

E-BULLETIN #133

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

item 252

"The art of mercy is to know how to draw good from evil" – JP II - the path of hope for Rwanda

I experienced the atrocities of war and genocide in Rwanda. As we all shared in what was unfolding around us we said that hell had opened its doors and the devils were out! The genocide in Rwanda had been planned and well prepared despite the presence of UN peacekeeping troops already for a year.

As a consequence of those tragic events, of genocide and war, with so many physical and spiritual wounds, so much pain and suffering, so many crosses, the reconciliation process is very long and almost impossible.

Despite this we can use it as a stimulus for acts of charity and mercy, and thus we can at least open a door to reconciliation. The words of St John Paul II – **'The art of mercy is to know how to draw good from evil'** – inspire us to fall back on spiritual values and promote whatever pastoral initiatives we can towards reconciliation and forgiveness.



pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Divine Mercy at Kabuga

That is why the Pallottine family decided to organize a Shrine of Divine Mercy in **Kabuga**. Back in 2010 the Sanctuary organized a Congress on Divine Mercy. The objectives to come out of that Congress can be summed up in its theme: **'The divine mercy as an antidote to the evil ravaging our society'**.

This Congress was able to gather 550 people from the three countries of the Region: Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. By its closure there were many Bishops, priests, religious and more than 7000 faithful. What emerged were 9 popular missions in various parishes of the city of Kigali during the evening, where more than 13,000 people attended! This is truly a kind of *New Evangelization*.

The Sanctuary of Divine Mercy with its program **helps the christians of Rwanda to associate their daily passion and suffering to the passion of Christ, to find new strength and a will to live as brothers and sisters – “Come to me all you who are exhausted and overburdened. And I will give you rest.”** (Mt. 11, 28). Every Friday we celebrate the Way of the Cross.

It is at Calvary that Jesus shows us his great love and the mercy of the Father. There we learn that Jesus took upon his shoulders all the evil that affects humanity. He was buried in the tomb and in the tomb Jesus buried all evil. The tomb tells us that God is able to draw good from evil. We are called to do the same: ***to draw good from evil.***



prayer time in the chapel of the tomb of Jesus

The number of faithful attending the Sanctuary increases, with adoration of the Blessed Sacrament as the main activity. Every day from 14:30 to 15:00 there is adoration, confession, the hour of Divine Mercy followed by the Eucharist.

I would like to share a story that shows how an encounter with Jesus in the eucharist can be a source of inner healing and a path to hope:

In 1996 we started to build a Center for Reconciliation of the Merciful Jesus, with a chapel of perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, in Ruhango. Once, travelling from there to Kigali, I brought in my car someone who used to provide technical assistance to this project, a young man of 28 years. During the way we talked, and listened to a radio program that commented on the genocide with a lot of hatred against Hutu, even inciting revenge! I discovered that the man who was with me was a Hutu and that his family had been exterminated.

I asked him: “When you hear that sort of thing on the radio what are your feelings, how do you react?” And he replied: “At the beginning I was like a madman, I did not know what to do; I felt anger and a desire for revenge rising against those who killed my family. Fortunately, I later met a friend who invited me to a daily hour of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The first time I felt very upset, I wanted to flee the chapel, but out of respect for my friend I tried to spend that time. I accompanied him during the following days and, after some time, an inner peace returned to my heart and up until now I have remained faithful to adoration. Incentives for revenge have no more impact on me because I am reconciled with God and with myself – and I have forgiven others”.

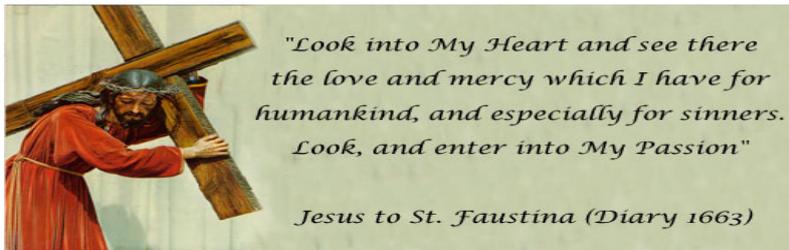
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Jesus, I trust in You

charismatic convention at Divine Mercy shrine, Mustabada

Mustabada was declared a quasi-parish on May 17, 2008. Fr Bodula sac was appointed as first priest in charge. The parish consists of about 245 families and includes an elementary school. At that time it did not have a residence so he lived at our nearby seminary. Other Pallottines have subsequently been appointed there - Fr John Bhaskar Madanu sac, the present parish priest, and Fr Prabhakar Reddy sac.

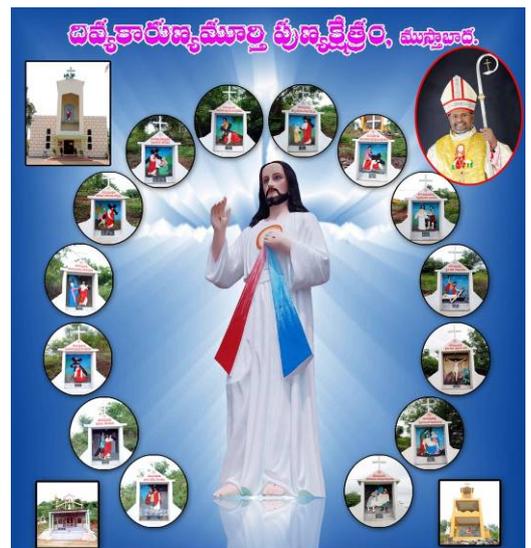


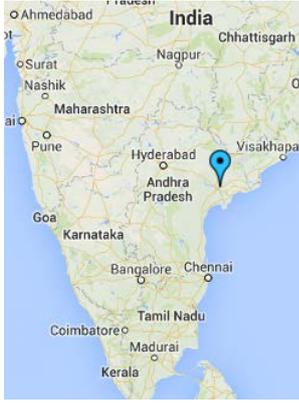
Since assuming responsibility we have introduced the Divine Mercy devotion. A Cross was erected in 2003-2004 on a nearby hill by parishioner Mr Shaker Babu. The local government has since erected a power line so that pilgrims can go up and worship the Cross.

Pilgrims have increased annually, and numerous physical structures are now in place – including a residence for the parish priest, a cement road for vehicles, Stations of the Cross etc. Annual celebration dates have been decided, 08-10 May.

This year, in spite of the hot season and untimely rains, about 12,000 people attended over the three days and almost 6,000 were given meals. It was a great experience for all of us. The feast was organized by the parish priest, parish council members, youth, Legion of Mary, JMJ sisters, St Ann’s of Luzern, Assisi sisters, FCC sisters, Jesuits, a few of our Pallottine confreres and Charity brothers. It created a great sense of realizing the vision of our founder St Vincent Pallotti.

I only gradually developed a personal interest in spreading devotion to Divine Mercy. For me, as a Pallottine and a priest, many doubts arose. Due to various experiences across the previous three years I had come to the conclusion that it was not worth being a priest. However God had his plans and showed me the way and the truth!





As an individual and as parish priest I would now like to make this devotion reach different parts of our diocese and eventually the entire State. Seeing the fidelity of simple, ordinary people to Divine Mercy I want to dedicate my life to spreading the devotion and develop this hill into a beautiful pilgrimage center where people can experience God. It can become a unique contribution to the church of Andhra Pradesh.

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you commented...

on #132