

SISTER ANNUNCIATA HUGHES (1912 - 2011)

Entered LCM 1941

Sr. Annunciata or Nuncie, as she was known to us all, though short in stature was a strong, determined woman with vision. She was a trained nurse and midwife when she joined the Little Company of Mary. She had trained in London during war years and experienced the underground shelters during the bombing. Therefore she was an independent young woman with a mind of her own. She was always private about her family; but we did know she had a twin sister.

Her first assignment was to St John's Hospital where she was found to be a very efficient nurse. In 1957 she was missioned to Pretoria to help staff the new LCM hospital there. She and her companions travelled by boat to Port Elizabeth and from there by train to Pretoria. She related that when they arrived in Pretoria, they were all asleep on the train and only woke up when the cleaner came into the cabin. She found during her time in South Africa that she had a special flare for administration and this was soon to prove essential.

In 1967 she was sent to Wedza Mission in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). She was quick to see the many needs in health care and the infrastructure. She was soon nurse, midwife, administrator, gardener, building site manager, fundraiser, book-keeper and so on. She met an architect called Rob Drummond who became a life-long friend. Rob gave his professional services free for all further LCM mission construction and also did the same for the Franciscans with whom we worked.

Having completed many improvements at Wedza, Nuncie was commissioned by Mother Dominic Foley, to explore the possibility of building another hospital somewhere else. Subsequently this turned out to be the new Queen of Peace Hospital in Murambinda. This was in a poor, remote, drought-stricken area, in urgent need of a hospital. Today it serves all the health needs of a high catchment and far flung rural area, in south east Zimbabwe. From here are provided comprehensive services to people with HIV/AIDS. The hospital complex and outreach facilities have expanded greatly to meet the evolving health and social needs of a large population.

Nuncie's third and final assignment was to a small rural hospital in the Sabi valley as the war of independence became increasingly dangerous. The sisters were eventually advised to leave and Nuncie went to the US, to train for an entirely new ministry in pastoral care. On her return she worked in this area of care in Ireland until she retired, ten years later.

She enjoyed the festivities for her 99th birthday to the full, commenting that she was "only 99"! . She loved to reminisce about Africa, where her most fulfilling years were spent. Nuncie was blessed with good health for most of her life, until three weeks before her death, when she got a brain haemorrhage. Her twin sister and other relatives visited her frequently and together after funeral, we shared our different perceptions of this memorable woman and sister.

We miss her and thank God for her wonderful life. May she rest in peace.

Aine Cunniffe LCM