

# MISSION NEWS



## HANDMAIDS OF THE SACRED HEART

December 2018 – 2019

# A LITERACY PROJECT



*Sr Magdalena tells about the Literacy Programme they are offering to the people of **Las Lomas, Bolivia**, where our Sisters are running an “Itinerant Mission”.*

### “LEARN TO READ AND WRITE”

“For several years the Sisters and young volunteers have collaborated in helping the children of Las Lomas with their school work. Then we had the idea of giving their parents the opportunity of **learning to read and write**, so that then, they themselves can get involved in their own children’s learning and help them with their homework.



### “YES, I CAN”

We labelled the literacy project “**Yes I can**”. The affirmative and positive slogan stimulates and encourages active participation and commitment.

The class also reflects upon and debates themes related with their everyday life.



## THE ADVENTURERS

We started with a group of fifteen adults, thirteen mums and two dads, between 21 and 56 years of age. These were the people who **dared to take the challenge** of handling **the pencil and the copybook, the letters and the words!** At the beginning, the study was a real challenge for them, for at times they found it **difficult to recognise the letters and the numbers or to remember what they had been doing in the previous lesson...**

But as we advanced, they acquired a certain rhythm and showed more enthusiasm, because they could write down what they were thinking and what they wanted to say.

For example, when I asked them to find words containing 'o' and the 'u', they at one replied, "Onur"!

(the principal character of the novel the mums are watching on the tele in the evening). **You should see their satisfaction and sense of self-dignity reflected in their faces.**

## MAKING PROGRESS

As they were making progress, these mums and dads became more enthusiastic, making greater effort. They hoped their learning would help them **"to read and understand the messages the school teachers send home with their children"**. They also hoped to manage their daily shopping better and even **"to find work without being deceived!"**



## SELF-IMPROVEMENT

These parents show great desire for self-improvement. In her excitement, Sra Pinto says, **"Shall I be able to learn how to read and write, now that I'm 56 years old?"** Sra Andrea, 48 years old, exclaims with a big smile, **"Now I can count up to a thousand! And I can write it all down!"** Sra Benedicta, 54 years old, says, **"Hermanita, (Sister) I never went to school, my parents had no money, but I am so happy because now I am going to learn..."**

## GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS

These mums and dads are so happy and full of hope. One says, **"I can now read the doctor's prescription given to my little son"**. Another, **"I no longer put my finger print on my son's Report Book, now I write my name!"** A number of them expressed their desire to go on to the **second part** of the Literacy Project **"YES, I CAN GO ON"**.

*Following this Literacy Project people can obtain a "Read and Write" Certificate. Going to the second part of the Project, they can obtain Second Level education or Professional Training. This Project is also an invitation to senior students and to young people who, through lack of resources, or other reasons, gave up school at an early age.*

# A PLACE OF HOPE

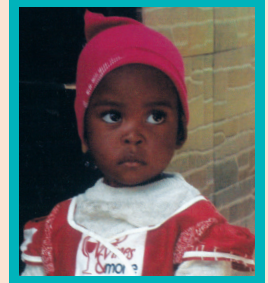


*Sr Ana gives us an idea of her experience as a Missionary in our Health Centre ,*  
**in Bikop, Cameroon.**

## JOYS AND SORROWS

“I have been invited to share my mission experience here in **Bikop**. Our entire life is Mission. Mission in life is comprised of **joys and sorrows, life and death, cross and resurrection**. In Bikop I am surrounded by **life**: many people, happy people, dedicated lives, exuberant nature, all kinds of animals, an enormous number of children and young people... But I am also surrounded by **death**: physical death, intense pain, injustice, violence, aggression, deception, oppression, visible corruption, dehumanisation, de-christianisation...

There are days when I feel **the excess of evil, the inability to put up with more evil.**



## ALL WELCOME

An average of 100 persons a day come to our Mission. In our Health Centre everyone is welcome, can consult a doctor, have an analysis done, and receive good treatment. Everyone who comes, goes away relieved, feeling better, and is in the process of being healed, or at least relieved, in the case of chronic or incurable illness.

## GENEROUS DEDICATION

All this is carried out through the work and dedication of the people working in the Centre. 20 Sisters and Lay People generously share their gifts and individual qualifications. Every day we try to do our best to restore dignity, to put all the people, who come to us, back on their feet. As a multidisciplinary team offering holistic attention, we are able to offer **comprehensive health care, physical, spiritual, psychological and social**.

## GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS

We are **thankful to God, and our benefactors**, for all the good received in Bikop during these past months: **expansion of the paediatric hospital unit, construction of a new laboratory and waiting room, medical campaigns in solidarity – dentistry, ophthalmology and surgery – computerisation of the entire Centre, implementation of a system of quality control.** We can say, **‘And God saw that it was good’.**



# BUILDING A NATION



*Sr Monica expresses the Sisters' gratitude for the help they have received for their work in **EAST TIMOR***

## **“MANY THANKS”**

“It is a long time since I contacted you; but we never forget you, as our very kind collaborators in our activities here in East Timor. Benefactors from different countries, such as you in Ireland and England, are enabling us to carry out our work among these lovely people. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to each one of you. We pray for you, so that you are always granted abundant graces from the Lord who is the source of all goodness.

## **GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR**

It is already 16 years since this tiny country became independent, but **nation building is not an easy task for all the people of East Timor**. The most evident social problem is **the discrepancy between the rich and the poor**. A couple of years ago a four-story mall was built in the capital. It is the first and the only luxurious supermarket in **East Timor**. It is always filled with young people who simply enjoy window shopping in an air- conditioned building! However, **the life of the ordinary Timorese, especially in the country side, is ever the same**. The people are obliged to live hand to mouth, without any income to improve their quality of life.



Bebonuk Primary School

## **OUR WORK – EDUCATION**

In such situation, we the Handmaids, try our best to build a just society. The key work for this objective is in the area of education. In all the Primary Schools in the city of Dili, all the **children from grade 1 to 4 can go to school only for two hours a day**. This is due to the fact that there are too few schools for a drastically increasing number of children. So **we opened an extracurricular school from Monday to Thursday to teach several subjects**. We also **need to provide the children with nourishing snacks**. For the older students, especially those in university, we hold **weekly language classes**. Every now and then we give them **religious and human formation** so that **they can be good citizens to build their country**. All these classes are free because of the economically difficult situation of the children and young people.”

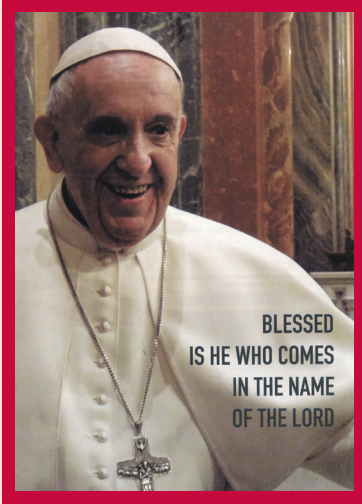


Seminar on how to write a thesis. Youth are eager to learn.



# AN UNEXPECTED VISIT

**All Christians dream of one day seeing the Pope even though it may be from a distance**



**Unexpectedly Pope Francis announced he wanted to visit St Raphaela Mary, Our Foundress, who lies in our Church in XX Settembre in Rome.**



**Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017**

**Pope Francis**

**Came to XX Settembre, Rome**



**“I have come to thank St Raphaela Mary. With her example she has helped me so much in the darkest moments of my life,”** The Pope said.

**He advised us never to lose our joy.**

# A CENTRE OF PEACE



*Sr Patricia thanks us for the help received and sends some photos of their work in **Cochabamba, COLOMBIA***

## “A PLACE OF VIOLENCE”

“What a blessing from God you are for us. Your interest in our work here in **Caracoli** and your generosity, are a great **encouragement** to us.

**Our Foundation “Sta Maria de los Robles”** is now established in the house (“your house”) built with your donations. Here we care for children of “different abilities”, and also for young people and adults. **Many of these pupils have emotional problems**

**due to personal insecurity caused by the violence prevalent in the district.** (A 15 year old boy witnessed an attack on a motorcyclist who was badly beaten). Many children suffer from malnutrition, so we have to provide nourishing food. Other problems are related to



drug trafficking. **Some children have got involved in the sale of drugs, others have been threatened for refusing to join in anything to do with drugs.** The worst cases are when the children themselves are involved in drug-taking.



## DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES

All who come here, whatever their disabilities, **are welcomed with respect, kindness and compassion.** We have to use different activities and therapies, music, dancing...according to the needs of the pupils.

In this peaceful environment a good number of students use their time well and work hard, as we can see in this photo of a supervised study, after the school hours. We offer literacy classes to adults, we have workshops where the adults learn to



make biscuits...creams and ecological soap. There is a baker’s shop too. Actually we need to buy a machine as the four women in charge of this activity are finding the kneading of the dough too painful for their hands! **These two displaced Mums are working with computers as they are trying to get the Second Level Education Certificate”.**



# DESTRUCTIVE EVIL



Sr. Irene with an elderly yazidi woman

*Sr Irene gives us an idea of her experience in KURDISTAN, IRAQ.*

## MISSION IN IRAQ

“I was sent by my Congregation to Iraq to collaborate with the Jesuit Relief Services (JRS) in **“the accompaniment, service and defence of the refugees and displaced persons”**, caused by **the war and the brutality of ISIS**, in Iraq and Syria. Last September I arrived in Erbil, the capital, where the JRS-Iraq has the headquarters of its National Office.



## AMONG THE DISPLACED

I think I should explain a bit about the context in which this mission is carried out. Between June and August 2014, more than 500,000 people coming from Mosul and the plain of Niniveh, and from Zumar and Sinjar, were forced to relocate in this region, because of the **violent occupation of their territory by ISIS**. More recently the military operations to reconquer **Mosul, the capital of the caliphate of the self-proclaimed Islamic State**, led to the displacement of around a million people.

## ‘STRANGE DAILY LIFE’

I have experienced a strange daily life since I arrived here, an experience which I describe as a **schizophrenic co-existence of good and evil, life and death, love and hate, acceptance and rejection, forgiveness and vengeance...** One could say that **I am in a place where evil seems to rule**. Its actions can only be described as those of **a terrible and heartless beast, ISIS: the persecution of Christians, the genocide of the Yazidis, open war between Shiite and Sunni Muslims...It is evil, truly evil!** Who can dare criticise the logical attitude of responding to evil with evil? Is it possible to say to **a mother** that she should not hate, when she **has seen her son executed in her presence, because he was caught talking on a mobile?** Can we say to a child that **everything will work out when he has just seen armed men take his father away?** How can we say to a young man who is **forced to kill again and again, that life is an inviolable value?**



## HOPE REMAINS

The JRS’s projects aim to promote psychological well-being to displaced people, to make accessible to them networks of services, of emergency assistance and social support. They offer informal education and academic support to students of Secondary Level. Various trainings in life-skills are offered to adults, thus fostering financial **independence**; the education of women is promoted. Counselling is offered to the **victims most traumatized by terrorism**. The people we try to serve come principally from the two minorities, **the Yazidi and the Christians, who suffer multiple traumas caused by their terrible suffering at the hands of ISIS”**.



**MAY THE JOY AND THE BLESSINGS  
OF CHRISTMASS  
STAY WITH YOU ALL THROUGH THE YEAR**

*many thanks*

*to all who have sent:*

**DONATIONS**

**POSTAGE STAMPS**

*Please continue to support our Missions*

**Send what you can to Sister Maria**

**MISSION CENTRE**

Handmaids of the Sacred Heart

St Raphaela's Convent, St Raphaela's Road, Stillorgan

Co. DUBLIN A94 TP38

Tel. +353 1 288 9963 [www.aciireland.org](http://www.aciireland.org)

Province [www.atlanticeurope.org](http://www.atlanticeurope.org)

**ENGLAND:**

25 St Edmund's Terrace,

LONDON NW8 7PY, Tel.+44 207 722 2756

[www.aciengland.org](http://www.aciengland.org)

**PORTUGAL:**

Escravas S. Coração

Rua de Sao Felix 2 A, 1200-840 LISBOA

Tel.+351 216057360 [www.aciportugal.org](http://www.aciportugal.org)

**FRANCE:**

Institut del L'Alma, 12 Avenue Bosquet, 75007 PARIS

Tel +33 0144 18 62 92, [www.aci-france.org](http://www.aci-france.org)