

XXX – *Marapyane Mission*, near Marble Hall

When, in about 1873, the Africans migrated from Central Africa to the area north of Pretoria, they found many small bones of animals that had been killed by lions at a water hole, so the place was named “Marapyane” (‘small bone’ in the language). In this dry area the fountains are far apart and the nearest permanent stream, the Elands River, is sixteen miles away. Marapyane is situated near Marble Hall very close to the little post office known as Skilpadfontein.

Bishop David O’Leary O.M.I had bought ten morgen of land here from an Irishman, a Mr Gould. When Archbishop J Garner became Metropolitan of Pretoria Archdiocese he planned to begin a mission station at Marapyane as soon as missionaries were available. In 1959 Father E Kammermeyer and Father Konrad Schmidleiter came from Germany with a few lay mission helpers to establish the Mission of Saint Martin de Porres on this spot. It was not an easy undertaking because most people of the area seemed already committed to one or other Protestant denomination.

Father Kammermeyer eventually persuaded Mother General Fromunda Zimmermann to give him a few Religious to help at this mission. In 1964 three Sisters of our congregation arrived at Marapyane and set up a small clinic. It seemed doubtful at first whether the clinic would make progress because the Dutch Reformed Church had already started a clinic close by. However, the Sisters soon had more work than they could easily cope with. A year later Sister Melitta Hartmann wrote in the mission chronicle: “On 24th January 1965 was the wedding of Mr Albert Semneya and his wife Sophie at the out-station Doornlaagte. Father Kammermeyer delivered a fine sermon and made the wedding a solemn occasion as it was the first Catholic marriage ceremony to be celebrated in this pagan village...

“On Easter Sunday two hundred people attended Mass in our new church of St Kisito¹ at Marapyane, although the building was really only half finished...

“... On the Feast of Corpus Christi a procession of the Blessed Sacrament was held for the first time at our mission, at which 290 people joined. It was a beautiful occasion with many girls dressed in white and ten altar boys accompanied the Priest. The people prayed and sang with all their might and were very happy...

“The 25th July proved one of the greatest days at Marapyane Mission. His Grace, Archbishop Garner came from Pretoria to bless the completed church. About 3000 Bantu and a number of Europeans came to the festivity.

“A month later a new church was also opened at Ramanchaane, an out-station about ten kilometres from here.

“In October 198 people were baptised here. They had gathered from various out-stations and had been under instructions for periods of between one and two years...

“On the Feast of Christ the King several motor lorries brought Catholics here from the district. About 400 people received Holy Communion that day and of these some two hundred had recently made their first Confession...”

Marapyane Mission is supported by several of our other Convents as well as by benefactors in Europe. So the mission grew and a new house was built for the Fathers and a convent for the Sisters. The clinic at this mission does not only treat outpatients but also conducts a small maternity home where many babies are born each year.

In 1973 Father R Webber O.M.I.² settled at Marapyane with a small group of African men whom he is training as postulants for his new religious congregation “The Missionary Sons of Jesus”. In time buildings were erected to accommodate Father and his junior aspirants to the priesthood.

¹ *The youngest of twenty-two martyrs of Uganda who were put to death by the king, Mwanga, whose objection to their Christianity was reinforced by their resistance to his impure demands of them. All these Christians persevered to the end despite cruel tortures and the entreaties of their families.*

² *He came to Marapyane after Father Kammermeyer had returned to Europe.*

Soon after his consecration in Pretoria, Archbishop Daniel honoured Marapyane with a visit. It was the first mission of his Archdiocese that His Grace had visited.

Our Sisters also support the Priests here in their apostolic labours by caring for the sick, instructing converts and by giving lessons to Father Webber's postulants who are furthering their education in preparation for the seminary.

XXXI – *Ramanchaane*³ Mission, Our Lady of Joy Convent near Marapyane

Already in 1959 Father G Brunner often called Ramanchaane to say Mass for the few Catholics of the village. It is about 10 Km from Marapyane. Later Father E Kammermayer built quite a roomy church for this locality.

On 15th July 1974 Sister Beatrice von Felten accompanied three African Sisters from Woodlands, Sisters Goretti Donga, Dominica Twalingca and Theodora Dlamini, to their newly-built convent at this 'Place of Chaane'. The community arrived after sunset and, as there was no electric light, they were glad that the Sisters of Marapyane had also thoughtfully provided matches and candles for them.

On the evening of 16th July, the Feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Father Conrad Schmidleitner, parish Priest of Marapyane, said the first Mass for the Sisters in their new home.

Sister Goretti, who has charge of the little community, is also the catechist, distributes Holy Communion on three days of the week when Mass is not said at Ramanchaane, teaches adults and children and visits the people in their homes. Sister Dominica is housekeeper, gardener and sacristan. Sister Theodora is a nurse and between 30 and 60 patients come to her clinic daily and, once a week, she also visits a detached clinic. She has started a Chiro Youth Club for the youngsters of the area as well.

On 8th August, St Dominic's Day, the Convent of 'Mme we le Thabo'⁴ was duly blessed by the Dean, Very Rev Father Brunner. This foundation should serve as a collecting house for African girls of the Transvaal who are desirous of entering our Convent at Woodlands. In the village is a secondary school which some aspirants can attend before they are admitted to the Novitiate.

The Sisters' apostolic work is progressing. A large number of people in the locality were Catholics only in name. Since the nuns visit them they are coming for religious instruction and are becoming true Catholics.

³ *Chaane is the name of the Chief.*

⁴ *Our Lady, Mother of Joy.*