



ARCHDIOCESAN MISSIONARY  
REDEMPTORIS MATER SEMINARY  
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P.O. Box 14125 – Mengo  
Kampala (Uganda)

Kampala, 11<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Dear friends of the Redemptoris Mater Seminary of Kampala,

In this holy Easter time, in which the Church invites us to rejoice in Christ's victory over death, we want to take advantage to greet you, to thank you and to present to you a little of the situation we are experiencing. We hope our experience may support you a bit in your daily difficulties and perhaps encourage you in your fight for faith.

With regard to Covid, although the first wave of the virus in Uganda seemed to have passed without serious consequences, in October 2020 the situation started changing sensibly. With the second wave, the cases of serious infection and deaths have increased. In the city of Masaka, 120 km South of Kampala, the spread of the virus has also affected many priests, some of them died, and even the bishop emeritus of the diocese has returned to the Father after a time of illness and fighting against the virus. In Kampala too, several presbyters were hospitalised and some died.

The virus also reached the seminary during the Advent period. Thank God, no one had any serious symptoms, but a visiting presbyter, some seminarians and a sister in mission were isolated for a few weeks and the whole seminary went into quarantine. However, we managed to get back together before 24<sup>th</sup> December and below you can see our Christmas breakfast with those 'freed' from isolation!



The itinerant team of the Neocatechumenal Way, on the other hand, was severely affected by the coronavirus. Giovanni, the team leader, in particular, experienced a very serious time of trial, risking losing his life. Thank God, he is now recovering in Italy and already planning to come back to Uganda at the end of this month.

If during the first wave the government had put in place all the necessary restrictions (although there were not many cases), during the second wave it was done very little, and the restrictions were in fact limited to maintaining a curfew from 9 pm to 5 am and the closure of schools. Even gatherings are banned but...below you have an example of 'social distancing' in the commercial area of Kampala!



Between the end of 2020 and the beginning of 2021, the Ugandan government was busy organising the presidential elections of January 14<sup>th</sup>, which took place in a decidedly tense climate. To date, although the official figures on the spread of the virus are not clear, it seems that the cases have dropped last month the first AstraZeneca vaccines arrived.

In the months leading up to the elections, some demonstrations were bloodily suppressed, resulting in the deaths even of ordinary passers-by and street vendors. In the ten days around the elections, the government literally 'shut down' the internet to prevent the leak of information and to avoid people to organise protests; in addition, all major social networks were blocked for about a month. The victory of President Yoweri Museveni, who was reconfirmed in power after 35 years of rule, was judged by many to be at least suspicious and the discontent of the population (especially in the region of Kampala) was felt. Then, as it is often the case in Africa, several hundred opponents or suspected opponents were killed in unclear situations or they simply 'disappeared' in the weeks following the vote.



Since the seminary opened, never before we saw feelings of hatred and rancour, combined with a desire for revenge, grow in people's hearts. We have strongly felt the Lord's call to preach love to the enemy and the urgency of forming priests who, together with families and the laity, can put out the fires of tribal hatred and the desire for only human justice. You too, pray to the Lord to send labourers into his harvest! The seeds of hatred and revolt are germinating, and at the end of the President's next term or at his death, the frustration of the population could degenerate. Pray that lay people and priests may announce to all the victory of Christ over evil and death, "He alone can purify us from the works of evil, He who died and rose again, He who is Lord!", pray that they may increase the "Christian communities composed of humble and simple people [...] a sign of the Kingdom that is coming, a Kingdom of love, justice and peace" (Pope Francis, Homily of 7 March 2021, Erbil, Iraq).

As far as the seminary is concerned, the schools, including the faculties of philosophy and theology, are closed from March 2020, with short breaks for final year students. We had hoped that the academic year could resume in February after the elections, but this did not happen, so, thanks to God and your help, the first-year philosophy students (who are the majority in the seminary) are making up the year with private courses. Some local professors and others connected online from Europe are helping us to cover the academic year's programme with intensive courses. We hope that in September, when the faculty is expected to reopen, they will be able to continue with the second year of philosophy.

In March, Alejandro, a seminarian from Costa Rica (in the photo), had to undergo a fairly urgent eye operation for a congenital deformation of the corneas (keratoconus) which was preventing him from seeing well and was worsening rapidly. We must thank you also for this, because with your support it was possible to operate on him in a good eye clinic here in Kampala.



The greatest suffering for the seminary in the last year was the prolonged halt to evangelisation, and at a time when there was great need of it. For more than a year now we have not been engaged in direct evangelisation, the curfew and the ban on gatherings do not allow us to go out into the streets or to have meetings or evening catechesis in the parishes (after work) to proclaim the Gospel, even participation in community celebrations has been intermittent. However, in these last days we got the opportunity of resuming with the evangelisation and the catechesis in one of the parishes of Kampala at the end of this month.

During Lent, we compensated the reduced activity in evangelisation with a more intense contemplative life made up of prayer and contact with the Scriptures, remembering all of you and, in a special way, those of you who are sick or seriously in trial. Courage, we do not forget you!

The increased intimacy with the Lord allowed us to live a beautiful Easter Celebration with the solemn Paschal Vigil through the whole night, even if in the morning of Holy Saturday we received the sad news of the death of our Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga. He suddenly passed on due to a heart attack in the night. Only two months ago he had confirmed me as rector of the

seminary and he appointed Fr. Leonard as vice-rector. Until that moment, Leonard (the second and, for the moment, last ordained presbyter of our seminary) resided in the seminary but worked as vice-chancellor of the diocese. Now, however, he will continue to assist the chancery from time to time, while his main task will be to help me run the seminary, and personally, I am very happy about that! Please pray a lot for us, so that the Lord may give us humility to accept His will and love for Him in our total inadequacy.

You will find down some photos of the pilgrimage we did during the first week of easter, in the footprints of the first missionaries in southern Uganda and of the Martyrs of Uganda.

We wish you all a peaceful Easter Time, may the Lord help us to find in the Risen Christ the only meaning to the events that surround us and the ultimate goal of History.

The Peace of Christ risen be with you all!

*Dark De Arcangelis*  
Fr. Davide De Arcangelis



Bugoma (Kalangala Island on Victoria lake). Here the first missionaries stopped before reaching the mainland of Buganda Kingdom.





Kigungu, landing site of the Missionaries of Africa in Buganda Kingdom (17<sup>th</sup> February 1879).



The Seminary under the statue of Denis Ssebuggwawo, one of the Ugandan Martyrs dead at the age of 16 (26<sup>th</sup> May 1886).





Procession towards Kigungu.





The Redemptoris Mater Seminary of Kampala 2020-2021 (formators, seminarians and sisters in mission).

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