

Saint Charles Lwanga and his companions



The Holy Martyrs of Uganda, namely St. Charles Lwanga and his many companions, missionaries and local converts to the Christian faith, martyrs of brutal persecutions against them, show us what it truly means for us as Christians to remain faithful to the Lord even amidst opposition, and at times, danger and threats to our livelihood and existence.

At that time, as Christian missionaries began to come to the region now known as Uganda, those missionaries were quite successful in their efforts and quite a few people came to believe in the Lord and gave themselves to be baptised as Christians. Before long, the missionary works and efforts led to conversions among the local populace, and quite a few of the local nobles and high-ranking officials also converted. Unfortunately, this caused members of the faithful, the missionaries and the local converts to be caught up in the bitter political struggle for control at that time.

Very soon, the king who was suspicious and wary of the rapid growth of the Christian faith and its rapidly growing followers, began to persecute the Christians from all walks of life, from the common men right up to even those among the nobles and the officials. Christian objections and opposition to some of the immoral attitudes and actions of the king and the then still pagan members of the community made opposition and persecution against them to become even more rampant and powerful.

It was at Namugongo just outside of modern day Kampala, the capital of Uganda, that dozens of Christians, including St. Charles Lwanga, the chief page or servant of the king, were burnt to death because of their refusal to recant their Christian faith and embrace the immoral actions ordered by the king. As the chief page, St. Charles Lwanga often did his best to protect the victims of the king's immoral actions and behaviours from his efforts and advances at fornication and sin with them. St. Charles Lwanga became a Catholic and baptised many hundreds of his fellow compatriots in the faith secretly, even from the time when he himself was just merely a catechumen.

When the Christian converts refused to abandon their newfound faith in God, they were tortured and brutally put to death, mostly by burning on the stake. Their courage in standing up for their faith, their steadfast refusal from abandoning their faith and safeguarding their own personal desires and safety, knowing that God was always with them and standing by them, became a great source of inspiration and example for many Christians over the years. At the site of their martyrdom now stands a great Basilica, the Basilica of Holy Ugandan Martyrs at Namugongo which draw regularly over two million pilgrims every year.