



"The Christopher"

To the Ends of the Earth...

Eight months of life and mission in Uganda



From the left:, Sr.Mercedes, Nathalie, Sr Albertina, Sr. Joseane e Sr Addise

After careful preparation offered by the Institute, including the presence and expertise of therapist, Sabina Fila, the time had finally come to be here in Uganda.

We arrived on April 23 2019 during the octave of Easter, among people who looked at us with a certain shyness and suspicion – and with a question. “Who are our guests?” We remembered that they are people who have experienced the trauma of war and therefore, were scared, suspicious and afraid.

In the first few days, we stayed in Kampala, the capital city, to start the process for work permits to enable us to stay in

Uganda. We went to the Jesuit Center that welcomes and assists refugees from several neighboring countries, and that also offers English language courses.

We visited the ARU (the Association of Religious Life) Secretariat, the Bishops Conference, and also made some contacts to meet people and organizations that work with refugees.

Then we headed towards our new home in Dzaipi, which was not yet finished. Thus, we spent two months among workers who calmly finished the final details. We had challenges with water, electricity, gas, without internet etc. ... but thanks be to God, we were able to overcome them. Another challenge is the language. We are a community composed by five people from four different cultures and languages, living in the midst of a people where each tribe or group has its own language. Therefore, we really need to use translators, to have a lot of love and patience with ourselves and the people of this mission.

In May, we received a visit from Mons. Elizeo Ovure, who is the Episcopal Vicar for Refugees & Migrants in the Arua Diocese. We MSCs were looking forward to reaching out to the refugees and he told us: 'Be calm, sisters, let us go slowly'. He spoke about CARITAS and the person in Liliam who would take us to the refugees. In these first two months, we visited and met with groups of people who already work with refugees. We had meetings with some of them, where they presented their work programs. We also visited the Prime Minister's Secretary for Refugees. In each refugee settlement here, there is a large team of government officials, as the influx of refugees has provided employment for more Ugandans. The health sector only accepts Ugandan workers, while the schools in the settlements only have teachers from South Sudan.



Sr. Albertina

Also, during May, with the help of the Dzaipi Parish priests who are also refugees, we finally arrived in the settlements. We had prioritized four settlements: Pagrinya, Nyumanzi, Ayllo I and Ayllo II. We started visiting the schools, health centers, projects, the Professional Center & the home for children who lost their parents in the war etc. Each settlement has many communities and also other religious denominations.

We started by holding a meeting with each community, creating a space for conversation to listen to their needs, their greatest challenges and hopes. In general, everyone expected us (because we are foreigners) to bring money to build a church, water wells in some communities, medicine, food, support for the children's school. We did not promise anything in terms of 'money' but a presence to create conditions of life with dignity together.

Knowing the leaders of the communities, especially the catechists who are a highly respected moral authority here, we set out to visit and prioritized the sick, the elderly and orphaned children. Entering these houses, we encountered situations of extreme poverty, of the sick, the blind, and elderly people living alone, of adolescents taking care of their orphaned brothers & sisters, of young people dying due to snake bites, malaria, typhoid and other illnesses, due to a lack of medicine, poor hygiene, lack of food - their basic needs are not being met. Hospitals and health centers are very limited and cannot cope with the needs of sick people.

Another finding is the high number of children and adolescents (64% of the population are children) - we say, jokingly, that here it looks like a factory of children. Each family has five, seven, nine or more children. Education is another great challenge. With so many children, the settlements should have many more schools. Currently, classrooms have 70 - 90 children, and some classes more than 100 students. In such a situation, the quality of teaching must suffer. Here, almost all schools are fee-paying and cost quite a lot.

I could go on writing many things about my observations of these suffering people, who carry in their bodies, minds and emotions, the harsh experience of years of war, family & property losses, family separation and yet, they still know how to smile, to pray (they are a people of great faith), dance, celebrate life and live a simple life.



Sr. Mercedes

In these eight months, we have worked hard, and the first group of women in the St. Kizito community of Pagrinya is already starting to be born. We are weaving bonds and providing space to share their losses and pain. We have an agenda (a structure for each meeting) which includes welcoming, minutes of meditation, exercises (physical movements), sharing of the past week, followed by 40 minutes or an hour of manual work to help with providing food for their family. We imagine that in the future, these groups will also extend to other communities. These are small steps as we get to know this ground well, and we are discerning how we can better help these sisters and brothers of ours.

The experience of these months has made us look, evaluate, and focus, in this first semester, only on Pagrinya settlement. We will not abandon the other three settlements, but currently, our strength and time will focus on Pagrinya, which is the largest.

At this time, we feel supported and helped by the priests of the parish, accompanying us to the communities, presenting us at meetings, and translating in the various languages. Additionally, we thank our Bishop Odoko, Monsignor Elizeo, other Religious sisters & brothers, especially those who are working with refugees, plus Sabina Fila for her presence and valuable help. We thank the leaders of our Institute for their support and visits, for their confidence in us and for the mission, sending us into this portion of the Kingdom of God where life cries out.

Sr. Albertina, MSC



Natalie



Sr. Albertina

Our cabrinian community in Uganda

Some aspects of our Ministry - 2020

On Wednesday January 1, 2020, in our community chapel, we had Eucharistic Adoration and the rosary with a Catholic women's group, as we also do every Saturday from 5 to 6 pm. Earlier on the same day, Sr. Albertina and Sr. Mercedes, together with our translators, visited our neighbor's house. A translator and I went in a different direction to wish a 'Happy New Year' to those who were sick. We visited 4 families that day.

In one of the families, the mother's name is Patricia. She has 7 children, including a set of triplets (one boy and two girls). The boy's name is Francis, and the 2 girls' names are Albertina and Agnes. They are teenagers and in grade 7. Patricia suffers from mental illness. Most of the time she is stable, but at other times she experiences confusion. Her husband has two wives and is living with the second wife, while Patricia's children are suffering due to their mother's illness and worry about their education.



In the second family, the mother's name is Godfrey, her husband's name is Moses, and they have two daughters. Their father drinks too much and frequently beat their mother. The parents were always fighting. Then, 8 years ago, their mother suddenly disappeared and no one knows where she is. The two girls expressed to me that they don't know if their mother is alive or not. They said that if she is alive, they need their mom, but if she is dead, they need to know also, as they are suffering without knowing. Their father has a second wife and is living with her. The two girls are living with their grandmother. They are at school, but they attend for one year, then the other year, they work to get money for their needs.

In Pagrinia settlement, I met another woman, whose name is Lucy. She is 30 years old, and has 5 children of her own, plus her sister's 3 children. Her husband is dead. Lucy's sister and her husband were killed in the war. So Lucy is taking care of all 8 children. Life is very challenging, as she struggles to educate all of them and provide for all their needs.

We visited many families, and while visiting we saw many people with physical handicaps, such as those who can't walk but crawl on their knees, those who are deaf, are missing hands or a leg, plus those suffering other physical or mental disabilities. They have many difficulties.



From January 15 to 17, 32 young people from the Parish Chapel Youth Committee participated in an initial meeting of 3 days. Father James and I presented a lesson. My topic for the lesson was ‘what does the Word of God have to say about young people?’ I shared with them the many chapters and verses in the Bible that I thought would help to explain this question of ‘what does God want to do in each of you at this

stage of your life? And they also contributed their own opinions and ideas. They were very happy with the lesson and to be together.



On the last day, at the end of the lesson, they asked us if they could have a football and a handball, to play some times after Holy Mass, or on Saturdays and vacation time. They expressed that these kinds of activities can bring them together. These opinions came from the settlement youth and the young people of the host community church.

Suor Addise MSC

Sr. Addise



The Sisters and Natalie with F. James and F. Grace

Tertianship Program

19 - 1 - 2020



From the left: Da sinistra: Sr Asnakech, Sr. Berhane, Sr. Shitaye, Sr. Gloria, Sr. Aynalem, Sr. Meseret, Sr. Suany and ???

Dear Sisters,

We are about to finish the Tertianship Program, and we are very grateful for your prayers, support, generosity, love, kindness, and accompaniment during this year of the Tertianship, which has helped us to grow as Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

During the Tertianship, we have received formation from people who have shared from their own experience & expertise on many aspects of living Cabriniian consecrated life.

We have also participated in retreats, volunteered in a variety of ministries for the poor and emarginated, received spiritual accompaniment, completed evaluations and entered into therapy. Living in community together, working, praying, sharing our talents and gifts, taking on more responsibility, has deepened our commitment.

As we are closing the Tertianship Program and being sent to different missions, we would like to ask you to keep us in your prayers.

**“When we listen to the Word of God,
We obtain the courage and perseverance to
Offer the best of ourselves to others.”
(Pope Francis)**



Sr. Meseret, Sr. Berhane, Sr. Aynalem, Sr. Asnakech and Sr. Lucy

We thank the Institute for this wonderful opportunity to deepen our consecrated life and relationship with Jesus. Thanks to each of you for your constant prayers and loving support throughout this year.

We wish you all God's blessings.

With love and prayers,

Your Sisters of the Tertianship
community,

*Sr. Asnakech MSC
Sr. Aynalem MSC
Sr. Berhane MSC
Sr. Meseret MSC
Sr. Shitaye MSC*



Sr. Shitaye, . Besunesh, Sr. Aynalem



The Sisters with Sr. Diane e F.Odomara