

## **Edición Video sobre Aparición de la Virgen María en Kibejo, Ruanda**

Negociamos la compra de los derechos de trasmisión televisiva y yo me responsabilicé de la edición para el formato de 28 minutos del "The Lumen 2000 Show". Durante el proceso de edición, que allá en el 1990 tardaba casi un minuto de filmación por hora, yo me conmovía siempre en la escena de la vidente que contemplaba a la Virgen María. A esta joven estudiante, del instituto María Auxiliadora, se le corrían las lágrimas y ponía un rostro distorsionado del dolor cuando escuchaba a la Virgen y "veía" ríos de sangre que correrían hacia el Lago Victoria, como lo manifestó luego. Quién podía pensar que era la profecía de lo que sucedería en Abril de 1994 con la masacre de los Tutsis. En el décimo aniversario de este genocidio, vería un reportaje de la BBC. Había una escena filmada en el 94 por periodistas presentes en el instituto educativo María Auxiliadora. La gente que se refugiaba ahí, suplicaban a los periodistas europeos que los matasen con armas de fuego antes de ser asesinados con machetes.

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### **JUDGEMENT ON THE APPARITIONS OF KIBEHO**

Bishop Augustin Misago of Gikongoro, Rwanda

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#### **DECLARATION OF THE BISHOP OF GIKONGORO, RWANDA**

On Monday 2 July, the Holy See released the declaration of Bishop Augustin Misago of Gikongoro, on the apparitions that took place in 1982-83 in Kibeho, Rwanda. The text we offer is a translated summary from the original 23-page French report on the apparitions of Our Lady in Kibeho and on the work of the two commissions (medical and theological) that studied them for the past twenty years.

Twenty years have already passed since the beginning of the study of the dossier on the apparitions of Kibeho. These unusual phenomena began on 28 November 1981, in the college of Kibeho.

The apparitions continued for a considerable length of time. Many words have been spoken by the alleged visionaries, and many facts, more or less mysterious, have taken place over the years. However, the phenomenon of the proliferation of alleged visionaries in the region of Kibeho and in the rest of the country might have really disoriented public opinion.

Two study commissions, one of doctors and one of theologians, were immediately set up by the local Bishop; they have been at work since April 1982.

On 15 August 1988, the local Bishop decided to approve a public devotion linked to the apparitions of Kibeho. Recognizing the legitimacy of this devotion, he deliberately put aside two questions whose solution was of capital importance for the future:

—Did the Virgin Mary and Jesus appear in Kibeho as some alleged visionaries affirm?

—If so, what visionary, man or woman, can be believed, in view of the large number of people who in those days began to talk about visions and messages from heaven?

The advanced state of the study commissions' work now offers sufficient elements to allow competent ecclesiastical authorities to pronounce definitively on this question.

As a result, Bishop Augustin Misago of Gikongoro, who represents this authority, has published his declaration concerning the definitive judgement on the apparitions of Kibeho, Rwanda. This important event in the history of the Diocese of Gikongoro, as in the life of the Church in Rwanda, took place on 29 June 2001, on the solemnity of Sts Peter and Paul, during a solemn Mass concelebrated in the cathedral of Gikongoro.

All the Catholic bishops of Rwanda with the Apostolic Nuncio of Kigali were present, together with many priests, religious and lay faithful from various parishes and religious communities of the Diocese of Gikongoro, but also from other Dioceses of the country.

Bishop Misago, who was the main celebrant of the Mass, personally read, in front of the assembly, the long-awaited Declaration, but only its most significant passages, for lack of time. The 23 page text is composed of three parts or chapters.

#### 1. Explanation of the facts

The first part (pp. 1-10) consists in a brief exposition of the facts, in which the Bishop primarily establishes some historical reference points, then he presents the elements of the message and finally he shows how the apparitions of Kibeho have born fruit, good fruit, in spite of the difficult moments that Rwanda and the other countries of the Great Lakes region have lived in the last 10 years.

#### II. Studies and conclusions

The second part (pp. 11-19) is the heart of the matter. It begins by recalling the initiatives to promote the devotion to Our Lady taken by Bishop Augustin Misago of Gikongoro. In 1988 his predecessor authorized public devotion at the site of the apparitions. He was Bishop Jean Baptiste Gahamanyi, of the Diocese of Butare, from which the Diocese of Kibeho was cut off. After a comment on the new phases of the work of the commissions, the Bishop declared that the dossier is ready and so the moment has come to publish the conclusions, summed up in 16 points.

We mention here some statements that govern the rest of the document. The Bishop declared as follows:

The three initial authentic testimonies of the apparitions at Kibeho

1. Yes, the Virgin Mary appeared at Kibeho on 28 November 1981 and in the months that followed. There are more reasons to believe in the apparitions than to deny them. Only the three initial testimonies merit being considered authentic; they were given by Alphonsine Mumureke, Nathalie Mukamazimpaka, and by Marie Claire Mukangango. The Virgin appeared to them with the name "Nyina wa Jambo", that is "Mother of the Word", which is synonymous to "Umubyeyi W'iamna" that is, "Mother of God", as she herself explained.

2. Various reasons justify the choice by Our Lady of these three visionaries already recognized as visionaries. These witnesses, historically linked, were the only ones on the scene for some months, at least up to June 1982. They are the ones who made Kibeho known as a place of apparitions and pilgrimage causing crowds of people to flock there. What is more important is that Alphonsine, Nathalie and Marie Claire corresponded satisfactorily to all the criteria established by the Church in the matter of private apparitions and revelations. In contrast, the evolution of the alleged subsequent visionaries, especially after the apparitions were over, reflects disquieting personal situations, which have

reinforced the existing reservations in regard to them and discouraged ecclesiastical authorities from proposing them to the faithful as points of reference.

3. In the evaluation of the facts and the messages, only the public apparitions are taken into consideration. Public are those apparitions that take place in the presence of various testimonies, which does not necessarily mean a crowd.

The most active period of these apparitions ended with the year 1983. Everything said or done after that date at Kibeho did not bring anything new with respect to what was already known, from the point of view of the messages and of the signs of credibility. This is also valid for Alphonsine who continued to attract many people up to the end of her apparitions.

#### First two years of apparitions at Kibeho

4. The first two years of the apparitions at Kibeho (1982 and 1983) constitute a decisive period for whoever wishes to know what happened and form an opinion. In fact it was during these two years that significant events were produced. These made Kibeho known and caused crowds to flock there. It was always in that period that the fundamental elements of the message of Kibeho were communicated and recapitulated and the apparitions of the major part of the first visionaries ended.

5. In the case of the three visionaries named above, who are at the origin of the fame of Kibeho, nothing that they said or did during the apparitions is contrary to Christian faith and morals. Their message is in conformity with the Sacred Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church.

The alleged apparitions of Jesus reported at Kibeho beginning in July 1982 are not taken into consideration in this Declaration for various reasons, primarily because the alleged visionaries of Jesus known to the pilgrims of Kibeho, developed disquieting personal situations. Regarding instead the first visionaries of the Virgin Mary, "no decisive objection has been formulated against the apparitions; the arguments in favour of their supernatural character appear to be very serious and the passing of the years has only made them more incisive".

#### Usefulness of apparitions for applying Gospel to current events

"The recognition or negation of the authenticity of an apparition does not guarantee infallibility; it is based on proofs of probability more than on apodictic arguments". In the sphere of the apparitions there is then no absolute certainty for the witnesses, except perhaps for the visionary. The definitive judgement about the Apparitions of Kibeho should be interpreted in this spirit. The recognition of these apparitions should not be considered a requirement of faith. Therefore each Christian is free to believe or not.

"A recognized apparition, that strengthens the life of faith and prayer, is certainly a powerful help for Shepherds of souls, but the message linked to this apparition is not a new revelation; it is rather a way of recalling the ordinary teaching of the Church, which has been forgotten".

#### III. Pastoral directives: Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows and public devotion

The third part of the Declaration (pp. 20-23) contains a group of pastoral directives that indicate to the faithful the line of conduct to follow in this context, in particular for all that regards the exercise of public Marian devotion linked to the apparitions of Kibeho already officially recognized. These practical instructions repeat in part what Bishop Jean Baptiste Gahamanyi had formulated in his three known Pastoral Letters on the events of Kibeho. The Bishop of Gikongoro completes them adding others, judged opportune in the present circumstances.

The name given to the Marian sanctuary at Kibeho is "Shrine of Our Lady of Sorrows", as the Bishop had anticipated when the first stone was laid, 28 November 1992, and repeated in his message of 15 September 1996, with fuller explanations.

"That Kibeho become a place of pilgrimage and of encounter for all who seek Christ and who come there to pray, a fundamental centre of conversion, of reparation for the sins of the world and of reconciliation, a point of meeting for 'all who were dispersed', as for those who aspire to the values of compassion and fraternity without borders, a fundamental centre that recalls the Gospel of the Cross" (from the Declaration).

The Declaration, formulating a definitive judgement on the apparitions of Kibeho, permits the clarification of a situation which was ambiguous for many faithful for a long time, and for public opinion, not only at Kibeho but in the whole country. "in the great number of celebrations for the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 of the Redemption and of the Centenary of evangelization in Rwanda, this Declaration makes it possible to respond to the expectations of the People of God and to bring new enthusiasm to the public devotion recognized already for 13 years".

The complete text printed in Kinyarwanda and in French is available at the diocesan offices of Gikongoro.

ikongoro, 29 June 2001

Rev. Ignace Mboneyabo

Chancellor of the Diocese

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Taken from:

L'Osservatore Romano

Weekly Edition in English

11 Jul 2001, page 8

L'Osservatore Romano is the newspaper of the Holy See.

The Weekly Edition in English is published for the US by:

The Cathedral Foundation

L'Osservatore Romano English Edition

320 Cathedral St.

Baltimore, MD 21201

Subscriptions: (410) 547-5315

Fax: (410) 332-1069

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Provided Courtesy of:

Eternal Word Television Network

5817 Old Leeds Road

Irondale, AL 35210

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