

Today the Church remembers the Ugandan martyrs:
St Charles Lwanga and his companions.

Young men.

Some only teenagers.

Burned alive rather than deny Christ.

And modern people hear stories like that and wonder:

“How could anyone die for religion?”

But the martyrs were not dying for an idea.

They were dying for a Person.

Jesus Christ.

In today’s Gospel, the Sadducees try to trap Jesus with a question about the resurrection.

But underneath the question is something deeper:

They do not really believe eternal life changes everything.

And that is always the danger when faith becomes merely intellectual.

The Sadducees know religion externally,
but their hearts remain tied to this world.

And Jesus answers powerfully: **“He is God not of the dead, but of the living.”**

Everything changes if eternal life is real.

Everything.

The Ugandan martyrs understood that.

In the nineteenth century, many of these young converts served in the royal court of King Mwanga.

And when the king demanded immoral acts and rejection of the Catholic Faith, they refused.

Not angrily.

Not rebelliously.

But firmly.

Because they belonged to Christ.

And Charles Lwanga especially protected the younger boys,
strengthening them in courage and purity.

One of the striking things about the martyrs is how ordinary they often seem
before persecution comes.

Young men.

Friends.

Catechumens.

Servers in the royal household.

And yet grace transformed them into heroes.

That matters for us.

Because holiness is not only for extraordinary people.

Saints are ordinary people who allow Christ to become more important than fear.

St Paul says to Timothy today: **“Fan into a flame the gift God gave you.”**

That is a perfect reading for St Charles Lwanga.

Because martyrdom did not begin at the moment of execution.

The flame had already been burning:

- prayer
- chastity
- courage
- fidelity
- love for Christ

And when persecution came, the fire was already alive within them.

The modern world desperately needs the witness of these martyrs.

Because modern culture constantly tells people:
comfort matters most,

approval matters most,
desire matters most.

But the martyrs reveal something greater:
truth matters more than comfort,
holiness matters more than popularity,
and eternal life matters more than earthly survival.

And perhaps nowhere is their witness more important than in the area of purity.

Charles Lwanga and his companions died partly because they refused immoral demands.

That takes enormous courage.

Especially today, when impurity is treated casually everywhere.

The martyrs remind us that the body matters.
The soul matters.
Chastity matters.

Not because the Church hates joy —
but because the human person is sacred.

The world treats people as objects.

Christ calls them sons and daughters of God.

And notice something beautiful.

The martyrs went to death singing hymns.

Not because suffering stopped hurting.

But because they believed death was not the end.

That is exactly what Jesus teaches in the Gospel.

The resurrection is real.

God is the God of the living.

The saints are alive in Christ now.

This is why Christians do not fear death in the same way the world does.

Death is terrible because of sin.

But Christ has passed through death and destroyed its final power.

And the martyrs witness to that truth with their blood.

The executioners could kill their bodies.

But they could not conquer their souls.

St Paul says:

“God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and love and self-control.”

That is one of the great needs of modern Catholic life.

Not aggression.

Not panic.

But courage.

The courage to remain faithful in a confused world.

The courage to live differently.

The courage to say:

“No, I belong to Christ.”

And perhaps most moving of all is that many of the Ugandan martyrs were very young.

Holiness is not delayed until adulthood.

Children can become saints.

Teenagers can become saints.

Young adults can become saints.

The world often expects very little from young people spiritually.

The Church does not.

The Church sees souls made for heaven.

And so today these martyrs ask us a direct question:

What is my faith actually worth to me?

Convenience?

Respectability?

Or everything?

Because Christianity without sacrifice eventually becomes weak.

But souls set on fire by Christ change the world.

The Ugandan martyrs helped transform an entire nation.

And the Church in Africa today stands partly upon their witness.

So today let us ask St Charles Lwanga and his companions to pray for us:

For purity in a corrupt world.

For courage in times of pressure.

For fidelity when faith becomes costly.

And above all,

for hearts so filled with love for Jesus Christ

that nothing on earth could make us abandon Him.