

Dear friends and benefactors,

my Pentecost letter will reach you just before the feast. Yes, sometimes we think that things are moving slowly and with a lot of efforts. I have translated a text which puts this feeling into words:



Holy Spirit, I am calling you
on the way,
which is ahead of me -
just so difficult and steep.
Lure me
up with you,
bit by bit.
Strengthen me
be my guide
the railing to hold on to.
Lead my steps
on the stony path.
Be my consolation
my encouragement
my power.
You are on the road with me.
Thank God.
Amen.

We are now in the rainy season, which started around Easter. Nevertheless, there were some dry days in between so that our people could till their fields. Shortly after Easter, however, some important equipment was damaged by a lightning strike: one of the generators was affected, as well as both X-ray machines, the oxygen generator, an autoclave ... Moments like these present us with huge additional challenges. How good that, through the mediation of a senior Doctor from Germany, who visited us several times, we quickly received help. It is great that a retired X-ray technician supported us spontaneously via WhatsApp with all of his professional experience.

We recently ordered a second detector with accessories for our X-ray system in order to be able to compensate for future calamities. Additional costs - but we trust in Providence.

But let me narrate to you chronologically: On 1st January, Gudrun Marat from Graz arrived in Matany as a volunteer. She worked a lot with children as a social worker in Austria, so it was only natural that she should share her experience as well. It is very important to us to get the children in the clinic, especially the malnourished and weakened, a little out of their lethargy.



Gudrun reports that it gives the mothers strength and hope to see how their little ones look more interested and curious into the world again, through loving care and animation.

It quickly became clear that we had to set up a play room for the children in the Paediatric Ward. Improvisation was required, and in no time, the first simple basic equipment was available. Gudrun perceives very well how to stimulate children's creativity. Even children of our employees, who have not been able to go to school or to the Kindergarten for months, due to Corona, gradually found themselves in the play room



In the meantime, Gudrun has received a lot of toys from home. Some packages have already arrived. -

This year we also celebrated the "Day of the Sick" on the 11th February. The festive Holy Mass was presided by our Bishop Damiano Guzzetti, followed by the blessing of the sick and the Hospital. Due to the corona pandemic, we could not organize an entertainment programme in the inner courtyard of the children's ward. Still, we wanted our patients to feel that it was their day. Therefore, we decided to give each patient a food package with rice and beans - a welcome gift at the end of the dry season when food is scarce!

The next day one of the patients told Sr. Paula that the blessing he received on the Day of the Sick had a very positive effect on him, as he experienced inner healing and felt deep peace within. - These were moving words from a seriously ill man who received a blood transfusion that day as well as he was too weak.



Holy Mass on the Day of the Sick

Our first Board of Governors meeting of the year took place in February. Dr. John Bosco presented the half-yearly report from July to December 2020. Once again, the hospital's utilization was high. In particular, inpatient admissions, antenatal care, laboratory tests, physiotherapy, orthopaedic care, etc. were significantly higher than in the same period of the previous year.

For us in Matany, more patients bring a bit more income, but even higher expenses, since all our user fees are highly subsidised. Exceptions are those with health insurance, but they just make up 5% of our patients.

Our medical team was strengthened by the return of Dr. Deus after his specialization as an obstetrician and gynaecologist. Additionally, two young doctors came from Switzerland for about 5 months in order to get experience in tropical diseases. It is wonderful to work with a young and committed team of doctors, but also to be able to rely on the skills of experienced doctors!



Intern Doctors with the Medical Superintendent

Substantial showers with heavy thunderstorms came down early last week. Suddenly the seasonal rivers became torrential rivers. The river bed under the new bridge just before Kangole filled up in a short time and threatened to flood the bridge. Most of the seasonal rivers here in Karamoja are crossed by "Irish" bridges in the river bed. Due to the heavy rains, some of the rivers are currently impassable because such bridges have been washed away or river banks have collapsed. Some places can only be reached by using long diversions, which means that valuable time is lost on ambulance trips. Some houses also had to be evacuated because of flooding.



Omanimani River at Kangole

Tragically, a girl was killed in the floods; it had harvested leafy vegetables across the river. When she was about to return home, the river had already risen, and when she tried to get to the other side of the river, she was swept away by the masses of water.

In the meantime, the rains have subsided and we have had wonderful sunshine again for three days. I am glad to inform you that a few weeks ago we were able to see numerous offspring among our dairy goats. In these days the hay harvest is due.

At the end of this letter, I would like to thank all of you for the valuable donations over the past few months. Your solidarity and active help allow us to overcome steep paths.

Since my first profession as a Comboni Missionary I have been accompanied by Psalm 27, Verse 1: "The LORD is my light and my help; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; before whom should I shrink? "

These words give me strength and confidence, even for paths that initially seem invincible. I don't have to be afraid of anything that may come my way, because I know that I am supported and rescued by HIM. I owe it to HIS leadership that I have been able to utilise my skills for so many years here in Matany, as part of a large, wonderful team. Together we can also overcome steep stretches. Pentecost, the feast of the inspiring helper who motivates us, gives us a new and deep breath.

May the power of the Holy Spirit help us to overcome all hardships and to continue our way with trust and confidence.

Yours Br. Günther and Team