Columns
Ministry



Good Samaritan Sisters Rose, left, and Batulumawo are examined at St. Veronica Medical Centre in Ttomi Buloba, Uganda. (Courtesy of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan)



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A long-held dream is finally taking shape with the opening of a new medical center in Uganda. In the spirit of the Good Samaritan, St. Veronica Medical Centre is already making a difference in the life of the local community of Ttomi Buloba, thanks to a collaboration born of a shared name and a shared charism.

The center began taking its first patients at the beginning of this year and was officially opened on May 4. It is operated by the Good Samaritan Sisters in Uganda and was built with the help of funding from Australia's Sisters of the Good Samaritan .

The history of the collaboration goes back to an international gathering of leaders of religious institutes (the International Union of Superiors General, or UISG) held in Rome in May 2019. This was when our congregational leader, Sr. Patty Fawkner, became acquainted with Sr. John Evangelist Mugisha, the leader of a religious congregation in Uganda named the Good Samaritan Sisters.

Sister John sought out Sister Patty among 800 conference members when she saw that both congregations had the same name. She invited Sister Patty to visit Uganda to see how the bonds between the two congregations could be strengthened.

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In December 2019, I went to Uganda on Sister Patty's behalf. The Ugandan congregation is an institute of the diocesan rite, founded in 1978 by Cardinal Emmanuel Kiwanuka Nsubuga in the Kampala Archdiocese. Our Australian congregation was founded in 1857 by Archbishop John Bede Polding.

Uganda has a population of 43 million, which is almost double that of the whole of Australia. The Ugandan Good Samaritan Sisters' motherhouse and headquarters are located at Nalukolongo.

Sister John introduced me to some of the members of her council to discuss ways in which our congregations might support each other and work together.

The Ugandan sisters had a dream to build a medical center that would service the needs of their orphanage, schools and the local community. Our congregation in Australia decided to give US$10,000 per annum over three years to help the

Ugandan sisters realize their dream.

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The money supported the construction of a dispensary with reception area, doctor's consulting room, a room to store medication, a laboratory, separate rooms for children, women and men, two self-contained rooms for seriously ill people, and a counseling and labor room for pregnant women.

Sister John said meeting Sister Patty in Rome was a miracle. "When I told Sister Patty the situation we work in in Uganda, she was touched. She promised me that one of her members would visit us. When Sister Patty sent Sister Veronica to Uganda, the love and relationship increased," she said.

Sister John said while their local district does have existing health facilities, they are old and a significant distance from their community. "The local people had been traveling long distances to receive medical treatment and now they no longer have to. The people have confidence in the sisters too," she said.



Good Samaritan Sister Evaline cradles the first baby to be born at St. Veronica Medical Centre in Ttomi Buloba, Uganda. (Courtesy of the Sisters of the Good Samaritan)

"The people are very happy to have the St. Veronica Medical Centre here. So far, five children have been born and we have treated 150 patients."

In 2019, I had a wonderful time meeting the sisters in Uganda and was impressed by their ministries. They are beautiful young sisters and Good Samaritan to the core, giving themselves totally to the care of the poor, not only with the clinic, but also in

schools and orphanages.

The sisters serve the needs of the local area and what they needed most was a medical clinic. Our council made the decision to help them fund it over three years. We are delighted it is up and running and that — in a little way — we have been able to help the people in Africa.

Sister John said the medical center was named after St. Veronica for two reasons: "First, to remember Sister Veronica who visited us, and as a sign of appreciation to the Good Samaritan Sisters of Australia. Second, to honor St. Veronica, who our Catholic tradition tells us was near Jesus Christ in his suffering, while he was carrying his cross and, in her love and simplicity, she wiped Jesus' face."

The maternity wing of the hospital has been named the Sr. Patty Fawkner Maternity Ward.

The clinic was officially blessed and opened in May this year by the Archbishop Paul Ssemogerere of Kampala.