

# A Step-by-Step Account of the Black Saints of Uganda



**Cenacle Speaker**

Cenacle nun, Sister Rita Ann Houlihan, will speak on the "Vocation of Woman in the Modern World" at the Cenacle Retreat League dinner at the Sheraton Hotel, Rochester, Sunday, Nov. 1, following Mass at 8 p.m. at St. Joseph's Church. Bishop Kearney will celebrate the Mass and preach the sermon. Mrs. Leo Seum is chairman of the program.

## Nun's Father Requiem Held

A Requiem Funeral Mass for Frederick Wilhelm Kochert was offered on Tuesday, October 13, 1964, in his parish church of Saint Francis Xavier Cabrini in Los Angeles, California. Interment was in Holy Cross Cemetery there.

Mr. Kochert, who died on Saturday, October 10, was a native of Rochester, New York and a resident of California for the past nine years. He is the son of the late Mr. C. Louis Kochert and the late Mrs. Catherine Uracher Kochert of this city.

## M. S. Brennan Requiem Sung

Funeral services for M. Sarsfield Brennan, native Rochesterian, and a First Assistant Erie County Attorney, were held at St. John the Baptist Church, Kenmore, on Saturday, October 16.

Requiem High Mass was celebrated by a cousin, the Rev. Joseph P. Brennan, of St. Bernard's Seminary.

Mr. Brennan grew up on Brown Street, attended old Cathedral High School, Georgetown University and Buffalo Law School. He moved to Buffalo 35 years ago.

## Seton Groups In Action

12TH BRANCH of Seton Workers of St. Mary's Hospital was entertained at luncheon at the home of Mrs. Charles Muligan of Seneca Parkway, Thursday, Oct. 8.

14TH BRANCH monthly luncheon at the Wishing Well, Hill Ave., Tuesday, Oct. 27 at noon. Hostesses will be Mesdames William Dempsey, Leonard Harris, Walter Morton, Op Skibey.

53RD BRANCH members were entertained by Miss Kathleen Carroll of Latimore Road at lunch at her home on Saturday. Plans for the Seton Sale project were discussed.

49TH BRANCH to meet Monday, Oct. 26 at 8 p.m. in St. Mary's Hospital. Hostess for the evening will be Mrs. Edna McAllister.

## Ladies To Meet At Mt. Carmel

Auburn—Mt. Carmel Ladies Club will hold its regular monthly meeting on Monday, October 26th at the school cafeteria with a Covered Dish Supper, at 6:30 p.m.

Members are asked to bring a wrapped article for the White Elephant Sale.

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Lourd and Mackay were at the palace at dawn, pleading, begging, demanding to see the King, but the guards had been given orders to keep them out. The King refused to see them, the Queen Mother, the Chief Justice, even the chiefs whose sons were pages—all ignored the attempts of the two missionaries to save the boys.

King Mwanga now believed he had the solution to all the problems that had plagued him for over a year. The mistake, he felt, had been in his tolerance toward Christianity, and the spirits of his departed ancestors had been punishing him for it. Now the tolerance must end, and the end would begin with the murder of the Christian boys.

His only hesitance was in the fact that the pages were all the sons and nephews of important men who had given them to him not only as a gift during their boyhood but because of the influential futures that could be theirs if they grew up in the King's favor.

Killing off some forty of the country's choice youth required a certain boldness. Before he went ahead with it, Mwanga wanted to be sure that there would be no repercussions from the chiefs.

When he had all the chiefs together in the audience hall, he presented his case against the pages, naming them and citing their disobedience and ingratitude. Delicately he hinted that the behavior of the boys reflected upon the parents, and he indicated he was most displeased with this and was not quite decided who should receive the punishment.

One chief rose and said: "Your Majesty, when we gave you these boys, they were good boys. If something has happened to them, it must be because of the white men they met at the capital. That could not be

considered our fault, and if they themselves by rejecting their religion have changed, they are not our sons any longer. Kill them, master, and we will give you new boys."

Other chiefs wildly seconded the idea. Mwanga said, "Then they shall die."

Again he called the pages together and ordered those who prayed with the white men to step aside. Thirty-one of them did; twenty-four of them were Catholics; seven were Protestants. He gave the boys one chance to deny their faith, but they all refused.

It was when Mwanga had turned the boys over to the executioners that Father Lourd managed to break through the guards and get into the audience hall. Before Lourd could reach the King, the court session was dismissed, and the King, surrounded by a heavy guard, hurried off to his private quarters.

The rest of the day was a fury of confusion. Mwanga, the King's son, was relieved, a decision he accepted in a howl of tears and rulsals.

A Protestant boy was given to a Moslem chief who wanted him, but while being carried off, he fought so wildly that he was immediately beaten to death.

Other young men—soldiers, clerks, court officials—were killed because they were known to be Christian leaders. Andrey Kagawa was decapitated in front of the King's house; Fountain, a famous warrior, was stabbed by lances at the gates of the royal enclosure.

Matthias Mbulumba, who had been a Catholic leader in the Mengo district, had his arms cut off at the elbow and his legs at the knee. Then arteries and veins were carefully tied so that he would not die too quickly. Bits of flesh were sliced from his body and roasted in front of his eyes. Mbulumba, a young chief, was tied to a tree, and guards spent an hour using him for target practice.

A hundred people died that day, because they were Christians. They were not considered as being Christians, or because someone disliked them and accused them of having once uttered a Christian expression.

The only calm was among the pages. They behaved more as if they were on their way to a picnic. Sixteen miles from the palace was a valley called Namugongo: a jail and an execution site were maintained there. The pages, tied in light harness, the square, inched the distance in two days. They thought the whole thing was very funny and laughed all the way.

During a rest period, when the boys were untied, one page approached the guards and said: "I don't see the sense in walking all the way to Namugongo just to be burned. Kill me now, and let's get it over with." The guards whipped him with clubs but not heavily enough, and he cried: "All right, all right! If you won't put your heart into it, let's do it your way." He went back to his place and waited to be tied again to the others.

## On to Martyrdom

The guards, the executioners, and people along the road were all puzzled by this strange welcome to death. Ordinarily, the boys should be screaming for mercy. Oddly, they seemed impatient to die, not to escape pain but to escape life. They looked about what they knew waited ahead for them, they teased their guards who threatened them with the severest torture, and the only thing that appalled them was the suggestion from anyone that they save

themselves by rejecting their religion.

Convinced that preserving their purity made heaven their reward, they were eager to get there, and nothing could dissuade them. Twice the chief executioner tried to talk his nephew into rejecting his religion in order to save his own life, but the youngster refused.

He was even sent away to relatives, but he returned to Namugongo every day, and at last he told his uncle impatiently: "Please leave me alone. I know what I'm doing."

The number of imprisoned pages rose and fell daily. New ones arrived from the palace three more were reprieved against their fearful protests, several died in prison from lack of food, water, or air. All week Lourd and Mackay bailed Lourd and Mackay bailed the King and pleaded for the boys' lives, but in vain.

On the night of June 2, the drums began, and the boys knew tomorrow was the day. They prayed and sang hymns and tried to sleep, but the executioners—almost a hundred—had been called in from all corners of the country to had started their preliminaries of drinking and dancing. It was a noisy, sleepless night.

Down came white hot. When the boys were led out of the dark, musty prison they blinked in the sudden sunlight, and for several moments they could not see.

The valley came into focus, the boys saw in front of them the small mountain of wood and reeds, which was to be their pyre. Nearly, the chief executioner still argued with his nephew, but the boy was adamant. Father then sent the youngster to the flames along with the chief executioner ordered his aides to club the boy to death first before wrapping him in a shroud of reeds.

One by one, the pages stepped forward and permitted themselves to be wrapped in reeds, and then they were placed on the pyre. Charles Lwanga refused to be tied up, arranged his own deathbed, and stretched out on it.

The guardian of the sacred torch came and applied the flame to the dry, brittle wood at Lwanga's feet. It caught quickly. Flames raced along the legs, scorching Lwanga in a wall of fire. Closing his eyes, he made the sign of the cross, then folded his hands in prayer, his lips moving soundlessly. He gave no indication of being aware that he was on fire.

On signal from the chief executioner, the guardian of the sacred torch went to the huge pyre and put the flame to it. When the pages saw the first smoke rise above them, they began to pray aloud. One of the assistant executioners let loose a high-pitched war cry, and the other joined him in a mad dance around the enormous fire.

Leaping and shouting, they continued as the flames soared, stopping only when they became aware of a very strange thing.

There were no screams of pain coming from the burning pages, only the sounds of their prayers, their voices quite normal, growing softer and softer until the last boy died. The executioners could not believe what their ears heard, what their eyes saw. They stood there quietly, stunned, afraid, until the flames finally flickered out.

The White Fathers that morning were under virtual house arrest, in order to keep them from going to the pages. Since dawn they had knelt in the chapel, saying the prayers for the dying and, when news came that the fire had been started, the prayers for the dead.

## Father Martin Feeney

The following is the text of the eulogy preached by Father Joseph M. McDonnell, at the funeral of Father Martin Feeney at St. James Church, Irondequoit, on Tuesday, Oct. 13, Father Feeney died on Thursday, October 8, 1964.

"I have glorified Thee on earth; I have finished the work which you gave me to do." (St. John XVII, 4)

It is customary to eulogize a priest when his funeral Mass is offered. That office is mine this morning as we have reverently joined our Bishop in offering this Mass for the repose of the soul of Father Martin Feeney. However, I feel that there is little that I can add to the eulogy that already has been so eloquently spoken in his favor, not in human words, but by the presence at this Mass of so many of his classmates and friends of seminary days. Some of them traveled here from distant dioceses, to pay their last respects to an old friend. All this bears testimony to the esteem in which they held him; and my words can be but a faint echo of their tribute.

I first came to know Martin Feeney 45 years ago when we entered St. Andrew's Seminary. A friendship between us began then because I believe in the Communion of Saints, I also believe that our friendship continues on, even though his death has ended its earthly phase.

We who knew Martin Feeney well during our seminary years were impressed with his singleness of purpose. He had chosen to follow the call of Christ, and nothing could deter him from his purpose. For that reason his years of preparation for priesthood at St. Andrew's and St. Bernard's Seminaries were marked by hard, earnest and consistent application to the development of his spiritual and intellectual resources. He did not spare himself at all in his efforts to mold himself and to be molded into a fitting candidate for the priesthood of Jesus Christ against the day when his bishop might call him to that high office.

It is true to say that since the day that call came on June 7, 1930, when Bishop John Francis O'Hern ordained Martin Feeney a priest, until this Friday just past when Christ, the great High Priest, called him to Himself, he gave of himself and of all that he possessed without stint from the depths of a generous soul for the cause of Christ. Truly could this good priest say when his soul was swept into the blue vaults of heaven: "I have glorified Thee on earth; I have finished the work which you gave me to do."

After his ordination Father Feeney was assigned to St. Francis Xavier parish in this city. Two years later he was assigned to St. Michael parish, Penn Yan. It was there that his health failed him in 1939.

IT IS TRUE that the years of his active priesthood were limited. It is equally true that these were good years for everyone, privileged to know him, for they received of the fullness of his priestly zeal. Children and youth were his great concern. He was tireless

in his efforts to better his knowledge and his methods in the field of catechesis that he might more effectively impart eternal truths to others. This diocese is the richer for such a priest as he; the parishes wherein he served are his debtors.

The latter years of his life were a Gethsemane. His health failed him 25 years ago. He was no longer able to exercise his priesthood. He could no longer offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, raise his hand in absolute atonement over the penitent, proclaim the truths of the faith from the pulpit and teach them in the classroom, baptize the newborn infant into the Mystical Body of Christ, or assist the dying to meet their God in peace. All this might impel us to ask, Why should this have happened to one so capable, so zealous, so considerate, so dedicated, so priestly? We shall never know the answer this side of eternity. Here we come face to face with the inscrutable will of God. However, in heartrending circumstances like this there are two basic truths to which we must cling.

First, God is love. I am a creature of His love. It was out of love that He created me, and He wishes me to be eternally happy with Him. He may not give me all I want in this life, but He does give me all I need for the next.

Second, the final reward for virtue comes not in this life, but in the next. As tapestries are woven not from the front but from the back so too in this life we see only the underside of God's plan.

As the path to Christ's resurrection and glory began in Gethsemane with his resignation to His Father's will, may we not hope that this good priest's Gethsemane has already earned him a share in the glory of that same Christ whom he served so well.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him.

## GOOD GOVERNMENT?



"I don't think any wrong doing has been done that is the kind we would be concerned about very seriously..." Senator Laverne, speaking during the first week of March 1964.

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It was noon when a man arrived from Namugongo and told them how the boys seemed to have died without feeling the flames that had burned them to ashes.

"This was how God helped them," Lourd said, and he led the priests back to the chapel for prayers of thanksgiving for the peaceful deaths.

It was while the priests were intent at the prayers that they suddenly remembered that this June 3, 1886, was the Feast of the Ascension.

**Harvest of Souls**

In the blood of martyrs, the Church has always said, are the seeds of the faith.

This proved to be true in Africa.

At the time of the martyrdom of the Uganda page boys, there were two hundred Catholics in the country. Four years later, there were twelve thousand. Today, there are two million, almost a third of the population, and they have made the Church their own by giving their country six African clergy, including an archbishop, eight bishops, 250 priests, and many nuns and Brothers.

From the start, the White Fathers believed that the young men who died at Namugongo were true martyrs, true saints, and almost immediately the Society began the great chore of collecting all possible evidence about the life of each martyr, the circumstances that led to his death, and of the death itself.

For almost thirty years, this work went on. In 1920, after having examined all the evidence, the beatification of the martyrs of Uganda was proclaimed by Pope Benedict XV.

Since then, careful studies were made of any claims of miracles attributable to the martyrs. In 1963, the Medical Commission of the Sacred Congregation of Rites in Rome announced that two such claims—the cure of two white sisters from the invariably fatal pneumonic plague—were accepted as bona fide. The way was now clear for canonization.

This Mission Sunday, October 18, the ceremonies for the canonization of the martyrs of Uganda were conducted in Rome by Pope Paul VI.

This is both fitting and proper in many ways. Occurring on Mission Sunday, it was a tribute to the White Fathers, now the largest missionary society in Africa, and to the White Sisters as well, for almost a century of their devotion to the continent which gave the Church some of its first saints, at Carthage, but now its newest saints at the equator.

Occurring, too, during the third session of Vatican Council II, the canonization of the young Africans demonstrates the message of the Council: the brotherhood of man, of all men and of all times; in the fraternity of the children of God.

At this time, when the struggle for this brotherhood brought about new horrors, the reminder of the Fatherhood of God is also a reminder of the eternal judgment of men who refused to behave as brothers.

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