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**Visit of His Eminence Card. Filoni to Uganda**

26-29 October 2017

**Homily for the Eucharistic Celebration**

**at Namugongo Uganda Martyrs Shrine
On the Occasion of the Climax of the Golden Jubilee**

**of the Archdiocese of Kampala**

Sunday, 29 October 2017

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood!
Esteemed Apostolic Nuncio!
Distinguished Authorities!
Dear Faithful!

“*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment*.” Then immediately Jesus added: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*.” This is the second. Like the two faces of the same coin, the two commandments cannot be separated. The first commandment is inseparably connected with the second, a reality that can also be expressed in this way: “*Whatever you do to the least of my brethren, you do to me*”.

The first reading from the book of Exodus condemns the unjust treatment of the weak and vulnerable in the community, that is, the strangers, the widow, the orphan and the poor. Generally speaking, it warns against the oppression of the suffering humanity, including the needy, the sick, the excluded, the marginalized, the migrants, the refugees, the victims of armed conflicts and others whose dignity is endangered. The catechetical tradition of the Church counts the oppression of the poor among *the sins that cry to heaven*[[1]](#footnote-1). In fact, God says through the sacred author of the passage we have heard: “*If ever you wrong them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry*” (Ex. 22:23). This implies that the way we treat others is object of God’s concern. A lack of solidarity towards the needy will directly affect our relationship with God. Moreover, it is not enough just not to mistreat the needy; the love of neighbor demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and come to their aid. If we, who are God’s means of hearing the poor, turn deaf ears to this plea, we betray the stewardship trust that we have been given by Him.

The poor and needy are always with us. I have learnt that Kampala Metropolitan area has seen massive movements of Ugandans who arrive in hope of jobs and a better life. Many have not reached these goals and remain on the peripheries of society. We also know that in the Gulu Ecclesiastical Province hundreds of thousands of refugees from South Sudan are looking for shelter to save their life from violence. We should seek to reach out to them with the love and mercy of Christ; if we do not, there are many others claiming to be prophets, apostles and healers who will. We must not let them be abandoned to themselves. Perhaps we cannot do a lot at this moment, but it is important to get to know them, whether they be Catholic or of another denomination. When we know them, the Lord will show the way to gathering them closer to our communities. That is part of what Pope Francis calls “going to the existential peripheries of society” and coming to know the “smell of the sheep.”

Love is not exhausted in relationships between individuals but spreads also into the social and political community; it intervenes in this context seeking the greatest good for the community in its entirety. On the social plane, love takes on the characteristic form of *social and political charity*. Social charity makes us love the common good; it makes us effectively seek the good of all people, considered not only as individuals or private persons but also in the social dimension that unites them.

On the occasion of a jubilee, which usually took place after every 50 years, the People of God, as attested by the the Old Testament, were to reach out to their neighbors by forgiving debts, by returning alienated property to the original owners and by liberating people from slavery and servitude. A jubilee was a time to help one’s neighbor get a fresh start. In the New Testament, Jesus presents himself as the One who brings the old jubilee to completion, because He has come *to bring good news to the poor*, *to proclaim release to the captives*, *to let the oppressed go free* *and to preach the year of the Lord’s favor* (cf. Luke 4: 18-19). All this points to the fact that community Jubilees have an important dimension worth noting.

I would like now to reiterate what I have been also saying to various groups in the past days. This Golden Jubilee marks an important step in the life of this Archdiocesan Church. Mine is a call for a beginning of a new engagement; indeed, a favorable time to create new prospects; to mark out the path of the Catholic Church in Kampala for the coming 50 years. With that in mind, it is rightful to ask yourselves: What kind of Church do we want to be, within the context of the Universal Church? What is our role in the context of Africa and of our country? I expect that the answers to these questions must be consistent with the guidelines offered by the *Second Vatican Council* and by other magisterial documents, especially those dedicated to the Church in Africa, namely, *Ecclesia in Africa* and *Africae Munus*. In fact, the Archdiocese of Kampala was erected in the wake of the *Second Vatican Council*. It is our ardent hope that this local Church will continue being a loyal implementer of the inexhaustible richness of that great ecclesial event.

The past half-century has mainly been *a* *period of consolidation* of the excellent work begun by the missionaries. We are all happy to note that along with the stabilization of the legacy of missionaries, there has been also remarkable growth, particularly in the size of the Catholic community, in the number of local vocations to the priesthood and religious life, as well as in the quality and quantity of pastoral infrastructures. In rendering thanks to God for all these blessings, we wish also to pay tribute to the three Prelates who have governed this Archdiocese since its creation: the late Emmanuel Cardinal Nsubuga, His Eminence Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala and His Grace Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga. We would like to express our profound gratitude to them for their sacrificial and dedicated service to this particular Church.

The coming 50 years should be, among other things, *a period of deeper growth in faith and charity*, mindful of the fact that if we have no love, then we are nothing at all, as St. Paul openly tells us (cf. 1 Cor. 13). A new engagement in evangelization should make the Gospel penetrate in a deeper way, not only in the individual person but also in the human society, so that the social-economic relations are increasingly imbued with the spirit of the Gospel. The Church and the society must collaborate closely to find the resources necessary to renew and build up a culture of love, reconciliation, justice and peace.

May the Blessing of our Lord, through the intercession of Mary Queen of Africa and of the Holy Martyrs, be upon you all! Amen!

1. Cf. *CCC*, 1867 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)