

mission *matters*



Photo of the Out of School Staff from Cross Catholic. Left to right: Sr Judith, Sr Miriam, Rebecca, Constant, Catherine & Suzan.

Sr Dr Miriam Duggan FMSA

The focus of this newsletter is Sr Miriam Duggan, a member of the religious congregation of Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa. Sr Miriam, a native of Co Limerick, graduated from University College Cork [UCC] with a degree in medicine. After graduation, she studied Obstetrics in the UK. Sr Miriam then moved to Uganda and was one of the first qualified obstetricians in the country. She spent the next 30 years working at St Francis Hospital Nsambya in the capital, Kampala. During her time there, Sr Miriam was instrumental in training midwives and doctors in Uganda and she handed over the running of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology to a Ugandan doctor, whom she had mentored.

Continued on page 4

Dear Friend,

I am writing to thank you once again for your continued support of Missio Ireland, which is the Irish branch of the Pontifical Mission Societies [PMS], the Holy Father's official charity for overseas mission. Having given many years as a missionary, working with the poor and marginalised people of our world, I am only too aware of their needs.

Pope Leo XIV has been actively encouraging and emphasising the importance of missionary work within the Catholic Church. He has praised the Pontifical Mission Societies for their global efforts and he highlighted the need for all Christians to embrace their missionary calling. He has also stressed the universal call to mission, urging believers to become active witnesses to the Gospel message of love, reconciliation and peace. He has expressed gratitude for the work of the Pontifical Mission Societies and other missionaries, recognising their vital role in supporting ecclesial communities in young churches and awakening missionary responsibility among the baptised.

At this time last year, we did not expect the death of Pope Francis, and the election of Pope Leo. Like Pope Francis, Pope Leo continues to focus on people on the periphery. The late Pope Francis said: "We often speak of the poor. But when we speak of the poor, do we sense that this man or that woman or those children lack the bare necessities of life? That they have no food, they have no clothing, they cannot afford medicine? Also, that the children do not have the means to attend school? Whereas our needs, although legitimate, are not as urgent as those of the poor who lack life's basic necessities." Pope Leo said: "We see the importance of fostering a spirit of missionary discipleship in all the baptised and a sense of the urgency of bringing Christ to all people." While addressing a group of Bishops on the 16th June last, Pope Leo said that "Bishops must not turn their gaze from the poor." He urged all Bishops to recall that "the poor are at the centre of the Gospel and that the face of Christ is in the poor, always taking care to show concrete solidarity towards the little ones."

In this issue, we share Sr Miriam Duggan's story. She is representative of many missionaries who dedicate their lives to living the Gospel among the poor and the marginalised of our world today.



Through your help, you are allowing the Church to thrive overseas by helping local communities to build churches, chapels, schools, clinics and parish halls. You are preparing the future leaders, teachers and carers of our Church by supporting the training of sisters, priests, religious brothers and catechists. Your support also protects vulnerable boys and girls overseas by supporting programmes that offer them safe shelter, healthcare as well as hope for the future. We thank Sr Miriam for her pioneering work in these areas.

I attended the Pontifical Mission Societies Annual Meeting in Rome at the end of May. This is a meeting where National Directors gather to discuss funding for missionary projects abroad. We had a private audience with Pope Leo. Each of us also had an opportunity to meet him individually.

Again, I extend a very special thank you to our donors and supporters, whose generosity makes so much possible. In conclusion, Pope Leo asks us to continue to be **missionaries of hope**.

Fr. Michael Kelly

Missio Ireland National Director

Responding to the HIV & AIDS pandemic, Sr Miriam supported the establishment of local clinics to care for patients with HIV & AIDS, as well as the rising number of AIDS orphans. She founded Youth Alive to support young people in making responsible choices and to provide support programmes to help prevent the spread of HIV & AIDS. The Youth Alive programme continues today and has been extended to 21 African countries.



In the late 1990s, Sr Miriam relocated to Kenya, where she continued to establish care and prevention programmes. One of the programmes that she is involved with is the **Out of School Youth Project**, which reaches out to vulnerable and marginalised young people within some of the slum areas of Nairobi. In these areas, poverty is great and life is harsh, with families struggling to put food on the table.

The target group for the programme are young people who are idle in the community, school drop outs, those on drugs and those experiencing a feeling of hopelessness.

The programme consists of training in life skills and first aid, as well as vocational training, with the aim of finding employment. As a result of the training received, many of those who participated in the programme started earning through employment, and in so doing, reduced the cycle of poverty.

The **Out of School Youth Project** has helped reduce the risk of young people engaging in harmful activities, such as substance abuse, or criminal behaviour, by providing constructive alternatives. Feedback from families reported improved living standards, due to the increased income and positive behaviour of the young people involved in the programme.

Missionaries like Sr Miriam carry out their work in the service of others with quiet humility. Even in retirement, she continues to assist those who are the most marginalised in our world. Missio Ireland supported Sr Miriam's project and continues to support similar projects.

Leaving a Lasting Legacy

Please remember **Missio Ireland** in your will.

- Handing on and supporting the faith in missionary outreach.
- Education of seminarians, nuns and catechists.
- Children's projects.



If you wish to contact us at Missio Ireland to find out more information, you can do so by emailing info@missio.ie or by calling (01) 497 2035.

You will be remembered in the daily prayers and Masses celebrated in the Oratory at Missio Ireland.

Missionaries killed in 2024

Every year, a report by the *Fides*, the Vatican based news agency, presents the stories of missionaries and pastoral workers who have been murdered around the world.

The 2024 report highlights the tragic deaths of 13 Catholic missionaries, including eight priests and five lay people, men and women who dedicated their lives to serving vulnerable communities, often in regions fraught with violence, poverty and social injustice. The term “missionary” includes all Catholics involved in pastoral work who were killed while living their faith. It also notes that the two most dangerous continents for missionary work are Africa and South America, with five deaths recorded in each.

AFRICA

BURKINA FASO

Volunteer **François Kaboré** was killed on 25th February in Essakane, in an attack by a jihadist group, while leading a prayer meeting with the local community.

Catechist **Edouard Zoetyenga Yougbare** was kidnapped and killed near Saatenga in the diocese of Fada N’Gourma. He died between 18th and 19th April. He was looking for his donkey when an armed group captured him along with another catechist, Jean Marie Yougbare, who was immediately released. Edouard’s body was found in the early hours of 19th April in Pouargogô, about seven kilometres from Saatenga. His throat was slit, his hands were tied behind his back and his body showed signs of torture.



CAMEROON

Fr Christophe Komla Badjougou, a Togolese Fidei Donum priest, was killed in Yaoundé on the evening of 7th October. The priest was shot dead in front of the gate of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Mvolyé, a neighborhood of the capital. The priest was killed during a street robbery.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

On 27th September, **Edmond Bahati Monja**, a Catholic radio journalist, was shot dead by gunmen near his home in the outskirts of Goma. The Congolese army formed alliances with other armed groups to defend the city and also supplied weapons to some militia. However, the presence of irregular armed groups has led to a rise in violent crimes in Goma, including robberies and murders. Edmond had been investigating the violence of armed groups in the region.

SOUTH AFRICA

TZANEEN

A Zambian priest, **Fr William Banda** of St Patrick's Missionary Society (Kiltegan Fathers), was shot dead on 13th March as he prepared to celebrate Mass at Tzaneen Cathedral.

PRETORIA

Fr Paul Tatu, a Stigmatine (Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ) from the Province of the Most Holy Redeemer, was murdered in Pretoria on 27th April. He was killed in his car with a gunshot to the back of the head.

AMERICA

COLOMBIA

Fr Ramón Arturo Montejo Peinado, the parish priest of San José in Buenavista, was murdered in a robbery on 4th June. Colombian police said they had caught the suspected perpetrators.

ECUADOR

Fr Fabián Enrique Arcos Sevilla, a 53 year old diocesan priest was found dead four days after his disappearance, on the evening of 3rd November in the province of Cotopaxi. According to police, the motive was robbery.

HONDURAS

Juan Antonio López, a married man with two daughters, was shot dead while he was in his car on 14th September, after attending a Eucharistic celebration, about 300 kilometres from Tegucigalpa, the capital. The crime occurred just hours after a press conference at which Juan, along with other representatives, denounced alleged links between members of the government and organised crime. Juan's murder is part of a growing repression against human rights activists.

MEXICO

Fr Marcelo Pérez Pérez was killed on his way back from the parish of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, after celebrating Mass. Two killers on motorcycles shot Fr Marcelo in his car on Mission Sunday morning, 20th October.

BRAZIL

Steve Maguerith Chaves do Nascimento, a 43 year old married man and father of a 6 year old girl, was shot in the head on his way to Mass on Sunday, 8th December. He worked as an architect and was also a parish worker who was involved in the preaching of

the Gospel and the charitable work of the Nossa Senhora da Cabeça parish. The crime occurred two minutes before the 7pm Mass the architect regularly attended. Two men on a motorcycle approached his car. When he realised what was about to happen, he tried to flee, but one of the men shot him in the head, killing him instantly.

EUROPE

SPAIN

Fr Juan Antonio Llorente, a Franciscan Friar of the Immaculate Conception, was murdered on 9th November in the monastery in Gilet, where he lived. A man armed with a stick and a glass bottle entered the monastery, shouted "I am Jesus Christ" and beat the monks. Several Franciscans were injured and all were taken to the hospital in Valencia. 76 year old Fr Juan died two days later in hospital from the serious injuries inflicted on his head.

POLAND

Fr Lech Lachowicz, a 72 year old priest, was attacked on 3rd November in his parish of St Albert, Szczytno, Northern Poland. According to police, the man who attacked him broke into the rectory armed with an axe with the purpose of robbing Fr Lech. The priest died in hospital on 9th November.

All information is supplied by *Fides*, the Vatican based news agency of Missio, and by Vatican news.

Your support makes the work of missionaries possible

Missio Ireland is the Holy Father's official charity for overseas mission and missionaries. Each member of the Church family, regardless of location or background, can do their part in helping and celebrating the work of missionaries.

The spiritual and financial support you offer plays an enormous part in giving missionaries courage, so that they can keep loving, serving and sharing God's love, mercy and peace with others.

To make a donation simply complete the form and return it to **Missio Ireland**, 64 Lower Rathmines Road, Dublin DO6 N2H1. Alternatively, you can also offer a donation by calling:

 **01 497 2035**

or online at:

 **www.missio.ie**

Thank you for all you make possible. We want to keep you up to date on how you are helping missionaries change lives. If you would prefer not to receive updates please call 01 497 2035 or email info@missio.ie and we will amend your contact preferences.



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