



Sowers of Prophetic Hope
Seminatrici di speranza profetica
 Säerinnen Prophetischer Hoffnung
Sembradoras de esperanza profética
 Semeuses d'espérance prophétique
Semeadoras de esperança profética

TESTIMONIAL Sr. Elvira Tutolo - Central African Republic

“...I didn’t want to kill, but my Boss constrained me... My task consisted in cutting the corpses to pieces... I remained in a container for several days without eating or drinking. I saw my companions dying one after the other... I was tied up and they killed my parents in front of my naked eyes... the white soldiers offered me some chocolate and then they wanted to do those things which I cannot narrate... I had to go to steal and prepare food for the fighters who returned in the evening... one of them abused me ... now I have a baby! We were all vaccinated to render us strong and courageous... they took my brother and tortured him. We found him later with his arms broken and without penis... my son’s body came afloat to the river’s shore with his legs and arms tied while his face couldn’t be identified... !

I witnessed all this violence but I prefer to narrate directly the expressions uttered by young men and women who have now abandoned the armed bands. We are trying to help them recuperate their lost dignity and rediscover the meaning of life, hence starting afresh to hope in a better life.

I am here to bring you the cry of a tormented people and Church. It’s the situation of a man attacked by bandits and left half dead on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Jericho ... from Bangui to Bossangoa, from Bambari to Alindao, from Berberati to Gamboula. I come from the Central African Republic who since the beginning of 2013 awaits the “good Samaritan”. In November 2015, Pope Francis, a pilgrim of Peace, came to open the Holy Door in Bangui to launch the jubilee year of Mercy. Through his choice he has given back so much hope. Unfortunately, after five years and 8 signatures and Peace agreements, 80% of the territory is under the control of the same armed Groups, although we call them Ex, of March 2013.

Their goal and only interest is to be able to continue to tear apart with impunity the Country’s wealth, especially diamonds, gold and even much more! It’s not a matter of religions. It was only a coincidence that the Seleka belonged to the Muslim religion. The real problem lies in the fact that there exists an excessive and competitive GREEDINESS for the substratum wealth, without any sign of respect for justice on behalf of the international

authorities. After 60 years since the proclamation of independence, we are still without roads, without electricity, without water supply, without schools, without hospitals in the real sense of the word. It's a people with a great potential but who remains humiliated, plundered and impoverished! The military Missions who have been called to defend the population have failed and they surrendered themselves to many conspiracies. Too many contradictions! I will mention only two : the UN is still extending the Embargo on the armaments and therefore the national army who tries painfully to rebuild itself, lacks the necessary equipment. At the same time, armed groups continue to receive weapons! The embargo on the Diamonds and at the same time the outflow of these same goods is out of control! The Catholic Church, through its structures and especially through the priests and the religious has paid and is still paying a very high price to defend the population. A young Church but who is highly alive, is a seed of hope that is in a state of revival and growth even in the midst of so many difficulties. We, Sisters of Charity of Saint Jeanne Antide Thouret reached Central Africa in August 1960, precisely in conjunction with the proclamation of Independence: already 60 years ago... We have Central African blood! With the other Congregations present on the territory and with the population, we work with the poorest, the little ones, the sick and youths. Together with them, we try to cling to our hope thanks to the educational and development projects. The Central African sisters are engaged in accompanying the girls who have abandoned the armed or prostitution Bands. In darkness, I began to grope in my experience with children/boys who lived on the street... because as they personally said, "I couldn't remain at home any more, I preferred to stay on the road"... Their parents are separated; the fathers work like slaves in the diamonds' sites. They live in utter misery because of polygamy, accuses of sorcery, violence because of lack of education. Always BETRAYED in their love and abandoned to themselves! On the road, exploited by adults they easily find themselves in conflict with the Law and thus end up in prison with the adults. How can we answer these children? How can we help these young people to grow? How can we help them to hope in a better world ? We have said " NO" to the Institute, to "internship" (as they call it) and " YES" to the Family. We launched an awareness and "Formation for local Couples." We managed to create a fraternity/association which was later acknowledged as National NGO : Kizito (a name chosen by the same children) to welcome, to protect and to socially reintegrate the minors. Thus the Couples have their natural children, so called "of the uterus" and the welcomed children, those of "the heart". Very often, given the big of children we manage to form football teams and even more!

We have no husband ... they aren't our children... it's not the sisters' task: it's a challenge giving rise to total availability and love; hope has began to emerge! In the meantime, broke out again. We have lost many children, young men! We have witnessed terrible acts of violence, torture, assaults and sexual violence.

Serge...I couldn't find him; I didn't see him for a few days... they call me that there is a corpse in a phase of decomposition at the end of the airport runway ... sister, he is perhaps one of your boys.... says the voice on the phone. I call the Doctors without Boundaries who at that time were present in Berberati but they cannot surpass the hospital's limits. I call the doctor, director of the hospital... the police and the Gendarmerie were inexistent... nobody wanted to move... I went with my small Suzuki on which I had hoisted a white towel.. and.... yes, he was precisely Serge : a destroyed body with highly evident signs of torture and then riddled with

blows. I still have the bullets without knowing why I have kept them... I wept... together with other youths we dug a pit... a prayer, a greeting. Just as we reached the centre, a car full of rebels was coming in our direction!

Just a few day ago one of the boys residing at the Formation Centre was telling me that his mother was pregnant. "Not far from Berberati, the militaries had arrived in their village. They took all the women and they cut their bellies with the machetes. The Mungi-white soldiers offered us some chocolate and then asked us to do certain things which I cannot narrate... Impossible to forget very difficult to forgive and for this reason I joined the Antibalaka to take revenge".

The youths tried to organise themselves to form a militia against the Seleka : violence calls for violence! And precisely as these young people remained in this centre, they gradually regained their smile and the desire to start dreaming again.

And we, together with them, we continue to be the good Samaritans, with the God of Hope, of the Resurrection and of Life!

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Sr. Elvira Tutolo