

## **Chat with Father Simon, Lucia's pastor priest in Asmara 2019**

**Father Simon:** Many Eritreans died during the civil war, others scarified themselves, some are disabled, and a few are fine. Some of the priests did help the EPLF movement. When the Ethiopians left, they did so peacefully, some of the EPLF helped them to find their way back home and protected them from others who might have wanted to attack them. There was peace, for this country, some freedom fighters sacrificed themselves for the country. Secondly, outside Eritrea, the people who helped this country was the Catholic Church tegadiloo.

**Father Simon:** Many of us suffered for the peace of the country, we sacrificed, we all did that for the movement, for the peace in Eritrea. All of this is good (Fithi) for justice, for country, all of our fathers and mothers worked for the country.

**Lina:** What is the meaning of country and belief, how dose believe and country mean (**Imnet and Adi** (Believe and country)?

**Father Simon:** For freedom, for justice, for development of the country, because of that we all joined together and became one people. Some offer their life, others money, or physical help, prayers, but the strongest is prayers. They (the Ethiopians) were supposed to kill us and leave but that did not happen, they got confused and left. For freedom and for justice, for the growth of the country, all of us are able to join, everybody does as he/she can, by money or by sacrifice, all did their share, and some by prayers.

**Father Simon:** The Ethiopians are supposed to kill and destroy us but they did not know what they were doing. Some went to Abet (Keren side) others to Mendafera, and many other places, these are the Amharas, and the story of Ethiopia in the last days. All Eritreans have their own share of the war, some handicapped, or lost, others fine, the priests (Church) in this country, especially mothers and fathers, have offered their share. Not only prayers but also followed it with sacrifice, fasting, giving alms, praying.

**Lina:** What do you think or remember of Lucia?

**Father Simon:** About Lucia, her feelings are like all Eritrean people, the same feelings of what peace means. My impression is that she is fikarit (to love, a lover), straightforward, confident, loves guests, some of the guests are poor, (not the rich people) but for the poor, there are a lot people who do not have room for the poor but she did offer them space.

For an older person, she had patience, when I heard of her death, I was worried about the kids who were in her house. I remember Zenebesh, her older sister, or the many poor and the orphans, always in her house. She was generous, not because of tradition; she was doing these good deeds from her heart. It was her natural inclination, graceful, doing the will of God. (Mathew 25) about the second coming of Jesus Christ. Everyone will come in front of him and will be judged. We are judged by the love of neighbor, which Lucia witnessed.

**Lina: Is Lucia a typical Eritrean woman?**

**Father Simon: I think she brought something with her from Sudan, even if it is Islamic; the Muslims have a generosity of nature. The *itfadel* (welcoming), the notion of welcoming people, that was the old Sudan. Even a passerby is acknowledged and welcomed. In addition, she has her own different nature, after forty years in the Sudan, she adopted some of the Sudanese culture but not the religion. Itfadel, an Arabic word, welcome is a good approach to life. We help people around us, we assist each other, she (Lucia) is a believer.**

**But here you are talking about mama Lucia but you have inherited her heritage but you do not see it in yourself. You inherited that gift from her. Whatever I offered as a pastor to Lucia, I did it for all other people. You are helping me, because you are generous and give me credit but you do not need to do this. What I did for Lucia was the same that I offer to others, nothing more. You are helping me more than I deserve. My conscious is clean. I went to see Lucia whenever she called me, I gave her communion and I offered prayers to her. I remember her as my mother, straight, but I really treated her the same as others. She welcomed all, and I had the tendency to love her for that.**