

## Memories of Hilda Timoney Dowley

1<sup>st</sup> Feb. 2017

As the song goes: Where do I begin?!

One oft repeated phrase from Ma Francis, as we used to call her: 'If you bring happiness into the lives of others, you won't be able to keep it out of your own'. How true.

I remember commenting before entering: 'But if I have the Postulant's dress that long it will be showing below my coat!' Horror of horrors! There was a guffaw of laughter..... and my dress DID hang below my coat.

After First Profession in London, Mere Eulalie happened to visit. She said: 'You want to go to S. America, don't you?' 'Yes', I said, with my eyes all aglow. Well, says she: 'I would like you to go to Burundi for 2 years to let Sr. Regine come to Belgium to study'. I thought to myself: 'she's just pulling my leg'. I quickly realised that this woman didn't pull legs. 'OK', says I as I looked heavenward, 'Thy Will Be Done' and off I trotted with Sr. Margaret Mary, my lifesaver, in tow!

To live with the Belgians was a real gift from God; what a work ethic and they were full of fun.

I will never forget Mere Vianney's hearty laugh in particular, and Marcel Marie (Michelle), Sr. Veronique (Janine), Agnes Charles, Miren from the Basque country; wonderful people.

A funny story from Kanyinya! Sr. Agnes looked after the orphans and the general maintenance and the food etc. She was always around the house and dealt with all the people who would turn up on the doorstep for whatever reason. Well, there was this man with one leg who had been coming to her for years and she would always give him something. One day as he departed with some goodies, the skies suddenly opened and the rains came down. He took off like the hammers of hell and as she looked after him she saw him drop the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg!!! Revelation. She used have us in stitches with her stories and escapades.

Mere Godelieve, the Provincial, was such a kind lady. She never missed an opportunity to get myself and Margaret Mary together. She had real empathy. I was so happy there I asked to stay a 3<sup>rd</sup> year. Mother Peter said 'Yes'. Mere Eulalie said 'No, she's going to Brazil to do her studies there'.

Sr. Philomena Whyte and I set off. We lived in a Favella, which in those days was very safe. Although it didn't work out as planned it was a unique and wonderful experience.

What was the plan of God in all those meanderings? Well it's quite clear to me.

I only have one gift and that's languages. Because Pope John 23<sup>rd</sup> told the nuns and priests to go to Missionary territories, the nuns who taught my older sisters French were now in Peru, hence, no French teacher for me! Latin was my favourite subject so at least I had a great basis for learning and grasping quickly the French and Portuguese. So Burundi gave me French and I was able to take it as my main subject in Coloma.

Memories? I remember how we showered in Brazil: a bucket of water and a small Blue Band Margarine tub to pour the water over yourself; no Power Showers there!!!

I often think of the amazing, charismatic, holy people with whom I lived during my 7.5 years ('63 to '70) and I feel deeply privileged and grateful for this experience. My truly best friends now are the ones who have had this common, shared experience. Deo Gratias.

Hilda