



The Prophetic Witness

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The Prelate and a congregation of Consecrated Persons inside Munyonyo Martyrs Shrine listening to a talk by Fr. Hillary Munyaneza about the witness of Uganda Martyrs. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By Sr. Specioza Kabahuma, DST

The Fiscal Agents will work together with the representative offices at the Ecclesiastical level and/or the activities will be replicated to the Diocesan level. All the activities will be implemented using the already existing structures used by ARU itself.

ii. The project will mainly target the Religious Institutes to be identified and recruited to participate in the project.

iii. The project implementation will be done through a recruiting approach, where mobilization and practical workshops from which, selected Religious Institutes will be equipped with information about human trafficking and

its manifestations in the communities they serve within Uganda.

iv. Religious Institutes from the four Ecclesiastical provinces will directly benefit from the funding. Indirectly about 97 religious institutes will benefit their many communities they serve through the information that will be shared through the platforms ARU uses to reach its members. The same information will be replicated to the many institutions and local communities that religious institutes serve in many parts of Uganda and beyond.

v. The major goal of the network is to have religious institute's members of ARU share synergies in combating the crime of human trafficking in Uganda.

2. CATHOLIC SISTERS COMMUNICATORS NETWORK

1) Introduction: Excellence in communications brings to the public notice all contributions sisters make in evangelization. It is an indispensable ingredient to developing effective partnerships with other organizations. To attain this, the catholic sisters communicators, under the umbrella of the Association of Religious in Uganda, (ARU), in their quest to improve communication will undertake the following activities;

2) Activities/Objectives of the network

a) Conduct an assessment of communication needs and gaps in sisters communication about their work/ministries and provide recommendations on strategies to address the said challenges. This will enable the Catholic Sisters Communicators to share information about their activities and commitment of sisters to the public fora. The assessment shall assist the network to establish communications activities that aim to reach the grassroots and mainstream media and raise the profile of sisters in Uganda and beyond.

To be continued in the next issue.

The Editorial



**Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru,
MSMMC**

Dear Reader,

Welcome to this first issue of the year 2024. As the year unfolds with great and special blessings from above, let us keep reflecting on the key themes in this issue.

The Day of the consecrated life this year manifested extraordinary response from the religious when group photos were hardly taken due to the overwhelming crowd! The official group photo was limited to the clergy and representatives of the religious.

The call to witness with the Uganda Martyrs, like melodious music, saturated the airwaves of Munyonyo and the entire Basilica of Munyonyo Martyrs' Shrine. This reminds me of how Pope Francis also challenged the team of ongoing formation: "Let us keep in mind the words of Saint Paul VI: we need to be witnesses before being teachers (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41), witnesses to the love of God, the only thing that truly matters.

When some-one is unable to be a witness, it is truly sad." Indeed failure to be a witness is sad since one would not enjoy authentic religious life, why? Allurements of the world may lead one to settle

in a mask, while failing to live an authentic religious life. Thus, bringing to fulfillment what Jesus forewarned, Mt. 7:15, "Beware of the false prophets, [teachers] who come to you dressed as sheep [appearing gentle and innocent], but inwardly are ravenous wolves.

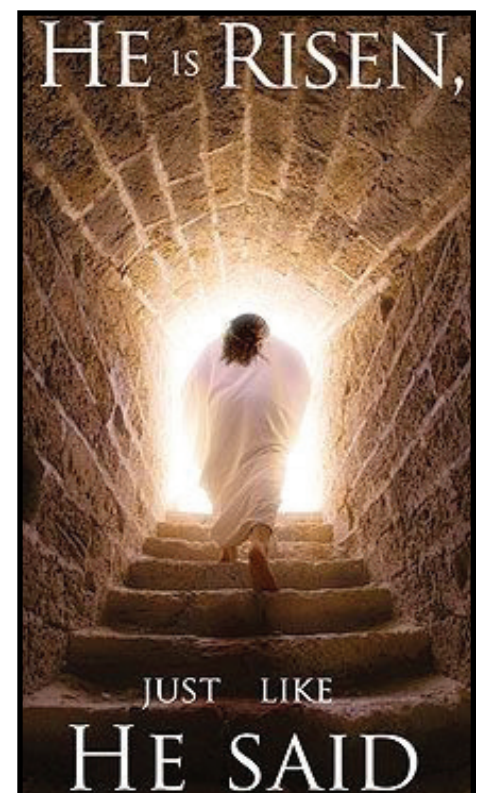
Unfortunately, this is the order of the day today! Many run away from the challenges of being witnesses to simply wearing the 11 personality masks for safety! As Jenna Fletcher puts it; A personality mask allows those who wear them to hide their real self from others.

While masks can serve as a barrier of protection for your self-esteem and hurt, they can also lead to: stress, anxiety, depression and exhaustion. Yet Personality masks are often a self-defense mechanism. They help protect you from hurt due to societal rejection, abusers, or bullies. But one would accomplish nothing! It is up to individuals to decide to witness to the truth in truth or not.

This reflection can usher the consecrated persons to discern on how best they can choose to celebrate their Jubilee Year in 2025!

This calls upon the Consecrated Persons to identify the portals for reconciliation, by identifying the dire need for national reconciliation in each country. Besides reconciliation exercise, there are several areas of interventions for the consecrated persons to undertake; be it political, socio-economic, vulnerable poor, environmental justice and the like. The choice is yours!

May the Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ render all people-humanity worthy witnesses in His vineyard, Amen



Consecrated Persons in large numbers, on February 2, at Munyonyo



In shot is a cross section of the Clergy and Consecrated Persons inside Munyonyo Martyrs Basilica on the day in Consecrated life listening keenly about a talk about the Uganda Martyrs by Fr. Hillary Munyaneza. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, MSMMC

Much as the World Day for Consecrated Life this year fell on Thursday, a working day, Archdiocese of Kampala opted to celebrate it on the D-day at Munyonyo Holy Martyrs Shrine, at the Basilica of St. Andrew Kaggwa. This day attracted overwhelmingly greater numbers of the Consecrated Persons than ever! Over 400 of them were registered, but we believe others did not register.

The event which was presided over by His Grace Paul Ssemwogerere, the Archbishop of Kampala, kicked off with an input about the Uganda Martyrs whose Diamond Jubilee (60 Years) is celebrated this year, 2024. Guided by the theme, *Uganda Martyrs and the Religious: A life of witness*, Fr. Hilary R. Munyaneza, of St. Mbaaga's Major Seminary – Ggaba delivered the talk about the Holy Martyrs of Uganda.

The basic text that guided the theme was, “You will be my witnesses,” (Acts 1:8).

“Welcome to Munyonyo: the starting point of the Uganda Martyrs’ journey to the climax of witnessing to Christ. A moment of gratitude to God for the gift of the Martyrs: the first believers of our land. A moment of gratitude to God for the vocation of each and every one of us: God called us in various ways, from various places, to various Institutes of Consecrated Life. Above all, we give gratitude to God for the gift of the consecrated life in the life and apostolate of the Church, Fr. Hilary emphasized.

“Witness is about Jesus Christ and the apostles. He informs them that they would be His witnesses: after having

been with Him and learnt from Him, they are now to take the same message to others. Jesus called the Apostles to be with Him and to go out and preach (Mark 3:13-14). Witnessing takes place after the Ascension: share with others your personal and religious experience of God. How many young people have you encouraged to embrace the religious or priestly life?

Quoting the Roman saying: “Nobody can give what he does not have.” Again citing Msgr. Timoteo Ssemwogerere who said, share with others what you have received in the Holy Mass. The extent of witness: starting from Jerusalem but not ending in Jerusalem because the entire world is the mission field in need of witness,” Fr. Hilary added.

According to Fr. Hilary, the Diamond Jubilee of Uganda Martyrs helps Consecrated Persons to renew, strengthen conviction, live the vows and become more committed to Christ.



Fr. Hillary Munyaneza on the day of Consecrated persons demonstrating how unity is source of strength, with unbreakable bundle of sticks. Photo by ARU

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He also reminded the Consecrated Persons who are the signs of the future age, to be focused towards a universal goal where Uganda Martyrs and all other Saints are, in the paradise. He also illustrated the power of unity by easily breaking a tender and single cassava stock into pieces while a bundle of sticks failed to break. The moral meaning of the drama was, unity is strength.

In the homily, His Grace Paul Ssemwogerere urged the Consecrated Persons to be attentive because the world is focusing on them. "We the witnesses should know the Lord and act like the first missionaries, the bearers of the light of Christ, and compassion which unfolded with encounter of Simeone and Anne in Jerusalem, (Lk 2:32)."



His Grace Paul Ssemwogerere presiding over Mass on the day of Consecrated persons at Munyonyo Martyrs shrine 2024.
Photo by ARU Reporter.

The Prelate further noted that, the Consecrated Persons should present to the Lord a light to enlighten the gentiles and prophesy the light of the world to all. The blessed and lighted candles symbolize Jesus, the light of the world. And the consecrated men and women are sent out to witness Christ - the light of the world.



A cross-section of Consecrated Persons attending Mass at Munyonyo Martyrs Shrine on the day of Consecrated life,
Photo by ARU Reporter.

"Be true evangelizers, discern God's action vs the spirit of the world, which seem to be greater and mightier than the Spirit of God and many are tempted to embrace it! Let us love and be courageous and may God keep and reserve us like Mary and Joseph. Let us offer ourselves with Jesus to embrace the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience and renew our consecration and use the vision for the future, in fatigue and illness let us emulate Anna who persevered in prayer and bear the testimony of enduring truth with Uganda Martyrs."

Blessing of Mother Kevin Gardens

After Mass, the celebrants and participants were invited to bless Mother Kevin Gardens. History has it that, the main Port was Munyonyo when Mother Kevin landed on February 15, 1903, near Kabaka's Palace. The garden is designed in commemoration of her arrival after the Missionaries of Africa.

Msgr. Richard Nnyombi, the Episcopal Vicar for Religious in Kampala



Consecrated persons from different congregations with lit candles in procession at the entrance of Munyonyo Martyrs Shrine.
Photo by ARU Reporter.

Archdiocese told participants to make use of the occasion of preparation to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Uganda Martyrs and pray through their intercession. He reminded the members about the Jubilee of consecrated life, due to take place next year, 2025. Msgr. Richard Nnyombi informed the congregation about the new Leadership Team of ARU - Kampala Branch led by Sr. Immaculate Nakato, IMR.

Sr. Lydia Apili Bwor the Secretary General ARU, further added her voice during the event. Basing on the letter for the Jubilee Year of consecrated life that, the climax of the jubilee year of the Consecrated Life would be held on October 8-9, 2025 in Rome. It is designed to be the year of reconciliation, conversion and sacrament of penance. Among others, it will add hope and peace, to the three paradigms: Commitment to the last; listening to the cry of the poor, Care and custody of creation; protection of the environment, Universal brotherhood and solidarity.

THE FOCOLARE COMMUNITY SPEAR-HEAD CHRISTIAN UNITY PRAYERS 2024



The Religious together with the Focolare Community that spearheaded this year's prayer for Christian Unity pose for a group photo at Mariapolis Mbuya Focolare Community where it was concluded. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By ARU Reporter

The Focolare movement in collaboration with the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC) organized celebrations to commemorate the week-long of prayer for Christian Unity-2024 which is held annually according to the Church tradition from January 18 - 25. The official celebrations were held at Mariapolis, Mbuya.

During the opening of the week of prayer for unity at the Secretariat of the Association of Religious in Uganda, (ARU), Msgr. John Baptist Kauta in his remarks said that during this week of prayer for Christian Unity, we are reflecting on the prayer of Jesus Himself that we may be one.

According to Msgr. Kauta, a week of prayer for unity is a reminder that there is some

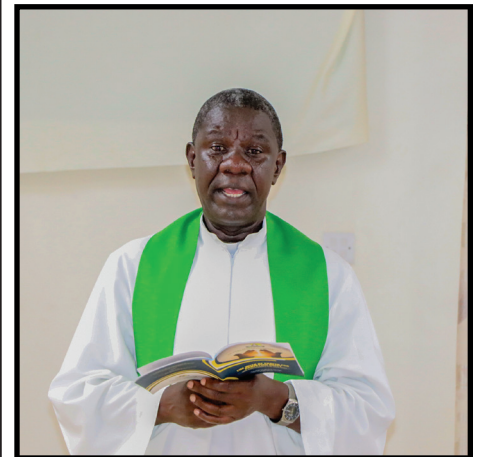
value somewhere and with some misunderstanding somewhere. He said, there is need for more dialogue and say to one another, let us understand and forgive though it is hard to understand and forgive and that is the purpose of the whole thing.

"So let me hope that as we pray for one another and as we pray for unity, let us all be bound by only one thing; theme of love irrespective of colour. Biasness disappears in time of need and in Heaven there will be no religion but we shall all go to God who admits all people." Msgr. Kauta emphasized.

The prayer for Christian unity, which will continue till the end of the year is guided by the theme: "you shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbour as yourself (Luke 10:27). This theme will be used by all Christian believers to pray for unity throughout the year.

Annually, Christian believers converge to pray for Christian Unity as a symbol of mutual respect and understanding of one another. "It is about coming together as believers in Jesus Christ to pray together and give witness to Christ who is our founder." Fr. Vincent Karatunga explained. Fr. Vincent serves at Uganda Episcopal Conference as the Executive Secretary for Inter-religious Dialogue and Ecumenism.

"As Christians, we have a lot to share in common like the bible and our common belief in Jesus Christ. So every Christian denomination is invited in the week of prayer to forget the differences, put them aside, come together and pray for that visible unity which Jesus Christ prayed for, (Cf Jn.17:21)." Fr. Vincent noted.



Fr. Vincent Karatunga share with the Christians about the week of prayer for Christian Unity-2024 at ARU Secretariat during its inauguration. Photo by ARU Reporter.

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Fr. Vincent said, the world today is characterized by division, hatred and violence because people have no respect for one another. People don't understand that we are brothers and sisters in humanity. Christians are called to be neighbors to one another which is the foundation of everything. The reason why Christians pray together is that, at the end of it all, they are brothers and sisters to one another and Jesus Christ is their brother, their Lord and Saviour.

"The sacrifice you did to come and participate in this prayer is for the Lord and for the good of yourself. When we talk of unity, I always ask myself, are we really united? But the most important thing is that let us pray for love and unity," Executive Secretary UJCC, the Orthodox Archimandrite Constantine Mbonabingi remarked.

According to Msgr Richard Nnyombi, Christian Ecumenism in Uganda has its roots dating way back with our fore fathers in faith. Nabulagala is where Pioneer Protestant Missionaries were often welcomed by the Pioneer Catholic Missionaries for cup of tea / coffee or for a meal, on their way to the Kabaka's Palace of Kasubi - Nabulagala or going back to their mission post at Nateete.



Different Religious leaders hold a candle to show unity. Photo by ARU Reporter



Religious leaders freely mix with Christians to illustrate unity during the closing of prayer for Christian Unity 2024 at Mbuya. Photo by ARU Reporter

Traditionally, stories were told in the evening around the "Foyer / Fire Place / Kyoto / Focolare". One of the key stories which have to be told around the "Kyoto of the Uganda Martyrs" is that of their Ecumenical Encounter and living. Missing it out would be an injustice to the 'Story of the Uganda Martyrs' and even more so to God who willed that both Catholics and Protestants die together for the sake of their faith in Jesus Christ!

The late Bishop Adrian Kivumbi Ddungu once wrote these inspiring words: "By accepting to die together, the Uganda martyrs gave a heroic testimony of ecumenism and that, Ecumenism is not an appendix to the teaching of the church, but the essence of Christ's teaching about love", (Jn. 13:34-35, Jn.17:21).

"As we gather here today, at another "Foyer / Focolare": to pray, meditate and reflect on our ecumenical journey; I invite you, dear brothers and sisters, to go with me to the Foyer of our



Participants hold hands as a sign of unity and peace during the conclusion of prayer for Christian Unity 2024 at Mbuya. Photo by ARU Reporter.

Ancestors in the faith: 'The Pioneer Missionaries – Protestants and Catholics - and the Uganda Martyrs'. Let us hear once again their ecumenical story which happened more than 140 years ago," Msgr. Richard appealed to the congregation.

"In the light of the story of the Good Samaritan, (Luke 10: 25-37), the official text for our meditation and reflection for the Week's Prayer for Christian Unity and for the whole year 2024 will hopefully help us re-listen to their story and renew in us the spiritual strength for our ecumenical journey and progress," Msgr Richard proclaimed.

The very first Ecumenical encounter at Lubaga on Sunday 23rd February 1879 between Fr. Simeon Lourdel (Mapeera) and Mr Alexander Mackay, unfortunately ended up in a clash! But, thank God, it was immediately followed by the spirit of reconciliation. It moulded beautiful story of the Good Samaritan!

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This ecumenism of charity was to continue after which prompted Fr. Leo Livinhac, the superior of the Catholic team to pen down: "The charity of the protestant missionaries has saved our lives. Without them we would not have had any quinine for eighteen months and in this country that means death." (Lubaga (Nabulagala) Diary, Friday 26th November 1880).

This ecumenism grew up into an ecumenism of friendship as reflected in the words of Mr O'Flaherty which he wrote about Fr. Livinhac in 1881: "I really like the superior of the White Fathers. He is an intellectual, a gentleman and a very spiritual person. We often walk together and we have very friendly discussions. He and his confreres are often very surprised when I explain to them our fundamental doctrine of an authentic Christianity that is based on the Bible..." (Friday, 27th May 1881).

"Imagine, when the Protestant Missionaries baptised their first converts in 1882, they invited the superior of the Catholic Missionaries, Fr. Leon Livinhac for the occasion!" Fr. Vincent remarked. This ecumenical encounter later on grew into an ecumenical commitment to defend Human Rights, like defending religious freedom when Muteesa wanted to impose Islam as state religion (1881); pleading for the life of Bishop James Hanington and later on pleading for the life of the future martyrs at Munyonyo.

When the Muslim chiefs and army took power in 1888, they imprisoned



Msgr John Baptist Kauta, priests, other Religious leaders, some of the ARU staff and Christians pose for a group photo during the inauguration of prayer for Christian Unity, 2024 at ARU Secretariat. Photo by ARU Reporter.

both the Catholics and Protestant missionaries for five days after which they were expelled from Buganda and on leaving, they used the same boat for Tanganyika! A testimony of the Ecumenism of suffering!

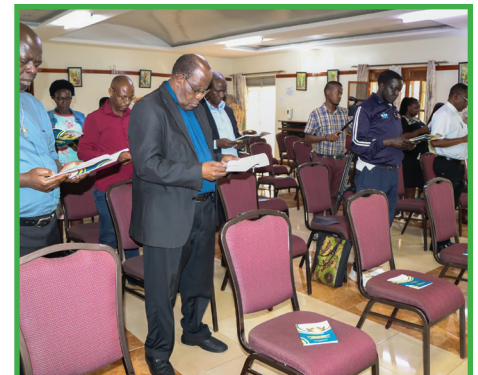
Following in the same footsteps of the Christian ecumenical journey, together with Canon John Israel Mwesigwa, we visited Cardinal Wamala at his residence in Nsambya. Canon Israel had worked with Cardinal Wamala in Kiyinda Mityana in the 1980s. In our Christian history in Uganda, the Protestants and Catholics are like twins: the Protestants are the *Wasswas* and the Catholics are the *Katos*! Let us be inspired by the *Wasswa* and *Kato* of Mityana, in the persons of the late Bishop Yokana Mukasa and Our *Jjajja*, Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala.

Cardinal Wamala remarked this about the Uganda Martyrs and Ecumenism: "We all ought to remember that they walked together as a family from their initial catechetical instructions; they walked together their journey of faith and suffering,

to the very point of death. This heroic witness poses to us a challenge to ponder about our progress with the ecumenical spirit that was initiated and exhibited by the Uganda Martyrs." (Message 3rd June 2018).

The prayer for Christian unity started way back in 1968 and every year, the

church keeps inviting Christians to the week for celebrations.



Religious leaders together with Christians during the opening of prayer for Christian Unity 2024 at ARU.



The Focolare community doing introductions during the closure of prayer for Christian Unity 2024 at Mbuya community Photo by ARU reporter.

CONSECRATED PERSONS COMMEND THE ROLE OF SYNOD ON SYNODALITY

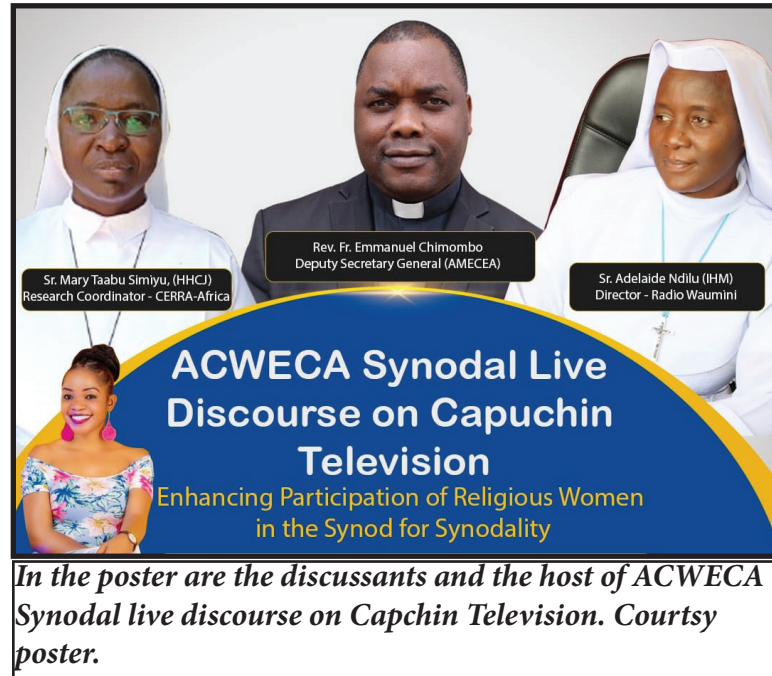
By ARU REPORTER

Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa (ACWECA), a regional body of major superiors have commended the role the Synod on Synodality has played to enhance their participation and amplify their voices since its inception on October 10, 2021 at the Vatican to date.

This was revealed in a televised discourse on Capuchin Television on Tuesday, February 27, 2024 at 15:00 hours EAT. The discourse was held by Sisters Celestine Nasiali, Lina Wanjiko and Fr. Anthony Makunde, AMECEA Secretary General.

ACWECA Regional Coordinator, Sister Celestine Nasiali said that the Synod on Synodality has been a wonderful experience that she has gone through and seen consecrated people building solidarity around it. "I see people listening to one another with strict observance of the three priorities of the Synodal journey; participation, communion, and mission."

Sr. Celestin acknowledges the different styles in the current situation; "There is need to listen to one another. The concern and feeling for one another's presence is visible in dioceses and or our parishes, the rhythm of activities reflects this pace and movement." Sr. Nasiali emphasized that a Christian is more than



willing to share the word of God and lead small Christian community prayers, something that was hard in the past. "Personally, I feel part of the small Christian community," Sr. Celestine added. She also observes that there is general participation in the Church activities than it was in the past. So they are adding value to every person. This indicates that in this participation, the Holy Spirit is calling and welcoming us all.

Citing an example of Sisters Blended Values (SBV) a program that focuses on sustainability and usage of a few available resources, Sr. Celestine disclosed that Sisters are now more open and feel the need to show people how to fish, than fishing for them all the time. Synodality has taught them the spirit of working together and they have the urge to add value to people around them.

if we value and choose 'Lena' to be the president of the school with the right motive, she will perform well. All this is done through listening," Sr. Celestine observed.

Sr. Celestine says that, Synodality is opening doors of the church and avenues for the consecrated persons in Africa. Because they are looking at how they can use the available resources and go extra mile in helping the people and listening to them. There is cordial dialogue between members in the church and Christians nowadays because they share experiences and ideas to reach mutual understanding.

While Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) Secretary General,

"We want to see that while listening to one another, we promote an all-round growth in our schools, open up the process of getting leaders through dialogue, for instance,

Fr. Anthony Makunde, contends that; “personally, looking at how the Synod on Synodality has taken shape from the very beginning when Pope Francis conceived the idea, it has been a gift, particularly to the church in AMECEA region, because it is a call to rethink on the way we do our mission.”

He adds that Synod has been in the church for a number of years, right after the Second Vatican Council. There have been synods, and these are special and consultative forums for the Pope, whereby the bishops from a particular area, if it's a special synod, or from all over the world, if it is an ordinary synod like this one, sit together with the Bishop of Rome.

The Bishops would then discuss, reflect and pray on a particular theme and then come up with propositions which are forwarded to the Pope. At the end of the day, it is the Holy Father himself who comes up with what is called the post-synodal exhortation, explains Fr. Anthony. He further noted that, there has been a unique experience, especially from the national and diocesan points of view as explained by Sr. Celestine, thus, the issue of involving the bigger group of every baptized person is commendable though being debated. In the AMECEA region, thank God for the gift of small Christian communities, the questionnaires were translated into different languages, which are friendly to the local people. They were rightly discussed at the small Christian community level - at the grassroots level, Fr. Anthony noted.

According to Fr. Anthony, it is in the remote areas where you can find people speaking their local language, reading the questions and reflecting. Although they were not able to use the methodology which they use at the national, regional, and the universal level, but at least they were using the normal small Christian community methodology of meditating, reflecting on the questions, and giving their views.

The second session of the universal level will be in October 2024 and already a kind of a shadow has been given, like the opening day, a two-day retreat, followed by the synod itself. What will remain is the spirit of Synodality which this particular synod has brought about; the spirit of journeying together, being together, living together and the spirit of listening to one another.

You have to be listened to, and also listen to others regardless of age, economic power or position. So it's not a one-way traffic like it is in the homily. But this one is a two-way traffic, whereby each member of small Christian communities has a chance of sharing what one thinks according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. And also have the obligation to shut up and open the ears and to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying through others. Thus, the spirit of Synodality.



Pope Francis: Youth are living hope of a Church on the move. Vatican Website.

Meanwhile, ACWECA Regional Director, Sister Lina Wanjiko, Sisters of Emmanuel from Muranga Diocese submits that, “My understanding regarding the Synodal journey is that we are moving together towards a common vision, destiny and purpose. The destiny is not near and we all know that if you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go far, you go together.” Moreover, ACWECA's mission is to empower consecrated women towards deeper evangelization.

Sr. Lina advised Christians to know the word of God as the food for the journey which gives the Christians energy to move together, give hope when potholes and frustrations are found! “But since 2021, we have trained many sisters who are now able to participate in the synodal journey in a professional way through African Sisters Educational Collaborative (ASEC), chiefly supported and funded by Conrad Hilton Foundation to ensure sisters are supported in education.” Sr. Lina revealed.



Vatican holds dialogue with German Bishops about Synodal journey. Vatican website.



The voices of women can help the Church embrace its synodal identity. Vatican website

A New Vicariate for Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross - Uganda



In shot, are the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross - Uganda posing for a group memorial photo with His Grace Paul Ssemogere and Bp. Lawrence Mukasa of kasana-Luweero Diocese on the day of Proffession and the Elevation to a Vicariate at Namugongo. Photo by ARU Reporter

By Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, MSMMC

Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross in Uganda celebrate the Jubilee of elevation of their mission to Vicariate along with the first four Ugandan Sisters. This day of celebration also witnessed the perpetual and first profession of the sisters. The event that took place on February 15, 2024 attracted participants from various parishes of the Archdiocese of Kampala where the sisters serve as well as a representative of the General council, Sr. Sheeja Kolacherril.

His Grace Paul Ssemwogere, who presided over the event appreciated the sisters for bearing true witness among the people they serve. He also reminded the sisters to look to the past with gratitude, while embracing the present moment with joy and passion, and look to the future with hope, citing

the Apostolic Letter of Pope Francis to the Consecrated Persons in the Year of Consecrated Life, 2014.

The prelate recounted the call of Prophet Jeremiah and reminded the congregation about each one's call for a specific mission. "God has entrusted you to touch people with compassion and hope, using instruments of God's love through health service, education and other pastoral outreaches. Further, in Philipians 3, St. Paul shares his journey of faith and regarded the past as nothing having found Jesus. Paul gave all for Christ including his own life and Christians are called to emulate Paul.

The Archbishop further reminded the congregation about the Lenten Message of Pope Francis, "Confront evil of power and materialism. We can easily become attached to money and soon encounter conflict." Basing on Mk.8:34 ff, His Grace

challenged the congregation to deny themselves and follow Jesus by embracing trials, challenges and sacrifices to have courage in the face of adversity, as did Uganda Martyrs who were canonized 60 years ago.

The first four sisters celebrating their Silver Jubilee include; Sr. Maria Sarah Nabaggala, Sr. Mary Margaret Nnassuuna, Sr. Mariedita Kabajungu and Sr. Gertrude Nampeera. These sisters make the Vicariate of Uganda proud, "You kept your promises since the first profession, you have followed the words of the founder; I need sisters who understand the cross, and with them I can accomplish anything."

Motivated and guided by the motto: *The need of the time is the will of God*, the sisters have spread out from Switzerland to the rest of the world. The event attracted a crowd that braved the early morning down pour and the gentle rain that continued through the Holy Eucharistic Celebration.



Another light moment shared by His Grace Paul, Bp. Lawrence and Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross. Photo by ARU reporter.

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The Superior General, Sr. Marie – Marthe Schönenberger, had this to say: “May you be permeated by the mystery of divine love every day, so that you may be able to bring this love closer to the people of your beloved Vicariate. For every person may know that s/he is loved by God, for He loves all his creation. Carry this joyful and hopeful message of divine and compassionate

love to the people in your place of work every day. Sr. Ulrika is close to you...let her words: “Give me a heart like yours, which gives itself for others and is consumed by the purest love,” accompany you.”

Sr. Genevieve D’Silva, the Vicariate Superior gives a hearty congratulations upon the Jubilee of the

Mission of Uganda being elevated to a Vicariate. “This tiny seed of the mission sown on the soil has sprouted, developed and spread in six Dioceses with 74 sisters and 12 formees. We praise and thank the good Lord for his benevolence and faithfulness on each and every member...Thank you sisters for your sacrifice in saying yes..., as you celebrate, count your blessings.”

Pictorial



A pompous procession of Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross during offertory when the mission was being elevated to a Vicariat. Photo by ARU Reporter.



Offertory procession extended, Photo by ARU SReporter.



Sr. Genevieve D’Silva, the Vicariate Superior gives a hearty congratulations upon the Jubilee of the Mission of Uganda being elevated to a Vicariate. Photo by ARU Reporter.



The Four (4) Ugandan Jubilarians renew commitment as Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross were being, elevated to a vicariate. Photo by ARU Reporter.

USFCN Commissions Renewal Course

Participants of 2023



The renewal cohort who graduated in December 2023 at the USFCN pose for a group memorial photo with the Director and other staff members in front of the centre's chapel shortly after Mass. Photo by ARU Reporter

By ARU Reporter

Uganda Spiritual Formation Centre Namugongo (USFCN), an arm of Association of the Religious in Uganda (ARU) commissioned 12 participants who attended the renewal/sabbatical course on December 15, 2023 after a two months and half of successful completion of the course.

The Director, USFCN Sr. Rita Nabukalu, told the prophetic witness that this group joined the program on September 29, 2023 and the official opening was on October 2, 2023 under the theme: *"Blessed are the poor in Spirit, the kingdom of Heaven is theirs"* (Mt. 5:3)."

According to Sr. Rita, the Renewal Stage is intended to help the participants re-read their lived experiences. They are in turn expected to be able to discover the presence of God's love and care without judging themselves. This is done by allowing themselves discov

er God's presence and love to be a grace filled moment to strengthen their spiritual foundation.

The topics covered during the sessions included; Discernment and Prayer, Journaling, Counseling and Stress management, Human Trafficking, Aging Gracefully, Spiritual Accompaniment, Laudato si, Canonical norms and consecrated life, Servant leadership, among others.

Uganda was dominant with 8 participants in the four nationalities; one Zimbabwean, one South Sudanese one Rwandese, one from Cameroon and others from Uganda. "This group was quite special and unique because they were serious and very active in class," Sr. Rita commented. They also used to have their free time especially in the afternoons for relaxation, personal reflection and exercises through sports. "The sharing of their historical back grounds was the foundation of getting to

know each other in order to move together and to build the community while helping one another without judging them," Sr. Rita noted.

The Director added that, one of the priests was so grateful for having started with the 30 days' retreat which now has become a foundation on which he discovered some stumbling blocks. All was about the fact that, spiritual nourishment was reached because of his openness to listen to the Holy Spirit that speaks from within his heart.

Sr. Rita added that the participants were grateful for the two-month stay at Uganda Spiritual Formation Centre. However, some of them proposed the short courses to be for those who cannot afford to stay for 9 months.



The Director USFCN, Sr. Rita Nabukalu gives her congratulatory remarks to the outgoing renewal cohort, Photo by ARU Reporter

Story continued to Pg 13

Participants' experience

Sr. Lillian Mungaa from Cameroon, belonging to the Congregation of Tertiary Sisters of St. Francis says, "St. Francis of Assisi is our Patron Saint and my experience at USFCN was a wonderful time and it was my first time living out of home. Here in Namugongo, I felt at home. So I am grateful to the Centre, the staff members as well as the participants for the warm welcome."

"The course has been enlightening and refreshing because I came at a time when I was really exhausted but I am very grateful for the program that was put forth because it gave us enough time to relax, pray and reflect. The prayers ranged from personal, communal to Holy Mass." Sr. Lillian added.

"I have really enjoyed my stay here and I am grateful to my Provincial Superior, Sr. Gloria, Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), and Uganda Spiritual Formation Namugongo (USFCN) for creating such an environment where the religious and priests can refresh themselves," Sr. Lillian appreciated.



Sr. Lillian Mungaa from Cameroon, one of the December 2023 renewal cohort take a reading during their graduation day. Photo by ARU Reporter.

While Br. Nuwagaba Charles, who was also a participant and a member of the Brothers of St. Charles Lwanga, working in Mbarara as a Zone Leader confessed that it was an enriching experience because, he had been out doing ministry and it has been a lot of work. He now feels energized and refreshed and that USFCN is a very conducive place for prayer.

Br. Charles enjoyed interaction with fellow religious; "I have made friends from different institutes and priests from different dioceses. It enriched me to meet diverse cultures, working together as a team not forgetting the selected topics which were covered added value to me," Br. Charles concluded.



Participants share a memorial moment with the Director and Sr. Sylvia Namubiru who represented ARU president at the occasion. Photo by ARU Reporter.

While Fr. George Tenywa Kisige from the Diocese of Jinja affirmed that the renewal ignited him to gather more momentum, discernment and prayer. He was able to reflect upon canon law, specifically on consecrated life. Fr. George reminisced how different facilitators on different topics came with very appealing experiences, expressions and delivery of material to them.

It surprised the rest of his colleagues as well. "It has helped us to rejuvenate in the spirit, the way we look at our mission and the mandate that we have," Fr. George revealed.

"I would like to express our gratitude to our Superiors and Bishops for thinking it necessary for us to come here and the facilitation they gave us. I express great gratitude to ARU and the entire staff here at USFCN," Fr. George applauded.

Winding up his experience at USFCN, Fr. George revealed that the whole experience was permeated, facilitated by the principal and that the Holy Spirit was really at work. He was sure that they were going back, energized, renewed, transformed and ready to continue with the mission for the good of the church, the glory of God and for the salvation of all.

On Behalf of the team at USFCN and on my behalf, we are so grateful to God for the strength and guidance throughout the two months. Our thanks go to the President of ARU Mother Speranza Namusisi who was represented by Sr. Sylvia Namubiru, the Administration and the Executive Members of ARU for the moral and financial support.



Sr. Sylvia Namubiru with a beaming smile hands over a certification of completion to Fr. George Tenywa. Photo by ARU Reporter.

USFCN INAUGURATES NEW FORMATORS 2024



The new participants currently undergoing the formation course at USFCN share a light moment with the Secretary General of ARU (4th left, Sr. Lydia Apili Bwor, the Director, Sr. Rita Nabukalu of the centre and FoMRU Coordinantor, Sr. Pauline Namuddu during their inauguration day 2024. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By ARU Reporter

"Each one of us has been given gifts and blessings by God, but how have we carried out what has been given to us? What God has given us is not our own but it is also for sharing with others," Fr. Tarsis Baguma, main celebrant at the inauguration ceremony of new Formators, 2024 at USFCN proclaimed. He urged the new Formators to pray hard because it is a key to overcome temptations of selfishness and listen to what God has for each one according to His will.

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key to overcome temptations of selfishness and listen to what God has for each one according to His will.

This year's inauguration ceremony of the new Formators was graced by the Secretary General of Association of Religious in Uganda (ARU), Sr. Mary Lydia Apili Bwor. During her opening remarks, she told the new participants to be the 'bright stars' among the people of God and lead them to Christ. Sr. Lydia reminded participants that at baptism, individuals become priests, kings and prophets and now all people are prophetic witnesses and need to play a prophetic role. As priests, everyone is supposed to stand in a gap between human beings and God.

"We have not become consecrated persons by ourselves, we are set apart for the mission of God. So we need to spend a lot of time with God so that He may guide us to do the right thing.

As priests, we need to pray and stand in the gap for the people of God entrusted to us." Sr. Lydia vehemently proclaimed. "Great things happen when God mixes with us, we are on a holy ground, and sacred place. What are we looking for, what is the Lord telling us in the year 2024? Why has He brought all of us here together? Let us not take it for granted," she added.

"God gives instructions through the people around us but we tend to be stubborn sometimes and we begin defending ourselves. For example, we all know the evangelical counsels, the three vows and community living but sometimes we do our own things like Saul and the Israelites (the chosen people)," Sr. Lydia noted. She also said, there are times when people demand things that are not proper and God allows them to go through them but after they get burnt, they begin to look around. A loving and ever forgiving God looks at His people and still welcomes them back to Him.



Srs. Lydia and Rita in attendance during the inauguration day of the new participants 2024 at USFCN.

Like in new wine in new wine skin, there is a reason why God has brought you here – to be renewed so that you may become a new wine in new wine skins. Please take advantage of every moment here so that when you are renewed, you can also renew others. "May God show us the way as we search for Christ in life and so find the truth as we patiently wait upon the Lord."

In the same vein, Sr. Ritah Nabukalu, Director USFCN told new participants, "You're standing on a holy ground and this ground is on the blood of the Uganda Martyrs. This is a sacred place." She advised the participants to be affected from the heart; because it is the heart which gets affected in the course of events and once it is affected, there will be transformation. "Be keen to note the ongoing transformation," she observed.



The Director of USFCN, Sr. Rita Nabukalu delivers her opening remarks on the inauguration day of the new participants. Photo by ARU Reporter.

"So, as we start to interact from today, things are going to happen deep down in our hearts as well as through our prayer every day.

We are praying for each other for connectedness because we are all created in the image of God and we want everyone to be a peaceful person which does not come if we don't create it among ourselves. This will help all of us to enjoy our stay here at USFCN," Sr. Rita noted.

She (Sr. Rita) encouraged the new participants, "It was God's choice and plan through the superiors to send you at USFCN.

It means they have recognized something positive in you to be able to attend this course. This will help to enrich yourselves and fellow sisters and brothers. Your superiors are looking at you in the future of your institutes. Be present to whatever you receive, so that it bears lasting fruits. Obedience to our superiors is good because it brings us peace and joy. Being here, we need to open our eyes and hearts and be present here and now." Sr. Rita earnestly emphasized.

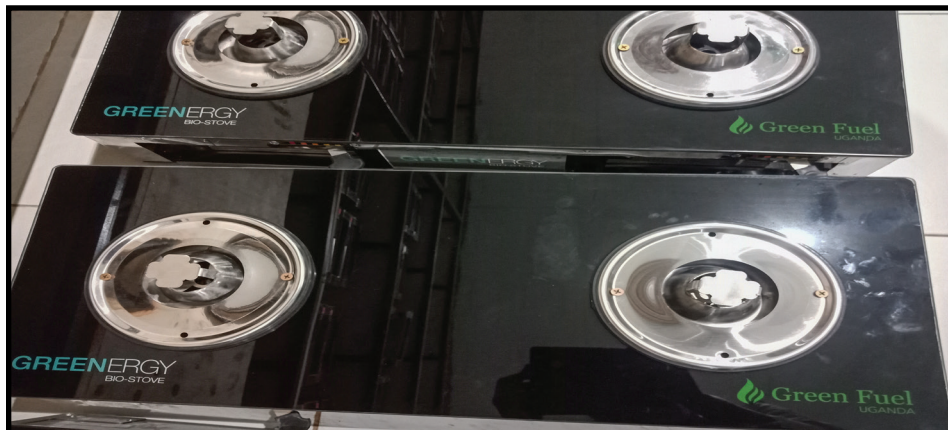


In shot, the Secretary General, the director and participants bow in an opening prayer to commence the orientation and speeches about formation and renewal in one of the halls at USFCN on the inauguration day. Photo by ARU Reporter.



Fr. Tarsis Baguma, one of the Facilitators at the USFCN in Formation and Renewal facilitation, presiding over Mass co-celebrated by one of the participants during the inauguration day this year. Photo by ARU Reporter.

Green energy for Ecological Sustainability



In shot is the Green Energy Bio-stove which uses the alternative energy for cooking with the aim of reducing dependence on firewood and charcoal which is the main cause of environmental degradation and climate change. Photo by ARU Reporter.

By Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, MSMMC

Gulu Archdiocese in collaboration with Bukona Agro processing limited of Nwoya District are in partnership to produce ethanol since 2020. This product was tested by Makerere University in 2021/2022. Its daily output is 40,000 litres, it is consumed locally and part of it is exported to Kenya in fuel tankers, one of the inside sources confirmed.

ARU Prophetic Witness learnt that, in its future prospect, ethanol will be introduced into petroleum industry. Addition of ethanol in fuel (Petrol/diesels) cuts down toxic carbon emission thus, reducing consequent environmental pollution. This is in line with UN Paris agreement of COP21, 2015 where, all countries were called to commit themselves to reduce their carbon emissions and work together to adapt to the impacts of climate change in a bid to mitigate climatic hazards.

Ethanol is an alternative energy used for cooking using Green Energy Bio-Stove, with the aim of reducing dependence on firewood and charcoal which is the main cause of environmental degradation and climate change. In Uganda, 21% of charcoal is used in urban setting, while 98% of charcoal and wood fuel is used in the rural setting. The local cassava production and other cereals are intended to provide raw materials for the factory's production of ethanol.

The charcoal business in Northern Uganda is being controlled after the introduction of ethanol. The Cassava commercialization and food security project, initiated by Gulu Archdiocese under the leadership of Father Mathew Lagoro Okun, saw an initial success, with up to 20,000 farmers embracing cassava as a cash crop. A few of the members from the population testify the benefits of the new agribusiness.

Besides cassava, the factory uses sorghum and maize as

alternative raw material according to the management under the Directorship of Praviin Kekal. The team also revealed that the Ministry of Energy with the help from World Bank is promoting clean energy and Bukona Agro-processing Ltd is eyeing the opportunity for this partnership. "If this succeeds, the price of Green energy stoves would drop by 100,000 UGX, Praviin revealed.

The factory claims that the Acholi sub-region faces a shortage of cassava, which has necessitated the use of maize and, at times, sorghum as alternative raw materials for ethanol production. Another source noted the challenges of procuring cassava and explained that they resort to using maize and sorghum in the absence of sufficient cassava supplies. In another development, some farmers claim that their expectations were frustrated by the low offers from the factory. "We were greatly disappointed when the factory chooses to buy our cassava below the market price! While the market price is between 1800-2000 UGX per kilogram. Bukona offers to buy between 850-1200 a kilo depending on the seasonal yields!"



Sisters visit the Agro processing factory that produces ethanol in Nwoya district. Courtesy photo.

Accordingly, the decline of cassava production can be attributed to several factors, including a mismatch between the enthusiasm for cassava planting and the factory's readiness to purchase the harvest at a fair cost. Sometimes, excess production causes losses as postulated in vicious cycle of agricultural production. However, the cassava commercialization project is making efforts to balance between food security and agribusiness.

Despite some of the challenges, the factory is expanding to produce animal feeds out of the by-products. The animals and birds to be fed include cows, goats, pigs and poultry. This is because the raw materials are readily available.

The secret behind the green energy in the Archdiocese of Gulu unfolds as a result of dire community needs, blended with the social entrepreneurship of the stakeholders spearheaded by His Grace, John Baptist Odama; the Archbishop of Gulu Archdiocese. The stakeholders include the religious women and men, the local community and technocrats from various walks of life. They (stakeholders) including consecrated persons supported the initial idea of taking the challenge of growth and development of Gulu Archdiocese minus external support.



Tractor operator and a Sr. supervising the Sisters' garden preparing to plough the garden for planting cassava, a product that is used to produce green energy. Courtesy photo.

The Archbishop and team took up the challenge: "To save Africa by the African evangelizers." During this meeting, the stakeholders raised a concern: "We need 32 parishes in Gulu Archdiocese for easy animation of pastoral work. Yet funds are inadequate for building local churches and infrastructure. So the slogan of Bishop Daniel Comboni, "Save Africa by Africans" becomes relevant today when the means of liberation is to avoid going abroad for help, the stakeholders noted.

During the meeting, one Okot Santu, the late Resident District Commissioner inspired the gathering with cassava enterprise while closing the conference. It was however noted that, this project was not palatable to the local community, because cassava was associated with food for prisoners and cultivated through forced labour by prisoners! However, through sensitization, operations and wealth creation program, the program is being rolled out and gradually embraced.

Pictorial



A Sister consulting factory management on industrial production process at Nwoya, Courtesy photo.



Sr. Lilly and Fr. Mathew on guided factory tour of Bukona Agro-processing plant, by the Quality Control Officer.

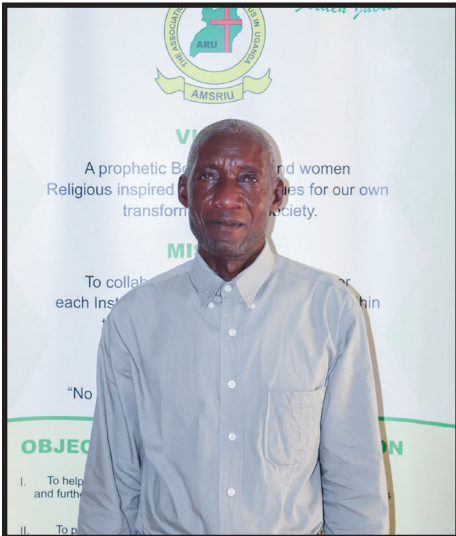


ARU Communications Director, Sr. Mary Lilly Driciru, touches the ground for interviews with Quality Control Officer



Employees of the factory at work, assembling the bio-stoves that use ethanol for cooking. Photo by ARU Reporter.

The long serving Driver, Ssalongo, retires from ARU Secretariat



Mr. Lukwago Jackson Ssalongo pose for a memorable photo near ARU pull up banner.

By ARU Reporter

Mr. Lukwago Jackson Ssalongo, the longest serving support staff at ARU Secretariat (December 1, 1997-February 5, 2024) has honorably retired from active service to a lower tone when need be. The soft-spoken Jaja Ssalongo who served for 27 years says, good working relationship motivated him to renew contracts at ARU. "I learnt their (sisters') ways and fulfilled their expectations. Also the regular services of the vehicles made me enjoy my driving service at ARU," he noted.

Ssalongo appreciates the sisters for all the time spent together. "I also learnt lessons from the sisters who were kind, simple, and approachable. They love the support staff and share the same food and make prompt payments of our wages at the end of the month.

This made me plan my family programs very well. They were often punctual and good time keepers during long safaris. Sisters are clean people, cleanliness is observed everywhere and I enjoyed living in a clean environment too but above all, the family spirit fascinated me. All these made me enjoy peace and love while serving at ARU."

However, much as Lukwago Jackson Ssalongo enjoyed his services and became a flag bearer as the longest serving support staff at ARU, he also faced some challenges. These include; the long distances he had to make every morning to ARU and the long safaris. "I made a great sacrifice of waking up early in the morning. Many times I battled with the heavy rains and the traffic jam of the city. Sometimes we would arrive late from the long safaris and miss the comfort of my family those moments.



Mr. Lukwago's smile remains indelible on the hearts of the people he worked with at ARU Secretariat.



Mr. Lukwago, one of the most meek and dedicated employees at ARU Secretariat share a light moment with the administrative staff. Photo by ARU Reporter.

Jajja Ssalongo developed problems with his sight, as he aged gracefully, "I used to have serious problems of driving late evening. Also, driving in the jam stressed me a lot. Now I'm beginning a stress-free life from today," Ssalongo deeply expressed. His doors are open to those who want to reach out to him. "For those who would like to catch up with me, I will spend the first month at Busega my nearest home. Later, on in the second month, I will go to our ancestral home at Kasanda-Mityana for about two months to be with my siblings and come back to Busega where I can revisit ARU once a while!"

"I thank the sisters of ARU and the support staff for the memorable moments spent together in real family spirit. May the Lord bless you all and give you the good that you need or desire. Stay well, eat well and work well. Good Bye..."

Where have we thrown our *Obuntu* values?

By Sr. Agatha Nankya, FDC
& Bro. Carlos Lwanga, BSCL

We are aware and know very well that we are all created by God in His own image. God loves us as His beloved children and made us humans completely different from other creatures. God endowed us with knowledge, to differentiate the good from bad. God gave us hearts to love and to be compassionate towards our brothers and sisters, and to wish them well. He gave us ears to listen to them and eyes to see their needs, and be able to help one another in fraternal charity. Sometimes the reverse is true.

Sylvia's unforgettable experience with Tracy (Not real names) but a true story.

Sylvia had two children, a girl and a boy. The boy-Kelvin was one-year-old. Sylvia was an orphan, and her husband also died in an accident, leaving her with the two children. After the death of her husband, her in-laws chased her away from her husband's estate. She went from place to place seeking refuge with her children. She finally found a kind-hearted person who offered her a small room to accommodate her with her children until she finds a better location. She fended a living by assisting people in their garden work.

Sylvia eventually got a friend - Tracy with whom she used to share. She trusted her so much. But one day, Tracy tricked her; "I have received



ARU Administrative and Program Staff members in a photo after Prayer on Trafficking in Persons on the Feast Day of St. Josephine Bakhita, February 8, 2024.

received a phone call from your brother." She believed the lie because this brother always reached Sylvia through this friend's phone.

This time, Tracy came with a hidden agenda, she told Sylvia that she had no airtime on the phone, so she would first go and buy airtime then give her the phone to talk to her brother. "Let me go with Kelvin to buy airtime and come back quickly," she said. Since they were good friends, Sylvia never suspected anything. Kelvin went as proposed with Sylvia's friend Tracy and never came back! Sylvia waited but in vain. She told the people around what had happened, and also reported the matter to the Chairman LC 1. They all went in search for the child, and put announcement on Radio Maria.

Stranded and helpless as she was, Sylvia went to the Convent of Sisters asking for prayers, that her son may be found. Indeed, the Sisters

assured her of their prayers, and also advised her to report to the Police. "With God, everything is possible, cf. Lk.1:37," the sisters said. And added, "We value life as the precious gift from God, and we shall pray

we shall pray until something happens." Indeed God rescued Kelvin! As it was later discovered that he was taken to many different places, Mbarara, Masaka, Kampala, finally, was brought back to Mbarara police station, where the Police called Sylvia to go and receive her son. The child was traumatized so much and feared everybody. He sustained deep cuts around his navel, and legs.

Today money is causing more harm than good. It has betrayed friendship, enslaved others. Unfortunately, many people have decided to shun from doing good. It is a pity! Such is what 'friends' can do today, we need to take care because it is the order of the day. And yet humans are created in the image and likeness of God and so a heart breaking relationship! Where have we thrown our *OBUNTU*? We have messed our dignity. Money has taken over cordial relationship!

Continued on page 20

Going to the extend of selling our own daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, and friends as if selling animals is unbecoming. As great people who once cherished *Obuntu* values, let us make a difference! Money will not even take us far. May God look upon us with mercy and create in us a new Spirit, and pure heart full of Love, mercy and compassion.

Dear parents, guardians, brothers and sisters, especially those who really value life, let us walk together in communion, in order to stop this evil of human trafficking. How shall we account before God if we just sit and watch when our dear ones are being tortured and killed in this way? If you can't involve in advocacy or external apostolate,

go on your knees and pray until something happens as the Sisters did for Kelvin. Wherever you are, God hears you. No one can say "I cannot do anything" No! Wherever you are, you can do something. Our generation is dying out having lost two generations. Let us wake up from our comfort zones and help our brothers and sisters. May the Lord open our inner ears, so that we can hear the cries of our brothers and sisters.

BRIDGING DREAMS: FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPACT IN CARE INSTITUTIONS



ARU-CCCU Resource Mobilization Manager, Mr. Emmanuel Epalat (2nd) left share a momerable moment with the staff of St. Mugagga Boys' Home Jinja. Courtesy photo.

By Emmanuel Epalat – ARU-CCCU Resource Mobilization Officer

In a heartwarming field experience spanning the active sites of Western and Central Uganda to the serene landscapes of Eastern and Northern regions, the Resource Mobilization Manager at the Association of the Religious in Uganda (ARU), Mr. Emmanuel Epalat, embarked on a soul-stirring mission in December 2023 and January 2024.

His intent was to revitalize life into the dreams of vulnerable children and provide instrumental support for their institutions to thrive amidst the challenges of the post-COVID-19 era and survive in an increasingly unstable and unpredictable donor landscape.

Mr. Epalat's field visits took him to the heart of Child Care Institutions (CCIs) / Programs, the backbone of hope for countless vulnerable children.

His itinerary included Nyakibale Lower, Grail Mushanga, Ibanda Babies Home, Wisdom Resource Training Centre, Mbarara OVC, Grail Masaka, St. Vincent Pallotti, Kankobe Children's Home, St. Mugagga Boys' Home, St. Kizito Babies Home, Butiru Cheshire Home, St. Francis Rehabilitation Centre Pamba, and Lira Babies Home.

The significance of these visits lay in the miles covered and the profound impact he left in his wake. His strategic approach focused on professionalizing and organizing resource mobilization efforts within these institutions, assessing their fundraising capacities, identifying strengths, acknowledging weaknesses, and proposing areas for improvement towards sustainability.

Through targeted support, home administrators and staff gained skills and knowledge to overcome

challenges in proposal writing, guided by a funding proposal framework and fundraising process roadmap. Knowledge transfer sessions empowered participants with effective fundraising strategies, role clarifications, competencies, problem-solving methodologies, and change management cycles to navigate challenges.

Innovative strategies for income-generating activities within the CCIs / Programs were identified and consultations with stakeholders ensured initiatives were viable impactful and illustrating. Mr. Epalat's dedication to uplifting communities and securing a brighter future for vulnerable children is countrywide.

Mr. Epalat's insightful journey has culminated in a series of key recommendations that serve as a roadmap for sustainable change. His impassioned call for staff at the CCIs/Programs to embrace capacity building in fundraising and project proposal writing, coupled with the emphasis on refining organizational visions, missions, and values, lays the foundation for enduring success.

The proposed targeted capacity-building initiatives, centred on strategic planning and donor engagement, promise to fortify these institutions against external challenges. This would be done by involving CCIs / Programs in crafting annual resource mobilization plans.

Mr. Epalat has provided them with a sturdy framework for long-term prosperity. The ripple effect of his efforts is already evident, igniting a transformation in resource mobilization and nurturing a landscape where these vital institutions can flourish autonomously.

His (Mr. Epalat's) work resonates as a beacon of hope, leaving an indelible mark on Uganda's child care landscape. His dedication and strategic foresight have illuminated a path toward a brighter, more sustainable future for the institutions that safeguard Uganda's most precious resource - her children. This would enable putting a smile on the face of a child!



The Grail Mushanga



Nyakibale Lower Unit



Lira Babies Home - Ngetta



The Grail Mushanga



Wisdom Training Resource Centre



St. Vincent Ibanda Babies Home



St. Kizito Babies Home [KIBAH] - Mbale

Pictorial

From Vulnerability to Resilience: Start-Up Capital to unleash Hope and Prosperity in 48 Vulnerable Households.



*A child being resettled after up-lifting the economic status of her parents.
Photo by ARU-CCCU Case Manager.*

By Caroline Nansukusa. S. ARU-CCCU-Case Management Officer

In a commitment to transition and uplift vulnerable households, ARU-CCCU in partnership with GHR and now Kulika plus CRS-Catholic Relief Services support, are creating stable family environment for children. This is being done through dedicated Child Care facilities and strategies. Thus, working passionately, aiming to create a more suitable and stable family environment for every child. The focal point is to support vulnerable children and identify their households particularly those classified as critically or moderately vulnerable as guided by the Government Household Vulnerability Assessment tool. In 2023, 48 households linked to St. Kizito Babies Home and Budaka Cheshire Home were carefully selected, the team implemented targeted interventions.

The support, tied to educating families on different family economic strengthening approaches and providing start-up capital, serves as a catalyst for kickstarting income-generating activities within these tight-knit communities. Families engaged in a range of economic strengthening endeavours, from improved farming methods for better yields to animal rearing, poultry to food processing, backyard gardens, and bakery ventures.

As the calendar turned from December 2023 to January 2024, the majority of supported households began reaping the tangible benefits of these carefully selected interventions to-date. Outcomes such as cakes, crisps, wine, improved farm breeds and yields, food stores both retail and whole sale among others. The once barren landscapes -

of despair blossomes with the fruits of resilience and determination. Yet, our work is far from over. As we reflect on the triumphs of the past, we are reminded of the countless families still yearning for a lifeline. Thus, we extend an earnest call to all who share in our vision: let us join hands in solidarity, for together, we can transform dreams into realities and sow the seeds of hope in every corner of our creation, hence marking a significant step towards creating a more resilient and thriving environment for vulnerable family.

The selection approach was thorough, ensuring that subsequent interventions, notably the provision of start-up capital for family economic strengthening, were finely tuned to address the unique needs of households classified as "Critically Vulnerable or moderately vulnerable." This strategic infusion of capital not only empowered these families but also resonated with a broader vision of fostering sustainable livelihoods. The initiative beautifully displays how a community-centric approach can lead to impactful and enduring positive change, Come June 2024, 48 households hopefully will start the journey of happily living with their children.

A GOOD CONSCIENCE IS A SOFT PILLOW: *You sleep well when you have nothing to be guilty about*

To our dear partners GHR and CRS, we are overwhelmed with gratitude for the continued generous support that has played a pivotal role in the transformative journey of vulnerable children and vulnerable households. This contribution, tied to providing start-up capital, has catalysed a wave of positive change within these vulnerable communities.

Gratitude to the dedication and commitment, families are now actively engaged in various income-generating activities, from improved farming methods to animal rearing and food processing. The strategic infusion of capital has not only empowered these households but has also aligned with a broader vision of fostering sustainable livelihoods.

The impact so far resonates deeply, showcasing the remarkable outcomes of a community-centric approach. As we look forward, the support has set the stage for these families to embark on a journey towards a more resilient and thriving life with their children. Gratitude for being a beacon of hope and catalyst for enduring positive change.

Pictorial



Pig-sty with fairly improved keeping practices and new animal breeds



Parent and child welcoming newly acquired animal bought



Some of the parent's liquid soap ready for selling



Parent supported with funds to plant rice, a rice field - during S follow-up



Products after training and start-up, capital samosas found during follow-up



Parent received start-up to begin a welding project after school, some stoves done right behind him.

Pictorial Highlights of the Major Events



A large number of Consecrated Persons attending the day in Consecrated life.



Sisters of the Mercy of the Holy Spirit elevated to a Vicariat.



Participants from USFCN share a light moment with ARU staff.



Focolare community share a memorial group photo at Mbuya



AACSS participants share a memorial group photo after the workshop.



Sisters' garden being ploughed to plant cassava in order to produce ethanol (Green Energy)



Participants of the Healthcare network technical committee share a group photo.



In shot, is the send off of the very second president of ARU, Sr. Rose