

Grace unfolding

Visit to our Sisters in the Sacred Heart Convent in Kabuhima, April 29 to May 9, 2010

Not yet five months passed since Bishop Ludowick Minde OSS, Kahama blessed and opened our new mission in Kabuhima, this was December 19, 2009. *Grace upon grace*, was our song then in our hearts and lips day and night. Now I see the grace unfolding in amazement and thanks to God. Our three sisters Sr. Elisabeth Tilly, Sr. Gonzaga Rutakwa, Sr. Joyce Nzuyu have started a life which is monastic and missionary, ever new striving for a genuine balance. Though the convent area needs still some necessary furniture and solutions are outstanding how to get the daily water yet the Sisters have their fixed prayer times with one hour lectio in the morning. They treasure the common meals with table reading and the community life as their support for so many pastoral and some social projects.

There is life on the parish ground until it is dark:

In the afternoon groups come to get classes for baptism, first communion. The children of the kindergarden have classes until 5 PM; some secondary students come for a tuition programme and at least two choirs practice until 6 PM. I met a group of elderly couples who came to register for getting their marriage blessed (27 couples will receive the sacrament at Pentecost); the last afternoon a group of lay people came to plan their mission work in preparation for Pentecost in the different outstations (27 centers and outstations make up the parish of Kabuhima with now 25.000 Catholics).



*Sr. Gonzaga
with girls of the
Maria Goretti group*



Sr. Joyce with the children

The Sisters visit one of the 14 Small Christian communities each Wednesday afternoon; I had the joy to join them. There are three government Secondary schools within the parish boundaries. The Sisters have been involved in all three of them with TYCS on a weekly basis. All the Catholic students and a number of those who want to be baptized are squeezed together for reading the gospel and praying. Many of those not yet baptized have parents without a proper marriage, therefore only the first and maybe the second child was baptized.

The sisters are clearly loved and wanted by the people, the charismatic parish priest Fr. Salvatore and the Bishop. They all thanked me for sending the sisters and expressed how well they cooperate with the people and how much difference it makes to have them. Of course the sisters go out to other centers as well; Sr. Joyce cares for the sacristy and the many small kids; Sr. Elisabeth started with a group of catechists and two schools, puts much efforts in finishing the house; Sr. Gonzaga started a group of 18 girls, Maria Goretti group, who attend a one year certificate course in sewing and other home craft with daily classes.

She leads a group of 19 girls who are interested in joining our Benedictine life. They wrote already applications to enter, 4 of them are in Form IV. She makes now plans to visit other parishes, starting with diocese of Geita. Of course she started immediately a vegetable and fruit garden. And there are so many activities of these missionaries with a burning heart. Now the primary school with English medium waits to be opened...

Bishop Minde said: “Really, you were brought here by the Holy Spirit and I hope the sisters will stay at least for 50 years!”

Sr. Raphaela Händler OSB

The Fruits of the Holy Spirit and Missionary Zeal

...and more news about Kabuhima...

It was the idea of Fr. Salvatore, the parish priest of Kabuhima Parish that the Christians should join hands with the Sisters in Evangelization of the region, to go from one small Christian community to the next, from one outstation to another in order to awaken the faith following the motto for Lent: You are the salt of the earth!

The faithful responded. We started our missionary journey with 13 missionaries. Every Thursday we met with the parish priest, gave report, received explanations and were sent to another community or outstation. Every Saturday we went in groups, one Sister with 4 to 5 Christians, where we were sent, preaching and praying with the people. In the evening we Sisters went home, but the Christians remained with the people till Sunday. After Sunday mass in Kabuhima we went back to the outstation we were sent to for Holy Mass, teaching and eating together. In the evening we returned home tired but grateful for being together with the people. More and more Christians joined our missionary journey. In the last week of Lent we were 47 missionaries and were sent to all 14 small Christian communities in the parish after we had visited all the outstations. On Palm Sunday all gathered together, even those who did not join the small Christian community for a long time. Many pagans started with lessons for baptism, those couples living together without marriage came to prepare for the sacrament. In the Vigil Mass of Easter 39 people, who had started the preparation already earlier could be baptized, on Easter Monday 37 children, all this by our parish priest Fr. Salvatore. We Sisters helped in distribution of Holy Communion to the many faithful gathered.

After Easter we continued with our missionary zeal: now with preparation of Non-Christians for baptism and for sacrament of marriage. The catechists worked really hard.

On Ascension we received representatives of the group of Legio Mariae from all parishes of Kahama diocese. Also they helped to rekindle the faith in the parish. They prayed together, got some teaching and ate together. Really there were many people. One small Christian community brought a cow to be slaughtered for the feast of Legio Mariae.

Pentecost was a special feast for the youth of the parish with its outstations and for all lay people. For Saturday before Pentecost the youth of the Secondary Schools had prepared some games and did some competition with the youth of the different villages which gave much joy to all participants and observers. At 8 pm all had supper together and at 9:30 pm Vigil Mass started which continued till 2 am. You might ask why so long. During mass many youth were baptized, received confirmation and 27 young couples the sacrament of marriage with baptism of their children. Really our parish priest Fr. Salvatore was tired. But still he danced to the local drum together with the youth, as if he would be from the same tribe – but he comes from Italy.

On Pentecost Sunday holy mass lasted from 10 am to 3 pm. On this feast day of the laity one Christian gave a touching witness of his faith. 27 couples, old and young, received the sacrament of marriage; children and grandchildren were baptized and got confirmation. After the mass we were eating with representatives of each small Christian community. It reminded me of the first Christians in the Acts of the Apostles:

One Heart and
one Soul in Christ

Sr. Gonzaga Rutakwa OSB