Church leaders urge Ugandans to renew their faith and devt

BY DAVID WALUGEMBE

KAMPALA. Religious leaders across Uganda have urged citizens to use the Lent season as a period of deep reflection, reconciliation, and renewed commitment to building a spiritually, socially, and economically stronger nation.

The 40 days of Lent, which commemorate the 40 days Jesus Christ spent fasting in the wilderness, were described by clerics as a turning point for forgiveness, sharing, and prayer for a better future for all believers.

Preaching during the first Sunday of Lent at Rubaga Cathedral, Rev Fr Dr Pius Male Ssentumbwe reminded Christians that the season is meant to prepare them for faith renewal, repentance, and reception of the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist.

"Fasting is not merely an obligation or church law but a sacrifice so that God forgives us our sins. The time you spend with God is crucial; the silence during prayers gives us an opportunity to communicate with Him," Rev Fr Dr Ssentumbwe said.

Rev Ssentumbwe urged Christians to shun acts such as theft, hatred, and disobedience, warning that such vices hinder believers from listening to the voice of the Lord.

He called on the faithful to uphold Christian values throughout the season.

Similarly, the Archbishop of the Church of Uganda, the Most Rev Stephen Samuel Kaziimba Mugalu, appealed to Christians to maintain genuine hearts by sharing with the needy without pretence to reap the fruits of giving, fasting, and forgiveness.

Self examination

The Archbishop emphasised the need for self-examination, saying many societal problems stem from the condition of the human heart. He cited the recent killing of Pamela Tumwebaze, the dean of students at Uganda Christian University, as an example of actions driven by ill intent.

This year's Lent comes shortly after Uganda concluded the January 15 General Election, which were marred by post-election violence, arrests, imprisonments, deaths, and heightened insecurity.

In a joint statement from the Kampala Ecclesiastical Province Dioceses of Masaka, Kiyinda-Mityana, Kasana-Luweero, and Lugazi, read during the Mass by Rev Fr Dr Ssentumbwe, the clerics called for respect for human rights and freedom of expression and condemned the violence witnessed during and after the elections.

"It's unfortunate our voices for peace were not heard and honoured. We saw widespread violence during and after polling, imprisonments, and what was most heartbreaking was the loss of lives," the statement read in part.

The bishops strongly condemned human rights violations and called on the government to prosecute perpetrators, stressing that the rights of all Ugandans must be respected regardless of background or political affiliation.

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