

MARÍA RUIZ SCAPERLANDA

ROSEMARY NYIRUMBE

A watercolor portrait of Rosemary Nyirumbe, a woman with dark skin, wearing glasses and a white headscarf. She is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. The painting uses soft, blended colors and visible brushstrokes, giving it a gentle and intimate feel. The background is light and airy, with some faint floral or leaf-like patterns in the lower right corner.

*Sewing Hope
in Uganda*

DISCUSSION GUIDE

About the Book

Sister Rosemary Nyirumbe's 62 years of life provide a powerful testament to God's presence, love, and hope amidst unimaginable violence. Throughout life, Sister's native Uganda and southern Sudan (now South Sudan) have suffered the devastating effects of war and military clashes. Children, the most vulnerable population, have suffered the most. Many have endured unimaginable cruelties, having been orphaned, kidnapped, forced to become child soldiers and/or sex slaves. In *Rosemary Nyirumbe: Sewing Hope in Uganda*, María Ruiz Scaperlanda sheds light on Sister Rosemary's vocation to love these youth in the midst of cultural and societal obliteration.

As a Sister of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Sister Rosemary, even at great risk to herself, continues to minister to children enduring the violence around them. She teaches them practical life skills while helping them to heal, forgive, and hope. She has earned international recognition for her work caring for girls escaping captivity from Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army. She has been named one of *Time* magazine's "100 Most Influential People in the World," is the subject of the book *Sewing Hope*, and of an award-winning documentary by the same name which was narrated by Academy Award-winning actor Forest Whitaker. She was named a CNN Hero in 2007 and received the United Nations Women's Impact Award in 2014.

About the Author

María Ruiz Scaperlanda is an award-winning journalist, author, and blogger whose work has been widely published. In 2016, María received the St. Francis de Sales Award, the

highest honor given by the Catholic Press Association to an individual, for her “outstanding contributions to Catholic journalism.” María is a member of the American Society of Journalists and Authors (ASJA) and has traveled on international assignments to the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, and now Africa. María and her husband of 37 years, Michael, reside in Norman, Oklahoma. They have four adult children, a Siberian Husky named Diego, and, so far, ten grandchildren. María blogs at DaybyDayWithMaria.blogspot.com/.

Discussion Guide

Chapter One

1. What are your impressions of Sr. Rosemary Nyirumbe's parents?
2. Which early childhood experience seems to have “cultivate[d] the mothering spirit” imbued in Sr. Rosemary's ministry?
3. Are you familiar with St. Daniel Comboni? If so, what do you suppose he would think of Sr. Rosemary Nyirumbe and her ministry? (If not, he may be a figure worth getting to know in connection to your reading of this book.)
4. What is most striking to you about the stories of Joseph Mukasa, Charles Lwanga, and the other martyrs (Anglican as well as Catholic) of Uganda?
5. “Friendship is such an important thing,” Sr. Rosemary is quoted as saying in this chapter. How do you see friendship as important in her life and ministry? (Keep an eye out for this theme in chapters to come, as well.)

Chapter Two

1. How does the period of Sr. Rosemary's life narrated in this chapter seem like a natural continuation of her earlier years, and how does it foreshadow and prepare her for what is to come?
2. What do you find most notable about Sr. Rosemary in this chapter?
3. What are the hallmarks of "Comboni spirituality"? How do you see them in the life and ministry of Sr. Rosemary? How does it resonate with your own life and spirituality?
4. What do you think of St. Daniel Comboni's missionary ideal to "Save Africa with Africa"?
5. Reflect on the words of St. Daniel Comboni quoted on pages 42 and 43. Have you tasted the "sweetness" of laboring hard for the love of Jesus Christ and the salvation of souls? How might you experience this in your own life and circumstances in the weeks and months ahead?

Chapter Three

1. The chapter opens with words written by St. Catherine of Siena. Why are these words and the woman who spoke them especially relevant to Sr. Rosemary's story?
2. Scaperlanda provides helpful background about Joseph Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army. Consider doing some further internet research about them in tandem with your reading of this biography. What are your impressions? Why would the United Nations have called the situation they provoked "the most forgotten, neglected humanitarian emergency in the world"?
3. What impact did the ongoing violence in Uganda have on Sr. Rosemary and her fellow sisters? What experiences stand out to you, and why?
4. Consider what Sr. Rosemary and her life and ministry must have looked like from the perspective of her fellow Sacred Heart Sisters. What factors do you imagine led them to elect her to be their first provincial superior?
5. Reflect on the words of Pope John Paul II at the Uganda Martyrs Shrine. What does he mean that "all that is true and good and noble in Africa's traditions and cultures is meant to find its fulfillment in Christ"? How might similar words apply to the traditions and cultures of your own nation?

Chapter Four

1. Consider the experience of the “nightwalkers” and their families. What are your thoughts?
2. Are you familiar with the Sant’Egidio Community? (It is not very well known in the United States but is far better known in Europe for its impressive contributions to the life of the Catholic Church and society.) Consider learning more about its work.
3. Ministry to “returnees” forms the heart of Sr. Rosemary’s remarkable work since the early 2000s. What strikes you about their experiences?
4. Why are the educational opportunities provided by the Sisters of the Sacred Heart to returnees important? In what way do these opportunities represent a lot more than simply learning cooking or baking skills?
5. Sr. Rosemary offers some insightful comments about “the desire to ask accountability of other people’s lives.” How might her words be helpful to us in our own lives? How do you hold yourself accountable to others?
6. Why was Reggie Whitten’s encounter with Sr. Rosemary important to him and his wife? And why was their meeting important to Sr. Rosemary and the children she serves?

Chapter Five

1. What does it mean to say that “love is rooted in presence”? How does this reflect your own experience? How does it reflect Christian revelation and Catholic life?
2. Read and reflect on Sr. Rosemary’s favorite Scripture passage: 1 Corinthians 13. How do you see the spirit of this verse reflected in her ministry? Has the passage or its teaching inspired your own faith life? How or how not?
3. What is your reaction to Sr. Rosemary’s conversation with the young LRA officer who came to St. Monica’s looking for his “wife”?
4. Sr. Rosemary comments that the returnees had “experienced unspeakable things.” How does Sr. Rosemary model an effective Christian response to situations where someone has had experiences that have been so painful as to be debilitating?

Chapter Six

1. What are your thoughts on Sr. Rosemary's comments about forgiveness? Do they bring to mind any people in your life whom you've found difficult to forgive?
2. What do you make of Pope Francis's comment in *Gaudete et Exultate*, quoted by María Ruiz Scaperlanda on page 111, about "feminine styles of holiness"?
3. In which ways have the sisters' mission in Uganda changed in the past decade? Why are these changes notable?
4. Do you know someone whose personality is marked, like Sr. Rosemary's, by joy? How do they share their joy with others? What impact has their presence had on you?
5. What might it mean to live, in your own life and circumstances, the motto of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart: "Live Love in Truth"?
6. You'll find the Sewing Hope Foundation's website at www.sewinghopefoundation.com. Consider visiting the site for more information on Sr. Rosemary's continued work or to offer your support.