HOW SEMINARY ROSE FROM NOTHING

BY MATHIAS MAZINGA

On November 11, St Paul's National Major Seminary, Kinyamasika in Fort Portal, Kabarole district, celebrated its silver jubilee in a ceremony that attracted stakeholders and friends. The celebrations ran under the theme: *How great are your works Lord* (Psalm 92:6).

The seminary was started by the Catholic Bishops of Uganda to respond to the increasing number of candidates for priestly formation.

The rector, Fr Dr Lazarus Luyinda, marvelled at the remarkable achievements of this theological seminary. "We burst into thanksgiving and praises for the wonders the Lord has done: from ruins to splendour, from bushes to lawns, from almost nothing to greatness. Our mouths are filled with laughter; our tongues sing for joy, the Lord has done great things for us (Psalm 126:2-3)," he said:

Kinyamasika now has a magnetic beauty, enhanced by the skillfully designed buildings on its picturesque campus.

But those who were there at the beginning say this sharply contrasts what was there during its inception. Bishop Francis Kibira, a former rector, has vivid memories.

"We opened with 49 seminarians on August 21, 1992. We started in old buildings inherited from St Scholastica Teacher Training College. Then the devastating earthquake of February 1994 destroyed some of the improvements that had been made," Kibira said.

"There was no library, textbooks and sports field. There was only one block for the accommodation of the seminarians.

There was also no running water. We would hire a truck to bring us water for cooking. The seminarians fetched their own water from Kinongoro well," he noted.

But that taught the staff and seminarians the vital skill of self-reliance and partnerships. The priests shared their prayers, personal textbooks, notes and other belongings with the seminarians.

"We eventually improved on the seminarians' accommodation and constructed our own sports facilities. We also started a dairy farm and piggery, planted a banana plantation and a eucalyptus forest. Kinyamasika became God's miracle. The seminary identified with her community life and spirit," Kibira explained.

Some of Kinyamasika's achievements include infrastructure developments, employment of the area folks and ultimately, the 557 priests it has trained.

Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala could not hide his joy.

"Kinyamasika Seminary is a brand. It has formed many good priests, who are zealous, resourceful and respectful to bishops and the people they serve."

Archbishop John Baptist Odama, who presided over the celebrations, inaugurated the statue of St Paul, the monument for the seminary's silver jubilee. The seminary's outstanding development partners were also recognised with awards.

The function climaxed with a friendly soccer match between the seminary's ordained alumni and the current students. The seminarians won 2-1.



Statue of St Paul erected infront of the new chapel



The old chapel

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