

- How might bishops, priests and deacons continue the mission of Jesus?
- What religious communities do you know? Was your school founded by a religious community? If the answer is yes, do you know anything about the founder? What kind of work do

members of religious communities do to serve others? Do you know any religious who have served as missionaries overseas? How did they continue the mission of Jesus?

Refer the children to page 71 of their book.

STORY

Before reading the story, explain to the children that some people choose to carry out the mission of Jesus by going to faraway places, especially to places where there is a lot of poverty and where people live in very bad conditions, so that they can share God's love and the gifts that God has given them with those people. People who do this are

called missionaries, just as those who carry out the mission of Jesus at home are called missionaries. Tell the children that this is an extract from the journal of Maura Lee, who spent time working in Kenya in Africa as a lay missionary, and who subsequently became a religious Sister.

Maura Lee's Story

My journey to Kenya began in 2009 on hearing that the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul had opened two centres to support people who were living in poor circumstances. I wanted to go as a volunteer and share my accountancy skills ...

In Nairobi, I went to a slum area called Bangladesh. Having come from a farming background, I was well accustomed to smells and odours from the farm, but I don't think anything prepared me for what I encountered on my first visit to Bangladesh. Not alone was I in shock at the appalling living conditions, the timber dwellings with galvanised roofs tightly packed together, no toilets or running water, the narrow walking area, the open sewers, the claustrophobic conditions people were living in – a 'jungle of poverty' – to me it was a nightmare to think that fellow human beings, no different to me, were living like this. However, after my first visit I stopped focusing on the surroundings, because on each occasion I received a warm welcome from women and children with smiling faces, and what I really noticed was how there was a great sense of community.

On my journey to Thigio, I passed through beautiful countryside with rolling hills and valleys, but what struck me most was how rain was so badly needed. This was an agricultural area and crops had been sown in the hope of rain, which was due since January. Now it was mid-March and the rains still hadn't come. When such a dry spell continues

it brings an added burden of devastating consequences for people who already have to deal with multiple difficulties.

One morning as I was going down to the school, I was met by a steady stream of young children with smiling faces. They had walked over an hour or more to get to school. Where they had walked is similar to climbing the first part of Croagh Patrick (a tough trek, even for the fittest!). On arrival to school these tiny ones would get a bowl of porridge and later in the day they would get a good nutritious dinner – this nutrition programme has dramatically improved the health of these children.

On another occasion, as I was on my way to do some home visits with the community nurse, I passed a little boy sitting at the side of the road. He told me that he couldn't go to school because his parents hadn't paid the school fees. Just then, the stillness of the air was filled with young, happy voices as the playground filled with children. The little boy rushed to the gates, held two bars with each of his small hands and rested his head in the gap between; he had such a longing desire to be the other side of the gate. It wasn't his fault that his parents hadn't the money to pay the fees. They weren't working because the rains hadn't come and they couldn't earn money weeding the crops for farmers, as they usually did.

My experience in Kenya has imprinted my heart with wonderful memories and a promise to return.