

# Videos Telling the Stories of Faith

by Fr. Richard Quinn and Fr. Martin Kivuva, Ukweli Video Productions, Kenya

On May 18th 1981, His Eminence Maurice M. Cardinal Otunga gave permission to begin a Video Ministry called - at that time - Video Communication Programme. It took two and a half years more of planning, convincing and seeking financial assistance before we made our first production. Our decision in 1983 to go as professional as budgets would allow, turned out very prophetic. We knew that to compete with the world we had to use the tools of the world. Only in this way do people stand up and take notice. We wrote six simple aims and objectives which we have faithfully followed over these many years.

**Evangelizing Through Video** Ukweli Video Productions evangelises through the medium of video by producing powerful images and messages to tell the stories of faith yet untold. This ministry responds to the pastoral felt-needs of the time. Ukweli Video has travelled through eight countries of Africa seeking out those stories of faith that can enhance and fortify the message of Christ in our lives. Video is a modern electronic tool which enables us to preach to millions and proclaim Christ from the housetops.

## Catholic Answers Series

Many religious teachers asked if Ukweli Video could make pastoral programmes giving answers to the many questions Catholics are asked every day in schools, businesses and the market places. Our response to their plea was to begin in 1994 our Catholic Answers Series a Pastoral series which gives answers to the tough questions about our religious beliefs. We gathered more than seventy such questions to be used in this series, e.g. Why do Catholics worship Mary, Saints and relics? Or why to go to confession to a priest and not directly to God? Why infant baptism? Immersion only?

The questions and answers are designed to be used in Seminars, discussions, Bible Studies. Each segment can be used as a topic guide for discussions.

These programmes were an instant success. To date we have completed three programmes which run on an average of 45 minutes each. Programme Four will be ready by the end of 1995. Each programme takes about three solid months from video taping to the last edit. It entails a lot of theological research and the art of transcribing these answers in correct images and in perceptible lay people's or everyday language. We use a mixture of the English and Kiswahili languages.

## RESUMEN

Narrar las historias sagradas por imágenes - esto es el objetivo principal de las producciones de Ukweli Video, Kenia. Trabajando desde 1981, el centro entretanto se concentra en dos series de programas: "La Buena Nueva de Salvación", fue puesta en marcha con motivo de la "Década de Evangelización" (1991-2000), con testimonios actuales de la fé, historias de los movimientos cristianos, pero también tocando temas delicados como SIDA. Desde 1994, la segunda serie "Respuestas católicas" con finalmente 70 programas trata preguntas típicas respecto a la fé católica. Entretanto Ukweli ha logrado financiar un 50% de sus costos para la producción pastoral por ingresos locales, ofreciendo sus servicios también a clientes comerciales y mejorando continuamente su sistema de distribución.

We have involved five seminary professors, qualified Catholic lay people and the seminarians of two major theologates. It has proven a wonderful pastoral experience for us all.

Our second series is called the Good News of Salvation Series in honour of the decade of evangelisation (1991-2000). Since 1991 we have produced eleven programmes dealing with stories of faith, social issues (AIDS), Catholic Movements and front line evangelisation.

Ukweli Video Productions has made other pastoral programmes in the following areas: Marian, liturgical, salvation, pro-life, environmental and vocational. Our great pastoral selection addresses itself to the spiritual needs of our people. Each year we receive many new ideas and requests for specific topics. The pastoral field has hardly been tapped and is inexhaustible like the oil fields of Saudi Arabia.

## Finances

It is a constant struggle to generate sufficient funds and to produce programmes that really meet the pastoral needs of our people. Being in a developing country with inflated prices, high duty and unstable situations, complicates this ministry even further. To run and maintain a professional production house we offer our services to NGOs and the commercial world. We have tried to build in self reliance into our financial operations. To date we generate about 50% of our needed operation expenses locally. However, an area that we consistently find difficult is to raise the necessary funds for our much needed pastoral programmes which are our main area of activity.

## Marketing, Distribution and Feedback

Since mid 1994, Ukweli Video has made improvements in its marketing and distribution strategies. Two things brought about our marketing success. At long last a local manufacturing company started to produce different size VHS video blanks with a transparent casing.

Our then new computer programmes have enabled us to produce colourful jackets explaining the contents of a programme with appropriate graphics. Previously we sold four programmes on a 180 VHS tape. We find it much easier explaining and selling one programme at a time. We have produced a colourful brochure and six page handout explaining our latest productions. We mail out this information to parishes and the many religious institutions and congregations found in Kenya.

## RESUME

Evangeliser en racontant des histoires par la puissance des images, telle est l'intention qui soutient depuis 1981 la production d'Ukweli Video, à Nairobi (Kenya). A présent, Ukweli Video est engagé dans une double série de programmes: "La Bonne Nouvelle du Salut", lancée à l'occasion de la Décade de l'Évangélisation (1991-2000), présente des témoignages actuels de foi, des histoires vécues dans des mouvements chrétiens et aborde aussi des sujets sensibles comme le SIDA... La seconde série commencée en 1994, appelée "Réponses catholiques", veut traiter de questions que se posent les baptisés ou qui leur sont souvent posées; plus de 70 programmes de 45 minutes chacun devraient à son terme constituer cette série. Mais ces programmes religieux ne pourraient pas être produits, si cette unité de production vidéo équipée de matériel performant - BETACAM - et donc aux frais de fonctionnement relativement lourds ne réussissait pas à s'auto-financer - quoi que seulement partiellement - grâce aux revenus générés par les travaux commerciaux et par une volonté permanente d'améliorer la distribution et la présentation de ses propres productions.