



The Prophetic Witness

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The members of ARU General Assembly with His Excellency, Luigi Bianco, the Apostolic Nuncio in Uganda, Centre, on the opening day of the Assembly at ARU Secretariat, June 4, 2024

By Sr. Specioza Kabahuma, DST

CATHOLIC SISTERS COMMUNICATORS NETWORK OBJECTIVES CONTINUED

b) To develop a communication strategy and plan for Sisters Communicators in Uganda. A communications strategy and plan specific to the Catholic Sisters Communicators in Uganda shall be developed following the needs and communication gaps through assessment conducted. The Sister communicators shall develop guidelines of communications activities and develop templates for communications activities to be made available. The projects management committee shall ensure that clear and actionable steps developed are aligned to the Catholic Sisters Initiative Strategy, equity and

advocacy plans, as well as communications matrix to be used to assess the scale and effectiveness of Sisters' communications in relation to the goal.

c) To establish and register Catholic Sisters Communicators Network in Uganda. A network that establishes regular communication and sharing among the sister communicators that can become the basis for an ongoing network that shall be created by organizing regular gatherings of sister communicators to identify specific communications modes, outlets, or partnerships that may be utilized in current communications efforts. An assessment of scaling up benefits of visibility and knowledge of their work. The starting point would be to encour-

age sisters to identify communicators whose work they admire, bring them together and enhance learning from one another. The network will provide sister-communicators an opportunity to identify and utilize communication opportunities and avenues to elevate their work.

d) Creation of a website for sister communicators – that will be instrumental in developing podcasts and other platforms for communication. The sub activities shall include acquisition of website domain, payment for sister communicators web hosting, website development where pictures, news feeds and pod-casts shall be created. Lastly, the website shall be maintained through regular uploads and downloads by a designate MSMMC sister communicator.

3) With the above network the following are the expected results:

- i. The assessment will come out with a Sister Communications' needs assessment report detailing communication gaps and needs.
- ii. ARU communication strategy implemented enhances Sisters' Communication in Uganda.
- iii. To establish and register a Catholic Sister-Communicators Network in Uganda.
- iv. A website will be created for the network for sharing news about sisters' ministries through articles, pictures, blogs and podcasts for communication activities.

To be continued in the next issue

The Editorial



**Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru,
MSMMC**

Welcome to this publication of the month of June, a special month dedicated to the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. As we also commemorate the memorial of the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the following Saturday after the Sacred Heart feast, we are automatically reminded about devotion to the two Hearts of Jesus and Mary. This is the source of Christian bonding to the divine. It adds with the Holy Spirit's gift of fortitude that enables us to become resilient in the journey of faith.

In this issue, we are gifted with a number of themes, first and foremost, our cover story is the June Assembly, the top authority of the Conference of Association of Religious in Uganda, ARU. We still continue to reap and tape our blessing as long as the life giving 'river' of ARU is following to water its branches as it also blesses the grass root communities they serve.

the Nuncio sat in the midst of the Assembly in adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament before presiding over the Holy Eucharistic Celebration for the official opening of the Assembly.

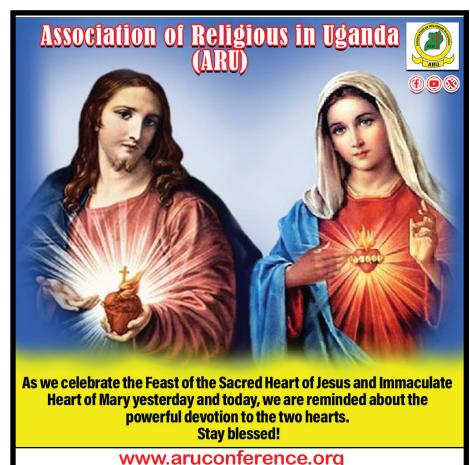
This brings out the theme on synodality, where, the Church calls us to journey together as sisters and brothers of the same family of God. We are called to act participatorily, commune together from the Eucharistic table of the Lord and reach out together through the mission to take the Good News to our sisters and brothers in various settings of the society. The synod of synodality is more pragmatic as opposed to theoretical. We are called to minister to one another as keepers of our sisters and brothers. At this juncture, the ball is in our court; let us give a right and successful play in turn.

Other important themes are the Jubilee of the religious (seen in the last issue) and the jubilee of the universal church. At the preparatory stage, this year, Pope Francis calls for a "symphony" of prayer.

The Assembly was privileged and graced with the presence His Excellency, Luigi Bianco, the Apostolic Nuncio to Uganda. This time round, like Mother Mary and the Apostles in the Cenacle,

"Hopefully that the forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire; that is why I have chosen as the motto of the Jubilee, Pilgrims of Hope. This will indeed be the case if we are capable of recovering a sense of universal fraternity and refuse to turn a blind eye to the tragedy of rampant poverty that prevents millions of men, women, young people and children from living in a manner worthy of our human dignity."

In our case, Catholic Care for Children in Uganda – CCCU ushers us to embrace this reality of turning an open eye to address the needs of poor children. The vulnerable children include and not limited to the orphans and neglected children who face abuses. This brings us to appreciate various interventions undertaken by ARU. It challenges you and me to identify and address other areas of need.



A HAPPY HEART IS
BETTER THAN A FULL
PURPOSE.
True beauty is of the Soul.

Community Life, a crown of Holiness, Nuncio tells June Assembly



A cross section of the participants of June 2024 Assembly, listening to the opening address of the Nuncio in the Jubilee Hall of ARU Secretariat

By Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, MSMMC

Iappreciate ARU's consistency in organizing the Assembly; even the COVID-19 lock down could not stop it, when you went ahead and organized it that time!" His Excellency, Luigi Bianco, the Apostolic Nuncio in Uganda remarked during the official opening of the Assembly. The successful Annual General Meeting (AGM) /Assembly of June 2024 was anticipated with meetings of various committees and its climax was attained from June 4-8, 2024.

The sessions were anticipated by the Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament and the Eucharistic Celebration; which was presided over by His Excellency Luigi Bianco. In addition to the homily of the day, during the official opening of the Assembly, the Apostolic Nuncio reminded the members about some upcoming events and information at hand.

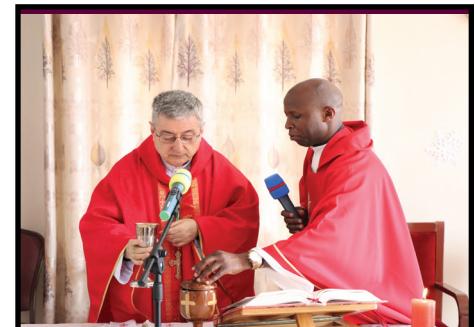
About the forthcoming Jubilee Year 2025/26, which used to be observed every 25 years but when necessity prevails, it can be declared accordingly. His Excellency, the Apostolic Nuncio added that, the Holy Year, will be localized. The local Churches – Cathedrals will be open to receive graces/indulgences.

About the Synod of Synodality and synodal journey, which started on Oct 9, 2021, with the theme: Communion, participation and mission, the Nuncio reminded the Assembly that the first session concluded in October, 2023, while the second and last session will commence on October 2-27, 2024. The Nuncio urged the Assembly to be aware of the new challenges of culture, attitudes, mentality and ideologies. "Keep your vocations like the diamond, that must keep being shaped for various purposes."

The Apostolic Nuncio also reminded the august house about

community life. "Community life is about participating in the life of the people. Living together is different from living in community. It is a means to get the crown of holiness. Life in the community is not easy but it is necessary and the way to go. Hope helps one to overcome difficult situations in the community and it is the theological virtue by which we desire heaven; it does not disappoint."

Among others, the Apostolic Nuncio reminded members about the importance of amicable relationship between the Bishops and Consecrated Persons. "This brings about a balanced life after contributing to the welfare of one another. Let us give a serious consideration for an integral and ongoing formation for human and pastoral development. Silence is a great atmosphere for listening, be open to one another." And the Nuncio also reminded the members about the Pope's intention this month which is: For migrants fleeing their homes.



His Excellency, Luigi Bianco presiding over the Mass with Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, ARU Vice President.

Continued to pg 4

While Mother Speranza Namusisi the president of ARU gave a note of welcome and thanked the house for accepting the invitation of Institutes of Consecrated life and Societies of Apostolic life. "I know you are busy people but you chose to come and participate in the Assembly for the sake of our Association/Conference. Thank you for supporting ARU through adding bricks to the building!"

Together with the newly appointed superiors, like Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, of the Spiritan Institute, who was reappointed to the office, Fr. Caxton Peter Mayanja, the new Superior of the Holy Cross Fathers, she congratulated and welcomed all other members who came for the first time to the Assembly.



In picture are the current members of ARU's Executive Committee being introduced during the Assembly.



A cross section of Program Staff members during the presentation of reports to the Assembly, June 2024. Photo by ARU reporter.



The Secretary General of ARU, Sr. Lydia Apili Bwor, addresses the major superiors during the June 2024 general assembly. Photo by ARU Reporter.

Mother Speranza reminded the members of the Assembly about the imminent celebrations of the Jubilee year of the consecrated persons. "The Jubilee Year is guided by the theme: *Pilgrims of Hope on the path to Peace*, to be concluded in October, 2025. Let us create a climate of hope and trust and listen to the voices of the poor. Let us make prayer the centre of our lives. And praise God's work in creation. And I wish all of you a happy stay at ARU."

The sessions among others included; Jubilee for consecrated life: Walking together towards achieving peace in Religious communities by Fr. Anthony Kibiira Kimbowa, MCCJ, Presentation of Financial and the Audit report, by the Office of Finance, Jubilee for Consecrated Life: Synodality in leadership, report of the Secretary General, Launching of the ARU Policies, Setting Mandates and closure by the President, ARU, Major Superiors, and the Moderator respectively.



The liturgical animators during the opening Mass of the June Assembly at ARU Secretariat. Photo ARU reporter.



Holy Communion time with Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, during the opening of the General Assembly. Photo by ARU reporter.

Q&A with Mother Grace Kyomugisha



Mother Grace Kyomugisha, the Superior General of the Sisters of Our Lady of Good Counsel.

By ARU Repoter

The Prophetic Witness caught up with Sr. Grace Kyomugisha, the current Superior General of the Sisters of Our Lady of Good Counsel- Mbarara. Prior to the elections that determined her fate, Sr. Grace served as Assistant Secretary General at the Secretariat of the Association of Religious in Uganda, Kampala. Having created suspense and dilemma to many, let us catch up with her through Q&A.

Q: Mother Grace, can you do self-introduction for the sake of those who may not know you?

A: I'm Sr. Grace Kyomugisha, the Superior General of the Sisters of Our Lady of Good Council (OLGC) - Mbarara. I have been working at ARU as Assistant Secretary General from 1st March 2023 to November 18th 2023.

Q: This was hardly a year! What happened to the contract?

A: I went for the General Chapter of our institute as a Delegate. As the process stands, the actual celebration of the chapter began on 1st December, 2023, up to 18th December, 2023, and on 13th

of December 2023, I was surprisingly elected as the Superior General of our Institute, thus, ending my contract at ARU, I would say prematurely.

Q: How did ARU go about the gap created by the absence of Assistant Secretary General?

A: God in His Providence first energized the Administrative Staff members to go an extra mile and has later filled the gap with the presence of Sr. Jane Yatuha, OLGC. She will complete what I was unable to do. I'm also happy that, I have left Sr. Jane with a group that work as a team. I bless and wish them well. This helps me to focus on the 368 sisters, scattered in Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. We are all engaged in a universal mission of Christ.

Q: Thank you for your time, what other message do you have for us?

I'm so grateful to ARU for the support and guidance while

working with the conference. And I'm also very grateful for the achievements and challenges I went through while at ARU. I owe gratitude to the people I worked with, and more especially the administrative staff at ARU.

I'm so grateful in a special way for the visionary leadership of Sister Lydia Apili Bwor. I'm indebted to Sr. Kamau Josephine, the Treasurer General of the Conference, Sr. Gaudensia Kababiito, the Accountant of the Conference. As well as Sr. Esther Nangobi, the Administrative Secretary, Sr. Elisabeth Kidega, the Cateress, and Sr. Lilly Driciru, the Communications Coordinator.



Sr. Jane Yatuha (left), incoming Secretary General interacting with Sr. Genevieve D'Silver (right), the executive member of ARU.

I will miss the teamwork and collaboration of these staff, without forgetting the Support Staff, the Program Staff, the Executive Committee, and also most importantly, the Board of Trustees. May God bless them, bless their efforts and bless us all.

Continued to pg 6

We are pilgrims of peace and the end point of everybody here on earth is heaven. I hope along the way, nobody among us will get lost. I beg God to give us the grace to keep offering services for His greater glory here on earth.

I would like to add that, I achieved a lot of things while at ARU but I do not attribute those achievements to my efforts, but to the teamwork I have enjoyed while at ARU. First of all, I was able to take minutes of the Executive Committee and of the General Assemblies and of any other important meetings we held. I participated in reviewing the policies of our human resource, financial policy, strategic plan, implementation plan, fundraising policy, name it. I have also been able to attend some national, international meetings on behalf of the conference whenever the conference delegated me.

I'm leaving ARU for another challenging apostolate. However, I know as a conference, ARU is touching the lives of so many people where individual institutes working as fiscal agents of the conference stimulates empowerment of the religious institutes and members. One of them is Healthcare Network being managed by the Sisters of the St. Therese of the Child Jesus, Fort portal, commonly known as the *Banyateresa* Sisters. The network is registered as a Legal entity and it can run on its own. The networks have advantage of soliciting funds from other organizations as long as they respect and promote the values of the Catholic Church.

A good conscience is a soft pillow.



Some of the members of Executive Committee and ARU Administrative Staff reaching out to bid farewell to Mother Grace Kyomugisha, OLGC.

Also, Care for the Elderly Network has been established and it is touching the lives of many people. Elderly care has helped sisters of so many congregations. And this network at the moment is under the leadership of the Sisters of Immaculate Heart of Mary Reparatrix or *Ggogonya* sisters. It is also registered as a legal entity; it is even in position of soliciting funds on its own. If these systems are well understood, their operations well handled, they are going to help all the religious in Uganda and serve for the benefit of all.

I also see the Conference growing further to the heights and being guided by the strategic plan, which has its objectives, goals, and is strategically guiding the operations.

Mother Grace, thank you for this great sharing, now let us go to independent voices of ARU Staff:

"Oh Sr. Grace we are missing your laughter, you are a treasure who lived and shared your

A friend's eye is a good mirror: A real friend will tell you the truth

giftedness with ARU and we believe you are rendering great service where God has taken you." "Now you're elevated as one who will forever collaborate with ARU, we shall miss your jokes...and what you have been to ARU." "You gave us spiritual nourishment and motivation as ARU members, we still believe in your collaboration."

"Thank you for accepting the cross. Accept it as God's will." "Allow sisters to be who they are, is the best approach. Thank you for your graciousness, thank you for accepting to come to ARU." "A time to be happy as leaders on duty and to care for the happiness of others too." "Be a good gentle mother to the weak, wayward, needy and all." "You have been upgraded to remain with us as ARU."

Lastly, from Mother Grace: "I thank God and everyone for the good you did to me and others. It is well known to many of our sisters. Thank you for the love and wisdom shared..."

All the best with blessing from the Heavenly kingdom.

Synod on Synodality Rekindles the Church in AMECEA Region



In picture are the participants of the Synod on Synodality from AMECEA region and ACWECA during a two-day workshop at ARU Secretariat, Kampala in May, 2024. Photo by ARU reporter.

ARU Reporter

In a bid to continue strengthening collaboration and Synodality in AMECEA Region, the Association of Member Episcopal Conference in Eastern Africa, (AMECEA), in collaboration with Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA) convened a two days' workshop, May 2 – 3, 2024, at the Secretariat of Association of Religious in Uganda, (ARU).

The goal is to let the National Association contact persons establish best practices as a way of journeying together as a Church. The synod on Synodality aims to bolster the Church's renewal proposed by the Second Vatican Council and to make room for the Holy Spirit's transformative work in the world.

According to ACWECA, after the first phase of Synod on Synodality, it has been observed that, there are significant changes as far as togetherness is concerned in plenary meetings with the Episcopal Conferences, Religious Associations, Lay Council, the Youth, and other associations in the church. This is one of the best practices ever since it lacked in the past.

“We realized the celebration of the day of Consecrated Life is not only done in the dioceses, but also at national levels. In some other places as a best practice, what is offered on this day is given to the religious which is mostly used for charity activities.” The ACWECA team revealed during the workshop.

“There are also meetings of bishops and the religious at metropolitan as well as regional levels with wide discussions and consultations. The religious are also involved at the planning level in diocesan activities together with other pastoral agents and vocation promotion is being coordinated at national level and at the diocesan level as well. This is now done in three quarters of the members of ACWECA.” ACWECA team observed.

Another remark ACWECA made is that, there are joint meetings as well as recollections, starting from parish levels, deanery, and the diocese in line with the decision making, consultation meetings on pastoral issues. This starts from small Christian communities, church councils, parish councils, deanery up to diocesan levels. It is accordingly being enhanced by the synodal spirit.



Continued to pg 8

ACWECA added that because of Synodality, creation of deliberate forums like a WhatsApp forum for both the religious as well as the clergy has been put in place. In a synodal movement, this is very important because it is where information flows and a lot of deliberations take place.

On the other hand, AMECEA team analysis indicate that there is growth of recollections, both at national and diocesan levels and preparation for these activities are done by the different groups. "We also have activities like observation of elections, including both the religious, the clergy, and even the laity." Mr. Mberere Bernard of AMECEA team revealed.

According to AMECEA, a communion and devotional prayer dubbed *Mahabharat* in Ethiopia is held in the homes of each member of the group and it is done rotationally. Thus, another way of building one another spiritually, integrally as well as promotion of effective evangelization.

For the betterment of the future of the Church, ACWECA proposes the need to support some of the priests serving amidst economic hardship in rural areas and informal settlements (slums) because it affects their service delivery and at times the general working relations with the Church.

AMECEA however suggests that there is need to create forums that bring together the laity, clergy, religious, local ordinaries in synodality. An example is in Malawi, after a period of time, the leadership of the laity, the clergy and religious, with the local



The male participants of the joint meeting on Synod on Synodality.



The female and joint participants of the meeting on Synod on Synodality.

ordinary come together at the national level to share their experiences and challenges in the mission.

According to AMECEA, it is vital to have a day of recollection of the clergy and religious towards strengthening their spiritual life and after the recollection, the groups need to come together for a meeting to share about their challenges and experiences. This so far happens in some dioceses and conferences. It is a good practice and needs to be extended to other dioceses.

AMECEA adds that a section of the Canon Law that hinders proper incorporation of the laity in exercising some of the duties in leadership in the mission calls for a review, thus, adjusting to allow the laity to properly participate in the running of the church, especially at the local level.

"There is a need for formation of personnel who understand languages or techniques of supporting Christians at the periphery like the deaf, the blind, among others. We also need pastoral programs to cater for the single parents who feel left out as

a way of journeying together in the Synodal Church." AMECEA noted.

"The processes of synodality we've had, through the discussions and the way forward that we've come up with will help us to continue living the synod. The synod should be something very practical to cause change which is already visible. In the years to come, just like we've been enjoying the fruits of the second Vatican Council, we will be enjoying the fruits of this special synod on Synodality" The Secretary General, ACWECA, Sr. Brigita Samba noted in her final remarks of the workshop.

AMECEA is comprised of ten countries; Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, Sudan, and Uganda. Additionally, Somalia and Djibouti have observer status. While ACWECA is a regional body of Consecrated Women encompassing 10 countries comprising; Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

A loaded wagon makes no noise.

CCCU host AMECEA for a Pilot Survey on child care reform



A group photo of some of the stakeholders with the AMECEA, CCCK and CCCU Team during the pilot survey meeting hosted by St. Philomena CCI -Jinja. Photo by ARU.

By Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, MSMMC

A paradigm shift to make family the best place for the development of a child to full capacity has received a welcome note. It is contrary to child care institutions which may hamper holistic child development of a child. The people of AMECEA region and beyond are embracing the value entailed in the paradigm shift. The venture in place, which was introduced in 2016 is being embraced by Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi and Sri Lanka.

As the world is awakening to embrace the importance of care reforms provided to children and vulnerable adults, AMECEA Region is not exceptional. This evolving trend signifies a shift from institutional care approaches towards embracing family and community-based care models. In the recent years, institutes of

consecrated persons have come together to advance care reform in a more concerted and collaborative way.

Guided by the theme: Strengthened families towards sustainable care reforms, ARU-CCCU and Uganda Episcopal Conference -UEC co-hosted the team from Kenya. These included; Mr. Bernard Mberere, Sr. Jane Wairimu, Sr. Jecinter Okoth, from AMECEA Communications Department, Sr. Delvin Mukhwana and Mr. Brighton Amuni from Catholic Care for Children Kenya-CCCK.

On arrival, the teams from AMECEA, CCCK, CCCU and representatives from ARU met at Uganda Catholic Secretariat with the team from Uganda Episcopal Conference (UEC).

The members from UEC included the Secretary General UEC, Msgr. John Baptist Kauta, Fr. Frederick Tusingire (Director Lay Apostolate Office), Fr. John Baptist Kaganda, (Pastoral Coordinator). After introductions, Sr. Euphrasia Masika, DST, Country Director, CCCU gave opening remarks and said CCCU that started in 2016 has become a champion in the reunion of children to families or family like environment. Unfortunately, children face more abuses in the families than in the child care institutions.

After 1,443 children were taken back to family from child care institutions, Uganda is championing in child care reforms followed by Kenya, Zambia, Malawi and Sri Lanka. Due to high level of poverty, families need to be strengthened with income generating activities and positive parenting before hosting a child.

“AMECEA Communications Department which has been key in amplifying information about Child Care Reforms has come to carry out a pilot survey on re-integration program. This involves transitioning model of Catholic Care for Children reforms with reintegrating children from Child Institutional care to family or community-based care. Close collaboration with the Church ministers is key. The involvement of the Church structure was mistakenly

Continued to pg 10

alienated and now is being integrated in the process of transition of a child from institution to family," Sr. Euphrasia explained.

"The reason why the Communication Team from AMECEA has come is to witness the case closure after management by the sisters, the local government with the support from the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. One such beneficiary is a child from St. Philomena Babies home, Iganga. This is a leading home in Uganda because out of 54, there are only five children left in the home (Child care institution). They successfully transitioned the children to natural families. In this case the Team from Kenya will witness re-integration of Mulabbi Aaron who successfully bonded with his uncle and family. The objective of this initiative is to bolster understanding and knowledge surrounding reintegration within child care reform and the strengthening of families, achieved through collaborative efforts with pertinent stakeholders." Sr. Euphrasia concluded.

In the same vein, Msgr John Baptist welcomed the guests to Uganda and assured them of the good works Catholic Church is rendering and the child care service of the sisters cannot be underestimated. Many people including prominent members of the Church and society have benefited from the child care service of the sisters. He added that there is need to work hard to stop child abuse in various forms and or perpetrators face penalty for abuses.

On the other hand Benard Mberere assured the house that, AMECEA

region does holistic service to children and ensures that children are in family or similar setting for their good. The program brings other pastoral agents on board. "We would like to document success stories and challenges and journey in Synodality with all. We shall share the reports with the Bishops about the journey of the sisters with children. There is need to bridge the gap between sisters, Christian community and the parish. Some people are even resisting the closure of CCCIs!" Bernard exclaimed.

Sr. Delvine added that, Synodality resonates well with CCC movement. "How best can the spiritual leaders help the movement? Why are families failing to take care of their own children? When did the rain start beating us? There is need to have conversation with the roots in child care movement, partnering and collaboration. This involves stakeholders, Small Christian Community, Traditional leaders and agents of evangelization. This would take us to another level as far as child care movement is concerned." She concluded.



The Team from CCCK, CCCU and AMECEA in picture with the community of St. Philomena Child Care Institution (CCI), after the case closure of Aaron in his new family. Photo by ARU.

While Sr. Geneveve D'Silva on behalf of ARU said, "a golden chance has come to realize how family is important for child care. Thanks to Ugandan group for taking the challenge. Orphans have a back spot that makes them vulnerable. There is need to study their challenges step by step; their needs, parenting, psychology and family."

The group then left for the Diocese of Jinja to carry out the mission and purpose for which they converged. ARU-CCCU selected St. Philomena Babies Home, out the 19 CCIs as a pilot CCI to showcase the phases of care management including but not limited to identification, assessment, enrolment, case planning, care implementation/interventions, monitoring and evaluation, and case closure.

Senior Novices Register big numbers in 2024



In a group photo are 151 Senior Novices in front of the Administration Block of St. Mbaga Major Seminary, Ggaba, after the opening Mass presided over by Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, CSSp, the Vice president of ARU.

Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, MSMMC

The Association of Religious in Uganda – ARU, this year has the privilege of celebrating the most Holy Trinity Sunday in a unique way by hosting 151 Novices for their annual national course. ARU hosts the Novices and the Junior Consecrated Persons at St. Mbaga Major Seminary, Ggaba. This is the highest number recorded in the last five years after 2019, when over 160 were registered. This is the maiden increase since the lockdown of COVID 19.

Mother Speranza Namusisi, IHMR, who doubles as the president of the Association of Religious in Uganda, welcomed all the Novices on behalf of the Superiors / ARU Fraternity. She told them about the importance of time to bond. "This is the time for bonding,

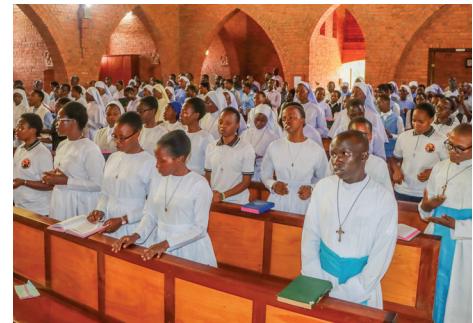
become one in Christ because divided we fall and united we stand. The lived experience as brothers and sisters at ARU calls us to live in unity. ARU has provided for us the necessary platform. Discernment is key as you go forward. You need not regret what God is doing for us through you," the president advised.

In addition to his eloquent and challenging homily, Fr. John Bosco Kamoga, CSSp, he emphasised the importance of living unity in diversity. "Look at different colors of flowers in a vessel, their beauty is in their diversity or it becomes monotonous with a single color! Live by ARU's motto; No longer strangers but Friends. It is important to grow. "Don't be big babies by doing the right things because somebody is seeing you. Be responsible, self-motivated and self-driven persons who are in charge. Formation is about becoming a good person so that you can fit anywhere!"

On her part, Sr. Lydia Apili Bwor, LSMIG, the Secretary General ARU, equated the candidates (Novices) to Moses who was called to deliver the Israelites from their slavery in Egypt. She also urged the participants to live in communion and strive to encounter God through prayer, the word of God, Holy Eucharist, creation, silence praise and worship. She also stressed the importance of diversity as seen by living with friends who come from different institutes. She assured them of being guided by various experts especially psychological counsellors. And would be helped to overcome the challenges of social media, addiction, abuse of freedom, money /wealth, negative cultural influence, LGBTQ+...

Sr. Pauline Namuddu, LSOSF, the Coordinator, Formation Ministry of Religious in Uganda – FoMRU called for unity among the Novices.

"Be united in all except in wrong-doing. A single rotten tomato spoils the basket. Portray the best of you and your institutes. Help each other grow closer to God. Do not seek to please the formators but God!"



Continued to pg 12

According to Bro. Cleophas Kyomuhendo, CSC, Coordinator of Formation Committee, the Novices this year would be guided by the theme; "The identity of a consecrated person in the changing world." He informed the Novices that, some of the topics to be handled would among others include; integration of cultural values and addiction and he also reminded the formees about the motto of ARU: "No longer Strangers but Friends."

The Senior Novices course runs from May 25-June 21, 2024. The seven male institutes in attendance include: Brothers of St. Charles Lwanga (Banakaroli Brothers), Brothers of St. Joseph the worker, St. Amans Community, Brothers of St. Martin De Porres, The Opera Family of Brothers, The Holy Cross Brothers, and Brothers of Christian Instruction. In total they had 48 Novices.

While the 17 institutes of Consecrated Women and Apostolic Societies included; Daughters of Mary (Bwanda), The Canocian Sisters, Cistercians, Comboni Missionary Sisters, Daughters of Charity, Daughters of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, Little Sisters of St. Francis, Mantalate Sisters, Missionary Sisters of Mary Mother of the Church, Sisters of Mary of Kakamega, Opera Family of Sisters, Our Lady of Good Counsel, Good Samaritan Sisters, Sacred Heart Sisters-Moyo, Holy Family Sisters, Sisters of the Presentation, Little sisters of Mary Immaculate – Gulu, Sisters of St. Joseph of Tarbes, with a total of 103 female Novices. With a sum total of 151 Novices.



A group of Novices from the institute of St. Joseph of Tarbes on the opening day of the Annual National Course at St. Mbaaga National Major Seminary-Ggaba, Uganda. Photo by ARU.



The Holy Bible is being elevated by the main celebrant after delivery by the liturgical dancers in a procession.



In picture are Novices from the Institute of the Brothers of St. Martin De Porres on the opening day of the Annual Course for the Senior Novices at St. Mbaaga National Major Seminary, Ggaba - Uganda. Photo by ARU.



The Presider delivering the homily during the official opening Mass.

The Sisters Counsellors' Hub Secures New Office Premises



Program Officer, AAC:SS, Sr. Eneles Chimbali (centre) with the Coordinator, Sr. Editrudis, the counseling Team and ARU Administration and Program Staff during the opening ceremony at the new premises.

By ARU Reporter

Religious Sisters Counsellors' Network Initiative, a program under All Africa Conference Sister to Sister (AAC:SS) has secured a new location. The Counseling Hub which works in collaboration with the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), was previously hosted at Uganda Spiritual Formation Center, Namugongo (USFCN). For reasons of convenience, has now been relocated to Nsambya-Lukuli (Makindye) in Kampala city suburb, near Rainbow International School.

The new premises were opened and blessed on April 5, 2024, by Fr. Nicholas Kiruma. The blessing ceremony was attended by sisters from ARU and the Senior Program officer of AAC:SS, Sr. Eneles Chimbali from Malawi. In his remarks, Fr. Nicholas appreciated the initiative and as one of the

professionals in counselling psychology, he encouraged attendees to use the services. "I will happily offer my time to serve whenever a need arises."

The Coordinator of the Counselling Hub, Sr. Editrudis Kajuna, OLGC, welcomed the guests present and took them through an overview of the activities that are being carried out. She told attendees that the Network brings together professionally trained Sisters in Psychological Counselling from Malawi, Uganda and Zambia. Sisters must be diploma holders and above and have to be legally recognized by the Counselling Association in their respective Countries.

"Sisters Counsellors' Network Initiative is there to give support and counsel as they handle and address mental health issues to all people regardless of their status,"

Sr. Editrudis remarked. She encouraged the attendants to make use of the services of the Hub and bring more people to benefit from the services.

The Counselling Hub offers various services that are meant to better humanity in mental Health. They include among others; individual and group counselling, family counselling, child and youth counselling, life improvement sessions, mental wellness, professional growth seminars and workshops of different topics, transitional psychotherapy, depression and stress management, terminal illness counselling, consultancy and many more. "Reach out to us for more information and services. Do not hesitate!!!" Sr. Editrudis advised.



Fr. Nicholas (right) blessing the new venue ahead of activity take off.



The commencing of inauguration and blessing ceremony at the new venue. Photos by ARU



Fr. Nicholas giving the final blessings after the inauguration and blessing ceremony of the new premises of the Counsling Hub. Photo by ARU.



The Coordinator Sr Editrudis (left) and Team of the Counseling Hub appreciate Fr. Nicholas Kiruma for the blessing and innaugural ceremony at the new premises of the Counseling Hub. Photo by ARU.

The Administrative Secretary, Sr. Esther Nangobi on behalf of the Secretary General of ARU, appreciated the efforts and extended special gratitude to the donors for the sacrifices made to ensure the success of securing new office premises for the Counselling Hub.

“We are particularly grateful to our donors whose generosity made today’s celebration possible in the opening of this Counselling Hub. We thank you for your support that has enabled us to continue our mission of bringing counselling services nearer to our brothers and sisters both religious and the laity,” She added, “Today we celebrate a significant milestone for our Association of Counselors. It is with great joy and gratitude that we gather to recognize the dedication and generosity of all those who are involved in making this Counselling Hub come to a realization.” Sr. Esther remarked.

“I appreciate the unwavering support and commitment of all sisters to the mission of Christ and thank Sr. Eneless Chimbali, Senior Program Officer, AAC: SS, and team in the pearl of Africa, Uganda for thinking of the wellness of all especially the Sisters; by bringing the counseling Hub that will assist many people. The sisters’ dedication to serve the community is indeed recommendable and appreciated.” Sr. Esther cherished.

According to Sr. Esther, the counselling hub facility will portray remarkable difference in the lives of the people it will serve. “We are deeply thankful for your continued partnership.” She concluded.

Also in attendance was, Sr. Euphrasia Musika, Director, Catholic Care for Children in Uganda. She commended the donors for the great initiative of funding the Counselling Hub and for relocating the premises to an independent destination.

“The premises is indeed conducive for counselling services. It is spacious and situated away from noise which allows room for privacy of those who go to seek counselling services.” Sr. Euphrasia observed.

“We are very privileged to have a Counselling Hub belonging to the religious with its staff as sisters themselves who are professional counsellors. This builds more confidence in the patients since they are rest assured of confidentiality,” Sr. Euphrasia added.

The Religious Sisters Counsellors’ Network Initiative which is a model Counselling Hub in Uganda was established in January 2023 by All Africa Conference: Sister to Sister (AAC:SS) in collaboration with ARU tailored to serving both the religious and lay people.

**Be swift to hear,
Slow to speak.**

Uganda's Eco Brixs responds to the cry of the poor and of the earth



Fr. James Ssendege, Co-founder (middle in white shirt) and CEO Bownds Andrew of Eco Brixs - Masaka Diocese in photo with a Team from ARU Secretariat, after a guided tour of the premises. With a lorry of plastics being off loaded at the background.

ARU Reporter

The Planet Earth this year commemorated the 54th Earth Day on April 22, 2024, a time when temperatures are breaking records year by year and pollution is at its pick levels. On this day, people around the world organize campaigns and make commitments to improve the planet's health.

Earth Day 2024 is commemorated under the theme "Planet Vs Plastics" which aims to increase public awareness of the detrimental effects that plastic pollution has on both human and environmental health, according to NDTV.

This year's theme tallies well with the plastic recycling plant of Eco Brixs of Masaka Diocese - Uganda. The initiative of Fr. James Ssendege and his friend Andrew Bownds, CEO of

building a zero waste community takes root as 44 communities are in plastic recycling business since 2016. The recycling plant has recycled 982 tons of plastics, with 41,232,013 plastic bottles recycled and 3,000 people who receive income through plastic recycling process.

In the recycling process, the plastic-flakes are smelted into molds to design different products like boats, "hard wood" for construction and goal posts, flower pots, picnic tables, chairs etc. The initiative is good news to the vulnerable communities who receive cash on delivery! The business simultaneously solves the unemployment problems as it addresses the overdue problem of plastic pollution, by rendering the cities and drainages free from plastic pollution. Thus, listening and responding to the cry of

the earth as it responds to the cry of the poor by employing them.

Ugandans have invested in their appropriate technological skills by fabricating a molding machine which takes three minutes to finish the process. Unlike the previously imported one that takes 3 hours. Hence, the fabricated Ugandan made is 2 hrs and 57 minutes faster than the imported version! Fr. James calls upon Ugandans to roll out the recycling industry to different parts of the country to keep Uganda free from plastic pollution.

According to NDTV report, the theme was selected with the historic UN plastics convention in mind, which is anticipated to be adopted by the end of 2024. The UK is one of the more than 50 nations that have demanded that plastic pollution be ended by 2040.

Historically, Earth Day is celebrated on April 22 every year. The day is also known as International Mother Earth Day. The purpose of the day is to raise awareness about various issues that threaten the environment and endanger the planet, such as the rapidly rising levels of pollution, deforestation, and global warming.

Countries and organizations from all around the world unite to promote awareness of the critical need to preserve the environment through different platforms.

AMECEA and CCC fraternity in Child Care and Re-integration in Eastern Africa attracts a visit to Uganda



In group photo are members of AMECEA, CCCK and CCCU fraternity in Child care and re-integration, during Uganda visit hosted by St. Philomena CCI, Iganga, Diocese of Jinja after the stakeholders meeting.

By: Caroline Nansukusa Ssekakije- ARU-CCCU-CMO

In a strategic move to enhance child care and re-integration efforts across Eastern Africa, the Comprehensive Catholic Care for Children fraternity (CCCs - CCCU, CCCK, CCCZ, CCCM) chose to partner with the Association of Member Episcopal Conference in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) Social Communication Department.

This partnership aims at ensuring that vulnerable children benefit from family-based care, receiving holistic support from family, community, and religious leaders. The collaboration began in Malawi in February 2024 and has now progressed to Uganda, where significant meetings and field visits from March 17-23, 2024, highlighted the importance of pastoral support in child re-integration.

Msgr. John Baptist Kauta expressed profound gratitude for the collaboration, emphasizing its timely intervention in addressing pastoral challenges related to families and pledging to strengthen ties through the Uganda Episcopal Conference.

The visit to Uganda was marked by engagements with key stakeholders, including Msgr. John Baptist Kauta, Rev. Fr. Fredrick Tusingire, and Bishop Martin Wamika, among others. Discussions underscored the necessity of transitioning children from institutional care to family-based settings, with strong pastoral support to ensure their well-being.

Fr. Fredrick Tusingire highlighted the importance of these conversations, stating, "The conference favours conversations about children in families, safeguarding, and parenting.

Msgr. Kauta further emphasized the importance of involving bishops in these initiatives, noting, "As we return them home, we need to do it rightly, ensuring enough preparations on the ground." A highlight of the engagement was the emotional reunion of a child, Aron, with his extended family, symbolizing the triumph of family bonds over institutional care. This event, accompanied by a communal Eucharistic service where Aron received his first Holy Communion, showcased the profound benefits of reintegrating children into family settings.

Sr. Genevieve D'Silver of the ARU Executive Committee likened the initiative to the divine care Jesus received from Mother Mary and St. Joseph, saying that "Taking children back to families is divine because the Savior too grew up in a family." The visit concluded with a committal message from the Bishop of Jinja Diocese, Bishop Charles Wamika who encouraged ongoing support and improvements in child care practices across the region, emphasizing the critical role of religious and community leaders in ensuring the well-being of the next generation. Bishop Wamika, further borrowed from a proverb that said "It takes a village to raise a child." Hence, the need for collective action and communal solidarity. In this way, the journey will represent a transformative power of embracing family values and communal participation in nurturing the next generation.

20 Prospective Foster Parents in Mbale City equipped for Family-Based Care



Participants and Facilitators pose for a group photo during training on Initiative to promote Family -based care in Mbale city in May, 2024.
Courtesy Photo.

By Caroline Nansukusa Ssebakijje (Mrs) - ARU-CCCU-CMO

In response to the pressing need for better care for vulnerable children, the Government of Uganda, through the Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development, identified numerous children living in inadequate conditions both in families and children's homes.

To address this, the Uganda Family Care for Children project, supported by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and the Association of the Religious in Uganda (ARU), launched an initiative to promote family-based foster care as a preferable alternative for institutionalization from May 20 - 24, 2024 in Mbale.

A transformative training session at Shine-On Hotel in Mbale City saw 20 prospective foster parents

immediately grasping the essentials of foster care parenting practices led by dedicated trainers; Mrs. Sarah Kalenda (PSWO-Mbale Industrial Division), Ms. Hajira Nalukwago (PSWO-Mbale Northern Division), and Mrs. Caroline Nansukusa Ssebakijje (ARU-CCCU-CMO), the training provided participants with the knowledge and skills to offer family-based care for vulnerable children in a foster care arrangement, marking a significant shift from institutional placements.

The comprehensive training covered crucial topics using a structured curriculum from the Foster Parents' Training Manual in Uganda. Modules included among others; introduction to foster care, preparation for first placement, safe care and positive parenting and teamwork among caregivers.

Engaging methods such as lectures, group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and plenary ensured active learning. Pre- and post-training assessments revealed significant improvements in participants' understanding, highlighting the training's effectiveness. Participants were not only educated but also inspired to take practical steps in their fostering journey.

By the end of the training, participants had developed a profound understanding of foster care principles, children's rights, and the responsibilities of foster parents. Equipped with practical skills and a clear action plan for future activities, participants left with a strong sense of community service and commitment to enhancing family-based care in Uganda.

The training's success marks a pivotal step in the country's efforts to protect and nurture vulnerable children, setting the stage for a brighter future.



Mrs. Caroline Nansukusa, taking the participants through some of the sessions during the training in Mbale.

SPOON Project enhancing Nutrition and Feeding for Children with Disabilities in CCIs



One of the master trainers of ARU-CCCU-Nutrition during a training session about improving nutrition and feeding practices for children with disabilities and those in alternative care. Courtesy photo from CCCU CM.

By: The ARU-CCCU-Nutrition Master Trainers

As the year-2024 dawned, the Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU) and Catholic Care for Children in Uganda (CCCU) have made significant strides in the third phase of the SPOON project. This initiative focuses on improving nutrition and feeding practices for children with disabilities and those in alternative care. Thus, aiming to enhance their overall health and well-being by ensuring they grow up in a nurturing environments that cater to their unique needs.

This phase has further expanded its reach by on-boarding five new Child Care Institutions (CCIs), expanding the project's reach and impact across Uganda.

These CCIs include; Holy Innocents Lira Babies Home, Nsambya Babies Home, St. Ursula Special School for Mentally Challenged-Jinja, Missionaries of Charity Babies Home-Moroto and Choose Life Home Based Care-Moroto. The addition of these CCIs is crucial for expanding CCCUs' impact and addressing the unique challenges faced by these institutions in providing adequate nutrition and care for children with disabilities.

The process was embarked on by ARU-CCCU-SPOON-Master Trainers (MTs), who kicked off with a comprehensive needs assessment and identifying the specific requirements of each childcare institution/program.

They then underwent various onsite training sessions,

building on the foundation of a centralized nutrition training program conducted last year, 2023. The selection process was rigorous, adhering to predefined criteria to ensure that institutions most capable of benefiting from and contributing to the project's goals were included.

They have successfully completed the onsite growth training and are now preparing for the onsite anaemia training. These sessions are designed to reinforce the knowledge gained during the centralized training and address institution-specific challenges. The onsite training focuses on practical applications, ensuring that the concepts learned are effectively integrated into daily practices.

In addition to the new training sessions, the master trainers are also monitoring the progress of the original 12 CCIs. This monitoring ensures that the training's impact is sustained and that any emerging issues are promptly addressed. Through these combined efforts, the SPOON project continues to make a significant difference in the lives of children with disabilities, ensuring they receive the nutrition and care they need to thrive.



Perception of Artificial Intelligence (AI), its inevitable bearing on the Believers



By Sam Bernard Gumisiriza

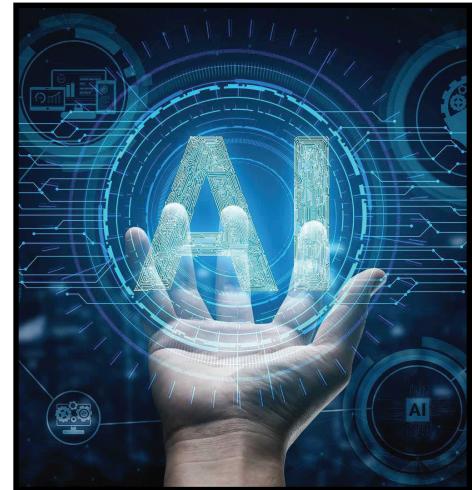
MME (UMI), MIT (NU), BIT (MUST), BA (SPS) MAK, DIU (ITC), ICT MANAGER, M&E OFFICER, ARU- CCCU.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not just transforming industries like healthcare, finance, and education, but it is reshaping the very fabric of our society. At its heart, AI is about crafting computer systems capable of human-like tasks: seeing, speaking, deciding, and translating. This technological flow has kindled a burning debate about its ethical, philosophical, and societal consequences.

Some examples of AIs and what they offer: Several AI technologies play vital roles across various domains: ChatGPT by OpenAI serves as a versatile language model useful in

customer service, content creation, and education. IBM Watson provides tools for natural language processing, machine learning, and data analysis for business decision-making. Google Assistant offers voice-activated assistance within its ecosystem, aiding in tasks like setting reminders and controlling smart home devices, while Amazon Alexa focuses on voice-controlled tasks such as playing music and online shopping, with a wide array of third-party skills. Tesla Autopilot enhances driving safety and convenience with its semi-autonomous driving features, including lane-keeping and adaptive cruise control.

Siri by Apple offers voice-activated assistance across Apple devices, including sending messages and providing weather updates. DeepMind's AlphaFold advances biological and medical research by predicting protein structures to aid drug discovery and disease understanding, while Cortana by Microsoft serves as a virtual assistant integrated with Microsoft's productivity tools. H2O.ai is an open-source platform used for building machine learning models, particularly in fraud detection, risk management, and customer segmentation, whereas Replika provides personalized mental health support through AI-driven conversations, aiming to reduce stress and loneliness. The list is endless and many more are being invented each new day.



Courtesy internet picture demonstrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) softwhere system.

Ethical and Theological Reflections on AI: AI raises several ethical concerns that society must address. It's crucial to ensure AI systems do not undermine human autonomy by making critical decisions without oversight. Accountability must be established for harm or errors caused by AI, involving developers, users, and organizations. Addressing bias is important since AI often learns from biased historical data. Privacy concerns involve protecting personal data from breaches and ensuring informed consent.

AI's impact on employment is significant as it can automate jobs, displacing workers and necessitating re-skilling. Ensuring AI safety and reliability requires systems to operate safely in unpredictable conditions.

Story continued to pg 20

Human-AI interaction should focus on human-centric design to enhance capabilities and foster positive interactions. Building trust in AI requires users to understand its capabilities and limitations.

Theologically, AI challenges ideas of human uniqueness and divine creativity, prompting reflections on ethical creation and responsible technology management. AI's impact on community and relationships requires examining its effects on interactions and promoting justice. Free will and determinism are also areas for reflection, exploring AI's influence on human agency.

Ethically, the use of AI should focus on the common good, thus, addressing issues like healthcare, education, and poverty. Integrating theological moral frameworks with AI ethics can guide its development in line with spiritual values so as to avoid creating conflicting gap between faith and AI. Questions about AI consciousness and its impact on understandings of life, meaning, and purpose are important. Thus, addressing these issues requires interdisciplinary dialogue among ethicists, theologians, technologists, and policymakers. A holistic approach that considers technical, ethical, and theological dimensions is essential for AI development. Proactive engagement with AI technologies is necessary to align their development with ethical and theological principles.

Better be the head of a dog than the tail of lion.

AI in Sacred Spaces - Transforming Religious Practices: Despite the ethical and theological challenges, AI also presents opportunities for enhancing religious practices. For example, AI-driven applications can assist in translating religious texts, making them more accessible to a global audience. Virtual assistants and chatbots powered by AI can provide answers to faith-related questions, offer spiritual guidance, and facilitate religious education.

In some places of worship, AI is being used to create immersive and interactive experiences. For instance, virtual reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) technologies can transport worshippers to significant religious sites or recreate historical religious events, offering new ways to experience faith... Where do we go from here??...

Future Perspectives: Looking ahead, the relationship between AI and the Religious Community will likely continue to evolve. As AI technology advances, religious leaders and scholars will play a crucial role in shaping the discourse around its ethical use and integration into spiritual life.

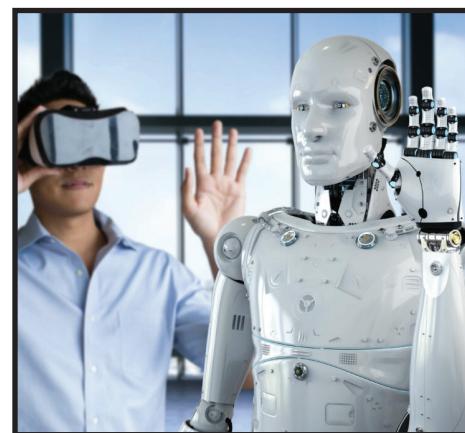
Interfaith dialogues may emerge to address common concerns and share insights on managing AI's impact on faith and practice. . Moreover, there is potential for AI to contribute positively to interfaith understanding and cooperation.

Diseases of the soul are more dangerous than those of the body.

AI algorithms can analyze and highlight commonalities between different religious texts and traditions, fostering a greater sense of unity and shared purpose among diverse faith communities.

What next? The relationship between AI and religion is a complex one, offering both opportunities and challenges. While AI holds promise in enhancing religious practices, preserving sacred texts, and fostering interfaith understanding, it also raises significant ethical and theological questions that demand careful consideration. As AI continues to evolve, it's crucial for religious leaders, scholars, and believers to engage with these technologies thoughtfully and ethically, ensuring they align with the core values of compassion, justice, and truth found in all religious traditions.

Let us embark on this journey of collaboration and exploration, ensuring that our integration of AI into Religious practices and life in general aligns with the timeless values of compassion, justice, and truth, fostering a world of understanding and harmony. This call us to discernment constantly, while taking into consideration the dynamics of life and evolving technology.



Pictorial Highlights of the Major Events



The June 2024 general assembly of the major superiors in session at ARU Secretariat.



AMECEA and ACWECA in session during the workshop on best practices caused by the Synod on synodality.



Novices pose for a group photo after the completion of the Canonical Norms at St. Mbaaga's Seminary.



Some of ARU's Executive and Administration members in a group photo to bid farewell to Mother Grace.



A group photo of some stakeholders and the AMECEA, CCCK and CCCU members in Jinja.



AMECEA, CCCK and CCCU members in a memorial photo with Bishop Charles Wamika of Jinja Diocese.



Sr. Eneles (right) and Sr. Josephine sharing a light moment shortly after the blessing of the new Hub premises.



ARU administrative staff visit Eco Brix site in response to the cry of the earth 2024.