



MEDICAL MISSION SISTERS

Over 95 Years of Healing Presence

Spring 2023

From the beginning of Lent, several of us have been talking about what we want to release and what we want to embrace. I think about this in the context of our social and political world, where polarization of views and priorities threaten to rip us apart. Sometimes I wonder if it is possible we can hold together as a country and as a world. With so many crises before us, life can feel unstable and unpredictable. For Lent 2023, I would like to release anxiety and worry, and embrace hope.

I have a phrase taped to my computer that says: Profound uncertainty [provides opportunity for] great hope. The words are a continual reminder to me that viewing unpredictability with fear is not my only option. When things are uncertain, when I am uncertain, I have a chance to practice hope.

Being hopeful is an intention – a choice. I am challenged to look around me and notice moments of hope – to observe, to be aware of others who are working for peace and who believe in promise and possibility.

Sister Vera Sheenan, who lives on our campus in Philadelphia, is one such beacon of hope. While living in Philadelphia's Germantown neighborhood from 1993-2006, she visited with families who were grieving loved ones' deaths from gun violence. It wasn't unusual for her to encounter young children wearing shirts bearing the names of their lost family members, and to see flower memorials marking the spot where someone was shot on the street. During her home visits, Sister Vera tried to offer some comfort. "I kind of just sat there with them in a quiet way," she recalls. "I didn't have any formal [grief counseling] education, I just tried to be present."



At the Philadelphia campus labyrinth, Sister Vera Sheenan and other MMS erected a t-shirt memorial to those who have died from gun violence.

Seeing firsthand the devastation of gun violence on families has mobilized Sister Vera to action. Although her demeanor is quiet and gentle, she possesses a fierce passion to remove illegal guns from the streets, and to advocate for legislation that bans the purchase of assault rifles. She participated in the rallies at a local gun shop, protesting the proliferation of straw gun sales. She is relentless in writing letters to the editor of local papers and developing petitions for others to sign and send to legislators. She seeks every opportunity to raise awareness and plea for a safer place for children and their families to live.



Sister Vera Sheenan

Sister Vera's commitment to this cause, and her hope that change is possible inspire me so much! In 17 countries, Medical Mission Sisters (MMS) are working for change, bringing hope and healing in even the most challenging situations. Will you consider supporting MMS in both your prayers as well as financially? Every gift assists us in our mission around the world!

Gratefully,
Lucy Klein-Gebbinck, MMS
Lucy Klein-Gebbinck, MMS

Your Gift of Hope

Enclosed is my gift of: \$ _____

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When Medical Mission Sisters Associate Betsy Hague hears of a need, she springs into action. Her energy and care pour out generously and abundantly. Last summer she learned from Sister Maigualida Riera that there is a great need for teaching English to women in Venezuela who are considering joining MMS.

Although she had no background in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Betsy enthusiastically agreed to see what she could do. She started taking classes and is now only a few months away from her certification in TESOL.

Several months ago, Betsy started working with Cerialy, a 19-year-old woman exploring the possibility of joining MMS. When they started, Cerialy knew very little English, and Betsy spoke no Spanish. Despite the language barrier, they were able to communicate and they soon developed a productive and rewarding working relationship. They meet for an hour a week connecting through Facetime on WhatsApp. Sometimes they discuss an article that Cerialy has chosen or they watch a movie together. Cerialy looks up words she doesn't know, stopping and starting the movie as needed. Other times Cerialy shares about her family and the different jobs she does while living with the Sisters in Barquisimeto.

Cerialy works in the Pharmacy which can be very challenging - there are many medications they are not able to stock, and customers sometimes direct their frustrations and anger towards Cerialy. Drawing on her own experience, Betsy has been able to teach Cerialy some ways to deflect a person's rage or grief without taking it on. Betsy comments that she is more than Cerialy's English teacher, she is becoming a mentor, accompanying Cerialy on her journey of discernment about becoming a Medical Mission Sister. She is a friend exploring world events through the articles they are reading. Betsy adds, "Even though Venezuela has enormous problems of its own right now, as world citizens we need to see ourselves as connected to the rest of the world."

Betsy's dream is that internet infrastructure and availability can be improved so she can set up teaching groups of Sisters through zoom. Her vision is that in teaching young Medical Mission Sisters English, they will be prepared to participate fully in the Society's international meetings and one day be leaders in the Community.



Associate Betsy Hague



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Cerialy (2nd from right) is welcomed by Srs. Luz Marina, Yira Infante and Maigualida Riera

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