

Celebration of the 137th Anniversary of the first Eucharistic Celebration in Uganda

“One Bread, One Body, though we are Many”



25th June 2016 saw thousands of pilgrims congregating at Nabulagala, the cradle of the Catholic Church in Uganda, to celebrate the 137th Anniversary of the first Mass in Uganda. The colourful celebration, organised by Nakulabye Deanery, was presided by the Archbishop of Kampala, Dr. Cyprian Kizito Lwanga.

On the same occasion, the parish church was consecrated and dedicated to St. John the Baptist. This new beautiful and spacious church, an extension of the old one, just next to the memorial chapel in which the remains of the five pioneer missionaries are interred, makes Nabulagala worthy of its historical position: *the cradle and ancestral home of the Catholic Church in Uganda*. In its altar, were fixed relics of Saints: Charles Lwanga, Mathias Mulumba, Catherine of Siena and Ashes from Nakiyanja, the holocaust site, where the Catholic and Protestant Martyrs were burnt to death in 1886. For many pilgrims, this was the first time they witnessed this very meaningful rite of consecration of a new church.



In the same ceremony, Bro. Andrew Kyagulanyi of the Brothers of St. Amans, presented himself candidate to the diaconate and priestly ordination. This was also a historic event. The Brothers of St. Amans were founded by the late Emmanuel Cardinal Nsubuga in 1984. Although the Patron Saint of these Brothers is

not Bro. Amans Delmas, one of the pioneer missionaries in Uganda, there is no doubt that the Cardinal wanted, through these brothers, to remember Bro. Amans and his missionary work in Uganda. Bro. Amans himself, on the 19th October 1879, made his perpetual missionary oath here at Nabulagala, making him the first catholic religious to make his oath on the soil of Uganda. Also, forty children received their first Holy Communion.

The theme of the day was: **One Bread, One Body, though we are Many**. In his homily, the Archbishop said that the theme of unity is strongly embedded in the Eucharistic celebration, clearly expressed and prayed for in the Eucharistic prayers (2, 3, 4), in the prayer of Our Lord (Father) and the prayer for peace and unity which we say before receiving the Holy Communion. He exhorted the congregation to fight against all types of divisions and conflicts within our society as experienced in domestic violence, religious and political conflicts, etc.

The celebration ended with the *'Mapeera and Amans Candle Prayer'* in front of the Memorial Chapel and the statue of Mapeera, praying for the beatification of these two. This prayer was inaugurated by Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala at the Grotto of Our Lady, at Namugongo Martyrs Shrine last year 2015 at the beginning of the Uganda Martyrs Novena, as one of the means to promote the cause for their beatification.

