

It's a beautiful thing



Uganda Martyrs Catholic Community

In Faith We Grow

UK AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

CHAPLAIN'S MESSAGE

NOTICE BOARD

PRIESTLY ANNIVERSARY:

Please pray for **Fr. Gerard M. Balinnya** who celebrates his 18th Priestly Ordination Anniversary on 29th June, 2009.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Congratulations to **Mr. Alex and Mrs Catherine Mulumba** on their 19th Wedding Anniversary (30th June, 1990). Bannaffe mwebale kufumba na kuumagana!

BIRTHDAYS:

Happy Birthday to **Cissy Claire Mubiru** of Battersea.

Happy Birthday to **Liam Jordan Sekweyama Mugwanya**

- 27 June 2001 (8 Years old)



It is all in the Faith

In the Zain Africa Challenge held in Kampala, as if blessed by the Uganda Martyrs, students of the Uganda Martyrs University trounced the students from Sierra Leone's University of Sierra Leone during the 16th series of the "Battle of the Brains". The Uganda Martyrs students won the round by 770 points against a paltry 370 points, sending the Sierra Leone students packing

Good luck to all the students who sat final exams this year

BE PROUD OF THE UGANDA MARTYRS!

Dear Brethren in the Lord,

Happy Uganda Martyrs' Day celebrations! This is one of the biggest days in our country and indeed the greatest in our Community here. This is the day that the Lord has made; we rejoice and are glad! We have all the reasons to shout for joy in the Lord because we are so privileged to come from the land of the martyrs who witnessed to their faith with such outstanding courage. The Uganda Martyrs have become so widely known the world over and more pilgrims are flocking Uganda to see the land of faith. Let us rejoice and be glad.

Just a month and a half ago one Nigerian teacher and writer came to my school and I introduced myself as coming from Uganda. He was so impressed and asked me instantly: "What about the Uganda Martyrs? We used to pray for them in Nigeria!" I told him that we do not need to pray for them any more since they are now canonized. They are saints! We now pray to them!" He said, "These are saints for Africa! I would like to know more about them!" Then I told him about our Community under their patronage. I gave him a little picture of the martyrs and the website for more information. He went away so happy.

From my encounter with that gentleman and the eagerness with which he spoke about the martyrs I realized how privileged we Ugandans are! I felt so proud to be a Ugandan! Let's not take the martyrs or ourselves for granted! They are special, *we* are special because of them! Let's rejoice and be glad!

Today we are celebrating the feast of our brethren in faith, though belatedly! We are honoured with the presence of His Lordship Bishop Adrian Kivumbi Ddungu who, at such short notice, agreed to change his plans and come all the way to preside over our celebrations. We rejoice and are glad!

Our Community is growing from strength to strength! Last year we got a good seven couples whose marriages were blessed. Each year some of our children receive their First Holy Communion and our young people are getting more and more involved in their Youth Day celebrations. It is interesting to note that each Community Day is unique in its own way as we mark various occasions. Thanks to all of you for your commitment, involvement and support. Please keep it up! Let us rejoice and be glad! We have had several challenges but we have always come out stronger and more determined like the Uganda Martyrs. I must say that I have always felt the hand of God at work in

our Community through the incessant intercession of our patrons. Let us continue to trust and pray to them with deeper faith, hence our motto: "***In Faith We Grow***". Please for our Community, pray for each other, pray for our families, pray for Uganda. May the Uganda Martyrs continually plead our cause before the throne of God the most high. Have great celebrations. God bless you all.

Fr. Gerard M. Balinnya UMCC Chaplain.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A very warm welcome to all and most especially to all our brethren for whom this is their first time to join us at our Community Day Cerebration. I must admit that on most occasions sacrificing a Sunday afternoon cannot be taken very lightly. After such a long time in anticipation, we have been lucky to celebrate the biggest day of our annual calendar – The Uganda Martyrs Day 3rd June, which on this occasion is being celebrated today 28 June 2009. This is our Patron Saints' Day, and on this occasion we are being joined by our brethren in Uganda, and indeed in the world over, in celebrating the courage and zeal of our brothers – in both blood and faith - The Uganda Martyrs.

I would like to extend a special welcome to Bishop Adrian Kivumbi Ddungu Emeritus of Masaka who has flown all the way from Uganda to be with us on this great day, and of course brings with him, greetings and blessings from all our brethren in Uganda. A special welcome also to those of our brethren who have travelled from afar to be with us on this occasion.

As you might undoubtedly be aware, the main mission of the Uganda Martyrs Catholic Community is to offer Ugandans and their friends living in the UK and Republic of Ireland, an opportunity to gather and praise God together in our indigenous languages.

Achieving this mission has always been a challenge, but credit goes to all of you, who over the years have enabled the UMCC to rise to this challenge, and inspite of the many and often seemingly insurmountable hurdles encountered along the way.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to you all for making the UMCC what it is and what it will continue to be. Last but not least, I must extend a special thanks to all those who have contributed in any way or form, towards the organisation of this day. Without you, I do not think we could even attempt to do the little that we have achieved.

God Bless you all.

Robert Mukiibi –Chairman UMCC

2008/09 MEMBERSHIP - £20 *To serve, or to vote at the coming AGM on 12th July, your membership must be up-to-date?*

THE AMAZING STORY OF THE UGANDA MARTYRS

Explorers from Europe, Speke and Grant, arrived at the court of the Kabaka in February 1862 and on return home spread word about what they had seen. Soon Henry Stanley arrived at court in 1874 and later made an appeal for missionaries, saying people in Buganda were in great need. In 1877 the first Protestant missionaries of Christian Missionary Society arrived in Buganda led by Alexander Mackay. The Catholic Church in Rome approved a scheme to send White Fathers in 1878. This was led by Simeon Lourdel who arrived in Buganda in February 1879.

Moslems from Zanzibar had also got access to the palace of the King of Buganda. The leaders of the three religions began to compete for converts. The people of Buganda viewed Christianity as superior to other beliefs even though conversion to Christianity meant making sacrifices. For example, Kalembe who owned a number of wives asked one woman to be his wife and arranged for others to go away, and asked for baptism. Among those who went to Father Lourdel for instruction were some pages attached to the royal household. The most important and trusted personal attendant of the Kabaka was Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe. Another man with natural leadership qualities was Charles Lwanga.

By this time King Muteesa was on the throne. However, on his death, a new King Mwanga ascended the throne and the scene changed! Mwanga was unstable, indulged in homosexuality and demanded his pages submit to his advances. The Christian pages knew such acts were wrong and so resisted. The storm kept gathering! Matters became worse when Bishop Hannington was due to visit the Anglican mission in Buganda which was interpreted by Mwanga as a move to annexe the whole territory. So Mwanga ordered that Bishop Hannington be stabbed with a spear!

Earlier on Joseph Mukasa had warned Mwanga against the decision to kill the Bishop. The Kabaka took out his anger on him and summoned him into his presence, saying Mukasa had insulted him by telling him that it was wrong to kill the white man. Soon Mwanga ordered Mukasa's execution which happened in November 1885. He said, "So I am to die for my religion". The executioner was a man named Mukaajanga who had seen many gruesome deaths.

Events now moved swiftly. The pages knew that Mwanga was wholly unpredictable when he was in one of his rages. His sexual lusts were now inflamed, and resistance to his demands had long been something which marked out the Christian pages. On the eve of the martyrdom Father Lourdel notes that a number of pages came in haste to the mission saying "We are destined for death – give us baptism before we die!" At night, a dozen more came and he spent part of the night preparing them, and they received the sacrament of regeneration with a wonderful faith.

Next day, Kabaka Mwanga summoned all the pages and shouted at them that those who were stuck to their faith would die. But under the leadership of Charles Lwanga they continued to avoid the ruler's demands. The storm broke on May 25th, 1886 when Mwanga went on rampage. Christian pages, and some of the older Christian men, were beaten, rounded up and imprisoned. They included Andrew Kaggwa, Matthias Kalembe and Charles Lwanga. Lwanga said, "If we have to die for Jesus,

we shall die together hand in hand." Mwanga shouted and ranted at the Christians and made them declare their final position firmly. But none of them left the group. Finally, they were bound in chains and forced to march away.

The place of the execution was to be Nnamugongo, a place of ritual slaughter. The young prisoners would suffer appallingly on the way, from their savage bonds which cut through their arms and legs, and from heat and thirst. Some were killed on the way with deliberate cruelty: Matthias Kalembe was one of these chopped to pieces!

At Nnamugongo the great fires were being prepared. The prisoners were herded into huts after their forced march. All along the way they prayed aloud and recited sections of the Catechism. Young Kizito was so full of faith and the certainty of meeting God in heaven. When Mukaajanga saw that all was ready, he signalled to his men to station themselves all round the pyre and then gave the order: "Light it at every point." Twenty-two Catholics and twenty-three Protestants were put to death! The flames blazed up like a burning house and the martyrs died invoking God. The savagery of the Kabaka's fires could not quench the flames of faith in Buganda! Christianity flourished and spread.

The Catholic Martyrs of Uganda were solemnly proclaimed saints by Pope Paul VI in 1964. Later in July 1969 he visited the country. And in 1993 Pope John Paul II visited Uganda and raised the shrine of the Uganda Catholic Martyrs to the status of a Minor Basilica. Today thousands and thousands of pilgrims flock to Nnamugongo from all over the world to come and pray to the martyrs. The Uganda Martyrs have brought fame to our country. We are proud to be Ugandans sharing the faith of the martyrs. May they continually intercede for us.

This article was adapted from the Catholic Truth Society Biography Series "The Martyrs of Uganda", by Joanna Bogle (2000) - ISBN 1 86082 079 4

Fr. Gerard M. Balinnya - UMCC Chaplain.

More Announcements

Books on Sale

The African Heroes, a small historical book, chronicles the lives of the Ugandan Martyrs and is on sale for £2. It also contains probably the only known photograph of 20 Uganda Martyrs taken in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) October of 1885.

Movies - It is now cool to be Catholic!

Passion of the Christ, the movie, rocked the world, Passion of the Martyrs is set to rock the Uganda Catholic community. A film about Mukaajanga executing the Martyrs was released in Kampala this week. It may premier in London soon.



Uganda Martyrs day, Namugongo 3rd June 2009

Announcement

You are British aged 18-25, Platform2 is arranging 10 weeks volunteering on development project overseas. Run by Christian Aid and BUNAC and funded by the government Department for International Development (DFID). Activities in selected countries in Africa, Asia and South America. On return, help to raise awareness about development issues in your community. For more information and application form go to www.myplatform2.com