

he declared recently.

delivered his homily, the Archbishop of

"Do not gossip, finish your meal."

RELIGIOUS LEADERS CALL FOR CALM AHEAD OF 2016 POLLS

BY SUNDAY VISION REPORTERS

Ugandans from all walks of life ushered in 2016 in style, with many in worshipping places giving praise to God for the year that was and the new year that is.

Religious leaders, including the Archbishop of the Anglican Church of Uganda, Stanley Ntagali, used the occasion to echo calls for peace in this election year.

When Ntagali introduced a family that ran away from the Burundi conflict that has so far claimed hundreds of people and displaced tens of thousands, there was dead silence at St. Paul's Cathedral, Namirembe.

The believers heard that Canon Simon Sibomana, the archdeacon of the Church of Bujumbura, survived death and escaped with his wife and child.

Ntagali said every community has conflicts, but it is up to the citizens to ensure they live together in harmony.

"I advise you to leave the differences and burdens behind and we look to Jesus to lead us through this year,



Namirembe Diocese Bishop Wilberforce Kityo Luwalira (L) and Arch Bishop Ntagali greeting congregants after the Service at Namirembe on Friday

doing his will," he implored.

Ntagali also appealed to Ugandans to stay calm and preach a message of peace during the forthcoming elections and avoid being misused and misguided by politicians.

"Let us elect leaders who will honour God and serve the people," urged Ntagali.

At All Saint's Cathedral, Kampala, the assistant Bishop of Kampala

Diocese, Dr. Hannington Mutebi, asked Christians to pray for peaceful elections.

"Do not be worried or anxious. Just pray that God helps us elect a leader that he has chosen. Do not be influenced by people who are giving you money to vote for them. Some of this money is coming from countries that do not wish us well," he said.

At Pabbo Primary School in Pabbo

sub-county in Amuru district, the Bishop of Northern Uganda Diocese, Johnson Gakumba, urged the faithful to be peace-makers and not people of violence.

This happened when Maj. Gen. Julius Oketta, an army representative in Parliament, asked candidates in this year's elections to vow before religious leaders that they will not promote violence and that they will talk peace during their campaigns.

The chairman of the Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, who is also the Catholic Archbishop of Gulu, John Baptist Odama, asked leaders in Acholi to stand up for human rights and work together despite their religious and political differences.

Odama, who is also the Chairman of the Uganda Episcopal Conference, urged street children in Gulu town to transform their lives if they want to remain good children.

The Acholi district Khadi, Sheikh Musa Khalil, asked leaders in Acholi to avoid suspicion and back-biting one another, noting that bad leadership is a hindrance to peace.

"Do not create violence. Instead,

guide your electorates by telling them to promote peace and respect for human dignity for all, especially in Amuru district, where there is no peace in the hearts of people as a result of land disputes," Khalil said.

In Hoima district, religious leaders also used the New Year sermons to call for peaceful elections.

Matthias Nyakatura, the Vicar General of Hoima Catholic Diocese, said there is need for peace in Uganda, especially during elections.

At Hoima Boma grounds, Pastor Betty Kasaija of Hoima Christian fellowship church, said there should be peaceful elections if everybody plays their part correctly.

Reverend James Mbabazi, the Associate Vicar of All Saints Hoima town church, prayed for God's guidance for Ugandans to choose leaders who will sustain the current peace and stability.

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