



# CB Inter In

Number 58, October 2009

Sisters of Charity of St. Charles Borromeo

## “I planted, but God gave the growth”

With these words of Saint Paul, sr Regina, the regional superior of Tanzania, has expressed her thankfulness for 50 years of God's wonderful works in Tanzania. The tiny little seed planted and fostered by our pioneers from the Netherlands steadily grows and bears much fruit, as we can see today. We know that they, and also the sisters from the next generation, have worked hard. And of course, they may be very proud of the result of their work, but once again, like Saint Paul, we must be aware that finally it is God who makes them grow.

In this issue we would like to invite you 'to pay a visit' to Tanzania through the articles written by our missionaries as well as by our Tanzanian sister.

To celebrate this golden anniversary in a more festive way, the next issue of CB Inter In will especially offer ex missionaries the opportunity to share the joys and pains of their apostolate in Tanzania. We eagerly await your writings.

On behalf of the editorial staff  
Sr Vincenza Pranawanti

## God's miraculous works in Tanzania

Sr Regina Sumiyatni  
Moshi, Tanzania

*“For what is Apollos and what is Paul? The servants through whom you came to believe, and each has only what the Lord has given him. I did the planting, Apollos did the watering, but God gave growth. In this neither the planter nor the waterer counts for anything; only God, who gives growth. It is all one who does the planting and who does the watering, and each will have the proper pay for the work that he/she has done. After all, we do share in God's work, we are God's farm, we are God's building” (1 Cor. 3:5-9).*

When our CB-sisters started their mission in Tanzania in 1959, they were

asked only for ten years but President Nyerere said: “We still need specialists.” We planned to stay for ten years only, but through the sign of the needs there, the sisters continued to do their mission.

In 1980, after having been in Tanzania for twenty years, the GB decided to let the CB-sisters strike root in Tanzania meaning that we opened our minds and hearts to welcoming Tanzanian girls who had the desire to join our Congregation.

In 1987 one sister from another congregation liked to make the transfer to our Congregation, and we accepted

*Lourdes grotto in the garden of our formation house in Arusha.*



her. Afterwards we started welcoming the girls one by one. All came to follow our way of life. Since we neither had a formator nor a formation house at the time, we kept sending them to the Philippines for formation until we started our own formation in 1999 in Tanzania. Up to now every year one or two girls still come in who want to join us. When I said yes to being assigned as a formator in Tanzania, (even though I was aware that I couldn't speak English well, and that I had to learn Kiswahili which is not easy) it was because I heard the Lord say: "There are some candidates for CB in Tanzania, I will send you there to take care of them, and I will be with you and work within you."

That day I promised to go and stay there for ten years only, because I am no longer young, but... not my plan, not our plan, but God's plan must be accomplished.

*Not to us Lord, not to us, but to Your*

*name give us the glory, for Your faithful love and Your constancy, for what You have done for the CB Region Tanzania. (Ps.115,1).*

Let my daily prayer for this Region be of inspiration to you:

"My Lord and my God, everyone, everything belongs to You. You give everything, You send everyone, You do everything in everyone, in each one of us, You watch over us, care for us, manage and plan everything for each single one of us. There's no expressing to how great our gratitude is for whatever You have done for us and in us. We continue to beseech Your help in caring for everything that awaits us, happens to us, in caring for all the sisters of this Region. That they may live in unity, in good health and in deep prayer. Bless our willingness and struggle to seek and do Your Will, bless our efforts in walking towards the self reliance of each community: Sengerema, Ndala, Yombo, KIA, Tengeru, Nairobi and Elizabeth. For, they all belong to You, You have Your own plan. Show us what to do, show me what to do. I am only Your servant and an instrument in Your hand, Lord, only present to do what You command me to. Use me according to Your Will, make me humble and meek, teach me to love each one whom You send to me, all alike, teach me to be patient, and wise. Amen."

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## To be like Christ

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**Sr Marichu Cultura  
Musuan, the Philippines**

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As Christians we were taught by our parents and elders to be good and to do good, especially to have fear of the Lord. The word Christian comes from Christ who is both human and divine. He is the One we try to follow by imitating His words and deeds in our own simple ways. The challenge for us religious, who have a vocation to love, is even greater. I have a responsibility to love and care for my brothers and sisters, especially those in need. Just like a character in a certain movie I have seen once so aptly said: *With great powers come great responsibilities*. Although in reality, to be a religious is not to have power and position or have people put you on a pedestal and admire you. Rather, it is a life dedicated to living the life of Christ, hence, to be like Christ. It is to others to love God and fellows so that justice and peace may reign. It is quite easy for me to say pleasant words to others or challenge them to change their ways. But when it comes to my own self, I sometimes feel sad and frustrated to the extent that I question my own self, my existence, my vocation as an instrument of love.

Violence is rampant in our society - rape, robbery inside the campus of CMU (Central Mindanao University). What is more painful is that some cases happened within the premises of our convent. The perpetrators did not give even a little respect to the church. It seems they do not have fear of God anymore. At times it also happens that even in our own families, we are strongly challenged to stand up for truth and be effective witnesses of Christian values such as promotion of the sanctity and integrity of life, and protection of the voiceless and marginalized. What a task to be God's presence amidst a society marked with conflicts and twisted values!

I must admit that sometimes it is difficult for me to reconcile those things that I have learned in my formation with my concrete experiences, especially with the present situation of my family. At this moment of my life, what I am holding on to is the goodness of God which gives me sufficient strength and courage to live life day by day. Helping me too to keep on going are the good memories I have with my family and the support I get from my commu-

nity. They may not utter any word for me, but their presence, smiles and their looks inspire me to keep moving on in spite of the difficulties I face.

May God always sustain us in our vocation and protect us from the difficulties that sometimes tend to wear us down.

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# Who is willing to go to Tanzania?

Sr Trinita Beus  
Maastricht, the Netherlands

The Pope had called upon all the religious orders and congregations not to let Africa become a lost continent but to send labourers to work in the vineyard of the Lord. Our Congregation wanted to respond to this call and therefore asked who of its members was willing to go to Tanzania to serve the people there.

At the time I worked in the hospital in Zwolle, 'De Weezenlanden'. I really liked it there. But when the letter from Reverend Mother came I really got the vibes and volunteered.

To keep it short: beginning of 1966 I found myself at Schiphol Airport where also my family had gathered to see me off. The journey would take me to Tabora in Tanzania. When looking at the map you will see that this town is located between Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika. It seems like a small area but Tanzania is twenty-eight times the Netherlands!

Tabora was not our final destination. We had to go on, go bush, in order to get to Ndala. A settlement back then, where our Congregation had taken over the outpatients' clinic from the White Sisters who had served the people for many years. The idea now was to develop it into a little hospital. With the financial help of Miserior (German Lenten fund-raising appeal for mission-

nary activities in developing countries) the Congregation had set up a new building in which over a hundred patients could be admitted. When I arrived there, everything related to patients' care was still under development. There were seven of us, Dutch sisters, and we were all up and doing. But everyone was enthusiastic and, do not forget, we were young and up to almost everything. We all had various jobs, it was all part of the deal. In 1970 the first Dutch doctor arrived which meant that, if need be, surgery could be performed.

One afternoon, when I was working in the children's ward, a mother was sent to me from the outpatients' clinic with a boy of at least one-year-old. She had also brought her other son, a five-year-old. The message I got was that she was referred to me because the little one had not peed for two days! The doctor would come and thoroughly examine him after the clinics' closing time. But, I was so curious that I decided to have a look at him first. I saw, what I believed was a peculiar globular ball and put into force the emergency scenario. With thumb and forefinger I

started to softly massage the little boy's willie who screamed in pain. All of a sudden what I had expected happened. A jumbo size peanut slipped out followed by a spout as from a fire-hose. Immediately the boy stopped screaming. The mother who had followed everything with great interest said: "He put it there" and with a stern look she pointed at her five-year-old. Now that he was better they could go home again. Asante Sana Mama, thanks! She put the kid on her back, tied a big piece of cloth around him, took her other son, her luggage and left. Relieved the family went home again. Mission completed! Only another 10 km walk and than all the misery could be forgotten. This was just one of the many funny events.

I stayed in Africa for about seventeen years. Sometimes it was tough but mostly they were happy and beautiful times. My deepest intention was to present God's love and care to the people. This also goes for all my fellow sisters who dedicated themselves to this place. And just so you know, a little sense of humour always comes in handy.

*Sr Trinita (on the left) with her fellow sisters in Ndala community, 1975.*



# Midday, evening and night by the river

Sr Lijdtwijdt van der Drift  
Maastricht, the Netherlands

**Sengerema, December 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>, 1986**

After having driven 300 kilometres we finally arrive at Seronera, the first lodge in the Serengeti, Tanzania. We can go no faster than 20 km per hour in this wildlife reserve. The only thing that separates us from Seronera (one of the lodges in the Serengeti where you can eat and sleep) is a bridge over a river. It is raining, it is raining everywhere and it is raining all day long. Sometimes it is coming down in buckets with thunder and lightning, sometimes it is more like an old fashioned Dutch drizzle, a soft and monotonous curtain of rain.

On our left and in front of us the towering mountains of the Serengeti and surroundings. Mountains with witty names such as 'Kilimafedha', mini money mountain. It is one of the mountains we will pass once we have crossed the river. But it are the mountains on our left side, where the rain is coming from, that will destine the rest of our evening and night. Like a waterfall the river flows over the bridge to then, with a thundering din, throw itself in the depths below. From hearsay we know that you can hardly call it a bridge for, it has no railings and its deepest point is right in the middle. It is this bridge and this river we get to at three o'clock in the afternoon.

We are not alone. There are five small cars and a truck on the side where we are parked and two smaller cars and a truck across the river. We are informed that people have drowned here several times, among them also Dutch nationals. They did not live to tell their tales. The only thing we can do is wait for the water to go down. It is half past four, six o'clock, quarter to seven and suddenly it is dark. The truck ventures the crossing followed by three Landrovers with experienced drivers. The last car starts to slide and bucket dangerously when it reaches the middle of the bridge. It is only with great difficulty that it safely manages to get across. Seeing this as inexperienced Europeans is enough for us to decide not to risk anything, even though we are in a strong Toyota. Other cars are leaving, back to "Lobolodge" where they have come from, 70 km away from the river. We



*Sr Lijdtwijdt feels totally helpless being left to the capriciousness of the river.*

stay behind. So does a small Citroen in which we know an Englishman and his wife. We are four: brother Carlos, two H.T.P. students, Alexandra and Benedict, who are in training in the Same diocese, and I. Six people in an immense 'garden' of wild and tame animals. I don't feel at ease at all, am worried and feel totally helpless being left to the capriciousness of the river that, with great hostility, makes itself heard on its whirling fall in the depths below, like a roaring lion lost in the Serengeti and dangerous to life when you get near it. Water: a blessing and a calamity, a natural force but a dangerous power. Tomorrow is Saturday and we must get to Arusha, which is still 300 km away, for on Sunday morning at five o'clock a KLM plane will land there with on board sr Ellis and two friends and benefactresses of sr Tarcisius named Lies and Hetty. We must get there on time but the river just laughs at us, doesn't give a damn about what we feel we must. The evening is closing in.

It is inky dark now and we try to make ourselves comfortable for the night. Our Toyota is not so big, but we are tired and who knows what the night has in store for us. One by one the others doze off. But not me, I am too worried and don't want to lose control of the situation. It is still raining and the river is not subsiding. What about tomorrow? Go back home? 330 km? What

about our arrivers? We can't let them know anything and they are complete strangers in Arusha. On our left thunder and lightning, in front of me the mountains show up dark in the night. I feel miserable because of the tension and fear. After all, we are in the Serengeti, aren't we? It is going to be a pitch-black, long long night, full of fear and bogies. The others quietly sleep through. How is it possible! Twice, I spot an approaching car on the other side. I see it come and leave again. The clock strikes two, the clock strikes three and now and then I have a catnap. The night seems to last endlessly, time drags on. Finally, between six and seven, dawn is breaking, in spite of the persistent rainfall. I venture out and see a Landrover on the other side of the river and a man wading through the water. He is coming towards us. When he, much to my relief, has made it, I tell him that we are too scared to go. He leaves again and returns with another man soon after. He looks at the car with the eye of a connoisseur and asks us to get in. Now I have to surrender, there is no alternative left. Terrified as we are, we hold on to each other. I start to pray: "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Jesus, Mary, Joseph". It's the only prayer I can come up with right now. How small, how big my faith is in such moments! Carlos makes the sign of the cross, a huge one. Seeing this makes me laugh. In spite of everything

I haven't lost my sense of humour, not even now! Slowly but surely we get to the deepest point. Wildly the water washes against the hood, but dead calm, like a strong camel in the desert, the Toyota with this cool, self-confident driver takes this obstacle as if it were

a game. And then, all of a sudden we have reached the other side. What a relief! Alexandra starts to cry and I embrace and hug everyone within reach. It is unbelievable, the road is free and we can set off for Arusha. We waited eighteen hours and the fol-

lowing 300 km will take us another fourteen. But, we arrive at the airport, spot on and nothing else seems to matter anymore.

To me these are the kind of experiences you only want to have once in a lifetime!

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## Fifty years Sengerema hospital

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**Sr Marie Josè Voeten**  
Sengerema, Tanzania

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In November 2008 we entered our jubilee year.

The first big jubilee happening was the blessing of our chapel, located next to the children's ward. Sengerema Hospital has a long tradition of pastoral care: first by sr Tarcisius Heijmink and later on by a group of volunteers. It had all been started off with father Louis Broos in the eighties. For our prayer services we moved hither and thither at the time. Thanks to the Brothers a nice chapel was erected which now forms the heart of the hospital. What started off small by the Brothers of St John of God and the CB Sisters, has developed into a regional hospital with three hundred beds serving a district of 600,000 inhabitants.

In a spacious maternity ward with a new delivery room almost eight thousand children are born and in two well equipped new operating theatres, including the two old ones, 2000 major and 2500 minor operations are performed. Four hundred people on average visit the outpatients' clinics daily, including the mother and child clinic and special clinics. The two schools attached (degree in nursing and midwifery and degree in clinical care) have been extended recently which means that they can now take in 200 till 240 students. Bugando Medical Centre has entered into a joint venture for the practical training of first-year assistant medical officers in obstetrics, surgery, paediatrics and internal medicine. Students of the University of Nijmegen and, more recently also from the University of Amsterdam, still do their three-month internship in Sengerema. Together with the district doctor and his team we are responsible for implementing the annual health plan for the district. Important aim is to reduce mortality during pregnancy, delivery and after care. End of 2007 an emergency

service was set up which can, if need be, transport expectant mothers by car from the district clinics to our hospital. In December 2008 a brand new district ambulance was stationed with us. The district pays for this service, but it are the drivers, nurses and doctors from the hospital who, for a large part, attend to these calls. To this end every clinic has the cell phone numbers of the district doctor and of us. It would of course be better if the mothers-to-be should come to our hostel for the pregnant earlier so that professional help is at hand when they go into labour.

A new ward has just been built which can be used for quarantine but will, most of the time, function as sick-bay for eye patients. A study fund, financed by loyal partners such as Mesos Medi-

cal Centre, is essential in order to pay for the costs of over twenty students every year, both employees and students from our two schools, so that we can guarantee the quantity and quality of staff in times that people prefer to work for the government. We are extremely happy with the support from the Blankendaal foundation that, for five years now, has invested in structural advance, improvement of services, and working conditions. Mr Blankendaal is related to br Gabinus Blankendaal, one of the Founders of Sengerema, who, at the time, was the superior of the brothers.

In November we are planning to celebrate our jubilee with our friends, benefactors and ex-workers. We also hope to organize a symposium on hot topics for the future of church-bound care in Tanzania. Throughout the year extra help is organized for patients such as 50 operations for free in July for children with a cleft palate (paid for by AMREF and Smile Train), 200 eye operations for free (Rotary Club still has to consent), orthopaedic operations for children in October when dr Carl Unsicker will visit us again and special days for breast cancer screening, diabetes and swabs.

With Sengerema Hospital the Congregation has contributed to the development of health care in Tanzania which continues till this very day.





## Wounded earth

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**Sr Amelita A. Intervencion  
Musuan, the Philippines**

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Bukidnon is a highland paradise in the heart of Mindanao. It is a home to the world's biggest pineapple plantation. It is the biggest cattle-producing province in the region. It is well endowed with natural attractions like the Kitanglad Ranges that includes Dulang-Dulang, the second highest peak in the country. And it has been identified as one of the country's richest in biodiversity and endemic species of flora and fauna and rich in mineral resources.

Nowadays, Bukidnon is not exempted on a burning issue of ecology. Many of the Multi National Big Companies interred just to put up their business and unmindful to the ecological destructions of the environment, our Mother Earth. Given the immensity of abuse inflicted on Mother Earth and the whole of creation, the present ecological destruction is proven to be equally humanity's destruction. The centrality and dominion of human over creation are proven distortions of a supposedly mutual relationship of support and sustainability. A paradigm shift is urgent for the survival of all creation, humans included.

What I've experienced these days is, that the wounded Earth, our Mother Earth, is bleeding to death. As human beings claiming to be intelligent and

free we, of all creatures, are engaged in abusing the earth. Due to my greed I want the earth to provide me with what is already beyond her powers, using all means and ways that are proven destructive and disastrous to all creation. All the present natural calamities happening all over the world are mostly signs that the Earth cannot take it anymore.

The earth is my dwelling place; a habitat of life for everything created by God. In order to live and grow, interconnectedness is the name of the game. Mutual support and co-sustainability are needed in order for all species to thrive and survive. The whole of creation is in process, groaning towards its fullness in God. In the story of creation, every time God accomplishes one, the author closes it with God pleased by His/Her work and sees it good. This serves as a reminder to me that all creation partakes in the spirit of God and manifests God's creative power and providential goodness. In short, the divine dwells in the heart of all creation.

I am also a product of God's creative power that is entrusted to me. Thereby, the truth that my existence is of interdependence with the intelligence of other creatures is proven. I have long

forgotten this truth and I overpower all the rest of God's creation, an act detrimental to the survival of all created reality. A wounded humanity, a wounded world, a wounded creation are what comprise my contemporary reality. Humanity, world and the whole creation need healing. Healing is only possible when a tight relationship is restored. Reconciling paradigms and actions in all relatedness are needed in order to put things in harmony according to God's purpose when He/She breathed life into all created reality.

The beauty of creation especially the beauty of Bukidnon lies in the gift of life and the consciousness in marveling at all these. First and foremost, I am challenged to promote human dignity and the dignity of God's creation. I am challenged to participate in the unfolding event of God's kingdom here on earth. In spite of the damage done to our creation I can still help rebuild it together, by changing my attitude towards environment by looking at it as part and only ground of every living creature. I need to thank God for His beautiful gifts, respecting nature, caring for it and developing it for my needs and for the needs of future generations. I need to know who I am and what I am for in the face of all created

# How big their smile

Sr Beatrice Ekisa (novice)

Tengeru, Tanzania

“Let Mary be the source of our joy. Let each one of us be Jesus to her.”

No one got to understand humility as well as Mary. She was a servant. Being a servant means to be at people’s beg and call with joy. Joy was the Virgin’s strength. Only joy could give her the strength to walk up the hills of Judea to carry out the tasks of a servant without getting tired. We too have to walk without stopping and go beyond the hills trouble. What a good example!

During my apostolate with the disabled Sibusiso children, I was very much challenged seeing that some of the children could not talk or walk, even standing upright was difficult for them. But, how big their smile, how cheerful their laughter and how joyous, especially when they receive physiotherapy. They are happy with everyone and are so grateful with any help.

Coming to the self, you find that always being joyful is very hard. Why? A question to which there is no answer. Mother Elisabeth, too, is challenging me to be a simple and joyful person because this can be a medicine to a lonely, desperate individual.

This takes me back to my heart. What is it that is not always active within the self? **‘Jesus being the answer’** is inviting me to meditate upon His wounds so that I may gain all the graces and answers to my troubles. And this always takes me to the cross at least once a day. For I know I get the secret of joy. And this has assisted me in the small Christian community to share my joy with our neighbours and also to encourage them on how to achieve it.

My experiences with these Sibusiso children have really uplifted my spiritual journey through what I learn from them. Thank God that I do take these challenges positively. That is why I am happy with my apostolate and why I am ready to share my experiences with my community members. Through this I learned again that **‘love begins in the family’**.

So, let us not be afraid to love to the point of hurting. Jesus Christ being the best example. He suffered for the sake of the whole world. He was not choosing who and who. This brings me back again to our fellowmen. We do assist

them in two ways, spiritually and materially. We give what we can afford and they appreciate it very much. Sometimes only a big smile is enough for them as some suffer because of loneliness especially the aged. Some feel they are being rejected by their families. But, when we visit them, they become a source of joy, of love to themselves and of fellowmen, too.

Above all I can say that every individual in this world is disabled in one way or another, but the solution to all disabilities is prayer. And we are encouraged to pray wholeheartedly, taking prayer as part and parcel of our journey towards the Kingdom.

things. I am much reminded to respond to my call to reclaim the integrity of creation, not to further degradation of the environment. I am part of the whole creation. Each of us is a caretaker of some niche of God’s created order. I

am called to be an instrument of healing in a broken world, to bring hope and life to our mother earth. There is no one here who is not steward over the created order. I need to take a hard look at the quality of stewardship over

creation. I need to re-examine the way I think and act, to affirm and support better what I am presently doing that is environmentally responsible and to critique and challenge what is irresponsible and unsustainable.



## Shaped by life choices

Sr Jocelyn P. Gutang  
Pagadian, the Philippines



Three pioneers (from left to right: sr Waltera, sr Gervasio and sr Hungera) bid farewell at Schiphol before leaving for Sengerema, Tanzania.

*“In the light of the Spirit who unites and guides the whole Church we realize the evangelical mission in our country as well as in other countries”*

*(Constitutions 47)*

### Colofon

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Wherever we are at in life or business is a result of the choices we have made. Though one's life may be shaped by choices, I do believe there are outside forces or factors that can create setbacks. But, it is still my choice as to how I will respond to incidents and situations that determine whether or not I move forward or fall behind. Obviously, choices have a profound impact on one's life.

In a few reflections I would like to share something about the choices that we have. The first is the choice to LISTEN. One of the best ways to build a connection with others and with inner selves is to listen to them. For me, to really listen beyond what one says and feels is quite difficult. Fears, worries, inhibitions and pride hinder me to listen. It takes months and years of struggle to listen to what my body tells me. And thus it also took time before I was able to tell to my superior about it. Worse, I was so scared when listening to the doctor's advise 'that I would have to undergo mastectomy'. It was God's grace and the support of the sisters that finally gave me the courage and strength to submit myself for surgery. The second choice is the choice to take care of one's HEALTH. This really appeals to me this very moment The protestant preacher says: "Our body is a temple, but many people treat it like an old house. On the way to get more

and more, they sell out the one key thing money can't buy; physical well being." Yes! there is a great truth in this. No amount, how big or small, can buy physical well being. Taking care of adopting a healthy lifestyle or not is my choice. To take enough rest or not is my choice. To eat healthy food and do exercises or not is my personal choice. To be rigid and to be calm or not is my choice. I realized, this only after I got sick I started to be more conscious and really took the effort to discipline myself in order to recover. It would have been much better of course had I decided to develop the discipline to live a healthy lifestyle earlier in life. I think, it is not too late, yet.

The choice to connect with the HIGHER POWER. Spending time for prayer and silence or not is my choice. The deeply spiritual people believe that life lived in prayer adds dimension to each day something which is nearly impossible to grasp for non-believers. At this very point in my life, I experience hope and energy when I am exhausted. Prayer gives me wisdom when I am confused and courage when I am fearful. In all these moments of trial and difficulty. I know God is there sustaining me. Whenever I experience inner void and emptiness or feel that my life lacks greater purpose I am challenged to connect myself to the SUPREME ONE.

