



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC JOURNEY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO KENYA, UGANDA AND THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
(25-30 NOVEMBER 2015)

HOLY MASS FOR THE MARTYRS OF UGANDA

HOMILY OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS

Area of the Catholic Shrine of the Martyrs of Namugongo (Uganda)
Saturday, 28 November 2015

[Multimedia]

“You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

From the age of the Apostles to our own day, a great cloud of witnesses has been raised up to proclaim Jesus and show forth the power of the Holy Spirit. Today, we recall with gratitude the sacrifice of the Uganda martyrs, whose witness of love for Christ and his Church has truly gone “to the end of the earth”. We remember also the Anglican martyrs whose deaths for Christ testify to the ecumenism of blood. All these witnesses nurtured the gift of the Holy Spirit in their lives and freely gave testimony of their faith in Jesus Christ, even at the cost of their lives, many at such a young age.

We too have received the gift of the Spirit, to make us sons and daughters of God, but also so that we may bear witness to Jesus and make him everywhere known and loved. We received the Spirit when we were reborn in Baptism, and we were strengthened by his gifts at our Confirmation. Every day we are called to deepen the Holy Spirit’s presence in our life, to “fan into flame” the gift of his divine love so that we may be a source of wisdom and strength to others.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is a gift which is meant to be shared. It unites us to one another as believers and living members of Christ’s mystical Body. We do not receive the gift of the Spirit for ourselves alone, but to build up one another in faith, hope and love. I think of Saints Joseph

Mkasa and Charles Lwanga, who after being catechized by others, wanted to pass on the gift they had received. They did this in dangerous times. Not only were their lives threatened but so too were the lives of the younger boys under their care. Because they had tended to their faith and deepened their love of God, they were fearless in bringing Christ to others, even at the cost of their lives. Their faith became witness; today, venerated as martyrs, their example continues to inspire people throughout the world. They continue to proclaim Jesus Christ and the power of his Cross.

If, like the martyrs, we daily fan into flame the gift of the Spirit who dwells in our hearts, then we will surely become the missionary disciples which Christ calls us to be. To our families and friends certainly, but also to those whom we do not know, especially those who might be unfriendly, even hostile, to us. This openness to others begins first in the family, in our homes where charity and forgiveness are learned, and the mercy and love of God made known in our parents' love. It finds expression too in our care for the elderly and the poor, the widowed and the orphaned.

The witness of the martyrs shows to all who have heard their story, then and now, that the worldly pleasures and earthly power do not bring lasting joy or peace. Rather, fidelity to God, honesty and integrity of life, and genuine concern for the good of others bring us that peace which the world cannot give. This does not diminish our concern for this world, as if we only look to the life to come. Instead, it gives purpose to our lives in this world, and helps us to reach out to those in need, to cooperate with others for the common good, and to build a more just society which promotes human dignity, defends God's gift of life and protects the wonders of nature, his creation and our common home.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is the legacy which you have received from the Uganda martyrs – lives marked by the power of the Holy Spirit, lives which witness even now to the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This legacy is not served by an occasional remembrance, or by being enshrined in a museum as a precious jewel. Rather, we honour them, and all the saints, when we carry on their witness to Christ, in our homes and neighbourhoods, in our workplaces and civil society, whether we never leave our homes or we go to the farthest corner of the world.

May the Uganda martyrs, together with Mary, Mother of the Church, intercede for us, and may the Holy Spirit kindle within us the fire of his divine love!

Omukama Abawe Omukisa! (God bless you!)