



# Missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate



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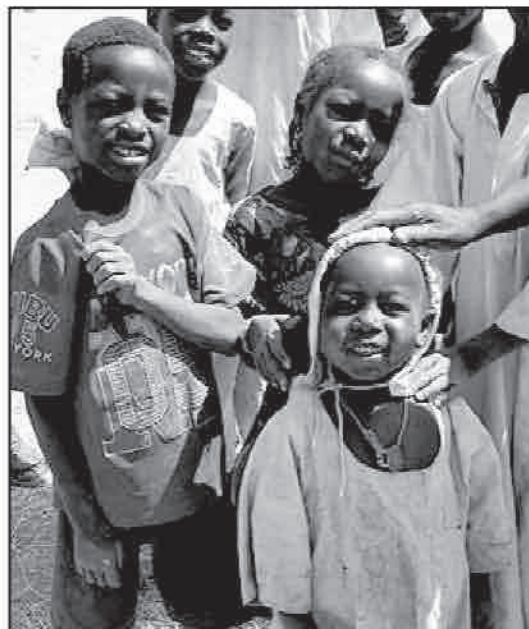
## Christmas without food!

EAST AFRICA -- When the long overdue rains finally came down in the drought-ridden region of northern Kenya, many of those who had suffered for so long without adequate water knelt down to thank God for the rain. But while they prayed in thanksgiving, they also knew that the drought had caused irreversible damage to crops, livestock and their own families. For too many -- the seasonal rains had come too late. The damage was done.

Some families in Kenya have lost everything as a result of having no rain for far too long. Because grazing areas and vegetation have all but disappeared, many pastoralists have lost nearly all of their livestock. Children, the elderly and those who are most vulnerable have become severely malnourished. People are dying. The worst drought in living memory has destroyed most of what the poor families in the region ever owned.

Some want to blame God. Others realize that a changing global climate -- brought on by widespread pollution and land mismanagement -- are causing rapid changes in the weather. "I don't want to blame God," one pastoralist says. "But never before has it not rained for such a long time; nor have the winds been so hot and dry. This famine is the most terrible disaster for us. Nearly all our animals have died. I fear we will die also."

This Christmas, the Missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate are urgently working to provide food, water and clothing for the neediest men, women and children throughout Kenya. The Missionary Sisters have also established feeding programs for many of Kenya's orphans living in cities and villages. Donations in support of the Missionary Sisters' outreach can be made using the enclosed reply envelope or (if using a credit card) by calling the Mission Office at (856) 358-4644.



U.S. MISSION OFFICE • POST OFFICE BOX 967 • ELMER, NEW JERSEY 08318 • (856) 358-4644

*The Missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate is a 501(c)3 tax exempt organization.*



## **Imagine feeding all of the children in an orphanage for one year!**

### ***You can do it through a Charitable Gift Annuity!***

Providing hot meals for more than 200 children . . . every day of the week -- every week for an entire year is a difficult and expensive job for the Missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate. In total, it costs well over \$10,000 to provide food for an orphanage for one year. And that is for **just one** of the many orphanages maintained by the Sisters! But with a charitable gift annuity of \$10,000 or more, ***yours could be the hand that feeds those who are hungry.***

The Missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate gift annuity program is a unique way for someone to help provide food for hundreds of orphaned children -- helping them get the hot meals they need while at the same time enjoying financial benefits for the remainder of your life. A charitable gift annuity will: 1) provide hot meals for orphaned children; 2) provide **you** with fixed payments for as long as you live (you may also add a second annuitant); 3) enable you to enjoy a charitable income tax deduction for the gift portion of the annuity; and 4) receive part of each payment tax free. **To request a personalized, no-obligation proposal to help you see your specific benefits for funding a gift annuity, call our Mission Office at (856) 358-4644 -- Mon. through Fri. 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. (EDT).**



***"When I was hungry,  
you gave me to eat!"***

*Matthew 25*

Understanding Catholic Teaching ...

## **What is the "Immaculate Conception"?**

Through the ages, Mary -- the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ -- has been identified by a variety of names and titles. Just a few of them include: Mother of the Church, Mother of Good Counsel, Helper of the Redeemed, Queen of Peace, Comfort of Christians and Virgin of Virgins. But perhaps the most recognizable one in this present day is the name: Immaculate Conception . . . whose feast day is celebrated on December 8. Many people still wonder, though, how the tradition and basis for the feast arose.

In 1854, Pope Pius IX spoke *ex cathedra* ("from the chair") pronouncing that "the most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege **granted by almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the savior of the human race**, was preserved free from all stain of original sin."

It had taken a long time for this doctrine to develop. While many scholars of the Church considered Mary the greatest and holiest of the saints, they often had difficulty in seeing her as sinless -- either at her conception or throughout her life. This is one of the Church teachings that arose more from the piety of the faithful than from the insights of brilliant theologians. Even such champions of Mary as Bernard of Clairveaux and Thomas Aquinas could not see theological justification for this teaching. Finally, two Franciscans, William of Ware and Blessed John Duns Scotus, helped develop the theology. They pointed out that Mary's *Immaculate Conception* is a part of Jesus' redemptive work. Other members of the human race are cleansed from original sin after birth through baptism. In Mary, Jesus' work was so powerful as to prevent original sin at the outset of the Father's divine plan of salvation.

**"Hail (Mary), full of grace, the Lord is with you!" (Luke 1:28)**

*Making a difference in the lives of Africa's children.*

## Hospital Equipment on its way to Kenya!

*New Jersey hospital reaches out with medical equipment for newborns*



TURNERSVILLE, NJ -- When Mrs. Ursula Martin read about the needs of the Missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate working with orphaned children in central Kenya -- she knew she had to do something to help. The following day, Mrs. Martin met with some of her colleagues at Kennedy Memorial Hospitals/ University Medical Center in Turnersville, NJ, where she works as an obstetrics nurse.

"I had read from one of the letters I received from the Sisters about the need for medical equipment for their hospitals and clinics in central Kenya. So I went to some of the people I work with and asked them if there was some way Kennedy could help. At first I thought they might offer a few boxes of bandages or syringes. But then they told me they would do whatever they could -- and they really did come through in a big way!"



While the full list of equipment donated by Kennedy Memorial Hospital is quite extensive, donated items include warming machines for newborns (a vital need for babies whose mothers are infected with HIV/AIDS) as well as other items used in pre-natal care. Most of these items are currently in transport to Mweiga Hospital located just outside of Nyeri, Kenya -- East Africa.

Even though the items were donated by Kennedy, the materials still needed to be packed in a large cargo container for the six-week ocean crossing to East Africa. As Providence would have it, McCollister's Transportation Systems of Vineland, NJ, and some of its employees donated their time, expertise and materials to help ensure that all of the medical equipment would properly be packed and secured in order to reach central Kenya as safely as possible.



From southern New Jersey, the cargo container was taken to Newark, NJ, where it was loaded onto a ship headed for the port of Mombasa, Kenya, on the Indian Ocean. Once the container arrives in Mombasa, it will then be transferred to Mweiga overland by truck -- a journey of more than 10 more hours. In total, the transfer of the equipment from Kennedy Hospital to its final destination will take more than two months.

The Missionary Sisters want to thank all of those who made this donation possible, especially Ursula Martin, RN; Kennedy Memorial Hospitals/University Medical Center in Turnersville, NJ; Robert Omohundro, Ron Capoferri and McCollister's Transportation Systems of Vineland, NJ. What an incredible blessing you continue to be for those who have known suffering for far too long.





## What is Christmas like in East Africa?



In Kenya -- among the Kikuyu tribe -- people will greet one another with "Gia na Thigukuu njega!" In Uganda, friends will say, "Furaha Ya Mwaka Mpya!" And in Tanzania, they will shout, "Nyasai Opaki Oro Manyeni!" But no matter what the language, the greetings of Christmas mean a time of joy and celebration for even the poorest of Africa's families.

Christmas is celebrated throughout the African continent by virtually every Christian community. Since the first century A.D., Christians in Africa have been celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ. During the past several hundred years, European traditions have heavily influenced the manner in which many Africans celebrate the holiday. In the customs handed down by the English explorers, some Africans will sing carols as well as feast on roasted meats. Most will exchange gifts and visit family and friends. While those who can afford it will generally give gifts at Christmas, the holiday is not nearly as commercial as it is in Europe or the United States. The emphasis is more on the religious aspect of celebrating the birth of Jesus and singing in church. If gifts are exchanged in poorer communities, they usually come in the form of school books, soap, cloth, candles and other practical goods. In East Africa, goats are quickly snapped up at the local markets and roasted on Christmas day. But whatever is eaten -- and no matter if a gift is given or received, the men, women and children of East Africa recognize that the holiday is not a time to focus on themselves. Rather it is a time to concentrate on and celebrate the kindness and mercy of the Creator who gave His only begotten Son so that human beings might know the depth of God's love.

### *Your letters to the Missionary Sisters ...*

We thank you for the notes and letters we continue to receive from friends and benefactors throughout the country asking about our work and spirituality. Even though we try very hard to answer all correspondence personally, occasionally many of the letters ask the same questions. With this in mind, we thought that we would continue to provide responses to these questions through our newsletter. Questions can be addressed to our Sisters at P.O. Box 967, Elmer, New Jersey 08318.



***Q: Do the Missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate wear habits and do they spend much time in prayer?***

**A:** We hear this question quite often. In comparison with most religious communities of Catholic women active in the U.S. today, the Missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate are quite traditional in their spirituality and in their approach to religious life. Yes, the Sisters wear habits -- beginning in their formation period (which can last 8 years or more). The Sisters attend Mass every day (if a priest is available); pray the rosary and spend time in Eucharistic adoration on a regular basis; as well as make monthly days of recollection. Some communities are also self-sustaining -- growing their own food and raising their own livestock.

***Q: Where is Bishop Perlo, the founder of the Missionary Sisters, buried?***

**A:** Originally buried in Italy, the remains of Bishop Filippo Perlo were recently transferred and reinterred at the motherhouse of the Missionary Sisters in Nyeri, Kenya.



