

NEWSLETTER OF THE IRISH URSULINE
FUND FOR KENYA ~ 2007

*Two hundredth anniversary of the canonisation of St. Angela.
Foundress of the Ursulines, and
Golden Jubilee of the Arrival of the Irish Ursulines in Kenya.*



Hello, dear folks!

There follows an update of Ursuline “doings” in Kenya. Enjoy!

First up, some extracts from a recent letter from Sr. Clare Ursula to sisters and friends in Ireland! (Sr. Clare has lived over twenty years in Kenya, and is one of four Irish sisters who still serve in that Mission field.)

“As I have said before, you enable us to do so much. Many, many thanks!



One example: Dorcas is a woman from the Turkana desert area. She is HIV positive, and needed surgery. Her operation had been postponed over five years, as doctors were afraid to operate in case of infection/poor healing, etc. She had reached the stage

where she would surely die of haemorrhage if something wasn't done.

As a result of help from Ireland, we were able to bring Dorcas all the way to Nairobi, to St. Mary's Mission Hospital. After scans, she was operated on last month. She was discharged recently, and is enjoying a new lease of life. Dorcas is filled with gratitude for the chance to be with her children for whatever time she still has. May God bless and reward your generosity!

This year we Ursulines are celebrating the Golden Jubilee of our arrival here in Kenya. During the past fifty years, many of our Irish Sisters have worked hard in difficult conditions to bring education and health care to the people of Kitui, Kitale, and Turkana Districts. We thank God for the rich heritage they have left us, of memory, inspiration, and structures.

Today, fifty years on, I am happy to say our Ursuline-built institutions are run by Kenyans, with the Irish sisters in a supporting role. Most of what we have been able to accomplish has been done with aid from Ireland. I

want to give you an outline of our plans for this coming year, so that you have some idea of what your donations can make possible.

Let me begin by reminding you of what you have helped us accomplish in the recent past in Kitale: St. Ursula's Pre-school is up and running. It has two teachers: Sr. Kevina and Patricia, with Sr. Ann Griffin as "full-back"! There is a pupil-teacher ratio in the school of 20:1, so great work is being done.



To put the above in context: our Sr. Alice is teaching in a neighbouring government-run primary school, where the junior classes have more than sixty pupils! This is no slight on the government, which is doing its best, given the resources at its disposal. But the reality of overcrowding often means that by the time the pupils have reached the upper standards of the primary system, many will have given up, due to boredom and/or neglect. They will simply not manage to use their education to get themselves out of "the poverty trap". St. Ursula's shows what is possible where there is "normal" class size, and daily teaching.

Still in Kitale, the St. Ursula's Dispensary, Kibomet, caters for the needs of the schools in the area, and of the local community. Sr. Francisca, and an older nurse, Rose, work there. The dispensary runs health clinics for the mothers and small children once a week. In addition, routine ailments, and endemic illnesses, like malaria, are dealt with. There is also counselling available for people with a diagnosis of HIV, and the medical personnel conduct school visits each term.



Our plans for this Ursuline Golden Jubilee year in Kitale arise out of an invitation by the Bishop and the local government Education Office to establish a new primary school. This will absorb the children in our pre-school, and cater for those children in the wider area who have no school to go to – about ninety children in total.

You must understand that there are some children who do not see the inside of a school before the age of ten, because they have too far to walk through an area of high insecurity. This is a problem we want to address. Our objective is to provide affordable quality education, with a particular

focus on the needs of the girl-child. In this Jubilee year, our aim is to build two classrooms, a staffroom, an office and a dining room. We plan to open the new primary school to pupils in January.



Moving east now, to the District of Kitui: Mutune Girls' Primary School was one of the first schools in Kitui. It was started by our Sisters, when they first came to Kenya fifty years ago. Today it is, in ways, a shadow of its former glory. We would like to restore it to some extent. Already our Sr. Leah is teaching there, and that has made a big difference. The local community's development fund has put a new roof on the school. Things are already happening! What we Ursulines propose to do, if we can rise to the challenge, is to build an administration block, with Office, Staffroom and Store. We will be guided by advice from Sr. Leah, who is on the ground in Mutune, and has her finger on the pulse of the place!



Thanks to all for a generosity which permits us to “dream”, and, in time, to see that dream become a reality. We continue to pray for your intentions, and we ask you to pray for us, that God's will may be done through our efforts.

May God be your strength and support throughout the coming months!
Sincerely,
Sr. Clare Ursula Tobin.

**A word (or two!) in conclusion, from our Foundress, Angela Merici,
on this two hundredth anniversary of her canonisation:**

In her Introduction to her Rule for the new Company of St. Ursula, Angela (in 1535, and when she was already in her sixties) wrote in no faint phrases: “Strive **with all your might** to live up to the call of God!” (Note that hers was the first Rule written exclusively by a woman to be

approved by Rome. It was also the first to be approved which had not been written in Latin. Angela was a countrywoman, from the Lakes Region of Northern Italy, and she wrote her Rule in Italian.)

Appropriate it surely is too, in this post-Pentecost season, to hear her counsel her “daughters” of the fledgling Company of St. Ursula on Obedience. Having listed all the authorities who have a claim on the obedience of the sister (“provided what is commanded is not contrary to God’s honour or one’s own integrity”), she then concludes as follows: “**Above all**, obey the counsels and inspirations which the Holy Spirit continually stirs up in your own hearts.”

Our Foundress, Angela, was a woman who recognized and cherished the call of God’s living Spirit, in the heart of each individual. She was convinced that growth in wholeness and holiness was about listening for, and responding to, that call. May she be inspiration for us all!

Thanks again to you who support the Fund, which focuses on the long-term development of the work begun fifty years ago. May our dreams continue to take flesh in ourselves, and in the brothers and sisters with whom we are privileged to share this planet, in all its rich variety and wonder!

Maire O’Donohoe (Director, Ursuline Fund for Kenya)
Autumn, 2007