

Reflection Thursday Week 9 - St Charles Lwanga and Companions 2021

Saint Charles Lwanga and his companions (- 1885/7). Many Christians, Catholic and Protestant, were killed by the Ugandan king Mwanga. Some were servants in the king's palace others his personal attendants. Charles Lwanga and his twenty-one companions (the youngest, Kizito, was only 13) were executed for being Christians, for rebuking the king for his debauchery and for murdering an Anglican missionary, for "praying from a book," and for refusing to allow themselves to be ritually sodomised by the king. They died between 1885 and 1887. Most were burned alive in a group after being tortured. Within a year of their deaths, the number of catechumens in the country quadrupled. St Charles Lwanga is the patron of Catholic Action and of black African youth, and the Ugandan martyrs' feast day is a public holiday in Uganda.

Celebrating the Ugandan martyrs seems to have little link to the celebration of a Golden Wedding Anniversary. Both however speak loudly of sacrifice. In the case of Jesus and the Ugandan Martyrs their offering involved a brutal and bloody death –a blood offering; blood being the symbol of life. In the eucharist the wine become the Blood of Christ. Christ shares his life with us completely. This same loving sacrifice, this offering of life in love is equally present in marriage. The Pope's letter on the family states:

Marriage is a precious sign, for "when a man and a woman celebrate the sacrament of marriage, God is, as it were, 'mirrored' in them; he impresses in them his own features and the indelible character of his love. Marriage is the icon of God's love for us. Indeed, God is also communion: the three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, live eternally in perfect unity. And this is precisely the mystery of marriage: God makes of the two spouses one single existence". This has concrete daily consequences, because the spouses, "in virtue of the sacrament, are invested with a true and proper mission, so that, starting with the simple ordinary things of life they can make visible the love with which Christ loves his Church and continues to give his life for her". Or as the Gospel states:

Happy are the poor in spirit; theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle: they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn: they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right: they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful: they shall have mercy shown them.

Happy the pure in heart: they shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers: they shall be called children of God.

MARRIAGE PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the grace and blessings you have given to Margaret and David during the past 50 years of marriage. We celebrate and recall the day when they joined together as partners in life and we thank you for being with them on their daily journey together through life's ups and downs. Increase their sense of belonging to each other.

We thank you that you have freely given them your presence, strength, help and hope. We pray that they will continue to grow in their ability to work together for the good of each other, for the good of their family and for the good of the world.

Fill them with love, forgiveness, patience and trust.

Guide them with the light of your word. May they continue to remember that, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres." (I Cor 13:4-8)

Increase their sense of companionship and friendship. Grant them the ability to laugh at their mistakes and the means to share the simple pleasures of life together.

Enable them to speak the truth in love. Help them to be good listeners. And grant them wisdom and a spirit of cooperation as they make your good plans together on the tough issues and challenges they face.

Surround them with good friends and neighbours. Protect their home. Care for their family. Provide for their needs. Guard their health. And may they enjoy many other anniversaries together. We ask this blessing in the name of the Father, ✚ and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.

At St. Peter's Catholic Church in Toronto , they have weekly husband's marriage seminars. At the session last week, the priest asked Giuseppe, who said he was approaching his 50th wedding anniversary, to take a few minutes and share some insight into how he had managed to stay married to the same woman all these years. Giuseppe replied to the assembled husbands, "Wella, I'va tried to treat her nicea, spenda da money on her, but besta of all is, I tooka her to Italy for the 25th anniversary!" The priest responded, "Giuseppe, you are an amazing inspiration to all the husbands here! Please tell us what you are planning for your wife for your 50th anniversary?" Giuseppe proudly replied, " I gonna go pick her up."