

Presentation by Sr Marie Rose, Prioress in Rwanda

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(Script runs alongside photos in Power Point)

Introduction: The Priory of Rwanda has been autonomous now for just about 4 years. We have 34 Sisters, 5 novices and 10 postulants. They live in 3 diocese with 6 communities. The Sisters have several missions of which: firstly prayer, care of the sick, catechetical, education, agriculture (garden and fields), cooking.

Prayer

A group of Sisters: they have just finished their retreat. Each year we make a retreat for 8 days.

Education

After the genocide, the Rwandan population saw so many consequences for example poverty, trauma, and lack of infrastructure... This is why some couldn't access school and others didn't have the money to continue their Secondary school studies.

You see those who learn to read and write but also learn how to make a vegetable garden.

Others learn to sew, it is above all girls who have not had the chance to continue their studies. When a family has lots of children they prefer to pay for the boys rather than the girls.

The Sisters knit jumpers for the children in Primary and Nursery school.

As there are few schools, nursery, primary or secondary, in Masaka, we have found it necessary to open a nursery school for children who have missed school, as many children otherwise have a journey of about 2 hours to get to school. During the weekend and the holidays they come into the Community to learn their catechetical.

Health

You see here the Sisters in the Health Centre. The Sisters do consultations, distribute medicines but above all assist with births.

Promotion of women

Many women in the village don't know how to earn money. They rely totally on their husbands and in most circumstances if they are abandoned by their husband, they don't know what to do and have no training. The Sisters teach them skills, for example to make juice which helps them earn money.

Other missions

We do a bit of everything, help in the fields, the garden, kitchen and so on. It is our charism but it costs us a lot.

Reconciliation

In the Health Centre, the Sisters look after all the sick without making any distinction between people and from time to time the Sisters play a role of reconciliation between the patient and the nurse. There are sick who come to the Health Centre and when they meet a nurse 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 at the same time as convincing them that the nurse is good, nice and cares for the sick. 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 to bear the humiliation is needed. In this role, the presence of the Sisters is useful and irreplaceable.

In catechetic, we teach prayer and when we have the opportunity we publish articles related to reconciliation and even broadcasts on Radio Maria. We have started a session one evening at the weekend for children aged 6 – 14, to teach them songs, games for their age group which express Christian and human values including: the respect for others and 'brotherly' love and we carry this

out by going to visit orphans of the genocide and children whose parent is in prison.

In education, we have young boys and girls who learn to read and write and others who learn to sew. Amongst them, there are those who are sad and unhappy, the Sisters try to accompany them spiritually and morally and little by little they begin to open up to the Sisters. For most of them 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 all the other pupils and they collect some small amounts of money to help their colleagues 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 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.