African Heritage Mass on World Mission Sunday: This is the day the Lord has made!

Sunday 19, October 2014, was an important day for the African community of Philadelphia. After months of intense preparation the African Heritage Mass took place at St Cyprian Church. The Mass was organized and sponsored by the Archdiocesan Office for Pastoral Care for Migrants and Refugees, which was represented by Mr. Matt Davis and Sr. Florence Enechukwu.

The African Heritage Mass has an important meaning for the Church of Philadelphia and for the African community in Philadelphia who have been in the margins of the Church’s life.

I was asked to give the welcoming address, and this was the perfect occasion to thank all the former missionaries who have served and loved Africa and who also gave a part of their lives to this continent. I was really touched by the supportive presence of many MMS and persons from our Sunday worshipping community.

My memory is full of wonderful images of that day. Several African Countries were represented and each community gave the best image of her culture to make of this historic Mass a fireworks.

This Mass presented cultural richness of Africa as well as the inculturation of her liturgy. We were given a real picture of the Africa we love and know, a continent full of life and hope, far from being swallowed up in the catastrophic news we hear every day. Thumbs up for the little Ivorian kids who in colourful Ashanti attire provided a playful and elegant dance for the offertory procession.

The African Heritage Mass will now be a regular annual event in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and will contribute to building a more universal spiritual reality around Jesus Christ who came to gather in unity all the scattered children of God.

In the African way of worship there is a natural sense of Joy, feasting, celebration, sacredness and the will to give adequate time to prayer. In this special event the Mass was scheduled to open at 2:00pm and lasted for two and a half hours.

As the African proverb says: «No matter how long the night, the dawn will break ». Let this African Heritage Mass be the dawn and a new beginning for the African Catholic Community in Philadelphia.

Long live the African Heritage mass, Long Live the Archdiocese of Philadelphia! Long live Africa!

NB: See a photo gallery from the Mass by clicking on this link: www.catholicphilly.com