News
Q&As

The local community holds a farewell party for Sr. Maria João Prudência (center) before she leaves Benguela, Angola. (Courtesy of Our Lady of Fatima's Sisters of Reparation)

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Sr. Maria João Prudência arrived in Lichinga, Mozambique, in December 2023 after a six-year mission in Benguela, Angola. In both African countries, the congregation of Our Lady of Fatima's Sisters of Reparation serves the people and the local church in education and pastoral care.

The Portuguese nun, who will celebrate 53 years of religious profession this year, "thanks God for the grace and the possibility of being able to serve wherever I go" and "is always ready to go wherever my superiors send me."

"It wasn't hard for me to leave Angola. By nature, I'm a detached person. While I'm there, I give my best. When I am invited to leave, I leave calmly," she shared.

Prudência is still aware of the difficulties she has seen and that her congregation is experiencing in Angola, a country with many privations and disparities, she says.

Having just arrived in Mozambique, Prudência describes her first impressions of this country, the Portuguese congregation's first destination outside of Portugal. "Mozambique is a more peaceful country, less lacking in food and other necessities," said the nun, though she does not forget the ongoing conflicts in Cabo Delgado, in the north of Mozambique.

Now in Mozambique, Sr. Maria João Prudência continues to serve the local community, children, young people and their families. (Courtesy of Our Lady of Fatima's Sisters of Reparation)

Prudência says her congregation gave great support to the displaced people coming from Cabo Delgado in 2020 and 2021. They were welcomed into the neighborhoods of Lichinga by the population, into their own homes or some uninhabited houses. But currently that "has not been necessary," she said. "At the moment, there is no talk of people leaving their land."

In a country with many needs and few resources, Prudência recalls that in December 2020, her congregation launched a solidarity campaign in which many entities and people participated, especially from Portugal. The campaign made it possible to support the neediest families with clothing, footwear and firewood — an essential for cooking — and basic food items like flour, rice, pasta, beans, vegetables, oil, salt and sugar.

Prudência spoke with Global Sisters Report about her experiences in Angola and now Mozambique.

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***GSR*: How did you receive the request to move from Angola to Mozambique?**

Prudência: I arrived at the Mozambique mission on Dec. 3, 2023. I accepted the invitation to leave for this mission with faith and a generous and decisive yes to go and love God and serve my brothers and sisters.

In fact, this has always been my motto: I am always ready to go wherever my superiors send me. Even if it's hard, I'm always ready and go with peace of mind.

You're still getting to know Mozambique. What stands out to you as your first impression?

My first impression was positive in terms of the people, the landscape and the climate. However, I found differences between the two countries. In Angola, I felt more involved with the people and the local church. Here, I still feel lost, and it's too early to share anything concrete.

And how would you describe Angola, where you lived for six years?

The people of God are wonderful, but life is not easy! The environment is very aggressive, as is the outlying neighborhood of Benguela where we live, which is very problematic. Young people are unemployed, and there are many conflicts, robberies and poverty. There is a lack of bread, water, schools, churches and hospitals. Many children live on the streets, and some are taken care of by older children.

Our congregation also suffers from frequent robberies. We receive continuous requests for food and money, and there are many difficulties. We have to be open to the needs of the unprotected.

So, it must have been hard to leave, seeing that there was still so much to do.

I left Angola feeling nostalgic, with *saudades*, and got attached to those people and brought back some happy memories. I think I also left a bit of myself there, as the people I worked and lived with said.

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But I left Angola feeling that my mission had been accomplished, having given my best, even if it was imperfect, and knowing that the sisters who stayed will continue our mission with the same commitment and dedication to bring the work begun in 2006 to a successful conclusion.

In comparison, how did you find Lichinga and Mozambique?

In Mozambique, everything seems calmer. People have their houses and *machambas*, which are plots of land that produce food to fight hunger.

However, in Cabo Delgado, in the north of the country, even though it's a long way from Lichinga, the situation is of conflict, and the war is on. We are alert and praying in church so that the people can live in peace and the sinners can be converted.

What specific work have you been entrusted with?

In Angola and Mozambique, our congregation works in education and pastoral care, with three sisters in each country. We serve as group animators, catechists and leaders of movements at the service of the church and the local population.

My work here is similar to what I did in Angola: I am the coordinator of *escolinha*, the kindergarten where we welcome 140 children from 2 to 6 years old and the superior of this religious community.

What do you think is most urgent?

The most urgent projects are refurbishing the roof of the school and community house. They are made of sheet metal and are rotten. Then there are a lot of basic and essential things missing, such as equipment for the kitchen, a stove, crockery, glasses and cutlery for the children.

Please pray for us that we may be faithful to God's plan and that of our founders.