

Cardinal Nsubuga: A Devotee to the Pioneer Missionaries in Uganda



Remains of Amans and Barbot 6th March 1974

On the 20th April 2016, we will be celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the death of Emmanuel Cardinal K. Nsubuga (1914-1991). He was well known for his devotion to the pioneer Catholic Missionaries in Uganda: Frs Leon Livinhac, Leon Barbot, Ludovic Girault, Simeon Lourdel and Bro. Amans Delmas. Of the five, his love and admiration for Fr. Lourdel was beyond telling and that is why he initiated the process for the cause of his beatification in 1987. Here below are some of the actions he did that express his devotion to those he loved to address as “Our ancestors in the Faith”.

- **1974:** He brought to Uganda the remains of Bro. Amans Delmas and Fr. Leon Barbot from Bagamoyo (Tanganyika) and Zanzibar respectively. On that occasion, he said:

“It is a Baganda custom that the tomb of the ancestors should be on Buganda soil as a proof of our origin to the coming generations. If a grandfather dies far from his country, his grandchildren will always bring him home to his native land. We, the Christians of Uganda, must do the same thing for our spiritual ancestors.”
- **1974:** On foot, by cars, aeroplanes and trains, he made a pilgrimage in France to the different places where the pioneer missionaries came from. He said that he went there to venerate the places where these missionaries were born, baptised and grew-up as well as to meet their relatives and to gather some souvenirs about them. In this journey, he was accompanied by Fr. Francis Payeur of the Society of the White Fathers.
- **1975:** He brought the remains of Mgr Leon Livinhac, the first bishop of Uganda, from Algiers (Algeria). Mgr Livinhac left Uganda for the last time on 9th April 1890 when at that time the missionaries were having their mission at Nabunnya. He died on the 11th November 1922 and was first buried at Maison-Carrée in Algiers (Mother House of the Missionaries of Africa), then exhumed from there in 1970 and transferred to the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa in Algiers. It is here that Cardinal Nsubuga exhumed his remains on the 12th April 1975 and left on 14th April for Uganda. NB: He could not get the remains of Fr. Girault Ludovic and Bro. Leo Lwanga (first Ugandan to become Missionary of Africa) because they had been put in a common grave with others after transferring them from the cemetery at the Mother House in 1970.

- **1975:** He presided the ceremony to exhume the remains of Fr. Lourdel from the cemetery behind Lubaga Cathedral and kept them in his chapel together with remains of the other pioneer missionaries. Here is an extract from what he wrote about that ceremony:

“...when the diggers reached the bones, all the people present and the religious were full of joy, they clapped their hands, they jumped... Some people took to their homes the soil and the small pieces of bones We had some prayers, blessed the bones and took them in the Cathedral and from there we took them in my Chapel where, these heroes who brought to us the Light of Christ, once again met in the same place....Let us pray that they may strengthen the Catholics in the faith and good morals.” (10th May 1975)



Remains of Mapeera 10th May 1975

- **1975:** This was a Holy Year and Christians all over the world had been invited to make pilgrimages to local and international pilgrimage places. Cardinal Nsubuga took the remains of Mapeera and Amans to Kitebi and Nabulagala. Remember that these two spent fifteen days at Kitebi from 21st February to 7th March 1879 before going to Nabulagala in their first house built for them by Kabaka Muteesa I.
- **1975 (3rd June):** Pilgrimage and blessing of the Uganda Martyrs Shrine at Namugongo. Cardinal Nsubuga with hundreds of pilgrims left Lubaga at 5am on the 2nd for Namugongo with the relics of Charles Lwanga and Matthias Mulumba plus those of the pioneer missionaries. NB: According to Fr. Yves Tourigny in his book: “Ancestors in the Faith”, the first plan of Cardinal Nsubuga was to bury the remains of these pioneer missionaries at Namugongo, but they were finally buried at Nabulagala on the 6th March 2011, the place where they started their evangelizing mission of Uganda in 1879.
- **1976:** He founded the *Congregation of the Good Samaritan Sisters*, with their Mother House at Nalukolongo in remembrance of the charitable works of the missionaries for the poor and the sick during their stay in this place between June 1885 and October 1888. NB: Nalukolongo was the 2nd Catholic Mission in Uganda.
- **1978:** He started *Mapeera Bakateyamba’s Home* (for disabled and needy) at Nalukolongo again in memory of the care for the orphans and needy by Mapeera and his confreres. The first residents in this home were received on the 17th February 1979, on the centenary anniversary of the arrival of the Mapeera and Amans in Uganda.

- **8th December 1978:** He laid the foundation stone of the '*Library and Archives*' at Lubaga as a memorial for Bro. Amans in preparation for the centenary celebrations of their arrival in Uganda.
- **1984:** He founded the Religious Congregation of St. Amans (Brothers of St. Amans; Lay Auxiliaries of the Clergy – L.A.C), again in memory of Bro. Amans. But, since Bro. Amans is not yet canonised, he dedicated the new institute to St. Amans who was the patron saint of Bro. Amans.
- **1987:** He concluded writing the book in Luganda entitled: "*Obulamu bwa Mapeera. Omutume wa Yuganda*", (i.e.,The Life of Mapeera. Apostle of Uganda). In its introduction, he wrote:

"I have concluded this work today on Monday 2nd March 1987 at the Generalate of the White Fathers in Rome, the Society of Mapeera.....Now, as we pray that our apostle be beatified, it is necessary to know some facts about his life and I hope that whoever will read this book will know him better, love him and take him as a model in his life."

In the same year, on the 22 September, he officiated the ceremony in Lubaga Cathedral to start the process for the beatification of Mapeera.

- **1990:** He wrote in his last will that he should be buried at Nalukolongo, behind the memorial chapel of the pioneer missionaries. This was fulfilled on the 29th April 1991.

Cardinal Nsubuga was really a true grandson of the pioneer missionaries! His love for the and especially for Mapeera is beyond our imagination! He expressed it not only in words but especially in his actions, creativity and courage. He had a strong faith in the God of Mapeera and his confreres, that He could provide him whatever he had decided to do for the good of the Church and his country and he invited the flock entrusted to him by this same God to do the same.

We are also amazed and challenged by Cardinal Nsubuga's sense of history! How he endeavoured to preserve the historical places linked to the pioneer missionaries and their spiritual children, the Uganda Martyrs. How he celebrated 'historical dates' at 'historical places' with *gratitude*, drawing from these celebrations the *passion* to live the present and the *hope* to face courageously the future! May we, as we celebrate his 25th Anniversary of entry into New Life, be inspired to do the same!

Nnyombi Richard, (M.Afr.)



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