

FORT PORTAL CATHOLIC DIOCESE

Our Ref:.....II.D.2.5.6:.....

Your Ref:.....



Bishop's Office
P.O.Box 914, Fort Portal
Uganda

PRESS RELEASE ON 23RD MARCH 2022

PREPARATIONS FOR THE UGANDA MARTYRS' DAY CELEBRATIONS 2022 AT NAMUGONGO ANIMATED BY FORT PORTAL CATHOLIC DIOCESE

Outline

1. Introduction
2. Selection of Fort Portal Diocese to lead the celebrations (last selection and theme)
3. The teams working (progress)
4. Strategies
5. The gaps
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Introduction:

Dear people of God, men and women of goodwill, I greet you all in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The purpose of this press release is to give you a briefing on the preparations and how far we have progressed regarding the 3rd June 2022 celebrations.

It was last month, on 14th February 2022, that we received the great news from the Uganda Episcopal Conference of our choice as Fort Portal Catholic Diocese to lead this year's Uganda Martyrs' Day celebrations at Namugongo Catholic Shrine. Due to the uncertainties of the Corona pandemic, the news came in a bit late.

The task is enormous and demands serious preparations on the spiritual level and material level so as to profit from the pilgrimage to Namugongo whose purpose is eminently spiritual, the material dimension notwithstanding. We are organizing a number of activities to march the task ahead of us, below are some of them.

Last animation and theme:

Fort Portal Diocese last animated this celebration way back in 1997. Since then, several changes have taken place; it used to be a small event of about 300 people, but now it is an event of millions of people.

In this year's celebration, we shall be guided by the theme, **BAPTIZED AND SENT TO WITNESS CHRIST WITH LOVE AND HOPE MT. 28:19, ROM. 8:35.** This theme is reflected in the way the martyrs died; they were men of faith baptized with water, but some were not yet baptized (baptism of blood). They had a great love for Christ. That is why they opted to die than obey the orders of Kabaka Mwanga. They were not threatened by the sword or fire. With love and hope, they looked to the life after death and resurrection without any fear.

Dear brothers and sisters, this theme inspires and invites us as Ugandans especially in these post COVID tough times to witness our faith with love and hope everywhere in our individual lives, families, institutions and our government.

We are going through so many socio-economic challenges of sicknesses, unemployment, poverty, death, among others. Some people have even lost hope. As Christians and Ugandans, we need to be inspired by our martyrs. They faced several hardships, especially when the missionaries had run to Tanzania. They kept the faith and succeeded.

This celebration is a great opportunity for us as a diocese, together with the faithful in Uganda and the Universal Church, to learn from the Martyrs' witness of Christ with love and hope, and to seek their intercession. It is a moment of spiritual renewal as we strive to preach the gospel and fight the evils in our society today.

Progress (The Teams Working)

- A Steering Committee has been selected, with Fr. Charles Oyo as the Chairperson and Dr. Patrick Birungi as his Vice with several other members.
- We also have other subcommittees that are working in tandem with the steering committee, e.g., liturgy, finance, protocol and security, catering, transport, construction and decoration, finance and others.
- There are meetings taking place in Fort Portal and Kampala to plan for the function.
- We have sought the Government's guidance on the nature of the celebrations. Although they have not yet responded to our request, we are optimistic that they will allow us to have a full blast of the celebrations.
- Several letters of appeal have been written to our diocesan parishes and other bodies about the same cause.
- A detailed budget of **UGX 1 billion** has been developed and approved to help in the mobilization and collection of funds

- A choir of about 200 hundred members has been selected, and they are starting practices this coming weekend

Strategies

- I have appointed Hon. Tom Butime and Hon. Frank Tumwebaze, under the coordination of Dr. Patrick Birungi, to mobilize for the diocese among the Kampala audience
- Different corporate and business bodies have been approached to mobilize and advertise in the Souvenir Magazine

Gaps:

Given a short notice, we still have a huge gap in finances.

Plans and Appeal

- On 1st May 2022, I will celebrate Mass with KEJI FODA, a group of Christians from Fort Portal Diocese living in Kampala at Kitante Primary School to gauge the process
- On 2nd May 2022, we shall have a fundraising dinner in Kampala to solicit funds for the celebrations
- Several other joint press conferences with Uganda Episcopal Conference shall be held to update the Country on the progress of preparations.

I continue in a special way to appeal to you all people of goodwill to support Fort Portal Diocese in realizing successful and fruitful celebrations. With your spiritual, financial, moral, social and all kinds of support, we shall be able to meet our **UGX 1 billion** budget, which is very much needed for the success of the occasion.

The money can be deposited into our bank account with CENTENARY BANK, Fort Portal Branch, with the following account details:

Bank:	Centenary
A/c Name:	Fort Portal Diocese 2022 Uganda Martyrs Celebrations
A/c No.:	3203286953
Branch:	Fort Portal

OR

On Airtel Money No. **0753 503 354** and Mobile Money No. **0771 963 204**, (Both lines in the name of Robert K. Muhiirwa).

Conclusion:

We extend our gratitude to the Uganda Episcopal Conference for giving Fort Portal Diocese the opportunity to animate this year's Martyrs Day celebrations at Namugongo. We thank the Government of Uganda and its various organs for the collaborative support.

I would like to appreciate all those who are praying for the success of this great celebration. With God, everything is possible. His project never fails.

You are all welcome to Namugongo Martyrs' Shrine to celebrate and pray to God through the intercession of the Holy Uganda Martyrs for love, peace and unity to prevail in our Country Uganda and the world at large.

May God bless you all.

Yours in the LORD,

+Robert K. Muhiirwa
Bishop of Fort Portal

