

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SR. BRIDIE DOHERTY



I, Eileen Maher, lived with Sr. Bridie Doherty in Emmaus community, Mbarara during the years she worked as a nurse with HIV/AIDS patients in eight villages in the environs of Emmaus community. Bridie was unique in many ways. Due to her very fair skin she had to protect herself from the sun. She wore rather long dresses with green wellington boots (these boots are now in Coloma Community), gloves up to her elbows, and always carried an umbrella which she even opened inside the car to protect her face from the sun.

Her palliative care project was funded by Misesan Cara, Ireland. She prepared a combination of vitamins and minerals which kept many of her patients alive until Anti Retro Viral drugs came on the market. The vitamins and Minerals were in tablet form. Since these were bought in bulk (tins with 1000 or 2000 tabs), she mustered up as many members of the community as she could get, and even visitors to our community were often roped in to help in the counting of these tablets. This operation took place in the GP room almost every day. 15 tabs of each Vitamin and Mineral had to be put into a small container for each patient. (These containers were the ones the films were bought in for the old cameras). She was very dedicated to this ministry for a number of years. At first she walked to the nearby villages, later she had the use of a car and a driver as she went to more distant villages.

Another aspect of Bridie's uniqueness: She was a very good cook and often helped in the kitchen. One thing I remember is that when she baked a cake for instance on a Friday for a function on Sunday, the cake disappeared as soon as it was baked. She hid it in a box under her bed for fear anyone would take a bite before Sunday.

Eileen Maher

Dear Sisters and bereaved family members of Sister Bridie, at this moment of separation, I am honoured and privileged to express in writing the loving memories of Sr. Bridie.

I lived with Sr. Bridie in Emmaus community, Uganda, the year 1988. I was then a novice in pastoral work while Bridie was a well experienced sister. As a novice, my pastoral work involved home visits with the aim of establishing small Christian communities at parish level. Sr. Bridie was involved in home visitations to families that were severely affected by HIV/AIDS in the same parish.



Sr. Bridie initiated a palliative care intervention so that people living with HI/AIDS would be helped to die in dignity. She also helped the sick spiritually as they faced terminal illness. It is important to note that in the 1980's ARV's were not yet available for people living with AIDS. In this case, Sr. Bridie gave hope to the hopeless. She helped people understand the ways in which AIDS spread thus minimizing the wide spread stigma that was associated with the killer diseases.

I call Bridie with white gave way! After several medical interventions in Uganda, she returned to Ireland for further treatment. Thank God for the hip replacement that saw Bridie to such a beautiful age.

At community level, Bridie remained a very practical and meticulous nurse. For example, if a sister was sick, Bridie presented food and drinks on a tray in such a way that would encourage the patient to eat. She was extraordinarily neat! I learnt a lot in this regard.

She was also found of offering a "hot Toddy" (whisky put in hot water) to young sisters with menstrual pain. She administered this remedy discretely in her room.

Once a week, Sr. Bridie would take a day off. Every sister in the community knew this day. She prepared her breakfast tray the day before and had her meals in the room. This was a day of rest for her to recover from the work done during the week. I suppose many of us have lessons to learn from this old age wisdom. She would often caution some of us to take care of ourselves. I have a strong feeling that it is never too late for me to learn to take care of myself amidst apostolic expectations.

Thank you dear sisters, Family members, Friends and Care givers for supporting Bridie through her highs and lows during her later years.

May the soul of Sr. Bridie rest in peace.

Anastazia

My time at Bisheshe with Bridie In 1984, together with Bridie and our late Sister Monica Beebwa we formed the first Bisheshe DMJ community. It was a busy and interesting time as we were establishing a new community and starting to get the farm going. After some time Monica was transferred to Fort Portal and Bridie and myself lived together there for many years.



Bridie truly made the community house into a home. She spent hours cleaning and scrubbing and what a super cleaner she was! One memory that I shall always have: the floor of the dining room, sitting room was made of square slabs of cement 2 ft X 2ft. After the builders left there were many spots of paint on them and for weeks and months Bridie sat on the floor every day with varying sizes of stones scratching away at the drops of paint until the whole floor was so clean that one could eat from it. Bridie was a super cook and always has something nice in the tin, just on case a visitor came – she had a special gra for the White Fathers of the parish and for them she had a waffle’s tin always at hand.

Bridie was a colourful character and gave us many a laugh. As we were trying to develop the farm it was decided to call a meeting of significant persons to help with a strategic plan (don’t think I even knew the word at that time) There was an agriculturalist, veterinary officer farmers and someone for finances. It was not a very easy meeting and there was some tension among us. Suddenly from behind the house we loudly heard Bridie shouting “Go and catch rats” Everyone jumped up, some ran out the front door or the back door or looked out the window to see what was happening. One man looking out the window announced “Sr Bridie is chasing a cat down the yard with a big stick” It was light relief for the meeting, gave us a laugh and things took a turn for the better after that. Bridie worked very hard, had a definite daily time table and was very focused on what she had to do. Every evening she dressed up well for the sun with boots and hat and headed out to the villages around where she visited the sick or said the Rosary with families or gave communion as each had need. This of course was all done in Rutooro, the language she truly loved.

Bridie had hawk’s eyes and would miss a pin if it was misplaced. Like the woman of the gospel she would search and had everyone else searching too until it was found.

I shall always remember my years in Bisheshe. I learned much and Bridie was part of that journey. She loved Donegal and may she rest in peace there and in the Lord’s kingdom.

Mona



Bridie had love for the poor! She was kind and generous.

May her soul rest in eternal peace.

Anatolia.

Dear Bridie,

I want to write about you in paying my attribute to you and thanking God for who you have been for me and us especially here in Uganda.



I recall vividly the first time I met you! It was when I came to Kinyamasika Teacher Training College and you were in charge of the kitchen, compound, gardens and all the workers. I met you mainly in the dining room where we had our meals and in the kitchen where we, students took turns in doing wash up after meals. I remember you were so meticulously clean that we all had to be careful in washing plates and drying them in case we messed the kitchen up, you would be swearing in the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. You used these Holy names so much so that we nicknamed you Sister Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

There were two male cooks by the names of John and Tinka and you worked well with them and really respected them. You stayed in the College for my first 2 years I was there but then I did not know where you disappeared to. We missed you so much especially the good meals we used to enjoy and bans/ bread with milk tea for tea break and breakfast every morning. Little did I know I would meet you later in life in Mbarara! You were always gracious to me and I remember we always sat and reminisced of the Good old days in Kinyamasika.

I was so happy to be able to stay in Iona Road with you for three days in June last year after our G. Chapter. You were in bed not feeling very well but when Anastazia and I appeared, you became so joyful and excited and our presence gave you strength! It was the strong love you had lived and showed in Africa and to the Africans and it seemed as though Africa had come to you!! I stayed with you then and we really enjoyed the good old charts!!! You asked me about many people but especially John and Tinka and I told you I had not met them since the time in Kinyamasika. I was surprised your memory about Kinyamasika was so vivid!

I thank you for starting and establishing Aids Ministry here in Mbarara, not as a big project but it continued for a long time. So many people were helped and lived longer than they would have done otherwise. I remember you taking medicine and Holy Communion to villages. Sometimes it would be very hot and so you had to carry an umbrella. Because people know you were taking Holy Communion to the sick, they called you a priest and so you were known as Fr. Bridie!!

Dear Bridie, You are still very much remembered with love and gratitude by us your sisters but also by so many people who still ask about you.

May the Lord in his own loving Mercy take you to himself and reward you for all you did.

Anna Mary Mukamwezi

Our dear Bridie has lived a quiet simple spiritual life:

I think she is one of those who saw herself as a “missionary” sister, having been sent to Africa to love and help the poor. She talked of Africa more than “Uganda”.



The poor people who never went to school had special place in Bridie’s heart. Her work in the kitchen in Kinyamasika- Fort Portal was always to make sure the students had good meals and in time, but she always made special time for the cooks and compound workers.

In Bisheshe, poor Ponsiano enjoyed Bridie’s cup of tea with a slice of bread and plus. Up to now Ponsiano still asks about “Bridie wangye”. He will definitely miss her most.

Bridie never wanted to waste any food. All leftovers would come back in another shape, colour and form. Those of you who know about “millet” would never imagine it kept in the fridge and then warmed up for lunch the next day! Jesus, Mary and Joseph!

Like all human beings Bridie had her moments of disagreements and anger. On one of those occasions I happened to be in Bisheshe just before Christmas. A cow had just been slaughtered for the feast. As I tried to talk with Bridie, she just kept saying, “I wish I was that poor cow. I would have gone to the Lord!”

I said thank God again because no one would have had meat for the feast! Here in Nyamitanga Parish, many people still remember the sister who always covered herself with the umbrella and walked all paths taking medicine to the AIDS patients.

May she rest in peace and pray for us.

Josie.

Good bye Bridie. Rest in Eternal Peace!

I lived with Bridie in Emmaus community Uganda, and we worked together in AIDS ministry for a long time. We used to walk for many kilometers going to meet aids patients in their different villages.



She would be carrying the Blessed Sacrament and I would carry a bag of medicine. She would conduct the service in the people's language and give them Holy Communion.

She would then meet each person individually to listen to their personal problems as well as giving them medication. She had to meet more than 200 AIDS patients per week yet she was never tired of walking or listening to each person.

She knew each person by name and she knew their personal needs.

She was always concerned with their wellbeing and she would always do what she could to make each person happy.

Sr. Bridie had love and determination for her patients, she would always go out to see them in the rain or in the heat of the day. Sr. Bridie loved her work and the people she was working with. She was also loved and admired not only by the patients but also by the village people where she used pass. I lived, worked and walked with my Sr. Bridie over the hills and down the valley's, I loved her, admired her for her courage compassion and most of all for putting other people's needs before her own.

Sr. Bridie has left good memories in Africa especially in Uganda, many people still remember her love for Aids patients. I am sure many of the people she has touched have already met her and they are now rejoicing in heaven. May she rest in eternal peace.

Sr. Dona DMJ, Uganda

I would like to thank the Lord who chose Bridie to be a DMJ. I had a chance of staying with her in Emmaus community in Mbarara when I was a postulant. I want to highlight here her faith



which was exhibited in her reverence of the Blessed Sacrament.

She taught us (Spes and I) that Jesus is present in the Host and that any consecrated tiny fragment of the host was Jesus. So she taught us how to carefully clean the Corporals and the Cruets saying that we bear in mind that Jesus is present in any fragment or drop of consecrated wine.

The keeping of the linen for the Altar was also special. Bridie had a way of keeping the altar Linen. After mass she would look for us the postulants and watch us roll the Alter cloth carefully as she has demonstrated to us. We would repeat that many times to have them well done and there would be no crease in them till they would be dirty and need to be washed. That was another lesson of washing and ironing them. I admired her reverence of the chapel materials and this made me like to do them the way she taught us with the same reverence. Indeed we were dealing with sacred materials since they touched the body of Jesus.

She also loved to take Holy Communion to the sick. This connected her with the villages around us and created a special friendship with them. Her few words of the local language did not deter her closeness to the poor and the ill. Some of the drivers who took her to the village said that she would give communion to all sick people irrespective of whether they had confessed their sins or not. She saw their need to encounter the Lord in their illness. Her Love for the sick and poor gave birth to the AIDS Ministry which she started as soon as HIV/AIDS became fully blown in the country.

She quickly thought of the need of the nutrition elements that could keep the patients going and she combined five vitamins and iron and the patients who managed to take these vitamins are still alive.

The AIDS ministry initiated by Sr Bridie became famous and we had over 500 patients receiving the vitamins. The Health System in Uganda was overwhelmed at that time with the number of patients that they could not provide enough medicine, so the supplement of vitamins provided by the DMJs was a big contribution to the Health Care that time.

I want to thank Bridie, for her commitment, innovation and Zeal.

We also had fun times with her and she would make us laugh. She was always neat and good looking irrespective of her age. We missed her so much when she returned to Ireland.

Now that she is gone to the Lord she will be our ambassador and all the people she helped especially the women and children in Mbarara who still remember and ask for her. Bridie, go gently to God and when you reach there, pray for us and rest in Peace.

She taught me this song from Ireland. I was lucky to find it on U-tube and can listen to it in memory of Sr Bridie:

Bring flowers of the Fairest....

O Mary we crown thee with blossoms today....

Those who know it may sing it as we honour Mother Mary and place our sister Bridie in her hands.

May her Soul rest in Eternal Peace. Amen.

Sr. Rosemary K



I met Bridie early 1995 as a Postulant. I was not used to her accent. She talked so fast that out of 20 words I would pick two!! She had a big heart for the young ones!! She was patient with me!! We worked all day in the kitchen preparing meals. She was so fast in everything. In spite of her short steps and my long legs, I run after her!! She taught me how to fold towels and bed sheets, and then arrange them neatly in the linen cupboard!! Thank you Bridie for the life skills which you gave us.

Sometimes she would exclaim, “Bikira Maria orare!!!” which would make us laugh! I never got what it meant but it literary means, “Our Lady stay for a night!” May you stay the rest of your days with Her.

Those who have shown us love, brought us joy, and made us laugh, have given us the lasting gifts of a beautiful life - and blessed our memories forever. We shall always remember her.

May your soul rest in eternal peace.

Grace.