AN URGENT PLEA FROM OUR OBLATE SISTERS OF THE ASSUMPTION IN IVORY COAST

by Sr. Isabelle Yeodetessinga , O.A

We are happy to resume contact with you after several months of silence, a silence, I am sure you have heard over the airwaves, that is due to the post-electoral crisis we have been experiencing in Ivory Coast. In fact, what happened was that the day after this election both of the remaining candidates claimed victory. Both formed governments challenging the other. The international community, represented by the United Nations and a number of regional organizations, sponsored a series of negotiation sessions intended to bring about a peaceful resolution to the crisis. Four months went by without any success. During this time, the common people paid the heaviest price: thousands dead and more than a million forced to flee their homes to other parts of the country or to neighboring nations.

From the health point of view, it's practically a catastrophe. There is no more medication in health centers, which themselves became the victims of the civil unrest. This situation has led the local populations to resort to traditional medicine, which remains untested in many areas and outright dangerous in others.

It is hard to describe the devastation, human and material, left in the wake of the armed confrontation between the armies of these two presidential candidates, especially in the financial capital of Abidjan and the west of the country. It was only on April 11 that the forces loyal to Alassane Ouattara, the candidate widely recognized as the legitimate winner of the election, were able with the aid of the forces of the United Nations and the those of the French consortium to arrest the former president Laurent Gbagbo.

Since his arrest, things have fortunately begun to calm down little by little just about everywhere in the country. Government services are returning slowly. People are now able to move back and forth between the north and the south.

Nevertheless, in spite of all these sparks of hope, the general population has been traumatized by the atrocities of the past few months and many people are afraid or financially unable to return to their homes. What makes matters quite precarious in some regions is that pockets of resistance are still active. Many, many people simply have no resources left; they spent

everything they had to flee and to fight for their survival. They won't be able to return until, and if, they can find the means.

Here in Togoniéré, in the north, we have given shelter to some 167 families who fled the violence in the hot spots of the country. Some are with us in the Catholic mission; others have been taken in by local families. We are in desperate need of medicine and first aid supplies to meet the immediate needs of these displaced people. Normally we stock medicine in our Emmanuel d'Alzon Health Center where we provide free care for these people who couldn't afford it otherwise. We need your help for this and for other basic resources.

With this urgent request, we send our best wishes for a Blessed and Happy Easter!

Sr. Isabelle, O.A
April 21, 2011

Donations to support Oblate Sisters of the Assumption *can be made to the Assumptionists and send to:*

Development Office
Augustinians of the Assumption
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