Mafuu



Memory Zulu

Congratulations!



Josephine Nayiga

We take this opportunity to thank our sisters who have generously committed themselves to guide and journey with the young sisters at various stages of formation. In the same breath, we are very grateful to all who support us in the formation and education of our sisters, may the Lord bless you abundantly. May the spirit of God fill us with wisdom and mould us into vessels of good news and peace.

KARIOBANGI CHESHIRE HOME AND DAY-CARE CENTER.

I doubt Pope Francis intended to be quite so prophetic when long before COVID 19 came he said "in a civilization in which there is no room for the elderly or where they are thrown away because they cause problems, this society carries with it the virus of death...Where there is no honour for the elderly, there is no future for the young"

At Kariobangi Cheshire Home and Day Care Centre, there is room for the elderly destitute persons all with declining physical strength and health and increased physical and financial dependence. Moreover they often shoulder the burden of caring for orphaned grandchildren.

26 elderly destitute men and women are resident at the Home. For the most part the daily routine of tending to them continues with the staff remembering that they have the strength, the patience and the passion to change the world by helping the elderly as much as possible. The elderly residents accept that the body does change and live good humouredly with ageing ailments.

Small groups visit the residents strictly adhering to the required health protocols. Just having people come and interact with the elderly residents, sing and entertain them makes a big difference. Having friendly people sharing the pain of this part of life's journey brings them joy.

The day-care elderly: The day-care elderly likewise age daily and for them life is much harder. They constantly express how much it means to them to be able to come to Kariobangi Cheshire Home for psycho-social support. The Kenyan people and friends overseas are generous despite being constrained themselves.

This enables us to provide food parcels to 260 day care elderly each week and provide a basic medical service which is much appreciated. Life is full of suffering and loss and relatives of elderly day care persons who died are helped with funeral expenses. This last act of mercy is a comfort to them in their loss and grief.

Pope Francis on establishing the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly on the fourth Sunday of July close to the feast of Saints Joaquim and Anne said, "Their voice is precious because it sings the praises of God and guards the roots of peoples". This is evident in the huge sense of gratitude for the seeds of kindness that comes to them through other people in our human family. Please accept their gratitude for your thoughtful help and their good wishes for a happy Christmas season.



A Way Out of Chronic Poverty.

Hands of Care & Hope run educational programmes to poor people in the slum areas of Madoya, Huruma and Korochocho in Nairobi, where life is very harsh and a constant struggle. Besides two primary schools, and a secondary school for disadvantaged children, there is an outreach program to youth in the communities who are unable to get employment due to poor education.

The out of school youth project has been in existence for the past 6 years and has helped 1350 youth. The youth are identified through Social Workers and Church Leaders. Many come feeling hopeless and that life has been cruel to them. They first undergo a Life Skills program including a Behavior Change process, Character Formation and many workshops to help them face the challenges of life. These are designed to reform any anti-social behaviour. Motivation plays a big part in every day inputs. Using the Motto “Yes we can”, they are helped to discover their capabilities, talents, and to know that past failures or their poor environment do not determine their future. Hard work, determination and reliance on God are key. We then look for sponsorship from Skilled Vocational Colleges, where they can practice their skills and gain employment. A recent survey has shown that 90% of those sponsored are now in permanent employment. The following testimony will highlight the effectiveness of the program.

The of Story Faith Mulandi:

I was in group 21 at Huruma Life Skills program. Before I came to the program, life was very hard, because I thought I could not achieve my dreams due to lack of funds for further education. After joining this two month programme, my life was changed. I learned different things like motivation, and how to face any challenge I came across in life which increased my self-esteem. I also learned that through prayer everything is possible. I learned about behaviour change which I found the most interesting topic in Life skills. I learned about character formation, and I changed areas in my character which were not good. I attended a course on Care of the Elderly and children with disabilities for four months. It is a very nice course and also it is marketable, because after training jobs are available. This work needs a lot of patience. Presently I am working in a local Nursing home where I am helping patients with different conditions. Sometimes it is not easy to work with patients, but with prayer and patience it is possible. I have been working for the past year, and I am very happy. Thanks to all who contributed to making my dreams come true.

Over the years it has been proved that empowering youth with life skills is a very positive way out of the chronic cycle of poverty. It gives people back their dignity; it is time and money well spent.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

LIVING WITH OPEN HANDS

By Sister Mary Fisher, FMSA

What does it mean to live with openness?...with open hands?...with an open mind?...with an open heart? I believe it means to live creatively, where each moment is ‘new’ and therefore an invitation.

Very often you and I create a God that is made into our own image and likeness. In doing this we diminish our own giftedness and we put aside the possibility for a deeper intimacy with God. There are many aspects of God. One aspect that I have lived with for many years is the *God of Surprise*. This *God of Surprise* has opened roads before me that I never dreamed would be part of my experience, and my response made all the difference in my daily living.

On returning permanently to the USA in 2013 after 41 years of ministry in Africa I found myself living in a community with a new reality. We opened the convent to students studying at Boston College for their Ph.Ds. and other degrees. These students were from the Congo, Lithuania, South Africa, Philippines, Australia, Kenya, USA and China.

The community offered the students the atmosphere needed for intense study and the students in turn shared with us their historical background, culture and sometimes a cooked meal! One of the students was Sister Xiaoping Guo. (Xiaoping is pronounced like ‘shopping’ with the accent on ‘ping’ ...Sho-PING.) Over the three years where Xiaoping lived with us we became friends – with many conversations on Chinese culture, customs, Catholic Church in China, and politics. There were times we had a common agreement and there were times we did not. After all the sharing the friendship remained.

On returning to China Xiaoping asked if I would be willing to teach a Chinese priest English. His Bishop asked him to do further studies abroad and his English needed to improve. My reply was, “Xiaoping I am not an English teacher.” To which she replied, “Sister Mary your English is very clear.”

Once again, the *God of Surprise* entered my life and I replied, “OK, let’s give it a try.” I first met Father John through Zoom. (I have not yet learned his Chinese name.) After this initial meeting we will meet once a week for ten weeks. On completion of these ten lessons, we will review our time together and decide how to continue into the future.

On entering my Congregation in 1960, I was assured that my ministry would be on the African Continent and now here I am teaching English to a Chinaman living in China!!

Living with open hands is being willing to be led in new and wondrous ways. Sometimes it is to our liking and sometimes it is not a pleasant experience. Either way the new openness leads to a blessing and a more familiar and intimate relationship with God.

Are you open to having this God of Surprise in your Life?

你願意在生活中擁有這個驚喜之神嗎？

