

## Reflection Friday 7<sup>th</sup> Week Easter St Charles Lwanga and Companions 2022

**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, some his personal attendants. Charles Lwanga and his 21 companions (the youngest, Kizito, was 13) were executed for being Christians, for rebuking the king for his debauchery and his murder of 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. The Ugandan martyrs' feast day is a public holiday in Uganda.

The New Revised Jerusalem Bible has replaced the word *Happy* with *Blessed* as follows: *Blessed those who are persecuted in the cause of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven: this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.* So often the spreading of the Gospel has been sown in blood, Uganda reminds us of this. It reminds us, too, that our freedom, our faith and life after death was at the cost of blood, the blood of Jesus. It challenges us to live our faith with courage and commitment.

Pope Francis: *"Today in the world, in Europe, many Christians are persecuted and give their lives for their faith, or are left aside, marginalized. Martyrdom, is the air of the life of a Christian, of a Christian community. There will always be martyrs among us: this is the sign that we are on the path of Jesus. It is a blessing from the Lord, that among the people of God, there be some witness of martyrdom.*