



UAC NEWSLETTER

May-June-July 2014

Dear sisters and brothers in the Union,

we are happy to present to you in this extended issue of the newsletter a sharing about **the Siuyu Rehabilitation Centre, Siuyu, Tanzania**, prepared by Fr. Tommy Ryan SAC and collaborators, along with other news from the Union.

1. THE SIUYU REHABILITATION CENTRE, SIUYU, TANZANIA

The village of Siuyu is found in the rural semi-desert district of Singida, Tanzania, one of the poorest areas of the country. In 2007, Fr. Tommy Ryan SAC, an Irish Pallottine, opened the Siuyu Rehabilitation Centre, and continues to be its director. The centre is run by the UAC, and was built largely through fund-raising by family in Ireland and some friends in the USA. Its main aim is to help those with intellectual special needs to have access to primary school education and education in the wider sense, giving them the opportunity to mix socially with others, to learn everyday tasks and to develop the "skills" necessary for life to the extent that their potential allows, one of the few centres in Tanzania which does this. The Centre also accepts those with physical special needs in order to afford them similar opportunities which they too would otherwise not receive. There are two Pallottine Missionary Sisters involved full-time with the children: Sr. Rozy Ombay SAC, the Occupational Therapist, who is responsible for the day to day running of the Centre and receives the children, interviews the parents, and does physiotherapy and some occupational therapy with some of the resident children and physiotherapy with some non-resident pre-school children who come for exercises, and Sr. Paskalina Boniface, SAC, who takes care of food etc. and the general administration. There is also a matron, a store keeper, a woman who works with Sr. Rozy in physiotherapy and occupational therapy a few times a week, and a helper for the teachers who assists in preparing the children for school, accompanying them to and from school and during school hours. A group of 6 women work from morning to evening Monday to Friday and another of 5 on Saturday and Sunday to prepare the children for school, clean, cook, wash clothes, etc. One girl with special needs sews and takes care of the clothes, especially of the small children, and a local man comes for several hours each week to repair the wheelchairs. There are 4 watchmen who, taking alternate weeks by day or by night, each work two weeks a month, also cutting firewood as a voluntary contribution. Each night 2 women and 2 men come to sleep, as there are four dormitories, two for the bigger boys and one for the bigger girls, and one more for the smaller boys and girls together. All of the workers are largely voluntary, getting a small 'thank you' at end of each month that they work, and all but three are members of the Union of Catholic Apostolate.

There are 65 children currently resident in the centre, all of whom go to the local government schools each day. 14 have only physical special needs and 4 have mild learning difficulties, with 2 of these going to the local secondary school and the other 16 to the local government primary school, all of them participating in ordinary classes for the full school day. The other 47 are intellectually disabled and go to the same local primary school for just three and a half hours each day for special classes with special government teachers. The children are divided into four groups depending on their ability.

A disability of any sort anywhere in the world is a hardship, but in a poor, semi-arid, rural Tanzanian community, where daily subsistence through physical labour is already a struggle and social services of any sort are extremely rare, a child with special needs is often considered an overwhelming burden, both physically and socially. But at the rehabilitation centre, the children and, equally importantly, their families, now get support they wouldn't have believed possible only a few years ago. No school fees are demanded, as it would be unthinkable for most families to use scarce resources on a child with special needs. The parents are asked to make a small contribution, such as a bag of maize or charcoal, or a few shillings to the centre every year so that they are not completely detached from the rearing of their children, but many are either not able or decide not to. Every child that it is judged will benefit through being in the Centre is accepted irrespective of this, and irrespective of religion or tribe. Despite the lack of funding and the overpopulation of the centre, the over-riding impression is of the happiness on the children's faces, their perseverance in walking and their determination to

be integrated with the local school. It is also inspiring to see the more able children looking after those with more serious conditions by pushing them around in their wheelchairs and helping them with other activities.

Fr. Tommy asked some of those involved in the Centre to share their impressions:

Mama Lucy, Mama Filo, and Mama Mbuja, three lay UAC members who work in the centre, noted the importance for the life of the Union in Siuyu of having one concrete apostolate involving all of the UAC members there. It keeps the group together and active in a type of apostolate that is very much in keeping with the teaching of Pallotti. It also enables some of the members to meet together each day for prayer, while all come together for Mass with the children on the last Saturday of each month and also for the Novenas of St. Vincent and of Our Lady Queen of Apostles, the centre's Patron. They also find working alongside the Pallottine Fathers and Sisters an enriching experience which helps them to learn more about St. Vincent's teaching.

Srs. Rozy and Paskalina are both very happy in this apostolate, cooperating with the Pallottine laity and priests in developing the children's quality of life. Planning together and working together is something very positive, and it is an inspiration to see how enthusiastic many of the lay members are and how willing to sacrifice so much of their time for the welfare of the children when much of the work is voluntary.

The children themselves also greatly appreciate what the centre offers them. Hashimu, who is 16, is in 7th class, having been here from 1st class, and is due to finish primary school, to which he travels in a wheelchair, in a few months. Although his hands are bent, so that he writes only with great difficulty, he still manages to excel in his class, coming second out of 210 students in a recent exam! He said that if it weren't for the centre he would have remained at home without any primary school education. Beatus is 15 and in 2nd class - he has learning difficulties. He says he is very happy here. Both remark that they eat well and are cared for with love. Prisca is 16 and in 6th class, and also goes to school in a wheelchair. She says that she would most likely stay at home without school if she weren't here, that she is very happy here and that the workers are like the Good Shepherd in the Gospel, knowing and loving their sheep and able to call each one by name.

Fr. Tommy, who worked in San Silvestro in Capite in Rome before coming to East Africa 29 years ago, speaks of how the witness of these children with special needs, with whom he has been working fulltime since the Centre opened 7 years ago, touches him in a deeply personal way: "I am handicapped at this stage myself, walking with two sticks but with no pain. Coming towards the end of my life and having difficulty walking, it is very good psychologically for me to be living with some very handicapped children who will never walk but who smile so much that I can't complain. As all the children go home on holidays twice each year people sometimes say to me, 'you must be so relieved to get a rest now', when, in fact, the opposite is true - all of us here are counting the days until they return. It's like a graveyard without them. For myself I am happiest when I am sitting, talking and laughing with the children, which is nearly all the time now. It is for me 'heaven on earth'.

In order to help ensure the ongoing financial viability of the Centre, a number of self-reliant projects have been established, with further ones planned; however, even if all were in place, we will always remain reliant to a great extent on the goodwill of people to enable us to continue to serve the children of this area who have special needs. Further information on the Centre can be found at <http://siuyurehabilitationcentre.com/> and the Centre can be contacted directly through the email address rehabsiuyusgd@yahoo.com. For some beautiful photos put to music, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NkUPOfkVZko>

2. THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GENERAL COORDINATION COUNCIL OF THE UAC

was held from May 23-27, 2014 at the International Centre for Pallottine Formation ("Cenacle") in Rome. Many different issues were addressed, including the following:

- 1) The implications of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* of Pope Francis for the Union and ways to help make it a real instrument of spiritual, pastoral, missionary renewal for all members and collaborators of the Union and beyond through using it as a basis for study and reflection sessions and encouraging all to read it personally.
- 2) Making the structures of the Union more effective:
 - a. at the General level - the proposal to seek a fulltime President, the strengthening of General Secretariat with new members and through greater collaboration in the work of translation.
 - b. at the national level - discussion regarding whether the Core Communities might be in a position to offer a member full-time for the work of the Union at the national level; discussion on the role of a member elected to the GCC or appointed National Formation Promoter vis-à-vis the NCC in their country.

- 3) The spiritual work of mercy chosen as the common project of the entire Union for the year: promote reconciliation particularly in families - e.g. through listening centres, liturgies of reconciliation, practical seminars on healthy family relationships, visits to families to celebrate simple liturgies of the Word of God with personal sharing.
- 4) the role of the three Core Communities and their members in the Union.
- 5) the functions of the International Formation and Financial Commissions.
- 6) Further planning of the upcoming international meetings of the Union in 2015: The First International Meeting of Lay Communities and the General Assembly in Grottaferrata in January and the General Congress in Brazil in July.
- 7) Development of clearer reporting and greater transparency in financial matters in the life of the Union at every level.
- 8) Further clarifications in the development of a common declaration on the protection of minors and vulnerable adults for the entire Union.
- 9) The proposal to reconstitute a Local Council or Pastoral Team to plan activities in SS. Salvatore in Onda, the spiritual centre of the entire Union, coordinated by the Rector of the church with the representation of the different components of the Union.

3. THE CANONISATION OF JOHN XXIII AND JOHN PAUL II:

With the entire Universal Church, the Pallottine Family rejoiced in a particular way on the occasion of the canonisation of Popes John XXIII and John Paul II. Both new saints have a particular link with our Family. **John XXIII** encountered the figure of Pallotti for the first time in 1903 as a 22 year old student of the Roman Seminary, when he participated in the conclusion of the Octave of the Epiphany in the basilica of Sant'Andrea della Valle, recording his impressions in his "Journal of a Soul": "I thought of the vocation of the Gentiles, the Christian missions spread throughout the world, the truly catholic, that is, universal, Church". Shortly after the closure of the first session of the Second Vatican Council and about 4 and a half months before his death, he canonised Pallotti on January 20th, 1963, recalling once again "the profound impression received" in this first encounter with Pallotti which "made clear the universal aspect of the Church". He said of Pallotti that he was "an innovator of new ways whereby people could come to know the love of God". **John Paul II** knew the Pallottines from an early age: Wadowice, his native city, was the cradle of the Polish Pallottines, and he had frequent contact with them in his youth and especially during his priestly and episcopal ministries. He spent a few months in the General House of the Society when he first came to Rome as a young priest and, during the Second Vatican Council, together with Fr. Wilhelm Möhler, the then Rector General of the Society, was one of the drafters of the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem). In his homily in SS. Salvatore in Onda on June 22nd, 1986, he exhorted the Pallottine Family as follows: "continue to multiply your efforts so that what Vincent Pallotti prophetically announced, and the Second Vatican Council authoritatively confirmed, may become a happy reality, and all Christians become authentic apostles of Christ in the Church and in the world!"

4. THANKSGIVING FOR THE RECOGNITION OF THE HEROIC VIRTUES OF VENERABLE ELISABETTA SANNA

In thanksgiving for the proclamation of the Decree of the heroic virtues of the Servant of God, Elisabetta Sanna, Cardinal Angelo Amato, Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, led a Eucharist in the church of SS. Salvatore in Onda on June 7th, the Feast of Mary Queen of Apostles, Patroness of the Union. In his homily, he said that "our prayer to Mary our Queen should have a triple effect on each of us: strengthen our hope in God's help, promote our sanctification, and revitalise our apostolic and missionary drive. This was borne out in Venerable Elisabetta Sanna - wife, mother and widow - who, although affected by painful disability to her arm and her hands from childhood, became heroic in her imitation of the Blessed Virgin, to whom she addressed countless Rosaries in this Church. Infectious in humility and in the motherly mercy of Mary and wisely guided by St Vincent Pallotti, Elisabetta became an apostle of goodness to the needy." At the conclusion of the homily the Cardinal officially handed over two original copies, in Latin, of the decree of Virtues, to the Rector General Fr Jacob Nampudakam and to the Procurator General Fr Jan Korycki. To all he added: continue to pray for the grace of beatification, and not only for beatification, but also for the grace of canonisation. The Liturgy was accompanied, with great

appreciation, by two choirs: the male Sardinian Codrongianos choir and the choir of the Union. Presently, subsequent to the proclamation of the heroicity of the virtues of the Servant of God, the applicant has prepared a book that records a healing through her intercession, which has already been delivered to the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for a prior evaluation. Following on from this the book shall be evaluated by the Vatican commissions: medical, theological and those of the Cardinals and Bishops. We hope that all proceeds positively and that we can soon celebrate the desired beatification.

5. POLAND: XIIITH PALLOTTI INSTITUTE SYMPOSIUM - "PALLOTTI'S APOSTOLATE WITHOUT BORDERS"

The latest Symposium organised by the Pallotti Institute took place in Konstantin from May 24-25 on the special occasion of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Konstantin house as a Centre for Missionary Animation (CMA) in service of missions and missionaries. Accordingly, the symposium reflected on various aspects of the missionary life, work and charism of St. Vincent Pallotti. There were over 200 participants from Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, Slovakia and Africa, representing various components of the Pallottine family: the majority were lay followers and friends of St. Vincent, together with many representatives of the Core Communities, including the Major Superiors, those responsible for Pallottine Missions, missionaries, seminarians, novices, sisters, brothers and priests. Specific topics addressed included the following: Fr. Jarosław Rozanski OMI, Professor of Missiology, spoke about "Missionary signs of the times in the nineteenth century", presenting the originality of St. Vincent's missionary thinking in the wider context of the Church and world of his time, with particular reference to the missionary impulse in the former. Then Fr. Stanislaw Stawicki SAC spoke of the missionary dreams of Pallotti and their implementation, mentioning that rather than becoming discouraged by dreams not implemented, Pallotti was encouraged to create new and infinite dreams, finishing with a presentation on Pallottine missions in Africa. Archbishop Henryk Hoser SAC spoke about "Missionary aspects of *Evangelii Gaudium*", sharing his personal reading of the document and clearly underlining the call of all members of the Church to witness to the Gospel with joy. Mr. Ed Martin Preciszewski (Catholic Information Agency) spoke about "Missionary signs of the times today", addressing challenges posed by modernity, outlining today's equivalents of the Areopagus and showing the special role of the laity in taking up the missionary task of the Church. There was a roundtable discussion on the theme Pallottine apostolate without borders which also examined borders yet to be crossed, chaired by Fr. George Limanówka SAC (Salvati Foundation), with the participation of invited guests Sr. Orencja Zak SAC (Cameroon), Sr. Marta Litawa SAC (Rwanda), Mirela Knopek (volunteer, Uganda and Peru), Fr. Stanislaw Stawicki SAC (long-time missionary in Africa), some African Pallottine priests, a Slovakian Pallottine novice, Fr. Alexandre Pietrzyk SAC (the French Regional Rector), and some Ukrainian and Belorussian UAC members. The Sunday Eucharist, the central ceremony of the 20th anniversary of the Centre led by Bishop Aloysius Orszulik, was celebrated in the recently redesigned Queen of Apostles Chapel.

6. NEW MEMBERS OF THE UNION:

Ireland: On June 7th, one person made the Act of Apostolic Commitment at the Annual Pallottine Pilgrimage to Knock, the National Shrine, for the Feast of Mary Queen of Apostles

Poland: On 7th June, members of the Pallottine family, mostly from northern Poland, met together in Gdańsk to celebrate the Feast of Mary Queen of Apostles. The celebrations began with a Mass led by Fr. Marek Chmielniak SAC, Polish NCC President, during which 4 new members joined the Union. This was followed by a time of *agape* in a spirit of unity and joy.

7. Opening of Diocesan Enquiry for the Beatification and Canonisation of the Servant of God Mother Anna Sardiello, Foundress of the Eucharistic Sisters of St. Vincent Pallotti, a Community of the Union.

At 6pm on July 22 in the Cathedral of Capua, Campania, Italy, Archbishop Salvatore Visco led a concelebrated Eucharist for this event, accompanied by two other bishops, various priests, deacons, religious, seminarians and lay people. Representing the wider Pallottine family, those who intended included Sr. Ivete Garlet CSAC, Superior General of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate and two General Councillors, Sr. Stella Marotta CSAC and Sr. Venícia Meurer CSAC, the Italian Provincial Superior Sr. Sara Carfagna CSAC, Fr. Martin Manus SAC of the General Council of the Society and Fr. Rory Hanly SAC, General Secretary of the Union.