

White Fathers - White Sisters



DEVS GLORIFICAT POPVLVM VGANDENSEM
PER MYSTERIVM SANCTÆ CRVCIS



The Story of the Uganda Martyrs

Edited by Fr. Bill Turnbull W.F.

SOWING THE SEED

The story of the twenty-two **Martyrs of Uganda** starts when the people of Uganda, or rather the **Kingdom of Buganda**, first came in contact with the outside world. The Arabs, who had established themselves at Zanzibar, were the first foreigners to trade in the interior bringing with them commercial goods which they exchanged for ivory and slaves. They gained favour at the court of **King Mutesa** but their influence on the court was pernicious, as reported by Speke and Grant, the first Europeans to visit the country, who arrived at **Mutesa's** court in 1856. In 1875 they were followed by Sir Henry Morton Stanley who was also struck by the Arab influence. Stanley's appeal, published in the *Daily Telegraph* of 15th. November of that year, marked the beginning of a series of events. His call for Anglican missionaries met with an immediate response and a year later the first three representatives of the Church Missionary Society arrived in Buganda.

Seven years before the **Bishop** (later Cardinal) **Lavigerie** of Algiers had founded the **White Fathers** and, with the attention that men like Stanley and others were focusing on Central Africa, **Bishop Lavigerie** drew up a plan for the evangelisation of Central Africa. It was accepted by the Congregation of Propaganda in 1878 and the first caravan of White Fathers reached Zanzibar in May of that year. The ten missionaries split into two groups. One remained in Tanganyika, and the other, led by **Fr. Livinhac**, made for Uganda.

The advance party, consisting of **Fr. Lourdel** and **Bro. Amans**, crossed Lake Victoria in February, 1879. **Fr. Lourdel** was favourably received at the court of **King Mutesa** and was allowed to start teaching the catechism. The

Kingdom now had three new religious forces and this was to have an important bearing on the story of the Martyrs. The King was impressed by the new teaching and sent boats to fetch the other three missionaries who were waiting on the southern shores of Lake Victoria. (1)

For two years all went well and the first Catholics were baptised in 1880. From 1882 onwards, however, the situation deteriorated. **Mutesa** was influenced by the Arabs, the Prime Minister, and other important people, who were alarmed at seeing the traditional beliefs threatened by the new religion. Under this pressure **Mutesa** secretly encouraged his people to annoy the missionaries by thefts, threats and insults. As a result in October, 1882, the Fathers presented themselves in **Mutesa's** audience hall and asked permission to leave the country for the time being.

During this enforced exile of nearly three years, devoted lay apostles continued the work of planting the Church. Among the early catechists the most prominent was **Joseph Mukasa**. He grew up at the court of **King Mutesa** where his integrity and loyalty made him a trusted favourite, so much so that **Mutesa** died in his arms in 1884. **Mwanga**, the new King, made **Joseph** the Majordomo of the royal household and recalled the missionaries. The Catholic community had increased four fold during their absence with many adherents among the 500 Court Pages, whose immediate head was **Charles Lwanga**.

PROTOMARTYR

The other courtiers expected **Joseph Mukasa** to be the next Prime Minister and said so openly. As a consequence he was hated as a rival by the existing Prime Minister. The King soon

began to hate him too, for **Joseph** dared to reproach the King for his debauchery, and he protected the Christian Pages. Knowing this, **Mwanga's** advisers, all animists or Muslims, hinted that he was no longer King in his own country, and that the new King was the God of the Christians "whom alone the Pages obey at the word of **Joseph Mukasa** and the white priests." **Mwanga** decided to banish this God and the first step would be to get rid of **Joseph Mukasa**. (2)

An opportunity soon arose. **Fr. Lourdel** used to treat the King for minor ailments, and one day **Joseph** brought him to attend to the King's sore eyes. The priest also prescribed some sleeping pills which were administered by **Joseph** and unfortunately caused the King some gastric trouble. **Mwanga** flew into a rage and, calling the Prime Minister, he accused **Joseph** of trying to poison him. The Prime Minister added further accusations against him, and said, "Give me this **Joseph Mukasa**; I will rid you of him." "Take him away," replied **Mwanga**. "You will save my life by doing so. There shall no longer be two Kings in **Buganda**!"

Editor's Footnote 2: Mutesa I (born 1857) died on the 9th. October, 1884, and was succeeded by Mwanga, his 18 year old son. The new King and the people were caught between their traditional religion, Islam, Anglicanism, and Catholicism, and they were confused especially by the rivalry and antagonism between the Christian missionaries. Mwanga had the Anglican Bishop, James Hannington and fifty porters killed on the 30th. October, 1885, when he entered Buganda through Busoga. This was done at a time when the Arabs encouraged rumours, playing on a prophecy that enemies would take this route to conquer Buganda. They added that 'white men', British or German, would come to take the country from Mwanga. The influence of the Arabs on Mwanga was detrimental and was a catalyst in the martyrdoms. The young Christian Pages at court, both Anglican and Catholic, refused to take part in Mwanga's activities. Their refusal enraged him and he took it as an attack on his authority which resulted in the executions.

Uganda 1886



Map above: based on the map on page 2 of the 'Uganda Martyrs' booklet

It was Sunday, the 15th. of November, 1885, and the first Catholic martyr had died for Africa.

SPARKING A FIRE

The death of **Joseph Mukasa** did not discourage the Christians as **Mwanga** expected, but moved them to pray that they too might die for the Faith. Still they took measures for their own safety. The paths leading to the mission were guarded by the King's spies, so the catechumens had to creep through the plantations at night to reach the priests' house. On the night following **Joseph's** execution **Charles Lwanga** was baptised. He had been a catechumen for four years. About the same age as **Joseph**, he succeeded him as the head of the Pages, a position which exposed him to the attacks of **Mwanga** who told him that he would exterminate all the Christians.

Mwanga sent **Charles** to tell the missionaries that unless they stopped teaching religion the mission would be sacked and they would be banished from his Kingdom. On other occasions **Mwanga** would say to **Charles**, "you seem to have lost your affection for me. Why is it? Well, go on praying if you must, but pray in your heart, and keep away from those cursed priests."

Charles had to endure angry reproaches and his situation was made more difficult by protecting the Christian Pages. With the King listening more and more to the counsellors the atmosphere at court became explosive. Not much was needed to arouse the King's anger. In February, 1886, a fire broke out in the royal enclosure and spread rapidly. The powder store exploded and the King's treasures were destroyed. As a result the King moved his court to Munyonyo, six miles away on the shores of Lake Victoria, taking some of the Pages with him. It now became doubly difficult for **Charles** to protect them.

The youngest of the Pages was **Kizito**, about 15 years old and the son of Kimbugwe, the highest official in the Kingdom after the Prime Minister. **Kizito** was a catechumen and his good looks were a special danger. Every time the King sent for him, he fled to **Charles** for protection. **Charles** would hide him, or send him out on an errand, well knowing that he risked his life in doing so. **Kizito** anticipated that one day he would have to choose between a life of shame or a painful death. He was continually asking the priests to baptise him but they said that he was too young and still insufficiently instructed. He used to confide his fears to **Charles** who told him, "Be afraid of nothing. I shall always stand by you. When the time comes, you shall hold my hand and we will die together."

The King realised that **Charles** was protecting the Pages and he was only kept from violent action by the thought that **Charles's** death would not terrify the Christians any more than that of **Joseph Mukasa** had done. Since all the Christian Pages persisted in their disobedience, he would kill them and **Charles** would be the first. In the meantime **Mwanga** persecuted the Pages, inflicting punishments out of all proportion to their faults: **Mukasa Kiriwawanvu**, a young catechumen, was thrown into prison for a quarrel with a companion; **Pontian**, one of the palace guards, was bound in chains for giving an incorrect message. A trifling incident set the whole thing in motion.

On the evening of Tuesday, the 25th. May, 1886, the King returned disgruntled from a hunting expedition. He called for his favourite Page, **Mwafu**, aged 14, the Prime Minister's son, and a catechumen. He was slow in arriving and when the King asked him where he had been **Mwafu** answered, learning catechism with **Denis**. **Mwanga** then called for **Denis** and he confirmed it, at which **Mwanga** flew into a rage: "What!" bellowed **Mwanga**, "you miserable



slave! You were teaching religion when I have forbidden it. And you dared to teach it to the Prime Minister's own son!"

Mwanga picked up a small spear and beat **Denis** about the head, neck and chest until the spear broke in his hand. Seizing **Denis** by the arm, he dragged him into an outer courtyard, shouting for somebody to take **Denis** and kill him. In the hope of a reprieve, the executioners held **Denis** overnight but the following day they hacked him to pieces with knives.

Still in a terrible rage, **Mwanga** set out for the house of **Andrew Kaggwa**, Conductor of the Royal Band, and a prominent leader of the Christians in the outer court of the palace. **Andrew** was away and only **James Buzabaliawo**, his second-in-command and one of his converts, was present. He was promptly arrested.

That night **Mwanga** told the Prime Minister that he would put every Christian to death. The gates of the King's enclosure were closed and orders given to allow no one to pass. Realising that it might well be the last night of their lives, **Charles Lwanga** baptised the four most advanced catechumens at the court: **Kizito**,

Gyavira, **Mugagga**, and **Mbaga Tuzinde**, the chief executioner's son - their Christian names are not known - and they kept vigil through the night.

THE CONDEMNATION

The next day, Wednesday, the 26th. May, the King sought the backing of his chiefs to take further measures against the Christians. He summoned the principal ones to his apartments at six o'clock in the morning. **Mwanga** began with a bitter complaint: "It was your duty to find me faithful servants, but you have given me nothing but traitors." At these words the whole assembly trembled. Despite some of the Pages being their sons the chiefs said that they were bewitched, were traitors, and so should be killed.

The King was delighted to obtain such ready consent to his plans, and told **Charles Lwanga** to summon all the Pages. He called **Mukajanga**, the chief executioner, and his assistants, and appointed a royal legate to seize and plunder Christians in the outlying villages. While waiting for the Pages to assemble the King vented his anger on **Anatole**, working himself into a

Picture above: A photograph of 'Our Lady of Exile', taken in 1886, where the White Fathers stayed after they left Buganda

fury and ending by throwing him into prison. **Anatole** had displeased the King by refusing promotion to an important position in the private part of the palace because of the dangers that went with it.

Mwanga was still screaming abuse at **Anatole** when **Charles** led the Pages in. They all prostrated themselves in greeting and then ranged themselves alongside **Charles**. Assuring himself that no one was missing, **Mwanga** ordered the gates to be closed. “Let all those who do not pray remain here by my side,” shouted **Mwanga**. “Let those who pray cross over to the reed fence!”

Charles Lwanga stood up and taking **Kizito** by the hand, he led the way, followed by all the other Christian Pages: **Athanasius**, **Adolphus**, **Achilles**, **Ambrose**, **Gonzaga**, **Mbaga Tuzinde**, **Gyavira**, **Mugagga**, six other Catholic Pages and two Anglican Pages. They were joined by **Bruno Serunkuma**, a palace guard, in a public profession of faith. **Mwanga** glared at them and yelled: “Tie up all the Christians! Take them to Namugongo and burn them!”

The executioners bound the condemned Pages with ropes round their necks and wrists, but **Mukajanga** was moved with pity because his son, **Mbaga**, hardly seventeen years of age, was among them. He said to him imploringly, “Say that you will give up praying and your life will be safe.” “No, father,” said the boy, “I am a Christian and shall remain so to the last.” **Mukajanga** longed to save the boy’s life and he asked his assistant, **Sebatta**, to use his powers of persuasion but he had no better success. When all had been bound, **Mwanga** reprieved six Pages.

On the previous night **Fr. Lourdel** received the news of the impending danger, and he had walked the six miles to **Munyonyo** through the rain at daylight. He tried to gain entrance to the inner court but was prevented. He said later: “The heroic little band passed within a

few feet of me. The young men had been bound together, and the boys formed a second group. They were tied so closely that they could scarcely walk, and I saw little **Kizito** laughing merrily at this, as though it were a game.”

The Chamberlain had a score to settle with **Bruno** and with the King’s permission he took him and flogged him. This reminded **Mwanga** of **James** whom he had imprisoned the night before and he sent for him. “Are you the chief of the Christians here?”

“I am a Christian, it is true,” replied **James**, “but the title of chief does not belong to me.” “This is the man,” continued the King, “who actually wanted me to adopt his religion. Take him away and cut off his head at once I mean to begin with him.” **James** was not executed at once but taken to join the others in prison. To these were added, on the King’s orders, the two Christians already in prison, **Pontian** and **Mukasa Kiriwawanvu**.

Fr. Lourdel did all he could to save the Pages. After a long wait he eventually gained audience with the King. “I told the King,” said **Fr. Lourdel** later, “the harm he was doing to himself by putting to death his best servants, but the King only laughed: ‘I will not allow my servants to pray. I am the King. I am Master here and no one shall resist my authority.’ Then he went on: ‘But I shall not kill them all, I will spare a few.’ ” That was all that **Fr. Lourdel** could gain. ⁽³⁾

Meanwhile the Prime Minister determined that **Andrew Kaggw**a, would not escape. **Andrew** was the Chief of **Kigowa** and a favourite of the King. He was liked by everyone and had a considerable following. His was the first Christian family in **Buganda** and his house was a place of prayer, instruction and refuge. As the leader of the Christian community at court, he was hated by the Prime Minister, especially as he taught the his children.

The Prime Minister brought pressure to bear on the King who was reluctant to condemn his friend. “Are you going to kill our sons,” he asked the King, “and spare that worthless **Munyoro**?” (**Andrew** came from the Kingdom of **Bunyoro**.) “You will spill pure **Muganda** blood, and let a cur go unharmed? Will you allow this man to go on inciting our people to rebellion? Hand him over to me and let me deal with him.”

Mwanga had no answer and so left his boyhood friend to the mercy of the Prime Minister. **Andrew** was arrested the same Wednesday afternoon and was taken to the Prime Minister’s enclosure and sentenced to death. Because he knew that on second thoughts **Mwanga** might re-prieve his friend, the Prime Minister ordered **Andrew**’s immediate execution: “I shall not taste food until I see his severed arm before my eyes.” The executioners could not believe that the King would approve the death of his great friend, and they hesitated.

Whereupon, **Andrew** said to them, “Your master is hungry. Set before him, then, the only food that will give him an appetite. Do not keep him waiting; put me to death!”

An eye-witness said, “I saw **Andrew Kaggw**a leave the tribunal. The procession disappeared behind a reed palisade, and I remained in the courtyard. In less than ten minutes one of the executioners reappeared holding a man’s arm severed at the shoulder. He took it to the Prime Minister in the judgment hall.” Now the Prime Minister could dine. The executioners cut off **Andrew**’s head and chopped his body into little pieces. It was three o’clock in the afternoon; **Charles Lwanga** and his companions were still

awaiting their fate, while being held in the prison at **Munyonyo**.

THE ROAD TO NAMUGONGO

Mukajanga had decided that **Namugongo** should be the place of execution and so they began the twenty mile walk. A halt was to be made about half way at **Kampala**. **Mukajanga**, the chief executioner, went on a mile ahead to make preparations for the ceremonial opening of the death-march. When the first party reached this place **Mukajanga**, completely drunk, staggered out to open the proceedings. He approached **Pontian**, the palace guard. “What is the charge against you?” he formally demanded. “I am a Christian.” He asked the question several



*Editor’s Footnote 3: **Livinac** later became Superior General of the White Fathers after **Cardinal Lavigerie** died. He died on the 11th. November, 1892. **Fr. Lourdel** remained in Uganda and died on the 12th. May, 1890.*



Picture above: King Mwanga

times, and then the assistant executioners were called upon to swear an oath of fidelity to their task. A drum call was sounded and as the echoes died away Mukajanga drove his spear into Pontian's breast. The first thrust did not kill, and Mukajanga tried several times more. Afterwards Pontian was decapitated and his body hacked to pieces. His head lay at the roadside all day.

Bruno cried out for the executioners to kill them all on the spot because the ropes which bound them were very painful. The only reply they got was an order from Mukajanga to roll the prisoners in the pools left over from the morning's rain. Their ropes contracted and added to their sufferings.

The procession got under way. As they neared Kampala they passed the plantation belonging to Bruno's brother. Their thirst was intense and Bruno called to his brother to bring some banana wine. When he came, Bruno said to him, "We are going to die. A stream that flows from many sources can never dry up. When we are gone, others will join our Faith." His brother held out the wine, but Bruno did not take it. Late in the evening the two columns arrived at Kampala to spend the night. Each prisoner was fastened to heavy blocks of wood by his wrists and ankles and his neck was placed in a wooden fork, the points of which were driven into the ground. There was little sleep for them that night.

It was the custom for the executioners to leave a corpse at intervals along the road leading to the place of execution. The following morning the executioners announced that they intended putting one of them to death. Athanasius readily volunteered. He had proved "difficult" the day before by sitting down and refusing to march any further. The executioners had beaten him and goaded him on. Now they readily agreed and, at the spot where Joseph Mukasa had been

martyred, they stabbed him with spears and hacked his body to pieces.

When the captives were released from their bonds, their necks were stiff and their feet terribly swollen. Gonzaga's ankles were so bad that the executioners were unable to remove the fetters which had bitten deep into the flesh. Amidst his indescribable sufferings Gonzaga dragged himself along the road behind the others for seven miles and finally collapsed near Lubawo village. In sheer exhaustion he waited for the final stroke, it came from the spear of Mukajanga who had waited for him. Unlike Pontian and Athanasius Gonzaga he was not hacked to pieces.

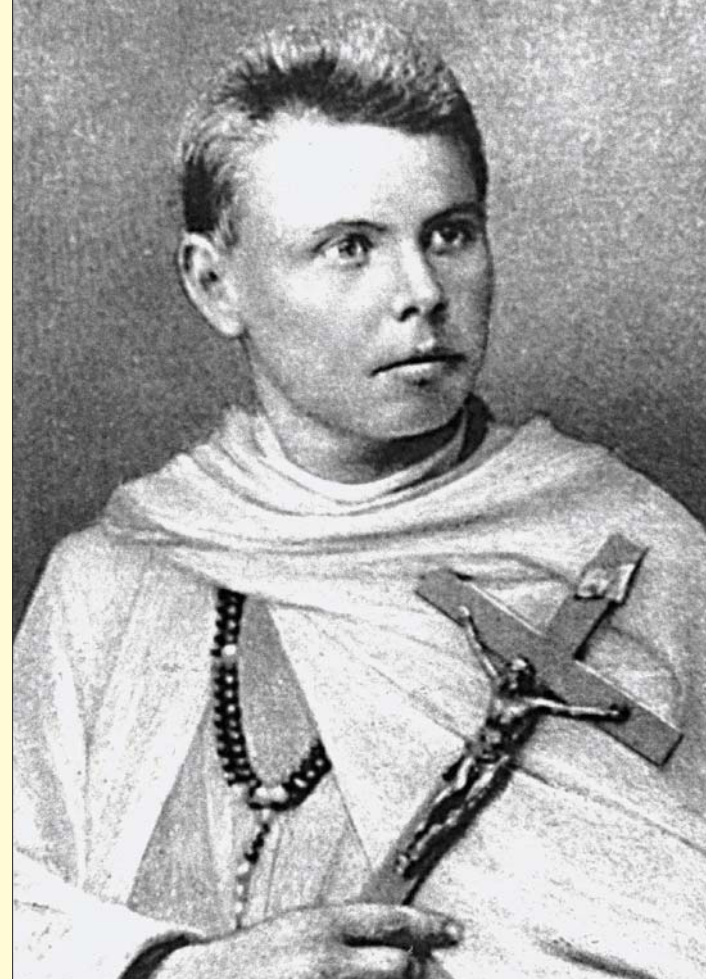
In the meantime the others had reached Namugongo. The executioners told them about Gonzaga, and how Andrew Kaggwa had been killed. Charles Lwanga said to the bystanders, "You do not understand our religion: if you did, you too would long to die for the Faith." The executioners now released Mbaga to a relative. The other prisoners were kept in close confinement for seven days while the funeral pyre was prepared. During this time Mbaga stood firm against the taunts, tears and entreaties of Mukajanga and his relatives.

MITYANA MARTYRS

At Mityana, forty miles from Kampala on the road to Mubende and Fort Portal, a flourishing Christian community had grown under the leadership of Matthias Kalembe. An exemplary Catholic, he was sub-chief (or Mulumba) to the county Chief of Ssingo, and used to gather the Catholics at the county headquarters for instruction. He became catechist, father and protector to the Catholics of the district. He kept in touch with Fr. Lourdel at Kampala through Luke, his trusted messenger. When the persecution broke out, Matthias was working on the rebuilding of the King's Palace at Kampala. Both he and Luke were promptly arrested and taken before the Prime Minister.

Their trial was short and on hearing that Matthias was a devout Christian the Prime Minister sentenced him to death. Then turning to Luke, he asked him if he prayed, when he said yes the Prime Minister condemned him to death at Namugongo. The executioners led them away on the road to Namugongo but Matthias sat down and told them that they should kill him at once. They proceeded to butcher him, as the Prime Minister had ordered. His arms were severed first at the wrists and then at the elbows. His legs were cut off at the knees. The executioners later described the scene. They testified that while they sawed through his bones, Matthias did not utter a single cry, but merely murmured, "My God! My God!" They said they tore long strips of flesh from his body and burned them before his eyes, and to prolong his agony they tied up his arteries and veins. Three days later, on Sunday, 30th. May, a man who passed by heard a cry for water. It was Matthias echoing the cry from the Cross, "I thirst". The man drew near, but fled in horror from what he saw. It was probably the same evening that a raiding party led by a royal legate descended upon Mityana.

When Matthias went to the capital he left Noe in charge of his household. Noe was an artisan, and worked as potter and tanner for the county Chief of Ssingo. On Monday morning the raiding party closed in on Noe's house. He had been instructing catechumens and, while they escaped through the back door, Noe met the raiders at the front. "Here we are," he said, and the next moment he was struck down by a spear. The wounded martyr was then lashed



to a tree and the village dogs set upon him. The agony lasted throughout the day as the savage dogs tore the flesh from his body. His remains were untied at nightfall and thrown on the road as a warning to others. Some thirty Christians were rounded up and taken to Kampala. The names and fates of most of them are not known.

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

On the 3rd. June, Ascension Day, about a hundred executioners gathered round Mukajanga's hut. They had spent the night drinking and dancing and now sang a warsong. The prisoners were brought forward with ropes around their necks and their hands tied behind them. Wasted

Picture above: Photograph of Fr. Lourdel taken in 1878

and weakened by pain and hunger, they still maintained their erect bearing and calm, happy expression. Their joy became triumph when they saw **Mbaga** run to join them.

The prisoners walked in single file before Senkole, the assistant chief executioner, and according to the custom he lightly tapped each on the head with a rod so that his spirit would not enter into the King. Three of them who were to be spared - one, **Denis Kamyuka**, was the chief witness at the beatification process in 1920.

It was also the custom for the assistant executioner to reserve a prisoner for himself so Senkole chose **Charles Lwanga**. With a slave yoke around his neck, his hands firmly bound to his side, and wrapped in a reed mat, **Charles** was strapped down to his death-bed. Senkole lit the pyre under his feet and the fire slowly burnt his feet and legs to cinders. "Come," said Senkole, "call upon your God and let us see if He can save you from the fire." "Poor madman," said the martyr in his agony, "you know not what you say. It seems to me that you are pouring cool water over my feet." After this, **Charles** lay quietly waiting for the end. Before the fumes suffocated him he cried out, "My God!"

The prisoners had been stripped of their white cotton clothing and arrayed in a rough covering of bark cloth. This was now removed and, clad only in loin cloths, they were led to the funeral pyre. Then **Mbaga** took leave of his friend, **Denis Kamyuka**. **Denis** made no reply, sobs choked his voice and he was overcome with sorrow because he was not allowed to die.

According to custom a few mouthfuls of banana juice were offered to each condemned prisoner. Mats woven of reeds were stretched upon the ground and each of the prisoners was put on the mat prepared for him. The executioners tightened the ropes around the prisoners' hands, strapped their legs together and then wrapped the reed mats round them like shrouds.

The live faggots were carried to the stake, and laid on the ground in a row, one against the other. The executioners mocked and taunted their victims: "You are to be roasted; now we shall see if the God in whom you trust will come and deliver you!" The answer came quickly from **Bruno**: "You can burn our bodies," he said, "but our souls you cannot touch."

The three Pages whom the King had pardoned were so distressed that the executioners humoured them by wrapping them up in mats as though to place them on the pyre. They left them a few yards away from their companions telling them that they would be burned when the bodies of the other Pages had been consumed.

Mukajanga still hoped that his son would renounce his Faith and ordered his release. **Mbaga** fell on his knees at his father's feet. Once again the father pleaded with his son. "The King told you to kill me," replied **Mbaga**. "Please do it. I want to die for Jesus Christ." With a gesture of despair the unhappy father whispered a command to a subordinate who led **Mbaga** aside. There a servant struck him on the back of the neck with a heavy club. **Mbaga** fell to the ground and his lifeless body was carried to the pyre.

Everything was now ready and the fire was applied to all sides of the pyre. Soon it was an inferno and the heat so intense that the executioners were forced to retreat. When the flames began to abate they returned with long poles and threw fresh fuel on the fire. Knives in hand, the executioners chanted a warsong at the top of their voices: "It is not we who are killing you, it is our gods; it is Nende, Mukasa, and Kibuka who are revenging themselves for your scorn."

The martyrs prayed aloud until the flames got the better of them, and the slaughter was complete. Thirty-one had died. Excluding **Charles Lwanga** and the eight who had previously been put to death, twelve are officially recognised as Catholic martyrs and thirteen

by the Anglicans. Little is known of the remainder but there were probably catechumens among them.

As a result of the martyrdom the number of converts increased and it became apparent to **Mwanga** that he had been defeated in his purpose. He was unable to continue the persecution on a wide scale because he lost the support of the chiefs and began to select individuals to wreak vengeance upon. He wanted to wipe out key men, such as **John Mary Muzeyi**,

a former Page under **King Mutesa**. **John Mary** could not tear himself away from the priests. He hid near the mission with three friends. This was discovered and **Mwanga** laid a trap for him with the connivance of the Prime Minister who sent him a message. In consideration of his services to **Mwanga's** father, **Mutesa**, the message ran, he would be welcome at court and would be rewarded with a chieftom. His friends suspected a trap, but **John Mary** said, "We cannot go on indefinitely hiding like this. Let me go. If the King kills me, I can meet no better fate for I shall be dying for my Faith."

John Mary went to the Palace and saw the Prime Minister and the King who told him to return and bring his friends with him. He re-

turned to his friends but went back alone again to the court. This happened a second time and he was never seen again. It is not certain how he died but it is probable that on the morning of the 27th. January, 1887, he had his head cut off and was thrown into a swamp.

Twenty-two had died for their Faith and the blood of these martyrs became the seed of Christians. On the way to his death **Bruno** said that the stream flowing from many sources would never dry up. How true these words have proved to be can be seen, not only in Uganda, but in the whole of Africa today. The heroic sacrifice made by the Martyrs has indeed borne fruit, a fruit that will endure.



THE UGANDA MARTYRS



The Icon of the Uganda Martyrs - (pages 16 and 17) is the work of the renowned Swiss artist, Albert Wider. The background of spears down the left-hand side of the picture, and the background of flames down the right-hand side, gives the general indication of the manner of death. The animal representations are the clan totems of the martyrs, so important for identifying family relationships.

The Leaders - Among the 22 Martyrs four of them stand out as leaders: **Joseph Mukasa**, the King's majordomo, and consequently in charge of the Pages at court; **Charles Lwanga**, the Head Page, who took over the leadership from **Joseph Mukasa** after his death; **Andrew Kaggwa**, the Bandmaster General, and the Chief of Kigowa: his influence in the outer court was considerable; **Matthias Mulumba**, assistant to the county Chief

Picture above: The church of Namugongo

of Ssingi, the leader of the Christians at Mityana, 40 miles from Kampala. In the notes below the martyrs' ages are indicated in brackets.

The Martyrs - The total number of people who died in the persecutions is uncertain. The names of 22 Catholics are known for certain. Among Anglicans who died the names of 23 are highly probable, of whom 13 most likely died at Namugongo. *

15th. November, 1886 **Joseph Mukasa Balikudembe** (25) - The Majordomo to the King, and with a premiership in the offing, he was the inspiration of the Christian community. His spirit of truth and justice, and his refusal to compromise, turned the King against him. He is the proto-martyr and was first beheaded and then burnt at Kampala.

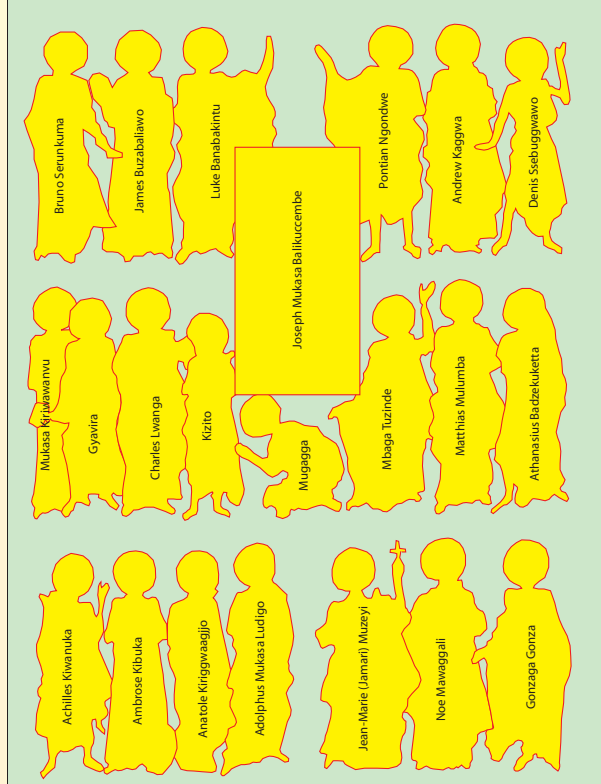
26th. May, 1886 **Denis Ssebuggwawo** (16) - Page and personal attendant upon the King. He was beheaded at Munyonyo, after being struck down with a spear. He is noted for his zeal and modesty.

30th. May, 1886 **Pontian Ngondwe** (35-40) - One of the palace guards, he is renowned for his faithfulness to duty. He died in the ceremonial opening of the death march at Munyonyo when he was speared and hacked to pieces.

27th. May, 1886 **Andrew Kaggwa** (30) - Chief of Kigowa and Bandmaster General (bugle), he was a model catechist and teacher (book). Particularly detested by the Prime Minister, he was beheaded and hacked to pieces at Munyonyo.

27th. May, 1886 **Athanasius Bazzekuketta** (20) - One of the court Pages, he was guardian of the King's treasures of ivory and cloth. He was hacked to pieces at Kampala and is called upon for his spirit of responsibility.

27th. May, 1886 **Gonzaga Gonza** (24) - A Page in the audience hall. Unable to remove the fetters from his ankles, the executioners speared and



beheaded him on the way to Namugongo. He is noted for his sympathy for prisoners and those in trouble.

3rd. June, 1886 **Matthias Kalemba (Mulumba)** (50) - The Assistant to the county Chief of Ssingi, Matthias became known for his meekness and gentleness. He was the leader and catechist of the Mityana Christians (book) and was dismembered (knife) and died a slow, agonising death.

3rd. June, 1886 **Noe Mwaggali** (35) - Potter to the county Chief of Ssingi, he assisted Matthias in his catechising. A humble worker and a lover of poverty, he was speared and savaged by mad dogs at Mityana, probably on this date.

The following martyrs were burnt to death at Namugongo on the 3rd. June, 1886.

Charles Lwanga (25) - He was Head Page and took the leadership of the Pages after Joseph Mukasa's death. He was outstanding

3rd. June, 1886 for his zeal (book), and for the baptisms he administered (calabash). He is the Patron of Catholic Action in Africa since the 22nd. June, 1934.

Luke Banabakintu (30-35) - An official under the county Chief of Ssingi, he made many long journeys for Matthias (staff). His family were hereditary boatmakers to the King (canoe). He is renowned for his imitation of Christ's sufferings.

James Buzabaliawo (25-30) - An inspirer of patriotism, he was second-in-command to Andrew Kaggwa, the bandmaster (cymbals). A faithful soldier to the end.

Bruno Serunkuma (30) - He was a palace guard of the royal arsenal. He refused a drink on the way to his death (beer pot). He is remembered for his mortification and temperance.

Mugagga (17) - A Page in the inner private courts of the palace, he is renowned for his chastity. His family were bark-cloth makers (mallet).

Kizito (15) - The youngest of the martyrs, he was a Page of the inner private courts. He is known especially for his purity and his spirit of joy.

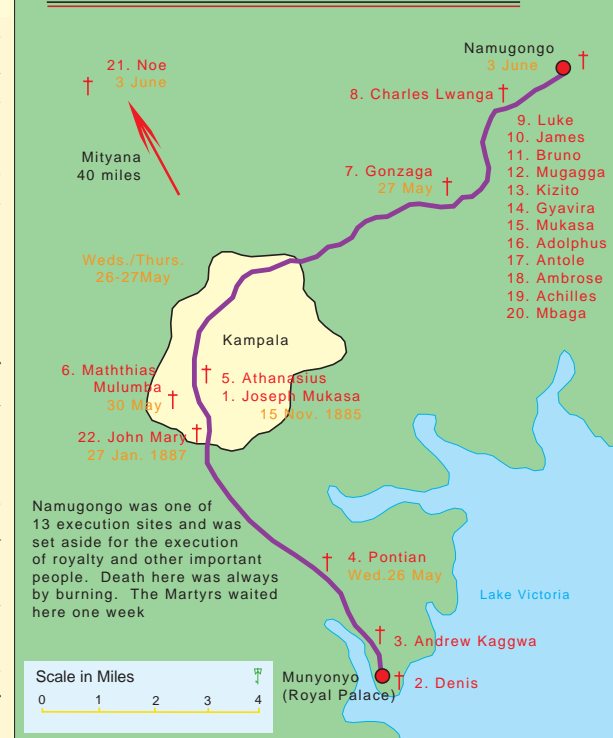
Gyavira (17) - A Page in the audience hall, and a King's messenger (letter in cleft stick).

Mukasa Kiriwawanvu (25-30) - A Page in the audience hall, he is remembered for his reconciliation with Gyavira after a quarrel.

Adolphus Mukasa Ludigo (25) - A Page in the audience hall, he was known for services to others. Preparing food (bananas) the customary work of women, was not below him. He is called upon for his humility.

Anatole Kiriggwajjo (20) - A Page in the audience hall, he refused higher office because of the moral dangers attached, and was particularly detested by the King. Renowned for his piety.

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Ambrose Kibuka (18) - A Page in the audience hall, he was everywhere known for his joyful nature (drum) and his neighbourly love.

Achilles Kiwanuka (17) - A Page in the audience hall, he is remembered for his hatred and rejection of pagan superstitions (amulets at his feet).

Mbaga Tuzinde (17) - A Page in the audience hall, he was the chief executioner's son. He refused to give in to the constant entreaties of his father and was clubbed to death before being burnt.

27th. January, 1887 **John Mary Muzeyi** (30-35) - A former Page, he was a prudent counsellor, a fearless preacher (crucifix) and was always ready to help the poor and the sick (man with crutches). He was the last of the martyrs and he was beheaded.

14 **Editor's Footnote:** * The first martyrs were Anglicans and they were roasted alive on the 30th. January, 1885. Their names were *Joseph Lugalama, Mark Kakumba and Noah Seruwanga.*
Sources: the 'Uganda Martyrs' booklet; 'Black Martyrs' by Rev. J. P. Thoonen, Sheed & Ward, London, 1941;

'The Fires of Namugongo' by Fr. A. E. Howell W.F., 1948; 'A History of Christian Missions' by Stephen Neill, Penguin, 1990; '2000 Years of Christianity in Africa' by John Baur, Paulines Publications, Nairobi, 1994.
Diagram opposite & map above: based on the items found on pages 15 & 18, & 31 of the 'Uganda Martyrs' booklet

