



EDDOBOOZI

EDDOBOOZI LYA MAPEERA NE AMANSI

"To Spread the Glory of God and to build His Kingdom"

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NABULAGALA CRADLE AND ANCESTRAL HOME OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN UGANDA



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INTRODUCTION

Mapeera-Nabulagala Parish enjoys a monopoly of the title: "The *Cradle* and Ancestral Home", vis-à-vis the Catholic Church in Uganda. It is the *Cradle* because the evangelising mission in Uganda started here and the first baptisms were also celebrated at this place. It is the *Ancestral Home (Obutaka)* because it is here that the 'spiritual fathers' of the Catholic Church in Uganda are laid to rest.

It also enjoys the privilege of having on its territory the 'Kasubi Royal Tombs' (*Amasiro*) where the two kings who played a major role in the Evangelisation of Uganda are buried, namely Muteesa I, who invited and welcomed the pioneer missionaries to Uganda and Mwanga who besides condemning to death the Uganda Martyrs also greatly contributed to the growth of Christianity in this country. It was also at

Kasubi palace that Mapeera on Sunday, 11th September 1881, courageously defended the freedom of religion when Kabaka Muteesa wanted to impose Islam as the state-religion.

This issue of *Eddoboosi Iya Mapeera ne Amansi* has been dedicated to this historical place of Nabulagala in order to help the pilgrims to discover some of the *treasures of the Kingdom of God* hidden in its 137 years' old Christian historical field (cf. Mt. 13: 44), since its foundation in 1879 by these two pioneer missionaries.

Kasubi – Nabulagala

Traditionally, each king initiated his palace (*olubiri*), which ipso facto became the capital (*ekibuga*) of the Kingdom. Mwanga II was the last king to establish a new palace at Mengo and after him palaces became hereditary, Mengo becoming the official one.

Kabaka Ssuna II (1826-1856) was the first to build his palace at Kasubi-Nabulagala (the two names were at that time used interchangeably). His first palace was at Mulago but later transferred it to Kasubi-Nabulagala. *Kabaka Muteesa I (1856-1884)*, when he became king in 1856, built his palace at Nakatema but then later established himself twice at Kasubi-Nabulagala, first in 1875/76, and then 1881-1884. He died here in October 1884 and was buried in his house, *Muzibu-Azaala-Mpanga*.

Foundation of the first Catholic Mission in Uganda

Kabaka Muteesa I gave land (*kibanja*) to Fr. Simeon Lourdel and Bro. Amans Delmas at Lubya-Nabulagala. It was first at Lubya-Hill but because of water problem, they moved to Nabulagala. Muteesa built a house for them which they occupied on the **7th March 1879**, a date that marked the opening of the first Catholic Parish in Uganda which lasted from 1879 to 1882. Before coming here, Mapeera and Amans were staying at Kitebi, for two weeks, in the family of Amir Ssekikubo, who was in charge of Kabaka's roads.

Among the workers that helped in building this first mission were the future martyrs, Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe and Mathias Mulumba.

Fr. Simeon Lourdel becomes 'Mapeera'

Brother Amans used to call Fr. Lourdel '**mon-père**', two French words meaning 'my father'. The natives thought that his name was '**Mompera**' and this eventually became his name under which he evangelised this country. Thus, in one of his audiences at Lubaga (6th June 1879), Kabaka Muteesa I said: "*Mompera yanatusomesa*" (i.e. *Mompera* is the one who will teach us), and eventually people started talking about '*eddiini ya Mapeera*' (the religion of Mapeera), meaning the Catholic Faith in contrast to '*eddiini ya Makaayi*' (religion of Mackay), the Protestant Faith.

Celebration of the First Holy Mass

The three missionaries, Frs Girault Ludovic, Leon Barbot and Leon Livinhac, who had remained at Kageye in Tanganyika arrived at Nabulagala on the **24th and 25th June 1879**. Bro. Amans, together with a fleet of twenty canoes given by Kabaka Muteesa, went to fetch them in April leaving Mapeera alone at Nabulagala.

Fr. Livinhac, who was the superior of the group, arrived last on **Wednesday 25th June** and on this very day they celebrated the first ever Holy Mass in Uganda. The main celebrant was Fr. Livinhac himself and the participants were only the missionaries since there were no other Catholics at that time and according to the Church laws of the time a non-baptised could not attend. Mapeera and Amans who had arrived before could not celebrate Mass because they lacked the essentials, i.e., hosts, wine and the potable altar. The celebration was in the room of Mapeera which temporarily served as their chapel until they built one some two months later.

Novena to the BVM and dedication of Uganda to Mary

On the day of the first Eucharist, they started the Novena to **Mary Immaculate**. It ended on the **2nd July 1879**, with a special ceremony of dedicating their lives, missionary work and Uganda to Mary Immaculate. Since then, they named their new mission (parish) **St. Mary's of Lubaga**, a name that they kept even when they were at Nalukolongo (1885-1888), Nabunnya (1889-1891) and Lubaga (1892ff)

NOTE: The novena was shortened by one day most likely for two reasons. First, during that time (between 1263-1969), it was the **Feast of the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth** (cf. Luke 1: 39-56), indeed a very significant missionary feast. Second, it was the anniversary of the Consecration of the Basilica of our Lady of Africa in Algiers, consecrated in 1872 by Cardinal Lavigerie. It was from this Basilica that these pioneer missionaries were sent off to come to Uganda on the 17th April 1878.

Unfortunately, we do not have the text of the first act of dedication to Mary, but we have the text when they renewed the same act the following year which is believed to have been the same as the first one. It is on the basis of this text that the present “Prayer to Mother Mary of Nabulagala” was composed.

<p>“Today, the last day of the month of Mary 1880, we the undersigned, Missionaries in Uganda, renew our act of consecration of the Mission of Lake Nyanza, to Mary Immaculate. We give her and consecrate all our bodies and souls, our works, our entire life, our death and our life to come. We swear that the Blessed Virgin Mary will be our teacher and superior, so that by her, through her and with her, we may understand and fulfil the will of her Divine Son, for whose Glory, we would like to wholly sacrifice ourselves. We declare that whatever good will be done here, it will be Mary who will have done it and therefore all glory will be given to her. Our signatures on this act, is the sign of our confidence and we have put this act under the feet of the Statue of Mary the Immaculate, our Sovereign Mistress.” (Monday, 31st May 1880)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PRAYER TO MOTHER MARY OF NABULAGALA</p> <p>Oh! Mother Mary of Nabulagala, like our ancestors in Faith, Mapeera and his companions, we re-dedicate to you our lives, works and country Uganda.</p> <p>Pray for us so that we may be protected from all diseases, accidents, wars and all types of oppression.</p> <p>Oh! Our dear Mother, lead us each day to follow Christ your Son, so that we may look at the things of this world with wisdom and fix our hearts only on those things that will lead us to eternal happiness.</p> <p>AMEN</p>
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Bro. Amans makes his perpetual missionary oath (19th October 1879)

When Bro. Amans was chosen to be sent to Uganda, he had made only the temporary vows. So, on arrival here, it was decided that he could make his perpetual vows after a retreat which he started on Saturday 11th October. The ceremony was on **Sunday 19th October 1879**. This made him the first Catholic religious to do so on the soil of Uganda.

To mark this historical event and date, Mapeera and Amans Beatifications Promoters (MAB-PRO) organize an annual pilgrimage here at Nabulagala for the Religious Men and Women in Uganda. It is a day of reflection and prayer for all the religious in Uganda.

“I, Brother Amans Delmas, in front of my brothers here assembled, and you my Father, I commit myself to live a life of obedience, poverty and celibacy for all my life as it is stipulated in the Constitutions and Laws of the Society of the Missionaries of Africa in all that concerns the Brothers in their life and work. I also promise to work wholeheartedly together with my brothers in the religious life, following the rules of this Society, in supporting all the works of charity and apostolate carried out by the missionaries for the spiritual and material welfare of the pagans.” (Handwritten and signed on 19th October 1879 at Nabulagala)

Catechumenate and First Baptisms in Uganda

Although Mapeera had several occasions to expose the different beliefs and teachings of the Catholic Faith during the royal audiences at Lubaga Palace, the organised and structured religious instructions with a group of catechumens was initiated at Nabulagala. Immediately after their arrival, Mapeera, with the help of **Dallington Muftaa** started to write a short Luganda Catechism which he completed by mid-October 1879. It was published in Algiers in 1881 being the first Luganda book to come out of print.

The first catechumen, Nalubandwa, was enrolled on the **13th November 1879** and was later to be the first

Ugandan to be baptised. This noble work bore its first fruits of baptisms celebrated by Fr. Livinhac on **Easter Vigil, 27th March 1880**. These were four: **Paul Nalubandwa, Peter Kyonooneka Ddamulira, Joseph Lwanga and Leo Kaddu**. They received their **First Holy Communion and Confirmation** the following day on Easter Sunday, **28th March 1880**.

After these first baptisms, there were others among whom the four future martyrs: Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe and Andrew Kaggwa baptised by Fr. Lourdel on **30th April 1882**, (these were his first baptisms in Uganda); Mathias Mulumba and Luka Baanabakintu who were baptised by Fr. Girault Ludovic on **28th May 1882**. In all, twenty (20) Christians were baptised at Nabulagala between 1880-1882.

*NB: Prince Mwanga was among those who frequented the mission together with the pages who went there for religious instruction.

The Well of Mapeera (Oluzzi Iwa Mapeera)

This well is about five hundred metres from the church. Although it is popularly known as "*Oluzzi Iwa Mapeera*" (the Well of Mapeera), in fact, it was Bro Amans who dug it together with the workers.

The importance of this well is not only that it provided water to the missionaries and the villagers, but even more so that it was from it that the water used to baptise the first Christians was drawn. It still serves the community around.

Catechism and formal education

Like their predecessors, the Protestant Missionaries, the Catholic Missionaries combined religious instructions with the teaching of how to read and write. Hence, in his Luganda Catechism booklet, Mapeera added an appendix of Luganda syllable, i.e., the alphabet and the way how to write and read Luganda language. This combination of religious instructions and secular education eventually gave the name of '**Abasomi**' (readers) to the Christians.

Fr. Livinhac, at the same time, started writing the *Luganda Grammar* which was printed in Paris – France in 1885. He also compiled a Luganda dictionary of about six to seven thousand words but unfortunately the manuscript of this dictionary was lost in a shipwreck on the 11th June 1884 between France and Algeria.

Having both Mapeera St. Joseph Primary School (NB: Mapeera was also called Joseph!) and Mapeera Kindergarten at Nabulagala church compound is a very meaningful reminder of the beginnings of the Church's involvement in promoting 'formal education'. In fact, Mapeera was already dreaming of initiating a college for the princes and children of the chiefs who could eventually transform the society using the knowledge and Christian values acquired from school!

First Christmas in Uganda (Thursday 25th December 1879)

This was celebrated in a sombre way but with hope that one day thousands will flock to the crib to pay homage to the Holy Child Jesus. By then, they had only three catechumens! This is how it was narrated in their diary:

"Being here in the middle of pagan countries where we do not have anything to put us in a festive mood, we try in mind to lift up our spirits up to our country France... It is really very difficult not to feel sad when we see that the Holy Child has not yet got other people to adore him except the missionaries. However we patiently endure this pain because we strongly hope that thousands and thousands of souls around us, which seem to be separated from us by a great valley, Jesus will find a way to attract them to himself so as to be able to convert them. The day is coming when a sea of people will flow around the crib as it is in other parts of the world. We pray that our unworthiness does not delay that hour of mercy. We have three catechumens."

Ransoming of slaves

Immediately after settling at Nabulagala, the missionaries started redeeming some slaves, especially children, from the Arab traders. These were mostly from Bunyoro and Busoga. In the three years they stayed at Nabulagala, they ransomed twenty eight children who were kept at the mission being cared for, taught how to read and write, catechism and some vocation works like carpentry and gardening. Looking after these children was one of the main duties of Brother Amans. When they left Nabulagala in 1882, they took with them

some of these children. This charitable work continued at Nalukolongo and Nabunya.

Departure of the Missionaries from Nabulagala to Tanganyika

Because of insecurity, the Missionaries freely left Buganda for Tanganyika in November 1882. By then, Kabaka Muteesa had left Lubaga palace for Kasubi-Nabulagala because of the plague.

On departure, they entrusted their remaining properties to the Protestant Missionaries in Nateete. (NB: When Mackay was leaving Buganda on the 21st July 1887, he left the keys of their houses to Mapeera in Nalukolongo!)

When the missionaries came back in Buganda in June 1885, Kabaka Mwanga gave them land at Nalukolongo. From then onwards, Nabulagala became an outstation of Lubaga Parish up to 1974 when it became a sub-parish of the new parish of Nakulabye.

Laitry in the footsteps of the missionaries

After the departure of the missionaries, the few baptised Catholics and catechumens, under the guidance of Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe and Andrea Kaggwa met at Nabulagala mission to plan for the future of the Catholic community during the absence of the missionaries. Thanks to this "parish pastoral council", during which Balikuddembe was elected to be the leader of the Catholic community, strategic plans were made which enabled the Catholics not only to remain firm in their faith but also to recruit new members.

The Memorial Chapel (1939)

This chapel was built in memory of : the pioneer missionaries, the 60th Anniversary of the Catholic Church in Uganda, the Uganda Martyrs: those who helped in building of the first mission: Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe and Mathias Mulumba; those who followed catechism here: Andrea Kaggwa, Luka Baanabakintu, Anatoli Kiriggwajjo, Gonzaga Gonza, Adolfo Ludigo, James Buuzaabalyawo and Noa Mawaggali; and finally those who were baptised here: Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe, Andrea Kaggwa, Luka Baanabakintu, Mathias Mulumba.

Two important dates were to be inscribed somewhere inside the chapel, that of the first Baptisms, 27th March 1880; and the one of the feast of the Blessed Martyrs. The model of the front part of the chapel was copied from that of the "Calvary of Lisieux" in France.

The laying and blessing of the foundation stone was done by Mgr. Edward Michaud, bishop of Lubaga (1933-1945). Present at this occasion was Mgr. Joseph Kiwanuka who had just been elected bishop of Masaka, being the first African bishop in modern times.

Remains of the Pioneer Missionaries at Nabulagala

On a number of occasions, the remains of the pioneer missionaries were brought to Nabulagala until they were buried here in 2011. The following are the dates and events when this was done.

25th May 1975: Holy Year. In the whole of the Catholic Church, Christians were encouraged to make pilgrimages to holy places, local as well as international. Nabulagala was one of those places chosen in Kampala Archdiocese.

25th June 1978: In preparations for the centenary celebrations of the arrival of the Catholic Church in Uganda and in commemoration of the 99th anniversary of the First Eucharist in Uganda.

24th June 2007: At the inauguration of Mapeera-Nabulagala Parish.

28th June 2009: Pilgrimage to mark 130 years since the arrival of the pioneer missionaries and the first Eucharist in Uganda. The general theme was: "**In the footsteps of Mapeera and Amans**". Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala was the main celebrant. Other events of the day were: The blessing of the **Grotto of our Lady of Nabulagala**, re-dedication to Mary and the breaking of the ground for the presbytery by Card. Wamala.

6th March 2011: Burial of the remains in the memorial chapel. The remains of Fr. Girault could not be brought to Uganda because they had been buried in a common grave with those of other missionaries in Algiers. Instead, some photocopies of the letters he wrote in his own hand while at Nabulagala were put in his urn.

The theme of the day was: **“How Beautiful are the feet of the messenger of the Good News”** (Is. 52:7). The main celebrant was Cardinal Emmanuel Wamala. The prayer for the re-dedication to Mary was said and the text was signed by the bishops present and the representatives of the different Christian groups, and was then put under the statue of Our Lady of Africa found inside the memorial chapel. On this same day, the association of **Mapeera and Amans Beatification Promoters (MAB-PRO)** was officially instituted and its Constitutions approved by the Archbishop of Kampala, Dr. Cyprian Kizito Lwanga.

Mapeera-Nabulagala Catholic Parish – St. John the Baptist

The preparations of the two sub-parishes, Mapeera-Kijukizo and Masanafu, cut off from Nakulabye Parish, to become a new parish started on Ash Wednesday, 1st March 2006. The Missionaries of Africa (White Fathers) were entrusted this mission.

The inauguration was on Sunday, 24th June 2007, feast day of the birth of St. John the Baptist. Its motto is: **“Ndisiimisa ki nze Omukama”** (How shall I thank the Lord! Cf. Ps. 116: 12), and the logo: **“two hands raising up the chalice”**, a symbol of thanksgiving to God for all His goodness as expressed in the above psalm, but also a reminder of the first Holy Mass in Uganda celebrated at this place. On this day, the Parish Church, the Statue of Our Lady of Nabulagala (inside the church) and the painting of St. John the Baptist were blessed. There were some adult baptisms and confirmations, and the installation of the parish priest. His Grace, Dr. Cyprian Kizito Lwanga was the main

celebrant. The Kabaka of Buganda, Ronald Muwenda Mutebi II, was the guest of honour.

Consecration of the New Church (25th June 2016)

The story of the ‘churches’ at Nabulagala started way back on the 25th June 1879 when the pioneer missionaries celebrated the first Mass in the room of Mapeera. Thus, Mapeera’s room was to be used as the ‘first chapel’ until they built one about which we read the following from their dairy of the **6th December 1879:**

“We have finished arranging the new chapel and this evening, Fr. Livinhachastaken in the Blessed Sacrament. We have placed the Statue of the Blessed Virgin above the Crucifix of the Altar; as for the footstool, we have put –a golden bracelet; we have put underneath it a silver-plated paper and covered all with a beautiful flag of the Sacred Heart made by the Carmelites; all this has made a very nice effect.” (Fr. Girault)

In 1939 the work started to build the Memorial Chapel to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1st Eucharist in Uganda.

In 1991, the Christians of Kijukizo began the construction of their sub-parish church, which served as the parish church of Mapeera-Nabulagala until 2016.

The work of enlarging the old church started in January 2013 and was completed in 2016. It was consecrated on the 25th June 2016, at the occasion of the annual pilgrimage. The main celebrant was the Archbishop of Kampala Archdiocese,

His Grace Dr. Cyprian Kizito Lwanga. On the same occasion, in the altar were put the relics of: St. Catherine of Sienna, St. Charles Lwanga, St. Mathias Mulumba and the Ashes from Nakiyanja where Catholic and Protestant martyrs were burnt together. There are also stained glass windows at the back of the church, two with Mapeera and Amans, the founders of Nabulagala, and two others with the four Martyrs baptised at Nabulagala: Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe, Andrea Kaggwa, Luka Baanabakintu and Mathias Mulumba.

The Cemetery

Besides the ‘five pioneer missionaries’ buried in the memorial chapel, there are other missionaries buried here. These, like the first five, are that ‘grain of wheat’ talked about by our Lord Jesus Christ when he said that: *“Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it remains alone. But if it die, it bears much fruit.”* (Jn. 12: 24).

The remains of 13 of these missionaries were transferred from Lubaga Chapel cemetery and buried here on the 27th October 2015. Among these we have: Fr. Denoit Camille who was the co-founder with Mapeera of Nabunnya and thanks to him we have the story of the last days of Mapeera, his death and burial; Bro. Cyprien van Griesven Joseph the architect of Lubaga Cathedral; Fr. Felix Gracy, founder of Narozali Parish. We are the fruits of their *‘falling into the ground’!*

Take note also of the tomb of Natalia Nvannuungi (1873-1997), sister of St. Joseph Mukasa Balikuddembe. She was the first to be buried at this place in 1997. Her stay at Kijukizo played an important role in the protection of the

church land and the growth of the sub-parish Christian community.

Monthly Eucharist for the cause of the beatification of Mapeera and Amans

In the effort to promote the devotion of Mapeera and Amans in view of their beatification and canonisation, the Association of Mapeera and Amans Beatification Promoters (MABPRO) decided to have a special Mass for that cause on the 17th day of each month, and in a special way here at Nabulagala (6.00pm). This

date is in reference to the 17th February 1879 when these two pioneer missionaries arrived in Uganda at Kigungu.

Annual Pilgrimage 25th June

Since 2015, there is an annual pilgrimage on the 25th June, whether it is a Sunday or a week day, to commemorate the first Eucharist in Uganda.

Although this date commemorates the First Eucharist in Uganda, reflection on the other Sacraments celebrated for the first time in Uganda at this place should

not be forgotten: **Baptism, Penance, Confirmation and Holy Communion.** Surely this reflection cannot exclude the role of Mary in the evangelisation of this country since this mission was entrusted to her from this very place.

Pilgrimage to Nabulagala, therefore, should inspire all pilgrims **“to re-think and meditate about our faith”**, as Cardinal Wamala recommended in his message at the occasion of the inauguration of Mapeera-Nabulagala parish in 2007.

PIONEER MISSIONARIES WITH TANGANYIKA TEAM



FIRST CARAVAN TO EAST AFRICA 1878:

1. Joseph Augier
2. Ludovic Girault
3. Leon Livinhac
4. Simeon Lourdel
5. Leon Barbot
6. Amans Delmas
7. Joachim Pascal
8. Theophile Dromaux
9. Henry Delaunay
10. Toussaint Deniaud

PICTORIAL



Grotto of Mother Mary of Nabulagala



Consecration of the Altar 25th June 2016



Nabulagala 6th March 2011



Inauguration Day 24th June 2007



Nabulagala June 2016



Kabaka Mutesa I owa Buganda P. 41

Kabaka Mutesa I



Kasubi Royal Tombs



Memorial 60th Anniversary 1939



Motto and Logo



St. John the Baptist,
Patron Saint of Nabulagala