

MISSION *matters*

Mission in Malawi



Before the pandemic firmly took its grip, Missio visited Malawi to witness first-hand the vital impact the Church is having.

As we drove towards the Lisanjala Health Clinic, to meet Father Vincent and Sister Nilcéia, we were in awe of the stark beauty of the countryside, the bright blue sky framed against blood-red earth. But however spectacular the landscape is, scorched earth does not a bountiful harvest make. Poverty in the region is widespread, and supplies of maize are constantly in short supply as people anxiously await the rainy season. Life expectancy is low - just fifty-eight for men and sixty-one for

women. Although much has been done to battle HIV, it remains a serious issue, and malaria is the constant threat. It can kill a person in just one to two days.

A beacon of hope

This is why Church-run services like the Lisanjala Health Clinic are so vitally important because they offer a beacon of hope. The Benedictine Sisters who run the Clinic do so on a shoestring. But their work doesn't stop there. They also feed local school children, and teach their mothers practical skills such as growing crops. Basically, they do anything they can to help make life a little easier in this drastically impoverished area.

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When we arrived and stepped out of our van, it felt like we were walking into a sauna. Under trees, groups of Malawian women had taken refuge from the heat. They eyed us warily until Father Vincent, National Director of Missio Malawi, walked towards us with outstretched arms. It was then that the women slowly began to stand and smile, swaying rhythmically to their own music. In unique African fashion, we were made to feel welcome and included.

From amongst the women Sister Nilcéia then appeared, with open hands of friendship and her infectious smile. As she walked towards us, she scooped up a small child and rested him on her hip. She told us that today's clinic was full, 'many of the women have walked over three hours carrying their sick children', and on other days, 'pregnant teenage girls might walk almost six miles to get help from our clinic.' But today is Tuesday, the day when boys and girls up to five years old are seen.

An all-embracing Church

True to the all-embracing nature of the Church, the small team at the Lisanjala Health Clinic welcome all children - no matter their religion, who they are, or where they are from.

Sr Nilcéia led us towards a small brick building that houses the clinic and introduced us to Peter, their clinician. Peter showed us the medical supply room. It held some boxes of malaria

medicine and eye ointment, 'we've not had paracetamol for two years. We are unable to treat the children's fever and pain,' he desperately explained. We gravely observed that we probably had more medicine in our Missio First Aid kit than the whole clinic.



The sparsely stocked medical supply room at Lisanjala Health Centre

Sorrow in this broken world

Although the rewards far out-weigh the challenges, missionaries experience much sorrow.

Sister Nilcéia, herself many miles from her home in Brazil, shared this sad reality, 'I remember delivering a little boy called Blessing. His mother Linda was only fifteen. She had been abused by a much older man.

Not long after he was born Blessing contracted malaria.’ In time, Blessing went to live with his grandmother, ‘we provided milk for him every week’. But when he was just ten months old Blessing died. He was malnourished. ‘It turned out his grandmother had been giving the milk to another child.’ ‘I cry when I think of Blessing. He didn’t have to die. But this is a broken world. Our only hope is in God, who is with us through the sadness. It was our privilege to love Linda and baby Blessing when it mattered most.’



Sr Nilcéia, a Brazilian missionary, is sharing God’s love in Malawi

Many stirring pastoral moments

Our visit to the Lisanjala Health Clinic was just one of the many hugely stirring pastoral moments we experienced in

Malawi. We could mention scores more. Like Father Charles, a priest from Lisanjala Parish. He proudly showed us his cow. The milk from that one cow keeps him and fellow priests fed, while every Friday he donates the much needed milk to the local nursery. Or the elderly grandmother who cradled her three-month old granddaughter, Praise, in the crowded waiting room of the Church-run Pirimiti Health Centre. Tiny Praise had been orphaned due to HIV. She may too be a carrier? We never found out.

Far reaching solutions

It is glaringly obvious what the Catholic Church is doing to help combat the huge challenges people face in Malawi. Sister Nilcéia’s and Father Vincent’s faith and charitable actions offer far-reaching and long-term solutions that inspire those they help to become missionaries in their own right.

Support from Ireland is never lost on missionaries, especially Fr Vincent whose pastoral visits to the sick and old are vitally important. As one elderly lady told us, ‘having the priests here is like a visit from Jesus.’ Fr Vincent said, ‘I truly don’t know how we would go on without the support of the wider Missio family. We have been helped enormously by our brothers and sisters in Ireland. This sustains not only spiritually and financially, but mentally.’

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Fr Vincent & Sr Nilcéia, always smiling as they care for communities in Malawi

As Sister Nilcéia put it, ‘the need here in Malawi is great. But the Lord is faithful and we continue to serve. We take courage from knowing you are with us in this mission’.

By being a Missio supporter, you are helping the Catholic Church share the love of God not only in Malawi, but with everyone. We thank missionaries for their self-sacrifice, and we thank you for helping to make their work possible.

We take courage

Threats from disease, poverty, inequality and climate change means that basic needs in Malawi will continue to grow.

If you can, please support overseas missionaries

Phone Fiona on 01 497 2035

Send a donation using the form below



YES! I want to support overseas missionaries like Sr Nilcéia and Fr Vincent

Here is my donation of €10 €35 €50 €125 Other

First Name

Surname

Home Address (Please include Eircode / Post Code)

Email

Phone Number

I enclose a Cheque/Postal Order payable to Missio Ireland Or charge my Visa Mastercard

Card Number

Expiry Date CVC Signature

Please post your donation using the Freepost envelope included, no stamp is needed

Dear friend, I hope this edition of Mission Matters finds you well and safe.

The Mission Matters newsletter is our opportunity to share with you the great work that our overseas missionaries continue to do, and proof that missionaries are still very much needed in these modern times.

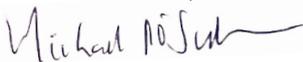
Everyone deserves to hear the Good News and know that God loves them. This love, carried out through the work of missionaries, bears the visible fruit of serving, 'the poor and sick, those who are usually despised and overlooked', as Pope Francis has said many times.

Enclosed you will read about the work of Sr Nilcéia and Fr Vincent in Malawi, which is one of the poorest countries in the world. In countries like Malawi the Church is a major provider of education and healthcare, as well as being a strong voice for human rights and care of the environment.

Thanks to your kindness, Missio Ireland is proud to be able to offer support and encouragement with the Church in countries like Malawi, as it continues to serve those most in need.

Thank you for your ongoing generosity and prayers, both of which play a very real part in bringing peace and justice to the world.

Yours in Christ,



In respect of Laudato Si, and care for our common home, Mission Matters has been printed on eco-responsible paper.



Father Michael P O'Sullivan
Missio Ireland National Director

Save the Date -
World Mission Sunday, 24th Oct

This year we will celebrate World Mission Sunday over the weekend of October 24th. Its theme 'We Cannot Remain Silent – We cannot but speak about what we have seen and heard (Acts 4:20)' is twofold. It is a message of hope - Jesus Christ is risen and we cannot keep his love, compassion and mercy to ourselves. It also challenges us to stand-up and speak on behalf of those whose voices are too small to be heard. We all have the potential to be champions for those who are weaker. For them we cannot remain silent.

WORLD
MISSION
SUNDAY
24th October
2021

You may remember last year for World Mission Sunday we shared part of Sister Marie Catherine's incredible life story?

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Sister Marie Catherine. She passed away early this year due to malaria. This makes her death all the more heart-breaking because malaria is a curable disease if diagnosed and treated quickly.

Sister Marie was the founder of the 'Servants of Christ' congregation in Niger. In this predominantly Muslim country, she fought for human rights, especially for girls and women. In an attempt to promote peace and harmony she was a champion of inter-faith dialogue with Muslim leaders.

She was an incredible woman whose legacy will live on through the many lives she touched, and the ongoing work of her fellow sisters who remain in Niger. We pray for her and her community.

We also wish to take this opportunity to remember the many Irish congregations who have lost much loved members as a result of the pandemic. In January we received the shocking and painful news that ten priests from the Spiritan order had died, eight of them having tested positive for Covid-19. All of these priests had served on the missions. The sadness experienced has been felt even



Remembering those we've lost

more acutely because communities do not have the freedom to grieve as they once did. We extend our sincerest sympathy to the many congregations who have suffered.

A Prayer for Those We Have Lost

In your hands, O Lord, we humbly entrust our brothers and sisters. In this life you embraced them with your tender love; deliver them now from every evil and bid them eternal rest.

The old order has passed away: welcome them into paradise, where there will be no sorrow, no weeping or pain, but fullness of peace and joy with your Son and the Holy Spirit forever and ever.

Amen.