



*Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother
of the Third Order of St. Frances of Assisi*

Ifunde-Tanzania

Ifunde (Tanzania), Christmas 2011

Christmas, poetry or drama? While our mind is chasing the lights and the Christmas cake's fragrance, the bare crib and the family of Bethlehem come into our sight. And then we can ask what the Christmas poetry is to Letisia who, after leaving home for the local dispensary (Kilengwe, her village, is about 8 km from Lohwa), gives birth to Masumbuko (that means "Problem" in the local language) assisted on the wayside by her young mother.

Or let's ask it to Consolata, who was born in the entrance hall of the local dispensary (closed because it was Sunday) assisted by a neighbor and by Sr. Fransiska who had been called for help. These childbirths didn't occur in clean clinics with warm cradles ready to welcome a baby, but in makeshift places, as the one in which our Redeemer was born, "there was no room for them." (Lk 2,7).

Perhaps the shepherds wake a pleasant thought in our mind, but then let's ask bibi (grandmother) Maria and Mzee (elder) Gabrieli, where the sweetness is of sleeping surrounded by your animals, that are closed in the same place where you sleep in order to keep yourself warm or just to protect them from the assault of night hyenas; let's ask them where the sweetness of awakening is when their smell permeates your clothes and makes you perceptible from afar. Or let's ask it to little Martin who spends his free time with his cousins not playing on football fields but pasturing the 6 cows that will give nourishing milk for his family and for a small trade.

Poetry or drama? Let's ask the angels, let's hear their cry of joy, that is still resonating throughout the Church "Today the Redeemer has been born, today the Lord comes to live with us!" And then here is the joy! Here is the certainty that Christmas is not a drama, but that Christ's face is hidden just in these situations of poverty, as He announced: " I was hungry" (Mt 25,31)

Here is the joy of Christmas, the joy of finding Jesus' face and the signs of his presence behind the stories of Letisia, Consolata, Mary, Gabriel, Martin and of many other poor people of our time.

Dearest, it is the joy of meeting the Lord that sustains and guides our actions and apostolate even in this land of Africa, and encourages us to strive for Evangelization, Education and Health.

As mentioned in the Easter letter, we have been trying to meet as many people as possible in their villages throughout this jubilee year: every Sunday we have been travelling roads and paths by our Toyota or by foot and armed with the desire to share the richness of Mother Frances given as a gift to us and to the Church; and we have been listening to the problems and sharing the expectations of our people, offering them a way to strengthen Faith, Hope and Charity.

To bring fuller life to others. Um anderen alle Fuelle des Lebens zu bringen. Per portare vita piena agli altri. Levar vida plena aos outros

The commitment to young people is going on both in the parish and in the diocese, and this year, as an alternative to the World Youth Day, young people from all the nation met at Arusha and also Sr. Alexandra was there with them. Also the children activities are going on and, for the first time since the parish establishment (as our priest said on that occasion!), our children had a three days meeting, where we shared the joy of being together through catechesis, singing, dancing and of course food for everybody.

Also the meetings with Catholic women (Wa.Wa.Ta) are going on in the hope of waking their sense of dignity and supporting in this way the growth of their daughters.

And what about the kindergartens? As you know, five nursery schools are now active in the parish area, with the great commitment to coordination carried out mainly by Sr. Emmanuela. The school year is now coming to an end and next January many children will start primary school encouraged by the journey made along with us during the school year. Unfortunately, parents often don't have a great interest in the education of their children and so their absences sometimes increase.

And our clinic? Health activities are going on and getting progressively and better structured, also thanks to the support of the equipment and instrumentation that have been gradually enriching our clinic; so now we can say that we assist more than three thousand people and that we made more than five thousand medical visits. Besides Sr Cinzia and Sr Fransiska serving as medical and nursing staff, we keep on supporting the youth ministry by attending meetings and sensitizing awareness pro-life, because even now Herod keeps on hitting children!

Dearest, we remind you that our service is also your service and that together we can be instruments and signs of the "God with us", we thank you for supporting us during this year in behalf of Letisia, Consolata, Mary, etc. ..., and we wish you

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

Sr Alessandra, Sr Cinzia, Sr Emmanuela e Sr Fransiska
Sisters of the Sorrowful Mother - Ifunde

