

Missionary Benedictine Sisters, P.O. Box 1 Ndanda via Mtwara, Tanzania, East Africa
E-mail: tutzingsisters@ndanda.net CP: +255784591277 Web: www.ndanda-priory.org
www.osb-tutzing.it

Superiors' Meeting December 8 - 11, 2011



From left to right: Sr. Maureen Cariaga, Sr. Raphaela Haendler, Sr. Andrea Polt, Sr. Ida Nungu, Sr. Tumaini Ajali, Sr. Regina Tesch, Sr. Martha Mtega, Sr. Elisabeth Tilly, Sr. Febronia Kimario

From 8th to 11th of December 2011 all Superiors of the communities met with the Priory Government to get a spiritual input ("Discernment" given by Sr. Ida Nungu), to report about the events of the last year and to plan for the coming year. It was a joyful enriching sharing, which gave us strength to continue also in the next year.

Together with the whole Priory House Community including students from Aquinas Secondary School



BUT Meeting in Mvimwa Abbey



The Benedictine Union of Tanzania BUT is rather young, 5 years only. The Constitutions were finalized in 2009. Members are: Abbey of Ndanda, Abbey of Peramiho, Abbey of Hanga, Abbey of Mvimwa, Abbey of the Camaldoli Sisters in Mafinga, Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Priory Peramiho and of Priory Ndanda, the Benedictine Sisters of St. Agnes in Chipole and of St. Gertrud Imiliwaha, the African Benedictines of Mary, Help of Christians, Ndanda-Ndolo. Except for the Camaldoli Sisters, who elected their first Abbess last year, all communities have their roots in Germany and now we see a large group of Benedictine men and women blossoming all over Tanzania.



This year Abbot Basil OSB of Mvimwa had invited us and almost nobody had ever been at this beautiful place because it is so far away. Far means that our car from Ndanda needed three days to travel to reach the place and three days to travel home. Thanks to God all went well although for almost half of the trip we had sand and mud roads. The first day brought us up to our Sisters in Peramiho. Next morning we left early for Mbeya, near to the border of Zambia and Malawi. Again back on

the road to Sumbawanga, Rukwa Region. We were so happy to be finally there but it was again a 1 ½ hour drive on a narrow mud road to reach the Abbey. How beautiful the sight! From far away: behind the brick buildings the mountains with rocks reach to the sky. The altitude is 1100 m and I was so pleased with the climate – not as hot as Ndanda, just right. And all the green grass, where, with us you see only brown, dried up earth. There is some rain the whole year round, even in the very dry months. The cattle are doing well and the people raise their pigs like goats without a pigsty. They roam around and look for food for themselves.

Mvimwa Abbey is a foundation of Hanga and Abbot Basil is the first Abbot. It has 44 final professed monks, 7 of them are priests; 10 Juniors and 10 Novices, no postulant. There are two dependant houses and several monks in studies. 70% of the living costs they can realize by the work of their hands, meaning agriculture, Primary School and a Secondary and High School with 850 students, boys and girls. In both schools day students and borders. The place is full of peace, quiet; the water comes from the mountain, and a small hydroelectric power station provides electricity in the evening. We joined the monks in choir and refectory. There is a single old brother, who was even among the pioneers in Hanga, all the rest are young people.

Our special topic was on Islamist fundamentalism presented very well by Fr. Lukas Komba, Mbinga Diocese, not a Benedictine, but educated by Benedictines. We discussed in groups questions like: was Mohamed a prophet? Do we pray to the same God? Is Islam a threat to the Christians? We learned more about the struggle of the Palestinians and the Israelis concerning the land.

Thankful for the great Benedictine hospitality and the exchange with all the Benedictine communities we traveled home and expect to meet again in Hanga in 2012 with the topic on Benedictine education.

Sr. Raphaela Haendler OSB

MISSION AWARENESS COMMITTEE OF TANZANIA (MAC)

MAC is a committee which deals with enhancing the spirit of missionary awareness in the Catholics in Tanzania. In Swahili it is known as “kamati ya Uhamasishaji wa Roho ya Umisionari”. The meeting took place at Mbagala Spiritual Center in Dar es salaam from 6th to 9th Nov 2011. Thirty five members attended the meeting from different religious Congregations of men and women in Tanzania as well as lay and Diocesan priests. The aim of MAC and this meeting was to create the awareness that every baptized Christian is responsible for missionary activities. The Motto of MAC is: “All of us are missionaries.” (Sisi sote ni wamisionari.)

MAC committee was started in 1987 by the Religious Superiors of Tanzania (RSAT). Later the Congregation of Religious Women of Tanzania (TCAS) joined them. After long discussions within RSAT and TCAS they agreed to forward the idea to the Bishops’ Conference of Tanzania (TEC). The Bishops supported the idea. Now MAC was put under the Pontifical Missionary Societies of Tanzania (PMS). The Secretary of PMS is automatically the leader and member of MAC.

It was my first time to attend this kind of meeting and I found it really helpful. MAC is a tool to enrich the baptized, to know and realize their position and duty in Church. I saw how other religious societies or congregations are active in the evangelizing mission. The members were divided into Zones such as Northern Zone, Coastal zone and Western zone. There was no Southern zone. Each zone gave the report of what they are doing for evangelization. From each group the members were Religious men and women, Laity and Diocesan priests. Some challenges were reported such as the Muslim campaign of marrying Christian girls, and pregnancy of school girls. The issue of mixed beliefs in God and depending on human magic power “ushirikina” was also mentioned. The solution was given that there is no way of fighting all these without deeper evangelization.

People should be touched by the word of God and live it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. A missionary is a person who lives

closer to Jesus and also who lives closer to his/her fellow human beings. People should be taught how to read and to interpret the Bible. We should follow the saying of St. Jerome who said that “ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ.” Christ should be in the center of the lives of the people and they should be aware that they are responsible for making Him known to others. To live the core of His teaching means to love God and to love his/her fellow persons.

How to do this? The answer was given: to use modern means of communications such as TV, magazines, website and radio broadcasting to make Jesus known. Next year 2012, MAC will celebrate its 25th Jubilee. Special booklets will be published and some TV and radio programmes will be prepared.

MAC is a non-profit organization. It depends on the contributions of its members. Each member who attends the meeting should bring his/her contribution to MAC. For attendance no allowance will be charged. Each member should pay his/her own to and fro transport expenses. It would be good for all congregations and religious societies to join this committee so that we could work together to make Jesus known to others. All of us are responsible for the missionary work. To be a missionary does not mean necessarily to go outside the boundary of your country or to come from abroad. **WORK AS A MISSIONARY WHEREVER YOU ARE!** Start from your family or from your community! *“Mmisionari mimi mimi wewe hata na yule mkubwa hata mdogo si lazima atoke ulaya” njooo njooo njooo nakuita njooo njooo njooo tukahubiri enjili.”*

Sr. Leticia Komba OSB

Christmas Celebration with the Poor



On December 23 we again invited poor people from our parish to come together to celebrate Christmas. After Holy Mass presided over by Fr. Ulrich Stoeckl OSB all -- around 100 participants -- went to the hall for lunch with a short program. After enjoying the festive meal Sr. Raphaela distributed to everybody a rosary together with a picture of Baby Jesus as a Christmas gift. Everybody including ourselves enjoyed being together.



From September to the beginning of January we were happy to have the second year Novices Blanka, Desideria and Monika with us for formative activity. They share with us some of their experiences:

My Experience during Formative Activity

On 19th of September 2011 I, Nov. Blanka Kimario, was assigned to Ndanda Priory House doing my apostolate in Zakeo kindergarten, with children of the Parish (Watoto wa Kipapa) and in the Sewing Room. I thank God for giving me this opportunity to live in community, experiencing its joys and

difficulties, which helps me to grow spiritually and physically.

It was the first time for me to be sent to teach children. I am grateful to the teachers, esp. the head teacher for her good guidance. I learnt how to teach children of different age groups, to teach in theory and practically, e.g. to calculate by using pieces of wood of different colors and length. I learnt how to help the kids to hold the pencil, to write and to perform different games. I listened to them about their problems discovering their weaknesses and strengths. Sometimes they did not play peacefully together but were beating each other during break time. Hearing their complaints and accusations, that one was beating another or taking away something, I slowly tried to counsel them to play peacefully without fighting in order to be good children of God. Otherwise they would behave like children of the devil. Once I asked all the children in class who would like to be beaten. Nobody showed her/his hand. Again I asked who would not like to be beaten. All showed up. I asked them, why they would not like to be beaten and they answered, because it is painful. So I concluded if you do not like to be beaten you should not beat anybody else. Slowly they restrained from hurting each other and from crying all the time. I invited them to come to me to explain any problem arising rather than to beat each other. I taught them to ask each other for pardon. This helped to improve the discipline in class.

I learnt from the children to tell the truth. Even after making a big mistake they were able to speak openly without hiding it.

I taught them different prayers like blessing of food, Our Father, Hail Mary, making the Sign of the Cross etc.

One day I had a special experience: A child was biting and hurting me, causing a wound on my hand. I had tried to bring her back to school after straying. She was crying on the way, while I was trying to calm her down with friendly words. Finally I succeeded in carrying her, but she took away my veil. When I put her down to take and put on my veil she slipped again away. I followed her, and brought the crying child back to school. One of the other children went to call her

father. But even he could not calm the girl. Talking about this experience I was near tears. I remembered Jesus who did not give up even when he was beaten and bleeding from his wounds. Really, to care for children is not an easy job, but with the grace of God I could do something. And I realized that wherever life becomes more difficult God is even nearer to us.

I thank Sr. Fides who taught me with great patience how to use a sewing machine and to make underskirts and bags, how to mend and how to hem. Very often I had to ask and undo, but always she was ready to leave her work in order to help me. So I learnt something, not yet being an expert like her, but at least being able to do small things.

With the help of Sr. Barbara Ruckert, an expert in Gregorian Chant, I was able to learn more about music, being now able to intone during Lauds and Vespers. I still make many mistakes, but the chantresses bear with it patiently. I wonder how Sr. Barbara could become the expert she is, being able to create these wonderful melodies. I would appreciate very much if she could come again to teach me more till I would be able to play the organ. Thank you to Sr. Raphaela Haendler and all who helped me to learn a lot during this apostolic activity!

Nov. Blanka Kimario

Formative Activity in Sacred Heart Community Kabuhima

Two weeks before finishing the catechetical course in Morogoro I learnt that I was sent to Kabuhima for my formative activity. So I was preparing the journey by bus from Morogoro directly to Kabuhima. Thanks to Nov. Blanka who helped me get a bus ticket and everything else I needed for the journey. On 18th of September I entered the bus in Morogoro, traveled till Kahama, where I slept in the bus waiting in the bus station and on the following day from Kahama to Kabuhima, where I arrived at 8:15 hrs. Sr. Agnes received me at the bus stand and together we went to our house. On the following day Sr. Elisabeth explained to me my assignment in St. Pio Pre-Primary School and in house and chapel. I am grateful for this opportunity to get more experience in community life,

though we were only a few. There were times of joy and difficult times as well. It helped me to grow spiritually and physically, to mature and to understand better the life I chose.

For two weeks I went with the Sisters to different outstations to teach Christians about their faith. Sr. Elisabeth together with catechist Sospeter took care of the parents, Sr. Agnes was with the children and I together with teacher Katema with the youth. These young girls and boys were so thirsty to listen to the Word of God and well prepared with all kinds of questions. We tried to answer them all. But time was not enough. We had to leave to visit another outstation, to come back only after one week. They were so grateful to learn something about Christian life. I was much impressed by the eagerness of the people to learn about their Christian faith. They really miss having Christians to teach them. Wherever we went to evangelize, people were happy to see us, pleading with us to come back, but time was not enough. As they lack so much guidance in their Catholic faith, they are easy victims of the many sects sprouting in the region. In Runzewe there are 24 different denominations. Lacking foundation, people are unstable in their faith. In the Pre-Primary School I was teaching mathematics, Swahili and English. It was my first time to teach children. So I was grateful for the support of teacher Rose Michael. She showed me how to teach them by playing and working with different materials. After lunch they had time to rest. When the school closed in November I had more time at home to clean the environment, to practice with the keyboard and to attend meetings of the small Christian Communities. On Sunday I was with the children of the parish (Watoto wa Kipapa) to help them prepare their little drama for Christmas. On 20th December I started my journey to Ndanda, where I arrived on 23rd of December in the night.

I am grateful for these 3 months of experiencing God's love in a special way. Thank you to all who supported me during my stay in Kabuhima!

Nov. Desideria Nyirenda

Apostolic Experience at St. Mary's Dispensary / Mtwara

It was the 20th of September when I was assigned to St. Mary's dispensary in Mtwara. I accepted joyfully, but also with many questions in my mind: can I work there, not being trained as a nurse?

On 23rd of September I left Ndanda for Mtwara, to start my new assignment. I was put to the reception where I expected things to be easier. But when the orientation started I got 4 pages full of names of drugs, injections and laboratory examinations with its prices. I was advised to read it and learn it by heart. Can you imagine how upset I was? I intended to do exactly this, but did not know where to start. Slowly one item after the other I stuck into my head ... and finally I learned many new things. Now I even know how to check blood pressure, -- amazing grace of our God. Later I understood the importance of knowing all these things as many patients asked the receptionist about the function of drugs, which the doctor prescribed for them assuming that every worker there is a trained nurse.

With a sincere heart I would like to thank our employee Euphemia whom I was working with, for her efforts to teach me, and her patience with me when I asked many questions. I was always troubling her, asking her to give me homework and to check it on the following day. With all these efforts I finally succeeded in learning many things needed in my work there.

Many patients attend our dispensary because of the good service and reliable supply of drugs and other necessary items. During the week there are daily up to 90 patients, during weekend at least 25. Really, the people around need us as Missionaries and appreciate our presence.

In the house I was helping in the sacristy. On Saturdays Sr. Karolina and I had Bible sharing with the workers of the house. On Thursdays I went with Sr. Karolina to the Small Christian Community nearby.

I thank all the Sisters in St. Scholastica community for their cooperation and the love they showed to me. I enjoyed the time with them.

The time in Mtwara taught me that when we think it to is impossible, God is telling us: All is possible. And when we think we cannot go ahead He is saying: My grace for you is sufficient! (2Kor 12, 9)

So let us put everything into God's Hands!
Nov. Monika Bernard

Now and then we welcome volunteers who come to help us in our apostolates and to experience Missionary Benedictine life in Tanzania. We are grateful for the enriching encounters and the help we as well as the local people receive.

Visiting Anaesthetist at Nyangao and Ndanda Hospital

After one year in 2009 and three months in 2010 it is now for the third time that I got the opportunity to be in Ndanda and Nyangao.



During a caesarean section, the mother holding the newborn baby in her arms.

In the beginning of September I left my home in Uppsala, Sweden, just before the long cold season began, and I shall return after the 2nd Advent week. I am working as "visiting anaesthetist" at St Walburg's Hospital and St Benedict's Hospital where I share the daily life and prayers with the sisters in the little St Agnes community in Nyangao and at the Priory House in Ndanda.

In my profession I am a rare exception in this country where not more than approximately 40 other medical doctors work as specialists for anaesthesiology, half of them in Dar es Salaam and probably none in the southeast of this large country with more than 40 millions inhabitants. World-wide, only in Sub-Sahara Africa do nurses work as anaesthesia

practitioners regularly and completely without the supervision and advice of any medical doctor for anaesthesia.



With Sr. Epiphania and Sr. Tumaini in Nyangao

This year Maria Sandgren, a Swedish nurse from the intensive care unit at the same department in Uppsala where I am employed, accompanied me to Nyangao in order to help the hospital start up the first intensive care unit (ICU) in southeast Tanzania. The rooms and medical equipment had already been prepared last year but a person who could train the local nurses how to perform ICU had been lacking. Showing great pedagogic talent and warm-hearted empathy Maria did an excellent job and we had a lot of joy together with the young Tanzanian nurses who were quite eager to learn. Of course, this ICU in Nyangao is not a high-tech unit like in Europe, but even with the limited resources, from the very beginning lives could be saved. Our first patient on ICU was a five weeks old male baby with severely obstructed inguinal hernia. Part of the bowels were already necrotic and had to be cut out during a difficult operation lasting two-and a half hours on a Sunday afternoon. This special anaesthesia would have been extremely difficult to manage if at all possible by a Tanzanian nurse anaesthetist. The following four days little Yasiri was struggling hard for his life since the bowels would not function even after a successful second operation. The new ICU nurses had a tough job and a real challenge to manage him. Especially the fluid balance is difficult to maintain in a 4 kg baby who is vomiting all the time when tools like infusion pumps or scales are lacking. Finally we put all eggs into one basket and allowed

him breast feeding although he continued vomiting after four days. And indeed the mother's milk calmed his bowels so that he recovered slowly after having lost 20% of his body weight.

Another case during the first weeks of ICU was also dramatic: A 30 year old woman had developed cancer of the uterus during pregnancy. We tried to postpone her operation as long as possible to get at least a little chance that the premature child would survive. However, after only seven months of pregnancy the mother was bleeding so heavily that she had to undergo immediate emergency operation in two steps: First the 1.2 kg female neonate was delivered by caesarean section and then the uterus and ovaries and surrounding tissues had to be removed. With our limited facilities and resources that was a difficult operation and anaesthesia. Thanks to the Tanzanian gynaecologist Dr Makota, our new anaesthesia machine which was partly funded by the mission procure of Tutzing in 2010 and partly by friends, and thanks to the ICU, the mother survived and will receive further cancer treatment in Dar es Salaam later on. Thanks to a volunteer from England, the paediatrician Dr. Jim, even the little baby survived. After the initial neonatal resuscitation by me he took over. Actually, such a preterm neonate would need a fully equipped neonatal ICU including means for mechanical ventilation. We could only offer one of the most important needs: a really warm environment which is granted from October to May, as we are just 1,000 km south of the equator. However, this very young baby chose to live and survived. Nothing is impossible with God. However, many patients, and among them many children and young adults do not survive in spite of all efforts because they reach the hospital too late or essential drugs or equipment or knowledge is lacking that could treat them successfully. The daily struggle of the health care providers is often frustrating and our Sisters need to be very brave to stand the many problems they face year after year. I am grateful to be able to come here every year. The regular training and maintenance of equipment leads to a slightly but continuously

improving of the quality of anaesthesia services in Nyangao and Ndanda. I enjoy the Benedictine Liturgy and the international communities of the Sisters. I also appreciate very much the cooler climate and better living conditions and the European health care system in Sweden. However, in the very north or in the very Tropics or in my home country Germany, we share this precious time of Advent and prepare ourselves, expecting the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

By Daniela Kietzmann

Internship in Aquinas Secondary School

My two months in Tanzania at Aquinas Secondary School are nearly over... This is the end of a great and instructive time for me and I am happy and thankful for all that I have experienced.



Since I did not have to be in Germany (where I study Catholic Theology and mathematics, to become a teacher) from October to December I decided to do an internship abroad. On the internet I found Sister Athanasia's e-mail address and asked her about the possibility of spending this time in Mtwara.

As it was my first time in Africa I really did not know what to expect, but my curiosity was greater than my uncertainty. And now I can say: I'm very happy to have had this great opportunity!

After the long journey from Germany I arrived safely in Mtwara and was warmly welcomed by the Sisters of St. Tekla convent. Even though I was very tired because of the flight, the weather and the anti-malaria-drugs, I immediately felt at home. In the following weeks my duty was to teach maths in FORM I and II and later Pre-FORM I. I really enjoyed my work with the students – even if it was

sometimes hard to teach them in English, as many of them do not understand much English. Due to the fact that my dormitory was in the hostel of the school, I often had the students visiting me in the afternoons and evenings with many questions about my life in Germany. In my free time I helped catalog a lot of books in the beautiful library of Aquinas and tried to help anywhere I was needed.

Even if life in Germany seems easier, with running water, electricity and supermarkets etc. I enjoyed seeing life in Africa. I really like the kindness of the people and the ability to be happy about the little nice things in life. Living next to the convent was convenient because I was able to join the Sisters for evening and night prayers. I enjoyed this ritual as a quiet and peaceful ending of each busy day. I learned a lot about convent life during my conversations with the Sisters at lunch and recreation. The end of the school year at Aquinas is always busy and full of happenings such as graduation, .

Nevertheless, all the Sisters at Aquinas always had an ear for listening, a kind word and some time for deep conversations.

In Germany the Christian faith is dwindling and even if many of my friends in Germany are practicing Catholics, I so enjoyed seeing a full church on Sunday morning and hearing the girls of Aquinas sing with great enthusiasm. I will miss the many happy faces of this great school choir. They seem to be very happy at Aquinas.

For me I can say: I had a great time in Mtwara and have learned a lot about our brothers and sisters in Africa. And there are many things that I have learned that will help me grow!

Thanks to all of you for warm words and welcomes and the possibility to spend this time here (also to spend a nice weekend at Ndanda!!!). I hope I can come back one day to spend a bit more time here in Tanzania!

God's blessings and strength and confidence for the great work you do here!

Judith Welschhof

Long awaited Organ arrived



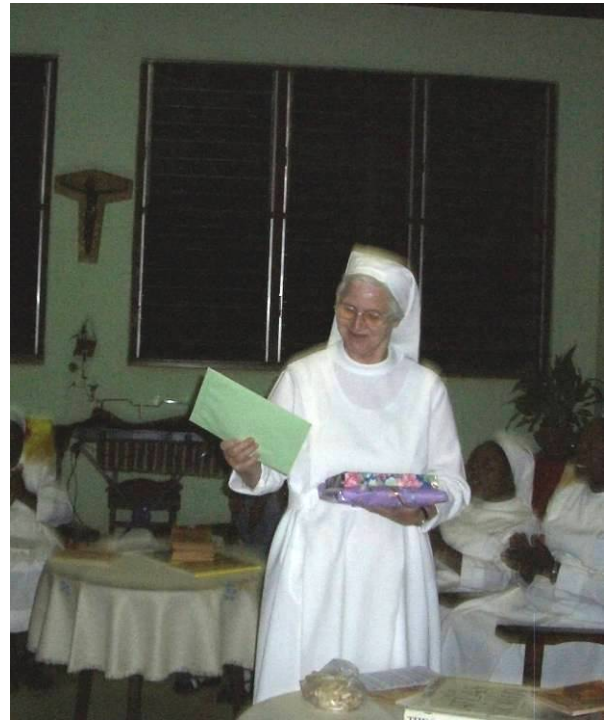
After long months of waiting, the new organ finally arrived. Already during the last years, our 18 year old electronic organ needed repairs again and again. Then In February this year the damage was beyond repair. Only an expensive spare part ordered in Germany could have helped. We were advised rather to look for a new organ. Soon we ordered: again electronic with 2 manuals and pedal, but we had to wait, not only Lent, but also Easter time without organ and still many months. So big was the joy, when finally October 24 it was there, and played so beautifully after being plugged in. The same day during Vesper it could be heard by all the Sisters. The following day after Holy Mass it was blessed by Fr. Sebald. May it help us to sing our praise to God – *ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus.*

Sr. Regina Tesch OSB

Thank you and Farewell to Sr. Barbara Ruckert

On the Solemnity of Christ the King, 20th of November, we had to say good-bye again to Sr. Barbara. Sr. Barbara stayed with us for 2 months in order to complete the work on the new Compline booklet and book for Vigils. Both books are now ready and could still be practiced under the guidance of Sr. Barbara. But not only this: also Sr. Barbara took time to teach our young Sisters how to read the notes and to intone in the office.

We are grateful for the great help of Sr. Barbara to improve our Liturgy and hope she will be able to come back again.



God's blessing for 2012

Responsible: Sr. Regina Tesch