

Congregations of the Assumption
Religious Sisters of the Assumption, Augustinians of the Assumption
Oblates of the Assumption, Little Sisters of the Assumption
Orants of the Assumption

re: Message of support and of communion for our brothers and sisters living and working in the Diocese of Butembo- Beni

At the meeting of our General Councils from January 4-6, 2016, we were informed of the latest events of the bloody Christmas experienced by the inhabitants of Mbau-Oicha and most recently those that happened at Luofu on January 7.

At this moment when massacres continue to sow terror among the population at large and among those Christians entrusted to your care, we, the members of the general councils of the Assumption Family (Religious Sisters of the Assumption, Augustinians of the Assumption, Oblates of the Assumption, Little Sisters of the Assumption, and Orants of the Assumption), wish to express our deepest sympathy to all the families ravaged by these ongoing massacres. We pray for the innumerable innocent victims: men, women, and children. We also wish to express to you our solidarity and support in your ministry of accompanying these suffering brothers and sisters, mindful how demanding and delicate it is in such trying circumstances as these, a ministry to which you devote yourselves standing closely at the side of so many helpless families. The consequences of these atrocities are multiple, at many levels: family life, upset by the massive rural exodus to the relative safety of city or town; increased hunger due to the fact that peasants can no longer go into their fields for fear of being murdered; and a marked increase in mental illness linked to the trauma that such slaughter brings with it.

Dear brothers and sisters, as you face these difficult situations, we encourage you to continue with courage and perseverance your apostolic commitment in collaboration with all other pastoral agents, and with your bishop, Most Rev. Melchisedek SIKULI. You are involved in a work of reconstruction and the defense of life, countering negative forces that seek to sow terror and death.

Witnesses of the hope given to us in Christ Crucified and Raised from the dead, you are, together with the universal Church and all men and women of goodwill, the only source of support in accompanying this suffering people. It is not easy to persevere in this struggle when you are faced with ever-recurring atrocities. But we are convinced: **death will not have the final word** . With eyes fixed on Jesus Christ, keep on finding strength in that source that is His heart overflowing with love and mercy in our journey of faith. He promised to be with us all days till the end of time. Walk in the hope of the Risen One who will never leave your side and thus bring your immeasurable strength. He is the one who can maintain you in the way of love and compassion with this suffering people.

For our part, as a sign of our communion with you, we commit ourselves to informing every member of the Assumption Family of what you have been experiencing. We will continue to support you by our prayer and by raising the awareness of all those capable of making the voice of these innocent victims heard.

We beseech Our Lord Jesus Christ to be with you in a special way at this time so that he might fill you with his grace and enlighten you in every circumstances with words and signs coming from His merciful Heart. May he shower on you His love that you might continue to walk with this population in distress.

Be assured, dear brothers of sisters, that we hold you close to our hearts and in our prayer.

Rome, January 11, 2016