

Tanzania

Sing a New Song to the Lord
Chronicle by Mother Anima Christi

*Sing a new song to the Lord,
His praise in the assembly of the faithful,
Let Israel rejoice in its maker,
Let Zion's sons exult in their king.*

*Let them praise his name with dancing
And make music with timbrel and harp.
For the Lord takes delight in his people.
He crowns the poor with salvation. (Psalm 149)*



Reciting this psalm in Ushetu, its words seemed to take on life. I saw the song and the dance, the timbrel and the praise of God on the part of the faithful of our parish dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes and I thought how pleasing this humble prayer must be in the eyes of God. This chronicle is to offer thanksgiving to God because after a long preparation we, the Servidoras (Servants of the Lord), were finally able to offer the Lord a new song: the song of Africa, with its sounds of unknown animals, the song of the rain, the song of the people who unite their voices with the clapping of their hands in a sound of praise to the Lord unknown to the Servidoras until now.

Perhaps everyone will help me in giving thanks to God for having given us the possibility to fulfill the promised foundation in Sub-Saharan Africa, offering it as a gift to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

For nearly ten years we have been taking steps to open a mission here, but evidently the time of God had not yet arrived. In July of 2000 I visited the mission of the IVE in Kenya and Sudan. In Nairobi, we buried a Miraculous Medal of Our Lady which Fr. Carlos Ferrero had given me at the tomb of [Venerable Edel Quinn](#), asking from this great missionary of the Legion of Mary for the grace of a foundation in Africa. Edel Quinn came to Africa in 1936, and, as she used to say, came to Africa with the heart of Mary in order to begin the Legion of Mary in so many places. It was therefore a wonderful surprise to find that in Ushetu, this little town so far from the world and from communication, there also exists a group of the Legion of Mary. The mission begun by this young Irish woman who died in exhaustion and sickness in Nairobi in 1944 having given everything to God extended even to this place. During her final illness she said: "they say that to suffer is the same as to work, so then if I cannot work, why should I not suffer?"

The providence of God gave me a book about the life of Venerable Edel Quinn three days before leaving on my trip to Tanzania and in that moment I remembered the request that we had made before her tomb in the cemetery of the missionaries in Nairobi. To God and His Saints be the glory!





After a long trip across land and mud, I arrived in Ushetu together with Sr. Maria Victoria Martyrum, who accompanied me from Rome. The sisters of the community were already waiting together with Fr. Simon, the local parish priest, Fr. Tito and the faithful who had gathered to welcome us. As we advanced in the car which took us ever further away from the civilized world and ever deeper into the bush, I kept recalling the words of His Excellency Bishop Ludovic Minde, the local Bishop: "I don't know why, but someone (a White Father missionary priest) put a church in Ushetu." For some reason God seems to want to say to us: "Here is where I want to save my people." Again I saw how amazing is the Providence of God and how beautiful it is to be able to be collaborators and witnesses in the hope that only God can give to His people.

The inauguration of the new community was an indescribable feast. More than a thousand people had come from far away—some for two hours by

vehicle over very poor roads, and others who had walked from the small villages surrounding Ushetu. It was a joyful and colorful assembly who sang us this welcome. The Holy Mass was really a lively celebration of the whole soul. The devotion of the people was very moving. During the consecration everyone was in silence and kneeling on the floor and on the ground of the small plaza outside the church, since the church was too small to hold so many people. After communion, a procession with the Blessed Sacrament borne by the Bishop, accompanied by priests, sisters and the choir brought the Sacramental Jesus to our little chapel. They brought Jesus to our little tabernacle which the sisters had brought from so far away—actually donated by a family in Southern Maryland—to honor Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament in the foreign missions of the Church. Beside the tabernacle there is also an image of the Virgin of Luján; now She too is a missionary in Tanzania.



This new foundation is one of the new tabernacles which Fr. Buela promised to God on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Religious Family. I hope that this tabernacle may be one which can give great glory to God and comfort to the Heart of Christ. For, here in Ushetu many pure and innocent souls, hidden from the eyes of the world, pray with devotion so sincere as to have moved me deeply more than once during my visit. In Ushetu the world seems to be very far away and one feels that the Heart of Jesus is loved and served by the souls of children. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 5:3)

At the end of the Holy Mass there began the speeches and a long procession of gifts for the new community. I have never seen so many gifts for the opening of a convent (and I have seen a number of these...). Pots, plates, cups, buckets of every size, sheets, sugar, salt, beans, corn, lamps, charcoal, money and even ten chickens and two goats. All of this was given with an unparalleled generosity considering the great poverty in which the people in this place live. Entering our convent after having cut the red cord of the inauguration, I remembered a house of the sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta in Syria which Mother had wanted to call "house of happiness." I hope that our convent in Ushetu may really be a place where the



divine hope brings to birth happiness in the hearts of the sisters, of the priests, and of the people of the place.

Certainly this place will also be one where our sisters will need to learn the mystery of the joy of the Cross, bearing tropical illnesses, the loneliness, the impotence of not being able to heal all the people, the trials and the fears.

When the bishop asked us to make the foundation, during his first time in our General Procura in Rome on January 25, 2008, he told us, “The only sisters who can go to that place are those who, for pure love of Jesus Christ, accept to found a mission there.” Really, it was the love of Christ that urged us on.



A few days after our arrival, the parish priest Fr. Simon took us to visit Grandmother Sophia. Seven years ago, Sophia was bitten by a snake that left her foot infected, producing a very large and deep scar which keeps her from walking, from putting any pressure on the foot, and leaving her in constant pain, since it is also an open wound. She did not want to go to the hospital for fear that they would amputate her foot. Sr. Maria Madre de Jesús began to clean the wound and I can be a witness of how new hope was born in her eyes. It was something so beautiful to have been able to see hope enter like a ray of sun in the midst of a dark cloud that I cannot forget the eyes of Sophia, nor the expression and the smiles of her husband, dressed in rags more than a shirt and pants, or of her two sons. Hope returned to that house... or better put, to that hut made of bark with a straw roof.

God in His Providence has wished to bring us to Ushetu, because a missionary once built a church here and an old German woman, named

Margrit, donated funds for the clinic and the convent.



In Ushetu the Church is present; it is a living Church, a Church which lives and prays in communion with Holy Mother Church.

I had brought with me from Rome some images of Pope Benedict XVI—postcards, nothing more. I left an image in the sacristy in Ushetu and another one in the chapel of St. Joseph, a town five kilometers away. After the Holy Mass, the senior catechist (the work of the catechists is fundamental in these places), showed the faithful gathered the photo of the Pope. They had never seen the face of the Holy Father though they always pray for him. They treated the image as if it were a true treasure. How pleasing must be the prayer of these faithful in the eyes of God! How much their prayers must sustain the mission of the Holy Father and of all the Mystical Body which is the Church!

I hope that the Servidoras, Mother Maria del Perpetuo Socorro (Peruvian), Sr. Maria Cor Iesu (Argentinean), Sr. Maria Madre de

Jesús (Argentinean), Sr. María Salaam (Egyptian) and Sr. María Magd’ Allah (Egyptian), may be faithful instruments of God to save His people here in Ushetu, just as I likewise hope that each Servidora may also be wherever in the world she may be planted. May the



grace of God render fruitful the poor work of our hands in the mission in Tanzania, the country which Venerable John Paul the Great used to call “the garden of peace of Africa.”



Mother Maria de Anima Christi
General Superior
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Rome

Thank you for your prayers and generosity for this new mission of the Church to bring God’s mercy and love to souls.

“Only the Love of Christ will save the world” Saint Don Luigi Orione