

Ecumenical Relationships in Masaka

Bishop Henry Katumba-Tamale

Warm Christian greetings from West Buganda Diocese. Here below is the story of my Ecumenical relations with Rt. Rev. Dr. John Baptist Kaggwa, Bishop of Masaka Diocese:

My parents, though not officially married in Church, were Christians whereby my father subscribed to the Anglican Church of Uganda and my mother to the Roman Catholic Church. Although I started my formal education at an Anglican Church School, Kisugu (not a full Primary), I completed my Primary level at a Roman Catholic School, St. Peter's P/S Nsambya where, while in P.5 I almost enrolled to train to become a Rev. Father! What impeded me was my parents' marital status.

I first met Bishop John Baptist Kaggwa way back in the 1980s when he was the Rector of St. Mbaaga's Seminary, Ggaba as well as the Parish Priest of Ggaba Parish. At this time, I was the Lay Reader of my home Church, St. John's Kawuku-Ggaba.

There used to be occasions where each party would invite the other to attend their functions; for instance, when the Bishop of Namirembe Diocese (Church of Uganda) would come for Pastoral visits, including but not limited to presiding over Confirmation Services, and/or when any of us would have Fundraisings for our respective Church Projects. In the Souvenir magazine "Omusumba" of my Consecration and Enthronement, Bishop Kaggwa alludes to these infant years of our interaction in ministry.

This background means that I have found it very easy to work with the Bishop of Masaka. His area of jurisdiction, commonly known as "Greater Masaka", comprises nine Districts and eight of these make up West Buganda Diocese (the ninth, Kalangala, is part of Namirembe Diocese).



Bishop Henry Katumba-Tamale (on the left) & Roman Catholic Bishop John Baptist Kaggwa at the ecumenical car washing

Highlights of things we have done together are:

Sharing a meal with some of our Priests at Kitovu, courtesy of Bishop Kaggwa; a gesture of welcoming us to Greater Masaka!

Meeting and interacting with other religious and political leaders of this vast area including, among others, the Vice President, Members of Parliament, Chairmen of Local Councils (LC) 5, etc. to brainstorm and see how we can network to optimally utilise the meagre resources we have to address the socio-economic challenges of God's people entrusted to us.

Walking on Good Friday with our respective congregations from Mbirizi Parish (Church of Uganda) after Bishop Kaggwa and I had delivered our brief Homilies in lieu of the Public Way of the Cross, to St. Matthias Mbirizi Parish (Roman Catholic).

Holding two Ecumenical Services at Luvule and Ssunga Parishes respectively, in respect of the Unity Week under the umbrella of the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC).

Washing cars in conjunction with other Rotary Clubs in Uganda and the general public, as one of the ways to raise money to annex a special and well equipped Ward for Nkozi Hospital for the treatment of the victims of motor accidents along the Kampala-Masaka road.

Sharing in funeral Services for some of the gallant and faithful sons and daughters of Christ in our respective Churches.

At the time of writing, arrangements are under way to hold an Ecumenical Christmas Carol Service in December.

I am optimistic that in the spirit of Ecumenism and as the Lord shall lead us, there is yet more the two of us can/will do in God's vineyard to expand and establish His Kingdom amongst His people. We shall appreciate all the support that we are given to this end.

Bishop Henry Katumba-Tamale is the Bishop of West Buganda Diocese