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

26-29 October 2017

**Homily for the Dedication of the Uganda Martyrs’ Shrine, Munyonyo.**

Saturday, 28 October 2017

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood!  
Esteemed Authorities!  
Dear Faithful!

I bring to you the love, the greetings and blessings of Pope Francis. I, too, warmly and personally greet each of you as we dedicate this beautiful shrine to God’s service in honor of our Martyrs.

A word of thanks to Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga for giving me this opportunity to be here with you on this occasion of the Golden Jubilee. Many thanks also to the Apostolic Nuncio, the Most Rev. Michael Blume, for his assistance in organizing this visit.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, God is always in the midst of the His People when they gather in His Name for prayer. The whole body of believing worshippers is the Temple of God: not one of wood and stone, but the congregation of believers, the “living stones” and members of the Body of Christ. In the Gospel, our Lord speaks of the Temple of his Body. Since Christ’s coming, the Son of God is truly “Emmanuel” – God with us. In the Person of Jesus Christ we have got to know the face of God the Father. “*Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father*” (Jn 14: 9).

A church building is a material temple of God. It is the place where the Christian community encounters Christ, listens to Him, offers prayers of petition and praise, and, in a principal way, celebrates the Holy Eucharist. Even in the Old Testament, the temple was considered a place of the special presence of God. The first reading of today’s liturgy describes the celebration of the rebuilding of the temple of Jerusalem that had been extensively damaged at that time by foreign armies. After the restoration of the temple to its former glory, the Word of God was once again proclaimed. The Book of the Law of Moses was read by the Scribe Ezra.

Today we too are gathered in this place where the first missionaries proclaimed the Word of God and founded the first Christian community. Like the ancient People of God, here we listen attentively to the Word of God, which the Ugandan holy Martyrs obeyed heroically to the point of death. Everything that we know about the Martyrs tells us that, from the very beginning, they understood the importance of the instruction in the Word of God they were receiving. Perhaps the most striking proof of the Martyrs’ attachment to the Word of God was the way in which they reacted to the departure of the Missionaries, after only a relatively short period of instruction. Rather than dispersing and losing interest, these laymen assumed the leadership of their Christian communities and went on instructing them in the faith so that, when the Missionaries returned, they found a marvelous increase in the number of catechumens and a remarkable degree of fidelity to the Word of God. I am thinking now of the two Martyrs, Saints Andrew Kaggwa and Denis Ssebuggwawo, who were murdered exactly at this place. Their blood poured out on this ground, made it fertile for the birth of new many Christians. In a short time an abundant harvest of fruits resulted.

A renewed impulse in evangelization, which is one of my wishes for you in this Golden Jubilee of your Archdiocese, is inconceivable without a *renewed attachment to the word of God*, especially in the families. Catholic families need a more direct contact with the Bible; otherwise, the sects will continue taking advantage of that weak point and thus continue leading astray many of our Catholic faithful, as it is now happening. It is therefore important that the knowledge of Scriptures in the families be constantly encouraged. It would be a good practice, for instance, to have the so-called “family-Bible -time”, which means, setting aside a specific day and time for your family Bible study and sticking to it as best you can. Every family, of course, should have its Bible, kept in a worthy place and used for reading and prayer.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, *God dwells not only in physical buildings, or in the Church as body of Christ, but also in a third dimension, namely, in our souls in grace.* Every Christian, in the state of grace, is a dwelling-place of God; his temple and habitation. As we heard it in the second reading: St. Paul reminds us: “*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you*? (1 Cor 3:16). Each and every baptized Christian has been consecrated, or ‘set apart,’ as a special dwelling place for God. We should therefore often bring to mind that the most Holy Trinity inhabits our souls when we are in state of grace. This great truth enforces the necessity of the holiness of Christian life. The second reading ends by saying: “*If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for the temple of God, which you are, is holy*” (1 Cor 3:17). Meditation on this marvelous reality should help us to be more conscious of the importance of living in God’s grace. We need to have a deep horror of offending the Lord, because sin destroys Christ’s temple and deprives our souls of friendship with God.

Today, as we consecrate this shrine in honor of the Martyrs, the Lord offers us a grace-filled opportunity *to renew our promise of putting faith in action*, emulating the Holy Martyrs. That effort should touch all the areas of our day-to-day life, which the Lord calls on us to evangelize. Here are some examples:

* In the family, so that the family – mother, father and children – may truly be a domestic Church where the Gospel is lived and proclaimed;
* In the parish, so that it may become more and more an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, charitable outreach, worship and celebration;
* In the workplace, so that true Christian witness shines out in the midst of so many temptations to mediocrity and to injustice;
* In the medical services and hospitals, so that people may truly experience the charity of Christ in those they meet;
* In civil activities, so that economies may be truly “people centered” and not only for making profit;
* In public life in its many expressions, so that the justice and non-violence inspired by the Gospel may build up our societies, beginning with its public institutions;
* In education, so that teachers and students may be motivated by high ideals of the gospel;
* Among young people, so that they may know Christ and the power of his Resurrection instead of secular and material systems of living.

There is no area of our lives that should not be transformed by the Gospel of Jesus. That is what the Martyrs teach us to do. The Uganda Martyrs lived lives of deep Christian commitment. May each of us be renewed in same Holy Spirit, who gave them courage, every time we come to this beautiful Shrine, where the Lord and his Martyrs meet us and strengthen us.

May the prayers of all the Uganda martyrs, in union with those of Our Lady, Mother of the Church, obtain for us the grace of perseverance in faith and in every good work, holiness and purity of heart, and apostolic zeal in bearing witness to Jesus in this beloved country, throughout Africa, and to the ends of the earth. Amen!