

Newsflash

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OUR NEW HOLY FAMILY FOUNDATION – BOTSWANA

related by Cecilia Leahy hfb

“Rejoice! The rains have come” exclaimed Fr Gideon Sibanda CMM as he welcomed our Sisters to Masunga. *“The Sisters have come - we have waited for some weeks for them to arrive”*.

Two twin cab bakkies left Coronationville, Friday 6 June at 08.15 hrs, with the precious cargo of our missionaries, Mahadi, Rathiny, Rajes and Victoria, plus Eleanora (Lesotho Province) and Cecilia (S.A. Province), 3 drivers and loads of luggage. We were accompanied by heavy rain and mist - in the language of Botswana, “Pula” (rain) meaning blessing - God rejoicing with us.

Six hours later sunshine welcomed us over the border into Gaborone, Botswana. Our journey north stopped halfway, where we spent the night at the Kanomo Centre, Mahalapye. Saturday morning our pilgrimage continued to Francistown, where we had lunch with Bishop Frank Nubuasah, SVD. This was a warm homely introduction for *Holy Family* to a new field of missionary activity.



Arriving at Masunga
Victoria, Mahadi, Drivers, Cecilia, Rathiny, Rajes, Eleanora

At last, being guided by two missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit, we arrived at 15.40 hrs at the Mission of Masunga. Fr Gideon opened



Departing Coronationville, Johannesburg

the doors of the new *Holy Family* home. Surprise and deep down wonder! Unloading all of the cargo was to follow, but Fr Gideon was quick to bring us all into his house for tea, which was ready for us and the assurance that Parish Council members were preparing the evening meal, which all would share together in the parish house.

The luggage was brought into a well furnished house. Each one chose her room and put down her luggage. The pantry had boxes of surprises waiting to be opened – crockery, cutlery and every kitchen need.

Sharing food in fellowship

It was not long before supper time. This was a touching experience of another culture. One of our

hostesses brought a basin with a jug of water and a towel. She poured the water over the hands of each one and gave us the towel to dry them. I thought of Jesus washing the feet of his apostles – we are called as servants of one another.

Fr Gideon introduced himself, his co-worker Fr Khumalo and the three ladies of the Parish Council who had prepared the meal. He invited introductions from *Holy Family* which were done by Mahadi. It was time then to enjoy a sumptuous and delicately prepared meal.

After a very pleasant evening, we retired for the first night in Masunga. We returned to our new home, where we spent time in prayer, invoking God for the gifts of the Spirit, which each felt was needed for this new mission in Botswana.

Sharing the Eucharist

Sunday, the feast of Pentecost seemed very appropriate to begin in a new Mission “and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit”. Holy Mass at 10 a.m. - a very special celebration in Masunga, where each of our new missionaries, Mahadi, Rathiny, Rajes and Victoria introduced themselves to the congregation, and were welcomed again by Fr Gideon and the people. Fr Gideon also conveyed a welcome from Bishop Frank, who left that morning for the United States of America. The congregation is relatively small, but very vibrant and participative. We were made to feel very welcome and accepted, by a very friendly people.

Immediately after mass, Eleanora, with her two Lesotho drivers left again for Johannesburg, as Eleanora had to attend a meeting on Monday. People came to the house to meet the Sisters, who learnt their first few words in Kalanga, the language of the area.

After preparing and enjoying lunch together, our new community set about finding themselves, amidst their own belongings and all that had been placed in the house for them.

Visit to Francistown

Monday morning some of the group, accompanied by Fr Gideon went to Francistown to supplement with things still needed, while those at home prepared the dinner. We were very grateful to Fr Gideon, who could show us the places to go for



shopping. We found that most of the goods are from South Africa. We were struck by the people of Botswana who are very friendly and ready to help. The towns and villages are very clean and tidy. Littering is prohibited. At the entrance to each place one is greeted with a sign “Do Not Litter”. One drives for miles and miles seeing only bushveld, donkeys, goats and some cattle alongside the road. Grass is very sparse. The animals nibble at the bush. It is a vast country, sparsely populated. In this country and among the people, our Sisters will discover and bring the presence of Jesus. We thank God for them and accompany them with our prayer.

Victoria, Rajes, Mahadi, Fr. Gideon Sibanda CMM, Rathiny



Cecilia and Isaac (our driver) left Masunga, Tuesday morning to return to Johannesburg via Martins Drift across the Limpopo into South Africa. This proved to be a short route, which brought us home at 19.00 hrs. As we were accompanied by “Pula”, God’s blessings as we left South Africa, so we left Botswana in pouring rain and were greeted by sunshine in S. Africa.

EXPERIENCE OF NEW BOTSWANA COMMUNITY

By Rajes

We all come from different parts of the world and experienced God's love. We would like to share some of our experiences with our Sisters.

God called us all by name and we said "yes" to our God. We are called to be a blessing to one another and to live our lives to the full. We started the journey of getting to know one another on 22 April 2003 in Bellevue. Sisters Margaret and Françoise led us into the journey with God and each other. The beginning was tough as we were confused, but eventually our inner journey began. Through this inner journey with Jesus Christ, we learnt to listen to every one and respect each other. Listening becomes hospitality. We realised that listening is important for our community and like the early Christian communities, we began to build our relationship with God and ourselves.

We experienced the challenges. Sr Cathy and Father Alfred challenged us to face the reality of the Church in Africa. Fr Gabriel informed us about our first foundation in Botswana. Two young men who worked with people living with H I V / A I D S touched our hearts as they shared their experiences with us of the pain and suffering of the people. It was difficult and painful. Marie Carmen and H y a c i n t h a discussed with us and explained inculturation. We enjoyed the leadership.

Finally our preparation ended with our primary evangelization. It was radical and real action for us. Sr Colleen worked with us and she was excellent. Like the bamboo tree we have to

glorify our brokenness and humility. The beauty of life is abundant, but in our brokenness we can become a channel of abundant life to the whole world.

We moved from Bellvue and shared life with the Coronationville Community Sisters. There were four Sisters in the house and they loved us so much. They were concerned about us and helped us in various ways. It helped us grow in our day to day life journey as we witnessed their lives. Then we offered ourselves to God and said with great thanks and praise "*here I am Lord*".

On 6 June we started our journey to Botswana with Sisters Cecilia and Eleanora and three drivers. After a full day of driving we arrived at the Kanamo Centre in Mahalapye where we rested for the night. We set off again early the



following morning with two Holy Spirit Sisters guiding the way up to Francistown. In Francistown we lost the Holy Spirit Sisters, but after buying some food and ordinary needs we managed to find our way to the Parish house in Francistown. The Bishop arrived, welcomed and blessed us and joined us for lunch. After lunch we

continued our journey towards Masunga with the Holy Spirit Sisters leading the way.

We reached our new home and were warmly welcomed by Father. On Sunday we went to Mass where we were introduced and welcomed into the community.