



Extended Family Newsletter

Issue 33 - April 2019

Cyclone Idai

Although the effects of the cyclone have somewhat dropped out of the news, we know that the dreadful tragedies continue in the lives of so many people. We have several RSHM communities in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, one in the city of Beira which was directly in the path of the cyclone. From a letter sent by Sr. Rosamond, our general superior, to all the sisters we know that the sisters are safe but don't know any more about their situation. In writing about aid to those affected by the cyclone, Sr. Rosamond told us that in addition to aid for the most immediate necessities, there needs to be ongoing help for the long term for all the people affected. She writes:

Recovery, of course, will be a long-term process... In order to address long-term needs, the rebuilding of lives and schools, we will research the most effective organizations through which to make donations. We plan to schedule these donations on a long-term basis. We welcome the involvement not only of our provinces (i.e. Sisters in all parts of the world), but of our schools and SHM Extended Family as well... We will update you about our longer-term plans for assistance.

We remain united in prayer for all suffering in Africa.

We know that Extended Family members from all parts of the RSHM congregation will be responding to this suggestion and assume that we too will respond as we can and as we get information. Donations can be channelled through the sisters in your area.

Sister Catherine Dolan

Returning to the Zambezi Region

In 2018 I had the joy of returning to the Zambezi Region. The opportunity came when I was invited by the Regional Council to help at the Region's Chapter and to spend a few weeks in the different communities, meeting the sisters, and reconnecting with the younger sisters whom I had known in the novitiate in Belo Horizonte.

The RSHM Communities

Currently there are 20 SHM Sisters in the Region, living in 6 communities, 3 in Zambia and 3 in Zimbabwe. The communities are small in number ranging from two to four. The ministries are varied: special needs education, secondary school education, nursing, retreats, counselling, spiritual direction, parish work, pastoral administration, human and social development, RSHM formation and vocation promotion. In all the ministries the Sisters and their lay collaborators are at the service of people who are suffering or deprived.



Sisters Celine Bitega, Aélita Otávia, Margaret Masarakufa, Mary Lungu and myself.



Srs. Celine, Mary and myself enjoying a picnic.



Srs. Lelia O’Shea and Coltridah Mooya and a local girl - Choma, Zambia.

Revisiting the different people and places I noticed the changes that had taken place in recent years. Zambia seemed more prosperous than when I was last there, in 2013. The land was better cultivated, with irrigation systems in some places. After heavy rain – which we had many times during my stay – it was good to see fields of maize or vegetables springing up.

In Zimbabwe, farming seemed less advanced and generally the situation was worrying. This was most evident in the struggle to meet the escalating costs of food and other basic goods and in the long queues for petrol and diesel which seemed to grow longer as each day passed. The picture I have painted may seem gloomy, but the spirit of the people shone out. Everywhere I went, whether in our communities or in the local parishes, the people I met were joyful, very friendly and interested in where I came from.

I felt at home in each of the communities I visited, aware again as often before that I belong to a world-wide family, united by a common history and mission. The “union of mind and heart” to which our Constitutions refer (#26) was very real for me as I experienced in each little community and in the larger gatherings the joy of our shared life together and our ongoing responsibility to accompany and support each other in our local communities and in our Institute as a whole.



Sr. Carol Schommer in the garden of the community house in Chinhoi, Zimbabwe.

The Holy Spirit Sisters

During my stay in Zambia I met many of the Holy Spirit Sisters (HSS). Their strong links with the RSHM continue and they too are involved in key ministries in Monze diocese. Sr. Evan, whom many of us remember, lives in Choma, close by the RSHM community there. The HSS and RSHM are involved in St. Joseph's School, Chivuna and in the nearby Clinic, where several RSHM temporary professed Sisters have been working in recent years.



Sr. Celine Bitega dispensing medicines to local mothers and babies at the Clinic in Chivuna Mission, Zambia.

On our way from Chivuna to Lusaka, Lelia and I had lunch with the HSS community in Mazabuka, where Sr. Christine Mwanza lives. Christine, who was the general superior after Sr. Sheila Morgan, asked about many of our Sisters from the NEP. Likewise Sr. Anna Haakaloba, who spent a year in Dublin in the 1980s, remembered many from the past. Anna now lives in Chikuni where the HSS formation house is situated. Currently there are five HSS pre-novices and they and the three SHM pre-novices often share in formation courses. While visiting Chikuni we also stopped to pray at the graveside of Sr. Catherine Chitali, RSHM, who died two years ago, RIP.

RSHM Regional Chapter

During the last week of my stay, the RSHM Regional Chapter took place in the Sisters of Charity Retreat Centre, Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe. The Sisters who run the house were most gracious and welcoming and took care of our every need. All RSHM from the Region were present, including Rosemary Mwangarezano and Kathleen Murphy from the novitiate in Belo Horizonte and Veronica Brand from the UN New York. Srs. Rosamond and Philippa were there from the General Council, Rome.



Florence Muuka, Evelyn Murray, Beatrice Magaya, Veronica Brand and Pamela Penkert



Total group of RSHM of the Zambezi Region, with Rosamond, Philippa and Margaret F.

The Chapter was an uplifting experience. It was a privilege to hear the Sisters sharing their hopes and dreams, struggles and concerns as they drew up their strategic plan for the next five years.

Thanks

I am grateful to all who helped to make my stay in the Zambezi Region an enriching and memorable one. The experience left me with the deeper conviction that while we are fewer in number today than in the past, we are enough and will be enough - if we are what God wants us to be: authentic, open and welcoming communities of faith, at the service of people who are suffering in today's world.

The preparations under way now for the 2019 General Chapter, remind us once more of the bonds that unite us across continents, with our Sisters and with our SHM Extended Family members everywhere. May the Chapter preparations help us to be true to the vision and charism of Jean Gailhac and to continue the mission entrusted to him and our founding Sisters, the same mission that is entrusted to us today - *that all may have Life (Jn.10,10)*.

Margaret Fielding RSHM

Meeting of the Extended Family in Béziers, 18th February 2019

We had an enthusiastic group of 46 people on the 18th of February 2019 to celebrate our 170th anniversary. After a brief introduction to the video on the Mother House we had a time for reactions and questions. The reactions were varied but brief, like very good, lovely pictures, the true story, a real contact with the history of the Mother House and an understanding of the various works of Father Gailhac and Appollonie.



The questions came rapidly: people were asking about Mother Saint John's family history, her role in relation to Father Gailhac.

- What about the story of Eugene, his role in relation to Father Gailhac ?
- The difference between the habits worn by the Sisters at different periods.
- What about the present story of the Mother House ?
- What is the expression of the Institute in the world today ?

Perhaps these were the main questions.

People in the group expressed a desire to visit the Mother House and Sister Marie Paule will ensure that responsibility to welcome them on Monday the 25th of February 2019.

The evening as usual was a great moment of sharing the meal, prepared by all of the participants and a time of conviviality.

Margaret McNamara

Carlisle Extended Family Report January- March 2019

The group met in the convent on 5 February 2019 to plan events for the year and ended the evening by celebrating Sr Moira's birthday with a small but enjoyable birthday party where we tucked into birthday cake and a few nibbles and of course the compulsory glass of wine. A lovely time had by all.



These photos were taken after our meeting in the convent on 5th Feb to include a small birthday celebration for Sr Moira's birthday

Foundation Day 26 February

On this occasion we invited 'Friends of the Sisters' to come and join us in the chapel, there were about 20 of us in total and we enjoyed a very informative viewing of the DVD 'The House where Life Flourished' which described the beginnings of the RHSM in Beziers France.

Sr Pierre with her great knowledge of Beziers was able to talk us through the different places we saw and was on hand to answer questions raised by the group at the end of the showing. Some of us in the group have been fortunate to visit Beziers and it was pleasing to see again the places that had beautiful memories for us. For the others it gave them such a lovely insight into the foundation and work of the congregation. Who knows there could be another trip to Beziers coming along? I hope so!

We ended the evening with a shared buffet supper enjoyed by all.

Future planned events

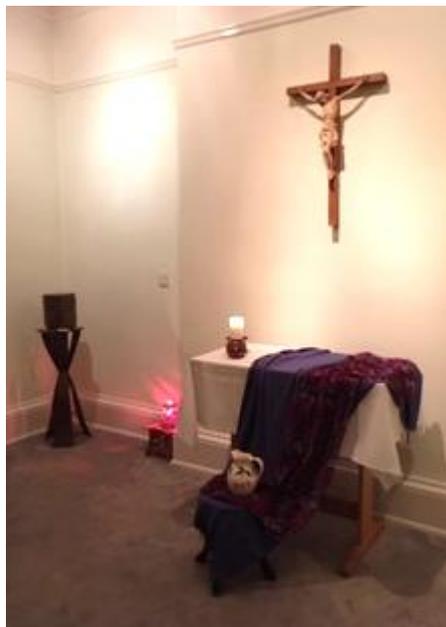
- 26 March 2019 – Lenten Reflection: Sr Moira has volunteered to lead this evening of prayer. (Not sure if she really ‘volunteered’!)
- 29 June 2019 – Feast of the Sacred Heart: We have invited Fr Tim Sullivan to come and address our group, the theme being ‘Creating a Future Filled with Hope’.

Maureen Wilson and Yvonne Gibson

Lenten Reflection Evening at Carlisle, 26 March 2019

The EF Carlisle group met in the convent where we joined the Sisters for our ‘Lenten Reflection’ which was led by Sr Moira.

We all congregated in the sitting room where Sr Moira gave us some thoughts on the ‘meaning of Lent’ and what it meant to us as individuals. A couple of members of the group shared what they do/ had done for lent now and in the past! One member of the group said rather than giving anything up they liked to do something to build up their spirituality/give help to a needy cause. The session was ended with a Lenten poem read by Greg Smith.



We then all moved into the chapel. The next part of our reflection commenced with the hymn “Everyday God” by Bernadette Farrell this was followed with Sr Moira giving us a few more thoughts on how we could look at our own lives and how we operate and then “The Prayer of The Empty Water Jug” (inspired by John 4.28) was then read out aloud.

The lights were then dimmed and we spent 10 minutes in silence reflecting on the words of this reading focusing on our own lives and on how we could improve our own spirituality. We ended the time of reflection by singing the hymn ‘God Beyond All Names’ by Bernadette Farrell. It was a very productive and thought-provoking evening which ended with a light supper.

Yvonne Gibson

As always thanks to the contributors and to Sister Thérèse-Marie for her work on the translations to and from French.

The newsletter is published in English and French versions. If you (or someone) else would prefer to receive the French version then please get in touch.

Could you contribute an item to the newsletter? Photos and articles – no matter how short – are always welcome and will be held for the next available newsletter. Don't delay - exercise your literary talents now! Contributions in English or French (both, even!) are equally welcome to the email address below.

Similarly, if you would no longer wish to receive the newsletter, please inform the editor at the address below.

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