

MY TRIP TO AMERICA

Florah

America has always held a certain appeal for me. I cannot switch off and stop thinking about its system, people's generosity, huge buildings, the big highways and beautiful houses. It is still real, because I was there physically.

I have heard people talk about going to the USA as a long journey; indeed it is "real travelling". The flight took about 20 hours.

My journey started when Sr. Patricia Pearson, Provincial gave me the information that I was likely to join Sr. Paskazia in doing mission appeals for the year 2016 in California. I was so excited and could not sleep after that information. I started thinking about travelling.

Good enough Sr. Pat gave me a hint on how to reduce my fears, starting with online application and Visa interviews process, with her outstanding question "Why are you going to America"? Which was the actual question I answered during my interviews in the American Embassy.

I became so excited after getting a two year visa and I was ready to move before I had booked the ticket. My excitement increased day by day until I finally reached Los Angeles airport.

It was a sunny day, 30th May 2016, when I woke up in morning with mixed feelings; same good feelings of happiness because I was to leave my country and to visit another continent , but at the same time sad feelings because I had to leave the people I have been with for years especially the pupils of St. Helen's primary school, Nyamitanga, Mbarara.

During the flight, we had a 3 hour stopover in Iceland, an emergency landing to save the life of one of the passengers who was ill. I was so anxious, I couldn't sleep at all, the flight became long and I was restless. I recited the Rosary many times asking the intervention of Mother Mary to help me because I had no communication at all with any of our sisters. Finally, after 23 hours flight we arrived at Los Angeles International airport. It was about 6 o'clock. After picking up my baggage, I saw my sisters; Paskazia, Annette Lawrence, Linda Peters and Linda Webb, all coming to pick me , what a surprise!!!! I was so happy.

I was warmly welcomed and I felt at home the moment I entered Marian Residence on 31st May 2016 at 6:45pm. I had no words to express myself, I was so tired but humbled. It was an opportunity for me to experience the kindness, love, care, support, generosity, friendship and above all the life of prayer.



There were a lot of discoveries and learning experiences for me, during the mission appeals in different Dioceses and Parishes. I was honored and blessed to be a Daughter of Mary and Joseph and to talk about the DMJ's in Africa.

I became a community member of Marian Residence; a caring, healing and loving home especially as I observed our sisters, and Margaret O'Rourke's last days on earth.

It was my first time out of Africa, and it gave me a chance to be exposed to other cultures and different ways of living and to meet some of our sisters I had never met. This experience became one of the most important in my life.

Generally people were so good to me no matter the age gap. They gave me a new purpose in my life; they opened up a world of adventure for me in giving me spiritual nourishment that is to say Iconography, riding the horse, participating in physical exercises, swimming/ walking near the ocean, making sandwiches, visiting Francisco Homes, celebrating Birthday parties especially Mary Rose's 85th at Nazareth and 90th anniversary of St. Augustine School, watching films and movies, eating popcorn, touring the LA city.



It was hard to believe that I finished three months in California. The time went fast without realizing it, yet I gained so much. The sisters opened their office doors for me to learn and improve on my computer, accounting and secretarial skills. Above all they allowed me to improve my DMJ spirit and Charism of compassion, love, joy and sharing.

It was hard to leave them but I had to.



All my experiences are recorded in my memory and I will tell the next generation.

In conclusion, I had a very good trip and a great time with my sisters and all people around.

Thank you my dear sisters for being there, inspiring and allowing me to be part of you, I really felt at home with each one of you.

For every one who contributed to this trip thanks so much for being there for me.

God bless America and my Congregation as we celebrate 200 years of our existence.

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