

## My Mission in Cameroon.

### Beatrice Ndayubaha.

I left the Novitiate in Uganda knowing that my first mission would be to North Cameroon and to the Diocese of Maroua-Mokolo. I departed from Bujumbura on 12/04/1994 on Camair together with Agnès Charles who was Provincial for Africa at the time and with Janine Mairiaux, Regional for Burundi.

The flight via Kinshasa was destined for Doula in South Cameroon. We spent a night in hotel whose name I don't recall. Next day we again boarded a Camair flight for the interior- Doula-Maroua. We landed in Maroua in the afternoon under a dizzying sun. The glare of the sun was so intense that I could hardly open my eyes.

Our sisters were there to welcome us. We headed in the direction of Mayo-Ouldeme in our little



Toyota Corolla. A question resounded in my mind: How could the grass push its way up through the dry and rocky soil? I think that I finally verbalised the question to Monique Boils who was driving, also asking her if there were any people who actually lived in this environment. Someone in the car asked if we could stop just to see if we could notice any bit of grass at all. All the way to the house we didn't see a blade of grass. It silenced me!

Monique explained that she lived there with Louis Marie, Agnes Philips and Jennifer and that Bernadette was in her hermitage close by. Monique added: "If you look closely you will see people and their little 'serés'." The word meant nothing to me- it was the first time that I had heard it. I later discovered that it referred to a family enclosure/kraal.

In truth I saw infants totally naked but healthy. The women worked unclothed from the waist up. That shocked me a little.

We arrived in Mayo Ouldeme on a Thursday afternoon. Mass was celebrated in the Church which was situated between our community house and that of the Little Brothers of the Gospel. The Parish Priest was one of that community. (He later became the Bishop of Maroua-Mokolo.) He had announced to the Congregation that a new African sister was coming to work in the Parish. After Mass the Priest and people/Christians came to greet us. A few minutes later a man came running

to ask the name of the new African sister. He explained to Monique that a baby girl had just been born to his wife and himself. She had given birth in the dispensary. He wanted to give the new baby the name of the newly arrived sister. Thus I bestowed my name on a baby before I had even spent one day in the area!

When I looked around, even though I had seen people and little houses, I said to myself: these sisters have played a joke on me. I could not believe that they lived in the desert and figured I'd better prepare myself to die of hunger. I didn't unpack my bag. I took out one item at a time leaving the rest inside the case lest I be told to go! However I stayed for four and a half years. I didn't die of hunger; on the contrary I gained weight!

I was given the apostolate of working with the women and young girls of the Parish. I had no idea what I would do. To this day I marvel at the co-operation of the apostolic team of the Diocese of Maroua-Mokolo. From the moment that I met the sisters who were engaged in the same ministry as myself, they took me under their wing and showed me how to approach the work. For myself I began to work with a little group of women which gradually increased, little by little. They later helped me to establish groups in every corner of the Parish. If there is any ministry that has been a source of joy to me, it was indeed this one among the women and the girls who had not received education. I remember the joy shared with a young girl who succeeded in writing her own name and who could read a word without help or correction from me. I recall the joy of seeing a young woman who finished sewing a garment to clothe her baby. Or to sell it to those who were not able to sew one for their babies.

The most simple of the women were those who taught me most. I learnt how to be happy with little. I am very grateful to the sisters who saw in me the capacity to be one of the women of Mayo Ouldeme.

