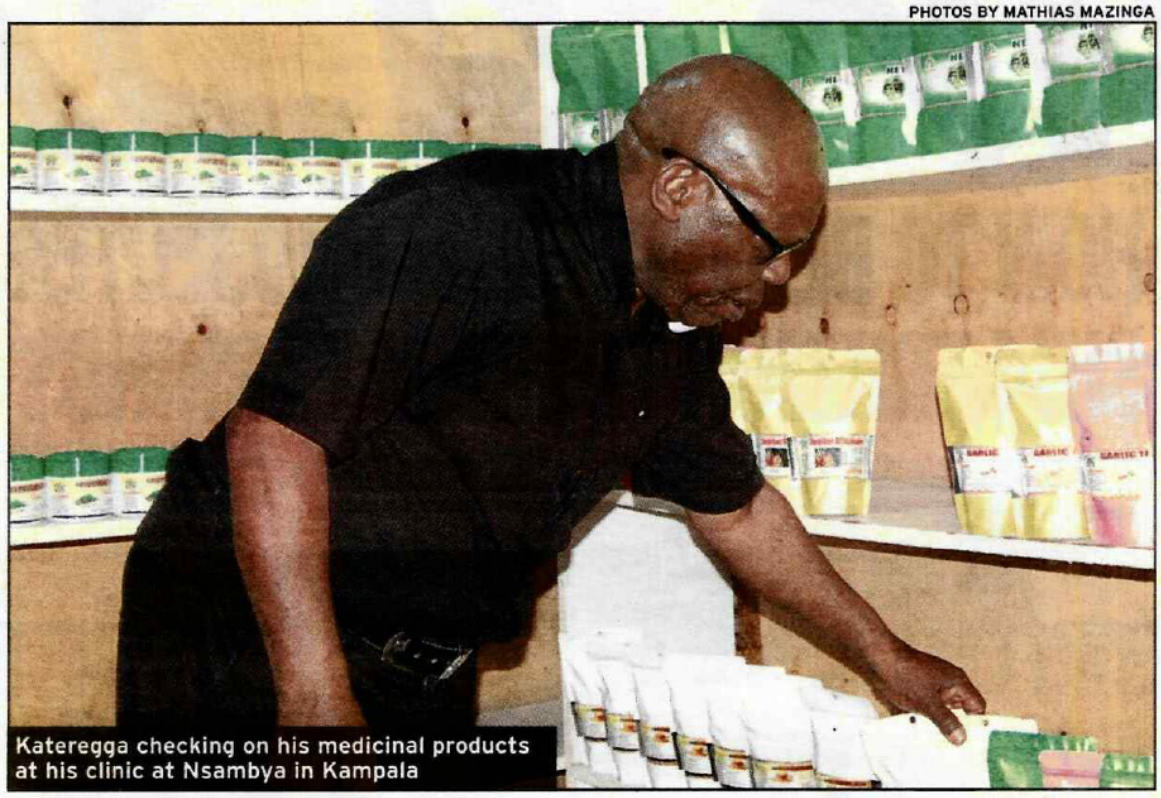
HOW FR KATEREGGA HAS FOUND A FORTUNE IN MAKING HERBAL MEDICINE

By Mathias Mazinga

PHOTOS BY MATHIAS MAZINGA



Kateregga checking on his medicinal products at his clinic at Nsambya in Kampala

Rev. Fr. Vincent Kateregga, a priest of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Masaka (currently serving as the curate of Buyamba parish), is a multiskilled versatile entrepreneur. He is a reputable sacred music composer, seasoned science teacher, educational administrator and preacher.

But even more interestingly, he is a celebrated herbalist with extensive knowledge in herbal medicine administration.

People of all walks of life flock his clinic at Buyamba parish, but also at Nsambya, where he meets people from Metropolitan Kampala every Thursday.

So, why and how did he swerve into herbal medicine administration? And how does he balance the herbal health-care ministry with his sacerdotal obligations?

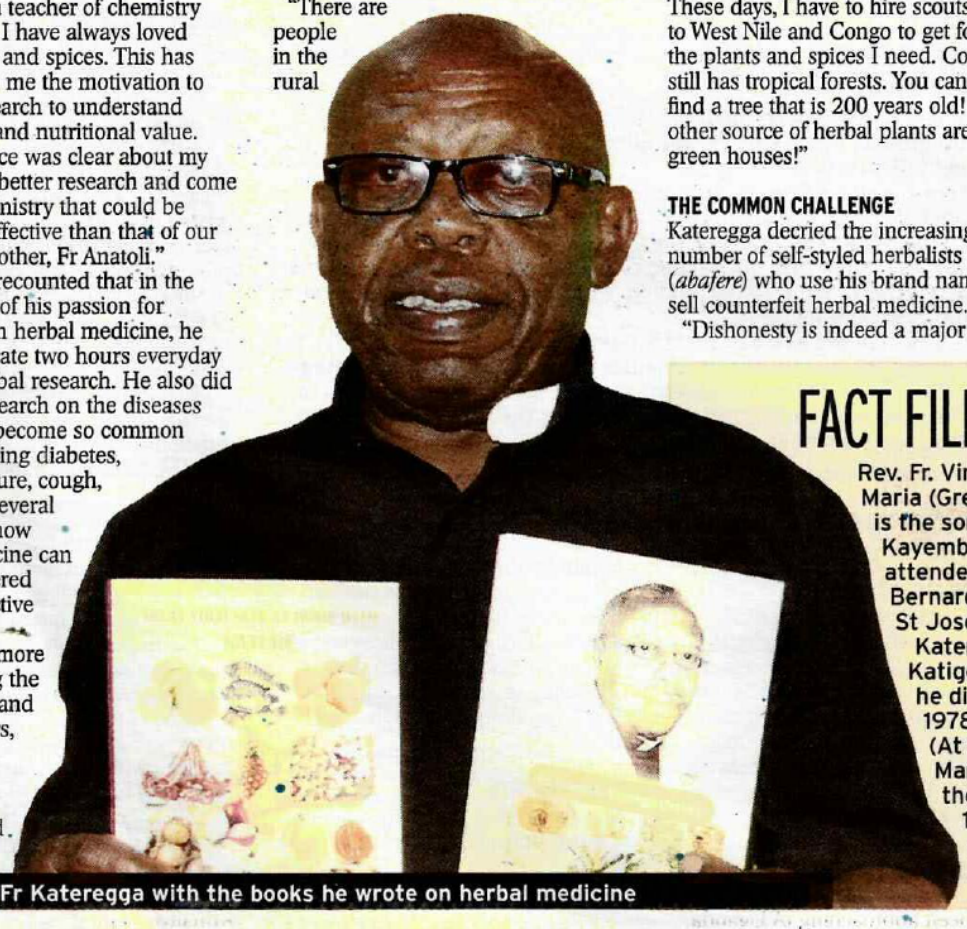
"I should say I was inspired by the herbal ministry of the late Brother Anatoli Wasswa. He was a member of staff of Katigondo Major Seminary during the time I was a student there. I used to look at him mixing the plant substances into medicine and giving it to the patients. I realised he was putting in a lot of passion and personal effort. He was not after money. All he wanted was to cause recovery of the patients that went to him," Fr Kateregga said.

He explained that Wasswa believed in holistic development because he knew that people who were sick and poor could neither listen nor understand the Gospel message preached to them. So, he decided to do research into herbal medicine and consequently became a highly respected clerical herbalist.

"The inspiration I got from Brother Anatoli thrived on my passion for research as a teacher of chemistry and biology. I have always loved plants, fruits and spices. This has always given me the motivation to do deep research to understand their health and nutritional value. My conscience was clear about my ability to do better research and come up with a ministry that could be even more effective than that of our venerable brother, Fr Anatoli."

Kateregga recounted that in the earlier years of his passion for discoveries in herbal medicine, he used todedicate two hours everyday to doing herbal research. He also did intensive research on the diseases which have become so common today, including diabetes, ulcers, pressure, cough, cancer and several others, and how herbal medicine can be administered to the respective patients.

"I became more active during the past decade and over the years, I have been improving on my products and services," Kateregga said.



Fr Kateregga with the books he wrote on herbal medicine

KNOWING MEDICINAL PLANTS

Kateregga said in his research, he has relied much on elderly people in villages who have deep knowledge of nature, ordinary people that some people could even despise.

"There are people in the rural areas who know much about the medicinal plants. I consult them a lot. Subsequently, I do more research on the information they have given me. It is unfortunate that the medicinal plants and spices are now hard to find, especially in central Uganda, due to gross environmental destruction. These days, I have to hire scouts to go to West Nile and Congo to get for me the plants and spices I need. Congo still has tropical forests. You can still find a tree that is 200 years old! Our other source of herbal plants are the green houses!"

THE COMMON CHALLENGE

Kateregga decried the increasing number of self-styled herbalists (*abafere*) who use his brand name to sell counterfeit herbal medicine.

"Dishonesty is indeed a major challenge of our society. We in herbal medicine are also not spared. But for me, I will always remain true to my ministry. I ensure every product I come up with is tested and approved by National Drug Authority. I urge my brethren in the herbal medicine service to maintain integrity," he said.

POVERTY CHALLENGE

Kateregga cites poverty as another serious challenge, saying: "Most of the patients I receive are poverty-stricken. They have a serious illness which needs to be treated, but they don't have money on them. But of course, to me, herbal healing is a calling which complements my sacerdotal ministry. I am in the practice not for money, but because of divine calling. And it is not only money that gives fulfillment. If I give a patient medicine and they get healed, that is my joy and profit because I know they will go back home, work hard and contribute to their community and the country."

Kateregga revealed that he has a partnership with some Chinese who currently do scans for needy patients for free.

"I am sure this is also God's working. Is legacy not of more worth than money? We also have another serious challenge. Many of our people don't believe herbal medicine is effective, yet it is the real source of modern medicine," he explained.

Beyond herbal medicine, Kateregga has also written a book titled, *Treat Yourself at Home*, to help Ugandans deal with some ailments that can be treated with medicinal plants, without necessarily having to part with money.

SACERDOTAL SERVICE

After his ordination, Kateregga served as curate at Kyamuliibwa parish church (1985-87). He was then appointed to Bukalasa Minor Seminary, where after a short time, he took up a special appointment to Sacred Heart Minor Seminary Mubende (in Kiyinda-Mityana diocese), where he taught chemistry and biology (1987-1990).

Kateregga was then re-appointed to Bukalasa Seminary, where he still taught chemistry and biology, until 1992 when he was transferred to Bisanje parish, and later Nazareeti parish church, where he served as curate until 2000.

Between 2000 and 2004, Kateregga served at the co-ordinator of the Education Week, Masaka Diocese. He then joined Makerere University for his master's programme (master of science, human resource management in Education), which he finished in 2007.

Kateregga was later appointed to other parishes, including Narozaali, Butende and Luvule. He is currently the curate of Buyamba parish in Rakai district.

WHAT PEOPLE SAY

Yozefu Ntambaazi (resident of Masaka)
We need people like Fr Kateregga. By treating people of their ailments, he preaches in words and actions the holistic Gospel, which addresses the spiritual and physical concerns of the people and hence propels development.

Percy Nyakato (Kibuye)
Kateregga is a multi-talented priest. He composed for us beautiful hymns. He has also contributed to community development through his herbal healing ministry.

FACT FILE

Rev. Fr. Vincent Kateregga (68) hails from Villa-Maria (Greater Masaka), in Kalungu district. He is the son of modest farmers, the late Catechist Kayemba and Agatha Nakate Kayemba. He attended Villa-Maria Primary School, St Bernard's College Kisowera, (Kyamaganda) and St Joseph's SS Villa-Maria.

Kateregga started his priestly formation at Katigondo National Major Seminary, where he did his Philosophical studies between 1978 and 1981. After doing pastoral work (At Bilkira parish in Masaka), he joined St Mary's National Seminary Ggaba for his theological studies between 1982 and 1885. He was subsequently ordained a priest by Bishop Adrian Kivumbi Ddungu.