

## **“My life giving experience at Dispensaries in India”**

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I am a JM sister- Sr. Amelia D'sa age 77 years old and worked in the Dispensaries of Gujarat and Maharashtra. My early learning was from the Spanish Sisters who meticulously taught me the rudiments of caring for the sick namely with love, concern, patience and explained to me the qualities of St. Claudine through their act of service and love towards patients. As time has passed reading, praying and working experience in this dimension of the dispensary has given me a healing hand towards the sick. Though I am 77 years old I still love my work with the sick and having experience severe illness myself I can feel the pain of the others in a better way. Claudine's Pedagogy- Do as I did for Christ has touched me in every aspect of my life. Her tender loving cares to the orphans, to the wounded sick, tenderness to her family member and above all to the sister in the Congregation she herself founded. A practical experience I suggest to do family visits to the middle class especially poor families for they are open and would be easily ready to listen, share their lives and take Christ in their lives if not values of Christ and Claudine. I like to show and share the writing and videos on Claudine's life which will be a good way of teaching.

William Osler said “The good physician treats the disease; the great physician treats the patient. Who has the disease”. We are an educational order yet M.Gloria of Jesus a Spanish Sister working in Gujarat mission together with Jesuit Fr. Conjet S.J. found the need that in the missions their poverty was great, sickness was rampant- Anemia (lack of blood) due to worm infestation led to Anemia, diarrhea and many other sicknesses. Claudine's one of the aim was “Form souls for heaven” through the work of dispensary exactly our sisters wanted to do that but in order to reach the soul one has to go through the wellbeing of the body. Therefore in the General Chapter of 1959(date to be checked) M.Gloria very strongly put the need of dispensaries in the mission. The General Chapter through the eyes of Claudine saw the need and granted the permission to start a dispensary. How happy the sisters and people of Gujarat were. The visits to homes and our Spanish sisters speaking to them in Gujarati with foreign accents was astonishment to the people and the joy of sisters was that they were able to

communicate with the people and listen to them and the seed of loving relationship was planted to never die. The fruit of this relationship that people build trust in sisters. The sick in the dispensaries build strong rapport and they were treated with a minimum fees or no fees, the medicines from Spain very effective and so the sisters attended to the sick daily for hours and Sunday was a holiday dedicated to Catechetical work “to make God known and loved”.

As the work of dispensary was increased, the need of Maternity cares to be attended came in as there were many fatal childbirths and at that time abortions were unknown. Once more beautiful wollen warm Baby Cloths were brought from Spain when the woman left the Maternity home they took the warm clothes for the baby, our sisters were “true mothers to them”. With great joy, all these mutual efforts enabled the sisters to increase the faith of the people in the sisters and eventually in God; their work became an instrument to show people that God loved them and will always love them. Claudine had the heart of a mother, she never refused help to any one and our sisters did the same whoever came to them, they accepted them with love and took grate efforts to meet the needs of the beneficiaries. In India the institution of marriage are regularized according to respective religion and minutely all the rituals are followed during marriage ceremony. In this typical situation Spanish priest Fr. Susai S.J. he regularized the Hindu marriage in a Christian way without hurting the feelings of the people or disturbing the Hindu marriage ritual. Claudine believed that prayer could work wonders, she was never disappointed, and we too were not disappointed need of priests and sisters increased in mission. We were welcomed to do the will of God through our medical work of relief. So much so that new houses had to be opened and again Sr. Benedicta Boada from Spain was heading work of building a new house and attending to the sick and pregnant mother’s antenatal and postnatal care was provided. Most of the mission houses in Gujarat have the dispensary attached even some run Mobile Dispensary too in faraway villages to meet the need of the patients who are not able to reach our dispensary or to any other medical relief.

I worked closely with them and being a young Nun Claudine was my source of inspiration and which has continued till today to carry on my service. St. Claudine our Mother Foundress a woman in this time, a courageous, faith filled, orderly, humble woman and I lived and kept trying to work and live as she lived. In the most of the cases the people needed our listening ears to listen to their anxiety with which they

come to us and not so much the medicine is effective as our words of comfort, care and listening to them was enabling them to return to us again and again. Today medical care has become very expensive to the poor, which they are not able to afford, in this scenario our dispensaries are playing major role of treating the poor with no free or very less fee. At the same time, the rules of the government are making matters difficult to run our dispensary but the higher Superiors seeing the need and are sending sister for further studies in medical field- Nursing etc and much more. There was a time most of the deliveries used take place in our dispensaries some times in time of need I have done the deliveries by myself alone. But now the things have changed women do not like to bare the pain of normal delivery they prefer cesarean and go to hospital as well government also comes heavily on pregnant women to deliver baby in a hospital and they do receive some beneficial for delivering baby in a hospital. Gradually we have stop in all dispensaries for taking maternity cases for delivery but we do provide them care to them.

To alleviate the suffering and help reduce the misery and pain of these underprivileged people is the main purpose of the dispensary was a purpose of M. Bede Gray to open a small Dispensary in 1960 for the boarders, newborn babies and for helpers in our Sangamner campus. At the request of the people in 1965, this service was extended to the poor and needy around, for their ailments and diseases, for conducting deliveries. Soon the people from nearing villages started coming to our dispensary for medical aid and relief. Daily the number of the patients increased so much so that we used to have more than 100 patients per day and every patient was treated with loving care. Kendal is remote village away from facilities of cities were not known to people in this situation our dispensary was a miracle to them. In the dispensary we provided free medical aid and relief and special care was given to them. Maternity cases were more and every day the delivery used to take place and sisters used to do the deliveries sometime, sister alone have conducted the deliveries. With all the challenges sisters at the dispensary were happy to serve the patients and found meaning in this mission, Jesus worked healing miracles in and through us. At Rahuri in 2003 a one year Home Nursing Course offering the Central Government Certificate was began. Taking into accounts demands of the government and challenges of medical field as well as the requirement of hospitals. In sharing Claudine's Charism, we also receive this grace of sensitivity to the Spirit. This same Spirit who moved Claudine to act moves us to

deepen our knowledge, trust, and dependence on this good God- in the person of Jesus. The same Spirit moved me and gave the vision for the future to undertake another new challenge- in 2010-11; I undertook a new initiative to start an 18-month RANM (Revised auxiliary Nursing and Midwifery Course) under the Maharashtra Nursing Council, with eligibility for a Government post in the rural areas. With this course of 2 years, some students of ours can work in our communities to take care of old and sick sisters or work in hospitals, having enkindled the values we have given them during their training period they proudly tell and live in their hospital mileux.

Claudine's last words were "How Good God Is!" these words were the fruit of her faith in God and these words of Claudine were the driving force of our us as were worked in dispensaries serving the sick and seeing the miracle of God in them. Claudine's life had a healing power and in turn, she became healing to others; following in the footsteps of Claudine our work in dispensary is an instrument of healing both soul and body to the people.

Claudine's life had a healing power – for her city, for the church of her times, for the new Congregation she started, for the people especially the children, the youth and the poor. We sisters at dispensary drew the same power of healing from St. Claudine indeed the same power of healing was passed on to the patients that came to us. The healing experience of sick people increased their faith and trust in the treatment that they received at our dispensaries through our sisters. Thus, this became strong foundation for our mission in medical field, we experienced God's active, and in all this He was using us as an instrument of His healing touch and loving mercy.