**MCP 2020 message from Diocese of Gikongoro, Rwanda**

Like Lourdes in France, Fatima in Portugal, Guadalupe in Mexico, and other Marian sites of pilgrimage, Kibeho is a place where the Mother of God, Virgin Mary appeared in the diocese of Gikongoro, in Rwanda, Africa. These apparitions began on November 28, 1981 and ended in 1989. In 2001, the Church approved them and acknowledged that truly the Mother of God has appeared to three girls, then students in high school at Kibeho. These are: Alphonsine who is now a nun in a Carmelite community in Italy, Nathalie who still lives at Kibeho and Marie Claire who passed away during the genocide of 1994.

At the first apparition, Mary revealed herself to Alphonsine as the “Mother of the Word.” She herself said that her message of conversion, repentance and prayer is not only for Rwandans but also for the whole world. Mother Mary taught Mary Claire the Rosary of Seven Sorrows and asked that when we meditate on the sufferings of Jesus and of his Mother, we too might always value our own sufferings, joining them with Jesus’ and offer them up for the salvation of our souls and of the whole world.

Therefore, after the genocide of the 1994 in Rwanda, the Catholic Church in Rwanda is bringing together the wounded children and Kibeho remains the best place of reconciliation with God and with one another, a holy place where the pilgrims experience the gospel of Mercy, reconciliation and love.

Your contribution through the Mission Cooperation Appeal will help the diocese of Gikongoro to build dormitories for our brothers and sisters in Christ who come to Kibeho especially the poor. Many of them walk to Kibeho for days and weeks from all the dioceses of Rwanda and in the neighbor countries. Despite few expensive motels affordable to few pilgrims, many of them do not find places to stay, food and medications.  Recently, Bishop Celestin bought two big tents to give shade to the sick, and weak people, and to host mothers and their children when needed.

It had been not easy to accommodate thousands of pilgrims who regularly come to Kibeho, and it will be much harder after pandemic Covid-19, in order to preserve people’s safety and health. Your donation will make difference in the lives of the pilgrims. It will give bread, medicine, bed and shelter to one or many of the pilgrims. Also, your donation support the shrine in her mission to promote the devotion to Our Lady of Kibeho, our Mother who wants all the Children of God to convert, reconcile each other and love each tenderly, bearing each other’s suffering and pain.

Thank you for your generosity and love for our brothers and sisters who make their pilgrimage to Kibeho in Rwanda. May Our Lady of Kibeho intercede for your family and provide for all your needs as well.

Fr. Lambert Ulinzwenimana

Archdiocese of Cincinnati

Representation of the Diocese of Gikongoro for MCP