...tourism and position Uganda as flag-off will take place at 8:00am. for our young people to be anchored management.

Namugongo Catholic Martyrs Shrine to open for pilgrims on May 24

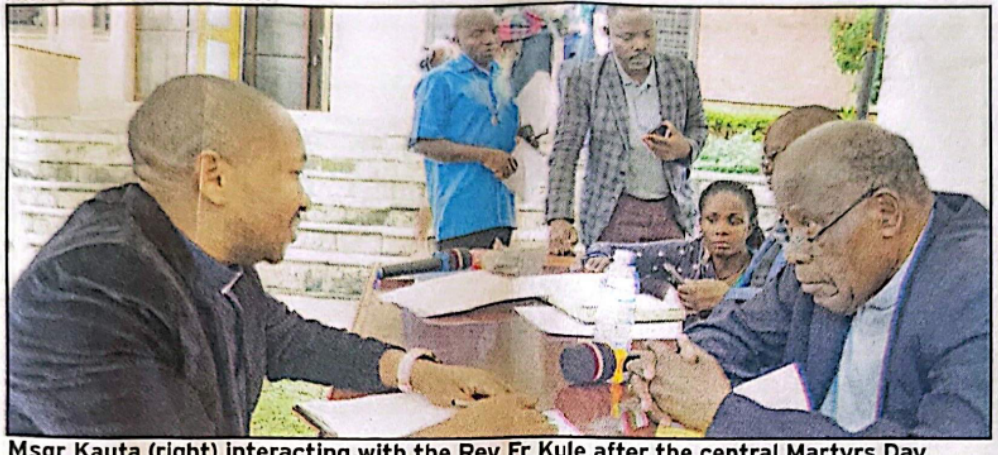
By Juliet Lukwago

The Uganda Martyrs Catholic Shrine, Namugongo, has announced May 24, 2026, as the official date when its premises will open to pilgrims travelling long distances ahead of this year's Uganda Martyrs Day celebrations.

The announcement was made during the Martyrs Day 2026 central preparation meeting held at the Catholic Secretariat in Nsambya.

The meeting attracted over 100 members drawn from various committees, including the Secretary General of the Episcopal Conference, Msgr John Baptist Kauta, committee members from Kasese Diocese, representatives from Namugongo Martyrs Shrine, Kampala, police officials and security officers led by Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Christopher Barugahare, who is in charge of operations in Kampala, alongside Julius Gobolo and other officials.

PHOTO BY JULIET ANNA LUKWAGO



Msgr Kauta (right) interacting with the Rev Fr Kule after the central Martyrs Day preparatory meeting at the Catholic Secretariat Nsambya, last week

READY TO RECEIVE PILGRIMS

Organisers said Kasese Diocese, working closely with the Catholic Secretariat and Namugongo Shrine Parish, has finalised arrangements to receive pilgrims from across Uganda and other parts of the world.

"The programme is for only the pilgrims walking long distances to Namugongo Shrine to reside in the premises until June 3," the meeting heard.

Uganda Martyrs Day, celebrated annually on June 3, commemorates the heroic faith of the 24 Catholic Martyrs and 23 Anglican Martyrs who were executed on the orders of Kabaka Mwanga II, the then King of Buganda, between 1885 and 1887.

The 22 Catholic Martyrs were beatified on June 6, 1920, by Pope Benedict XV and later canonised by Pope Paul VI on October 18, 1964.

The Catholic Church also recognises two catechists from Paimol Blessed Daudi Okello and Gildo Irwa who were killed in 1918 and later beatified by Pope John Paul II on October 20, 2002.

The annual celebration, which attracts millions of pilgrims from around the world, is held at Namugongo Martyrs Shrine, where many of the 22 Catholic and 23 Anglican martyrs were burnt to ashes.

NOVENA PRAYERS

The Shrine secretary, Francis Muwonge, announced that this year's Catholic Martyrs Novena, a nine-day prayer programme, will begin on May 25 and run, until June 2.

He said the prayers will be held at Namugongo and Munyonyo Martyrs Shrines.

"Christians in their parishes are requested to recite the Novena in their parishes as we prepare spiritually for the celebrations," he said.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING

The organising chairperson from Kasese Diocese, Fr John Baptist Kule, thanked individuals and institutions that have already supported preparations while appealing for more assistance.

"We are grateful to the Government of Uganda for the support of sh2b towards the preparations, but we are still looking for money to fulfill the budget of sh4.5b," Fr Kule said.

He explained that the sh4.5b budget will cater for pastoral and liturgical preparations, public address systems, renovation works, electricity, transport, banners, decoration, catering, pilgrims' accommodation, medical services, protocol, publicity, welfare, water, sanitation and other logistical needs.

Fr Kule said organisers have already established 16 sub-committees to oversee different aspects of preparation.

Kasese Diocese is hosting the Uganda Martyrs Day celebrations again after 21 years.

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