News



Screenshot of the funeral Mass for Sr. Rita Shisala Itebete of the Sisters of Mary of Kakamega (GSR screenshot)



by Wycliff Peter Oundo

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

NAIROBI, Kenya — April 9, 2024

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Hundreds of Sacred Heart Mukumu Girls School alumni, family, friends and clergy gathered on April 2 at the Mukumu Convent cemetery in Kakamega County in Western Kenya to lay to rest feted educator, principal and congregant of the Sisters of Mary of Kakamega Sr. Rita Shisala Itebete.

Itebete, 80, died on March 24. She is remembered as an impactful educator who served as the Sacred Heart Mukumu Girls School principal for about 25 years (1978-2002) and was among the school's longest-serving principals since its establishment in 1959 by the Ursuline Sisters from Bergen-Holland.

Her mentorship to more than 30,000 girls was eulogized April 1 at a requiem Mass at the Sisters of Mary of Kakamega St. Augustine Chapel. Her former students reminisced about her as their loving mother, hero and caring "Mtawa" (sister in Swahili). Itebete's high standards in education were invigorated by her mantra: "Educate a girl and transform a nation, community, village and home." She especially loved teaching history and culturally responsive education where her storytelling skills infused with rich references to her Luhya culture thrilled and endeared her to students.



Screenshot of the funeral Mass for Sr. Rita Shisala Itebete of the Sisters of Mary of Kakamega (GSR screenshot)

"I knew Sister Rita since I was a kid and even more when I was her student at Sacred Heart Mukumu Girls High School and school president in my last year of school. She was my role model and I looked up to her for my leadership and religious calling. She was very kind and empathetic, loved the poor, and held many classes at the school," said Sr. Jacqueline Injete of the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ.

"We have a strong alumni, who contributed and bought her a car for her golden jubilee because she had run a very renowned school but never even bought herself a car which is a testament to her leadership and integrity," Injete added. "She is my wisdom figure. Whenever I visited Kenya, I would meet her and chat. I will miss her as my mentor. I loved and cherished her deep prayerful life and neatness even at 80 years old."

Advertisement

Itebete is honored by colleagues and the clergy as a religious who dedicated her life to her vocation and congregation. Her golden jubilee seven years ago alongside four other nuns is an homage to her lifelong dedication to the service of the church, especially the Diocese of Kakamega.

"We come from the same parish as Sister Rita, she was among the parish's first Catholic nuns," said Sr. Celestine Nasiali of the Oblate Sisters of the Assumption. "She mentored me and many other sisters in religious life. While she was the principal of the Sacred Heart Mukumu Girls High School, I would visit her with my grandmother. Her way of being a disciplinarian yet lovingly and gently inspired me to be a nun. I just loved her and admired how she did things and how she pushed one to dream big in life. She could ask, 'What do you want to be in the future?' and say, 'Go for it, my granddaughter.' "