

OLA SISTERS IN BOTSWANA:

‘PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP....’

It is the most recent of our Missionaries Journeys – only three years old, and already strong and lasting roots are deeply implanted into the land of Maun, one of the major townships in the country, about 500 kilometers north of Francistown and where OLA Sisters have ‘**put out into the deep**’ ‘**Duc in Altum – Put out into the deep**’ – these same words which drew Peter, James and John into the mission of Christ have also called Sr. Bernadette McCarthy and Doris Benneh Gyan from Ghana, Colette Soubeiga from Burkina Faso and Sr. Cynthia Nwadike from Nigeria into the on-going mission of Christ some 2000 years later.

In his letter of invitation to the OLA Sisters, Bishop Frank Nubuasah, (SVD, GHANA) had this to say:-



Sr. Cynthia Nwadike (Nigeria – on left) & Sr Colette Soubeiga (Burkina Faso- on right) with youth in Botswana

‘I want you to know that my prayers have been accompanying you, I look forward to the day when the OLA Sisters will set foot on our soil here with the intention of coming to build their tents among us...I am a man of faith who waits on the Lord, I know He is sending you to come and share ministry with us, you are welcome’

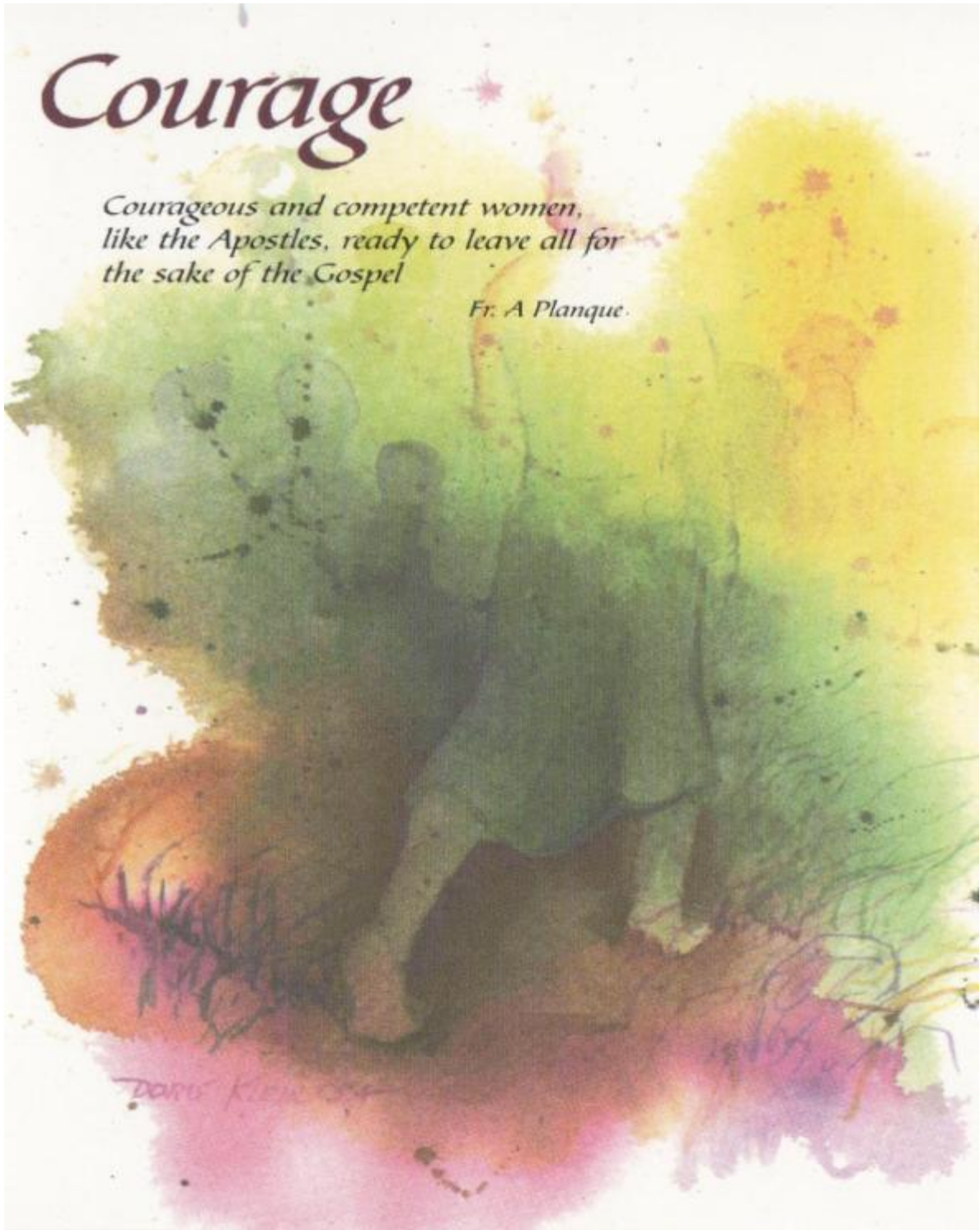
Bishop Frank Nubuasah, SVD

And so in August 2008, the Sisters set out into the unknown with the same courage, faith and zeal for mission as their Founder Fr. Augustin Planque SMA.

Courage

*Courageous and competent women,
like the Apostles, ready to leave all for
the sake of the Gospel*

Fr. A Planque.



Experienced missionaries all, Bernadette, Colette, Cynthia and Doris know how to **Observe, Listen** and **Dialogue** with the local people, slow to **impose their own ideas**, instead they gently go along with the people, continually moving into places where there is a greater need to witness to God's compassionate love for the poor and most abandoned.



Primary Evangelisation, Formation in the Faith – Catechetics, Leadership training and work with HIV/AIDS patients, their children and families were among the fields of missionary activity offered to the Sisters. This also included the opening of a pre-school for children in need, many of whom are AIDS Orphans.





Botswana is one of the worst affected countries in the world with HIV virus. Approximately 25% of the population are infected. The Church is struggling to respond effectively to it.

Sr. Bernadette, a nurse with vast experience in administration, set about accompanying the HIV/AIDS patients; she encouraged government officials, local chiefs and councilors to become more involved in the project to ensure stability.



'I have been going from ward to ward, from village to village trying to get the chiefs, councilors, and other government officials to give their support to the project....

After three months supportive groups are in place as well as appropriate cottage industry type activities which also helps to generate some funds for the families.

Orphans and vulnerable children in the communities are now one of my immediate concerns: for this I enlist the help of social workers who are very helpful and wise



Sr Cynthia is a full time parish assistant. She visits the sick and brings communion to the house bound. She is the coordinator of the Vicariate's Counter Trafficking in Persons (CTIP) desk.

Sr. Marie Colette, is the Sister in-charge of Catechesis in the parish and is now Diocesan Coordinator for catechetics; this takes her into the villages where she organizes courses for catechists strengthening them in their faith and prayer life so that they too will more confidently share their faith in the Risen Christ with others. Marie Colette also teaches in the pre-school.



Sr. Doris is in charge of the pre-school where nearly 50% of the youngsters are orphaned and vulnerable children: She is in close contact with their teachers and families encouraging and enabling them to bring a positive outlook into the many challenges facing them at home. Doris is also



Sr Doris & Sr Marie Colette with the pre-schoolers

the youth animator in the parish. All four Sisters animate basic Christian communities throughout the parish.

Courage and faith nurtured by prayer enable the Sisters to face the challenges of the day: they live far away from mainstream OLA communities and places; they carry a weighty multifaceted work-load: may they hear the oft repeated words of Augustin Planque, our Founder **'We must do what the good God is asking of us and leave the rest to him.'**

