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LETTER TO THE FRIENDS OF SISTER EMMANUELLE

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MESSAGE FROM SISTER EMMANUELLE

Dear Friends,

Here I am somewhat moved at the thought of going into my hundredth year. It sends a shiver down my spine; there's nothing to do and nothing to say, I am aging... I am getting old!

I better start getting used to it, because before this hundredth year, I did not imagine what a century could mean, and finally entering a new century is no mean feat!!

I thank the Lord who loved me through everything, and who helped me to support, in my turn, so many friends throughout the world.



I would never have put up with the life I had, and all these troubles in Sudan, or in Lebanon, had I not believed in the resurrection of the body and in life in its broadest meaning. Love is stronger than death.

If you have loved, if you have shared, and if you have been involved in other people's happiness, you have sown acts of love that will never die. And even if you did not express it in these terms, it was a way to glorify God.

Thank you again my Lord for all the marvellous friends I have been privileged to meet along my path; each one of them has given me his (her) light and his (her) warmth. They have allowed me to move on singing. Being bound together is a merrier and faster way of progressing. Joy is such a wonder! Dancing on the path, singing on the path, laughing on the path, hand in hand. YES, life is beautiful and wonderful indeed! Yes, it is beautiful and fascinating life! As long as these relationships are more or less oriented towards the same goal: the Happiness of Loving and being loved.

It only remains for me to thank you, my numerous friends who have helped me over and over again to save thousands of children in SUDAN.

*You are in my prayers and in my heart.
May God bless you, I embrace you in our roped party*

Sister Emmanuelle

We have had the pleasure of a brief visit to Sister Emmanuelle in the Var, in the retirement home where she lives following her return from Egypt in 1993, surrounded and cherished by some sisters of her congregation.

Sister Emmanuelle has not changed. Of course she is a bit stooped and huddled up in her wheelchair, with a thin tube connecting her nostrils to the respiratory device she needs, BUT her enthusiasm remains intact, her voice is clear and her eyes are shining bright. Sister Emmanuelle greeted us with a large smile and we were impressed by her lucid mind and zest for living.

It is with great hope that we left Sister Emmanuelle, convinced that the spirit is stronger than the body and its ageing... **Love stronger than death...**

Thank you my Sister!

Fabienne and Charlotte



Dear Friends,

Sister Emmanuelle has just turned 99, and here is the 100th letter that we are sending to you since our creation!

On this jubilee year, it seemed appropriate to go with my son Patrick to Khartoum, to consolidate our cooperation with the Saint Vincent de Paul Society.

Our main purpose was to meet each of the team members involved in our programs under the leadership of Kamal Tadros, whom we have always been able to rely upon with confidence.

Our stay was short (5 days), but intense and very useful.



We have come back with the comforting and promising belief that Kamal has formed a strong and motivated team, people with skills as various as required by the wide range of our actions.

OUR TRIP TO SUDAN

Khartoum

My last trip to Khartoum was conducted in 2002.

Within five years, **the city has drastically changed**: traffic jams, constructions everywhere, increasing number of immigrant workers (Chinese, Indians, Filipinos, Lebanese, Egyptians, Arabs from the Gulf...). It is obvious that since the peace agreement between North and South in 2005, the oil profits have been invested in something else than the civil war, but unfortunately, the choices of the government do not always seem appropriate for a recovering country: while everything needs to be rebuilt in the South, the money goes mainly to the capital, in prestigious real estate projects that are far from answering the immense basic needs.

The Saint Vincent de Paul team: overall statement

We have met more than 40 people through individual interviews, all concluded by a photo (a comprehensive presentation document will be available shortly on our website).

Most of them are employees of SVDP. Some are external consultants. All are Sudanese, each one is essential to the good functioning of the Society: from the mechanic who is quite busy maintaining the old vehicles of the fleet, to the intellectual who wants to make the work of SVDP known throughout the country with the report that he recently published and the newspaper that he just created.

Most of SVDP employees have between 5 to 7 children! When you realize that their salary is lower than what they might get if they were hired by private companies, and bears no comparison with what they would earn if they were working for foreign NGOs, you understand that their motivation comes from something else. **The cement of this team is a sense of service to their brothers in need.**

Many have praised the fluidity of human relationships within the organization: everyone has a well-defined position in the organizational chart; Kamal is setting the tone with no "authoritarianism", and there is good communication between the members of his team. As Kamal says: "We are here in a democracy"!

In addition, the team reflects the country's cultural diversity. Many ethnic groups are represented: mainly Shiluks and Dinkas, but also Baris, Nubas, Madis. There are also Sudanese of Syrian origin. The vast majority are Christians, and they work in good harmony with the few Muslims, some of whom are top executives who greatly facilitate our relations with the authorities.

Lastly, 90% of the people we interviewed can speak English.

Some examples of people we met

John Ugo Gambolon is Kamal's deputy.

John made a very good impression on us, and he seems to have all the required qualities, both human and professional, to succeed Kamal one day.



Born in Juba 42 years ago, John worked there in the early 80's, in the local government. He left the area in 1989, when the situation became unbearable.

In Khartoum, he met Kamal on humanitarian operations supporting displaced person.

He joined SVDP 9 years ago, being first in charge of finance. Early in 2008, he will obtain his Ph.D in economics.

John is married and has 5 children.

He is a steady man, discreet but determined.

He told us: *"I can feel the suffering of the people, the needy... I used to live in the villages, I know how they suffer. When I had this chance of working to help the poor, I felt very motivated. I am spiritually motivated to do this job. If you want to know God, you know him through the sufferings of the poor."*

Emmanuel Isaac Milla is the assistant to the head of vocational training. Born in the province of Equatoria, he arrived in Khartoum in 1985, and joined SVDP in 1994. We asked him to tell us **the difficulties he is facing in the vocational training program.**

"The first challenge is to teach people who are often illiterate. Then there is the control of the budget, knowing that inflation is high, that the government has just increased the VAT from 10 to 15%, and that the materials used in certain training are expensive, like wood in carpentry, or tools and liquid in refrigeration... Another problem is the transport of these materials, as we only have one vehicle for our 6 centres. Then, due to lack of means, we cannot meet the criteria for the recognition of our certificates by the Government. Finally, our centre in Mayo has been severely damaged by floods. As it is not a permanent structure (unlike our other centres), it could happen again. Not to mention the fence that we have to build around the centre, for fear of eviction by the authorities... "



Dr Awut Deng was born in England, but has lived in Khartoum since she was 3.

She graduated in medicine two years ago.

She works in our Friday clinics, and like all the doctors of these clinics, she is not paid by SVDP but directly by the patients, to the extent that they can afford to pay..

"I heard about SVDP through colleagues, physicians who were working in Friday clinics. We doctors work in pairs, and treat between 60 and 80 people every Friday. I have been working in Gabarona so far, but I am going to be transferred to the new Friday clinic of the Gebel Awlia farm.

It's wonderful to be able to work helping other people. "

Buzz at Gebel Awlia

After three days of intensive interviews in the modest offices of SVDP, we went to Gebel Awlia, which is one hour away from the headquarters.

We started with the visit of **the new farm "Dar Juan Matha", the construction of which is now completed** to our great satisfaction, and is located 400 meters away from the other farm.

Water and electricity have now been installed. An ingenious pipeline starting in the well of the first farm is supplying the new one with water.

By 2008 the farm will accommodate 160 young people.

The fact that the farms are close together will facilitate logistics: school transport, workshops in the afternoon in the first farm...



There is a large piece of land around the farm, where teenagers can be taught agricultural techniques. Our gratitude goes to « The Spanish Trinitarian and Mercedarian Fathers » who supported the entire construction costs, and who are to finance part of the operating costs. We then went to the first farm, where we could attend in particular the inauguration of a new training workshop: "Health awareness, first aid, hygiene and HIV"



The setting was impressive !. We met again Hassan Martin, whom we had interviewed the previous day. Hassan belongs to the Red Crescent which cooperated with SVDP in setting up this training workshop. He is responsible for our 5 centres which provides training to 1000 persons a year.

After a training period of two months those who obtain their diplomas have the possibility of continuing their training in the hospital. They then have the opportunity of being engaged as medical assistants. Thirty of them have been engaged since this type of training was introduced!

Finally we attended a big celebration organized in our honour by the young people of the centre and the neighbouring population. One thousand five hundred people were present.

There were speeches, prayers, songs and dances, followed by the presentation of certificates. Nothing had been overlooked.

We even received presents ourselves!

We were really moved to see the results of the efforts of so many people..



We wish to thank in particular Gabriel Ngang Maduok, the person responsible for all training in the Omdurman region, who organized this event in a most professional manner, without needing to consult Kamal.

Thanks also to all the people who took part into this special moment that will remain in our hearts.

Let our Sudanese friends who read this letter be kind enough to transmit them our deepest gratitude.

Good news received on our last day

On the eve of our departure we were received at the French Embassy where Mr. Romain Philippe told us how much he and Her Excellency the Ambassador appreciated our activities in Sudan. He **confirmed having received on the previous day the final agreement of MAAIONG** (a subsidiary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to finance a new training centre in Juba!

We also learnt that the **UN**, through UNIDO (United Nations Industry Development Organization) had evaluated our training programme and had qualified it as an **"excellent quick impact project"**.

UNIDO will contribute 11 000 € towards our programme of fighting sida.

On 12 December UNIDO representatives will visit two of our centres (Mayo, and a new centre, Soba), a home for girls and a farm. They plan to offer our teachers an additional week of training, as well as improving the equipment in our centres and to propose to the *Supreme Council of Vocational Training* the official recognition of our certificates. This is a little miracle of the Good Lord!

Operation Moneybox of the little Sudanese

I estimate that this will produce a total of 25.000 Swiss Francs this year. Thanks to your gifts approximately 300 children will have been able to be nourished. Many thanks to all the people, families and children who have shown such solidarity!

I wish to convey to you the best wishes for Christmas and the New Year from our team and the one of SVDP as well as from the little Sudanese who were nourished thanks to your generosity.

Until next year!

Michel Bittar
Président

PS : I should also like to inform you that, at its last meeting, our Committee decided to update our mailing list by eliminating those who had not made a contribution during the past three years ! This will allow us to economize on postage and to introduce more photographs and colour (obviously more expensive) in our letter for the pleasure of our donors, thanking them in this way for their unwavering fidelity!



LAST MINUTE NEWS FROM HAITI!!

As this letter is about to go to press I received this e-mail from Jean-Claude François, President of Haiti Cosmos:

Good morning Michel,

The telecommunication aeriels were broken by the torrential rains. They just started working a little while ago but the imminence of another cyclone has just been announced!.

Our activities are proceeding well with ups and downs.

Production of medicines continues normally. There are some small problems of fermentation which Gabriel had pointed out. The pharmacists from HUG (Geneva University Hospitals) and those from the University made some recommendations which I have passed on to the Laboratory and since then the problem seems to have been solved.

Now I must stop because there is no more electricity. I'll try to morrow.

Best regards

Jean-Claude François