

CELEBRATING THE 137th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST RELIGIOUS VOWS IN UGANDA

This day is annually organised by the Association of Mapeera and Amans Beatification Promoters (MAB-PRO). It is in remembrance of the day when Bro. Amans Delmas, one of the two first Catholic Missionaries in Uganda, made his missionary oath in which he committed himself for life to serve the African people in general and the Ugandans in particular. This was on the 19th October 1879 at Nabulagala.

This day is dedicated to prayer for the Religious in Uganda and they are invited to come on that day to Nabulagala, the very place where Bro. Amans pronounced his oath. This year, a number of religious together with the lay Christians congregated to the same venue. They were officially welcomed to the parish by Fr. Bernard Chowa.

The theme for the day's reflection was: "*Religious in Uganda on the royal road of Christian discipleship*" adopted from Pope Francis' speech at Nalukolongo (28th November 2015) in which he said that '*hearing and responding to the cry of the poor is the royal road of Christian discipleship*'. In fact, the whole reflection, guided by Fr. Nnyombi Richard, was based on the text of the Pope's speech. He concluded his reflection inviting the pilgrims to '*mind the gap*' between the rich and the poor in this country which is widening day after day!

The Eucharistic celebration which followed the reflection was presided by Fr. Edward Ssebukoola, the parish priest of Ggombe. Fr. Edward is also a member of Mapeera and Amans beatification promoters. St. Monica choir lead the singing. In his homily, he invited the congregation, this time joined by the pupils from Mapeera Primary School, to imitate Mapeera and Amans in their pastoral zeal and commitment to do the will of God whatever the cost! Like them, he said, we too should be ready to go to the frontline of the evangelising mission, ready to attack the many challenges that face our Christian Faith and the Catholic Church.

At the end of the Mass, a procession left the church going to the Memorial chapel where the remains of the pioneer missionaries are buried. A beautiful bouquet of flowers in honour of Brother Amans was put in front of the burial wall and with lighted candles – reminding us the Light of Christ which these missionaries brought to us, we concluded with the prayer for the beatification of Mapeera and Amans.

"*Oluganda kulya.....*" (brotherhood goes with the eating together.....), so goes the Luganda proverb! Our reflection and prayer was followed by lunch! We are very grateful to all who attended this celebration. We thank the members of MAB-PRO and the Parish leadership for the good preparations! We continue thanking God for the gift of the religious men and women in our country and we pray that they too, in their pastoral zeal and commitment, follow in the footsteps of Bro. Amans.