



Contact

Newsletter of Sisters of St. Louis, Nigeria Province



SSL Second Year Novices at the Ibadan Mercy Home in September 2018

A VISIT FOR REFLECTION

by **Confidence Ude, Novice**

On Thursday 13 September 2018, we visited Obijackson Foundation, a non-governmental organization supporting the government owned juvenile correctional and child-care home located on Polytechnic Road, Sango, Ibadan. The foundation takes care of motherless babies, abandoned and rejected children in society. Sr. Mary Okewola, a Sister of St Louis, takes on the onerous task of managing the home with a few staff on behalf of the foundation.

We visited the juvenile home (also known as Ibadan Mercy Home) as part of our short stay at the Provincial House, Ibadan. There we beheld with teary eyes children with different

health and growth challenges. There was a child found in a waste bin where her mother had dumped her. Another child was abandoned in the hospital by his parents because they found his illness a burden. There were pathetic cases that make one reflect on one's life.

The boy who had been abandoned in the hospital is now being taken care of by Obijackson Foundation. He is blind, cannot walk nor talk; neither can he sit up nor eat solid food. He is epileptic, has an enlarged head which has undergone four series of surgery to reduce it. His treatment and care has gone on for four (4) years. We pray for divine healing for him.

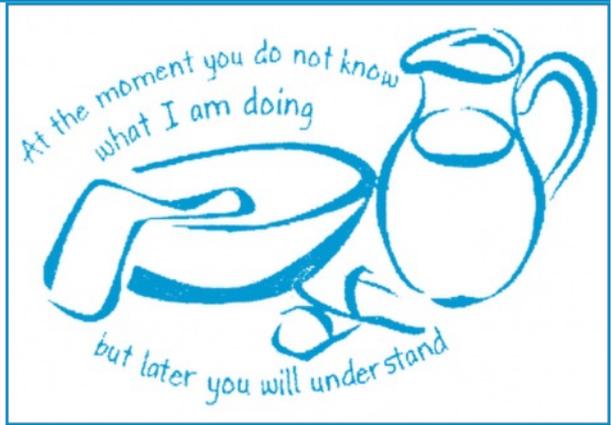
There were many others with different cases that we met. Their situations indeed prodded us to reflect on our own lives too. Although we visited Pauline's Bookshop where we bought spiritual books of our choice and later had time out for relaxation at Agodi Gardens, the visit to the juvenile home was the highlight of the day. We were touched by the conditions of the young ones as well as the love and care they receive from their caregivers. May the Lord Jesus bless them and continue to use them for the benefits of humanity.

We had a big farewell party before we left Ibadan. We are very grateful to Sr Isabel Mann and the Kolapo-Ishola community for their hospitality.

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Deepening GC 2015 Calls



The Retreat Centre (ALBRCC), Ijebu-Itele

The Chapter document states that, *“As disciples of Jesus, we are called to wash one another’s feet and to empower the weak and vulnerable of our world, who have neither choice nor voice.”* We acknowledge that our different stages of life determine how we engage in mission. Some sisters participate through their presence and prayer and others engage with local and global issues. We make our own the prayer of Bishop Walsh’s which says that, *“Mission is to go to a no-place, serve God’s nobodies and in the eyes of the world accomplish no-thing. In this way we realize we are at the centre of what time, meaning and history are all about. O God, give us the courage to dream new dreams, think new thoughts and go forward into the future with the spirit.”* —JJ Walsh MM

Going to a no-place

For us, going to a no-place means trusting in what God calls us to do, anywhere, at any time. Here our models are Abraham, Mary and the apostles. When God asked Abraham to go to a place God would show him, Abraham was being asked to go to a “no-place,” to an unfamiliar territory and to accomplish a rather foggy mission. No one in his or her right mind would accede to such an unclear mission. Yet in trust Abraham got up and went, and this for him, as St Paul says repeatedly, was counted as “righteousness” Romans 4: 3. Abraham set to go to the place that only God knows the name. He was not given a road map neither did he asked to be told where

before he would set out. He trusted. Can we trust in God’s design for our lives?

The Blessed Virgin Mary was called at a young age and unmarried, to bear a child in a cultural environment which was very biased against women, and in general anything but tolerant to such a situation. Mary was not unaware of this and of her moral and physical precariousness in the eyes of the society in the event she conceived while still unmarried; she knew the consequences. Even when she inquired of the angel how would this be since I have no relation with a man (Luke 26-38), the angel’s answer was that the Holy Spirit will overshadow her. Whatever this meant, Mary had to trust, which is reflected in her response: “Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word” (Luke 1: 38). The question is that even when are not put in the picture, we are not consulted, the mission is unclear, we do not understand, it is unfamiliar, discomfoting and threatening, can we accept it with Mary’s docility, her total yes, not minding the consequences?

In the Great Commission, Jesus said to his disciples “go into the whole world and proclaim the Good News”. They were to go to everywhere and everywhere is no-place. Thus we come to understand mission as going to no-place is rooted in trust in God, in God’s people and in God’s entire creation. This trust in God involves a positive attitude that says yes, in a conviction that does not waiver, that the Lord is always good.

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DECEMBER		
8th	Sr. Immaculata Obanure	Feastday
8th	Sr. Mary John	Feastday
8th	Sr. MaryJo Abba	Feastday
8th	Sr. Maria Ilo	Feastday
8th	Sr. Veronica Mary Odida	Feastday
13th	Sr. Lucia Akinnusoye	Feastday
13th	Sr. Lucia Adenle	Feastday
19th	Sr. Juliana Egbeleke	Birthday
25th	Sr. Christiana Udebor	Birthday
28th	Sr. Grace Iwok	Birthday
31st	Sr. Matilda Owolagba	Birthday

Heart of the MATTER

by Rita Akin-Otiko, SSL

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) Cry: Maranatha! Come! LORD JESUS!

The term IDPs is a familiar tag even among children in Nigeria today. Generally, the term IDP is used for describing people who have to flee their homes and communities due to disasters, be they natural or human-made. I remember about six years ago when our Sisters had to minister to the IDPs in Ewulu after the overwhelming floods that submerged a vast part of the community. I read recently that the flood has started its mayhem again in the same community and other parts of the country. Then, our Sisters, Agnes, Janet, Philomena, Immaculata, Vivian and Mary-Theresa and Margaret were vanguards in bringing succour to the people who were camped in a school within the Ewulu community. Sisters in other apostolates provided both materials and foodstuffs for them and our Sisters coordinated the civil and fair distributions of the items for the length of time the IDPs were in their temporary location.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reported in 2014 that road building projects in Lagos in February 2014 made some nine thousand persons homeless¹. This is an example of human-made displacement. The monitoring centre also reported that between January and June 2018, there is an estimated 5.2 million new conflict/violence induced IDPs in 10 highest hit countries. Ethiopia took the lead with a total of 1.4 million IDPs, while Nigeria occupied the 4th position with 417,000 IDPs. Other nations were

Syria (1.2m), Democratic Republic of Congo – DRC (946,000), Somalia (341,000), Central Africa Republic – CAR (232,000), South Sudan (215), Afghanistan (168,000), India (166,000) and Yemen, (142,000)².

Nigeria started experiencing the menace of human-made-violence-induced IDP status since 2011 after the terrorist attack on Christmas day in Madallah. Since then, till date, IDP camps have spread to different parts of the country. The health welfare and humanitarian supports have declined drastically in these camps and there is escalated suffering. Children are being born in camps and many have little or no schooling whatsoever. Young girls and women are being sexually harassed³. And to add insult to injury, political parties take their campaigns to IDP camps⁴. Actions they say speak louder than voice. How plausible would their campaigns have been if they had relocated the IDPs and improved their conditions of living.

In times like this, what role is the Church playing? I mean the Catholic Church in Nigeria. Apart from the staged protest and prayers we embarked upon this year, what else can we say we as a Church have done to alleviate the problems of IDPs? Catholics in Nigeria are estimated at 52.6 million in 2010⁵. If each Catholic contributed a Naira per day for one year that would amount to N52.6m multiplied by 365 which would be N19,199,000,000 (19+ billion Naira). I believe this would provide succor for a significant number of our displaced sisters and brothers. The Church has been known to stand in solidarity with the poor and marginalized in the past. What is happening today with poverty- plenty and hearts gone wild with war? How can we make Advent a period filled with hope for our sisters and brothers still lingering in camps, in rain, hot sun, and biting cold? How can we go and tell it at the IDP camps that our Messiah is near at hand? Maranatha! Come LORD JESUS!

References

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3. <https://www.channelstv.com/2016/11/01/sexual-harassment-shettima-request-detectives-idps-camps>.
4. <http://www.thelegislatureng.com/stop-using-idps-camp-for-campaign-gov-ortoms-tells-apc/>.
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Children having lessons in makeshift classrooms in one of the IDPs camps in Nigeria (photo source: www.globalgiving.org)



MISSION —continued from page 2

Serve no-bodies

It is true that initially mission entails a call to work with people unknown to you, and we consider such people, without insult or condescension, as “no-bodies”, the poor. Mission is a constant call to serve the persons always in need. A call to embark on new territory in terms not only of cultures and attitudes, but personalities and emotions. This is a task which once again clearly calls for trust and courage.

In our Mission statement, we stated clearly that “We, Sisters of St Louis, faithful to our call “that all may be one” commit ourselves to live God’s love for the whole of creation, and especially to stand in solidarity with those who have no choice — the poor and marginalized.... Through all our ministries, we resolve to work to transform unjust structures and promote peace, reconciliation and the integrity of creation. Therefore mission for us is a preferential option for the poor, preferential treatment for the lowly, those we might call the ordinary folk of society, those who need us, the unwell who are in need of a physician. We refer to them as the poor. This calls us to be compassionate. According to Laurenti Magesa, “Compassion eliminates prideful feelings and attitudes and fosters the realization that, however socially important we might be, or seem to be in our own eyes or those of other people, we are all, at the end of the day, part and parcel of the rank and file of humanity, with all the strengths and weakness. On the other hand, the aspect one chooses to emphasize about oneself will shape one’s view of mission and the people’s perception of one as one engages in mission. It will identify one as a person of compassion or just a religious autocrat or functionary”. A call to re-orientation on how we do or carry out apostolate to include Pope Francis’ injunction to “smell the sheep”. To come down to the level of those we serve in a way that we can identify with them.

Accomplish no-thing

The society we belong to is a society of achievement and accomplishment. These determine your importance in the eyes of the modern man. And because of these, we find a lot of competition and disorientation in the way we carry out our apostolates today. To create an impact, we must collapse and build. We see it as a waste to have a certain number of people in the internal ministry, and we cannot see that it is mission. If my place of work is not a point of reference, I feel that I have done nothing. This to a point makes us not to be willing to work with the poor or to go to rural areas. Yet mission is about touching lives. Everybody is contributing to this mission. The stage at which we are determines the way we participate in the mission. **It is not my mission, but God’s mission.** Our apostolate is to build human values, to wash one another’s feet in the world’s vulnerable including our sisters. Here we see a call: to differentiate between Mission and Apostolate, to go back to our roots or to re-evaluate our preferential option for the poor. Mission is a call to willingness and openness, the ability to say yes when you are asked to go to a place and to touch lives. A call to service, to be the voice of the voiceless. All of this requires, in the words of Walsh, the **courage** to dream new dreams and think new thoughts in the ministry.

Contact

EDITORIAL

Thy Kingdom Come!



Dear Family,

Looking around us in society today, one’s heart aches for the gross injustice and suffering which abound. We know for sure that our governments are overwhelmed, for there are attendant woes to each good step they take to make things better. Forces within and without constantly disturb the peace. While we hope and pray for better policy implementation, strong and humane political will on the part of the government, our business is to keep proclaiming that “There is a Kingdom coming!” We do well if we are true harbingers of God’s Kingdom on earth as we live.

We do well if we do not give people false hope — True hope is in God’s unfailing Kingdom, where no one shall “hurt nor destroy in all [God’s] holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:9) God’s Kingdom is coming! It is an everlasting one. Until then, our business is to bring hope and succour to our fellow human beings who are in need, giving them a foretaste of what is to come. God, the Father, Thy kingdom come!

Thank you all for making the publication of this issue possible. Let’s redouble our efforts in keeping in contact. Happy reading.

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« Word to Live By »

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

— Jesus Christ
(Luke 11:1-2)



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