

**Lives
of
Saints**

St Charles Lwanga

1865-1886

Feast day: 3rd June



I became interested in the teaching of the Catholic missionaries in 1880, when on a visit to the capital. Then, in 1884, on the accession of King Mwanga, I went to the court and entered the royal service. I was at once placed in charge of the royal pages in the great audience hall, immediately winning the confidence and affection of my charges. I was considered the strongest athlete of the court, and I excelled at wrestling which was the most popular sport at the palace. I was also known as "the most handsome man of the Kingdom of the Uganda."

Mwanga was a superstitious pagan king who originally was tolerant of Catholicism. However, his chief assistant, Katikiro, slowly convinced him that Christians were a threat to his rule, since they did not bow to him, nor make sacrifices to their pagan god, nor pillage, massacre, nor make war.

Joseph Mukaso, head of the court pages, encouraged the African youths to resist Mwanga's sexual demands, and he was killed for doing that.

On November 15, 1885, the day of Joseph Mukasa's martyrdom, some royal servants and I went to the Catholic Mission and were baptized by Father Simeon Lourdel. Our lives were in danger because we were catechumens. The following day, the king assembled all the pages and demanded under pain of death that we confess our Christian allegiance. All of us, Catholic and Anglican, except for three, did so. Mwanga was baffled by our solidarity and our constancy, but hesitated to carry out his threat to kill us all. Several times in early December the king attempted to intimidate his pages, in spite of visits from the Catholic and Anglican missionaries. During this time I instructed the pages in the Catholic faith and sought to inspire and encourage them to remain chaste and faithful. I was burned to death at Namugongo on June 3, 1886, on Mwanga's order.

Pope Paul VI canonized all 22 Ugandan martyrs, in October of 1964. I am the patron of youth and catholic action in most of tropical Africa.

"Katonda"

"My God."

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