

SISTER SHALOM, Prioress of the Community of Emmanuel, Bafut, Cameroon

Watch and Pray

I wish to say thanks to Mother Mireille and Br. Alois and his community for inviting our community all the way from Cameroon to be here and to share this afternoon. I am here on behalf of many sisters, to share a little with you how we have benefited from and related to the life of Brother Roger, even today. Our community still uses the Taizé prayer book. When the Deaconesses of Reuilly were gaining grounds in the religious life, Sr. Magdalene Mireille was a member of Reuilly. She developed a desire to bring this way of life to her Church in Cameroon, the Presbyterian Church.

After many years of discernment and formation, she went back to Cameroon in 1967 with three other sisters from Reuilly. In 1971, Sr. Magdalene Mary started a community in the central region of Cameroon. It was not easy at the beginning. She received a lot of persecution from the Church and even from individuals. But, because of her faith and perseverance, the community was gradually growing. Then, in 1975 the Presbyterian Church welcomed the community in the northwest region. They also welcomed her with theological training, and she was ordained as a pastor. In Matthew 26:41 we read, "Watch and pray." These words were received by Sr. Caroline, the founder of our mother house, during her prayers. These words were so deep in the mind of Mother Magdalene Mary, in her devotion she also received a similar word, in Isaiah 62:6. and put them in her own words. "On your walls, Jerusalem, I have placed watchwomen; they must never be silent, day or night. They must remind the Lord of his promises."

Our sisterhood has tried to live according to this call, wherever they are. We have taken a certain responsibility to pray and to watch. Contemplating Jesus Christ on the cross, through our daily prayers. Reconciling, and trusting one another, through the art of metanoia. Our world today needs men and women to pray, to share in common with people, and to live the Gospel. We do that. Every two months, the sisters choose verses from the Gospel, and they try to live according to these Bible verses. In this way the Bible can be put in practice in our community.

No matter the challenges we face as religious, we are sometimes not looked at, but we continue to practice love for the sake of Jesus Christ, through the celebration of our daily offices and by meditating on the Gospel. We practice unity among ourselves, and to the world as well, by sharing and accepting each other, especially in times of difficulties. Our prayer life is interwoven with activities such as farming, raising cattle, the pastors' attire, the liturgical vestments of the church, and communion wafers, which are made by the Emmanuel sisterhood. We also have the guest house, where we welcome people and listen to them. Some sisters work in the hospital and schools. And we have a center for disabled children. To conclude, we live a life of prayer, reconciliation, and trusting one another. And through this, we have been experiencing God's love among us, no matter what our differences are in our day-to-day life.