
Filipina Oblate Sisters in Kenya

THE NEW CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF JESUS AND MARY



*Front row: The Oblate Sisters of the Society of St. Pius X
Back Row: The Missionary Sisters of Jesus and Mary*

Inception

The need of an SSPX congregation of sisters with an active missionary life must have impressed itself on the mind of His Excellency Bishop Bernard Fellay, Superior General of the SSPX, for sometime, but **“How, Where, When and Who?”** remained unsolved questions until after many prayers, much reflection and divine enlightenment. Fr. Marc Vernoy, former District Superior of the SSPX in Africa, was instrumental in what has happened. Divine Providence wished that the realization of this plan would take place in Kenya, Africa, in March 2011 when the necessary instruments were ready: candidates, a chaplain, sisters that **would take care of the candidates’** formation and a proper house with a chapel.

The First Community

So far six Oblate Sisters have happily

crossed the threshold of Our Lady of Angels House, four of which have come from the Philippines. The official presence of the Oblates in this beautiful safari country began on 11th September 2009 when Sister Maria Josepha, along with two Kenyan Sisters, formed the first community of the Oblate Sisters of the SSPX in Karen, Nairobi, occupying the same house left by the SSPX priests who had recently moved to Lavington, a 20 minute drive from Karen. Soon a Kenyan and four Nigerian ladies joined the new community asking to be trained as future Missionary Sisters. The Oblates immediately started the work assigned to them of giving preliminary training to the future Missionary Sisters. Then, in August 2010, they were joined by a French candidate who had previously received a year of training as a postulant at the Oblate Sisters’ Novitiate in Salvan, Switzerland. Bishop Fellay had in fact advised her to

undertake this training until such time as the foundation of the envisaged congregation took place. On 19th March 2011 she became the first Novice of the Missionary Sisters of Jesus and Mary, and so Our Lady of Angels Novitiate was born.

Oblates from the Philippines

In September 2010, just after her Perpetual Oblation, Sister Maria Philomena from the House of Bethany, Philippines, was transferred to Kenya in order to help at Our Lady of Angels House. The following March (2011) two other transfers took place: Sister Maria Josepha was sent to the House of Bethany, while Sister Maria Concepcion, then at the House of Bethany, was sent to Our Lady of Angels House. With the newly founded congregation operational, more help was needed. So in July 2011, another Oblate Sister from the House of Bethany, Sister Maria Remedios, joined the community in Karen. At present there are four Oblate Sisters in Karen—a Kenyan, and three Filipinas—these last have adjusted themselves well to the Kenyan lifestyle as well as to the pleasant perpetual spring-like climate of Nairobi which is so different to their hot and humid Filipino archipelago. Within the community, however, they continue to live the life they have learned from their novitiate in Switzerland—a life imbued with the SSPX spirit.

Our Chaplain

The chaplain, Father Philippe Pazat, SSPX, is of great assistance to the novitiate in ways which are not just spiritual. He teaches Catechism, Liturgy, Apologetics, Spirituality, Church History and Crisis of the Church, through which he transmits much of the spirit received from the

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direct contact he had with Archbishop Lefebvre. He also offers the community weekly spiritual conferences as well as giving spiritual direction to some novices while watching over the safety of the whole novitiate with paternal eyes. The community also appreciate his handyman skills in carpentry, electronics, landscaping and in many others. In fact, interested Sisters and novices are now learning these skills from him.

Daily Life at Our Lady of the Angels Novitiate

Divine Providence, through our superiors, has entrusted the initial formation of the novices and postulants, as well as the running of Our Lady of Angels House, to Sister Maria Concepcion. Sister gives lessons to the candidates on the Religious Life and the Vows, Gregorian Chant, English, Latin and other principles essential to the novitiate.

Sister Maria Philomena, besides being the house bursar, is also in charge of running some errands and flower arrangements. For over a year she helped at the Holy Cross Parish in Lavington teaching catechism and giving some lessons in Maths and English to little children at the weekends.

Sister Rose Mary, a Kenyan, helps in the kitchen, and also with the sewing, gardening, caring for the animals and, until December 2011, she too gave catechism classes in Lavington. She still teaches catechism to some souls in the neighborhood in Swahili which is her native tongue.

Sister Maria Remedios teaches sewing to the novices and postulants and is responsible for the sewing department as well as for house maintenance.

The novices and postulants also have

an important share in the housework outside their time of prayer, lessons and study. They do cooking, cleaning, gardening, laundry, animal care, sewing, some carpentry and house painting. In addition to all this, they go to the open market in pairs on Saturdays to buy fresh fruit and vegetables.

The Novitiate has been unfortunate with its vegetable garden this year because of a drought lasting five months. If they had had a bore-hole their vegetables would have prospered. In Kenya the ground becomes hard and very dry if it does not rain for few days and then after some weeks the grass turns brown. It is quite interesting to know that the water in Karen is as deep as 350 meters below the surface—no wonder there is such a scarcity of water! The fact that the Council water comes only twice a week means that the novitiate has no other choice but to buy water and refrain from watering the garden.

The whole community also has some moments of relaxation. Every day the sisters go for a walk after lunch for about half an hour, and on second Wednesdays, the novices and postulants go for a long walk for the whole afternoon. On the last Wednesday of the month the whole community goes out for a picnic at a green park where they spend most of the day in innocent games, not forgetting, of course,



Sister has a great devotion to St. Joseph.

to pray the Divine office at noon and performing the prescribed thirty minutes of spiritual reading after lunch.

Building Projects

Finally, after eleven months of intense building work between June 2011 and May 2012, the members of Our Lady of Angels House are settled in their renovated house. For this they are sincerely grateful to the Divine Providence and to their Superiors and benefactors. In return, the whole Novitiate pray daily for their intentions at the altar and during the recitation of the Holy Rosary. May Almighty God reward them! Ω

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Our Lady of Angels House