

## Sr Patricia's story



**Sr Patricia is a Franciscan Missionary working in Kenya. She is featured in this year's World Mission Sunday poster and folder.**

### **Share your faith. Give life. Make a world of difference**

*"Anna, 26 years old and a single mother of three children, came with her sister Mary to the Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa's Love and Hope Centre in Nakuru, Kenya, and pleaded for me to save her life. Anna comes from a very poor family background. She lives in the slums and is unable to look for work because of her illness. She has three very young children who depend on her so much.*

*Mary explained: "Anna has been sick since January and has not been able to eat, even though I liquidize all her food she repeatedly brings it back. She has lost nearly 3 stone in weight. The clinic hasn't been able to do anything."*

*A biopsy carried out in Nairobi showed cancer of the oesophagus. We were asked to take Anna back to Nairobi from Nakuru for radiotherapy to help shrink the tumour before surgery. She was admitted to hospital and was to have surgery on 29 August. That night I called the surgeon to see how things went only to be told that the operation could not take place as planned because there was no blood of her type in the hospital. The next day, a donor was found and the blood taken, but the vital blood was then misplaced! I had to look for other donors. Eventually I found a few.*

*All was set for the surgery which took place on Friday 2 September. I returned to the hospital early the next day, only to be told that the tumour had spread and was inoperable. Anna's mother and her sister Mary were devastated at the news. So that is where we are now - a very sad story indeed."*

Sr Patricia Speight's letter could have been written by many missionaries. Her commitment to a very sick patient and the frustrations involved in finding a doctor and obtaining appropriate help and treatment are not unique: they are part and parcel of the daily missionary experience. Every missionary knows the feeling of utter helplessness in the face of situations which they have not created and which they must address on behalf of others. Every missionary knows what it means to make an act of faith and to continue their daily upward struggle, often ploughing through layers of bureaucracy, inefficiency and corruption on behalf of the 'little ones' who are helpless. Advocacy is often the most important part of a missionary's life because their faith and conviction drive them onwards when most other people would give up, pack their bags and go home. On countless occasions, it is only the missionary's persistence and their proverbial 'foot in the door' that finally forces people in authority to see justice and commonsense.

When the blood for Anna was misplaced, it was not unusual. That sort of thing happens all the time. The trouble was that her relatives are too poor and insignificant for their complaints to be taken seriously. They needed Sr Patricia to help them – and she did. She went out into the highways and byways to find blood donors, paying their fares to the hospital lab. She

travelled backwards and forwards to the lab to ensure that the blood was taken, recorded, appropriately stored and available for the transfusion which, eventually, Anna was too ill to receive. Yet that is not unusual: countless missionaries will have done exactly the same thing and on many occasions. It's all part of the daily life of a missionary, the part that is unknown to, and unappreciated by, the developed world but absolutely vital to the developing world. There are innumerable occasions when people turn to the missionaries because they have nobody else who will take their part.

Anna, Mary and their mother were fortunate even if Anna's cancer is incurable. They found in Sr Patricia someone whose care and concern is utterly genuine, prepared to go to extraordinary lengths to help them in their poverty and their pain - not only in life, but also as they prepare for death and bereavement. **Just as Sr Patricia's faith in God keeps her going, so it is also her example which tells others that they are not alone in their struggle for survival: God is with them. To know and love Jesus is to share him with others.**

People often overlook the poor in their midst. World Mission Sunday helps to remind them that they are neither forgotten nor unimportant. It is one day each year when the whole Catholic world unites in supporting missionaries such as Sr Patricia, whose photograph and story feature in the World Mission Sunday material sent out to the parishes. Their concern for the poorest in society is a powerful witness of God's love for all people.

Thanks to World Mission Sunday on 23 October and the collections in parishes such as yours, Anna's is one family which will not be alone and unsupported at a time when they urgently need help. World Mission Sunday shares faith and gives life and hope in its annual global outreach to places where the Church is young and poor. World Mission Sunday is a lifeline to many thousands of people such as Sr Patricia, Anna, Mary and their mother.

World Mission Sunday enables Sr Patricia to share her faith and give life. Join her. You can make a world of difference.

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Missio is the Church's official support organisation for overseas mission. It is responsible for promoting World Mission Sunday which occurs this year on 22/23 October. This is the principal celebration of the Church's commitment to proclaiming the Gospel to all peoples. It is also an opportunity for every parish in the world to contribute to Missio's support for missions and missionaries.

World Mission Sunday is the special day each year when, through Missio, Catholics across the world reach out in global solidarity to its younger and struggling members. It is the day when Catholics across England and Wales help the Churches of Africa and Asia in their responsibility for building faith communities, as well as supporting their 11,814 health care facilities, 4,722 orphanages, 3,577 homes for the elderly and disabled, 19,581,694 Primary School plus 9,864,576 Secondary and High School pupils and 633,348 university students.

To learn more about Missio, go to [www.missio.org.uk](http://www.missio.org.uk)