



MISSIONARIES IN ACTION

DOMINICAN MISSION FOUNDATION

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Let There Be Light



Dear Mission Friends:

Our long collaboration with the Congregation of Dominican Sisters of Christian Doctrine currently takes us to the African village of Ayene in Equatorial Guinea, where the sisters administer an elementary school for 250 children. Your generosity has been a tremendous help in providing the school with basic amenities that most of us take for granted. In last December's newsletter, Sr. Margarita Cortez, O.P. reported, *"Our preschool roof is breaking down and each raining season makes it worse. Our budget is tight and \$6,000 is what we need for it."* Many of you designated your next gift to go toward that roof—one family alone contributed two-thirds of what was needed!—and the roof is now doing its job.

We pictured a typical classroom now that the children are sheltered from the elements, but as you'll learn in Sr. Margarita's most recent report to follow, the entire school is lacking yet another essential requirement, besides roofs, that most of us take for granted:



Anuarite Nengapeta School in Equatorial Guinea. Preschool is in foreground sporting a new red roof, thanks to our wonderful donors.

"Our school, Anuarite Nengapeta Preschool and Primary School, could sure benefit if we had electricity. When we are in the rainy season, which can last six months, our classrooms get very dark. We must shut the windows so this makes our children struggle to see the blackboard or even read a book. There are so many devices, like computers and projectors, that the teachers cannot utilize, and so many types of after school activities that we cannot offer. Our students are greatly disadvantaged compared to others.

You may ask, "How difficult can it be to get some light?" Well, first of all, in this country, most hardware prices are inflated and it's hard to find stores which are honest about their costs. And finding affordable workers who are also competent is almost impossible, so one must have a lot of money to get quality work.

Even if the prices were fair, however, we don't have an allowance for such repairs or improvements.

When we first arrived here 25 years ago, there was no electricity in the town at all. The nights were so dark that the stars appeared to be brighter and very close, and watching the dragon flies was quite a spectacular show. But of course living without electricity has more negative effects than not. For example, poor eyesight is very common here. The elderly suffer from cataracts so severe that surgery is useless. And an orchestra of crickets would sing loudly all night long.

As missionaries, however, we learn to adapt. We carried toxic lanterns everywhere until we adjusted to the custom of going to bed early and rising early, like the villagers we'd see walking at sunrise to their plantations of peanuts, banana, pineapple, and yucca.



For a time we had a generator at home, but not only was it quite a task to turn it on and off several times a day, it was also an added expense to our community's tight budget.

Over the last 25 years, electricity has been gradually made available to most towns, according to the government's "selection process," and so some homes have been able to install it and purchase lamps and basic appliances. But it was only last year that they brought light to our community.

We have had many challenges to overcome, but no one ever said that it would be easy or that everyone here would have an immediate change of heart. Our inspiration has always been St. Dominic, a torch of light who felt so deeply moved by those who struggled with their sinful lives that he cried to God for the salvation of their souls.

We too have never been able to remain silent or pretend that we don't care about the corrupt decisions, based on greed, of so many government leaders. Our duty is to preach day and night to all, with hope and faith that they see God's light, and whether or not

Above, the evolution of the preschool roof, from its severe rain damage, to Sister's joy at the repair's progress, to the completed, safe, sealed ceiling—no small feat in the poor village of Ayene.

they listen is in His hands. Every time I have an opportunity to bring the light, I will, hoping that people can rise out of the darkness and sing with joy, "You are the light of the world..."

Our only support comes from generous people like you who want to help others have better opportunities in life. Such support relieves us from worrying about meeting our own basic needs and allows us to focus on the needs of our young students. Please help us help them to have a well-rounded, well-lit, quality education so that tomorrow they will be better able to respond to the challenges of the future.

God bless you for allowing us to stay strong, and thank you for always being there for us, even when your own needs are great. Every day we pray for all of you who keep us going, asking that God will help you in your difficulties as well. Together let's keep Christ's light burning, passing down the faith to those who are in darkness.

*Feliz Navidad,
Sister Margarita"*

Sister humbly understates the living conditions and sacrifices that she and her fellow Dominicans endure because she knows that their students and families endure much worse. My words last December still apply: *Let us not only help the sisters provide a safe environment in which to impart a high quality education to as many children as possible, but let us also follow their example of doing whatever is in our power to render dominance, cruelty, and greed helpless by not looking away, by taking action, and by helping to restore self-respect, strength and dignity to the abused of the world, particularly women and children.*

We are ever grateful that "the eyes of [our donors'] hearts [are] enlightened," and that you "know the great hope to which He has called you (Eph.1:18)." *May your Advent season be full of joyous anticipation, confident that, "The true light, which enlightens everyone, [is] coming into the world (John 1:9)."*

*In Christmas peace,
Lesley Warnshuis*



Left, when it's not raining, teachers often prefer to have class outside in the sunlight, which is much easier on the eyes than a dim classroom; right, Sr. Margarita on the left and Sr. Monica, the provincial superior, on the right, pose with some of their faculty and staff members.



The Sisters' Mission: "We firmly believe that education is an invaluable contribution to a country's progress, and we hope that eventually a better future for these children can be achieved—one where they can be allowed to grow in every sense, where they learn to live with mutual respect, where their dignity as human beings is acknowledged."



Blessed Anuarite Nengapeta (Sr. Marie-Clementine)

The sisters' school, Anuarite Nengapeta, is aptly named. Preaching a Congolese Mass in London about Anuarite Nengapeta, the first Bantu woman to be beatified, Cardinal Vincent Nichols of the Diocese of Westminster described how she taught us, by example, "how we are to treat each other, forgive each other, never hold grudges against each other, resist anger with patience and love, continue to be generous even when we are not thanked or appreciated. Only in these ways can we too express in our lives the same love of God that your Blessed Anuarite, your Blessed Marie-Clementine, showed in her life."

Born December 29, 1939, the youngest of six daughters, Anuarite joined the local congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family in 1959 and became Sr. Marie-Clementine. During the Mulele Rebellion in 1964, the 46 nuns of her convent were kidnapped by the rebel army. She was singled out by one of the colonels, but when she resisted his attempted rape, he beat her with a rifle butt. Then he ordered fellow rebels to stab her with bayonets before he shot her in the chest, and all the while, she was proclaiming, "I forgive you for you know not what you are doing." It was December 1, 1964 and she was only 24.

In 2009 a prize for *The Woman of Courage in the DRC* (Democratic Republic of Congo) was established to honor her bravery, sacrifice, and strength. Each year it recognizes the vital contribution of a Congolese woman who, through courage, hard work, perseverance, and community service, has helped further democratic ideals and improve the plight of women. (The inaugural prize was awarded to Bernadette Muongo of Goma for her work in helping survivors of sexual and gender-based violence in the Eastern DR.) Indeed, as Cardinal Nichols stated, Anuarite's "actions have become a light in our eyes."



Top left, the country's presidential palace and top right, how the majority of the population lives; above, a little boy is happy just to have a ball to play with, no matter what its condition; right, children are asking for water while they await the government's annual Christmas gift distribution.

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**With the holidays approaching,
0.5% could really add up!**

**It would be a tremendous help
to our missionaries,
and we would be so grateful!**

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky, the flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night; ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new, ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go; ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind for those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor, ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause, and ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life, with sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin, the faithless coldness of the times;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes but ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood, the civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right, ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease; ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
Ring out the thousand wars of old, ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free, the larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land, ring in the Christ that is to be.

~Alfred, Lord Tennyson