

Rwanda - Jubilee Year of Evangelisation

By Venuste Linguyenzeza/ANB-BIA

Last year, the Church in Rwanda celebrated its Centenary. On the 2nd. February, 1900, missionaries arrived at the Mwami's court. [a] One hundred years on, how are things going?

Can we really justify a celebration such as a Jubilee? (1) After all, there's a bishop in prison, and both he and the Church in Rwanda are having to defend their past actions. The Jubilee programme has had to take into account Bishop Misago's appearances in court. [b] How can we possibly celebrate, keeping in mind what happened during the period of the genocide and remembering the unspeakable massacres that took place? Christians are accused of having taken part in the genocide and the Church as having initiated it. Indeed, there is reason for the Church to wonder whether the occasion of the centenary is a time of Jubilee or a time of trial.

However, the needs of truth and justice call for an appraisal of the situation. We must examine our past history in both its negative and positive aspects. We must not be afraid to face up to our failures, our shortcomings, our omissions, our weaknesses. Everything must

be examined in detail. It is indeed a critical moment for all of us, and it's a real pity that the Church in Rwanda has to go through this exercise in such circumstances. There are tremendous pressures against the Church; terrible charges to face up to; the Church's apostolic workers are killed, detained, or are in exile.

In the eyes of the public, the Church is on trial for its alleged or real involvement in politics. The fact is, the Catholic Church has been positively and actively present in many domains, for which the people remain grateful and will remain unfailingly attached to their Church.

The Church in Rwanda is present at all times, be it in times of difficulty or when all is going well. Some even accuse it of being 'too present': i.e. present everywhere ... too powerful ... you can't get away from it. One ambassador put it this way to a missionary who had just been ordered to leave the country: "The Church's presence is harmful". Others say the Church is "young, much appreciated, but easily impaired". (2) Statistics confirm that the Church is present on all of Rwanda's one thousand hills, in all sections of national life.

Editor's Note [a] Mwami (King) at the time was Musinga.

Author's Note (1) Some people, suffering from recent events, felt that they had to protest against the celebration of the Jubilee. They said: "The time for rejoicing has not yet arrived". But their understanding of Jubilee as simply a time for rejoicing, is wrong. In fact, it is a time for repentance, for pardon and reconciliation (Leviticus 25, 8-22). The present Jubilee has come at just the right moment, to help us come to terms with our history. The condition being that we admit that we are 'ill' and that we turn to Jesus whose love will heal us. Message read by Bishop Kizito Bahujimihigo on the occasion of Christmas and the New Year 2000 in 'Notre Lien', no. 3 (January-December 1999).

Editor's Note [b] Bishop Augustine Misago - was born in Ruvuna, Byumba Diocese, in 1943, and he became Bishop of Gikongoro Diocese in 1992. He was arrested on the 14th. April, 1999, and held in Kilgali Central Prison, accused of being involved in the 1994 genocide. These include incidents such as: the disappearance of 30 school girls at Kibeho; the murder of three priests at Cyanika; and the massacre of about 20,000 people at Kibeho Parish Church.

Reasons for the Accusations - The Rwandan Catholic Bishops, the Vatican and various Catholic media sources have claimed that Bishop Misago was a victim of the Rwandan Government's conspiracy against the Catholic Church in Rwanda and R. D. Congo. The comments made by Archbishop Marcello Zago, Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, concerning the Bishop's arrest summarize what many Church leaders think about the situation in Africa. "Public opinion cannot fail to see that in many African countries the Church is subject to persecution. Bishop Misago is not the only one to be targeted. Efforts to weaken the Church, under different pretexts and for different reasons, are seen throughout central Africa, particularly in the region of the Great Lakes.

Attacking bishops in Rwanda, and now also in the Congo ... is obviously part of a broader plan that involves the whole of Africa: it is good that the Church and people in general realize this."

STATISTICS

People's memories and understanding of events, have been clouded by the genocide, and because of this, other interpretations have been given to the situation of the Church. The fact is, if there had been no genocide, then the Church's presence in Rwanda would have been seen as a real and unquestionable success.

Christianity spread rapidly throughout

Rwanda. In the 1930s, people were talking about the "Spirit blowing like a tornado across the country!" Rarely have there been so many conversions over so short a period. We may well understand the missionaries' enthusiasm for what was taking place. In their wildest dreams they never dared hope for so much,

all the more so as they had just been expelled from Uganda. Leaving aside their motivations or the strategies they adopted in their work of evangelisation, let us simply say that they wanted to 'convert' and bring to Christianity as many Rwandans as they possibly could. And they succeeded.

When asked "Why are they against the Church?" the Archbishop replied "They want to weaken the Church because she is a force which opposes inhuman systems. This part of Africa is living the same situation as Latin America, with the spread of religious sects and cults. One notes pressure to spread these cults, probably with support from various international economic organizations. At a time when the people are still insecure and bewildered, these sects are exploited as a means of dividing and weakening the Church and taking away her members. ... The Church simply cannot approve what is taking place: ethnic clashes, one group dominating the other, arbitrary trials and sentences without proof, all in total absence of any prospect of reconciliation." (Fides 14/04/2000)

Bishop Frederic Rubwejanga, of Kibungo Diocese and Vice-President of the Rwandan Bishops' Conference, was asked by 'Fides' "Why should someone accuse the Church of genocide?" He replied: "The reasons are not at all clear and I cannot say that I know them. One may be that people tend to confuse the Church as a whole with her individual members. Crimes committed by individual Christians are blamed on the Church as institution. It has often been said that the Catholic Church, to which many Burundians belong, played a part in the genocide. But this affirmation does not hold under careful examination. In this regard the Pope spoke words which should be heeded. He said that the Church cannot be held responsible for acts committed by some of her members and that these individuals must have the courage to admit their personal responsibility." (Fides 24/09/1999)

The Bishop's accusers are not just the Rwandan Government. Various publications throughout the world have levelled accusations at the Catholic Church and Bishop Misago. They include 'African Rights' (UK), in 'Rwanda: Death, Despair and Defiance'; 'Solidaire' (Belgium) and 'Goliath' (France). The Acquittal - The Prosecution asked for the death sentence. Eventually all accusations against Bishop Misago were dropped and he was found not guilty of complicity in the 1994 genocide. The Bishop was released from prison on the 15th. June, 2000.

Author's Note (2) Title of a video-cassette published in 1990 as a preparation for the Pope's visit to Rwanda.

Picture above: A thoughtful moment



MANY 'MISSION POSTS'

It was initially a question of getting established. Parishes (they used to be called 'missions') were set up everywhere. Once a Christian presence had been guaranteed in the middle and around the extremities of Rwanda, the missionaries were able to spread out throughout the length and breadth of the land. Today, there are 133 parishes (with approximately 500 outstations attached to the parishes). There are 9 dioceses. Readers will get a better idea of the general picture when we explain that an average parish covers some 200 square kilometres (77 sq.mls), and a diocese an average of 3,000 square kilometres (1,158 sq.mls). [c]

Rwanda was said to be the most Catholic country in Africa, some giving the percentage of Catholics as high as 80% of Rwanda's total population. This is of course exaggerated or at least it shows a poor knowledge of available data. To get a **proper appreciation**, one has to take an average between parishes with a high percentage of Catholics and those which have less. The parish with the highest percentage of Catholics is, of course, Save (the first mission), totalling 85%. The parish with the lowest percentage of Catholics is Gatari in Gikongoro Diocese, with Catholics numbering only 0.7% of the local population. In this way, the Catholic population on a national level, is 51% of Rwanda's total population.

Baptisms continue everywhere. Let's take just one example: Byimana Parish, with a Catholic population of 82.22% had 1,284 Baptisms in 1998. The same year, Save Parish had 2,536 catechumens for baptism.

PERSONNEL - OF GOOD QUALITY AND NUMEROUS

Once the missionaries had established their 'Parish Plants', their next priority was to bring as many people as possible to the waters of baptism. They genuinely wanted to develop a **flourishing** Local Church. The missionaries

were preoccupied with training good quality and numerous local personnel - first of all to assist the missionaries and then eventually to replace them. All credit to the **White Fathers** and the **White Sisters** who, as a matter of policy, refused to look for vocations for their own congregations. Rather, they were concerned with building up a true local Church with its own leaders. Their pastoral methods differed from other missionary congregations elsewhere which prioritised the recruitment of local priests and nuns for their own congregations and institutes. In Rwanda, the first Rwandese White Sister was professed only in 1961, and the first Rwandan White Father was ordained priest only in 1983.

Very soon, Rwanda had its own local diocesan clergy as well as local religious congregations for nuns, priests and religious. The first two local priests were ordained on the 7th. October, 1917. Note that the Rwandan clergy were very soon placed in positions of responsibility within the Church. In sharp contrast to the colonial power, the Church was the **very first organisation** to entrust Africans with important responsibilities. In 1919, the diocesan clergy took over Murunda Parish. In 1935, three Rwandan priests were asked to found a new Parish (Janja). On the 25th. March, 1956, for the first time in the whole of Africa and even in the world, a black bishop consecrated a white bishop. On the 18th. April 1961, for the first time in Africa, the local clergy took over the running of the seminary.

Regarding the **Religious** in Rwanda, Bishop Hirth wanted to found two local congregations - one of men and the other of women. [d] In 1912, he founded the Josephite Brothers and the First Profession in the Congregation took place in 1916. The first Josephite Superior General, Brother Laurent, was elected on the 11th. January, 1953. Bishop Hirth founded the Benedikira Sisters in 1913. In 1919 the first

Sister was professed in the Congregation. The first Benedikira Superior General, Mama Teresa, was elected on the 12th. January, 1953. On the 24th. April 1956, Father Raphaël Sekamonyo founded a totally Rwandan congregation, the Bizeramariya. Other foundations took place in recent years - some in response to a call from young people who wanted to consecrate their lives to God, but who lacked a more advanced education (they possibly had only been to primary school) and who at the same time, didn't see the necessity of catching up on their education for their future apostolate among the rural population. (Bishop Blaise

Forissier and Bishop Louyis Gasore founded such Congregations to cater for these needs).

Regarding **personnel**; in recent years, quite a number of international religious Congregations, both male and female, have come to our dioceses to work within the context of our diocesan charitable services (also for state-run charitable services). In Rwanda, they saw the possibility of attracting many vocations to their ranks, so much so that they established a number of training houses (29 for Sisters and 19 for Mens' religious Congregations). Butare Hill is called the 'Little Vatican' because of its numerous training houses.

EDUCATION

The Church is said to be omni-present in education and the medical/social field. What's the reality of the situation?

Regarding **education**; the Church has taken on the responsibility of running many schools

from primary level upwards - private schools such as seminaries; grant-in-aid schools run by the Church but subsidised by the State; state schools which the state has entrusted to the Church such as the famous Butare School Group. The National University was founded by the Dominican Fathers, who ran it until 1974. The Church was asked to take on this responsibility because the colonial power, Belgium, was unable to do so. The first Education Agreement between the State and the Churches was signed in 1925. The Catholic Church did its best to increase the number of schools. There was a **dire necessity** for qualified personnel to train the teachers needed in the schools, so the Josephite Brothers and Benedikira Sisters saw a major part of their vocation dedicated to the field of education.

Unfortunately, as in many other countries, **youth unemployment** is a major concern in Rwanda, and the Church has risen to the



*Editor's Note [c] See the facts and figures about the Church and a map of Rwanda on pages 8, 10 and 16-17.
Editor's Note [d] Mgr. Jean-Joseph Hirth was a White Father born at Spechbach-le-Bas, Alsace, France on the 26th. March, 1854. He arrived in Rwanda from Uganda in November, 1912, and died on the 6th. January, 1931.*

*The article is continued on page 9
Picture above: Surrounded by the lush land of 'a thousand hills' in previous years*



FACTS AND FIGURES ON THE RWANDAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

KIGALI ARCHDIOCESE - The Bishop is Archbishop Taddée Ntihinyurwa. The priests working in the diocese are as follows: 40 diocesan; 3 fidei donum; and 43 religious. There are about 210,000 Christians of other denominations. The population has been increasing since 1994 due to the many Tutsi returned from exile.

BUTARE DIOCESE - The Bishop is Mgr. Philippe Rukamba (from Kibungo Diocese, nominated 2nd. January, 1997). He took over from Mgr. Jean-Baptiste Gahamanyi. The diocese was created in 1961 as Astrida and was renamed Butare in 1963. Before the genocide the population, mainly Tutsi, was 900,000. There were 500,000 Catholics and 30,000 catechumens in 1992. **Save** was the first parish established in Rwanda (1900). At present the priests in the diocese number as follows: 87 diocesan; 4 fidei donum; and 32 religious. Many of the diocesan priests live outside Rwanda (studies, work for the Church, and in exile). Since 1994 25 diocesan priests have been ordained. The Nyakibanda National Major Seminary is in Butare Diocese.

BYUMBA DIOCESE - The Bishop is Mgr. Servilien Nzakamwita. The priests working in the diocese are as follows: 4 diocesan; 14 fidei donum; and 12 religious. During the genocide more than 200,000 people were killed in the diocese and 300,000 have returned from exile. These comprise of 50% under 15 years old, 10% are orphans and 70% women. A great deal of the diocese's work is caring for this population.

CYANGUGU DIOCESE - The Bishop is Mgr. Jean Damascene Bimenyimana (from Nyundo Diocese, nominated 2nd. January, 1997). The diocese is in the west of the country and was created in 1981. The area is still suffering from the effects of the genocide and the insecure situation. Missionaries who worked in the diocese left,

there are no male religious congregations (previously 4) now and there are 8 congregations of women religious (previously 13). 25% of the population follow traditional religions, and 3% are Muslims.

GIKONGORO DIOCESE - The diocese suffered a great deal from the genocide and the ensuing war. 75,000 people, the bishop and 12 priests were murdered, despite the area being part of the French 'Operation Turquoise'. The present Bishop, Philippe Rukamba (from Butare Diocese), took over after the arrest of Bishop Misago. There are 4 diocesan priests and 10 fidei donum priests.

KABGAYI DIOCESE - The present Bishop is Mgr. Anastase Mutabazi (1996). In 1994 the then Bishop, Mgr. Thaddee Nsengiyumva, was murdered. Fr. André Sibomana took over as Apostolic Administrator until the appointment of the new Bishop. There are 39 diocesan priests, 9 fidei donum; 5 religious priests. As a result of the genocide and the war there are many social and pastoral problems.

KIBUNGO DIOCESE - The Bishop is Mgr. Frédéric Rubwejanga. There are 44 diocesan priests. The population of the diocese has increased by 200,000, mainly Tutsi, since the conflict. 17% of the population follows the traditional religion and there are a number of sects.

NYUNDO DIOCESE - Mgr. Wenceslas Kalibushi stepped down on the 2nd. January, 1997, and Bishop Alexis Habiyaambere S.J. (from Butare Diocese, Regional Superior of the Jesuits in Rwanda and Burundi) took over. The diocese is the largest in the north of the country and was established in 1959. During the genocide 32 priests were murdered and several priests and major seminarians are in exile. There are 22 diocesan priests, 2 fidei donum, Josephite Brothers and 5 different Women's religious

challenge by establishing education programmes for the unemployed outside the regular school system. In colonial times these took place in 'Social Centres'; following independence, the Church established Rural Education Centres (CERAI) for young people who had to leave school without completing their education and who had to make a 'go of it' for themselves.

The Church's involvement in the field of education has always been a **ticklish problem** in Rwanda. Already in colonial times, a number of people were calling for the schools to be freed from the influence of dioceses and parishes. Following independence, some were talking about an "intolerable situation". Today the State is being urged to shake-off the Church's hold over education.

If the Church wanted to hang on to the schools, it was because it was able to influence young people. All the children attending Church-run primary schools, **had** to attend catechism classes and were baptised in Primary Five

(there was no obligation to be baptised but I've never known anyone who refused). In secondary schools, however, it was quite common to come across non-Catholic students. The Church made sure it was present among those who had successfully completed their education, as in every aspect of an educated society.

THE MEDICAL/SOCIAL FIELD

The Church is also present in the medical/social field. But unlike the Church-run schools where the Church's policy was to actively proselytize among the students, in the medical/social field, the Church put everything it had at the service of the **entire population**, especially the poorest and those living in the remotest areas.

The Church is running hospitals and health centres where health care is provided for the people; where very ill people are admitted to hospital; where pregnant women are taken care of until they have given birth or who have just given birth. The health centres are also



congregations in the diocese. Islam is a growing influence in the diocese as are the 'Eglise de la Restauration' and the 'Bahai' sects.

RUHENGERI DIOCESE - The Bishop is Mgr. Kizito Bahujimihigo (from Kibungo Diocese). There are 12 diocesan priests, 1 fidei donum, and 19 religious priests. Of the 51 major seminarians 23 are in the country and 28 study abroad. The diocese has 35,000 catechumens and there are 240,000 Christians from other churches. Security is a problem in the area as many of the 'Hutu army' have returned from the Congo and there are clashes with the Rwandan army.

THE FIRST RWANDAN BISHOP was Mgr. Aloys Bigirumwami (b. 22/12/1904) consecrated Bishop of Nyundo on the 10th. November, 1959.

THE FIRST RWANDAN PRIESTS were Balthazar Gafuku (from Zaza Parish) and Donat Leberaho (from Save Parish) ordained on the 7th. October, 1917. Joseph Bugondo (from Save Parish) ordained on the 29th. June, 1919.

nutritional feeding centres for poorly nourished children and where mothers are given some training in providing basic dietary needs for the family. There is, of course, a programme for family planning. However, the Church won't allow its health centres to get involved in large-scale contraception programmes which are extremely expensive and which need a medical follow-up. An under-developed country such as Rwanda is unable to afford such a programme. The Church, instead, insists on **responsible parenthood** (education and information instead of simply distributing mere gadgets the population will have to buy and, of course, has no means of doing so).

The Church is committed to the **social sector** through several charitable organisations (too many to be listed here). These organisations help destitute and elderly people, the blind and the handicapped. There are also specialised

THE FIRST RWANDAN WHITE FATHERS were François Xavier Bigeziki, born on the 20th. April, 1948, from Runaba Parish, and was ordained on the 28th. August, 1983. Now working in Burkina Faso.

Ladislas Komezusenge born on the 30th. December, 1949, from Rwaza Parish, and was ordained on the 5th. August, 1984. Worked in Tanzania and was killed in a car accident at Arusha on the 9th. August, 1997.

André Lyumugabe, born on the 9th. December, 1963, from Muyunzwe Parish, and was ordained on the 8th. August, 1993. Worked in Zaire and is now working in Burkina Faso.

Jean Claude Kaburame born on the 18th. March, 1965, from Muhororo, and was ordained on the 18th. August, 1996. Now working in Mali.

THE FIRST WHITE FATHERS established the Save Parish on the 8th. February, 1900.

THE FIRST WHITE SISTERS established themselves at Save on the 12th. March, 1909.

Centres for development purposes. Butare Diocese, under the leadership of Bishop Jean-Baptiste Gahamanyi, is to the forefront in this type of work - the other dioceses have soon followed suit. Why? Because the Church is **convinced** that it has a mission to the 'whole person' - body and soul, and so must concern itself with the individual's physical well-being as well as his/hers spiritual needs. You often hear it said: "Mens sana in corpore sano - a sound mind in a sound body". The Encyclical 'Populorum Progressio' added that development is a new name for peace. The Church must concern itself with the entire person and involve itself in every form of human advancement. That's why parishes are involved in development issues. The risk is, of course, that the Church, instead of appearing to be poor in itself and concerned with the needs of the less fortunate, is seen to be rich and powerful (a State within

the State); at the same time it is continually begging for money it needs for its charitable work, from abroad.

CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

THE ETHNIC PROBLEM

No report on Rwanda is complete if it does not mention the ethnic problem. All the more so, if such a report were to refer to the Church's action and influence in this area, and were to accuse the Church of having aggravated, if not having caused the ethnic problem. First of all, I would have liked to have said that the Church regrets the thesis put forward by **Bishop Classe** who, in order to gain the sympathy of the royal court and the tribal chiefs,

stated that the "Tutsis are superior". [e] All I can do is to affirm that on this occasion, Bishop Classe certainly didn't speak for the whole Church in Rwanda. It's **unfair** to judge the Church and all its work during 100 years in Rwanda, on the basis of a few unhappy positions adopted by some of its representatives.

What's being said today and the accusations spread around, would have us believe that in 1994, the Church in Rwanda was largely Hutu. Figures show just the opposite. The clergy and the religious congregations were mainly Tutsi.

The ethnic problem remains a **major challenge** for the Church. So what's to be done? The Church must root out all tribalism in its own ranks, and then in Rwandan society in general. The Church must cooperate with civil society, with the educated classes, with the leaders, indeed, with anybody who wishes to

achieve reconciliation among the Rwandan people. Even if a certain kind of **propaganda** is still circulating which continues to cast aspersions on the Church, the people have never lost confidence in it. The Church is there to help the country be reconciled with itself. If Rwandans want to achieve reconciliation with each other, they must be reconciled with the Church. Why? Because the Church in Rwanda is not a foreign body in Rwandan society; it is not a handful of expatriate missionaries. **Rwandans** form the Church. The number of Catholics in Rwanda is such that it would be a gross error to exclude them from the work of achieving national reconciliation and reconstruction. It should be noted that when preparations for the Jubilee were underway, Catholics were to the forefront in emphasising the need for reconciliation.

A Christian in today's Rwanda, especially the priests and Religious, all belong to a particular ethnic group, but, more importantly, they



Main sources for information about the dioceses: International Fides Service of: 23rd. January, 1997; 13th. and 20th. March, 1998; 8th. May, 1998; and 18th. September, 1998; material received from Rwanda about the Jubilee.

Editor's Note [e] Bishop Léone Classe was a White Father born in France in 1874. He arrived in Rwanda on the 21st. March, 1901 and died on the 31st. January, 1945.

Picture above: A quiet chat on the verandah



belong to Christ, and in Christ we are all brothers and sisters, no matter our tribal origin. In Christ there can be no divisions.

SELF-SUPPORTING

It must be said that when it comes to the question of financing the Church in Rwanda, the missionaries gave us the **bad example** of expecting everything to come from Western countries; they did not teach us to take care of ourselves even if the offertory collection during Mass was an established fact by 1928. So, when it comes to running our schools and hospitals, or when a new church has to be built, or scholarships must be provided for needy students, then we're only too quick to hold out our hands for 'manna from heaven' i.e. from Europe. And that's not normal. We should be prepared to **accept responsibility** at the very least for ordinary recurrent expenses such as running our parishes and paying our apostolic workers. What's happening at present, shows we're living over and above our means.

It's not just a question of money. It's a whole pastoral strategy. My past experiences as former Vicar-General of Butare Diocese only strengthens me in my viewpoint. In my time I instituted an awareness programme that the Church in Rwanda must be self-supporting, that we must not continue to live like expensive irresponsible people. I insisted that every time a parish priest agreed to establish a parish financial council (with an open and above-board accounting system), the parishioners for their part, must agree to pay for certain parish activities, from their small means available. This did help to reduce the money the priest had to find, for example, for running the parish vehicle. Parishioners began to feel they were responsible, together with their priests, for the smooth running of their parishes. Thus, there was a commitment by the laity towards **their parish** at a local level.

The fact is, parishes must become self-supporting, whether they want it or not, because Europe will not go on and on sending 'bank transfers' to their brothers and sisters in Africa. In Europe, the younger generation is growing increasingly fed-up with supporting 'the Missions'. And this is only normal. The Church must take care of itself.

THE LAITY

The present-day pastoral strategy of the Church in Rwanda, means that the laity must play its **true role** as members of the Church. Particular mention should be made of our catechists and our community leaders in the Small Christian Communities. Vatican II insisted that the laity, by the very fact of their baptism, must be prepared to take on responsibility in their Church. Also, in many places there are fewer priests and we're not getting any younger! This particular problem does not, as yet, apply to Rwanda as our seminaries are absolutely full. But acknowledging the laity's rights and duties has nothing to do with the lack of priests.

It's important to educate lay people to play their role in the Church of God. The Bishops of Rwanda have set up an *ad hoc* Commission to study this issue, but so far, it hasn't produced much by way of results. Pressure is mounting on the bishops from various quarters such as former seminarians, catechists, Small Christian Community leaders, members of Catholic Action and the Charismatic Renewal and from others among the laity, to ensure that the laity's true role as the 'People of God', is recognised. The Church in Rwanda could avail itself of the local Pastoral Centre, but we can only note that those who regularly attend the conferences and updating sessions in large numbers are sent by the bishops from Burundi and Congo RDC's Kivu Province, rather than from Rwanda. Also, more sisters than laity attend the conferences.

If we want the laity to become truly responsible, we have to train them. And the training provided must take into account that the laity do not only belong to the educated section of society.

INCULTURATION

There was a time when the Church wanted to up-root traditional religion (indeed, do away with all idols and signs of what was once described as 'vain observances'). That time is now over. Traditional religion is now seen as a 'stepping stone' to Christianity.

God's word needs to be part and parcel of Rwandan culture, so much so that Rwandan Christians think, pray and act both as Rwandans and as Christians. We are a Roman Catholic Church, but this is first and foremost Christ's Church established in Rwanda.

It is high time that current theological thinking, our catechism and our liturgy become **specifically Rwandan**, while remaining faithful

to the teaching of the Universal Church. People have to be imbued with the Spirit, and feel they can express their faith in Jesus Christ according to the genius of their own culture. Why not teach theology in **Kinyarwanda** at the major seminary, in the religious training centres and in catechist schools? Don't forget, Rwanda has the enormous advantage of having the same language throughout the country.

The People of God in Rwanda have already made great progress in the field of inculturation, especially among groups which have been influenced by the Charismatic Renewal or by their experiences in Kibeho (apparitions are said to have taken place here).^[1] People sing and dance during liturgical celebrations, but all this remains a bit too 'cosmetic'. The Bishops have made some steps towards inculturation by publishing the Bible in Kinyarwanda. But it's not enough.

HUMAN RIGHTS: A PROPHETIC CHURCH

The Church in Rwanda has been blamed for keeping silent. This is only true in part. Many



Editor's Note [ff] There have been reported apparitions of the Blessed Virgin at the Kibeho Church which began on the 21st. November, 1981. After an official enquiry commission the then Bishop (Jean-Baptiste Gahamanyi) gave permission for public worship there in 1988.

Picture above: Building for the future



people, especially those who set out to criticise the Church, are unaware of the bishop's many statements.

The Church must change its way of speaking. It must be prepared to 'risk all for the sake of Jesus' and not limit its prophetic role to ex-cathedra statements and pastoral letters. The faithful must feel that all the pastors speak the same language and share the same boldness.

The Church must be present in **human rights** issues. It's not enough simply to set up Justice and Peace Commissions. Father André Sibomana and his fearlessness in speaking out must not remain an isolated case, never to be replaced when he disappeared from the scene. [g] Even a bishop must not be left to speak out alone. The Church in Rwanda must be prophetic in the service of justice and peace. It must have the courage to speak up for those who have no voice; it must have a preferential option for the poor; it must pay due attention to present appeals emanating from the people. Some people will always accuse the Church of involving itself in politics - even when keeping silent, the Church will be accused of practising a policy of silence. Far better to take a stance on human rights issues, to adopt a policy for justice, peace and unity. The Church must learn to side with its laity who know the issues at stake.

And what about **the Media**? Here's a working tool just waiting to be of service. Sad to

say, the Church doesn't make much use of the Media, and when it does, only utilizes it poorly. Don't forget, there are some publications such as 'Dialogue' and 'Kinyamateka', which could be better availed of. We (clergy and laity), have really got to see how we can make better use of the Media. We must dare to speak out!

A MISSIONARY CHURCH

The Church in Rwanda is also criticised for not being sufficiently 'missionary'. The same was said when Sekou Touré drove the missionaries from Guinea and, again, when Bagaza did likewise in Burundi. [h] "Rwanda", it was stated, "could have sent some priests to lend a helping hand to their brothers and sisters in need". Even within Rwanda, it's not right that a diocese such as Gikongoro can't get any help from neighbouring dioceses, which, while not having an overwhelming number of personnel to spare, **could** lend a hand. On the other hand, it's rather curious that Gikongoro is said to be lacking priests when one of its parishes, Kibeho, had at least one priestly ordination per year from 1970 to 1990.

Following the events in 1994, Rwandans are now to be found in the four corners of the world, but it certainly wasn't planned. Before this diaspora, the only Rwandan missionaries were religious from international congregations. Those who 'lend to God' will be repaid a hundredfold. The Church in Rwanda must learn

Editor's Note [g] Mgr. André Sibomana died on the 9th. March, 1998, after an illness (Lytell's Syndrome) which began in 1976. He was born in 1954 and ordained in 1980. He was the Editor of a Rwandan Catholic newspaper 'Kinyamateka', President of the 'Rwandan Association of Journalists' and of the 'Association for the Defence of Human Rights and Public Freedom' ('Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de la Personne et des Libertés Publiques'). Mgr. Sibomana "denounced the [previous Habyarimana] regime and its abuses of power, breaking with the Archbishop and others in the Hierarchy who continued to give Habyarimana largely unquestioning support" (IPEP 14.74.). He was awarded the 'Reporters Beyond Frontiers' prize in 1994. This did not stop Mgr. Sibomana being accused of involvement in the 1994 genocide after the Rwandan Patriotic Front took power. Other human rights organisations made similar accusations but 'Amnesty International' and 'Reporters Beyond Frontiers' have praised his work, and the OAU's IPEP stated that "André Sibomana was another remarkable priest as well as a human rights activist whose name should stand with those honoured German clerics who defied the Nazis." (IPEP 14.74.)

Editor's Note [h] Ahmed Sekou Touré (1922-1984) was President of Guinea for 22 years. He worked with Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana, 1909-1972) for Pan-Africanism during the time that African countries were becoming independent. Jean-Baptiste Bagaza (born 1946) was President of Burundi between 1976 and 1987. He overthrew Michel Micombero (1940-83) and did much to unite the country, but several confrontations with the Catholic Church came to a head in 1985 when the Government introduced many curbs on Church activities.



to give freely beyond its own frontiers. A Church must be missionary or does not exist.

IN-DEPTH EVANGELISATION

The genocide proved one thing vis à vis the Church: Christianity in Rwanda is still rather like a flock of sheep following one another, and is still present on a superficial level; in-depth evangelisation has still to be done. But this doesn't mean the Church, in preaching love and the brotherhood of humankind, tolerance and 'togetherness', has failed the people. It rather shows that a long road still lies ahead.

The Church has arrived. It has established its structures and institutions. Now it has to build on the message that has already spread throughout the country. And that's proving no easy matter, even in a Europe where the Gospel has been preached for nigh on 2000 years and

where Pope John Paul II has launched the second evangelisation.

What's now needed is proper planning and a comprehensive, soundly-reflected pastoral strategy - sadly lacking for the moment. We look to the new generation of bishops for guidance in this matter.

CONCLUSION

On the 10th. November, 1959, Pope John XXIII established the Catholic Church's hierarchy in the Belgian Congo and Rwanda-Burundi. Yes, the mustard seed has already grown high, it has already produced some fruit, but it needs more fostering: we still need to trim it, to dig around it and to add some fertiliser. With God's help, the harvest looks promising. May it prove so in the future.

Sources: Zenit (<http://www.zenit.org/english>); International Fides Service (<http://www.fides.org/home-ing.htm>); 'Leave None to Tell the Story, Genocide in Rwanda', Human Rights Watch (<http://www.hrw.org>); 'Death Despair and Defiance', African Rights; Amnesty International (<http://www.amnesty.org>); 'The Angels Have Left Us by Hugh McCullum; 'Hope for Rwanda' by André Sibomana, Laura Guilbert & Hervé Deguine; 'Rwanda: The Preventable Genocide', 'IPEP' 'International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding Events', OAU, 7th. July, 2000. (<http://www.oau-oua.org/document/ipep/ipep.htm>); 'A People Betrayed, The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide' by Linda Melvern; 'The Rwanda Crisis History of a Genocide' by Gérard Prunier.

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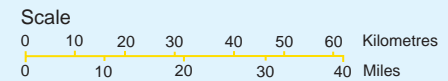
Picture above: The future of Rwanda



Rwanda

Key to Map

- = Towns & cities
- = Rivers
- = Roads & tracks
- = Prefecture Boundaries



FACTS AND INDICATORS ON RWANDA

BASIC INDICATORS

Total Population	7,235,000
Population under-5	1,259,000
Population under-18	3,829,000
Annual no. of births	295,000
GNP per Capita	US\$250

EDUCATION

	Male	Female
Adult Literacy Rate (15 years and older) *	56	50
Primary School Enrolment Ratio (Gross)	88	88
Primary School Enrolment Ratio (Net)	67	68
Secondary School Enrolment Ratio (Gross)	12	9

MORTALITY

Infant mortality rate **	110
Under-5 mortality rate **	180
Under-5 mortality rank	18
Annual no. of under-5 deaths	53,000
% Oral Rehydration (ORT) use	47
Life Expectancy	41 years

IMMUNIZATION

% of 1-year-old children	
BCG	94
DPT3	85
Polio3	85
Measles	78
TT2	83

NUTRITION

Infants with low birth weight (%)	17
Exclusively breastfed (0-3 months)	90
Breastfed with complementary food (6-9 months)	68
Still breastfeeding (20-23 months)	85
Underweight	
moderate and severe	27
severe	11
Stunting	
moderate and severe	42

FACTS AND FIGURES ON THE RWANDAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

DIocese	AREA (2)	POPULATION	CATHOLICS	PARISHES	PRIESTS	BROTHERS	SISTERS	SEMINARIANS (3)	CATECHISTS
Kigali (1)	3,116 sq.km.	1,402,689	785,506	18	86	45	224	47	1,112
Butare	1,958 sq.km.	547,500	381,867	20	123	59	336	38	229
Byumba	3,350 sq.km.	953,000	365,544	13	30	9	104	43	272
Cyangugu	1,844 sq.km.	543,652	282,034	9	31	-	109	18	168
Gikongoro	2,057 sq.km.	444,283	126,316	9	14	-	33	22	81
Kabgayi	2,187 sq.km.	738,877	496,333	23	53	-	110	74	491
Kibungo	5,834 sq.km.	760,964	213,794	11	44	10	92	27	247
Nyundo	4,000 sq.km.	1,184,940	462,653	19	24	5	68	42	262
Ruhengeri	1,661 sq.km.	820,000	400,000	11	32	2	90	51	210
Totals	26,007 sq.km.	7,395,905	3,514,047	133	437	130	1,166	362	3,072

Editor's Note [c] continued: (1) Kigali is an Archdiocese; (2) 1 square kilometre is 0.3861 of a square statute mile; (3) Major Seminarians.

Wasting

moderate and severe	9
% of children receiving Vit A supplementation	75
% of households consuming iodized salt	95

SAFE WATER AND ADEQUATE SANITATION

% of population with access to		
	water	sanitation
Urban	60	12
Rural	40	8
Total	41	8

Footnotes: * total adult literacy rate = 53%; ** per 1,000 live births; DPT3 = diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough) & tetanus; TT2 = tetanus twice to pregnant women and mothers. Source: The State of the World's Children 2001, UNICEF.