

**A turbulent period in Burundi, but the Lord watched over the DMJ.
Novitiate in Kanyinya.**

In 1979, the first expulsions began under the regime of President Bagaza. Srs Jeanne Devedec and Monique Boils had to leave Burundi in 48h as did several other missionaries. However, these "evictions" were making international noise and would soon be replaced by "a definitive departure authorization" upon expiry of the current visas (usually two years).

In this climate, we had started the postulancy in Kaninya in 1984, followed by the novitiate, now we could see that soon not a single DMJ would be able to stay in Burundi. And what would happen to our two Burundian novices: Christine Ntibarutaye and Renée Butoyi? Srs M.Viannney Parmentier, Michelle Collignon and Renée Bauerly were supervising them but they would also have to leave!

Fortunately, in Ibanda, Uganda, there was already another novitiate and our sisters are preparing to welcome our two young Burundians. A date of departure from Burundi was fixed: November 1986. Our sisters from Uganda will pick them up at the Burundi border near Kanyinya.

But the situation was still deteriorating in Burundi and we are afraid that they would not be able to leave! So, we brought forward the date of departure and tried to warn Uganda: a written message, phone calls ... in vain, it seems. Have our sisters heard from us??

At last, October 25 it is time to leave! Two cars packed with luggage (for we already foresaw our own departure) M. Vianney, Michelle and Renée with our two novices in tears! They were leaving their country for the first time and did not even know if they would return.

Then a long wait at the border: from 7am to 6pm, and no one arrived from Uganda! So about turn! And this time we came back laughing! But tomorrow we would have to go back to the border. Our sisters from Uganda may have had a setback ... (In fact they never received our messages warning them of a change of date!)

At the border we waited again ... At about 11am, I asked the customs officers if I could cross the border (without passport or visa as it was unexpected) and take Christine and Renée as far as Kigali. They were understanding and accepted but provided I returned before the border closed at 6pm ... Thank you Lord! (We had prayed a lot before we left). We were on our way to Kigali: Christine, Renée and I, and we're going to the Jesuits, the only place I knew. They welcomed us and then directed us to the "Procure" of the White Fathers who would more easily be able to help the novices get the necessary visas to continue their journey!

I explained the situation to the Fathers and, indeed, they were very welcoming. After entrusting them with Christine and Renee, I went, speeding and praying, towards the border of Burundi where I arrived at 18h! Phew! And thank you again, Lord and Virgin Mary, to whom we entrusted our young people.

And then, after a few days, Sr. Renée came to tell me, and to repeat: "We shouldn't have let them go that way." I, who had had so much trust in Providence, now I was beginning to be afraid!

In fact, the novices had written very quickly to us but we never received anything and it was only about two weeks later that we heard indirectly through Bujumbura!

Too bad we did not have Uganda's letters! The White Fathers had indeed helped our Burundians and had taken them to the border of Uganda. Then they took a taxi to Kabale. This without knowing either English (barely a few words), or where the DMJs were in Kabale. From here, they first stopped at the bishop's house where they were directed to the community, and then finally they reached the DMJ house. But it was Sr. Liz McCarthy who opened the door to them. And Christine said "I am Christine from Burundi"! Stupefaction! The excitement of Liz who said: "But not now! In a fortnight!" And instead of bringing them in, she ran to the sisters in community!

What a warm welcome!! But we understand Liz a bit because the sisters had not been warned that the arrival at their house had been advanced by two weeks. Later and even now Christine tells this story laughing and we also laugh knowing the good heart of Liz and how Uganda could then help our novices.

Once again: Thank you Lord, thank you Virgin Mary and thank you to our sisters

Sr. Michelle Collignon, 7 March 2017.

