

## **Malawi: Caring Through Sharing With Others**

By Sr. Raynelda Saragih



Each year colorful Easter candles arrive from our friends and supporters in Germany.

These candles come from Visbek parish, Germany via the containers. The candles are used in Madisi parish in Malawi and other Parishes. We recycle the remains of these candles and thereafter we produce new ones. Nothing is wasted.

**<Sister Klara, beautifully arranges candles for Easter each and every year.**

### **The Sharing of Ufa with the Poor People of Malawi**



Ufa comes from maize grain. It is used for preparing nsima, a meal eaten either during lunch or supper. The Franciscan Sisters in Malawi take a great part in sharing ufa with the poor, especially during hunger times and this period of the covid 19 pandemic. There are 6 main villages where they share ufa and some of them are Milimbu village, Ntanira village, Madisi trading center and Joel village. They have centers in these villages where they meet with children, parents and guardians and those of old age to give them ufa.



**Children wait to receive ufa.**



Some parents and guardians bring firewood to St Francis school which is used for cooking porridge for the pupils.

## **AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENT**

### **During the Harvesting Period**

St. Francis pupils are involved in harvesting both soya and pumpkins from the school garden. In order to avoid spread of the covid 19 pandemic, the pupils put on the face masks when harvesting. They also wash their hands with soap and use hand sanitizer.



**Pupils harvesting soya from the St Francis School gardens**





**Pupils proudly display some of their harvest of soya and pumpkins**

After harvesting soya, the students pound it in order to remove the seeds from the pods. This is also done while observing covid 19 preventive measures. The soya is used for making porridge flour which is cooked for the pupils. It is also used for making milk.



### **Planting Trees and Bamboo**

The Sisters encourage the planting of trees and bamboo around the school campus and some other areas. Bamboo are later used for firewood. This helps to avoid cutting down trees to use as firewood, thereby protecting the environment.



for

**Holes were prepared  
planting trees**





**One of the workers digs a hole for planting bamboo.**

Fruit trees are also planted around the school campus and the pupils bring manure which is added in the holes for better growth of these trees.



**<Workers also planted tiny fruit trees**

**Sister Raynelda planting the > strawberries.**

Strawberries were also planted in repurposed plastic bags and bottles for beauty. When they have grown, these strawberries are delicious additions to any meal.





## Academics: Standard 8 Pupils Return to Their Classrooms



The senior classes, especially standard 8 pupils who are about to write the Malawi National Examination, are having classes with their teachers during the holiday of covid 19 pandemic. This is done so that they can catch up with the syllabus in order to perform well on the exams.

## Dry Vegetables



The dry vegetables, especially the pumpkin leaves, are prepared by cutting and boiling them into a pot. Thereafter they are exposed to the sun to dry. Tomato is also cut and dried. Later on it is mixed with dried vegetables. These vegetables can stay for a year. They are mostly eaten when the season of fresh pumpkin leaves is over.

<Dry pumpkin leaves exposed to the sun to dry

## Some Other Activities



Sister Klara and Sister Raynelda cooking eggs for a special meal.



The Sisters are having a meal with their workers

Sister Klara and Sister Raynelda during student vacations







School inspection meeting



St. Francis pupils performing a dance while carrying winnowers in their hands

### **USA: Holy Week and Earth Day In a Time of Covid**

By Sr. Beatrice Hernandez and Covenant Companion Jeanne Connolly

This year a Lenten food drive was held in collaboration with national USA Catholic Sisters Week. This effort by the Wheaton Franciscans, our Sunday worship community and the IBVM Sisters, was able to bring much-needed awareness to the current increase in food insecurity, as well as financial donations to support the work of the Northern Illinois Food Bank, Feed My Starving Children Mobile Pack initiative,





and Neighborhood Food Pantries. In addition to these local organizations, the Wheaton Franciscans made donations to three other organizations supporting food insecurity. It is difficult to determine how much money was raised because payment by check did not go through our online account. We do know that our pantry donation required seven shopping carts and four additional armloads to empty the goods from Covenant Companion Paige Samdal's vehicle. The donations were met with great thanks. In addition to financial and pantry donations we are very grateful to the enthusiastic

and generous volunteers who collected the pantry goods: Sr. Julie Stapleton, Nick Noe, The Leonard's, The Ruggaber's, Augustine Family, Tramel Family, Beamer Family, Sr. Melanie Paradis, Sr. Bea Hernandez, Sr. Sylvia Wehlisch, Sr. Barb Nelson, and Covenant Companions Paige Samdal and Jeanne Connolly.

For Holy Week 2021 our Sunday liturgy community was gifted with a special gift bag of items that they could use during the livestream liturgies of the Triduum. Each bag contained a blessed palm branch, a special towel with explanation of the significance of the Holy Thursday feet washing within the liturgy, a small wooden cross for Good Friday, and a small votive candle for the Easter Vigil. Of course, also included were some small chocolate Easter Eggs for Easter Sunday. Worshipers drove up to receive their gifts the day before Palm Sunday.



Our Wheaton Franciscan community of faith experienced the Easter Triduum 2021 with a simplicity, beauty, and grace befitting transformation. Each celebration reminded us that these high holy days are not about performance and perfection; they are about our place in the universe as the body of Christ. We give thanks for signs of new life bursting out all around us, and we give thanks for our family and friends. We rejoice at the possibilities that the "Spirit of God" has placed before us. We humbly pray to be a blessing in the heart of the world.





**In 2020, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day** had only a tree planting by our maintenance staff due to the recent outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. There was no time to plan a virtual event, since the shutdown of all gatherings occurred in mid-March that year. However, by 2021 we were able to plan a socially distanced Earth Day event for COVID vaccinated participants requiring masks and social distancing. Over 50 people happily gathered to honor Mother Earth with a planting of a Kentucky Coffee Bean tree. In the evening, a powerpoint virtual Earth Day celebration of Wheaton Franciscans and friends was shared on you-tube.



On May 20<sup>th</sup>, Sr. Beatrice Hernandez was one of 4 presenters sharing how the Wheaton Franciscans have been raising awareness and engaging in activities to care for Mother Earth over the years. This particular session occurred during the Laudato Si week of international festivities hosted by Sr Sheila Kinsey who coordinates the UISG and USG JPIC Office in Rome as well as working with the Vatican Dicastery for Integral Human Development. It was an honor to share a powerpoint presentation of the many efforts undertaken to care for creation. Sr. Bea also shared a presentation with all the Sisters of the St. Clare region about the newly launched Laudato Si Action Platform (LSAP) and the Care of Creation Prayer Network. The sisters unanimously approved registering our region as active participants in the prayer network. Plans are already underway within our region to discern our participation in the LSAP over the next seven years. We look forward to collaborating with other religious congregations and many others in this effort to make a difference in climate change and the preservation of biodiversity.

## **Germany:**

By Sr. Alexandra Völzke

### **For the protection of the Amazon and indigenous peoples**

We are co-signatories of the joint letter of the Bank for Church and Caritas, Paderborn, on the protection of the Amazon and the indigenous population living there: "Catholic investors demand protection of the Amazon in Brazil". The sisters of our Congregation in Brazil are also committed to the protection of the environment and the rights of people living in the Amazon area. The Bank for Church and Caritas, Paderborn writes about the commitment letter: "We are convinced of the necessity that we must make full use of our possibilities as Catholic financial market participants by raising our voices together. In doing so, we are trying to motivate the Brazilian government in a dialogue of engagement to finally respect human and environmental rights in the Amazon," says Tommy Piemonte, Head of Sustainability Research at the BKC, explaining the concerns of the Catholic institutions. So far, there has been a very high level of media attention for this initiative. More than 60 media worldwide have reported on it in various languages. The high level of media attention is not only proof that this commitment represents an urgent issue, but also generates the necessary public attention to increase the pressure on the Brazilian government. The English text of the letter and the list of signatories can be found at: <https://www.bkc-paderborn.de/nachhaltige-geldanlagen/nachhaltigkeitsfilter/engagement/engagement-brasilien.html>

- On our homepage [www.fcjm.de](http://www.fcjm.de) published on 14.04.2021



### **Liebfrauen gymnasium donates computers to Romania**

We are very pleased about a generous donation of used computers from our partners at the Liebfrauen gymnasium in Büren. With the still well-functioning PCs, 30 student workstations with servers can be set up in a village school in Slatina Timis in Romania as well as individual workstations in the kindergarten of our sisters in Caransebes. There they are urgently needed and of great value for the school. "The school community of the Liebfrauen gymnasium is pleased that with the donation of the computer workstations at the school in Romania, an important step is taken into the digital future," says a statement from the Liebfrauen gymnasium.

### **Conflict in the Middle East**

In a statement, the Inter-French Working Group (INFAG), an association of German-speaking Franciscan religious orders in Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium, calls for an end to the violence in the Middle East and opposes the increasing anti-Semitism in Germany.





Committed to their motto "pax et bonum - peace and good", the members of the Franciscan (religious) communities are shocked by the military conflicts. In particular, we are outraged by the fact that the Palestinian and Israeli attacks are killing more and more civilians, including many children.

"We call on both parties to the conflict to silence the guns, end the violence and respect human rights. A lasting peace is based on a justice that takes into account the legitimate interests of autonomy and security of both sides," says INFAG in its statement. A de-escalation of violence therefore includes the complex history of the conflict and its effectiveness. One-sided polarization, defamation and re-admission would deepen the rifts and not contribute to a solution. In their statement, the Franciscan (religious) communities view the anti-Jewish actions here in Germany with great concern: "A justified criticism of the actions of the State of Israel in no way justifies a violent action against our Jewish fellow citizens and their institutions. We condemn the attacks on synagogues and the increasing anti-Semitism in the strongest possible terms." As Franciscan sisters, we share this concern. We combine this with a clear commitment to stand in solidarity with the Jewish communities against any anti-Semitism. We will pray for peace in the Middle East and peaceful coexistence in our society.

### Online preparatory seminars for the MaZ'lerinnen

A MaZ'lerin writes about an online seminar: "After an introductory impulse, we began to deal with our personal beliefs. This prepared us very well for our guests. First Father Sylvester from Malawi told us about his faith and we had the opportunity to ask him questions about it. We learned about differences between Malawian and German or European churches, his handling of faith crises, and the role of free will in God's plan for humanity. It was incredibly interesting to be able to talk to this priest living and working in Rome.

In the evening we talked to sisters from Salzkotten, who had joined especially for us. We talked about all kinds of things, for example, about their personal path into the order, prejudices and faith experiences. It was impressive to be able to hear so many stories.



On Saturday, we dealt with the topics of "global learning" and "racism". We dealt with various levels of racism, analyzed racist advertising and exchanged views on "right" action in situations in which we observe racism or in which we ourselves act or think in racist ways. Another important point was to take a critical look at development cooperation. On Sunday, our focus was on the power of language and various forms of discrimination. We talked about how our language can exclude, hurt and belittle others and what responsibility this entails for us."