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The creativity of charity

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‘Bata Hilton’ is an iconic meeting point in the Central Business District of Nairobi. It is typical to await a friend or two there as it provides a calm haven in the bustling city

centre. Only a few people braved the early morning drizzle on Holy Saturday this year. My friends from Roshani and I formed one of these groups. Despite the chilly weather, we were in high spirits looking forward to the long-awaited visit to the **Wings of Compassion Rescue Home**. The home, in Kiambu County, provides shelter and education to around 30 young women from vulnerable backgrounds and their children.

One at a time we trickled in, laden with our contributions and hearts full of expectation, as we had all heard a lot about the home. When the whole group arrived, we picked up our bags and burst into laughter when we realised that none of us knew precisely how to get there. In the end, we settled for an Uber and enjoyed an entertaining drive to Kiambu, for the driver maintained a

hilarious running commentary on a wide variety of current issues.

We were joined by the Blessed Nyaatha Small Christian Community from Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church, Ridgeways on arrival. We later learnt that they have been visiting and supporting the home since it was founded in 2010. Our entry was punctuated by ululations as the young women sang and danced to welcome us. This warm reception set the tone for the rest of the visit and we happily responded to their summons to dance with them, deeply moved by their exuberant joy.

We then introduced ourselves and listened spellbound as the young women shared their stories of courage and resilience.

I held back tears as a young Samburu[i] girl, who had been given in marriage at the age of 12,

described how she had fled and was now living in the home. A scholarship from the Kenya Commercial Bank allowed her to continue with her education while she cared for her child.

On speaking to the young women one on one, we realised that the suffering they had endured was hidden in their smiles and only in their eyes could one make out an unwavering determination to better their lives and those of their children.

Dorcas, one of the cofounders explained to us the family atmosphere lived in the home, how they cared for one another, chipping in with the chores and care of the children. We reluctantly left at the end of the day, all gratefully convinced that we had gained more than we had given and determined to return.

The songs of the young women echo in my mind as I read the words of Don Fernando in his consideration about social action, *“We cannot be indifferent to any of these things, we are all called to exercise ‘the creativity of charity’ in order to bring the balm of God’s tenderness to all our brothers and sisters who are in need”*.

VM.

[i] A Nilotic community from north-central Kenya.

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