

OUR LADY OF KIBEHO

After twenty years of rigorous investigation Our Lady of Kibeho became the first and only Vatican approved Marian apparition site in Africa. In 2001 the Church finally proclaimed that the evidence it had collected on the apparitions was too overwhelming to ignore.

Pope Francis in an address to the Bishops of the Episcopal conference of Rwanda on their visit to the Vatican on 3 April 2014 said:

“ I entrust you all to the motherly protection of the Virgin Mary. The Mother of Jesus wished to appear in your country to several children, reminding them of the efficacy of fasting and of prayer, especially the recitation of the Rosary. I sincerely hope that you can make the Shrine of Kibeho radiate even more the love of Mary for all her children,” ...The story still remains largely unknown.

On Saturday 28th November 1981 the Blessed Virgin appeared at Kibeho Rwanda to a 16 year old school girl named Alphonsine Mumureke.

Alphonsine was serving in the dining room of a girls boarding school when she heard someone calling her name. Then she walked towards a corridor where the voice came from and heard a gentle voice say “My Child”, all she could see was a brilliantly luminous white cloud materialising in mid air a few feet in front of her.

Then to Alphonsine's amazement the most lovely woman she had ever seen emerged from the cloud floating between the floor and the ceiling, her hands were clasped in front of her in a gesture of prayer, she was barefoot. Alphonsine was filled with an unimaginable joy. She felt she was in the presence of the Divine and knelt down and asked “Who are you “? the woman replied

“I am the mother of the word”

“You are the mother of the word” Alphonsine repeated and said “my name is Alphonsine”

Mary responded “ Of all things in heaven what makes you happy” “I love God and I love his mother who gave us their son Jesus, who has saved us” Alphonsine immediately said.

“Really” the lady replied”

“Oh yes truly” said Alphonsine

“If that is true then know that I have heard your prayers and am here to console you.

I want your friends and school mates to have your faith, for they do not have enough.”

The Virgin asked Alphonsine to join the Legion of Mary. Alphonsine agreed to do so right away. Mary then stated that she wanted to be loved and trusted by people everywhere so that she could lead lost souls to salvation through Jesus.

Alphonsine though a good Catholic wasn't particularly devout. Her parents separated before she was born, She was raised by her mother in poor circumstances, however she had a happy childhood.

She was not believed, the students began taunting her at once, some thought she was out

of her mind. The insults she received were led by a girl named Marie Clare who was one of the most outgoing and popular girls in the school

The Blessed Virgin continued to appear to Alphonsine in the school dormitory throughout December 1981, usually on Saturdays in full view of students and nuns.

Alphonsine asked Mary to appear to other school girls as well. She was getting a lot of abuse and rejection.

Alphonsine said because Mary loves us so much she wants us to have more faith in God. During advent we should reflect on the return of Jesus. She said that Mary told her that her son will return to earth soon and that our souls must be prepared for his arrival. The world is in a very bad way with a lot of hatred and sin, so she wants us to say the rosary every day to cleanse our hearts and show our love for her, for Jesus and for God. She says that praying the rosary is the best way of showing her our love.

The second visionary was Anathalie Mukamazimpaka. She was 17 years of age, a member of the Legion of Mary and was known as one of the most pious students in the school. This apparition happened in January 1982 at about 7pm. Anathalie was going to go to chapel but was feeling unwell and went to the dormitory. She decided to say the rosary to calm herself. She went into a daze and found herself in a meadow, a bright white sphere descended from above and an unseen woman spoke to her from the light.

Mary said

“I am sad because I have sent a message and no one will listen to my words as I desire. My child you must pray, for the world is in a horrible way; people have turned from God and the love of my son Jesus. So many souls are running to ruin that I want your help to turn them back to my son”. Mary told her that along with any pain she would endure, she must lead a life of mortification, a life of discipline, humility, prayer and denial of the body and its appetites.

The third Church recognised visionary was Marie Clare. It began on 1st March 1982. Marie Clare was born in 1961, her father died a few months after her birth and her mother often had difficulty providing for her. So she lived with her grandparents for much of her childhood. She was raised Catholic believed in God but was not very religious. She was her class president.

Marie Clare had a vision while in chapel. She saw a field before her and a sky of beautiful colours then she heard a voice call her name Mukangano. Mary asked her to repeat the verses from the beatitudes about blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. From then on her behaviour changed. She said the Virgin was carrying a black rosary beads which Mary said was an ancient one called 'the rosary of the seven sorrows' and that it would be the girl's mission in life to reintroduce it to the world.

Mary told her I cannot promise you happiness in this world but I can promise you eternal happiness in the next world.

One message was that humans time on earth is nearing the end and that many of God's children have fallen into sin. Mary told her she was here to convert hearts back to Jesus and encourage people to say the rosary because its the most powerful tool of prayer and

conversion we have to fight evil and receive God's love. She said the Virgin kept repeating the same message “when I address myself to you, I am talking to the whole world. I have not come to Rwanda to speak to only those in the parish of Kibeho. When I come to one person I speak to all of God's children everywhere.”

Bishop Jean-Baptiste Gahamanyi assembled a medical commission to examine the visionaries and then he appointed a theological commission a few months later.

Mary told the visionaries that she would appear to them on March 25 1982. She instructed them to gather all 120 students together and have everyone kneel down during the apparitions and pray the rosary as an act of penance for having persecuted the visionaries. She promised that every student who attended the school for the next six years would complete her education and graduate with a diploma. In Rwanda such an achievement was completely unknown, poverty illness meant that only a few students from any one school would complete their education and graduate. Mary had told Anatholie that all people were her children she instructed that the Protestants and Muslim girls should pray the rosary not as Catholics but as her children and they would be awarded as all the others. All students knelt and prayed the rosary. Every single girl went on to graduate from Kibeho High School.

On 15 August 1982, the feast of the Assumption, more than 20,000 people turned up at Kibeho expecting to sing joyous songs and share apparitions some were hoping for miraculous cures. When Alphonsine entered a state of ecstasy she began a song of welcome

“I am too sad to hear my children sing” Mary said. Alphonsine started the song seven times and seven times was told to stop

Mary began to weep

The people could not hear the Virgin only Alphonsine.

Alphonsine has visions of what was going to happen in Rwanda

Each visionary who stepped on the podium received the same message that day.

The genocide in Rwanda happened in 1994.

Marie Clare commented that one of Our Lady's greatest sorrows during her many visits to Kibeho was that not enough people truly listened to the loving advice and counsel she offered through her visionaries, too many individuals came to the village simply to witness a miracle their hearts failed to hear the messages. Mary repeated again and again, Love God, love and be kind to each other, read the bible, follow God's commandments, accept the love of Christ, repent for sins, be humble, seek and offer forgiveness and live the gift of your life how God wants you to do, with a clean and open heart and a clear conscience

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Our Lady of Kibeho, Immaculee Ilibagiza