

AN IMPORTANT TIME IN MY LIFE



I am Sr. Silvana Sauro and I have been working for years in the Bursar General's Office. In 1981, I was sent as a missionary to the Congo (which at that time was known as Zaire) and I was there for three years. That was

a time of great joy, witnessing and apostolic zeal for me.

Regarding this experience, I would like to share above all a few beautiful aspects of the Congolese people, leaving aside the negative features, namely: the problems that are present in this part of Africa, which is rich in natural resources but whose people live in poverty and an atmosphere of violence due to repressive governing regimes.

The local parishes are active and vibrant because the Congolese people are very religious and also very hospitable. They live in the presence of God, in the firm belief that he alone is the Master of life.

I recall the words of a "pousse pousseur"—a person who does the backbreaking work of pushing a handcart to transport goods. He stopped me in the middle of a local marketplace and confided to me: "Sister, I believe in God, just like all the rest of my family. I believe Jesus dwells in me and that he loves me. So during the day, while I am pushing my cart barefoot beneath the broiling sun, I know that I am not alone. I speak to the Friend who is in my heart, who keeps me company, and I feel stronger in the midst of my toils." I was deeply moved by this man's words and I begged the Friend in his heart to make his presence felt more tangibly not only to this humble laborer but also to all the Congolese people and to me.

The Congolese highly esteem reading and many people would come to our book center to spend the few coins they had on reading material. To give them greater access to our publications, Sr. Domenica Attardo and I would often visit the schools of the area to give the children the chance to purchase a book or booklet to help foster their formation. How many children we met! We did a lot of vocation work among the girls, offering them flyers about our mission. How excited they

became about the Pauline vocation! And how many other opportunities we had to carry out our apostolate in the midst of a people thirsting for Christ....

But in 1984, Jesus Master knocked on the door of my life in an unexpected way. I had to return to Italy for an urgent operation because I was experiencing intestinal problems that mystified the doctors.

When I woke up after the surgery, there were several people gathered around my bed. They all looked sad and worried. I knew at once that my situation was serious. Someone said: "Poor thing. The doctor had to remove so much.... If she's lucky, she might live another two weeks." Within myself, I cried out: "This can't be happening! Lord, why me? I was so happy in the missions! I want to go back there.... Why are you asking this of me???"



Now I too was sad and worried. But at Mass that Sunday, the Lord touched me through the words of St. Paul, who said: "Whether we live or die, we are the Lord's." I said to myself: "I am a consecrated religious. But do I truly belong to the Lord?" Those words of Paul were the key that helped me face my situation serenely.

In the days that followed, many FSPs stormed heaven with their prayers for my recovery and I want to take this opportunity to thank Prima Maestra Thecla yet again for obtaining for me the restoration of my health.

I've been a member of the Generalate community for more than thirty years now, serving our communities around the world through my work in the Bursar's Office, which has become the place of my mission and into which I pour all my enthusiasm and apostolic zeal.

I praise and thank the Lord for this and I want to continue to live for his glory!

Silvana Sauro, fsp