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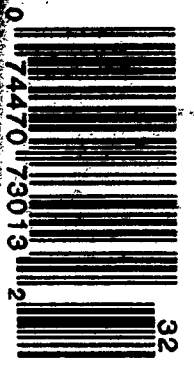
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Meetings allow area Rwandans to share tragedy

By Kathleen Schwar
Freelance writer

ROCHESTER — Traditionally, Rwandans teach women not to kill anything. If they see a snake, they're to wait until a male is able to kill it, because women are life-giving.

"We went so far from our culture," laments Francois Utazirubanda, as he relates this tradition. "On the road women are killing people with babies. We are not ourselves anymore."

The Rwanda civil war may be over, but for Utazirubanda and three other Rwandan friends in Rochester, the wrenching roller coaster ride continues. Week after week, they've shared news from the *Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, London, and Canadian newspapers and news magazines. They read, hoping to spot a cousin, even a wife, now perhaps a refugee. They differ at times politically and spiritually, but always listen to each other.

They believe they are the only Rwandans in the area. (Utazirubanda laughs heartily that he hoped for more, until learning the many *Buteras* in the telephone book were Italian, not Rwandan.)

"That's where we get our strength — from talking about it," says John Ndusha, 40, program coordinator and alcoholism counselor for Pathway Houses of Rochester and parishioner of St. Mary's Church, 15 St. Mary's Place. "The pictures have been so graphic and chilling. Everybody who sees them, something dies in you."

Ndusha left Rwanda when he was 5 or 6 because of a civil war and was raised in Uganda. Yet he has several relatives remaining in the war-torn region, he hopes. He recalled happy youthful days tending calves and swimming in Lake Muhazi in the north, where his father was head chef for a ritzy tourist hotel. He remembers the country's last king as a nondivisive influence. "Everybody is forced back, even if not physically," he said. "Every day we are trying to explain what happened."

The group was joined by Antoine Uwimana, 30, in July. Director of economic policies for Rwanda's Ministry of Planning, he was stranded in Washington, D.C., while attending a World Bank training seminar. He laughs, "I arrived April 4; the plane crash happened on the 6th."

The plane crash to which he was referring killed the president of Rwanda and fighting escalated immediately between the Hutus in power and rebel Tutsis. Although politics encouraged such division, the local Rwandans say, 90 percent of Rwandans are of mixed — both Hutu and Tutsi — background. They find it rather amusing that anyone, including the World Almanac, identifies Tutsis by their tallness.

Uwimana's friends — and uncle, Utazirubanda — laugh with him at his timing. The talk turns serious again. The last that Uwimana heard of his wife, Francoise, and daughter, Sandrine, 2 1/2 years old, was April 10. They planned to leave Kigali to stay with an uncle in western Rwanda. "Now I don't know where they are," he said. A color

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AP/Wide World Photos

An Irish nurse with the Dublin-based GOAL relief organization — who declined to be identified — distributes vitamin C tablets to refugee children in the Orphelinat orphanage, located at the Mugunga Refugee camp near Goma, Zaire. Relief officials estimated that more than 20,000 children have been misplaced during the exodus of Rwandan Hutus into Zaire.

As rainy season approaches, crisis is expected to get worse

By Catholic News Service

As Catholics throughout the world offered special prayers for the people of Rwanda last Sunday, Pope John Paul II asked them also to remember the people of neighboring Burundi.

Sporadic tensions between Hutus and Tutsis in Burundi "continue to arouse great concern," the pope told visitors at his summer residence Aug. 14.

Clashes between the same two ethnic groups in Rwanda exploded into a civil war in April, leaving hundreds of thousands of dead and millions of people displaced.

"I turn with confidence to those harshly tried populations and to those responsible for their political life, exhorting them to give a chance to reason, human and Christian wisdom and concern for the common good," the pope said.

Only then, he said, will Burundi "be saved from more suffering and open to a future of agreement and authentic moral and civil growth."

Like Rwanda, Burundi is a heavily Catholic nation. About 60 percent of the population professes Catholicism.

Pope John Paul offered special prayers for the Rwandan refugees, asking that they be given consolation, hope and the security needed to return home in peace.

In his Angelus address the next day, the feast of the Assumption of Mary, the pope again prayed for the suffering people of Rwanda.

"To your maternal care," he prayed to Mary, "we entrust the nations of various continents which suffer because of injustice and war, particularly the martyred land of Rwanda, as well as the dear peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the entire Balkan region."

In Cyanika, Rwanda, hundreds of thousands of refugees live in huts built of twigs, banana leaves and, for some, plastic sheeting.

Illness is taking upwards of 20 lives daily and the upcoming rainy season is likely to turn hillsides to mud, sweeping away many of the fragile shelters.

The refugee situation in southwest Rwanda's Gikongoro region is like that of Goma, Zaire, which has filled American television screens, Catholic Relief Services official Nanci Martin said. But unlike Goma, camps such as Cyanika and others in the region go relatively unnoticed by the rest of the world.

From Cyanika, Martin said that CRS, Caritas agencies from Europe and the Irish Catholic relief agency Trocaire are at work in the region providing food, medical and other assistance to refugees from Rwanda's bloody civil war.

Sister Siobhan Corkery, one of three Irish women religious running a Trocaire emergency clinic in Cyanika, described the refugee plight in Gikongoro as "the hidden tragedy of Rwanda," said Martin in her written report. About 80,000 people live in the Cyanika camp.

The clinic, housed in a simple Catholic primary school building, treats hundreds of refugees daily, Martin said.

On one day, approximately 1,000 people were waiting in line for assistance, she said, amid "the cries of wailing children."

While the stream of patients doesn't stop, supply lines are less consistent.

On one day, Sister Corkery was exasperated because the expected delivery of water had not arrived, causing a shortage at the clinic.

But the Irish sister said that despite the hardships, "one of the exciting things is that you are able to influence world events just by being there," Martin reported.

"Some observers have likened conditions in this region, which has at least 650,000 displaced people, to that of

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**Burundi next?
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