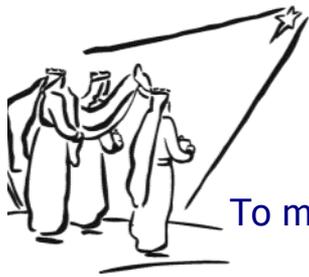


**EDITORIAL**



The Work of Christmas

When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the Kings and Princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,  
The real work of Christmas begins :



To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry  
To free the prisoner,  
To make peace between nations,  
To bring Christ to all,  
To make music in the heart.



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With this Newsletter we send you our Christmas greetings.  
Let us together continue the real work of this Season !



## Fulfillment in Caring for Children

*"... yet, taught by time, my heart has learned to glow for others' good, and melt at others woe".*



**G**iving oneself for another's happiness is true heroism. Life is at its best when other people are happy because of you.

Saturday is a time for us to relax from a week's work. But for us, the Lay Associates of the Missionaries of Africa, Dahlia, Reina, Tia Anda, Nanay Arsenia and myself, Saturdays have become exciting and fruitful.

The children at Poulton, a neighborhood in A.S. Fortuna, Banihid, Cebu City, at the back of the Missionaries of Africa Seminary have claimed our time. Saturday afternoons - from 2:00-4:00 p.m. we catechize children aged 3-12 in a basketball court. No desks. No books. While the classes for these children are intended to teach the simple core doctrines of the Catholic faith - to lead the children into a deeper awareness of how these beliefs should touch every part of their lives - our gift of time really communicates a fuller life to them.

We notice their joyful enthusiasm and the excitement every time we meet them on Saturdays. There is fun, laughter and enjoyment that everyone feels after the classes are held. The small kids enjoy the lessons we give and the games we play and we enjoy their laughter at seeing us their teachers join in the games! The challenge to lift the spirit of every child keeps us going in this worthy cause. We find in the gleeful faces of the children Jesus Christ,

who loves children. We believe He is the only one who can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in

the life of the Holy Trinity.



Yes, life with the children at Poulton is worth the happiness we look for, every time we finish the day. We find fulfillment in our simple work. At times we also share our "merienda" to let these children feel that we do not only feed them spiritually.

This is the COMMITMENT of the lay associates of the Missionaries of Africa in Cebu: To be with those who need us! We said "YES" to the work for the greater glory of GOD! And it's so fulfilling!

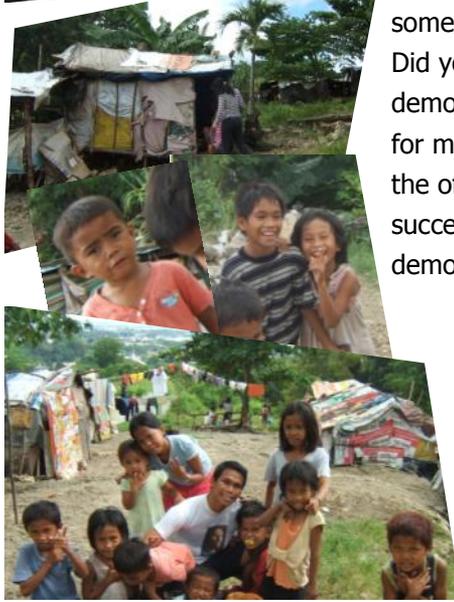
**Mz. A. (Vicky Abella)**

### *Our Children - Our Responsibility*



**T**ayong is the name of the place where I go for my pastoral work. It is about a kilometer's hike to get there. My experience with the kids is part of an ideal world because there I can play with them, I can make fun. Their smiles, their laughter and their happiness add spice to my life. There is no room for me to feel unhappy when I am with the Tayong children. For sure these kids have a big influence in helping me discover the real value of my existence. Wow! That's saying something!

Did you know that these kids are living on a demolition site? Their families have been there for more than 30 years. Some three years ago the official "owners" of the adjacent properties succeeded in having their simple houses demolished. As no re-location site was ready for them, they rebuilt their houses. These were again demolished and their building materials confiscated. Since April 2009 they have been forced to live in some kind of tents. The first time I arrived in this area I felt shy to communicate and to mingle with them because I did not know exactly what to do and what to say. Their



situation is desperate. It makes their life very hard. But, listening to their different stories from their daily lives, I realize that I have been able to help them

at least in a small way. My task is only to be with the kids and at times offering catechism on the life of Jesus. I do believe that children are entrusted to us by our Creator. What we teach them, what we show them, is our responsibility. What they become is our responsibility. Our future is in the hearts and the minds of our children.

**Rudisel Alberina**, 1<sup>st</sup> year student

## *An Amazing Ministry of Hope*

**D**enise, now in her sixties, came to Ghana/West Africa as a young chemistry graduate and volunteer with the American Peace Corps in the 1970s. Here she found the meaning of her life: her husband John Klein-Douwel and her amazing ministry of hope: a **"Tree-Growing Project"**. I came to know Denise and John during my first assignment as a young priest in 1990. The vegetation in the Northern parts of Ghana in the so-called Sahel-belt of West Africa is marked by an almost complete absence of trees. Only trees that are useful for women's livelihood such as mango, dawa dawa and sheanut trees can be seen standing like exhibits in a museum.

When John and Denise initiated their tree growing project they began to set up village tree-nurseries by providing chainlink wire-fencing on a loan basis for a number of years. The aim was to help in setting up so-called family woodlots, as firewood is the main source of fuel for cooking. Today, after more than 30 years many of these woodlots are now dotting the bleak savannah landscape like green islands of hope.

With the tree growing project enabling Denise to reach out to the remotest corners of the parish she was able to accomplish an even **more amazing** medical ministry alongside her regular work. Untiringly reaching out on her small Honda 90 motorcycle on dusty roads, Denise has been able to discover during her visits child patients in often seemingly hopeless conditions. By her incredible perseverance she often succeeded in referring child patients to medical doctors in the University Hospital in the capital Accra at 700 km distance for reconstructive surgery.

The pictures of **Daniel** tell the story of a young boy who at the age of 13 found himself with a cancer that resulted in his disfigurement. Through the efforts of Denise he was brought into contact with a Ghanaian plastic surgeon, Prof. Dr. Grace Parkins, who was able



to restore his features after four operations. Daniel is only one very striking example of many other children whose lives have been changed thanks to Denise' and John's untiring dedication to protecting and nurturing life.

*Anyone who wishes to know more about Denise, John and their amazing ministry may write to: [Thomas.Schwiedessen@gmail.com](mailto:Thomas.Schwiedessen@gmail.com)*



## *From Tree Planting to Nobel Prize*

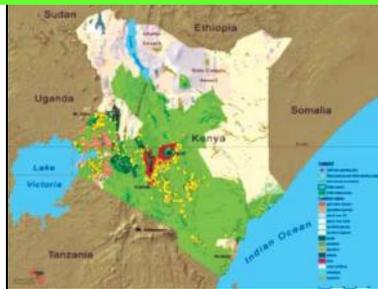
**P**rofessor **Wangari Maathai**, the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, died of cancer at the age of 71 (Sept 25, 2011).

In 1977 she started a "Green Belt Movement" GBM which succeeded in planting 47 million trees as of today. 6,000 tree nurseries are being cared for by 600 community groups, at times composed of disabled and mentally ill people.

She was born in a small village of Kenya in the 1940's. With her graduation she obtained a scholarship to study in the US (like President Obama's father).

On returning to her country she became the 1<sup>st</sup> woman to run a university department in Kenya (Department of Veterinary Anatomy). Visiting villages she was struck by the degradation of the environment. She noticed with concern how entire forests were being cleared and replaced by commercial plantations. The resulting loss of biodiversity brought drought and an increase in poverty.

Soon it became clear that the issue on the environment was also a **political issue**. Democracy was needed! Planting trees became a political act bringing her into opposition to the then president Daniel Arap Moi. She was imprisoned and released only after a campaign supported by the Kennedy family (USA). In 1993 she had to go into hiding for fear of being



*In yellow tree nurseries and planting sites in Kenya maintained by GBM*





assassinated. In 2002 she joined the coalition which succeeded in defeating President Moi. The new government appointed her minister of the environment in

2003. She was instrumental in ensuring that the new Kenyan Constitution included the right of all citizens to a clean and healthy environment.

More at <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>

***"We cannot tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations of all species to rise up and walk!"***

### **The Nobel Peace Prize**

was given to three African women on October 5<sup>th</sup> :

**Ellen Johnson Sirleaf** who is Africa's first democratically elected female president (Liberia);

**Leymah Gbowee** who mobilized and organized women across ethnic and religious dividing lines to bring an end to the long war in Liberia.

**Tawakkul Karman** who has played a leading part in the struggle for women's rights and for democracy and peace in Yemen both before and during the "Arab spring".

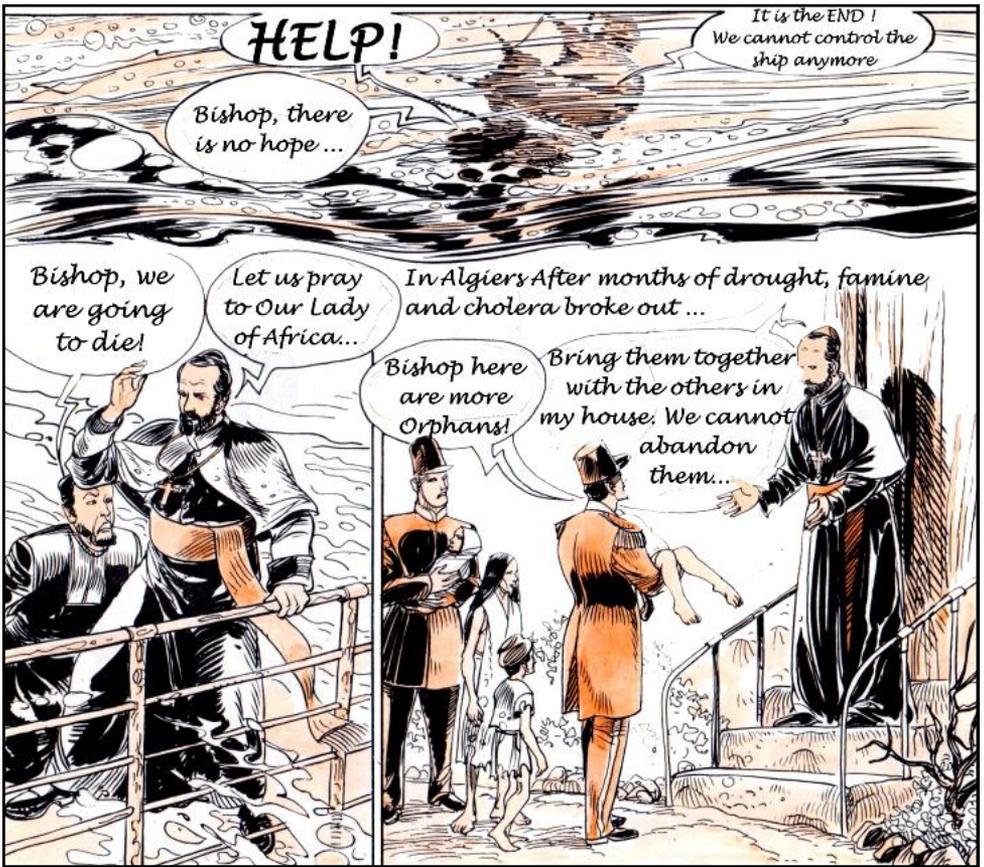
The Nobel Committee's intention in conferring the prize was to promote the great potential for democracy and peace that women represent.

## *Our Founder Cardinal Lavigerie (5)*

**O**n his arrival at Algiers on May 15, 1867 Lavigerie, the 42 year old newly appointed Archbishop, was greeted by an artillery salute, armed soldiers and large crowds along the roads.

Algeria (North Africa) was a French colony at that time. The colonial government excluded all Christian activities in this Muslim country for fear not only of fomenting religious divisions, but also because the authorities as well as the great majority of the French population of the colony were violently **anti-religious**. This had brought endless trouble to the previous bishop of Algiers and Lavigerie would suffer the same fate in his efforts to build schools and create parishes.

Aside from these difficulties Lavigerie had to face another challenge: for more than a year already the country was suffering from a **terrible drought** followed



by famine and epidemics (cholera and typhus). Over a 100,000 people had died in the year 1867. [By the end of 1868 half a million people had died as a result of the epidemic and famine.] These challenges did not discourage Lavigerie. On the contrary! With remarkable energy he asked religious personnel and financial support from different European countries. In the meantime he opened his palace and later even the seminary to shelter the abandoned orphans. Subsequently he was able to open centers to accommodate nearly two thousand orphans.

A particular incident helps to capture the experience of the 42 year-old newly appointed Archbishop of Algiers. In August 1867 after having met the Pope and the French Emperor Napoleon III he embarked by ship to return from France to Algeria. What should have been a peaceful 36 hour journey turned out to be a six day ordeal. The ship was caught in a **storm**. The 700 passengers were terrified and thought that it was their end. Lavigerie called them all together.

“Let us submit ourselves to the **protection of the Blessed Virgin,**” he said, “and promise her that when we reach Algiers we will go directly to the Basilica and dedicate ourselves to her.” The storm raged on, and yet there seemed to be an unusual calm about the ship. The crew managed to overcome the problems and six days later they reached Algiers. A huge crowd was at the quay, waiting with food and clothes. On leaving the boat the passengers and the crew following Lavigerie went straight to the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa fulfilling the promise they had made at sea.

*Vocation Club : Kabang Falls  
December 4, 2011*

The vocation Club of Cebu organised a hike to Kabang falls 17 youths joined Fr. Thomas and Fr. Emmanuel. After a long climb we cooled down by diving into a chilly mountain pool. Roasting dried fish and sharing our food between sunshine and rain showers made for a great bonding experience.

For information on **joining the Missionaries of Africa** contact:

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**How you can help us:**

- Above all, please help us with your prayer for vocations and for missionaries in Africa.
- You can spread this « News Letter » through e-mail.
- You can support the formation of our seminarians by sending your contribution by check payable to « Missionaries of Africa Inc».

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