



## *Solidarity with our sisters in Africa*



### **Message from the Community**

Welcome to the **Fifth Edition** of our newsletter. It has been a challenging task to select and edit material for this edition as there has been so much choice!

We were thrilled that so many of you were able to meet 5 of our African sisters personally when they were with us in the summer – and for those of you who didn't manage to meet them, we include an abridged version of their moving testimonies in this edition.

We were pleased to hear of the progress of so many of the projects in both Congo and Rwanda and you will see in this edition how our support of the nutrition centre has been able to feed many malnourished children over the last year.

You will also read of the progress of the new foundation in Kindu in the Congo. During the summer, it was also agreed that this mission house will start a process towards becoming our third autonomous priory in Africa. You can imagine that this decision provoked much rejoicing and loud singing and dancing in Africa!

Very little news makes its way from either country to our news desks, but you may have heard that in August there was a 5.6 magnitude earthquake which centred on Bukavu in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, killing two children, and whose shock waves were felt into Rwanda.

The sisters described graphically how they were drawn from their beds in the middle of the night in fear and how that fear lasted for

several more days as they were unsure whether there would be further tremors or whether the volcano looming over them in Goma would erupt. A small example of how life there is daily fraught with new and old concerns and challenges.

This year has marked our first venture as a Community into sending a young volunteer out to Rwanda to teach the sisters English. We were thrilled to have chosen Phoebe Lim and look forward to her tales on her return. All being well, this could herald further similar openings!

To conclude we would like to thank you all personally for your support and interest. Your friendship, prayer and material support for our courageous sisters in these vulnerable countries means a lot to them and to us.

With love from the Community



Left to Right : S. Véronique, S. Petronella, S. Teresa, S. Marie Rose, S. Antoinette, Phoebe Lim, Claudia Lim, S. Therese, Fiona Lim

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## AFRICAN SISTERS VISIT UK – JULY 2015

We were delighted to welcome several of the sisters from DR Congo and Rwanda in July this year. Pictured left to right: S. Antoinette (DRC), S.Petronella (Prioress DRC), S. Véronique (DRC), S. Marie-Rose (Rwanda) and S. Thérèse (DRC, not pictured below).



The sisters were attending the Prioresses Conference which was held at Howe Close in Colchester.



Whilst they were in the UK, the Prioresses gave a talk about DR Congo and Rwanda. The occasion presented an opportunity for the sisters to give more information about their work and to thank people who had been involved in supporting them with fundraising and with their prayer.

Summaries of their talks follow.

## DR CONGO UPDATE **S. Petronella**

A thank you first of all for the welcome extended to S. Véronique and S. Thérèse over the two years they were in England and for giving them the great gift of learning English.



The Priory in DR Congo was founded in 1966, in a period between the two wars in DR Congo, by Mère Hadewych from the Belgian Community. In that period poverty, malnutrition and lack of education prevailed. Unfortunately that is still the case nowadays in many parts of our country.

Our Priory in DR Congo has 223 sisters currently and the number is growing. We have 18 daughter houses in the Congo, two in the Cameroon and one in Brazil. There are also 7 houses which are temporarily closed due to the war.

Our mission as Daughters of the Resurrection, is to “dry the tears of God wherever he cries”. We are mainly active in rural areas where poverty is particularly high. We live alongside people, sharing their daily lives.



Our life is based around total devotion to God in the practice of spiritual guidance, prayer, Community life; this life is defined by joy, spirituality, hospitality wherever we are called to live.



We walk alongside those traumatised by war, those victims who have been stripped of everything. We visit poor families, abandoned children and elderly people.

We are involved in the promotion of women through practical training; teaching embroidery, sewing, cooking, soap making, reading and writing. These women together will, in the long term, improve the situation of the local society.

Our sisters work in hospitals, dispensaries, maternity wing, psychiatric centre, in our nutritional centre. We also work in a centre for mentally ill and in the prisons. The work is very important in a region such as ours, which is incessantly

ravaged by war. Many people suffer traumatic experiences. It is a question of healing those wounds.

The conflict, which has lasted 21 years, has now killed millions of people and left countless others injured. Currently, yet again in the East of the Congo and to the North, we are faced with another rebel offensive.



Education of young people occupies an important place in the apostolic work of Daughters of the Resurrection. Through our schools and catechetics we teach forgiveness and reconciliation.



The lack of education has a serious impact on the whole of society. The poor people who the Lord has sent us are these abandoned children, left to their own devices, with 'no way out'.

These children and young people are the future of this society ravaged by violence.



*Orphans found on the road to Mirhi – 2011*



*Four years later (2015), after regular visits to the Nutritional Centre and now in school*

It is in this difficult context that we are active in DR Congo. During these last few years a total of 9 of our sisters have been killed. The war and constant insecurity have consequences for us in our everyday lives.

Despite that constant threat our sisters stay faithful to our mission to help and live alongside the poorest of the poor. We are grateful for all the support you give both financially and spiritually as we try to convey the hope of a better future for the oppressed people in our country.

## DR CONGO COMMUNITY CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

This year celebrations begin in DR Congo, which lead up to 5 November 2016 when it will be 50 years since the foundation of the Daughters of the Resurrection in DR Congo.

The Community began in Bukavu (South Kivu) in 1966, under the guidance of Mère Hadewych, a Sister of the Belgian Order of Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre. She was helped by a Norbertine father, Père Werenfried Van Straaten (founder of Aid to the Church in Need). He provided financial support and direction.

The Priory was founded in the period between the two wars in DR Congo. Mère Hadewych, who had been working in the Congo since 1934, was struck by the misery of the people and a desperate need to help them. The survivors of conflict had terrible malnutrition and at that time most of the population in rural areas was illiterate. Mère Hadewych saw the need to set up an Order in the Congo to help the people there. After lobbying the local Bishop the 'Institute of the Resurrection' opened in November 1966 for women prepared to live a vowed life in the service of others. Numbers grew from year to year and eventually the Order became properly affiliated to the Association of Order of the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre, sharing the same Constitutions and the same spirituality and charism. There are now well over 200 sisters in DR Congo.

The Community in Rwanda was also started by Mère Hadewych, who in response to an initial request for help from a priest in the Nyundo district in the 1980s, sent the first sisters, from the Congo to Rwanda in July 1982. The Community in

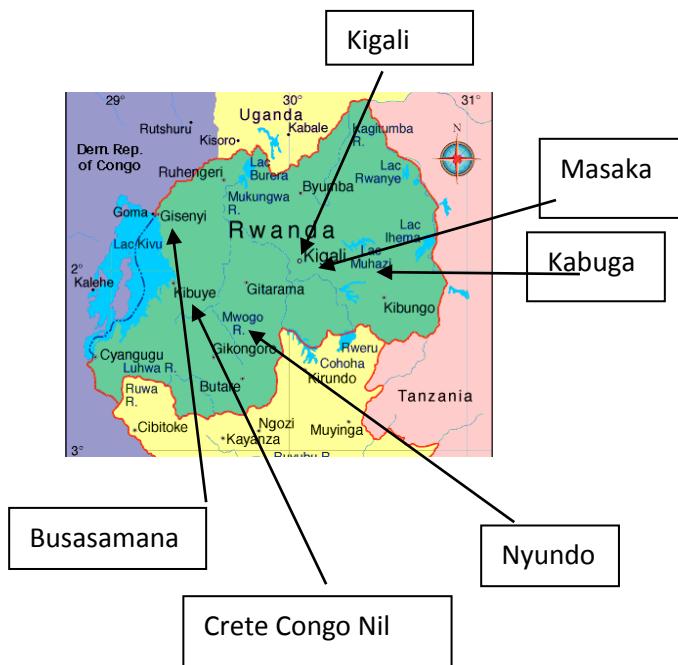
Rwanda grew and they eventually got their autonomy in the Association in 2011, when S. Marie Rose became Prioress.

There are several events planned over the course of this coming year in DR Congo in anticipation of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and we will report further in our next Edition!

### **RWANDA UPDATE**

**S. Marie Rose**

The Rwandan Priory has 34 sisters, 5 novices and 10 postulants. Numbers are growing and there are between 3 and 5 new entrants each year. The sisters are engaged in 6 smaller communities in Rwanda.



The sisters in Rwanda work in education, health centres, they take care of the sick, teach catechetics and are involved in agriculture.

There were so many consequences for the Rwandan people following the 1994 genocide: poverty, trauma, lack of infrastructure. Many could not access school and others did not have the money

to continue their secondary education. Above all it was young women who did not have the chance to continue their studies.

As there are few schools in Masaka, for example, we have found it necessary to open a nursery school.

(Also see report on the Primary School project in Masaka on Page 8).



We have young children in the schools who are sad and unhappy. The sisters work alongside them to gain their trust and slowly the children open up to them. For most, the main reason for their problems is that their parents are in prison. It is not easy to resolve these problems but we have raised awareness with the other pupils and they collect small amounts of money to help their fellow pupils in need.

Each month we take something to the prisoners and they are happy that in this way we pass on our message of reconciliation and solidarity.

We do a lot too for the promotion of women. Many women in the villages do not know how to earn money. They rely entirely on their husbands so if they are abandoned by them they do not know what to do and have no training. So we teach them skills, for example sewing or making juice (see following photo) which they can sell.



We do a bit of everything in Rwanda, help in the fields, the garden, the kitchen and so on. It is our charism, but we are limited in what we can do depending on the funds we have.

Healthcare is another important area for us. We work in health centres, giving consultations, distributing medicines and assisting with births. In the health centres our sisters look after the sick without making any distinction between people. From time to time the sisters play a role of reconciliation between patient and nurse. There are sick who come into the health centre and when they meet a nurse whom they think took part in the genocide, even if there is nothing to link them directly, the patient can insult and humiliate them, and judge them incapable.

The sisters take care of the sick whilst convincing them that the nurse is good and caring. They then return to the nurse and explain that there are patients who still live with the trauma of the genocide and patience and courage is needed to get through this. The presence of the sisters is useful and irreplaceable in this role.

We try to give life and hope where life seems at an end and we are committed to breaking down the wall which separates us, whilst building a bridge which connects us; people come from both sides and they meet.

## LAUNCH OF OUR VOLUNTEER PROJECT TO RWANDA

We are very pleased to report that Phoebe Lim arrived in Rwanda on 5 October.



*Tea and liturgy with Phoebe's family, friends and Community at Howe Close*

You may remember in our last Edition we were advertising for two volunteers to go to Rwanda for 6 months. We were blessed with more enquiries than we had hoped for, we selected two people, but finally just one person, Phoebe Lim, travelled to Rwanda this year.

Having just finished her 'A' levels, Phoebe is on a gap year before University. She is excited about her new challenge. We also hope that the sisters will be able to enjoy Phoebe's musical talents. S. Marie Rose and all the Community are very pleased to welcome her.

After a short stay in Masaka near Kigali, Phoebe travelled West to Busasamana where she will stay for 3 months, living alongside the sisters there and then will transfer to Masaka until April 2016.

As the official language in Rwanda has changed from French to English, the sisters now have to take exams in English. So by helping them with their English, she is also helping the Rwandan people.

## KINDU, DR CONGO

In 2013, our African sisters sent a small group to Kindu which is the capital of Maniema province in D R Congo.

It has a population of about 200,000 and is situated on the Lualaba River at an altitude of about 500 metres, and is about 400 km west of Bukavu.



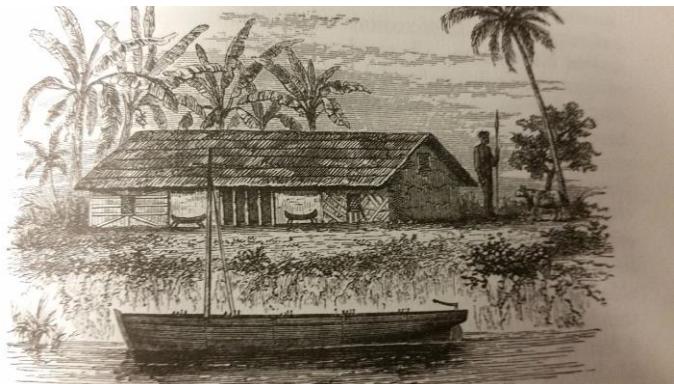
*Kindu is divided into two by the river Congo and is one of the places where Stanley & Livingstone met*

Kindu is linked by rail to the mining areas of Kalemie, Kamina and Kananga to the south. It also has an airport with a 2,200 metre runway and has historically been an important port along the Congo River system.

The town was an important centre for the ivory, gold and the slave trade during the nineteenth century. Arab-Swahili slave traders were based here from about 1860 and sent caravans overland to Zanzibar.

Henry Morton Stanley came upon "this remarkable town" on 5 Dec. 1876, describing it as "remarkably long" with a "broad street, thirty feet wide, and two miles in length" and "behind the village were the banana and the palm groves".

Margaret Mary and I were fortunate enough to make an official visit there this summer 2015.



*Ikondou village as seen by Stanley*

We struggled somewhat with the climate – a humid 35+ degrees daily which sapped our energy and made nights long and rather wakeful!

In that context we marvelled at what our sisters have achieved since their arrival.

They have cleared lands and turned them to pasture; they have started and manage a now thriving livestock for the Diocese; they have turned discarded huts and shacks into rooms to live and work.

We found it strange to see how a place geographically so close to the large towns around Lake Kivu can be so different in every way. Despite it being alongside the River Congo and one of the significant places where Stanley and Livingstone met, it is largely a pagan area where young people and families lack any real moral compass.

The sisters (there are now 8 of them) have made themselves accepted by the local people, through their hard work and their unfailing spirit of service and love for all.

They have used this base to begin to evangelise at a very basic level and are collaborating with the (relatively few) priests to baptise and bring basic material and human support to all the people of the area.



*After Sunday mass – Margaret Mary with Soeur Marguerite and some of the many children they have catechised*

We are pleased that a few more sisters will join them later this year and they will start to work in local schools and other services.

After our visit there we returned to the Priory of Mirhi where we were pleased to be present at a meeting of the sisters which gave enthusiastic endorsement to the proposal to start a process towards Kindu becoming an autonomous Priory.

Before that can happen, the group needs to be self-sufficient financially and we are working with them to see how we can support the creation of works for them which will bring in some regular income – eg their own pharmacy and host-making workshop.



It is an exciting new venture and we are very hopeful for its future.

Please pray for them – and watch this space!

S.Moira  
August 2015

### **PRIMARY SCHOOL IN MASAKA, RWANDA**

The Community in Masaka is situated not far from the capital of Kigali; by car it is 40 km from the airport, depending on the traffic.

Most of the population live off the land (traditional agriculture – “hoe farming”) with a small amount of livestock (goats and cows). The harvest always depends on how much rain they have had, as in this area water is scarce.



It is a population where the majority of the adults are illiterate; most of those who can't read, write or count are female, so that amongst young women, more than 15% are illiterate.

Masaka does not have a good State primary or secondary school. There are private schools which are aimed primarily at the lucky few, but most parents can't afford to pay school fees: hence few students study at or finish secondary

school. The dropout rate is still high in this area.

All these reasons, lead us towards wanting to build a primary school where we can provide basic education. Because many parents are uneducated, they have not sought, nor have any influence, to change this situation but they do have trust in us, as Religious and we can persuade them that without studies there is no development.

S. Marie Rose  
July 2015



We are sad to report that the development of the primary school has had to be halted due to current lack of funds. We will report on the situation in the next Newsletter.

### TREATING MALNOURISHED CHILDREN

*A report and thank you from DR Congo – August 2015*

Many of you have supported our efforts to fundraise for the work our sisters are doing in DR Congo with orphans and undernourished children.

In August 2015, S. Moira and S. Margaret Mary visited the Congo and spoke with S.

Valentine Mastaki who is responsible for the nutrition programme. The stories she told them were very moving and they were impressed by S. Valentine's practical and 'hands on' manner.

The service that the sisters now offer is the result of several visits from the sisters to the sick and poor in the villages. The sisters reported back to the Community about the malnourished children. The Community then responded by inviting the children to come every day for treatment until they got better.

Those who got better then spread the word about what the sisters were doing, so the numbers increased. As a result of that, the Community then assigned S Valentine Mastaki to the project.

Many children got better after treatment, but the information was not initially recorded. In 2014 S. Valentine began to register details of the children, their age, village, and their progress. It is wonderful to be able now to see such clear evidence of the success of their intervention.

S. Valentine gave Moira and Margaret a copy of their report on the work they had been doing over the last 12 months and showed them how they chart the progress of all the malnourished children in their care.

From their report we can see that in 2014 they treated 67 children aged between 11 months and 10 years, plus one adult. According to their statistics they were over 80% successful in their treatment for malnutrition (ie no longer needing treatment). Others are still undergoing treatment, some transferred or stopped coming. Two children died.

So far in 2015 (January to August) they have been treating 47 children aged

between one month and 9 years. As at August 2015 just less than 50% had been treated successfully but of course others are still undergoing treatment, so that statistic is hopefully set to improve by the end of the year. One child so far has died.

The end of the report contains a summary from S. Valentine. She says that there are many more who are sick but they just cannot take all due to lack of resources. They take the worst affected. Some of the children are so sick that they take them in and have to feed them through a nasal-gastric tube, until such time as they are able to feed themselves. Every Wednesday and Saturday they also teach the mothers about proper nutrition to avoid the children having a relapse.

Thank you for your support of our sisters and their work. We will update you again.

## FUNDRAISING

We are continually grateful to all our private donors and fundraisers.

Thank you to the Willis family and all those who came to a wet but wonderful Garden Party in the summer; to Peter and Eileen Webster and the Blessed Sacrament Justice and Peace Group who have run Quiz Nights and Lent lunches; to Annie Callaghan and the Brightlingsea and Wivenhoe parishioners who have raised money to buy solar lights and batteries for our sisters; to New Hall School and to all of you who help us to help our sisters in Africa.

**Don't forget about the Giving Machine** when you are internet shopping throughout the year. It costs you nothing and is simple to use, see the guide on our website:  
<http://www.canonesses.co.uk/news-events/africa-newsletters-and-fundraising/>

Alternatively you can donate directly via our website:

[http://www.canonesses.co.uk/shop-\(plusdonate\)/](http://www.canonesses.co.uk/shop-(plusdonate)/)

## NEW FUNDRAISING INITIATIVE!



Attached to this Newsletter you will see a flyer advertising a new 'Christmas giving' fundraising initiative, which we are piloting this year.

See <http://www.canonesses.co.uk/news-events/africa-fundraising/> for more details.

Money raised from this initiative will go directly to the sisters in DR Congo and Rwanda for the work they are involved in, which we report on in our Newsletter.

To purchase any of the 'gifts' go to our website SHOP:

[http://www.canonesses.co.uk/shop-\(plusdonate\)/](http://www.canonesses.co.uk/shop-(plusdonate)/), select and pay for the item you want, then we will send you the Gift Certificate in the post. Simple as that.

We also hope it helps you with ideas for your Christmas shopping!

Thank you to one of our friends for suggesting we set this up and for another friend for her help with the design.

Do keep the ideas coming!

With huge gratitude, love and prayer.

*Contact us:*

[crssuk@canonesses.co.uk](mailto:crssuk@canonesses.co.uk)

[www.canonesses.co.uk](http://www.canonesses.co.uk)

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