

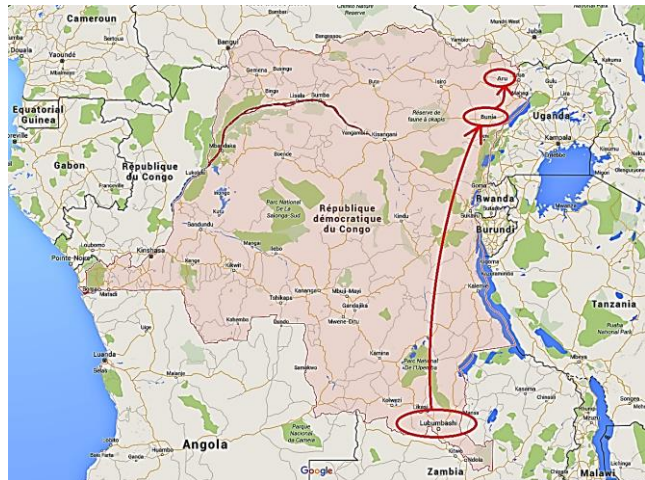
My first missionary appointment in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

By Humphrey Mukuka, M.Afr

My journey to Aru.

My decision of passing by Lubumbashi, situated in the southern part of the country near Zambia, to go to Aru, next to Uganda in the North-East, was a bit adventurous. Everyone was advising me to pass through Kampala in Uganda and then enter to DR Congo by road. Being in Zambia, I wanted to go to Lubumbashi to see the families that had welcomed me and my friends Robbin Simbeye, Sylvestre Chimenge, Mathew Kalumba and Joseph Mulenga for a French course in 2008. One in particular, Papa Kabangu and Mama Annie, came to witness my priestly Ordination in Kabwe last year on the 27th June, 2015. It was so nice to see them again.

I heard that flights from Lubumbashi to Bunia was risking due to negative experiences of local airlines. Anyhow, I thought to myself, *“Let me accept it the way it will be. Besides, it will be a learning experience.”* Guess what! I was very surprised to find a very well-organised airline called CAA. We



travelled safely only that we had to stop over in many places.

Upon my arrival in Aru, I soon discovered deep tensions between some youth and the missionary community. I was wondering how I will integrate myself in such an environment. What will be my participation in the rebuilding mutual trust? Then, I remember what I learned during the Spiritual Year: *“An ideal community does not exist but we try by all means to build our community according to the model of an ideal community where we are sent as missionaries.”*

Fortunately, things have largely improved since my arrival. We have worked out our “community project”, meaning the way we wish to live as a missionary community. We have regular fraternal meetings and a monthly recollection.

Pastoral Activities

The Parish *Notre Dame du Congo* is a very dynamic one based on primary evangelisation focussing in visiting outstations in various villages. The warm hospitality the Christians help us to forget the bad roads. Those visits are more intensively made in November and December. I have already visited some outstations but still need much more time to know them all. This is really a wonderful experience.

I have been designated to look more closely to various parish groups such as the Mass servants, the *Kizito-Anuarite* association, the *Bilenge ya mwinda* or *Youth of the light* group, the “Mouvement Sacerdotal Marial”, “Les mamans catholiques” and the sick. For the later, I came to understand how deeply most of them are in need of the sacrament of reconciliation and receive the Holy Communion as quite a few have been waiting for a long time to welcome a Priest in their homes.

My difficulties and challenges.

The misunderstanding between some youth and our community is still being badly felt. But we are seriously working to rebuild confidence with a high sense of creativity so as to encourage everyone to remain joyfully active.

The state of poverty in Aru and its surroundings is unfortunately very high. Consequently, solicitation for financial assistance is constant and can become a form of harassment.

With so many spiritual needs to cover and leadership responsibilities, my time as much as my energy is running out quite often. However, I remain confident with the help of my fellow confreres and God. Remember me in your prayer!