

Laurien Ntezimana

Last Update: 19 February 2002

The Confession of Detmold

La confession de Detmold

1996

We, Christians of different Churches, from Rwanda and elsewhere, gathered at Detmold / Germany from 7th-12th December 1996 at the invitation of Dr. Fulgence Rubayiza, in collaboration with the ecumenical community of Hiddesen, to pray and reflect on our common commitment to build a Rwanda where all people can live together in harmony. After having discussed, exchanged opinions and prayed, we declare:

I.

The Rwandan people will never be reconciled with each other unless each party accepts to kneel down before the suffering of the other party, to confess their own offense and to humbly ask forgiveness of their victims.

II.

Therefore:

1) We, Hutu Christians, present at Detmold, recognise that our group has oppressed the Tutsi in various ways since 1959. We confess the massacres committed by the Hutu against the Tutsi group at different periods of Rwandan history, culminating in the genocide of 1994. We are ashamed of the horrors and atrocities committed by the Hutu towards the Tutsi: torturing, raping, slitting pregnant women open, hacking humans to pieces, burying people alive, hunting people with dogs as if they were animals, killing in churches and temples (previously recognised as places of refuge), massacring old people, children and the sick in hospital, forcing people to kill their own relatives, burning people alive, denying burial and thousands of other ways of cynically degrading and mockingly putting to death.

We carry the terrible weight of this unspeakable crime and we accept to bear the consequences without resentment. We implore our Hutu brothers and sisters not to forget this terrible past when they judge the present reality in Rwanda. We humbly demand forgiveness of God and our Tutsi brothers and sisters for all the evil we have inflicted upon them. We commit ourselves to do whatever we can to restore their honour and their dignity and to regain our lust humanity in their eyes.

2) We, Tutsi Christians, present at Detmold, are happy and feel comforted by the demand of forgiveness made by our Hutu brothers and sisters. We likewise demand God and the Hutu to forgive the repression and blind vengeance which members of our group have taken, surpassing all claims to legitimate self-defence.

"Inkoni ikubise makeba uyirenta urugo" (Justifying evil on the pretext that it effects a rival, ends up by turning back on the person who justified it).

We also demand God and our Hutu brothers and sisters forgiveness for certain arrogant and contemptuous attitudes shown to them throughout our history in the name of a ridiculous complex of ethnic superiority.

3) We, western Christians present at Detmold, grateful for the friendship and trust and for the invitation of our Rwandan brothers and sisters to share in their prayer and reflexions and to listen to their sufferings and hopes, confess that since the arrival of the first Europeans in Rwanda, we have seriously contributed to the increase of divisions in the Rwandan people.

We regret that, feeling too sure of our superiority, we discriminated between people by generalizing and judging some as good and others as bad.

We regret that our countries have conducted violence by delivering arms to all parties. We regret our silence and our neglect of the refugees of the years of the Independence. We also regret our silence and our abandon of the Rwandan people during the genocide and massacres in 1994. We regret our silence and neglect when it was question of finding a viable solution to the return of the refugees after the genocide. We regret our failure to listen and to share in the suffering experienced by our Rwandan friends.

For all this harm, we demand God and our Rwandan brothers and sisters to forgive us for not respecting them as they are and we want to commit ourselves with Jesus to a path of listening, respect and solidarity.

III.

We urge all members of Rwandan society and their friends in the International Community to feel all equally concerned by each other's misery. We exhort them to work together to comfort and rehabilitate all who have been wounded by the Rwandan tragedy: The widows, the orphans, the prisoners, the refugees both old and recent, the homeless, and the marginalised Batwa. May everyone find recognition and respect in Rwanda and be rooted in the midst of brothers, sisters and friends.

IV.

We thank the Father, who has given us his Spirit to break our "hearts of stone" and to free us from the mistrust and fear which separated us. He has remade us brothers and sisters committed to the Way of His Son, who died and rose again to reconcile man to God and to one another.

N.B.

If you recognise yourself in our confession, you can share in it by sending us your signature; and if you have any comments to make, you can write to one of the following addresses:

In Europe: Dr. Fulgence Rubayiza, Otto-Wels-Str. 6, D-33 102 Paderborn / Fax-Nr.: 0049 (0)5231 / 680744 (Detmold)

In Rwanda: Abbé Modeste Mungwarareba, B.P. 357 Kigali / Fax: 00250 / 75439

Detmold, 12.12.1996

Signatures:

Nicolas Hitimana
Dr. Fulgence Rubayiza
Théodetta Uwizeyimana
Abbé Vincent Harolimana
Abbé Patrice Nzeyimana
Abbé Flor Vanderborght
Laurien Ntezimana
Agnès Umutangana
Abbé Jérôme Masinzo
Abbé Modeste Mungwarareba
Michel Kayitaba
Thaddée Ntihinyuzwa
Jean-Pierre Godding
Pfarrer Jörg Zimmermann
Pfarrer Jonathan Rwamuningi
Tharcisse Gatwa
Pfarrer Samuel Ntoyimondo
Jérémy Musilikare
Bruno Eliat/Eliat
Emeritha Karamira
Abbé Jean-Baptiste Bugingo
Schwester Pascasie Usabimana
Abbé Pierre-Claver Nkusi
Dr. Rhiannon Lloyd

URL: <http://www.theo.kuleuven.ac.be/ct/>
Contact Address: liberation.theology@theo.kuleuven.ac.be
Contact Person: [Prof. Jacques Haers SJ](#)