

# Springing Into Action: COVID-19

*The pernicious coronavirus* stalking the world is impervious to all boundaries – geographic, economic, social, political, and religious. However, as always, those with fewer resources are the most at risk. The individuals and families who already live on the thin margin of starvation, the refugees and immigrants, those who have no homes, are even more vulnerable.

Medical Mission Sisters and Associates (MMS) live close to their neighbors' harsh realities of poverty, homelessness, and social injustice. As medical professionals, therapists, volunteers, teachers, farmers and more, they are responding to the urgent needs with healing presence and inventive, practical compassion.

The following photos and short descriptions will give you a quick glimpse into how MMS are activated - providing safety, imparting vital information and making all the difference in the lives of thousands of women, children and men in Indonesia, Germany, Ghana, the Philippines, Venezuela and the U.S.



*Sisters Anke Boeckenfoerde and Maria Tuminah hand out food and water to local families who have few resources in Jakarta, Indonesia. Many people are falling deeper into poverty. As of April 15, 2020, over five million people in this country have lost their jobs.*

Like Jesus, our call is to a radical activity of love. It is imperative that the peoples of earth declare responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.

Loretta Whalen, MMS Associate  
North America

Indonesia has the largest economy in Southeast Asia. More than half its workers are in the informal sector as street vendors and rickshaw drivers. They cannot work from home and if they do not work, they have no money for themselves and their families.

MMS are distributing food and health equipment to the poor in their neighborhoods. Sr. Anke Felicitas Boeckenfoerde shares: "When I came with the food yesterday, some children - who were playing in the dirty river - saw me and immediately jumped out of the river. It seemed they were hungry as they were running to me on the street. No time for putting on their clothes! Suddenly I was surrounded by more than 10 naked boys (maybe around 8-12 years old) catching their food to fill their empty stomachs." She goes on to say, "One little boy brought back his food box with the words, 'Take this for another one, I already got a box from my brother.'"



Anticipating that the crisis would extend beyond one month, the Sisters in the Philippines gathered their resources to provide long-term support. They are responding to the request for food assistance for the urban poor communities in Manila, and the distribution of rice and basic food items to four Lumad (indigenous) communities in Quezon.

MMS are also making and delivering food once a week for the front-line health staff at the Lung Center of the Philippines in Quezon City.

Perhaps like never before, we are aware of how connected we are with each other - locally, regionally, nationally, globally. However, even as we are experiencing the same storm around the world, we are not in the same boat. Those with resources have access to protection and medical care - they can safely isolate as necessary; for those with few or no resources, COVID-19 is much more deadly. Please consider contributing today to the Medical Mission Sisters, knowing that your gift will stretch all around the world, providing for basic needs and offering hope to “the very least of these.”

### Ways to Give:

**Mail:** Fill out the remittance envelope provided and return with your gift.

**Online:** [www.medicalmissionsisters.org](http://www.medicalmissionsisters.org). All information provided to Medical Mission Sisters is completely secure.

**Sustaining Gifts:** You choose how much your bank automatically deducts from your checking account once a month. A gift of only \$10 a month equals \$120 per year!

**Planned Giving:** Include MMS in your estate planning! Please call Jeanmarie Foy at 215.742.6100 x136 for more information.



*Sister Rita Amponsaa-Owusu, Head of Pharmacy at Holy Family Hospital in Techiman, Ghana, is personally leading the charge to ensure continuous production and supply of hand sanitizer.*

The Medical Mission Sisters are an international Society of Sisters with over 600 vowed and associate members in 18 different countries. We were founded in 1925 by Dr. Anna Dengel, whose burning passion was to provide medical care for Muslim women in East India (Pakistan) who were dying in childbirth due to cultural gender constraints.

Over the past 95 years we have evolved beyond building hospitals and providing clinical medical care to a broader scope of service. Our commitment is to be a healing presence in the way that most meets the needs of our times. We envision a world where all people can live with dignity, where no one is in want and lives in harmony with the whole of creation, the community of life. We are women with great passion...for wholeness, for justice, for life.

Please visit our website at [www.medicalmissionsisters.org](http://www.medicalmissionsisters.org) to read more about who we are and what we are doing! You can also check out our Facebook page - Medical Mission Sisters and Associates!



Sister Carmen Speck (front) works in Elisabeth Street Outpatient Clinic, a hospital that offers medical help to those who have no homes in Frankfurt, Germany. Sr. Carmen shares that with the country's lock-down, even the small ways to earn a few dollars are no longer available to those living on the street. There are no passers-by to drop coins in a hat, or leave bottles to be returned for the deposit.

Sister Dr. Maria Goetzens, who also works in the clinic, shares: "...what I already know is, there is no suitable space to protect these people from infection. This makes my heart heavy. I am comforted by the story of Jesus, who, unprotected, 'faced life'."

photo courtesy of Timm Kauhausen, Caritas Frankfurt

The children in Barquisimeto, Venezuela (30 of them, from 2-13 years of age) come to the MMS's home every day begging for food. The Sisters are no longer able to provide daily lunches for the community because food, gas and electric are too scarce. Once able to provide meals for up to 200 people in their neighborhood, now the Sisters share just a few bags of food a week to the neediest families.

Sister Maigualida Riera says, however, that their hope and desire to celebrate life remain firm. They embrace signs of solidarity and invite creativity that can lead to joy. When the children come to their gate in the mornings, the Sisters give them a task to do for the day. One day the assignment was to make something with their own hands. Sister Mai was delighted by the tenderness and beauty the sometimes angry or discouraged children expressed. Their reward for the task completed? a small and deeply appreciated snack.



Sister Marisol Martinez is very busy five days a week with food distribution in the Kensington section of Philadelphia. She helps serve over 400 boxes of food, twice a week, to people who form a line that stretches around the block. She also helps to prepare and serve meals to 200 people several times a week at a local community center.

Also distributing food in the Kensington neighborhood is Sister Lucy Klein-Gebbinck. She says that people who need food come up to an hour early and wait patiently, supportive of one another - helping with bags, with rides - and sharing by word of mouth that food is available.

photo courtesy of Sr. Linda Lukiewski, SSJ

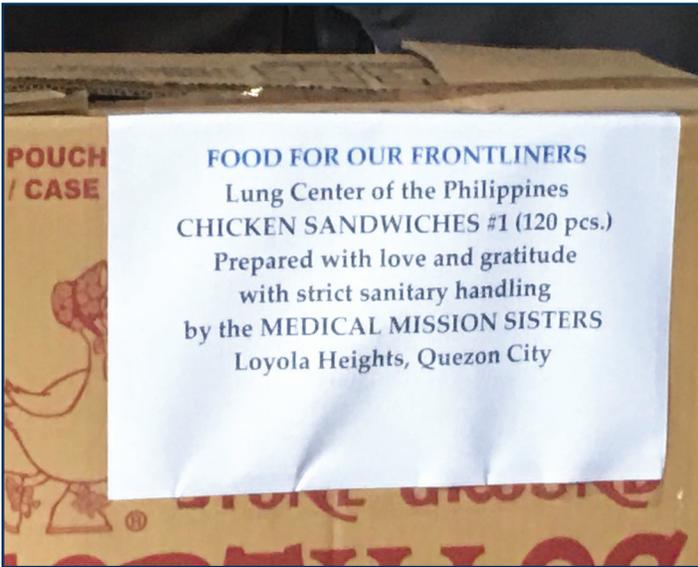




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Sister Smita Parmar ensures social distancing while delivering food to her Dalit neighbors in North India, who are starving. She says, "Compassion knows no religion."