

**CHARLES LWANGWA AND  
COMPANIONS**

*3RD JUNE*



Today we commemorate Saints Charles Lwanga and his Companions. The 22 Ugandan Martyrs were people who were executed between 31 January 1885 and 27 January 1887. They were killed on orders of Mwangwa II, the Kabaka (King) of Buganda. Charles Lwanga himself is the patron of youth and Catholic action in most of tropical Africa. He protected his fellow pages, aged 13 to 30, from the immoral demands of the Bagandan ruler, Mwangwa. Charles Lwanga encouraged and instructed the fellow pages in the Catholic faith during their imprisonment for refusing the ruler's selfish demands.

Charles entered the royal household as assistant to Joseph Mukasa, head of the court pages. On the night of Mukasa's martyrdom for encouraging the African youths to resist Mwangwa, Charles requested and received baptism. Imprisoned with his friends, Charles's courage and belief in God inspired the others to remain chaste and faithful. For his own unwillingness to submit to the immoral acts and his efforts to safeguard the faith of his friends, Charles was burned to death at Namugongo on June 3, 1886, by Mwangwa's order. Saints Charles Lwanga and his Companions had a clear conscience in their faith in the God of Jesus and were ready to die than to betray God and their community of faith by renouncing their faith. When Pope Paul VI canonized these 22 martyrs on October 18, 1964, he also made reference to the Anglican pages martyred for the same reason. Like Charles Lwanga, we are all teachers and witnesses to Christian living by the examples of our own lives. Today, let us pray for the grace to refrain from pleasing people in their selfish desires and choose to serve God for the restoration of a kingdom of justice, peace and joy.