Visiting a Public Hospital...

The Kenyatta National Hospital of Nairobi is a gigantic building which shelters over a thousand patients. People from all over the country come to this Hospital as it has the capacity to provide treatments for all types of diseases. You can imagine thirty beds in each room, simple medical equipments and surely the patients do not receive enough anaesthetics... The paediatric department is located on the third floor of the Hospital and it is here that we come and visit sick children once a week.

The whole story began when one day, while passing in front of this Hospital, we entered to see how it was inside. As we arrived at the children’s ward, we were shocked: the children were so numerous and some of them suffering from dreadful diseases. Eventually, a little boy on his wheelchair made the first approach towards us and asked if Sisters could come and play with him. And that was it. We started paying visit to those children once a week.

We begin with visiting some of those countless rooms, greeting the children from bed to bed, encouraging them, handing them out some Miraculous Medals and saying some little prayers with them. The mothers stay at their children’s bedside day and night sharing the same bed of their little ones. How they would feel comforted if somebody came to join in their sorrow! One time, there was a room that was being renovated, they were repairing the floor... Beds were moved and packed in one corner of the same room while in the other they were drilling the floor... There was much dust and noise but nobody uttered a single complaint....
So, we settle ourselves in one corner of the big corridor and children who are more able come and join us. The floor is not so clean but it is much better compared to the one they have at home... There we are... with all kinds of games and colourings at their disposal.

Another time, after some weeks of visits, a little girl died just before we left. It was consoling to know that one of our priests was able to administer Extreme Unction few moments after her death. The following week another girl, who had become the former girl’s friend, asked us interesting questions about life and death. We were happy to be able to talk to her about Heaven, this wonderful Heaven that awaits us, where there are no more sufferings and tears. One could see how her little eyes shone with Hope! Every week we then continued talking to her more about God, our Heavenly Father. Finally, that little girl recovered and returned home. We pray that the tiny seeds sown in her heart will one day bloom...

There are times that the children die in the hospital. By God’s grace some are able to receive the sacrament of Baptism before they breathe their last. It can also happen that parents refuse to have their children baptised. When that happens, we seem not to hear the loud music on the bus and seem to forget about the tedious traffic while on our way back to the convent so absorbed are we in prayer in order that grace may touch those parents’ hearts! For this intention, we are very grateful for your prayers so that souls may open themselves to the grace of our Faith!

One afternoon, we arrived quite late to our usual appointment with the children. From the window of a ward, a little girl saw us approaching. She had been waiting for our coming and knew that she would receive a happy smile and a prayer on that day as it was a Tuesday. It was touching to know how she asked her mother to allow her to wear her best dress so that she might appear a bit elegant for her Sister visitors!

**Baptism at the Priory**

On 23rd May this year we witnessed with great joy the Baptism of eight children and young people from the Parish. We had known them for quite some time and seeing them becoming God’s children was particularly touching. Actually, it is not unusual to see these children coming to the Parish alone by themselves. They come to the Parish either through their friends who have been regular comers or by being attracted by the activities organised on Saturdays which include meals. There are some who take their faith seriously, who know their Catechism well and look forward to receiving the Sacrament of Baptism. Preceding that Baptism ceremony we also took care of the material needs of the girls: we offered them the possibility of having a good shower and, of course, we did not hesitate to shine their shoes as well. We had already prepared a beautiful white dress for each of them, very clean and well ironed. In fact, it is a kind of feast to them being able to wear a beautiful dress!
One of these girls, unfortunately, has been brought up from the worst side of the slum. It is the place where they illegally produce a certain type of alcohol which is at the same time dangerous and smells horribly strong. The people living around that area are mostly drunk from morning to evening. The girl’s mother seems to love that alcohol very much; her father, she has never known him. That very day the mother was to attend the daughter’s Baptism ceremony. We passed by her house and announced to her that she had to dress herself properly and in haste because something great was going to happen to her daughter. That lady came, and instead of drinking the whole afternoon, she spent that same afternoon in the Church!

Needless to say, those poor children need our prayers in order that they may be able to persevere until the end because the family environment where they live does not offer them any support at all! At the end of the ceremony, there was a big and colourful cake prepared by the Sisters for the occasion. As usual, the celebrant is the one who cuts the cake. So there were eight of them who cut the cake!

**Father Niklaus Pfluger’s Visit**

Father Niklaus Pfluger, being Monsignor Bernard Fellay’s delegate, normally comes to our Novitiate every year. This time he came in the month of June. His visit was inaugurated by the Corpus Christi procession at the Parish. On the day preceding this feast, the weather was not favourable at all, it was therefore impossible to set up the altars of repose on the streets... At the end, the procession successfully took place around the priory garden...

Father Pfluger’s visit included a six-day retreat that he preached to half of the community. He spoke wonderfully about the Holy Mother Church taking references from the Holy Scripture. Throughout this week while one group of the community was rapt in meditation, the other busied themselves with the household works. (Usually, the kitchen during retreats seems to be the place of particular attention as meals should be always on time regardless of the limited personnel). On one of those days in the kitchen there was some sort of apprehension: the Sisters had to make sure they worked more quietly and faster than usual so as to keep up with the schedule. In addition to the gas burners, and so as to gain time, they used a charcoal cooker to cook some of the food. The Sister cook thought of pouring kerosene on to the charcoal to accelerate the combustion... but instead of the kerosene she mistakenly poured a glass of unleaded petrol used for the lawnmower on to the glowing charcoal! You can imagine what a loud “BOOM” came out! Luckily and it was certainly for this reason that our Novitiate had been placed under the patronage of Our Lady of the Angels, who must daily send a great number from her Angelic Army to watch over us!
Before Father left the Novitiate, a simple show was organised for him: it consisted of a short play and a song dedicated to him, composed for the occasion. The striking part was the one prepared by our Ugandan pre-postulants: it was a sort of a traditional presentation using feather dusters to symbolise angels’ wings!

**Instruction week**

During the Easter holidays our whole community had the chance to attend an intensive course on Pedagogy that lasted for a week. It was given by a former school principal and is one of the faithful. It was interesting to learn teaching methods used in Kenya and then put them into practice.

Obviously, each one of us had the chance to do a short “teaching practice” in front of everyone and which offered us the possibility to improve our way of teaching. It was, indeed, a good week full of instruction... and we had fun at the same time!

**At the foot of our Mother in May**

Every Tuesday throughout the month of May we prayed the Rosary in candle procession to our “Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes”... One Tuesday our Chaplain had invited our neighbours: priests of the Society of African Missions and the Little Sisters of St. Joseph. By chance, two hours before the procession a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, a gift from Switzerland, arrived by post. It was very much appreciated because until then we only had a statue of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. It was then blessed by Father Becher and was honoured by our prayer of the Holy Rosary.

That evening we were so glad being able to be in communion with our neighbours... praying the Holy Rosary which everyone knows!

We are very grateful for your continued support which allows our small community to live and grow.

**Greetings from our favourite hilltop!**

May Our Lady of Africa always keep you under her mantle!

**Missionary Sisters of Jesus and Mary**

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