

Hospitality in the Holy Monastery

After a long time away from Emmaus community, in Nyamitanga, southern Uganda in 1979, Anatolia Kabareberaho, Goretti Nkiko and Theresa Bateta left Ibanda Community and went there, thus joining other religious and local people who had returned to clean and clear up the mess left in their houses by the soldiers who occupied them during most of the war months. Little did any DMJs know what was waiting for us in our house. Little property was taken at the time we left our house after Mass that unforgettable Sunday when finally we all felt the war getting dangerously close. Whatever vehicle was around was well packed with people and little 'belongings.' The sisters who were left behind locked all the rooms to protect valuable goods in the house. The locks were cut by the soldiers only to leave the place for looters to take what they wanted, which was everything in every room. What was left was what was too heavy for soldiers or civilians to carry: huge tables.

The three mentioned above who returned to clean the house were warmly welcomed by the sisters of St Clare who never left Nyamitanga but stayed caring for all who took refuge in their convent throughout the war. Be Blessed dear sisters for through your prayers PEACE came to our country. The sisters of St. Clare, known as POOR CLARES looked after us very well. I have no idea how they got three rooms to give us and food to feed us all the time we spent clearing and cleaning our house.

Treasures turned into a rubbish heap.

A gift of photos upon photos; important documents in the house were all heaped in one room, I guess to provide room for all to sleep. Amazingly I still have not solved the mystery of how they entered and left the rooms but sure they did; whoever they were!!!! We spent very many days cleaning walls first with water and soap plus good will which resulted in clean and neat rooms for all our sisters to live in--- praise God. Next was the 'BOX ROOM', a place where all papers, books, Photos which did not start fire were heaped. What a sight it was!!!!!! We managed to save a few of the documents and photos and got rid of the rest. Three stones for making a cup of tea to cheer us up were an important tool later used to welcome the rest of the community as we were assured of security on Nyamitanga hill. Good Bishop John Baptist Kakubi who never left the hill; and other priests and religious had come back. As our house is at the bottom of the hill surrounded by empty school buildings of St.Helen's and Maryhill, any noise made us alert but surely security was good and we soon settled to doing our normal work around.

Big Welcome.

The many friends left behind tried to keep whatever was left around and brought it back as they came to see us, my Good News bible was given to me and few medals were brought back by our friends. All signs of hospitality were seen in the many friends from the village who brought us food and came to help us clear our grown bush around our house.

Our students returned, noise and laughter surrounded us once again and DMJ spirit up, to lift us up in all we tried to do. The Lord organized our activities and we lacked nothing because what we did not have we improvised and we managed. Many thanks go to the Poor Clares Sisters for opening their doors to us in time of need, which three of us still treasure. I was a novice at that time in second year and I enjoyed listening to psalms sung morning, evening and at night. The hospitality of our dear sisters touched me greatly.

THE PROTECTION OF THE HOLY FAMILY OVER OUR HOUSE WITNESSED.

On the stage of what used to be our chapel was put our LADY and St. JOSEPH neatly; no dirt or paper around them. The place was swept and respected, hopefully some Christian soldiers and those who passed by said a prayer. To our surprise all windows except one which was hit by a flying object were left untouched. All the doors were patched, painted and opened because the keys were well kept, marked per door by SARAH DURKAN, EILEEN MAHER and HELEN LANE who lived it all until they too joined the rest in Ibanda DMJ community. Places of refuge were KINYAMASIKA and IBANDA communities.

WE praise GOD FOR HIS GOODNESS ALL THE TIME.

THERESA BATETA

