**78. Healing Hands**

I went ‘under the surgeons’ knife this week’. No it was not a major situation but simply the removal of an unsightly, non-cancerous lipoma on my neck. I had shown it to Sr Maria Martinelli, a surgeon who has been the leader of the Health Training section of **Solidarity with South Sudan**, who simply remarked: ‘It’s a lipoma. I’ll remove it if you like’. Two days later she did - quite painlessly and quickly, with a local anesthetic, in the minor operations room of the St Daniel Comboni Hospital in Wau. I found myself marveling at the healing hands and skills of a good surgeon.

Not only has Sr Maria directed the Health Training Institute (CHTI) in Wau, she has also raised the funds and supervised the re-building of the Catholic Hospital in Wau. The hospital was reclaimed from the military a few years after the war ended in 2005. The student nurses go there for the major part of their clinical training. Their training is ‘hands on’ and hopefully they will learn to have ‘healing hands’. It has already been noted that the best trainees in the practical situation are not always the best academically. Some who find the academic study difficult are emerging as warm and compassionate, as genuine healers, patient with those in need.

We took a major step forward this week with the first meeting of the CHTI Board in Wau utilising a constitution written by Naida Haxton, Deputy Chair of the BoysTown Board in Australia, with input from me on behalf of SSS, and subsequently ratified by the SSS Board in Rome. This new Board involves Sudanese –Bishop Rudolph and local doctors representing the Republic of South Sudan and the State of Western Bahr El Ghazal – plus Sr Maria, Fr Joseph and me. More local members will be added to ensure professional expertise in required areas. The long-term aim is to develop a self-sustainable health training institute run by Sudanese health professionals for their own people. But, even now, the service delivered by the CHTI tutors and students is a great gift to the people of South Sudan.

In the 36, four-week blocks, spread over three years, that comprise the nurse training programme, there are five academic blocks of class room learning in the first year and seven of hospital or clinical experience. In the second year, there are three blocks of class tuition and nine of hands-on training. In the final year, there are two blocks (eight weeks total) of class tuition and ten blocks of supervised clinical work. So the development of a high quality hospital in which to do this practical training is a very important part of the Registered Nurse Training.

The Board constitution sets out the following important aspirations:

*The CHTI Institute shall endeavour to inculcate in the trainees, the principle of the Hippocratic Oath, Christian ethics and in particular the following:*

- serious and deep motivation in the exercise of their profession;
- the right moral conscience in all circumstances in the field of Health;
• respect for human dignity, irrespective of the social position of a person;
• respect and defence of human life, including the life of the unborn;
• personal and professional responsibility;
• dedication in the exercise of their professional duties.

Edmund Burke remarked that ‘example is the school of mankind and they will learn at no other’. What is very evident to me is that the students are receiving very solicitous, good example and encouragement from our SSS personnel in the CHTI and at the Daniel Comboni Hospital. It has been amazing to see the transformation and development brought about in only a couple of years. Re-construction of the hospital is continuing with wards and a well-equipped operating theatre to open later this year. There is great need for the hospital and for confident healing hands. -- Br Bill

Fr. Joseph, Sr. Maria, & Sr. Mary Anne at hospital

Hotel as it was
Sr. Dorothy helping trainee Sr. Susan
Sr. Felistus
Sr. Stella in clinical supervision
Srs. Alphonsa and Sneha
Student nurses in class
Student nurses
Student tea break