

**SOLEMN CLOSING SESSION OF THE DIOCESAN INQUIRY  
OF THE CAUSE OF BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION  
OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD  
FR. SIMÉON LOURDEL [MAPEERA] and BRO. AMANS DELMAS**



On the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2018, many of us went to Nabulagala, the Ancestral Home of the Catholic Church in Uganda, to witness the Solemn Closing Session of the diocesan Inquiry on the lives of the two Servants of God, Fr. Simeon Lourdel Mapeera and Bro. Amans Delmas, in view of their beatification and canonisation.

Such a ceremony comes once in a blue moon! In Uganda, it has so far happened

three times. The first was that of the Uganda Martyrs (1915); the second was that of the two catechist martyrs of Paimol, Daudi Okello and Jildo Irwa; and the most recent one was that of Mgr Aloysius Ngobya and Sr. Amadeo Byabali (2016). We expect another one in the near future of Mother Kevin.

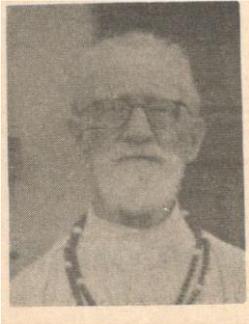
The ceremony concluded one of the prescribed activities at the diocesan level in the campaign of seeking the beatification and canonisation of our two ancestors in the faith. The process has now moved to the first level of the Roman phase where the ‘Acts of the Diocesan Inquiry’ will be scrutinised to find out whether the cause should continue to the next levels.

### **A brief history of this Cause**

In the case of Pere Mapeera, we can say that the idea goes back to the time immediately after his death in 1890. At that time, the Church leaders of his diocese of Arras in France together with the White Fathers, entrusted Fr. Nicq the work of writing his biography. The first edition of this book came out in 1895. It was so popular that after a few years all the copies were sold. The second edition which came out in 1905 was also out of print a few years later. The third edition was printed in 1922, two years after the beatification of the Uganda Martyrs; and in this edition a separate chapter on these martyrs was added.



Fr. Nicq, the writer of the first edition, greatly used the letters of Fr. Lourdel which he wrote to his relatives in France and to his religious superiors in Algiers. This biography clearly reveals the Christian heroic virtues of Pere Mapeera on which, we who never lived with him, base our firm conviction that he is worthy of being beatified and canonised.



Coming back to Uganda, the idea of initiating the diocesan inquiry for Pere Mapeera can be traced back in the year 1959. On the 15<sup>th</sup> August of that year, Fr. Modeste Raux (1870-1865) wrote a letter to Archbishop Joseph Cabana, requesting him to initiate the process both for Pere Mapeera and Mgr Leon Livinhac. (NB: Fr. Modeste was the one who finalised the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the biography of Mapeera, before his appointment in Uganda in 1906.) In his reply, Mgr Cabana told him that he would follow up the case of Mapeera; as for Mgr Livinhac, he told him that the Superior General of the White Fathers

was the responsible person to do it since Livinhac had been a Superior General of the Society and had died outside of Uganda. In any case, apart from that reply, there was no follow up on Fr. Modeste's request. The reason for this failure to follow up on this request seems to have been the Uganda Martyrs' cause for canonisation which had just been restarted in 1958 after many years of silence. It seems, therefore, that the attention of the church leaders at that time was totally focussed on this issue.

Cardinal Nsubuga was the one who resurrected the idea. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1987, in a Solemn Mass in Lubaga Cathedral, he initiated the diocesan inquiry on the life of Pere Mapeera. He got permission from Rome (*nihil obstat*) on 13<sup>th</sup> January 1988. He instituted the team headed by Bishop Joseph Mukwaya to do the work. When Archbishop Emmanuel Wamala succeeded him, he continued to promote the cause and the devotion.

### **Inquiry on the life of Bro Amans**

During the time of Cardinal Wamala, especially at the occasion of preparing Nabulagala to become a parish in 2005/6, some Christians asked to add Bro. Amans on the inquiry. Their reasoning for this request was that both Mapeera and Amans went through the same sufferings and hardships in their work of evangelisation in Uganda and Tanganyika. Archbishop Cyprian K. Lwanga welcomed the idea and sought permission from Rome which was granted on the 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010. On that same occasion, Rome asked Archbishop Cyprian to renew the process for Pere Mapeera by appointing the diocesan tribunal and other experts as prescribed by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints which he did on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2016 during a Solemn Mass in Lubaga Cathedral.



### **A ceremony to be seen once in a blue moon**

After two year of inquiry on the lives of the two Servants of God, Pere Mapeera and Bro. Amans, the Solemn Closing Session took place on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2018, Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This rare ceremony took place at the very place where these two apostles of Uganda inaugurated their evangelising mission of this country and where their remains are now

buried. The ceremony was preceded by the Holy Sacrifice of Mass presided by Mgr. Kalumba Gerald who represented the Archbishop.



The essence of this ceremony was to hand over the 'Acts of the Diocesan Inquiry', i.e., all the witnesses from more than forty five people and all the collected written documents about the two Servants of God which numbered to more than twenty thousand pages! The handing over of these documents was

done by the officials of the diocesan tribunal; each one making an oath, swearing before God and the Assembly that they had fulfilled the duties entrusted to them and had kept the secret of their office. These documents were sealed; some were sent to Rome while others were kept in the archives of the Archdiocese where they will remain sealed unless permission be given by Rome to open them.

### **We are just beginning....**



In their messages for the event, both the Archbishop Dr. Cyprian K. Lwanga and Cardinal Wamala reminded us that our campaign for the beatification and canonisation of Mapeera and Amans was just beginning! This message was not intended to discourage us or to make us loose hope, but rather to challenge us to put in more effort and zeal in our campaign; and not think that we had reached our goal. They further reminded us that we

have to pray seriously for miracles which are still demanded by Rome. They also invited us to financially contribute to the costs in the next phases.

### **Mother Mary with us**

Fr. Modeste, now resting in Lubaga cemetery, decided to write his letter of request for the initiation of the process of Mapeera's beatification on the feast of the Assumption of Mary. It is interesting to note that this Solemn Closing Ceremony was also celebrated on a Solemn Feast of Mary, that is, her Nativity. On this point, the Archbishop made the following reflection in his day's message:



“We have celebrated this event on the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. I think that the Lord wanted to remind us that as the birth of the Virgin Mary announced the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, likewise the arrival of our ancestors in the faith here in Uganda announced the birth of the Catholic Church in this country. Remembering, therefore, that it were these ancestors who taught us who Mary is and made us love her tenderly, we in turn entrust to her the next phases of their cause for beatification, asking her that all those phases may be completed smoothly and in the shortest time possible.

Cardinal Wamala in his day’s message had this to say on the same point:

“Brothers and Sisters, we are closing this phase and handing over the results of our work, from Nabulagala, the very place where our ancestors in the faith inaugurated their work of teaching the religion in our country; the same place where they are also resting. We are doing it on the 8<sup>th</sup> September when we are celebrating the Nativity of Our Blessed Mother Mary, to whom our ancestors consecrated us and their work. Let us use this chance to entrust our work to Our Mother, so that she may present it to her son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that it might bear worthy and expected fruits.

Our ancestors Pere Mapeera and Bro. Amans together with their companions trusted very much Mother Mary as we can discern from their prayer at the beginning of their mission here in Uganda through which they consecrated to her their lives and their apostolic work:

“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.”

We too, their spiritual grandchildren and as we have been invited by the Archbishop and the Cardinal, let us entrust our work to Our Mother of mercy, with confidence that she will not abandon us as she never abandoned our Ancestors in the faith, those who made us know her and love her dearly.



### **In the footsteps of Mapeera and Amans**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says the following about the reasons why some of the faithful are declared saints:



“By canonizing some of the faithful, i.e., by solemnly proclaiming that they practised heroic virtues and lived in fidelity to God’s grace, the Church recognizes the power of the Spirit of holiness with her and sustains the hope of believers by proposing the saints to them as **models and intercessors. The saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult moments in the Church’s history.**” (Article 828)

As we continue our campaign of praying to God for the beatification and canonisation of Pere Mapeera and Bro. Amans, and basing ourselves on the above teaching of the Church about the saints, let us double our efforts to know the life and works of these two Servants of God; let us take them as our models in their heroic virtues and fidelity to God’s grace so that they may become for us source of renewal in witnessing Christ especially amidst the present day challenges to the Church in Uganda, which they themselves laid the corner stone.

*(Visit our website: [mapeeraandamans.org](http://mapeeraandamans.org))*

**Jjajja Mapeera**