

## In Memory of Monique

Monique Boils arrived in Mayo-Ouldémé, north Cameroon on November 4, 1980. This was not her first arrival in Africa. Because of her father's job in the Court system in the Belgian Congo, the family lived there until Monique was 16.

Returning to Belgium, Monique completed her education as a teacher. She volunteered to work in Africa as a teacher with the Dames de Marie in Burundi. Later, she returned to Belgium, entered the Dames de Marie Novitiate and after Profession returned to Burundi to be part of their Province. Here she worked for 11 years and then under the Bagaza regime she was expelled from Burundi, along with many other missionaries. She was given a year's sabbatical in the Holy Land and then said she was ready for whatever was to be. So, this new possibility opened. Actually it had opened 20 years already in the person of Frere Andre Brunet.

In the 60's, Andre Brunet arrived in Mayo-Ouldémé to accompany an ethnic group called the Mada. For 20 years he listened intently to the spoken word and in time translated the New Testament and significant passages from the Old Testament. As his knowledge of the language developed, Andre did a revised version of these works. He also wrote a French-Mada Dictionary, a simple History and Geography and compiled a collection of the Mada creation stories along with their mythology.

Now that he was slowing down, he had the great joy of recognizing Monique as his successor. They worked together for some months and then with his well-trained translator, Monique had her immediate task stretching before her – to translate the Proper of each Sunday Mass. Now this task which was serious, had its humorous side. Slelemke, the translator, had to pass through the local market on his way to Monique. After imbibing the local beer with his friends, he's in a kind of Nirvana and a little sleepy. For the next 2 hours Monique, with great patience and humor, achieved her goal – not without further obstacles from the printer that would cause even IBM to have apoplexy. Thus we had a fully-fledged Sunday liturgy.

Maybe another memory of these very early days could be mentioned. I have special memories of our Sunday visits to one or other of the mountain villages. These entailed a 4-hour round trip, walking, beginning at 6 a.m. and returning in the heat of the day. Somehow in all of that, Monique's sensitivity to the hidden beauties of this arid land, was worth the whole trip. That, coupled with her capacity to develop relationships with people along the way and in the villages were a source of great enrichment for the 2 of us.

Later, during one rainy season, a French linguist, whose project was the unification of the spelling of the dialect, meant the respelling of every word of the New Testament and the significant passages of the Old Testament. It was

a great challenge for Monique and Petit Frère Phillipe Stevens (a cousin of our sister Bernadette Lecluyse, who later became Bishop of the diocese of Maroua-Mokolo, of which Mayo-Ouldémé is part) and all the other missionaries whose main purpose was to bring the Word of God to the people.

The years went by and at the end of Monique's journey in Belgium, she was accompanied by four of our African Sisters. So she never really left the land she loved – Africa.

Louis Marie