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BY YOWERI KAGUTA

With two months to the commemoration of Uganda Martyrs Day, Kasese Diocese under Mbarara Archdiocese has intensified spiritual and liturgical preparations ahead of the June 3 celebrations at Namugongo.

At the centre of the preparations is the diocesan choir, expected to lead thousands of pilgrims during the Eucharistic celebration.

More than 300 choristers drawn from the diocese's 14 Catholic parishes are undergoing a week-long intensive training at St Augustine Catechists' Training Centre in Nsenyi, Kisinga Town Council.

The training is marked by devotion, discipline and spiritual renewal, with the choir rehearsing over 100 liturgical hymns selected to guide pilgrims in prayer, praise and reflection on the witness of the martyrs.

The diocesan choir chaplain, Rev Fr Mariko Bwambale, described the preparations as both a musical and spiritual journey aimed at ensuring a befitting celebration.

"By God's grace, we have practised all the songs designated for the national celebration. What remains is to enrich them with instruments and harmonies to uplift the faithful into a deeper encounter with Christ," Rev Fr Bwambale said.

He commended the choristers for their commitment, noting that their role goes beyond performance.

These choristers have dedicated their time and energy in a true spirit of service to the Church. Their voices will not only sing but also evangelise and inspire pilgrims at Namugongo," he added.

Rev Fr Mariko also lauded diocesan leadership and the Central Executive Committee for providing the support

Kasese Diocese steps up Martyrs Day preparations



Choristers, drawn from the diocese's 14 Catholic parishes, undergo training at St Augustine Catechists' Training Centre in Nsenyi, Kisinga Town Council, on Tuesday. PHOTO/ YOWERI KAGUTA

needed for the preparations. External trainers have joined the programme to assess the choir's readiness.

Discipline

Chief trainer Vincent Muhindo said the group has shown discipline and willingness to learn.

"They are highly trainable and have embraced songs in different languages, reflecting the universal nature of the Church. We are confident their performance will be spiritually enriching and liturgically sound," he said.

After the Nsenyi training, the choir relocated to Holy Dove Vocation Sec-

ondary School in Kinyamaseke Town Council for further rehearsals ahead of the pilgrimage to Namugongo.

BACKGROUND

Uganda Martyrs Day, marked annually on June 3, commemorates 45 young Christian converts—both Anglican and Catholic Church—who were executed between 1885 and 1887 on the orders of Kabaka Mwanga II of Buganda. The martyrs, many of them pages in the royal court, were killed for refusing to renounce their Christian faith.

According to the tentative programme, the choir is expected to arrive early to lead hymns, responses and meditative chants during the liturgy at the shrine where the martyrs were killed for their faith.

Significance

This year's celebration holds special significance for Kasese Diocese, which last led the national prayers in 2005 under the late Bishop Emeritus Egidio Nkaijanabwo.

Its return in 2026 is seen as both a moment of grace and a renewed call to witness.

The diocese will lead the celebrations under the theme, "Christ is alive in you and me."

Under the leadership of Bishop Francis Aquirinus Kibira Kambale, a 13-member

organising committee chaired by Rev Fr John Baptist Kule has been set up to coordinate the preparations.

However, the diocese faces financial constraints. Of the required Shs4.5 billion budget, only about Shs250 million has been raised.

Rev Fr Kule appealed to the public for support.

"I appeal for financial support from all people of goodwill. Every contribution, no matter how small, is a sign of faith and unity as we prepare to honour the martyrs," he said.

As June 3 approaches, the faithful are being urged to prepare spiritually through prayer, repentance and renewed commitment to the Gospel.

Thousands of pilgrims, including those from the Democratic Republic of Congo, are expected to attend the celebrations.

300
CHOIR
MEMBERS