



St. Benedict's Monastery, Missionary Benedictine Sisters
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January – May 2011

EXPANSION OF THE ST. BENEDICT'S HEALTH CENTRE

"The Lord has done great things for us." This is the best phrase to describe the marvels at St. Benedict's Health Centre. The dispensary is located about ten kilometers from Jinja town which was nicknamed "ghost town" due to low population and slow economic development despite its strategic location. The people living in the neighborhood of the dispensary are relatively poor and the majority is Moslem.

Despite the above background we get many patients on the daily basis from Monday to Saturday and on most public holidays we work half day. The patients come from as far as Iganga, Tororo, Mbale, Kampala and some from Kenya and Rwanda. People come with all sorts of sicknesses to our dispensary because many of our patients as well as health workers from other health units recommend our dispensary to people with complicated ailments but to our surprise most of them get healed. Our Sr. Benedicta, the in-charge, says, " It's Our Lord" at work in the dispensary.

With this in mind, the original facility could not accommodate the high turn up of patients especially the waiting area because the queue is usually very long and some times they queued up to the afternoon. This long waiting of the patients in the hot tropical sun weakens them the more. This was the driving force to expand the unit, especially the waiting area.



New building and the Ambulance

A two storey building has been constructed in the front of the old building. The ground floor is the waiting area which is 100M x 70M. This is a relatively large area to accommodate all the patients as they come. The waiting area is multi-purpose; it is used as a classroom for the St. Benedict Women Group and the Sunday School Children when our usual place at school is being used for other purposes. It is also our Church on big feasts when the village people join us for Holy Mass; for instance on Palm Sunday this year that is where we celebrated Mass. The other floor of the extension is office as well as the conference hall. With movement from the old building offices; room has been created for more consultation rooms and a theatre for minor operations which is great news for our patients.

We conclude with a big thank you to our long term and faithful benefactors: Mr. Josef Wiederkehr and his friend Mr. Oscar who have supported us with financial assistance. May God reward them for their continuous generosity to our dispensary and the poor in our neighborhood. Hearty thanks to our sisters working in the dispensary who conceived the need for expansion and started saving the last ten years. Your savings, thoughtfulness and implementation of the project are highly appreciated. May God bless you for the work well done!

Last but not least, we too congratulate the dispensary for the purchase of its Ambulance. It is in good working condition and at the moment it is very helpful especially to women in labor with complications who are referred to Jinja Hospital. We thank our benefactor,s none other than Taegu Priory – Korea, who have made this dream come true.

Sr. John Paul Marunga

OUR RETURNING MISSIONARIES SR. ODILIA AND SR. ANNA MARIA

On16th January 2010 we were blessed to have Sr. Odilia Kipanga from Peramiho Priory, Tanzania and on the 12th January 2010 we were also blessed with yet another missionary, Sr. Anna Maria Kituku from Nairobi Priory, Kenya. Both sisters were assigned in the school. Sr. Odilia was Deputy 11, dormitory

mistress and she was teaching various classes. She was also an English teacher to our Congolese aspirants. Later on she started a women group, majority of whom are poor widows and single mothers. These women were to be empowered to become self reliant by using their different skills in art and craft. The women were also taught English and writing as part of the program. She started with a small group of ten women but by the time she left the number had risen to fifty regular attendants. They said they were happy to learn something about art and craft because it eradicates their poverty. They now know how to make many things like sweaters, necklaces, table cloths, just to mention a few. The time Sr. Odilia left they had already started to enjoy the fruits of their labor. They regret that Sr. Odilia left them so soon, however, they hope that the work she begun with them will continue. They thanked her for sharing with them her gifts, time, love, encouragement, being a mother to them and her availability whenever they needed her.



Sr. Odilia with the women

Sr. Anna Maria was in charge of the Kindergarten section. She initiated new methods of teaching the young ones and the teachers were very happy to have her. She worked hand in hand with the teachers and this cooperation between them made the Kindergarten shine. The most remarkable thing that she introduced was the graduation of the Kindergarten children. The day of graduation was very exciting, colorful and joyful. It was the first time the parents and the children witnessed such in our school. This is a day to remember for the children, parents, teachers and administration as a whole. This practice will continue every year.

Generally, our Sisters Odilia and Anna Maria enriched us very much with their gifts in the community, school and the people they encountered. They were social, loving, friendly, hardworking; the list is endless not forgetting their audible voices which uplifted our singing in the Chapel. It is a pity that they stayed for a short time and went when we still needed them.

We thank them for their support and contribution to the wellbeing of our community and school. We hope we shall carry on all the good work they begun. *“Mungu awa bariki milele na milele. Asanteni sana na karibu tena”*. May the Lord bless you in your new apostolate and give you the strength and graces to serve Him.

“Kwa herini”

Sr. Anna Mary Adikini

*We congratulate our School Sisters
for the good performance
in the 2010
Primary Leaving Examinations
(PLE).*
*They were number two in the whole
of Jinja District.
Congratulations once again!
Keep up the hard work,*

ONE YEAR IN JINJA

A year ago, in May 2010, two missionaries arrived in Jinja. On the 26th, we welcomed Sister Anastasia Cheserek from Nairobi Priory and on the 31st, Sister Juana Maria Rivera from Manila Priory who both completed one year in Jinja this year.

While managing the farm, S Anastasia acquired new skills in the sugar cane and rice fields. It was harvest time, so cutting of cane, loading and transporting to the sugar mill in Kakira a 10-minute ride away, then removing the stumps and plowing the soil anew, and planting new seedlings were a new experience for her. The rice too needed to be harvested, dried, and milled. Then, together with the farm workers she went with her gum boots into the deep muddy water replete with water snakes and actually enjoyed plowing with them. The farm animals have grown in number; most significant are the cattle, with a total of fourteen: milking cows, young males and females, and calves.

As part of her ongoing formation, S Anastasia also joined a group of sisters and some teachers from our grade school for a computer course in town.

We thank S Anastasia for the valuable help to Jinja farm and wish her well as she returns to her Priory after her one year inter-priory exchange assignment.

Sister Juana Maria's experience as formator for fifteen years in Angola and superior in an outreach community in the Philippines before coming to Jinja prepared her well for her mission assignment. In our now two-year old monastery convent, Sister has had multi-tasks: in charge of postulants on exposure in Jinja, doing some of the jobs of a treasurer—bookkeeping, marketing, disbursement, repairs and maintenance, developing the vegetable garden, banana trees and green areas around the house, supervising the kitchen where she actually improved her cooking skills, and chapel, where she shared her artistic gift. When asked what she is doing in Jinja, her answer would be: whatever is needed to be done, that is what I am doing.

May S Juana Maria continue to serve Jinja community in good health of mind and body as she begins the next three years of her four-year mission assignment.

Sr. Mary Vincent Feliciano

ARU (JINJA) LENTEN RECOLLECTION DAY

ARU in full is the Association of the Religious in Uganda, composed of men and women from different congregations. Its main task is to strengthen the religious in their different callings of evangelization through workshops, courses and arranging prayer sessions from time to time.

This year we were asked to host the Lenten recollection for Jinja Diocese. You can imagine what it feels and means to host over 60 people for prayer. There was much preparation to be done and so we had to put our minds and efforts together to share the duties and responsibilities to make the day successful.

A big number of religious responded all together; we were more than sixty participants. The participants were good time keepers because we managed to start in time. The facilitator was Fr. Waiswa a Diocesan priest. He gave us a very good conference about the love of God but we often put the work of God (apostolate) first before God that sometimes we finish a whole day working and forget to say our prayers let alone visiting Jesus in the Tabernacle. He concluded by saying that the love of God should

come first and the rest follow. After the conference we had the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament as well having their confession. We were blessed with a big number of priests and everybody who wanted to confess got a chance to do so.

Lunch was on time prepared by all who were present because every participant was to carry something to be shared for common lunch. Some carried cooked food, some soft drinks and others snacks. The hosting communities usually cook something that can not be easily carried like matoke, beef stew and that is what we were expected to cook as the hosting community.

The celebration of the Eucharist was the second last item which was very good with good music, good celebrants and good participation since everybody was renewed. The final item was the election of the ARU officials which was done efficiently.

This marked the end of the Lenten ARU recollection day. Our Benedictine hospitality value was highly appreciated. We thank God who enabled us to make the day a success for His unfailing love and fidelity.

Sr. Rose Amoït

THE AIM VISITORS

AIM means Association of International Monasticism and the visitors were from AIM USA. The aim of the association is to help poor monastic communities in developing countries. They support them in different ways according to need.

When we heard that AIM members were coming to share with us something about the Rule of St. Benedict, oh, we were eagerly waiting for them. The long awaited day came when the sisters went to pick them from the airport and in the meantime those of us we stayed at home were welcoming the sisters of Grace and Compassion from Irundu who were to join us for the short course. The sisters who went to pick the visitors from the airport did not know them; all they knew was that they were three persons and the names of the two sisters. They made a poster of a reasonable size so that they would not miss them and later they were making fun of it the way they were running after three people that were coming out together of the arrival hallway.

The course they gave us was interesting as they did not limit it only to the Rule of St. Benedict. They shared with us about different monastic ways of life like the Cistercians, how they developed and what brought about many different congregations but under one umbrella of following the Rule of St. Benedict, for instance, the Missionary Benedictines, Cistercians, contemplatives, etc. It was really

interesting to discover that the wind blows where it wills. The course was alive and this made the Rule of St. Benedict be brought into our day to day living: how, why, what things should be and what they should not be.

We became familiar with the visitors i.e. Sr. Annie, Sr. Barbara and Carolyn Fuhs. They were very free with us and in only one week they almost became “Ugandans”.....

We appreciate our community that hosted them, the AIM-USA board and everyone who made it possible for the course to run smoothly. Above all, we thank the Almighty God who always knows what is best for us and He provides it at the right time.

Sr. Annet Namadi

COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE FOR NOVICE. PHILOMENA

- In life there is always time for practice and with it comes experience.
- This hopefully became so real when her turn came.
- We already longed for her days to approach until finally it dawned. She came on the 1st November 2010 and left on the 27th January 2011.
- Life is young when the young ones are around.
- Our Nov. Philomena made us to enjoy free walks by doing a lot of cobweb suspending around our big convent.
- You know you can remove them in the morning, they will come back to do a great whole night’s job which could trap you in the morning if you do not look carefully.

Nov. Philomena had a humble time in the kitchen as her major assignment; this did not prevent her from working in the courtyard and helping in the garden. She was so hard working that she ended in all areas like working in the refectory and teaching English to the women’s group.

Our Nov. Philomena was really great and it was nice having you around though it was but a short time. Hope soon it will be for a longer time. Keep it up and God bless your journey.

Sr. Anna Pia Aloba

EASTER TRIDUUM 2011

This year as usual, we went to the Missionaries of Africa to celebrate our Easter Triduum because our numbers are very small and besides we do not have a Chaplain in our convent. Their community is not far from ours and besides they are the most regular priests that celebrate Holy Mass for us in this convent.

Our movements started on the Holy Thursday up to Easter Vigil Mass. However the remarkable thing that happened here in our convent was the Way of the Cross. It is usually said by the sisters only but this time we were joined by our Sunday School Children and we did it in style.

First of all the number of the children that attended were more than fifty which made our numbers admirable and to crown it all the Children acted the Stations of the Cross. There was one small boy who played the person of Jesus, he was really good. His acting was so touching that about three sisters shed tears as we prayed. The children that were not acting were so attentive and aware of what was going.

On a whole this was a good experience because those little ones who would not have known what the way of the Cross was came to know it through active participation, all for the greater glory of God.

Sr. John Paul Marunga

TWO ASPIRANTS TO NAIROBI

On 28th of February traveled to Nairobi Aspirants Stella Kyakmwa Kavota from Democratic Republic of Congo and Symphorosa Aloba from Moyo, Northern Uganda. Both had worked in St Benedict's Health Centre for a year under Sister Benedicta Yeo, in different departments. Stella needed to improve her English language skills, and Symphorosa, a nurse, was getting acquainted with the Congregation while strengthening her health condition.

It is the first time an aspirant from Congo has entered our Congregation, while in several formation houses in Jinja, both female and male, there are Congolese vocations.

We wish Stella and Symphorosa all the best as they begin their religious formation in Karen and accompany them with our prayers.

Sr. Mary Vincent Feliciano