

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE APOSTOLATES IN THE VICARIATE UGANDA

The need of the time is the will of God". These words of our founder Fr Theodosius Florentini OFM Cap. and the motto of our Institute, bring out very well the essence of the mission and the apostolates in our Vicariate today.

The ministry of Jesus directs us sisters in our mission. *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. He has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he has sent me to heal the contrite of heart, to preach deliverance to the captives, and sight to the blind, to set prisoners free, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of reward".* Lk 4: 18-19.

In our apostolates we will find all these works of Jesus fulfilled, thus Administration, Social works, Formation, Education and Health ministries, trying to fulfill the mandate for which Christ called us.

On 6th October 1993, four Sisters arrived in Uganda. These are Sr. Amala Kunnath Nakakaawa, Sr. Veera Bara Nassuuna, Sr. Claudia Kerketta Bukirwa and Sr. Louisa Thomas Nakiwala. They took up the responsibilities of Administration, social work/formation, teaching and healing ministries respectively. Since then, we have responded to the need of the time through the above responsibilities as need arises.

ADMINISTRATION

When the sisters began in Uganda, it was a mission under the leadership of the Generalate directly from our Mothehouse in Switzerland and the local Superior was Sr. Amala.

On 12th February, 1999, the mission of Uganda was raised to the Vicariate level, being called Vicariate Uganda under the leadership of Sr. Amala Kunnath, Sr. Asha Gidh Namuli and Sr. Marianne Maduckayil Nansubuga. That's the reason we celebrate today 25 years of the elevation of the mission to the Vicariate level.

In 2005 another leadership Team was elected. From 2008, Sr. Lisa Mudoor Nabakooza was elected the new Vicariate Superior for three consecutive terms with the following team members; Sr. Veera, Sr. Genevieve, Sr. Claris, Sr. Gertrude Nampeera, Sr. Mary Margaret Nnassuuna. From 2017, Sr. Genevieve D' Silva became the new Vicariate Superior. With the following as team members; Sr. Claris, Sr. Mary Margaret Nnassuuna, Sr. Rose Nakitende. Sr. Sylvia Nabitaka joined the Team in 2021.

As we celebrate 30 years of our existence in Uganda and 25 years of the Vicariate, we have a new Vicariate leadership of Sr. Genevieve, Sr. Veera. Sr. Immaculate Birwanya and Sr. Auma Monica that will soon assume office. We thank God for all that has been able to be accomplished during all these years by each individual member of our Vicariate through the leaderships of our sisters. In each community a local Superior is appointed with certain responsibilities. At present we have the following local Superiors in all the seven communities;

1. Sr Bukirwa Claudia in Namugongo community
2. Sr Lisa Mudoor in Busunju community.
3. Sr Mary Grace Kayaga in Kiziba community
4. Sr Mary Margaret Nnassuuna in Kikyusa Community
5. Sr Maria Sarah Nabaggala in Osia community, Tororo
6. Sr Mariedita Kabajungu in Kempara community.
7. Sr Annuntiata Muhongayire in Bulimbo community in Kenya
8. Sr Immaculate Birwanya for the new community yet to open, Kitakyusa.

FORMATION MINISTRY

And Jesus turning, and seeing them following him, saith to them: What do you seek? Who said to him, Rabbi, (which is to say, Master,) where do you stay?" He said to them, " Come and see. They came and saw and remained with him that day". John 1:38-39

As soon as the mission began in Uganda, emphasis was put on forming young ladies who wished to join the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross. Vocation promotion is the first stage before admission to aspirancy. So, following the diversity of our Institute, girls from different places, tribes and cultures are invited to join us. On 16th June 1994 the first aspirants were received in the humble beginnings of formation in Kiziba. Many sisters have given themselves tirelessly to the formation of different stages. And on 15th February 1999, under the formation of Sr. Marianne as the first Novice directress, the first four made their religious profession in Kiziba community, Kiziba Parish, Kampala Archdiocese. These are the ones celebrating the Silver Jubilarians today. Formation ministry developed steadily and today we have;

- ❖ The aspirancy and candidacy stages under the direction of Sr. Mary Grace Kayaga, at Kiziba community.
- ❖ Postulants have their formation in Namugongo community with Sr. Prossy Nansereko as their directress.
- ❖ Novitiate is at Busunju Community with Sr. Imelda Namyanzi as the Novice Directress.
- ❖ Tertianship, a period in preparation for perpetual Profession is held at Busunju community with Sr. Lisa Mudoor as the directress.
- ❖ Ongoing Formation is done by Sr Marianne Nansubuga.

Formation ministry is a team work of many Sisters without whom it would not be possible. As we celebrate today, we are 80 sisters from Uganda, Kenya Rwanda and India sharing in the mission of Christ as need calls us. And wherever we are, we do catechism teaching, strengthening the faith of the people so that the faith of the Christians be strengthened. This is further developed during formation stages.

HEALTH MINISTRY

"We hurry anywhere where human need calls us". Mother Maria Theresa Scherer. These words of our Co-founder urge us to respond to the needs of the people especially carrying out Health ministries in the different communities where we are. Sisters directly serve in health centres or indirectly serve the people through visiting them in their homes and ministering to their different needs of body mind and Spirit. We are engaged in health apostolates in the following places;

- Ulrika Health Centre in Kiziba Parish, belonging to the Archdiocese of Kampala
- Holy Cross Health Centre in Kikyusa community, in Kasana Luweero Diocese
- Holy Cross Health Centre in Osia community in Tororo Archdiocese

We have also been able to collaborate with other Dioceses/ Institutes to carry out Health services. For example, in St. Padre Pio Health Centre run by the Capuchin Friars in Busunju, Mityana Diocese. Sisters too are being prepared to embrace this ministry through different Health careers.

SOCIAL PASTORAL WORK

We actively involve in social/ pastoral work. The old are cared for, the orphans and the widows are given first priority. Thus compassionate love for Christ crucified therefore compassionate love to their neighbour and especially the underprivileged. Catechists and the education of their children through the support of our Friends from Santa Maria Parish Hegne, Germany has boosted their family status and that of their children especially in Kiziba Parish. Many sponsored students through the same support have attained their goals. Thanks to our sponsors. Catechism teaching is one of needs where God calls us to respond. HIV/AIDs clients, counselling and treating them has become more of a pastoral issue. They are

welcomed and reassured wherever there is need. We care for their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Social work involves many areas of concern like caring for single mothers and raising the social status of women through self-help groups.

EDUCATION

Wherever you find a Sister of Mercy of the Holy Cross, there is always a school. It can be formal or informal. The sisters who came first began teaching in the schools around. So St Pius Senior Secondary School, Kiziba, is the first where Sr. Bukirwa Claudia taught. Other sisters continued thereafter. Other schools where sisters have involved in education ministry include:

- St. Francis Secondary School in Busunju, Mityana Diocese
- St. Padre Pio Primary School Busunju, Mityana Diocese
- St. Joseph Primary School Busunju, Mityana Diocese
- St. Kizito Primary School in Kikyusa, Kasana Luweero Diocese
- Kempara Primary School in Kempara, Mbarara Archdiocese.

As years went by, the Sisters constructed their own schools by the help of our sisters, well-wishers and benefactors. These are;

In Kiziba community, Kampala Archdiocese

1. Holy Cross Junior School,
2. Holy Cross Primary School
3. Holy Cross Vocational School in Kiziba to cater for girls who cannot go for further studies

In Osia community, Tororo Archdiocese

1. Holy Cross Junior School

In Kikyusa community, Kasana Luweero Diocese

1. Holy Cross Junior School
2. Holy Cross Secondary School

In Bulimbo community, Kakamega Diocese, Kenya

1. Holy Cross Junior and Primary School in Bulimbo community.

FARM AND GARDEN

We cultivate our own food to earn our living. And as St Paul says, "Anyone unwilling to work should not eat," this is our priority too. The Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross are hardworking. Wherever we are, we are surrounded by domestic birds like chickens, turkeys, guinea fowls, ducks, geese etc. Domestic animals too add to the reality of our Spirituality as Franciscans. Cows, pigs, goats, rabbits etc. All these contribute to the good health and to the economy of the sisters and the society which we serve.

PRAYER

"Much can be done with and for God", These words of our Co-Founder Blessed Mother Maria Theresa Scherer bring out the source from where we draw our strength as we carry out the above apostolates.

"Christ gave his life for us. We who follow him as Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross are drawn into his redemptive work through our service, prayer and suffering. To participate in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the saving action is our mission and our joy" Article 60

of our Constitution. We join with all the living and the dead through prayer. Our service to the people consists ultimately in this, that celibate, poor and obedient we are available to them and walk with them. Living in the spirit of the Gospel, we fulfil our task in the world and in doing so glorify the Triune God". Article 69.

Conclusion

As we celebrate 25 years of our first four Sisters and of the elevation of the mission to the Vicariate level, we extend our thanks to the great family of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross all over the world who have supported us in all ways. Gratitude goes to our Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala who welcomed us to Uganda and all the Bishops in the Dioceses where we serve from whom we have been able to carry out different apostolates in many Dioceses. All our friends, benefactors and co-workers thank you so much and may the Lord bless you abundantly.

Sr Mary Margaret Nnassuuna
Jubilarian 15th February 2024