



## **AFRICA/BURUNDI - The Golden Jubilee of the Shrine of Mugeru and the consecration of Burundi to the Virgin Mary**

Bujumbura (Agenzia Fides) - The celebration of the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Burundi coincided with the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the Marian Shrine of Mugeru, located in the Archdiocese of Gitega.

The celebration, as stated in a note sent to Fides by don Lambert Niciteretse, Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference of Burundi, was attended by the Bishops of the Country, the Secretary of the Apostolic Nuncio in Burundi, hundreds of priests, religious men and women and thousands of faithful. The Burundi government was represented by the Second Vice-President of the Republic.

Thousands of faithful from all eight dioceses in Burundi made a pilgrimage to Mugeru and most of them attended the prayer Vigil, during which many received the sacrament of reconciliation.

The Mass began at 10 and was presided by Mgr. Simon Ntamwana, Archbishop of Gitega.

In his homily Mgr. Grevais Banshimiyubusa, Bishop of Ngozi and President of the Episcopal Conference of Burundi, recalled the role that Mary had for our salvation and emphasized that if we take refuge under her protection, we will have the peace that comes from Her Son, Jesus Christ.

The Archbishop of Gitega further explained that the Church of Burundi chose to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Shrine of Mugeru, to commemorate the consecration of Burundi to the Virgin Mary, Queen of Peace, in 1961. At that time the Country was preparing for independence and the change of the political system frightened the inhabitants of the Country. To avoid Burundi falling into violence, the Bishops wrote, on June 3, 1961, a pastoral letter inviting the faithful to gather on Mount Mugeru on August 15 at the Marian shrine, to consecrate Burundi to the Mother of God, Queen of Peace.

Since then, Mugeru became the first Marian shrine of Burundi. Every year thousands of pilgrims go there on pilgrimage, and God has granted many graces through the intercession of the Virgin Mary.

At the beginning of the Mass the message sent by His Exc. Mgr. Fernando Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples was read, which states that the consecration to the Virgin is the expression of the growing faith of the Church of Burundi, of her desire to take refuge under the protection of the Mother of Heaven and to be guided through Her by Her Son Jesus Christ.

The jubilee year will end on August 15, 2012. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 17/08/2011)