

Le témoignage de Sr Maureen Dempsey

2006

- **Sr Maureen Dempsey**

Oxford, England

My first impression was that this was a very stimulating and well-planned conference, although perhaps a little over-full, not leaving much time for reflection and a "breathing space" each day. My other strong impression was of the lively and caring "family" nature of the Assumption, each group contributing something unique to the whole, yet sharing so much of our distinctive charism, and working well together as brothers and sisters. The liturgy was well planned each day and the use of different languages, drums etc helped the prayerfulness.

The highlights for me were the lecture of Bea Edel Churu on the various challenges to African society in a globalised world and the talk given by Archbishop Lebulu of Arusha on how the Church in Africa lives its vocation and mission as Family of God. I felt both these fine people brought me close to present-day African society and the challenges the African church faces today. They energised me and made me feel very proud to see what Africans can offer the universal church today !

The moving Vigil of Reconciliation from Rwanda was surrounded by an atmosphere of recollection and was touching and memorable ; bringing home to many of us both the horrors of 1994 and the sustained and difficult efforts at understanding and forgiveness which seemed eventually to bear such rich fruit. Learning of Africa's efforts at ecumenism in a missionary context interested me very much and I appreciated the ecumenical "Vespers" we celebrated with the different pastors and church leaders. I did feel that English-speakers were not really well catered for and were at a distinct disadvantage, which was sad and caused frustration at times. I was also rather surprised that EAST African speakers and especially Kenyans did not play a larger part as lecturers. At times WEST Africa seemed to be at the forefront of our thinking, rather to the neglect of East Africa's special problems and challenges. However, I found much that was stimulating and helpful. I feel I understand the African church much better and I do appreciate the care, thought and planning that went into what was not an easy conference to arrange at such a distance.

Thank you for a very special time !

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