

Joyful Easter from Kinshasa

By Fr. Mario Barbero, April 14, 2006

My dear friends,

Happy Easter 2006. In Kinshasa we started the paschal Triduum with the Chrismal Mass at the Cathedral. The Cardinal was surrounded by 650 concelebrating priests and a large crowd of religious women and lay faithful joyfully singing and praying for their priests. The celebration lasted three hours. The same in the evening Mass for the Supper of the Lord in our parish of St. Luc where the Mass was celebrated in French and Lingala: three hours celebration followed by an hour of silent adoration. During all these hours I could reflect and pray for all of you. During the Easter night many catechumens will be baptized in Kinshasa and throughout Congo. All difficulties notwithstanding, the church keeps growing in this country.

In our community, the 20 seminarians are attending the Paschal Triduum in the various parishes where they do their pastoral work on weekends. But on the Holy Thursday we gathered together to thank the Lord for the gift of the Eucharist and of Priesthood and to wish "Happy Feast" to the 3 priests of our community (Frs. Sympho, Osorio, and myself).

The political situation in the country is slowly evolving. On February 18 the new Constitution was promulgated, this should lead to organizing the elections in the coming months. In the past weeks there have been the presentations of the candidates: 32 for the Presidency and about 7,000 for the Parliament (with 500 seats available).

The social situation is still very hard, though: high unemployment, lack of health services, many families cannot afford to send their children to school. Yet we think that with a democratically elected Government also the social situation will improve. We still ask for your prayers for our country.

Our ME community is slowly growing. On Sunday March 26 we had a recollection day for all encountered people in Kinshasa, to reflect on the Encyclical letter of Benedict XVI "Deus caritas est" GOD IS LOVE, a theme that has to encourage and challenge all married couples to become a better "icon" of God's relationship with his people (§11).

To each one of you I wish a Joyful Easter and assure my prayers, asking for yours.

God bless.
Fr. Mario