

MEDICAL MISSION NEWS

Summer 2011

Ecological Crisis Our response at HEAL



Architecture using renewable local materials

In Capulaan, four hours north of Manila, in the Philippines, our Sisters are creating an ecological center for reflection and study on two hectares (about 5 acres) of donated land. They named this center the Haven for Ecological and Alternative Living (HEAL). Five MMS are in mission there.

HEAL took shape from the words of the Filipino Bishops, "We will not be successful in our efforts to develop a new attitude towards the natural world unless we are sustained and nourished by a new vision. This vision must blossom forth from our understanding of the world as God intends it to be. We can know the shape of this world by looking at how God originally fashioned our world and laid it out before us."



A Class at HEAL

Planting - the educational programme

HEAL is a means of awakening people to the ecological crisis in our world, and giving direction for action. The educational program is integrated with work and prayer. Affordable sessions are made accessible and available to the wider community. They use organic farming methods, architecture using renewable native materials, such as bamboo and local grass thatch, renewable sources of energy, such as solar, wind and bio-gas. They aim for the preservation of biodiversity and zero-waste management. They use permaculture, which places priority on the permanent sustenance of the land, and the life grown on it. At the end of 2010 they wrote about the developments that they described as two phases: the first being the planting and sowing period and the second the harvesting time.

There is the actual sowing and planting in our vegetable/herbal farm, and vermiculture (a way of composting using earthworms to speed up the process) and animal farm. These kept us busy and considering weather conditions, it was a challenge to keep everything moving and alive. We had part of our fields ploughed and we planted corn, mung beans, and cassava in large quantity besides the year round supply of a lot of different green vegetables. We planted many fruit trees and to date we have 37 varieties or a total of 381 fruit trees and 34 varieties of hard wood trees.

The other part of the sowing and planting is that of those coming to our place as visitors and those who have availed of our different programmes. The significant results of this are requests for eco-centered retreats for individuals or groups (lay and Religious).

Harvesting



Filipina MMS Anne



Dutch MMS Elly

We ventured into one Sustainable Agriculture Workshop with our neighboring farmers, and we are seeing the results with one farmer producing organic vegetables, fruit and rice! We also ventured into an Eco-Retreat Trainers' Training Program in two parts. We had 17 participants from a number of different places. All this is to raise ecological awareness, leading to ecological conversion which, hopefully spreads the message. We are seeing some other groups wanting to set up similar projects.

This year Dutch Medical Mission Sister Elly joined us for four months with HEAL as her base community while in the Philippines. She has been a tremendous asset to our programmes and retreats. She had come prepared with input dealing with various aspects of the ecological dimension of our healing mission. Indonesian MMS Catharina, Pakistani MMS Iginia and Filipina MMS Linda joined us for some time.

Part II of our Eco-Retreat Trainers' Training is harvesting, which is more on the aspect of our understanding and the growth of our life here. Everything on the farm was ready for harvesting. So every morning, the participants were out for an hour, harvesting okra, beans, mung beans, lettuce, Chinese cabbage, rosella fruit and worms. Harvesting of the learnings on the eco-retreat are plentiful, each one harvesting a great deal for her/his own spiritual growth. At Mass they each made a commitment to practice what they had learned as an Earth Worker to care with love and gentleness for the well-being of the Earth community. It is very encouraging to know that our **Earth Workers** and Earth Healers are growing in numbers and reaching to other parts of our country.



MMS Society leaders visit the HEAL community

The Ecological Crisis - a concern for all MMS

Ecological Crisis—Here and Now (some concerns from our General Chapter 2009)

In these days we are experiencing the devastation of our planet. Earth's resources are exploited uncontrollably by a few, resulting in the extinction of species, a widening gap between rich and poor, economic and political crises. Climate change and the increasing frequency of calamities have an untold cost in the lives of humans and other species, displacement of peoples and internal and international forced migration. The victims of this crisis are people living in poverty and those who are marginalized, especially women and children. The result: greed, violence and wars.

The ecological crisis has helped us to see that healing demands equity. Efforts to improve access to basic needs and health services, safe drinking water, unpolluted air, care for the homeless and dying, appropriate and accurate information are some ways in which we carry out our healing mission from an ecological perspective. The values of our consumer societies can lead to our wants becoming needs. This way of living has contributed to the ecological crisis. We see that our resources are not only personnel and finance but include the Earth. We are responsible for the care and good use of everything entrusted to us. This results in challenges. In choosing eco-friendly products, we may be faced with the tension between what is for the best interest of the Earth and high financial cost. In different parts of the world we are finding different ways to put these concerns into practice.



American MMS Margaret in the vegetable garden

Ecological awareness in the U.S. with recovering addicts

Indian MMS Goretti gives some up-to-date news of New Jerusalem Now:

Our tradition is one in which those who complete one year clean are honoured with all their loved ones and with the family of New Jerusalem Now. One of those celebration days was in February and it happened to be Margaret's 60th Anniversary of Vows also. Medical Mission Sisters and other friends were present and many alumni from far and wide came to share this time. It is nice to see that after Sr. Margaret's return from her retirement our community has become more alive. God has blessed her with a special ability to reach out to others in such loving and caring ways. She has helped so many people and touched so many lives.

Recently Margaret has received the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Certificate of Merit, a great honour for her and for all of us in the community who have spent time and energy with her to see the success of our garden and fruit tree grove. The gardening project started as another form of therapy for the residents. They grew and used fresh, organic vegetables for their meals. Extra produce was donated weekly to the surrounding neighbourhood. They started growing herbs and vegetables for sale to help raise funds and provide the participants a sense of accomplishment through business awareness.



Caring for the earth at a Philippine eco-centre is one of hundreds of ways in which Medical Mission Sisters around the world try to be a healing presence to others today. Filipina Medical Mission Sister Yolande writes about her work in an eco-centre called “Healers of Mother Earth” (HOME).

Healers of Mother Earth

Battling with the climate

The Cagayan Valley in Northern Luzon is one of the hottest, driest areas of the Philippines, with summertime temperatures over 105 degrees Fahrenheit. HOME is a place where people in the valley can learn how to care for their environment. It also has a clinic that offers alternative methods of healing.

HOME is surrounded by the rice fields of poor farmers who formerly depended on rain in order to plant rice. When the rains came, they were able to harvest once a year, but they did not have enough water for the necessities of life. These farmers and their families worked so hard, but were still poor, unhealthy and undernourished. Their children were not even able to go to school.

working hard BUT struggling

The people working in HOME discovered a free-flowing, underground stream that could be harvested to supply clean water, not only to the eco-centre, but also for the farmers and their families. If the poor farmers are able to plant and harvest more often, they will be able to eat enough to keep them healthy. With the help of a generous donor, our Sisters were able to use wind and solar energy to bring the underground water to the surface and harvest it. This system will permanently supply the water needs of the eco-center and the farmers.

The eco-centre teaches people how to care for and heal the Earth, and make proper use of the bounty of the Earth like water to keep them healthy. It also supplies the farmers with clean water for their daily needs, and for watering their rice fields and gardens. When people are able to harvest from the work of their hands, they are able to eat and maintain their health. A healthy environment makes people healthy, and water is indispensable to a healthy life.

Making use of Earth's bounty



Doctoral thesis presented

German Medical Mission Sister Birgit worked and was in leadership in Peru but took some years of leave in Germany to work for a doctorate on “The Human being and nature in the cosmivision of the Aguaruna and Huambisa (Peru) and in the Christian vision of creation. A comparative study for the intercultural and interreligious dialogue in the perspective of practical theology”. Here she gives an introduction to the subject of her thesis which she presented successfully.



*The
result*

Success!

Birgit in her rainbow doctoral cap with District Coordinator German MMS Gertrud

The cosmic vision of the Aguaruna and Huambuisa, indigenous peoples in Peru, is deeply embedded within the natural world in which they live and within their culture. My thesis aims to name important dimensions of this cosmic vision guided by the following questions: How does this vision shape the relationship between human beings and all the other living beings? What is the place and role of the human being within the cosmic order?

In the Amazon Region of Peru the Catholic Church understands herself as a partner of the Aguaruna and Huambuisa, accompanying them in their struggles for survival and for recognition of their right for a sustainable development on their land. The Church is engaged in an intercultural and interreligious dialogue with both indigenous communities.

The destruction of the rainforest (often in order to plant huge areas for biofuel) and the serious ecological damage caused to the Amazon Region urges the Church to reflect on its own vision of creation including the place and responsibility of the human being within this web of life and an ecological practice coherent with this vision. I'll also address the topic of the important connection, which exists between the preferential option for the poor and a responsible use of the natural resources of the Earth.

In a following step I initiate a dialogue between the cosmic vision of the Aguaruna and Huambuisa and the Christian vision of creation, highlighting common aspects, mutual challenges and enrichment as well as deep insights and learnings gained in the process.



Dagmar with Roma children

Some of the most vulnerable

German Medical Mission Sister Dagmar, who has been working with victims of human trafficking for many years is on the steering committee of RENATE (Religious in Europe Networking against Human Trafficking and Exploitation). She has moved to Berlin to join the Jesuit Refugee Service on a voluntary basis. At JRS, she is able to use her wealth of experience by visiting and accompanying people in detention centres who are awaiting deportation from Germany. She is able to assist them with legal aid and helps to discharge the most vulnerable, including children, pregnant women and the elderly from the centre. She writes here about a visit to Albania:

Different & Equal (D&E) is an organisation that runs a big shelter for victims of trafficking and forced prostitution in Tirana. At the moment there are 17 women and girls in the house and up to one hundred women receive assistance for integration and promotion outside the house. D&E tries to help them to either go back to their families or to continue with an NGO.

In the recent annual report of D&E I read that more than half of the mothers do not want their daughters to return home. Where they live nobody will believe that they have been cheated, coerced and sexually terrorized. They survived because police found them. To date the 'Daughters of Eve' are regarded as slavish seducers, willing to do everything for money. The image that these conservative mothers have is that their daughters are shameless and worthless and this is deeply rooted in the male-dominated culture.

Finally I met English Loreto Sister Imelda who had stirred up my curiosity so that I wanted to know a bit more about this country that was really unknown to me and about what she was doing.

Imelda introduced me to some of the projects she is involved in that give witness to her courage and trust in people and in God. These projects have been opened in partnership with SHKEJ (Education for Life), an Albanian association.



Dagmar with WRAJFT women in Lac

but women with so much potential

She took me to the Roma Camp which resembles a so-called Third World slum with its abject poverty and without most modern conveniences like running water, sanitation and electricity. At the camp I met some of the staff. They were committed to their work which combines integration into mainstream society not only through good food, health care and through schools and courses which teach more than knowledge and skills but also through their empathy and solidarity which are able to break the chains of culture, colour of the skin and gender and to go beyond them.

The next day I was invited to visit young women outside of Tirana who are being reintegrated into their families and communities. The host guide was a social worker from 'Different & Equal'. Two of the women, supported by their parents, were in the stage of opening their own hairdresser's shops. The last young woman we met that day was a university student. She was determined to use her studies for helping victims of trafficking to fight for their rights. I admired her courage because this is a dangerous job for an ex-victim who had been trafficked by distant relatives and who are too influential and too rich ever to be punished for their crimes.

I was impressed by the many initiatives Imelda had started not only with the Roma but also with women in distress who were single mothers or divorced or abandoned women. I met a group of WRAJFT (A Woman's Right in Albania for Freedom, Justice and to speak her Truth) in Lac who lived illegally in a dilapidated building where they could be evicted any time. Neither the government nor the church or other religious communities were interested in their lot. It's Imelda and the Loreto Sisters and other committed Catholics who make a difference to these women with so much potential. The women offered very tasty pastries which they had made themselves. I don't know whether they will be able to run a small bakery together but I pray that their determination and skills will bear fruit by making a living through their own work.



Eco-chapel at HEAL

OBITUARY

Mrs Christine Brilus, Harlow, Essex

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