

My experience and my relationship with the Daughters of Mary and Joseph in Cameroon- Frans Byl M. Afr

Mémé Parish.

When I arrived in North Cameroon in 1987, I was welcomed at Salak airport by Father Philippe Steven, George Truchot and Sr. Agnes Philips. I stayed in Mayo Ouldémé for (40 days) some time in the community where Monique Boils, Louis Marie Hanrahan and the Burundian Renée Butoyi lived. Our relations were very warm and friendly. The sisters helped me find my way to Mémé. When I started in the parish at Mémé, the Daughters of Mary and Joseph already had their house. They were already present there while the construction of the Presbytery was in progress. Prior to the community house being built Sister Agnès Philips used to come from Mayo Ouldémé to Mémé by motor cycle - a journey of more or less 20 km. Then for some time she lived with a local family while learning the Mada language.

It was in December 1988 that I moved to Mémé with my cook Emmanuel Chiba. In the community of sisters there were Sr. Agnes Philips and Sr. Renée and afterwards Sr. Jennifer Condron joined them.

Masses, morning prayers and vespers were in the chapel of the sisters. With Sr. Agnès we visited the villages and she helped in the formation of Catechists. Sr. Renée worked with the youth and Sr. Jennifer worked with the women. Sr Beatrice came from Mayo Ouldémé to help us. Our team worked in collaboration with Mayo Ouldémé's Little Brothers and the Sisters (DMJ). At that time there was Sr. Erna Huber who knew the Ouldémé language.

In the early 1990s, several sisters came to Mémé to replace Sr. Renée, who had gone for studies in Bukavu (DRC) and later in Europe. Sr. Rosemary Kamahoro was there for a few years, and Sr. Marie Claire Nakayiza. After the death of Sr. Jennifer, other sisters came: Sr. Lucy Lolem, Sr. Hedwig, Sr. Caritas and Sr. Alice.

During my eleven years in Mémé as parish priest I experienced a good collaboration with the Daughters of Mary and Joseph. Every Sunday afternoon, I was invited to the sisters for lunch and every Sunday the sisters were invited for supper at my place. We ate together, visited the other religious communities and the Waza Park. Our apostolate worked well and succeeded thanks to the good collaboration we had as apostolic team.

When I moved to the procure, the contacts with the sisters became less frequent, but I hold a good memory of the work we did in a spirit of understanding and collaboration. I did not know the younger sisters who came to Mémé later - Arlette, Henriette, Martina and Grace- as well as I had known the others.

During my holidays in Belgium I went to see Monique Boils and Renée Butoyi. During my stay in Yaoundé I would also go to greet Sr Anna Mary and Sr. Beatrice in their community near the Basilica of Mvolyé and the young people in the novitiate near the St Paul printing house.

In 2008, I went to visit Sr. Agnès Philips in Ngozi. Sr. Patricie, who is now in Mémé community was there at the time. I also met Renée Butoyi and her husband André in Kiremba. Sr Lucy Lolem accompanied me to Bujumbura.

I kept in touch with Sr. Louis Marie and Sr. Bernadette Lecluyse, Sr. Monique Boils and Sr. Agnès Philips by correspondance and emails.

I visited all the communities of the Daughters of Mary and Joseph in June 2001 with the Provincial Sr. Anna Mary on my way back back to Maroua; During that time I met Sr. Agnès Charles, Sr. Marie

José and others. In short, I have great respect for the commitment and work of all the sisters, especially Sr. Agnès Philips, who has given herself body and soul to Mémé Parish. Certainly, there were also moments of pain like the death of Sr. Jennifer Condron buried in Yaoundé and the refusal of Perpetual vows of Renée Butoyi but the joy and the friendship between us remained.



My joy was great on October 13 on the occasion of the Perpetual Vows of my daughter Anne Marie Adama.

My appreciation for the Congregation remains intact, nourished by my contacts with the Sisters of St Joseph of Bruges that I knew in Congo and with the Congolese Josephite Fathers working in our Diocese.

I pray that the Congregation may grow in Cameroon and all over the world.

Written in Maroua le 4/12/2018.

Father Frans Byl.