

# He taught us to love

SR MARY MCHUGH

*I*t was a hot August afternoon in St Columban's Hospital, Mokpo, Korea. I was hurriedly preparing medicines for a few hundred people who had come from faraway places for treatment that day. One of them was an ill young mother who asked if she could have a few words with me. We stepped aside from the crowd.

"Sister, in our village a young boy is dying for the past week and is in a pitiful condition. I wonder if the sisters could do anything for him," she said.

I assured her that although I couldn't move until after 5:00pm, I would go out and see the little fellow then. She was happy.

I went out in our ambulance to the village of Mauna. We were soon directed to Gino's house. The little boy was suffering from bronchial pneumonia. He was five years old but looked much younger. He was lying on a sheaf of rive straw in the barn, gazing into space. The flies were buzzing around him, sometimes sitting on his face, yet he never blinked an eyelid.

His mother had died at childbirth. He was mentally and physically retarded. His father was up country trying to earn a living. The grandmother was trying to care for three other children in a small space.

As I picked up the little bundle, I was afraid the bones would break through his skin. I wrapped him in a towel and took him to our hospital. As we got to the admissions desk I wondered to myself, "Where on earth am I going to put this little body?" He needed total care, so I thought, "He will have to go to the intensive care unit."

When we got there the head nurse was horrified when I appeared with my smelly little bundle. "Sister," she said, "You are crazy to admit this little boy. You know he will never be any use to society, even if he does get

well. There are many more deserving people waiting for this bed." She muttered as she looked away from Gino and fumbled with the papers on her desk. I thought first, "She's right. This is a waste of money." Then somewhere deep down inside I got the courage to demand that Gino be given a chance.

She reluctantly took Gino and put him in a corner bed. Then she assigned two student nurses to care for him. They bathed him gently cleaning his eyes and mouth, making him comfortable as they talked to him, smiling.

Soon the doctors gave him big doses of antibiotics and vitamins. The young nurses took Gino under their care, spending hours trying to feed him fine gruel. They then made a collection from other parts of the hospital to buy food they thought he might like. From bright coloured paper they made toys to hang around his bed. They brought their own transistor radio so he could listen to music.

Before long, Gino's lovely brown eyes came alive, and he began to smile, especially towards the nurses who cared for him so well. Indeed he had his favorite one. His wizened face became round and beautiful.

When he got well we sent him home. His care was followed up by the students. I went back to the head nurse to thank her for taking such wonderful care of Gino. She said to me, "We needed Gino more than Gino needed us."

I thought, how true! I too needed Gino. I needed to be reminded again of the worth and dignity of the human person irrespective of the handicapped mind or body that held it.

Gino had evoked more love, caring and sharing in the hospital community than maybe I had done at that period.

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REMEMBER THE MISSIONS

IN YOUR

WILL

*We cannot take our earthly possessions with us, but we can so dispose of them that our good works will continue after we are gone. A bequest to help missionaries bring God's saving message to non-Christians is a practical way of showing our love for Christ.*

*Why not speak to your lawyer about it?*

## FORM OF WILL

I give devise and bequeath to the Superior for the time being of St Columban's Mission Society (see below for local address) the sum of

\$ ..... for the use of the said Society.

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