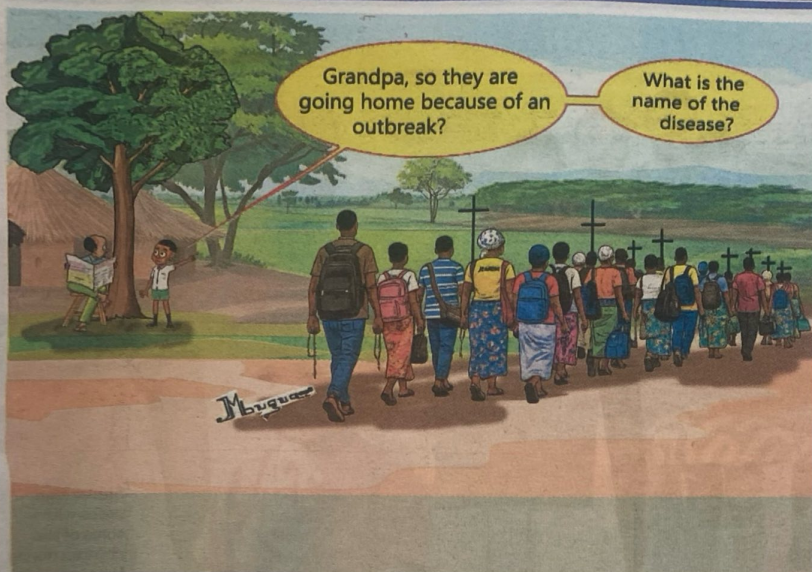




Musho wonders why pilgrims walk so far

BY TONY MUSHOBOROZI

One afternoon at Grandpa's farm, Musho sat on a wooden fence watching the highway that ran just beyond the cattle paddock.

The road was always busy with trucks from Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi, some groaning up the hill while others hissed down the steep slope. But he was not here to watch the trucks and the buses.

He had recently developed a habit of watching pilgrims walking past on their 400km long walk to the city. Some were from as far as Congo and Burundi, while others were from far away villages. They came in groups large and small, walking toward Kampala for the Uganda Martyrs celebrations at Namugongo.

Then he turned to Grandpa, who was seated nearby peeling sugarcane with the concentration of a surgeon.

"Grandpa," Musho said, "why do these people walk all this way?"

Grandpa looked up. "To honour the Uganda Martyrs." "But why walk? If I had to go that far, I would take a bus," Musho said.

"For many of them, the walking is part of the prayer." Musho frowned. "So, blisters are holy?"

Grandpa laughed. "In a manner of speaking, yes."

"I even see children among them. I do not know if I can walk nonstop for three weeks,"

Musho said. Both fell silent. Both were preoccupied with different thoughts.

"I am told they walk because the martyrs walked a long distance on their way to be executed," Musho said.

"Yeah. A long time ago, a group of young Christian converts in Buganda refused to abandon their faith. They were matched for long distances and killed for their faith on the orders of Kabaka

Mwanga. The long walk is in honour of that sacrifice."

As Musho watched them daily, he could not believe that these people would walk for weeks in order to make it to Kampala in time for the big day. Then one, out of the blue, Musho witnessed something he least expected. The pilgrims were walking toward the opposite direction instead of towards the city.

"Grandpa, how come the pilgrims are walking that way, instead of this way?" Musho asked.

"You have not heard yet?" his Grandpa asked.

"Heard what?" Musho asked.

"The celebrations for this year were cancelled."

"Cancelled? By who? Why?" "By the government. It seems there is an outbreak of some disease and they fear that the whole country might get infected if three million people meet at Namugongo and then disperse back into the villages," Grandpa said.

"But can God not protect his people?" Musho asked. "I am sure God could but the government does not want to take chances."

Musho spent days watching the pilgrims walking back home. It made him sad.

Answer this

1. Why do pilgrims walk to Namugongo?

2. Who were the Uganda Martyrs?

3. Why were the celebrations cancelled?

4. How did Musho feel watching pilgrims return home?

What you say

How have you benefited from the first term holiday?

Gemima Naginda 12, P.6, St Peter's Primary School, Ngogwe, Bulikwe District

During this holiday I have acquired skills to make mats and flower pots which can beautify our home.

Noreen Nampilima 11, P.6, St Peter's Primary School, Ngogwe, Bulikwe District

I was able to get enough time to visit my relatives and friends whom I had spent a long time without seeing.

Jamillah Nakasagga, 11, P.6, St Peter's Primary School, Ngogwe, Bulikwe District

During the first term holiday I learnt how to read the Bible and how to sing some church hymns after my parents taught me how to read the music.

Precious Wepondi, 14, P.7, St Peter's Primary School, Ngogwe, Bulikwe District

During this first term holiday I dug up my garden in which I planted maize and beans. I hope to sell and get some pocket money.

Tracy Nalugonda, 12, P.6, St Peter's Primary School, Ngogwe, Bulikwe District

During the first term holiday, I relaxed and engaged in many sports and games which has refreshed my memory.

Pamela Bulyaba, 11, P.6, St Peter's Primary School, Ngogwe, Bulikwe District

I was taught how to perform the kiganda dance by my teachers which is something I have always wanted for a long time.

BY FRED MUZAALÉ