**Archdiocese of Chicago**

**Mission Appeal Presentation by:**

**Benedictine Sisters of St Agnes, Chipole, Tanzania**

**Eighteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time**

**August 1-2, 2020**

Dear brothers and Sisters in Christ, (good afternoon/ good evening/ good morning). My name is Sister Gloriosa Komba. I am a Benedictine Sister of St. Agnes from Tanzania in East Africa. What a privilege it is for me to be with you today although in this virtual manner with this written presentation. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic the Archdiocesan Mission Office wisely decided not the have personal presentations for mission appeals this year. Therefore, I am most grateful that our community has been invited to be one of the mission organizations to participate in this particular way, on this weekend.

***Note: The following section [ - ] can be included in this presentation after a brief homily by the celebrant. Or if desired, this section [ - ] can be eliminated to shorten the presentation.***

**[**I think it is very providential that when reflecting on mission today we have this beautiful Gospel…the miracle of the multiplication of loves and fish, an event that is cited more often than any other in the Gospels. In this event Jesus demonstrates some vital aspects of mission: Rather than send the people away, he says “no YOU feed them”. Then they bring out what was available, 7 loves and 2 fish, which equals “7”, meaning to these people “all that is needed”. Then after feeding the 5,000, figuratively which represents all of Israel, they gather 12 baskets’, meaning the old 12 tribes are now done, the new 12 must share this special presence of Jesus with the entire world. And here we are today, about to break this living bread together, as best we can during this difficult time.

Now, let me describe how I, as a Religious woman and the members of my community try to make this Living Bread present in our lives and the lives of those we serve. Making Jesus present to others is after all the main purpose for our lifetime commitment to Religious Life.**]**

Allow me to share briefly a few things about our lives and ministries. Our Congregation was founded just 75 years ago. However the Lord has already blessed us with over 500 Sisters, with 48 Novices and Postulants. We Sisters serve in 12 Dioceses in Tanzania. Our ministries include education, health care, pastoral work, an orphanage and serving people with special needs.

I am pleased to say that in our Community we have Sisters trained as Teachers, Dietitians, Doctors, Catechists, Nurses, Trade School instructors. You can imagine then how we are able to touch the lives of many thousands of people, many of whom come to meet Jesus Christ for the first time through us.

I would like to briefly share with you just a couple of examples. For many years our Sisters have maintained a residential facility for orphans. These children are between the ages of one month to eighteen years old. They come to us in many ways. Some of the children have literally been left at our doorsteps as newborn babies. I remember in one case on a Sunday morning we found a little baby wrapped nicely laying on our doorstep. We were not able to find the mother. This girl is still with us, now in our secondary school. Sadly, I must say also that, others have been abandoned on rubbish heaps because the poor mothers simple cannot afford to care for a child. Your donations will be put to very good use to help so many.

Another example is one of our dispensaries which serves 8 villages, and it is the only medical facility in the entire area, serving thousands of people most of whom are very poor peasants. We have provided this service for many years with our Sisters who are doctors, nurses and other health care providers. Recently, after many years of fund raising we were able to build an entirely new Health Center. We were very excited about our move into a new facility.

However, literally days before we moved in, the newly installed gas system had a break and the building was completely destroyed by fire. A very sad day to our Sisters, and those needing medical help through our clinic. We are not discouraged; we are making do with the old dispensary, and struggling to raise money to rebuild again.

The second collection today will be an opportunity for you to join us in carrying out the work of Christ among the neediest of God’s people. For these people whom we serve, our lives as Religious Sisters and our ministries clearly shows them that God has not forgotten them.

I sincerely thank the archdiocesan mission office for inviting me to be with you today. Be assured of my prayers and the prayer of my Community for all of you as we daily remember our benefactors. Thank you and May God bless each and every one of you.