



GOOD WORKS

Worldwide Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

COLLABORATION in Village and Parish

Health Pastoral on the Island of Marajó, Brazil

By Sister Maria Socorro Oliveira da Silva, SND

Health care is a primary concern for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur on the Island of Marajó, Pará, Brazil. They have initiated a Health Pastoral on this island to provide support, spiritual encouragement, information about the rights of infirm persons, and to offer an alternative mode for treating illnesses. They encourage good health and healing by natural means, with fewer chemicals in the body, when possible and feasible.

The project began with women leaders giving their time in service to alleviate the suffering of people living in poverty who are not able to get to doctors and do not have the money to buy medicine. The Sisters, working with women leaders in the town of Breves, participate in a pastoral approach to health care. They search, through home remedies, to alleviate and cure illness. Sr. Maria Vagner Souza Silva, SNDdeN began the Health Pastoral in the town. Now, Sr. Maria Socorro Oliveira da Silva, SNDdeN visits the sick in the community and meets monthly with the women to discuss what would be the best way to make the home medicines. Her previous two years of experience in health and pastoral care has been beneficial for the people. The Sisters in



Sister Maria Socorro prepares herbs for alternative medicines.

the local community give support as well to these endeavors.

Experience of Growth

The Health Pastoral offers an alternative for treating illness. In September 2015, the Sisters invited from the mainland a woman who has a long experience in furthering education with home remedies for healing. For three days, the people participated in workshops on remedies for colds, oil for massage and special



Sr. Maria, with six other women from Our Lady of Fatima Parish, make home remedies for the sick and infirmed.

medicine for anemia. His experience enabled the women leaders, and infirm persons in the neighborhood to have a greater understanding of alternative medicines. The workshops were a great success. The people believe strongly in healing from medicines made with plants and natural herbs. In fact, they usually search out these alternative methods. Now, about 30 families benefit from the consultations and the use of alternative medicine.

The neighborhood has about 4,000 people and is growing every day. The group of seven women, including Sr. Maria, find this outreach demanding. They make home remedies of natural materials: leaves, flowers, barks, oils and water. These remedies sometimes work more slowly than chemicals, and require many visits, but they are generally more effective over the long run, and certainly are less expensive. Receiving invitations from the sick, the volunteer helpers are generous and patient, as they visit monthly about 40 persons in their homes. Since the sick are so weak and frail, even conversations become limited. In all visits, prayer is essential to the healing process. The community of Our Lady of Fatima is the most active in the Parish. The opportunity to serve in this Health Pastoral has called for growth in a spirit of compassion and solidarity in the community. The leaders and volunteers rely on two important ingredients for this service: the love of the sick and faith in the loving action of the good God.