

Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard



NEWS LETTER No. 24 Christmas 2004 New Year 2005

A true Christmas Story

On December 21, 2003 a baby boy, maybe three weeks old, was brought to us. He was obviously born prematurely and was very weak, dehydrated and badly malnourished and had oral thrush, which is usually a sign of an immunodeficiency. He could hardly suck from a bottle and vomited his food soon after having been fed. He also had severe diarrhoea.

Father Gérard baptized him in danger of death immediately and we gave him the

names Gerland and Nhlanhla (which is Zulu for "blessed" or "lucky" as used in the beatitudes of Christ's Sermon on the Mount). He is really blessed and lucky that people brought him to us and we are trying our level best to give him a chance to survive.

Meanwhile we could find out a bit more about his background: Gerland's grandmother had to look after him. We know nothing about Gerland's mother and do not even know whether or not she is still alive. Gerland's grandmother must have been so fed up with the fact that she had to care for him, that she literally threw him away into the arms of the man who brought him to us and who claimed that Gerland was an abandoned baby. He said that Gerland would have dropped onto the ground if he had not caught him. There is some suspicion that he might be the father, and was not prepared to look after his son and the grandmother might have expressed her unwillingness to look after the baby. Nobody knows for sure, but it is clear that nobody wants him, but us. Gerland's story is similar to the life of Jesus who was not even given a place to be born except a stable.

We are glad to be able to give Gerland lots of food and love and we are happy to update you, that he is progressing well and that we may win the race against death and pull him through. He is a real Christmas gift to us and we are proud to mother and "father" him.



Christmas 2003 in Blessed Gérard's Church in Mandeni, South Africa

**May the glory and peace
of the incarnate saviour fill your life
in this Christmas season
and on every day of the New Year 2005!**

Investiture of Lillian Molloy as an Honorary Dedicated Member

The Council of the Dedicated Members of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard has decided in its meeting on 20 April 2004 with a unanimous vote to grant Honorary Dedicated Membership to Miss Lillian Molloy from Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the United Kingdom according to No. 5.1.4. of our Statutes: "Associate Members, who have supported the Brotherhood to an exceptional degree, may be granted Honorary Dedicated Membership through a majority vote of the Council of the Dedicated Members. Honorary Dedicated Members have all the privileges of Dedicated Members, except the right to vote in the Council of the Dedicated Members."



Clare Kalkwarf, Father Gérard, Lillian Molloy and Nokuthula Thabethe

This is the highest honour the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard can confer and it was done in gratitude and acknowledgement of her extraordinary participation, support, loyalty and fidelity to our work, our principles and our vocation. We also acknowledge her dedication to "Our Lords, the Sick", in her professional career and in her support of the Order of Malta in the United Kingdom and abroad. We invested her as an Honorary Dedicated Member at a special celebration on 6 June 2004.

The President's Award of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard for the Year 2004

was presented to

Miss Princess Sindisiwe Ndlovu

for her outstanding and professional way of catering for our patients, her friendly and patient way of dealing with special dietary requirements for our patients and her readiness and reliability to carry great responsibility as the professional caterer of Blessed Gérard's Care Centre and as an active member of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard. Congratulations and Thank you for all your hard work and loyalty!



The Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard wholeheartedly welcomes its most prominent member: His Eminence, Wilfred Fox Cardinal Napier O.F.M.

Being part and parcel of the Roman Catholic Church's special response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa we meet His Eminence, the archbishop of Durban and chairman of the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference, **Wilfrid Fox Cardinal Napier, O.F.M** again and again at various meetings and conferences. We felt strongly that we should invite his Eminence, as the head of the Church in South Africa, to visit us to see with his own eyes and experience what we are doing as part of his flock.



Cardinal Napier spent a whole day on 9 March 2004 with us, looked and listened very attentively to our presentation and guided tour of our service and was obviously very impressed with our work.

We are highly honoured that our Cardinal has acknowledged our organisation and its work by expressing his wish to accept our invitation and become a member of our brotherhood.



He was officially received into the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard and presented with the members' medal on



the (early celebration of the) Feast of Blessed Gérard at Blessed Gérard's Care Centre, Mandeni, on Saturday, 18 September 2004.



Dr. Paul Thabethe, Sr. Nokuthula Thabethe, Clare Kalkwarf, Cardinal Napier, Father Gérard

My stay at

Blessed Gerard's Care Centre by the Vice-President of the British Association of the Order of Malta Lady Patricia Talbot of Malahide

The beauty and glorious sunny weather greeted me on my first visit to South Africa. The purpose of my stay was to spend time at Blessed Gerard's Care Centre and Children's Home in the heart of Zululand at Mandeni. I received a very warm welcome from Clare Kalkwarf who runs the hospice with Father Gerard, who sadly was not there, as he was fund raising for the hospice in Germany. I was very soon able to interact with the staff, patients and children which I found a very rewarding and humbling experience.

Very dark clouds are descending on Africa and this area of Zululand in particular, with an epidemic of AIDS, which is threatening to wipe out a whole generation of young people who's ages range from thirty years downwards. Already in the last ten years thousands of people have died, leaving many families with only grandparents and very young children many of whom are HIV positive. One grandmother was left with her young grandchildren and nine graves on her small plot. It is a devastatingly sad situation leaving many of the Zulu people with no home, food or money. 83 % are unemployed and worse is that the traditional values of their culture are being eroded by western influence and promiscuity, from both inside and outside the family, are causes of this epidemic spiralling out of control.

The hospice which is eight years old is administered by Father Gerard, Clare Kalkwarf and a few other dedicated people. It is on three floors and includes a beautiful chapel, offices and visitors quarters. They received a very welcome gift of forty beds from donors in America just as the hospice was completed.



There is also accommodation for about forty children on the top floor with good and safe access to play areas. Many of them are HIV positive and will probably only live to the age of ten. The children go to school, and they live as normal a life as possible within the confines of the hospice. Most are orphans and will remain there as long as necessary. Some do go home if the families can provide for them.

The hospice, which accommodates up to forty AIDS patients, is run by a totally dedicated team including Father Gerard, Clare, a doctor, nurses and helpers many of whom are voluntary. People from overseas also spend time there helping with the patients, one in particular is Lillian Molloy from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who gives up a month of her holidays each year to teach First Aid. She is doing valuable work.

Clare is the most dynamic of people who has dedicated her life in recent years to the care of the patients and children. Also her respect of and encouragement to all the staff must give them a great sense of purpose in what they are doing for the sick and dying. The hospice is run with all the Christian values and love it deserves. Mass is celebrated each morning and both staff and patients may attend, many of whom are not Catholics.

During my stay I accompanied a nurse on two assessment visits some miles away in a very poor rural area. On both occasions we returned with someone who required treatment. One was a baby girl of about six months who's mother was in hospital and the father was unable to feed the baby as he had no money. She was severely malnourished having only received sugar water for three months. Already, while I was there, she was responding to an appropriate diet. Hopefully she will be able to return to her family.

The British Association of the Order of Malta among others have given and pledged money for the continuation of the work of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard which they are most grateful for. We are all remembered in their daily prayers.

My final thoughts of these memorable days are that it is really the most vital and important work that must go on to help relieve some of the terrible suffering and pain of these poor people who are dying of AIDS, also to help educate them as Clare and her team are doing and as she says, "if the Brotherhood can save one life, all the hard work is worth it."

It is nothing short of a miracle what these wonderfully dedicated people are doing for the Zulu living in this very sad country. Please remember them all in your prayers.

A special vote of thanks to all our sponsors, donors and other supporters!

We finance all our work exclusively through donations and grants and depend entirely on them, as we do not sell services to pay for our expenses. We thank **BASMOM, the SACBC Aids Office, the Benedictine Mission House in Schuyler/U.S.A., Nampak, Victor Claudius, the South African Sugar Association, the Missionary Benedictine Sisters in Namibia, the Holy Family Sisters, Mr. C. Hansard, Loungeweave, Mr. Albert Render, John & Helen Crook, Dawn & Roger Malcolm, the Nardini Sisters, Whirlpool, the St. Vincent de Paul Society Umhlali, the E.A. Stewart Trust** and all our other benefactors for helping us to raise the funds to finance our free service to the poor and needy in our area. May God reward you abundantly for your generosity and faithfulness!



Blessed Gérard's Hospice HAART Programme

The Story of Qalile Uhlelo

Qalile Uhlelo* a 39 year old lady walked into Blessed Gérard's Hospice in August 2004 looking for help. She was very ill with all sorts of opportunistic infections. She openly admitted that she was HIV positive and had heard that Blessed Gérard's Care Centre had started an anti retroviral therapy programme.

Qalile was interviewed. She answered all the questions openly and without reservation. She lives within the municipal area of Mandeni and was committed to staying alive. Her employer was fully supportive of her and encouraged her to go ahead with the treatment.

At the beginning of September we drew her blood for a baseline reference test. The shock came when her results were received. With a CD4 count of 1 cell per mm³ and an extremely high viral load of 90536 copies/ml, it was incredible that she was still able to walk. A person who is HIV-negative would have a CD4 count of between 800 and 1300 cells per mm³.

We offered Qalile to be admitted into Blessed Gérard's Hospice as an in-patient, because of her bad state of health, which she accepted. Qalile was a model patient and complied with all that was asked of her. Antiretroviral therapy is not as simple as taking painkillers and requires thorough education and commitment on the part of the patient. Therefore it is a condition that all candidates for the HAART programme must undergo four weeks of ARV treatment literacy training to learn, understand, accept and follow all the aspects of the treatment from disclosure to adherence.



The first HAART readiness course

The first week of the drug readiness course arrived. It was Tuesday morning and all was prepared. Unfortunately Qalile had developed severe diarrhoea and vomiting. Our medical doctor prescribed the necessary medication to control this, but it continued unabated. Qalile became weaker and we were worried that her life was seriously in danger. Slowly, one day at a time, she responded to the treatment. The diarrhoea and vomiting subsided but she had since developed peripheral neuritis and therefore could not walk anymore, it was too painful for her to put her feet on the floor. Qalile fought back. She overcame her opportunistic infections to the extent that our doctor decided to give her individual tuition for module one of the drug readiness course. She showed great enthusiasm, which even inspired other patients, the doctor, the nurses and caregivers and they continued to encourage her. The second week of the drug readiness course came and went without any further problems, as happened with the third and the fourth modules. At this time she sat with our doctor and planned her treatment – what time will she be able to take her drugs every day, where will she keep them, what will she keep them in? Qalile answered all these questions with the guidance of the doctor.

Having completed this process, it was time to read and understand the treatment contract. This was explained to her in length. Qalile listened attentively as she was asked to commit herself to living a positive, healthy life and to abide by the rules of the HAART Programme. Qalile excitedly signed the contract. The director of Blessed Gérard's Care Centre also signed the contract, promising to give her the drugs and to support her physically, psychologically and spiritually.

The time had come! Qalile's life-prolonging drugs arrived.

Day 1 – Qalile was fine;
Day 2 – Qalile felt a little nauseous;
Day 3 – Qalile started vomiting;
Day 4 – Qalile felt good;
Day 5 – Qalile felt a little stronger;
Day 6 – Qalile was discharged and went home;

Day 10 – Qalile came back to Blessed Gérard's Hospice for a check-up. She was not feeling too well, so it was decided to readmit her. Qalile's Immune system was reconstituting itself and was fighting back.

Day 17 – We decided to do some more blood tests to see how Qalile was really improving. Her CD4 count was up to 8 cells per mm³. She was on the road to better health. We nursed her through this period of reconstitution and when she emerged on the other side, we discharged her home again. Qalile returned to Blessed Gérard's Hospice weekly for her routine visit to the doctor. On 3 November we carried out another blood test. This time her CD4 count was up to 18 cells per mm³ – which is still considered extremely low, but it does show



The first batch of blood samples being collected by the courier service to be transported to the laboratory.

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The very first time we administered HAART medication

an improvement. The interesting figure was the viral load result, which had decreased to 74 copies/ml. This was good news indeed.

Qalile continues to improve daily. Her CD4 count on 6 December 2004 was 39 cells per mm³. She is still a model patient and does all that she is asked. Thank you Qalile, for being our first HAART patient and for teaching us so much – patience, strength of character, will power and perseverance! Thank you Qalile for your encouragement and for showing us how well our HAART Programme can work to greatly improve the quality of life of people living with HIV / AIDS!

* The story is true, but the name is fictitious to protect her identity.



Blessed Gérard's Hospice HAART Programme SACBC, CRSC & PEPFAR

Blessed Gérard's Hospice HAART Programme (Highly Active Anti Retroviral Therapy) under the auspices of Blessed Gérard's Hospice and the South African Catholic Bishops Conference has developed and matured over the past year. We are very grateful to the government of the United States for channelling funds through their "President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief" (PEPFAR) via the "Catholic Relief Services Consortium" (CRSC) to the "Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference" (SACBC) to finance a considerable part of the cost of the programme. Through the admirable work of Sr. Alison Munro O.P., Dr. Malebo Maponyane, Johan Viljoen and the other members of the SACBC AIDS Office fourteen functioning ARV roll-out sites in the whole of South Africa could be established so far and we are proud to be one of them as "SACBC site 3".

It was extremely difficult to find a medical doctor and a professional nurse who would want to work in Mandeni, which is often considered to be "in the middle of nowhere". Finally, on 1 August our new Doctor started work. The professional nurse, Sr. Elizabeth Coetzer had already started with us and had undergone the necessary training. The team of Father Gérard Lagleder, Mrs. Clare Kalkwarf, Dr. Saba Shembe (until November 2004), Dr. Lerato Gabela (since November 2004) and Sr. Elizabeth Coetzer has gelled and have worked extremely hard to make the programme function efficiently.

We have trained sixteen of our members of staff as therapeutic counsellors to enable them to counsel the patients, teach HAART readiness courses and assist in adherence monitoring.

The schedule of our HAART Therapeutic Counsellors' Course

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9:00 – 12:00	HAART readiness Course Module A	HAART readiness Course Module B	HAART readiness Course Module C	HAART readiness Course Module D	Counselling skills
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
13:00 – 16:00	Teaching skills	Advanced HIV/AIDS information Opportunistic Infections	Advanced HIV/AIDS information Anti-Retroviral Therapy	Advanced HIV/AIDS information Adverse Drug Reactions	HIV/AIDS Pre- and Post-test counselling Partner counselling Family counselling

Blessed Gérard's Care Centre has been accredited by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health as an Antiretroviral (ARV) Therapy Roll-out Site. We are working in line with and in co-operation with the SA Government roll-out plan. In actual fact, we have even trained patients and staff of the Provincial Hospital in Stanger to help them get the government ARV roll-out going and we continuously include their AIDS patients from our area in our HAART readiness courses. Thus we have developed a very good and beneficial relationship of mutual appreciation and assistance to the good of the patients.

Fortunately, before the medical doctor started work, all the plans were in place, having done extensive research into the running of a programme such as this and all of the HAART team having attended the HIV / AIDS Management Course. Once the doctor was in situ it was easy to begin. Within one month we had put our first three patients onto anti retroviral therapy. Four months later we have 37 patients on the therapy and another 20 in training to receive their drugs. The 100 places which the funders will pay for will soon be full. In March 2005 we will be able to put another 100 patients onto the programme.

This programme requires absolute commitment from the patients, who are expected to take full responsibility for their own health and well-being. This is the reason why all candidates for the HAART programme must undergo a sixteen hour information and education preparation, spread over four weeks. They do have to have a "treatment buddy" who will attend the courses with them and will accompany them through their therapy; rendering encouragement and reminding them to take their tablets, advising them to contact the Hospice should they need assistance. The preparation course covers the following subjects:

Week 1: Teaching Module A

- Purpose of the training and expectations
- Pledge of confidentiality
- Introduction to the hospice
- Stigma, disclosure and positive living

Week 2: Teaching Module B

- Basics of HIV/AIDS & WHO staging
- Blood tests (quick test, CD4 count & viral load)
- HIV-associated opportunistic infections & cancers
- Prophylaxis of pneumonia & meningitis

Week 3: Teaching Module C

- Treatment for HIV/AIDS: Anti-retroviral (ARV) Therapy
- ARV adherence
- ARV side-effects
- ARV resistance
- ARV monitoring

Week 4: Teaching Module D

- Details of Blessed Gérard's Hospice HAART Programme
- Making a treatment plan

The information is really extensive and on completion, the patients can make an informed decision as to whether they want to carry on with the HAART programme or not and with the guidance of the doctor they can decide on which medication they can take.

Due to the fact that we have been even more busy and inundated with work since starting our ARV roll-out and also because this is such an intense and complicated programme, with patient monitoring of utmost importance, our costs have increased dramatically. Through the SACBC and CRSC the USA Government have agreed to pay only for blood tests, the ARV therapy and for some of the follow-up expenses.

However, there are many other hidden costs such as stationery, printing, photocopying, media equipment for the ARV drug readiness courses, opportunistic infections prophylaxis, fuel and wear and tear on the vehicles while doing home based care, training of therapeutic counsellors, employing an extra Professional Nurse, increased patient load in the Hospice (while patients are treated for the side effects of the ARV drugs) and increased costs involved in caring for the inpatients.

This is an extremely worthwhile programme as we are able to give the mothers back to the children, the children back to their parents and the fathers can continue in their traditional role as breadwinners.

The Story of Ngapumelela Ngosizo

An unconscious male patient was admitted to Blessed Gérard's Hospice in 1999 suffering from TB meningitis. He came from a very caring family who had employed a lady to look after him. This lady was Ngapumelela Ngosizo*. Ngapumelela decided to continue caring for her patient by completing our caregivers course and by becoming a member of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard.

Ngapumelela came daily to care for her patient and the others in the ward with him. When he was discharged she continued caring for him at home. Finally he passed away and Ngapumelela carried on volunteering at Blessed Gérard's Hospice, caring for other people who were ill. Then she found work in a factory and had little time to volunteer, but kept in contact with us.

Then one day in June of this year, my office phone rang. "Ngapumelela Ngosizo is here to see you" I was told. As usual I was very happy to see her smiling face. When I went down stairs to meet her, she was not smiling. I knew something was wrong. We sat down and Ngapumelela asked me if her daughter could be admitted to Blessed Gérard's Children's Home. "Why", I asked. Ngapumelela started to cry. She told me she had just been discharged from hospital and had Tuberculosis. She told me she has AIDS. She was really ill and deteriorating by the day. Her sister, who had cared for her, chased her away because she was sick. Her mother and other siblings had also ostracised her. Ngapumelela had not been working and relied on her sister for hers and her daughter's livelihood. Without that support Ngapumelela was desperate. "Alright" I said. "But I would like to make you a better offer" Ngapumelela looked at me through her tears with a question in her eyes. "I would like to offer you enough time to raise your daughter, to go back to work and to have a good quality life" Ngapumelela continued to cry, but was silent as I continued "We are about to start our Antiretroviral roll-out programme and I would like to offer you, the chance to be one of the first to be included in this programme" Ngapumelela's tears dried up and a look of hope and relief replaced them. She left her current phone number and went home.

Two months later I had the great pleasure of phoning Ngapumelela and inviting her to come for her blood tests and to be included in the first drug readiness course. She completed her course and because she fulfilled all the criteria to be admitted to the programme, she was given her antiretroviral therapy. She has not had any side effects, she has gained lots of weight and is looking much healthier and is happy.

One of the most wonderful consequences is that Ngapumelela's daughter has her mother back!

* The story is true, but the name is fictitious to protect her identity.

Blessed Gérard's Children's Home



has seen major growth during the past year. It is a loving home to 28 children at present. The home is overseen by the principal care-giver Mrs. Sandy Porter. She has been an asset to the home and has breathed a breath of fresh air into the daily lives of our children and care-givers alike. Mrs. Porter, under the guidance of the Project Co-ordinator, Mrs. Clare

Kalkwarf, has begun to collect books and videos for a library. She has created a home-work room for the school-going children and encourages the care-givers to take more responsibility and helps them to bring out the best of their qualities. The children are given a chance to develop their confidence and their own personality by being given little tasks to do around the home.

The increase in the number of children has meant that we have had to increase our permanent staff. One care-giver was transferred to the housekeeping department of the Children's Home and another care-giver was employed.

Many more children suffering from AIDS have come to us. We are very privileged to be able to love and care for them.

The building of Blessed Gérard's Care Centre houses Blessed Gérard's Children's Home and Blessed Gérard's Hospice on different floor levels. Although the two projects are run separately they complement each other very well. For example, if a child becomes ill, he or she will be transferred to the hospice on the ground floor. Once the child's health has improved again, he or she will be transferred back to the children's home on the second floor. No matter what their health problems are, we ensure that the children can live as normal a life as possible.

Three of our children attended the local primary school during 2004 and five attended the local nursery school. The other little children were stimulated by undergoing a formal play programme, to make integration into a public school an easy transition for them, when they are old enough.



The Children's Home has been given the wonderful gift of a minibus. The Udo Jürgens Foundation donated the money, through the German Malteser Auslandsdienst, to buy the vehicle which was blessed by His Eminence Wilfred Cardinal Napier on 18 September 2004.

Blessed Gérard's Pre-primary School and Crèche

is now ten years old. It has been running continuously for all those years, with a holiday break only around Christmas time each year. Our Pre-primary School is one of the major feeders for the Government Primary School, which is next door. The children are very well accepted there and are far ahead of the other children because of the school readiness programme which Miss Patricia Zikhali teaches, most successfully.

Our Pre-Primary School and Crèche is in an absolutely underprivileged area with severe poverty. This goes so far that parents sometimes cannot even afford our nominal school fees of R15.00 per month, nor can they give their children a lunch box full of food every day to bring along.



Therefore we decided that we would provide the children with substantial and nutritious food, thus helping to relieve the poverty of the families and prevent malnutrition. If the children have full tummies when they go home, the family has one less mouth to feed. Blessed Gérard's Pre-Primary School and Crèche now gives the children two meals a day – breakfast and lunch. We also decided to

ease the burden on really poor families, by making them exempt from paying the school fees. We are happy to say that our nursery school is full to capacity. Out of a total of 32 children at the end of December 2004, nine will go to Class 1 at the Primary School in 2005 and many little ones are on the waiting list to be admitted to our facility in the New Year.

Blessed Gérard's Pre-Primary School and Crèche is built high up on a hill overlooking the Indian Ocean. The close proximity to the sea air results in the equipment and even the building deteriorating quite rapidly. The building is in need of major renovations – the roof is leaking, the paint is peeling off, the water pipes need to be repaired and much of the playground equipment is rusty and would need to be repaired or replaced. We intend carrying out this work during the holidays.



In six days it will be Christmas ...

My friends and I are going to fetch our old age pensions today. Today is the day where we will all meet at the pension office, we will spend some time together chatting, then buy some fruit and bread from the informal vendors sitting on the pavement outside the pension office. Today should be happy with anticipation of the coming festivities. But there is no joy, there is no happy expectation. On the contrary, most of us are exhausted, not only from walking a long way in the heat and the blazing sun, but also from nursing our adult children who have AIDS and from trying to care for all the grandchildren, as well.

Nokuthula, my 26 year old daughter died in October from AIDS related infections. She has left me with her three children to care for. The youngest of the three is Mbali. Mbali is now four years old and is showing similar symptoms to what her mother had. She is too weak to walk, so I have to carry her on my back wherever I go. Thokozani (7 years) and Fikile (6 years) are also too young to stay on their own at home, in an area where violence, rape and child abuse are part of daily life. We must look a very sorry sight as we all traipse along the muddy roads together.

The bond between Mbali and her mother was very deep, as she was breast fed for two and a half years. But it was this love, which was to seal her fate, as she too is in full blown AIDS now. Mbali's father died during 2002.

As I leave the pension office and the street vendors with my few oranges and a loaf of bread for supper, I wonder to myself what is going to happen to the children when I die. I am now 82 years old and not very strong. I brush the thought from my mind as I walk because the problems of today overwhelm me.

Mbali is crying, she has diarrhoea, oral thrush, refuses to eat anything and is emaciated. How am I going to cope? One of my friends tells me about Blessed Gérard's Hospice where her daughter had been cared for. She was so impressed that she suggested I go there with Mbali. I turn around and walk the eight kilometres with Mbali on my back and Thokozani and Fikile following.

Finally I reach Blessed Gérard's Hospice. I am received with warmth and respect into the reception area. It is cool inside and we can finally sit down. Mbali lies on the floor out of sheer weakness. A nurse comes and picks her up; we are taken to a lounge where we are offered something cold to drink. The nurse takes Mbali to the examination room, where we mutually decide to admit her to the hospice. My heart is very sad but it is also suddenly lighter and I am so grateful. The people are so nice to me and to the children.

Mbali is taken to a nice clean room where there are other children but she is too sick to notice. I leave with a spring in my step, although it is a long way home I know Mbali is in good hands.

The compassionate and sensitive people at Blessed Gérard's Hospice have told me that when Mbali is a little stronger, they will send her upstairs to Blessed Gérard's Children's Home, where she can play and learn, where she can be cared for and loved.



Mbali on Christmas Eve 2003

Thank you to the people who help in Blessed Gérard's Hospice and Blessed Gérard's Children's Home, you have helped me tremendously. Knowing that Mbali receives all the care that she needs her brother and sister and I can enjoy Christmas."

Foot note: Mbali did indeed enjoy her Christmas, but her condition continued to deteriorate over the next few weeks and finally she succumbed to AIDS when God called her at the end of February 2004.

Blessed Gérard's Malnutrition Clinic

has given 38,325 meals of protein enriched porridge and baby milk formula to sick, starving and hungry children under the age of five during 2004. Our founder member and Director of Charity Work, Sr. Nokuthula Thabethe continues to run this fortnightly programme with 35 infants registered at any one time.

The programme is run from the Sundumbili Catholic Church hall, which is approximately 5 kilometres from Blessed Gérard's Care Centre. Father Gamede, the Parish Priest is most accommodating and we are extremely grateful to him for permitting us to utilise the hall for this purpose.

There is a most beneficial and complementary interaction between our own projects, Blessed Gérard's Malnutrition Clinic, Children's Home and Hospice. Malnourished children are admitted as inpatients into the hospice if necessary. When they are a little better they are transferred to the children's home and once they are on a normal diet again, they will be referred back to the malnutrition clinic.





The Relief Organisation of the Order of Malta in South Africa



How it all started

- Father Gérard reports: I came to the area of Mandeni as the parish priest in 1990. In this position and especially as a missionary, I was, of course, approached by everybody, especially when **people were in need** of any particular care.
- One day I was called to take Communion of the Sick to a dying lady. I visited her as I had done so before regularly. When I arrived I noticed that she was in a very bad condition. She had terrible bedsores and she was totally emaciated. I gave her Communion of the Sick and I gave her the Anointing of the Sick. Then I said to her: "I really would be glad if you would allow me to take you to a good doctor." "But I don't have any money", she said to me and I said: "Let that be my worry, because I think, that you really need to see a good doctor." She agreed and then I put a mattress on the back of my pickup, I laid her on it and I took her to the doctor. The doctor was Dr. Paul Thabethe from Sundumbili. When we arrived he said: "For heavens sake, she must go to hospital immediately." She was transferred to hospital and died there on the same night. When I met Dr. Thabethe again he said to me: "**Father, can't we do something?** There are so many people here who simply die from malnutrition or from being totally neglected at home and that should not happen. This kind of thing should not be a cause of death. By saying so he was knocking on open doors with me.
- The second event, which was very impressive, was this: There were two very poor families in Mandeni, living in one house. The father had no work. They could not feed their seven children and the landlord, who they had rented a house from, had threatened to evict them. They had nothing to eat and nothing to wear: A totally desperate situation. As usual when people are desperate, they come to the Catholic Church, even if they are not Catholics. So on Sunday, after the service, I made an announcement in church and I asked "Is there anybody who could possibly help to get these totally desperate families back on track again?" A member of the pastoral council, Mrs. Kalkwarf, responded and said: "**Oh yes, we can do something to organise help.**" She went off and a day later she had organised the whole parish and other people, too. Some brought food, others brought clothes, others got the children back to school and others even found jobs for the men, so that within three months the need of the families was alleviated. This was most inspiring: "Well, there are people here who know how to organise help!" And this was exactly the spark I needed.
- As I had been involved with the work of the Order of Malta in Germany since 1969, where organising help became my second nature, it struck me and I said: "Let's plan and do something to help the people in this area of Zululand on a long term basis." Then I said to myself: "**It would be good to found an organisation within the country, where South Africans make plans on how to give help to South Africans who are in any kind of need.**" Therefore, on 28 October 1992, I founded the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard, an organisation of South Africans, which is based in South Africa and works with local people.

What we now are

- a group of close to 1500 **idealists** with the aim to enable and empower people to help themselves and to provide direct aid in cases of emergency and immediate need.
- the South African **relief organisation** of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, which was founded as a nursing brotherhood by Blessed Gérard more than 900 years ago.
- a **faith based organisation** (FBO) putting into action what our motto "tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum" means: "Protection of faith and service to the needy".
- a "**Private Association of Christ's Faithful**" in the Roman Catholic Church, open to members from all different faiths and cultural backgrounds.
- a **community based** (CBO) **non governmental organisation** (NGO) based on the voluntary service of its members.
- a "**public benefit organisation**" (PBO) operated **not for profit** (NPO) and dedicated to the welfare of all people.
- a **non-discriminating** and **non-exclusive** organisation, which serves the needy irrespective of their creed, colour of skin, political affiliation or social status.



Brotherhood of

Blessed Gérard's Disaster Relief Project

We give
medical assistance and care
as a relief organisation
in case of a disaster.



Blessed Children'

We look after an
to sick, neglected
malnourished,
and orphaned

Blessed Gérard's Relief Fund

We help people
in our local community
in genuine cases
of immediate need.



Blessed Gérard's Bursary Fund

We give bursaries
to poor pupils and students
from our local community.



Blessed Gérard's Poor Sick Fund

We help sick people
from our local community,
if they cannot afford urgently
needed medical treatment.



Blessed Gérard

Blessed Gérard's Malnutrition Clinic

We run a clinic, where we
examine, treat and feed
malnourished infants
and teach their parent or
carer in proper baby care.



Blessed First A Emergency

We offer F
assist people i

Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard

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Mandeni 4490

Republic of South Africa

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e-mail bbg@smom-za.org

Homepage <http://www.bbg.org.za/>



Blessed Gérard



Gérard's Home

and give a home to orphans, abandoned, abused, and abandoned children.



Blessed Gérard's Hospice

We run a Hospice to provide home based care, day care and inpatient care for needy sick people, suffering from HIV/AIDS, and train the public in home based care.



Gérard's Care Centre

Gérard's Aid and Emergency Service

First Aid and emergency services.



Blessed Gérard's Community Development Centre

We run a sewing school to fight unemployment and thus prevent HIV infection through dangerous alternate ways of income generation.

Blessed Gérard's Friendship Club

We organise meetings to enable the elderly to get out of their isolation and socialise with others.



Blessed Gérard's HIV/AIDS Education Programme

We teach the public how to avoid HIV infection and how to live positively with AIDS.



Blessed Gérard's Pre-Primary School and Crèche

We run a Pre-Primary-School and Crèche for underprivileged children.



of Blessed Gérard

How You can help us to help:

By joining us

- as an **Active Member**
if you are able and prepared to help in our projects to serve the poor as a volunteer and agree with our principles. In this case, please call us for an interview.
- as a **Donor member**
if you want to support our service financially on a regular basis.
- as a **Spiritual Supporter**
if you want to help us through your prayers regularly.

By a donation towards our charity work.

Financial contributions are most needed.
If you want to donate goods, kindly contact us beforehand to make sure that the donation will be really useful.

By making us a beneficiary in your last will and testament.

By your prayers that God may bless our service and those we serve.

Dear reader,

this centre sheet of our newsletter serves like an independent insert giving basic and general information on our whole organisation, its tasks and its work. It can be used like a prospectus or even as a poster to inform others about us.

If you are not already a member of our organisation, we ask you to join us now, and if you are already a member, please invite others to join us. The more support we can get regularly, the better it is! If every member would only bring us one other member, we could double our support base and help even better and more.

Application for Membership

Indicate which kind of membership you want!

- I am prepared to support the work of the **Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard** as a **Donor** through an
 annual quarterly monthly
donation of (amount) _____ (currency) _____.
- I want to help the **Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard** through my prayers as a **Spiritual Supporter**.

Title: _____

First Name: _____ Middle Initials: _____

Surname: _____

Date of birth: (day) _____ (month) _____ (year) _____

Residential address: _____

Postal address: P O Box _____

Place _____ Postal Code _____

☎ Code _____ No _____

Cell phone Code _____ No _____

Fax Code _____ No _____

E-Mail: _____@_____ Homepage: http://_____

Signed at _____ on the _____

Signature of applicant _____

Fill in and send this form to:

Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard
P O Box 440 · Mandeni 4490 · Republic of South Africa

Fax +27 (0)32 456 7962

If you want to join as an active member, come and talk to us personally!

Making a donation



If you live in South Africa:

Blessed Gérard's Care Centre, being a public benefit organisation in terms of section 30 of the Income Tax Act, has also been approved on 2 July 2003 by the South African Revenue Services (SARS) for purposes of section 18A(1)(a) of the Income Tax Act, i.e. donations to Blessed Gérard's Care Centre are tax deductible. [Reference 18/11/13/2777]

This means that now we can issue South African donors with tax receipts for their donations, which they can use for tax deduction from the SARS. **If you are a taxpayer in South Africa and want to utilise this facility, make sure, that you make your donation to "Blessed Gérard's Care Centre" (not to the "Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard"!)** For donations of R500.00 and above we will issue such a receipt automatically.

You may make a donation directly into our banking account. Our banking details are as follows:

Name of Account: Blessed Gérard's Care Centre

Type of account:	Current Account
Bank:	First National Bank
Account number:	529 4004 0349
Branch:	Mandini
Branch code:	220 429

Please ensure that you put your personal details on the deposit or send the information directly to us, so that we can acknowledge and assign your donation properly.

The most convenient solution for both sides would be if you organised a stop order on your account, if you want to donate regularly.



If you live in the USA:

Thanks to the generosity of the Benedictine Mission House in Schuyler, Nebraska, we can now offer you a convenient way of making donations towards our work, inside the **United States**, with the possibility of declaring your donation on your tax return.

Cheques should be made out to "Benedictine Mission House" **with a remark "Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard"** (Please do not forget this!) These should then be sent to:

Benedictine Mission House · P. O. Box 528 · Schuyler, Nebraska 68661
People who have made a donation of more than \$200 will receive a tax certificate immediately from the Mission House and donors of smaller amounts would receive one at the end of the tax year, if they want to declare their donations on their tax returns.



If you live in Canada:

Make out a check to the "Order of Malta", **mark it "for the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard"** and send it to:

Order of Malta
1247 Kilborn Place
Ottawa ON K1H 6K9

You will receive a Canadian tax receipt for the full amount.



If you live in Great Britain / United Kingdom:

- You may send a cheque:
Any cheques sent must have the payee name: "BASMOM (BBG) Fund" (a fund of BASMOM, Charity No. 227994) and to be sent to this address:
The Hospitaller BASMOM · Mantle Hill · Bellingham · Hexham · Northumberland NE48 2LB
- You may deposit your donation directly into the banking account of the BASMOM and **mark it for the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard:**

Name of Account:	BASMOM Emergency Fund
Bank:	LloydsTSB
Account number:	00872754
Branch:	Bellingham Branch
Branch code:	(30-94-19)
- In any case, please make a Gift Aid Declaration.
You will find a form online at <http://bbg.org.za/giftaid.pdf>

Like the unclean leper ...

Thandi* is a 31 year old mother, unqualified and unemployed. She lives in a rural area approximately 35 kilometres from Mandeni and is ecstatic when her boyfriend comes home from Durban to visit her. When Sipho* walks in the door, Thandi can sense immediately that there is something wrong. She tries to find out what is troubling him but he avoids answering her. That night she comforts him and falls pregnant, not realising that she has put herself in severe danger. All the time Sipho is with her she has an uneasy feeling, but cannot pinpoint the problem. Thandi questions Sipho about his life in Durban, where he is working and deduces that he has another common-law wife there and possibly a child or two. Finally he confesses that he has betrayed her with another woman. All his promises of paying lobola (bride price) for her and with it her hope to get married have dissipated and suddenly she has no future to look forward to. Her family is also very disappointed. Sipho leaves for Durban with no intention of ever returning to Thandi. She is devastated.

About two months later Thandi has her nagging suspicion confirmed when the nurse at the hospital tells her she is pregnant. At the same time the nurse takes the routine sample of blood. Thandi tests HIV negative. A wave of relief passes over Thandi. But this is short lived because at her next antenatal check up, the nurse takes another blood sample – this time she is tested HIV positive. The feelings of despair, anguish and disappointment are almost too much to bear. Then the nurse assures her that there is a possibility that her baby might not necessarily become infected with the H I Virus. The months go by and Thandi grows to love the little baby she is carrying. When her baby boy is born he looks healthy. She names him Bhekithemba*.

During the course of four years Thandi starts developing symptoms of AIDS. She gets weaker, loses weight, develops Pulmonary Tuberculosis and Kaposi's sarcoma (an AIDS related skin cancer) and Bhekithemba also tests HIV positive. He is diagnosed with Pulmonary Tuberculosis as well. They are living in her parental kraal (a rural Zulu home made up of several mud huts), but the family has totally ostracised them. They refuse them access to the common family hut and isolate them in a remote little hut by themselves. The other children are told not to play with Bhekithemba. Thandi and Bhekithemba are both lonely and depressed. Too sick to fend for themselves, they are given food by a child putting a bowl on the floor and pushing it under the door and then running away. Like "the unclean leper" they are left totally alone. There is no water to drink or to wash and no toilet. One can only imagine what Thandi must be feeling - the humiliation and the indignity. Her own family pushes them out, disowns them and treats them worse than the goats and dogs outside!

Somehow the social workers hear about Thandi and Bhekithemba's plight. They visit the kraal and discover the disgusting and inhuman circumstances which the pair have been subjected to.



The social worker contacts Blessed Gérard's Care Centre which does not hesitate to prepare a place for both Thandi and Bhekithemba. The next day the social worker brings them to the hospice. They are weak, dirty, hungry and desperate. Thandi is now in a ward with eight other women whose health status is even worse than hers. Bhekithemba improves tremendously after receiving lots of good food and all the necessary medication so that within a week he can be transferred to Blessed Gérard's Children's Home. He attends nursery school along with the other children and visits his mother every afternoon. The social workers want Thandi's family to come to Blessed Gérard's Hospice to visit their daughter and grandson and to be educated about

HIV / AIDS, for which they have such an irrational fear, but they keep refusing to come.

Psychologically Thandi has given up hope of her family accepting her back into their home. She is devastated by the fact that not one of her relatives cares enough about her and her little boy to visit her. This state of mind prevents her from continuing to live with a positive attitude. She starts getting depressed. She has lost interest in eating and is losing even more weight. She expresses her wish that Blessed Gérard's Children's Home will take care of her son when she is gone. The medical staff and care givers try their very best to lift Thandi out of her depression. But to no avail. Thandi starts having headaches and sleeping more and more. The treatment, which the doctor has prescribed, has no effect. The decision is taken to transfer Thandi to hospital for further management. But she never makes it back to the Hospice. She dies in hospital from TB meningitis, leaving her sick little boy behind.

How do we tell Bhekithemba that his mother will never come back? How do we explain to the family that they need to take care of the little boy?

We contact the family of Thandi, through the social worker, who tells us that the family are not interested and are not going to organise for Thandi to be buried. They are also not interested in Bhekithemba and as far as they are concerned he can stay with us until he too dies.

Unfortunately, we are not legally permitted to give Bhekithemba Antiretroviral Therapy. Only his family can take this responsibility. Bhekithemba's future is obviously a short one. But he continues to attend the Pre-Primary school with the other children. We treat all his opportunistic infections and give him all the care and love that he needs.

* The story is true, but the names are fictitious to protect their identity.

St. John's Feast and Blessed Gérard's Feast

St. John the Baptist is the patron Saint of the Order of Malta. Being the Order's Relief Organisation for South Africa we welcome the new members, celebrate the Solemnity of St. John every year as one of our two major feasts, where we socialise with all our members, benefactors and supporters. The second big feast is the Feast of Blessed Gérard, our own patron saint, of course.

St. John's Feast 10 July 2004



Abbot Willibrord, Abbot Godfrey, Father Albert and Father Gérard during consecration



Celebrating members in church



Children and VIPs during the speeches



The "Brotherhood Choir"



The "Blessed Gérard's Children's Home Choir"



Clare Kalkwarf welcomes John who had come to Blessed Gérard's Children's Home on the day of his birth as an abandoned baby two

Blessed Gérard's Feast 18 September 2004



Wilfred Cardinal Napier, Clare Kalkwarf, Nokuthula Thabethe, Father Gérard, Dr Paul Thabethe, Dr Peter Martinez & Dr Roux Martinez



Celebrating members in church



Wilfred Cardinal Napier blesses the medals for the new members



Father Gérard conferring the medal of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard onto Wilfred Cardinal Napier



Father Gérard blesses all the new members



The weatherman had promised rain: Lunch was served in the emptied garages.

Blessed Gérard's Community Development Centre

has had a fairly steady attendance during the year with 48 students passing both the Primary and Intermediate Courses. There has been an interesting and surprising change in trend, whilst sewing is traditionally considered a woman's job, more and more men are coming forward to be trained. Mrs. Mdletshe, our teacher, has been as faithful and loyal as ever. She has put on three fashion shows during 2004, to show-case the capabilities of the people who have gone through our courses.

One fashion show was in Durban at a fundraising concert which our member Victor Claudius held for the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard. The second fashion show was part of the entertainment, at our celebration of St. John the Baptist's Feast in June and the third one was at the official welcoming of His Eminence Wilfred Cardinal Napier into our organisation, in September 2004.

We supply our students with all the consumables such as fabric, thread, zips, buttons, needles, pins and scissors and they can use our sewing machines and over-locking machine free of charge. Our sewing school has been running since 1 June 1993 and most of the machines were bought right at the beginning. Some need to be repaired and some should be replaced.

Blessed Gérard's Bursary Fund

continues to help needy students and pupils from the local area to fund their studies. The Bursary Fund has paid out close to R90,000.00 in school fees and other fees during 2004 for more than 50 pupils and students. This has enabled many children to go to school and has given a chance to two of our members and care-givers to study nursing at St. Mary's Nursing College in Mariannhill near Durban. Three more members are busy with a Child Care course and another has completed a computer course.

We feel very strongly that education is fundamental in breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and alleviating the harsh realities of unemployment.

SMOM Lourdes Pilgrimage 2004

Since our Vice-President, Clare Kalkwarf first joined the team of the British Association of the Order of Malta (BASMOM) in 2001 it has become a tradition that the two members of the Order of Malta in South Africa, Mrs. Kalkwarf and Fr. Gérard participate in the pilgrimage alternatively.



liturgical events (eucharistic celebrations, processions, stations of the cross, anointing of the sick etc.) but also lots of fun and socialising, which is a very special need for the sick pilgrims, who are often quite lonely and isolated in their home situation.

It was at the big pilgrimage party, where one of the hospital pilgrims, Mr. Tony Butler, who otherwise would have no chance to contribute to the welfare of other people, decided to "donate" his mustache to the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard, but he would not part of it, unless we were "paid" for this. Within minutes the unbelievable amount of xxx GBP was raised for us and Mr. Butler's moustache was publicly shaved.

Father Gérard did not only get a chance to make a presentation about our work to the pilgrimage group but he had also the special privilege to serve in his original profession by joining the nursing team and he enjoyed this greatly to exercise his multifaceted nursing pastoral monastic and missionary vocation.

Not only did BASMOM even pay for Father's ticket and accommodation, but Peter Loyd joined the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard as an active member and presented him with the most successful proceedings of his and BASMOM's fundraising activities.

We would like to express our most sincere and profound gratitude to Pater Loyd and the British Association of the Order of Malta for their wonderful support in so many different ways. We are proud and glad, that we are also part of your team at Lourdes and look forward to the pilgrimage in 2005. May God reward you richly for all your faithful help!



The members of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard at the 2004 SMOM Lourdes pilgrimage: Jim Little, Lillian Molloy, Peter Loyd and Fr. Gérard



Help rendered to Inkamana Abbey

Our president, Father Gérard, is a Missionary Benedictine monk of St. Ottilien archabbey in Germany and has been assigned as a missionary to Inkamana Abbey in South Africa since 6 January 1987. When two of his confrères, Abbot Willibrord and Brother Stephen became very sick and needed 24 hours care, seven days a week, Abbot Godfrey asked us to admit them into our hospice and we most gladly agreed.



Father Gérard, Abbot Willibrord and Brother Stephen

Br. Stephen Ebert O.S.B. suffered from Motor Neurone Disease and spent the final stages with us from 11 March until his death on 21 May 2004. He had always been an example of a most dedicated monk and even in his final stages of suffering he never lost his faith and goodness of heart.

Our member **Abbot Willibrord van Rompaey O.S.B.** had a severe stroke in March 2004 and even when he was still in the high care ward of Newcastle Hospital, he insisted that he wants to be transferred to us. Apart from some necessary interruptions of hospitalisation in Umhlanga Rocks Abbot Willibrord spent nearly eight months, from 18 March until his death on 5 November 2004 with us. Father Abbot was a very kind, friendly and deeply grateful patient, but his own patience was put to a hard test, when his diabetes and his very weak heart made him nearly blind and totally dependent.

Thank you, Brother Stephen and Abbot Willibrord! Your presence among us was a great privilege and a deep blessing. R.I.P.

Deacon Mark & Celia Carter



While on a recent visit to relatives in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, we were able to respond to the kind invitation received from Clare Kalkwarf to visit the Hospice of Blessed Gérard at Mandeni, which she runs together with Father Gérard Lagleder OSB. Many of you will remember them both as helpers with the British Association's recent Lourdes pilgrimages. We arrived for Sunday Mass and had a great welcome, both being seated on the Sanctuary and

Mark being invited to proclaim the Gospel. The inspirational Chapel has suspended above the altar, a large golden Maltese Cross and the wonderful Zulu carved Crucifix, also using the eight-pointed Cross.

There are also many banners, pictures and stained glass windows with representations of Blessed Gérard and other early members of the Order. The congregation consisted mainly of patients and helpers and some were brought in, in their beds, possible due to the design of the building. Many of the children sat on little plastic chairs close to and surrounding the altar. The helpers looked purposeful, practical and caring not to mention smart, in uniforms embellished with the Cross of the Order. During the beautiful Mass we were particularly touched by the bidding prayers said on behalf of the British Association. Afterwards we were taken to a private Dining Room for an excellent meal during which we were shown a video explaining the work of the Brotherhood. This covers a number of areas, apart from running the Hospice and Children's Home, and includes a Community Development Centre (Sewing School), Pre-Primary School and Crèche, Malnutrition Clinic, AIDS Education, Poor-Sick-Fund, Disaster Relief, First Aid and Emergency Service, a Club for the elderly and a Bursary Fund.

We were taken on a tour of the Hospice building which is on three floors but with only two being in use at present. It was built like this to allow for future expansion as there is no extra land for extensions outwards. All the furnishing are "state of the art" from the kitchens, the medical facilities to the lift and all are spotlessly and immaculately maintained by cheerful helpers. On the ground floor there is accommodation for twenty or so adult AIDS sufferers, male and female, several in terminal stages of the illness. On the top floor are the children, again about twenty, the healthier ones engaged in playing games with the helpers. Many of them before coming to the Home had been neglected, abused and abandoned, not to mention malnourished. Some are orphans. With funding the number cared for could be doubled as the surrounding area is one of great need with over 50% unemployment and 80% of the population HIV positive.

All the voluntary helpers at this centre of care and charity exercise cardinal works of mercy in the name of the Order and our founder Blessed Gérard. The courage and commitment of Father Gérard and co-founders of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard in building up this work, in the short space of 10 years is impressive. It was a happy and memorable visit for us and we are deeply grateful to Father Gérard and Clare for their kind hospitality and we set off back to Umhlanga with a great deal to think about. It had been inspiring to see the Order at work in this relatively remote part of Africa and still pursuing the principle of our Founder Blessed Gérard. His words reach out to us over the centuries "Our brotherhood will be ever-lasting, because the ground which this plant is rooted in, is the misery of the world – and because, God willing, there will always be people, who want to work towards the alleviation of these sufferings to make this misery more bearable".

Father Gérard's "home leave" in Germany

Father Gérard left us on 19 September 2004 to go on home leave until 22 November 2004. The main aim of his trip was to meet some of our major donors and benefactors to thank them for their help and to give an account on our charitable work in the hope, that they will continue their support. Father spent 62 days overseas, travelled close to 13,000 kilometres by car, and gave 66 presentations, 23 sermons, 1 TV interview, 4 radio interviews and 3 press interviews.

A few pictorial notes - the list is not even intended to be complete - from his itinerary may give you an impression of some of the stations of his fundraising trip:

Neuburg, 27 September:

Presentation at St. Peter's Parish & meeting with many members, including Johannes Lagleder & Hans & Albertine Sporer. 29 September - 1 October: Presentations at Descartes High School.

Manching, 30 September: HI Mass & meeting with our member Fr Peter Wagner



St. Ottilien, 3 October: Our members Br. Dr. Ansgar Stüfe and Archabbot Jeremias

Schröder at the missionary exhibition "Education changes worlds" featuring our AIDS education and our pre-primary school.

Greußenheim, 6 October: HI Mass & presentation & meeting with our member Marianne Oschmann & family & Werner & Hedwig Neckermann.

Würzburg, 7 October: TV interview with Andrea Haagn.

Rüsselsheim, 7 - 9 October: HI Mass, Presentation & meeting our member Fr Michael Eich.

Mainflingen, 8 October: Presentation



Elsendorf & Appersdorf, 9 - 13 October: HI Masses, presentations & meeting with our member Fr Arnold Pirner & Hanna Stadler's family.

Pilgramsberg, 10 October: Presentation & meeting with our donor Fr Schottenhammel & Fr Gérard's ordination class.

Aachen, 14 October: Meeting with Claudia Goebbels of Kindermissionswerk.

Cologne, 14 - 15 October: Meetings with our member Günter Hupperich & Malteser Auslandsdienst (Mr Ingo Radtke) & HI Mass with the community St John the Baptist.

Ehreshoven, 16 October: HI Mass & presentation on the "Day in honour of Blessed Gérard" at the Spiritual Centre of Malteser Germany meeting several of our members, members of the Order of Malta and Malteser Hilfsdienst.



Rastatt, 18 October: Our member Dr. Andreas Heinze had organised an

exhibition of the "Künsteratelier Rastatt" which donated paintings which were sold in support of our work. The artists handed the proceedings over to Fr Gérard.



Karlsruhe, 18 October: Dr Heinze & Mr Halmich invited Father to give a presentation to their Malteser Hilfsdienst branch.

Kronau, 19 October: HI Mass

Oyten, 20 - 21 October: HI Mass, presentation & meeting with Deacon Thomas Müller & his wife, who want to come to us as volunteers.

Hamburg, 21 - 22 October: Meeting with our members Tim Stohrer & Dr Peter Franke



Ebnath, 22 - 23 October: HI Mass & presentation & meeting with Susanne Stadler's family.

Selb, 23 October: Presentation at Malteser branch meeting our member Klaus Wotzka.

St. Ottilien, 24 - 25 October: World Mission Sunday - presentation meeting our members Therese Prinzessin von Bayern, Rainer Opgen-Rhein, Fr Wagner, Mr & Mrs Sporer & presentations at Rhabanus Maurus High School.

Neuburg, 25 October: Presentation for Lions Club meeting our benefactor Udo Leitenstern.

Berlin, 26 - 27 October: Invited by our members Diane Freiin von Wrede & Walid Nakschbandi Father went to the capital of Germany and gave a presentation to high-ranking members of the German government and leading journalists.

Munich, 27 October: HI Mass & presentation for members of the Order of Malta.

Weiden, 27 - 31 October: Interview at Radio Ramasuri and the "Der Neue Tag" newspaper & HI Masses & presentation at Sacred Heart Parish & meeting with the parents of our



deceased great benefactor Fr Michael Wittmann (Mr Wittmann had suffered a stroke the day before).

The Wittmann family donated Fr Wittmann's chalice to us!

Schäftlarn, 30 October: HI Mass & presentation at Lourdes pilgrimage society meeting our member Antoinette Keßler.

Ottobrunn, 30 October: HI Mass at Albertus Magnus Parish.

Tann, 31 October - 1 November: HI Mass & presentation meeting our member Sr. Cilli Schedel.

Falkenberg, 1 - 2 November: Presentation meeting many relatives of Fr Gérard including our member Alois Göllinger.

Altötting, 2 - 3 November: Presentation meeting our members Anna Spielmann, Prelate Maximilian Absmeier and Anna Folger.



Passau, 3 November: Meeting with Father's teacher in the New Testament, Prof

Franz Mußner, who supports us financially and through his daily prayers.



Schweiklberg, 3 - 4 November: Meeting with Father's teacher in dogmatics and Missionary Benedictine, Abbot Christian Schütz.



Sechtenhausen & Unterschneidheim, 4 November: HI Mass & presentation at our member Fr Peter Winter's parish.

Munich, 5 November: HI Mass with the community St John the Baptist & presentation.

Puchheim, 6 November: Presentation for the scout group meeting our members Walter & Barbara Ruhland, Elena Schmidt, Silke Sehling & Beatrice Neher.



Nußdorf, 7 November: Father opened the jubilee project of Malteser Hilfsdienst in the archdiocese of Munich and Freising. They are celebrating the 50th anniversary of their foundation and decided to give their celebration a special aim by supporting our work, especially our hospice, children's home and malnutrition clinic. (Picture: MHD Diocesan manager Christoph Friedrich & our member Gabi Rauecker)

St. Ottilien, 8 - 9 November: Presentations at Rhabanus Maurus High School & in the novitiate.

Gröbenzell, 9 November: Presentation organised by our member Felix Mallmann.

Augsburg, 10 November: Meeting with the head of the Diocesan Mission Department Prelate Dr. Bertram Meier.

Nabburg, 11 November: Presentation at Schmeller High School meeting our member Wolfgang Schneider.

Weiden, 12 November: Presentation at Augustinus High School (where Father Gérard matriculated in 1976)

St. Ottilien, 12 November: Presentation for the monastic community of the archabbey.



Bittenbrunn, 13 November: HI Mass & Benefit wine feast organised by Mr & Mrs. Stutz.



Rudelzhausen, 14 - 15 November: HI Mass & presentation at our most faithful benefactor Fr Georg Weinzierl's parish.

Munich, 15 November: Life interview at Radio Horeb organised by our member Monika Reimer.

Regensburg, 15 - 16 November: Meeting with Bishop Dr. Gerhard Ludwig Müller, HI Mass at Father's



home parish, presentation & visit to our member Mrs Inwald & family in

Bach & press interview at "Mittelbayerische Zeitung" organised by our member Gregor Tautz.

Munich, 16 - 17 November: Radio interview by St. Michaelsbund, press interview by the Catholic News Agency, meeting with members of the Order of Malta by invitation of our member Nadine Baronesse Redwitz, HI Mass & presentation for Malteser Hilfsdienst.

Eichstätt, 18 November: Presentations at Willibald High School.



Neuburg, 18 November: Another meeting with our honorary dedicated member & representative in Germany, Father's brother Johannes.

Amberg, 19 November: HI Mass & presentation at Holy Family Parish.

Eichstätt, 20 November 2004: A special highlight concluded Father's fundraising tour, a benefit concert "dialogues" by the Willibald High School at the University of Eichstätt. The Willibald High School chose us as the beneficiary of their Christmas fundraising action this year.



Munich, 21 November: Our honorary dedicated members Hans & Albertine Sporer,

who had hosted Father not less than ten times during his tour and are two of our most faithful supporters, and our members, Father's brother Johannes & sister Mechthilde say farewell to Father at Munich airport.



We are most grateful to them and to all others, who support our work so steadily and faithfully.

WELCOME to all our new members:



Two angels made from flesh and blood



Hanna Stadler is a Registered Nurse from Maltersdorf/Germany and she volunteered to come to us for a whole year. She arrived on 16 May 2004. Hanna is a textbook example of a most dedicated, happy and uncomplicated personality, highly skilled and experienced in her profession and absolutely faithful and persevering in her duties. She has lots of good ideas and is a source of inspiration especially when dealing with difficult patients. Nothing is too much for her and nothing too difficult or below her dignity. She needs not to be instructed what to do when, but she has a watchful eye and a ready heart to put into action whatever is needed to look after those in her care and make them feel better and loved.



Susanne Stauffer is a music and dance therapist from Ebnath/Germany who studied and works in Salzburg/Austria. She also offered us a whole year of her life to help us in our work as a volunteer. Susanne arrived on 1 September 2004. She has a contagious laugh and an absolutely sunny personality. Susanne gets on exceptionally well with everybody. She takes great care and shows high responsibility when dealing with our children in the Children's Home or our patients in our Hospice. Susanne shows great empathy for those in her care and understands well to stimulate the children and to occupy the patients.



Hanna and Susanne have become big friends not only with one another, but they have also a very nice and friendly relationship with management and the other staff and volunteers in our care centre community. It is an absolute pleasure to have them here with us and we thank them wholeheartedly for their great and most valuable help.



Durban's Mr. Charity: Our member Victor Claudius

Mr. Victor Claudius, our member of nearly four years, has raised in excess of R110,000.00 during this short time, through his extremely hard work and perseverance. Over and above the money which he has collected for us he has donated goods such as: 40 beds and mattresses; dining room furniture; twelve picnic sets for the playground; five television sets and a video machine; a microwave oven; two chests of drawers; various blankets, toys, videos, books and clothes; biscuits, sweets and cakes at Christmas & Easter.

Some of the ways in which he raises the money is through recycling Christmas cards

for resale, he holds second-hand book sales, he raffles donated items and he makes collections in shopping centres and at sports stadiums.

By far the biggest event was the concert, which he produced to raise funds for the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard.

This year was the third concert, which was held in our honour. The Big Band Variety Show was a great success. The South African Police Services Military Band got the crowd singing and clapping as they played well known tunes. The choice of music was excellent, including three of the languages of our province - English, Zulu and Afrikaans. The concert was a great success having made more than R12,000.00 profit.



Mr. Claudius works tirelessly to help those less fortunate than himself. He really cares about others, with little thought for himself and continues to raise funds to help us carry out our work. We are enormously appreciative of Mr. Claudius' very hard work and selflessness.

Rev. Sr. Fides, Frau Trude Adriaans-Böttcher, Mr Pierre Nicholas Armani, Miss Samkelisiwe Cynthia Bhengu, Mr Cyril Siyabonga Sondoda Biyela, Mr Nimrod Muzi Biyela, Frau Adelheid Blechschmidt, Familie Frank Blechschmidt, Frau Katrin Blechschmidt, Rev. Sr. Wivina Maria Francisca Bornauw, Dr. Dominique Albert André Boubouleix, Miss Basukaphi Fortunate Buthelezi, Miss Ngame Precious Buthelezi, Signore Mario Carnevali, Mr. William Carter, Mr. Zdirad J.K. Cech, KM, Mrs Mpathoni Silindelokuhle Cele, Mrs Vishaka Chinnapen, Sr. Elizabeth Anne Coetzer, Mr Jonathan Cook, Rev. Sr. Paula Irena Julia Depuydt, Signore Francesco Paolo Di Giovanni, Miss Slungile Sthembele Dlamini, Miss Phumzile Nonhlanhla Dlamini, Rev. Wilhelm Max Dorenbos BA MA, Mr Oleg Drozdov, Miss Thabisile Maureen Dube, Miss Lydia Fikile Dube, Frau Andrea Edenhofer, Herrn Dr. Arnulf Emmendorfer, Rev. Sr. Elisabeth Alice Gerarda Foulon, Dr Lerato Gabela, Frau Edith Göllinger, Herrn Alois Göllinger, Herrn Werner Gross, Miss Kennie Pretty Gumede, Miss Phumelele Innocentia Hadebe, Rev. Sr. Marie-Therese Julia Herman, Frau Beate Hirschenkrämer, Miss Khanyisile Phumzile Nokwanda Hlatshwayo, Mr. Lawrence Solomon Hlongwana, Mr. R.A.U. Juchter van Bergen Quast, Frater Damian Junge O.S.B., Miss Sanelisiwe Happiness Khumalo, Miss Thulile Bridget Khumalo, Miss Fikile Sphiwe Khumalo, Herrn Alexander Kirsten, Familie Günter Kornmann, Miss Liane Legey, Miss Promise Linda, **Mr Peter Robert Loyd**, Miss Zandile Lushozi, Mrs Sarah Macmillan, Herrn Klaus-Dieter Maier, Miss Thulisiwe Princess Makhoba, Miss Thembaphi Nokuthula Makhoba, Frau Sarah Matzenbacher, Herrn Dr. Thomas Mayer, Frau Angela Mayer, Reverend Sister Basil Mbonambi O.S.B., Mr Frank G A McCullough, Miss Nonsikelelo Ourelia Mchunu, Miss Zikhokhile Nelisiwe Mchunu, Miss Zimisozenkosi Precious Mdletshe, Miss Zanele Proginah Mdletshe, Herrn Wolfgang Meier, Mrs Shirley Lydia Meyer, Miss Zandile Precious Mgenge, Miss Summerose Sinenhlahla Mgobhozi, Miss Promise Thandeka Mhlongo, Miss Nelisiwe Maureen Nokukhanya Mhlongo, Signore Salvatore Millefiori, Miss Beauty Zothile Mlambo, Miss Londiwe Nomvuyo Cynthia Mlambo, Miss Honnorratter Thandekile Mngadi, Miss Veli Mandi Mngomezulu, Herrn Clemens Monninger, Herrn Gerhard Monninger, Frau Maria Monninger, Miss Nontobeko Mpanza, Miss Sizakele Lorraine Mpanza, Miss Sanele Vuyisiwe Mpontshane, Miss Ntombifuthi Zanele Msane, Miss Silindile Sylvia Msweli, Miss Khanyisile Faith Mthembu, Miss Ntombikayise Nonhle Mthembu, Miss Charity Mthembu, Miss Nomalungelo Noluthando Valentia Mthethwa, Miss Samukelisiwe Believeness Mthethwa, Mr Mpiionhle Halalisanzi Zephania Mthethwa, Miss Nondumiso Mthimkhulu, Miss Busisiwe Fikile Mthiyane, Miss Fortunate Gcinile Mtshali, Miss Celani Nozipho Mtshali, Mr. Mduduzi Nkhulumeli Hezekia Mtshare, Corporal Augustino Munika, Miss Rosemary Nomusa Mzimela, Miss Prudence Buyi Mzimela, Miss Happiness Zanele Mzimela, Miss Sindisiwe Ntombiyenkosi Mzimela, Rev. Sr. Rafaela Nalecz, **His Eminence Wilfred Fox Cardinal Napier O.F.M.**, Miss Ntombenhle Bridget Ncube, Miss Mpume Portia Ncube, Miss Babongile Nokubonga Ndimande, Miss Nelisiwe Happy Ngubane, Frau Agnes Niebler, Miss Ntombifuthi Precious Nkwanyana, Miss Nonkululeko Nelisiwe Felilius Ntanzu, Mr Lindani Msizi Ntshayintshayi, Miss Balungile Mary-Jane Nxumalo, Signore Davide Palladinelli, Reverend P. Godoffred Palmi O.S.B., Miss Bonisiwe Cynthia Phakathi, Reverend Sister Cornelia Phiri O.S.B., Mr Stefan Pieksma, Rev. Sr. Wilfrieda Cerafine Cornelia Platteau, Mr Ivan Podvorec, Mrs Sandra-Leigh Porter, Miss Roxanne Porter, Herrn Joseph Puchner, Firma Lackierbetrieb Marcus Georg Pult, Frau Stefanie Purtscher, Miss Nonhlanhla Fortunate Qwabe, Signore Samuele Ranzato, Frau Monika Josefina Reimer, Hochwürdigen Herrn Pfarrer Wolfgang Schmid, Mrs Sheilagh Dawn Schröder, Frau Simone Schwalbe, Dr. Saba Nongcebo Shembe, Miss Fakazile Purity Shongwe, Mrs Therese Sidmouth, Frau Sarah-Ann Spenzel, Frau Johanna Stadler, Frau Susanne Stauffer, Herrn Adalbert Steimer, I H Elisabeth Gräfin Strachwitz, **Lady Patricia Mary Talbot of Malahide**, Miss Gabisile Lillian Thabethe, Herrn Bernhard Thoma, Dr. William Timlin, Ph.D, Signore Cristian Tramelli, Signore Cristian Tramelli, Herrn Heiko Uhle, Frau Renate Uhle, Rev. Sr. Yolande Verholle, Mr Johan Viljoen, Miss Tanya Michelle Warren, Frau Elisabeth Weigand, Dr Charles Wilson, Mrs. Trudy Winkler, Mr. Erich Amadeus Winkler, Miss Hlengiwe Angeline Ximba, Miss Nelisiwe Veronica Zikhali, Miss Siphesihle Zodwa Zikhali, Miss Andile Witness Zitha, Miss Sethabile Holliness Zitha, Miss Agrineth Nomathamba Zulu, Miss Zama Victoria Zulu, Miss Cynthia Nombulelo Zulu, Miss Roseline Bongwiwe Zulu, Miss Vumile Nombuso Zulu, Miss Octavia Philile Zuma.

Membership statistics on 10.12.2004	Active		Spiritual	Total
	Members	Donors	Supporters	
South Africa	559	109	70	738
Germany	68	262	107	437
USA	18	29	31	78
Italy	3	22	26	51
Great Britain	14	1	7	22
Denmark	0	1	19	20
Ireland	2	7	2	11
Austria	2	2	7	11
Canada	0	3	6	9
France	2	3	2	7
Netherlands	1	2	2	5
Australia	0	3	2	5
Belgium	2	0	1	3
Czech Republic	0	2	1	3
Hungary	0	1	2	3
Tanzania	0	0	3	3
Kenya	0	0	3	3
Seychelles	0	2	0	2
Spain	0	1	1	2
Mexico	0	1	1	2
Poland	0	0	2	2
Portugal	0	0	2	2
El Salvador	0	0	2	2
Venezuela	0	0	2	2
Croatia	0	0	2	2
Switzerland	1	0	0	1
Norway	1	0	0	1
Argentina	0	1	0	1
UAE	0	1	0	1
Nigeria	0	0	1	1
Zimbabwe	0	0	1	1
Andorra	0	0	1	1
Finland	0	0	1	1
Malta	0	0	1	1
Brazil	0	0	1	1
Chile	0	0	1	1
Peru	0	0	1	1
Indonesia	0	0	1	1
Japan	0	0	1	1
Philippines	0	0	1	1
Singapore	0	0	1	1
Russian Federation	0	0	1	1
Sweden	0	0	1	1
Total	673	453	317	1443

NB: Active members outside South Africa are members, who have held in South Africa as volunteers. These members keep their active status. Many of them continue to support us actively, e.g. through fund-raising and canvassing for membership.

The "Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard - NEWS LETTER" is the official mouthpiece of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard and is edited by the Management Committee of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard.

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