

## **Presentation by Sr Petronella, Prioress DR Congo**

**July 2015**

### **The Daughters of the Resurrection – DR Congo**

Firstly, I would like to thank you all for inviting us to share with you who we are and what we do. We thank you too for the welcome you extended to our Sisters Thérèse and Véronique who spent two years here. Through you they were fortunate to learn the English language, which is a great gift.

### **Foundation**

The Priory of the Daughters of the Resurrection was founded in 1966, in a period between two wars in DR Congo, by a Sister of the Canonesses of the Holy Sepulchre, Mère Hadewych. In that period, poverty, malnutrition and lack of education prevailed. Unfortunately, that is still the case nowadays in numerous parts of the country. The Daughters of the Resurrection follow the mission of their foundress to “dry the tears of God wherever he cries”. They have interpreted the signs of their time and have wanted the Daughters of the Resurrection to work with their local Parish, through their devotion to serve the poorest of the poor with whom they share their lives, and so witness their love of Christ who said: “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25, 40) art. 6 Directory

### **Presence of the Sisters of the Resurrection**

The Priory of the Daughters of the Resurrection today has 223 Sisters in the DR Congo, aside from Rwanda which is now an autonomous Priory. The Priory is present in the two continents of Africa and Latin America (in Brazil). We have a presence in the Cameroon. 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. We are open to the concerns of others. We are mainly active in rural areas where poverty is particularly high, we live alongside people, sharing their daily lives.

## **Apostolic work of the Daughters of the Resurrection**

The life of the Daughters of the Resurrection is based around total devotion to God in the practice of spiritual guidance, prayer, Community life; this life is defined by joy, simplicity, hospitality wherever the Sisters are called to live. Through their charism, they live in rural areas so they can share the lives of the poor as closely as possible and help them in the following ways:

### **a) Social care centres**

All the activity here is concentrated on the promotion of women, creating social centres, teaching embroidery, sewing, cooking, soap making, reading and writing. Two Sundays a month we also go to rural Parish communities to look after poor families, abandoned children and elderly people. What we do there is a mere drop in the ocean. The most important work for us is in the centre where practical training for young women is carried out. Those women together will, in the long term, improve the situation of the local society.

### **b) Morale**

Congolese women in South Kivu fell victim to the war in DR Congo from every point of view: death of their husbands, their children, in short, they were stripped of everything. The Daughters of the Resurrection walk alongside these women who, traumatised by the war, often need medical treatment in one of our medical centres or hospitals.

### **c) Care of the sick**

The Daughters of the Resurrection work in the hospitals, dispensaries, maternity wing, psychiatric centre, nutritional centres and give assistance to old and sick clergy. It was in one of the health centres in Kasika that our 3 Sisters were murdered in 1998. We also work in a centre for mentally ill and in the prisons. This work is very important in a region such as ours, which is incessantly ravaged by war. Many people suffer traumatic experiences. It's a question of healing those wounds. The conflict which has lasted for 21 years now has 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.

#### **d) Pastoral care**

In collaboration with the parish team the Sisters help prepare children and adults to receive the Sacraments, hold sessions with Lay Catechists, do home visits to the destitute and sick, visit prisoners etc.

#### **e) Teaching**

Given that this incessant war has even traumatised the little ones, and that it is very important, over and above anything else, to continue to talk about forgiveness and reconciliation, education of young people occupies an important place in the apostolic work of the Daughters of the Resurrection today. The poor people whom 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.

The lack of education in young people has a serious impact on the whole of society. Many young women turned towards prostitution to make a living and others are 'used'. In addition, the school system, because of low wages, is infected by a general state of corruption, from Primary level right up to Secondary and University.

#### **The spirituality of our charism**

The Paschal mystery is the heart of our life. We live it out in our daily life trying to share the suffering of our brothers and sisters. Through our listening, we give hope and joy to people who are discouraged, by showing that despite suffering there is still life. (Example: orphan children, the sick who find their smile again. In short, "living alongside" our little Bisimwa becomes our own).

#### **Conclusion**

It is in this difficult context that we, the Daughters of the Resurrection are active in the Democratic Republic of Congo. During these last few years, a total of 9 Sisters have been killed in the two countries. The war and constant insecurity have consequences for us, the Sisters, in our everyday lives. Despite the constant threat which hangs over us and can sometimes lead to death, we

stay faithful to our mission and we have confidence in the work of the Holy Spirit, who leads us and guides us in our mission. To be able to fulfil our task to help the poorest of the poor, we need your support both spiritually and financially. Consequently, we are grateful for your support in three ways. Support in prayer, in financial terms and by having supported our two Sisters who spent two years here. Thanks to your solidarity, we feel confirmed in our mission. We can convey the hope of a better future to the oppressed people in our country. Once again, thank you.