ENCOURAGEMENT

November 2026 – Issue 184

THE HOST APOSTOLATE
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Mary, Mother of the Faithful People of God

It would be easy to assume that Marian apparitions happen exclusively in Europe. This is partly because access to them and their propagation has been in countries that have developed quickly and it is both easy to travel to them, and information has been easiest to obtain. It is also true that this access was not always the case but nevertheless much easier than those outside of Europe. Whether they are accepted or not, considered an essential aspect of faith, it would be an unusual person, who has not at least heard of Lourdes, Fatima, or Medjugorje in more recent times. Of course there are others in many parts of Europe.

Yet apparitions happen all over the world. Probably the famous being in Guadalupe in Mexico which is still one of the most visited shrines and attracts over twenty million pilgrim visitors a year. It is also one of the oldest. There is also Betania in Venezuela. But what of other continents, what of Africa? Perhaps to date, the most famous is that in Egypt in *Zeitoun* where countless number saw Our Lady, both Christians and Moslems alike and indeed non-believers. In the spring of 1968, a Muslim bus mechanic in Cairo looked up at the dome of a Coptic Christian church and saw a woman made of light. He thought she was in danger of falling. He called out. His co-workers looked. Others walking past stopped. Within minutes there was a crowd. Within weeks there were thousands. Within months over the course of three years of repeated apparitions, captured in photographs and on Egyptian state television, confirmed by the government of Egypt and by the highest authorities of both the Coptic Orthodox and Catholic churches there would be over one million witnesses.

There are however two more places in Africa that are growing in popularity and as yet little known in Europe. Both require special attention and for different and similar reasons. The first of these is in Rwanda and the second in Aokpe, Nigeria.



In a quiet African village in 1981, (incidentally the same year as Medjugorje), the Virgin Mary appeared to three schoolgirls with a message that would shake a nation—and the world. Known as Our Lady of Kibeho. She came with a voice full of love, but also with a sorrow that would later prove to be prophetic. Though initially ignored, the messages she gave of repentance, prayer, and the dangers of a world turning away from God foretold one of the most devastating tragedies of the 20th century: the Rwandan genocide. But her message wasn't only for Rwanda. It was for all of us. (Approved 2001)

"Her beauty and Joy of the Catholic Church in Africa is that our blessed Mother is honoured in the liturgical calendar as Queen and Mother of Africa, 30th April it is celebrated as such and some apparitions in Africa have been 'approved."
(*Fr. Eric Endeche Agbara)*

Fr. Eric has given us a wonderful witness statement regarding Aokpe from which I quote above, but sadly too long for the scope of Encouragement. However, I would like to share my personal and perhaps interesting witness regarding this apparition.
Let me first start by making it clear that I have never been to Nigeria. I had never heard of Aokpe or of any events taking place there. My husband, Michael, and I were living at that time, for a short time, in London as we were looking after my father. It was a time of many changes and challenges and a time of special prayer.

In April 1997, one very early morning around five o'clock I heard within me, in a dream, or something like, the word which *sounded* like 'Ugbookule.' I woke up and wrote it down. There were also the words 'go wait for me there.' When my husband woke up, I told him. But neither of us were any the wiser. For reasons I cannot explain, I thought of it as being in Nigeria. So, over the next months we search, looked at Maps, asked anyone who was from there and nothing. However, I could not ignore it.

Then in 1998 our parish in Brockley was visited by A Holy Ghost Father (Spiritan), giving a Mission. He said many interesting things but all I could think of was to ask him the question. Had he ever heard of such a place. His response was immediate. He looked stunned How do you know of it??. Of what? I replied. He said it was pronounced Ugbokolo and it was in Nigeria associated with Aokpe. He grabbed my arm and told me you must go and see Fr. John Beirne. He gave me an address in Bromley, London, a Motherhouse of the Community. He was back from Nigeria but ill.

It was much, much later that I did meet up with him. I did go to the Motherhouse though. We had considered going to Nigeria seriously in between for we were slowly picking up information by then. However, on two occasions my father's illness was such that we could not leave. I did however, speak to him and a lady who was in touch with him, Mrs. Joanna Ottea. She told me much… She told me where to obtain an early video, very short, and to see Fr. Beirne. In between I learnt that he had been the priest present at the time of the Apparitions and knew the visionary. He had doubt at first himself and did not believe her but with subsequent events he was convinced. Indeed, he suffered much because of his conviction about it, even when returning home to England. He did, however, give me a book, which he wrote, a basic effort but an excellent account and other material he had regarding the Visionary which I treasure.

The Virgin Mary began appearing in October 1992 to a twelve-year-old girl Christiana Inebu Agbo in 'Aokpe' located in the small village in a remote area of Nigeria.

Fr. John Beirne was priest of Ugbokolo and was in the Mother Parish of St. Patrick's where Aokpe is situated. He knew her and her family well.

The public apparitions started on the 3d August 1994, Our Lady gave Christiana many things and announced herself to Christiania in her native Idoma dialect. Translated it means 'I who stand between heaven and earth and receiving graces for you (her children) '. There is no room to say much more here save that I have also met Fr. Eric who visited me recently, who was equally astonished about all the information I had and the links. I remain astonished myself at the sequence of events over a period of time.

But I want to conclude with a remarkable thing regarding the apparitions in more recent times. As a good Mother given to us by Jesus himself on the cross she comes to warn her children. She requests conversion of heart and prayer. She also has a special mission of *warning*.

Starting with Fatima in 1917, she said to the three children, that the active war 1914-1918 would end but that a worse one would come. If people did not change. It did.

In Medjugorje she warns of many events that would follow a lack of change. A war did in fact break out, in Yugoslavia. The atrocities of Rwanda came very quickly after she told the three visionary children of the event. And who can doubt the suffering of Christians in Nigeria at this time. As for war… we continue to pray that global conflict will cease. And a larger war will not be inevitable.

Should we not heed the warning of a Mother who cares for her Children and bring them to Jesus.

There is now a beautiful shrine In Aokpe where the local Bishop celebrated a yearly Mass.

Halina Holman (with thank to Fr. Eric.) ©



November ... remember and pray for deceased relatives and friends.

"Do not let the prayer come from your lips alone but your heart too. Persist, and the Lord will grant your request. Love the Church of my Divine Son, renew the vows of your Baptism regularly, and remember to pray for the souls in Purgatory."

May 14th, 1995 Our Lady of Aokpe

Feast Days in November

1st All Saints' Day (Sunday)
2nd All Souls' Day
3rd St. Martin de Porres
4th St. Charles Borromeo
7th St. Willibrord
8th Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time
9th Dedication of the Lateran Basilica
10th St. Pope Leo the Great
11th St. Martin of Tours
12th St. Josaphat
15th Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time
17th St. Hilda of Whitby
18th Dedication of the Basilica of Sts. Peter & Paul
22nd Our Lord Jesus Christ the King
23rd St. Columban
24th Sts. Andrew Dung Lac & Companions
25th St. Catherine of Alexandria
29th First Sunday of Advent
30th St. Andrew, Apostle, Patron of Scotland

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