

## Ideal to die for, not to kill

### Ideal to die for.....

When the Pioneer Missionaries left Algiers in 1878, they were almost sure that they will never go back to their beloved homeland to see again their dear ones. Fr. Simon Lourdel Mapeera, whom we can consider to be their spokesperson, expressed this very well in his will, written on the 15th April 1878, two days before they left Algiers for their journey to East Africa: *"I engage myself in this journey to those far off countries, from where most likely I will never come back home ....."*

However, in spite of the threats, these men, consumed by the passion for their "ideal", were ready to risk their lives. Again, their spokesperson spelled out in clear terms this 'ideal' in his will: *"... but I want to be clearly understood that I am going there for no other reason except the one of spreading the **glory of God** by widening the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ in the hearts and minds of the people there."*

The Uganda Martyrs, like their fathers in the Faith, had an 'ideal' and a 'passion' for it, ready to witness to it whatever the cost. The passion for this ideal started from the beginning of their catechumenate when some of them had to find the most convenient time for their catechism classes, even when it meant to go at night. And when on that memorable day at Munyonyo they decided, like Peter and John (Acts 4/19-20), to 'obey God rather than men', they must have known the consequence of their decision and when they started their journey from Munyonyo to Namugongo, they knew very well that they were not going for a picnic! Like their spiritual fathers in Algiers eight years before, they were more than sure that they will never go back alive to their dear homes, nor see again their beloved ones. They were *engaging* themselves on this journey for an ideal: their Christian Faith and its implications in their day to day living.

### .... not kill

The ways and means the pioneer missionaries had at their disposal to realise their 'ideal' was symbolised by the drawings on their *caravan flag*: the **Cross** of Jesus Christ, a symbol par excellence of active non-violence, the **Sacred Heart of Jesus**, a symbol par excellence of disinterested love and service, and **Mary** the symbol par excellence of maternal love and care.

Equally, the Uganda Martyrs never turned to violent means (words or actions) while trying to live fully in accordance to their ideal; and not only them but also the whole Christian Community which instead sought spiritual strength from the sacraments and encouragement from the missionaries at Nalukolongo mission to be able to face courageously the persecution.

### Ideals to kill are idols

For a follower of Christ, 'ideals' that allow to kill or the use of violence and other immoral means are but false ideals. They are 'idols' (false gods). And let us not limit this killing to only the physical act of murder or assassination. This assassination can also be spiritual, moral, psychological, social, political and economic. It can be carried out by an individual person or by an institution. The victim can be an individual person or a community (group) of people.

Two 'false ideals' that many of us in Uganda of today have added on the list of our ideals, sometimes with the blessing of some churches, are '*wealth and power*'. By seeking to attain these 'false ideals', which in fact are only a means, whatever the cost, has driven many Ugandans to assassinate physically, but also spiritually, morally, psychologically, socially, politically and economically, their fellow citizens and unfortunately this phenomenon continues up to this day.

### Do we have ideals to die for, not to kill?

Descendants of Mapeera and Amans and of the Uganda Martyrs, do we have as individuals and as a community of Ugandan Catholics, some ideals and the passion for their realisation, ready to die for them not passively but actively and pro-actively; ideals to die for and not to kill or use any immoral and violent means in order to achieve them? How does each of these 'ideals' include and integrate the 'ideal' of Mapeera and the Uganda Martyrs, that of '*spreading the glory of God*', which St. Irenaeus (2<sup>nd</sup> century bishop of Lyons, France) well defined saying that "*the glory of God is the human being fully alive*".