

**E-BULLETIN #118**

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

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item 224

**Rwandan reconciliation entrusted to Our Lady of Kibeho**



The Shrine of Our Lady of Kibeho. Credit: Michelle Bauman/CNA.

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Meeting with the Rwandan bishops for their *ad limina* visit Thursday, **Pope Francis** urged them to be agents of reconciliation, commending them to the Marian apparition at Kibeho, in the country's south.

“Rwanda will in a few days commemorate the 20th anniversary of the horrible genocide which has brought such suffering and wounds, which are still far from healed,” the Pope said April 3 at the Vatican. “I join with all my heart in mourning, and I assure you of my prayers for yourselves, for your often torn communities, for all victims and their families, for all Rwandans, without distinction of religion, ethnicity, or political affiliation.”



April 7, 1994 was the first of 100 days during which Hutus in Rwanda massacred their Tutsi neighbors. Up to 1 million Rwandans were killed, most of them Tutsi.

“I commend you all to the maternal protection of the Virgin Mary,” Pope Francis told the nation's bishops. “I sincerely hope that the Shrine of Kibeho might radiate even more the love of Mary for her children, especially the poorest and most injured, and be for the Church in Rwanda, and beyond, a call to turn with confidence to Our Lady of Sorrows, who accompanies each of us on our way that we might receive the gift of reconciliation and peace.”

He noted that reconciliation and healing “certainly remain the priority of the Church in Rwanda. I encourage you to persevere in this endeavor, for which you have already taken a number of initiatives. Forgiveness of sins and genuine reconciliation, which may seem impossible to human sight after such suffering, are however a gift of Christ that it is possible to receive, through a life of faith and prayer, even if the road is long and requires patience, dialogue, and mutual respect.”

Because of this, the Bishop of Rome said, the Church “has an importance place” in the rebuilding of Rwandan society, with hope “bearing witness to the truth.” He noted the catholicity of the Church, saying it can “overcome prejudice and ethnic divisions” when it “speaks with a sole voice.”

Pope Francis noted the upcoming 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Rwanda and the Holy See, highlighting the importance of building up the common good around the values of human dignity, justice, and peace. “Do not be afraid to highlight the irreplaceable contribution of the Church to the common good,” he told them. “I know that the work done, in particular with regards to education and health, is considerable.”

“The education of youth is the key to the future in a country where the population is renewed quickly,” Pope Francis reflected. “It is therefore the duty of the Church to form children and young people in Gospel values, which they shall find especially in a particular familiarity with the Word of God, which will be for them like a compass indicating the route to follow.” He added that it is thus important that Catholic schools combine their “educational mission and the explicit announcement of the Gospel,” saying “these should never be separated.”

The Pope encouraged good formation for the laity, saying they play a crucial role in evangelization and reconstruction, and for families, saying children must learn there “the authentic Christian values of integrity, fidelity, honesty and self-giving, which permit one to know true happiness, after the heart of God.” He told the bishops to care particularly for their priests, and for the formation of their seminarians.

“Dear Brothers, I assure you again of my affection for you, for your diocesan communities, for all of Rwanda,” Pope Francis concluded.

Entrusting them to Mary, he reminded them that she “appeared in your country to children, reminding them of the efficacy of fasting and of prayer, in particular the recitation of the Rosary.”

**Carl Bunderson – Vatican City – ITALY**  
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## Marian apparitions – Rwanda

**Our Lady of Kibeho** is the name given to Marian apparitions concerning several adolescents, in the 1980s in Kibeho, south-western Rwanda. The apparitions communicated various messages to the schoolchildren, including an apocalyptic vision of Rwanda descending into violence and hatred, possibly foretelling the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

In 2001, the local bishop of the Catholic Church officially recognised the visions of three schoolchildren as authentic.

The Kibeho apparitions began on Nov. 28, 1981, at a time of increasing tension between the Tutsis and the Hutus. They occurred at Kibeho College, a secondary school for girls, and included an apocalyptic vision of Rwanda descending into violence and hatred which many believe foretold the 1994 Rwandan genocide. The Virgin Mary appeared to the group with the name "Nyina wa Jambo" ("Mother of the Word") synonymous with "Umubyeyi W'Imana" ("Mother of God"). The teenage visionaries reported that the Virgin Mary asked everyone to pray to prevent a terrible war. In the vision of Aug. 19, 1982, they all reported seeing violence, dismembered corpses and destruction.



The longest series of visions were attributed to Alphonsine Mumureke who received the first vision on November 28, 1981 and the last on November 28, 1989. Anathalie Mukamazimpaka's visions began in January 1982 and ended on 3 December 1983. Marie Claire Mukangango had visions for six months, lasting from 2 March 1982 until 15 September 1982. She was later killed in the massacre of 1995 at the same location.

During his 1990 visit to Rwanda, Pope John Paul II exhorted the faithful to turn to the Virgin as a "simple and sure guide" and to pray for greater commitment against local divisions, both political and ethnic.

In the 100 days that followed the April 1994 assassination of the nation's president, by most accounts, 800,000 Rwandans, by some accounts, over one million, were slaughtered by their countrymen and, in some cases, their next-door-neighbors. The violence was the culmination of intensifying animosity between the two ethnic groups – the Hutus and Tutsis – and the civil war that had preceded it. Kibeho was twice the sight of a massive massacre, first at the parish church in April 1994, and then a year later in April 1995 where more than 5,000 refugees who had taken shelter at Kibeho were shot by soldiers.

The Holy See has not approved these apparitions.

The Marian sanctuary at Kibeho was named "**Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows**" in 1992. The first stone was laid on 28 November 1992. **In a 2003 agreement, between the local Bishop and the Society of the Catholic Apostolate, the rectorate of the Shrine of Our Lady of Kibeho was entrusted to the Pallottines. The rector is appointed by the local bishop and the Regional Pallottine Rector.**

with approval of Fr Stanislaw Filipek sac [SF] – Kabuga – RWANDA  
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you commented...

on #117