



The
Daughters
OF CHARITY
EMMITSBURG PROVINCE

Reflections of Pilgrimage to Kenya

Sister Claire Debes, D.C., Provincial Superior, Emmitsburg Province, and Sister Honora Remes, D.C., Provincial Superior, East Central Province, embarked on a pilgrimage to Kenya in late February 2010. This was truly a memorable visit to the Kenyan ministry, which is sponsored by the English speaking provinces of the Daughters of Charity.

Their mission was multi-faceted: to learn about our Sisters' ministries, to support their efforts, to meet the people they serve, and to be able to share first-hand the heartwarming stories of the goodness that the Sisters are blessed to be doing. In little over eight years, the Daughters of Charity have expanded this ministry to what it is today.



Several villagers from the village of Chepnyal pose for a photo with Sister Claire Debes (4th from left), Sister Honora Remes (center), and Sister Catherine Madigan (far right).

The three Sisters from the Emmitsburg Province who are making a difference in the lives of the Kenyans are Sister Patricia Beyrau, D.C., Sister Deborah Mallott, D.C., and Sister Mary Shea, D.C. Together with Daughters from other US provinces, Sisters from the province of Great Britain and Ireland, Nigeria, and Eutrea complement the missionaries.

With these five ministries, the Sisters are making a small dent in the extreme poverty in Kenya and the lives of the villagers, as did Saint Louise de Marillac and Saint Vincent de Paul. The Sisters work with the poorest of the poor. Education for the children begins with pre-school, or nursery school, a pre-requisite of the school system. Since it is not free, those who are poor are not able to attend, and, therefore, have no access to an education.

Sister Patricia Beyrau, D.C. began an Early Childhood Development Center, a model school for teacher training. She instructs women to become teachers, so they can continue teaching others and expand this program. Upon leaving this program, each teacher receives a trunk of starter supplies. Today, there are 32 outstation schools.

In Nairobi, Sister Deborah Mallott, D.C., strives to improve the lives of many who live in deplorable conditions. It rained while Sister Claire was there, and a home that had a floor made of dirt had a metal roof that leaked. The family had to live midst the mud. Manpower was recruited from within the village and, with Sister Deborah's ministry, the roof was fixed.

Sister Claire and Sister Deborah visited a villager named Samson to take him a blanket. On the way to visit Samson, Sister Deborah told Sister Claire about the time when she took Samson a good pair of shoes. His alcoholic brother took the shoes to sell in support of his addiction. Before



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leaving, Sister Deborah made a bargain with Samson's brother that, if he did not take Samson's blanket, she would bring him a blanket on her next visit. Sister Deborah hopes to help him see that there is a better life than his addiction. This visit left a memorable impression with Sister Claire.

There is a new mission in the city of Kitale. One of its industries is producing a brew from sugarcane. However, an unfortunate outcome is that by noon, the adults are typically drunk, and the little children are not tended to, or in school. Sister Florence Ngozi is like a Pied Piper to these children. With encouragement, she got the children back into school and also started a youth group. She met with about 15 women to help them understand that there is an alternative to this lifestyle. Sister Claire reported that some women are now growing vegetables, and the women asked Sister Florence to continue these meetings. Small steps are yielding good results.

Relatively new to the mission in Kitale is a building not much bigger than two or three classrooms put together. It is here that the Sisters hope to counsel and meet with the villagers who come for help. Outside of the building, a garden offers peace and calm as an alternative to their life.

Chanzo, a Kenyan word meaning source, is the main house in Nairobi and a seminary for young women entering the community of the Daughters of Charity. Six Kenyan women are in seminary today, with more entering each year. The Sister missionaries mentor the seminary Sisters, so that they can continue the ministries.

About the ministries:

In January 2002, the Daughters of Charity opened two houses in Kenya: one in Thigio, the Archdiocese of Nairobi, and one further north in the mountains in Chepnyal in the Diocese of Kitale.

Two years later, in September 2004, in view of the wider needs, a third house was opened in the Karen/Nairobi area. Called 'Chanzo', which in Kiswahili means 'roots' or 'source,' this house was established as the administrative headquarters for the Daughters of Charity in Kenya for the future. It was here in January 2008 that the Seminary (formation house) was opened.

While the Province of Ireland takes responsibility for this Mission Outreach, it is a collaborative venture involving the five Provinces of the USA, Australia, Great Britain, and the African Provinces of Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Nigeria.

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