

"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5, 16)

item 468

Flamme d'Amour – Keshero/Goma [DRC]



This chaotic scene was in a photo published in 2008, in THE TELEGRAPH [UK], as Congolese troops and thousands of people streamed into the city of Goma. Aid agencies warned that fighting in the DRC [Democratic Republic of Congo] was threatening to cause a humanitarian catastrophe as tens of thousands became refugees. Goma is just inside the DRC border, and Keshero a township on its edge.



Little has changed. The conflict continues and has now been going on for decades. Disturbingly the scene spells out the need for orphanages, many orphanages. One such, from which I have just returned, is a small project initiated by a group called the Flame of Love [Flamme d'Amour] community. Introduced to Fr General during his 2015 Visitation he confessed afterwards that the image of 'babies sitting around one plate and eating just rice' never left his mind.

The Flamme d'Amour outreach originated in Canada. A centre was established at Keshero just with a view to taking care of at least some of the displaced children. Most of the refugees are women and children, a good percentage of whom are orphans. Some were abandoned and others lost their parents during the war. The orphanage would serve two purposes. First, care would be given to children who need it. Second, these children would be taken out of a position of being pressed into human trafficking and made to carry weapons and fight in the struggles in and around Goma.



This particular community was founded in 2007 by Sister Alvera Gahunyuza, a Teresian Carmelite. In May 2010 she wrote in a report: "As to food, we eat poorly. Every afternoon we eat beans with bananas or with potatoes or rice; in the evening, we eat pasta with vegetables

(cabbage, cassava leaves, bean leaves, etc.) We eat meat once every month or two, the fry once a week if there are many."



The centre currently serves 175 children. 75 of them are internal (boarding) while the other 100 are external. It welcomes orphans from 0 to 10 years. When they reach 15 years old, they are reintegrated into their large family. There we continue to support them, paying their school fees and providing them with some basic necessities for their life. In addition to these vulnerable children 'Flamme d'Amour' also helps women who have been raped, and many other conflict victims.

Following his visit Fr Jacob challenged the Union, Australia-wide, to consider what assistance it might offer. The response was positive and now their support helps Alvera and her collaborators to meet some of the essential daily needs – better hygiene and food conditions, food, drink, medicines, clothes, soap, just to mention a few. And they are now actually anticipating small income generating projects to enable the orphanage to be self reliant in small basic needs.



As part of its fund raising drive the Keshero cause was presented to the Queen of Apostles parish school in Perth, WA. and their children responded magnificently.

So we would like to extend our very grateful appreciation to those young students who, in very little time but with much enthusiasm, recently handed over a cheque for AUD2852.40. Special

thanks to them – truly God surprises us wonderfully!

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item 469

the fundamental rule.....!

Dear Confreres,

We are gathered together in our church of SS Salvatore in Onda, the spiritual centre of the entire Union, to express our gratitude to God.....Other than the concrete motions that we approved, what do we take away from this Assembly? In point of fact our consecrated life and apostolic commitments go well beyond a few concrete projects!

So what are the most fundamental spiritual, charismatic, communitarian and apostolic values and principles that the present Assembly was trying to define for us for the coming years?

The most important messageis the main theme itself: **‘The fundamental rule of our little congregation – of each one of us and our communities – must be the life of Jesus Christ.’** It is an invitation to a more gospel-centred life. If we are attuned to the movement of the Spirit in the church today, we would realize that this is also the core point of the papacy of Pope Francis and also of other recent popes like Benedict and St John Paul II.

Now this message might look extraordinarily simple and common. And there is nothing new in it. So do we need a General Assembly to reaffirm what is fundamental christian teaching? Do these pious words, of a saint from another century, have any relevance for our post-modern civilization?It is true that just by affirming a statement, we will not change anybody or anything. God’s grace is required and concrete efforts from all of us if we want to initiate a process of spiritual renewal, both as individuals and as communities.

How do we do it? Certainly it cannot be done by others. We ourselves must take up the challenge of personal conversion. It means placing God first. It means starting afresh from Christ – the divine model of perfection. Before attempting to revive faith and charity in others we need to be personally revived. Only the evangelized can be an evangelizer.

When it comes to the christian life there is no short-cut or magic formula except that of living and appropriating the paschal mystery. This means, above all, following the Divine Master in his self-emptying and self-sacrificing life in order to find the fullness of life for ourselves and for others. Here is then the ultimate remedy for the ego-centered individualism that destroys oneself and one’s community. Nothing can substitute for a life centred on charity and self-giving. One can read any number of books on prayer but until one prays, one is not really praying.

The word of God, adoration of the eucharist, service to the most needy, etc., are ways to encounter the person of Jesus. It is in this sense that we need to consider the call to be missionaries. A self-centered life, closed up in the comforts of our room, is the surest way to destruction of ourselves and our communities. Talk about self-giving can often be annoying and uncomfortable for this reason. Our worry about personnel and money....can destroy in us any trace of trust in divine providence still left. The logic of today’s gospel, inviting us to go forth to the ends of the earth to preach the Good News, can appear to be wishful thinking to those who place their security in their bank balance.



Therefore I invite the General Council, Provincial/Regional/Local Councils as well as each member of the Society to make a sincere and concrete effort to translate the spiritual advice of our Founder for the imitation of Jesus – ‘the daily practical memorandum’ – once more a reality in our lives.

A second point worth recalling is that, through our consecration, we have expressed our willingness to follow Jesus Christ in the Society of the Catholic

Apostolate. Our consecration obliges us to live and diffuse the spirituality and charism of our Founder, always in service of the Church. This means knowing and experiencing profoundly the spirit and charism of our Founder. Here is the big challenge before the entire Society. In following Jesus Pallotti is our spiritual inspiration and guide. In our apostolic works we try to realize his charismatic vision for the good of the church. In our formation and apostolic and missionary efforts, in all our efforts at collaboration, in our attempts to build up international and intercultural communities, we must be rooted in our charism. Our finance and assets are simply in the service of our apostolic goals. If we wish to build up communities without borders we need to be infused by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The traces of prejudice and human limitation that we all share cannot be overcome without being imbued by the spirit of charity and communion..... To be a Pallottine also means to live the spirit of infinity and the universal spirit of our Founder himself. It is such a spirit that opens up our minds and spirit to see the multiple realities in the world with respect and humility.....

We had an inconclusive discussion on the role of the Society within the Union. Perhaps we are not yet ready to make solid commitments in favour of our Founder and his charism. It clearly shows that we need to reflect and pray a lot more on our Founder and his spirituality. This is the personal commitment that I make as a Pallottine, as Rector General and Ecclesiastical Assistant of the Union for the next six years: to do everything possible to place God in the first place and to realize the spiritual maxim of our Founder to make Jesus Christ the fundamental rule and motive for our lives and apostolic works. This can be done only with the grace of God and with the participation of all the members of our Society as well as with good collaboration with the rest of the Pallottine Family. Our formation houses, communities, Pallotti Institutes, Major Seminaries, parishes and apostolic centres, etc., have to be animated and coordinated accordingly.....



May Mary Queen of the Apostles, St Vincent Pallotti, our blessed Martyrs and Bl Elizabeth Sanna intercede with God for this grace.....

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you commented...

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