

"6th March 2014 - A LENTEN DAY's RETREAT FOR THE ELDERLY PEOPLE IN KIRAMBI-RWANDA"

When the day dawned the elderly people said that they could not wait to see how it will be. They said this was a day they were looking forward to that has been prepared for them. They indeed felt so special that someone has thought of them, gathered them together, prepared some input for them and above all a meal with food to take home and a blanket wow!. They have never had this opportunity in their old age. ***" I have never been given this opportunity in my life"***.

When they all arrived, they were happy to be at our place and had a lot to share with each other. The energy around and the openness to share was amazing. They were just bubbling with words. Their faces brightened. Oh "I was happy to be part of this joyful day for our elderly people" says Sr Angela.

I am grateful to the Michael's House for their support. Indeed through you, I have been able to reach out more to our elderly people. May God Bless and reward you.

The session started by singing some songs and a little traditional dance as well.

I affirmed them that, they have beautiful voices and that made them so happy to sing the more. They said when they were young they were the best singers. Ha ha I Laughed. After the song, they organized themselves to do



The elderly weeding some grasse



The elderly people singing and dancing with joy

something for us as sign of gratitude for the support we are giving them. They said that they want to show us that they are **"Small girls and boys in spirit though they are now old physically"**

Guess what, they all went to weed part of our compound that had small grasses as a sign of appreciation for the support we are giving them. They were singing as they weed. It was gorgeous. The ones that were very weak were sitting on the side giving moral support to the ones working. Oh that was nice of them I was moved. I felt like stopping them but they would have felt useless. I had to let them do it and that made them feel fulfilled and cherished. I was grateful to them for the work they did. They said, people think they are useless but they can do something small and that was their gift to us today. It was the most beautiful experience for me to be with them and share their joy. Indeed I saw the face of Christ today.

Sometimes we visit them and bring them food wherever they are, other times they just come the programme and get the food and go but this Lenten season was marked in a special way. I thought of doing something different for them yet very extraordinary. I planned a days' retreat for them and the blankets crowned the whole occasion especially during this rainy and cold season. **" I was cold now I am warm"** they said.

The day was planned and everything was ready waiting for the elderly people. It was divided into four sessions:

1. Life as a gift from God:
2. Sharing joys and struggles
3. Lenten season.
4. Sharing a meal together followed by distribution of blankets and food for them (**10 Kgs Rice, 10Kgs beans, 10Kgs Maize flour and a bar of soap**)



The elderly people having some input from Mrs Aloysie



They are sharing a meal together.

It was very interesting to hear them share about their struggles and joys as well. One of the things that struck me was how each one acknowledged that they are frail because they have one pain or the other. Others in the joints, general body and especially the eyes. One of them said ,” You are lucky. I have a problem with my legs I can not walk as fast as I want”. Immediately another said, “You don’t know what it feels like to be blind. At least you can walk slowly and see what is happening but me I can not”. Eventually they consoled one another that they have to accept that they are elderly and that they are no longer energetic as before anymore.

They also shared what they are planning to do this Lenten season. It was humbling for me to hear how they are planning to pray more this Lenten season and continue having a positive attitude in their old age so that they would age gracefully. They promised to pray for the donors supporting them and for us at the ground that are directly involved with purchasing things from far and bringing them near for them. They are really filled with joy and gratitude. They have hope in their lives now. They are happy that someone cares for them and above all that Sr. Angela has reached their homes. They are happy that she climbed the hills to know where they are living and the situation they are in.

After those sessions there was a meal and a drink prepared for them and they were very pleased to share it together. We made sure that all the food was soft enough that everyone could eat and enjoy. They never had such a treatment before and they were grateful. They said indeed we have a special place in Sr Angela’s heart. One asked, *“Where had I been before as they had been suffering?”* Another said . *“they pray that this support will continue.”* another said, *“Please convey our gratitude to those people that do not know us yet support us”*

When the blankets came out for each one, nobody could believe it. They all clapped and were so excited” **A blanket for me?? I was cold and now I am warm**”. Some shed tears of joy. They could not imagine getting a blanket. It was a blessing being with them as they opened the blankets and covered themselves with them. They were so happy.” *I can’t even express this nor put it in words. Only God knows what you have done to these people”* Says Sr Angela.



Sr Angela (Behind) with the elderly people after receiving their blankets. A blanket for me!!, " I was cold and I am now warm". Someone said.



The elderly people smile as they see food (Rice, Beans, maize flour and soap) ready packed for them.



Some grand children that came to help their grandmothers carry something home.



THEY ARE ALL SAYING THANK YOU VERY MUCH

THE SMILES SAY IT ALL. THEY ARE INDEED GRATEFUL FOR THIS BIG TREAT TODAY.
"TELL THE ONES SUPPORTING US THANK YOU VERY MUCH, GOD BLESS THEM."