

Uganda@25

On 31 October 1996, 25 years ago, the first group of men travelled to Kampala to stay and live there on a permanent basis and to start the stable activities of Opus Dei in the Pearl of Africa.

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Prince Katama and his wife Edith met Blessed Alvaro in Nairobi in 1988 and asked him to start apostolic activities in Uganda. Soon after that the trips to Kampala from Nairobi started. They used to travel every

two months. The first priest to travel was Fr. Peter and later Fr. Albert and Andrew took over. The first task in the first months was to get in touch with the friends of Prince Katama and this was a very good start. They had some recollections in the chapel of Mulago Hospital and other activities.

Once they moved permanently, they started staying in the rented house of a Cooperator, an Italian fellow called Jean Michelle De Maio. He was staying alone, and he welcomed them with open arms. That was a useful landing place for the first few weeks. The house was close to Wandegeya.

Some months later and after a lot of searching they moved to a rented house close to Makerere. The house was not perfect, but it gave them a place to start. There was an annex to the house which they called “the

palace”, but it was anything but a palace. Besides this house there was a church that did a lot of preaching at night with the loudspeakers at full volume for the neighbours to hear everything. This normally happened at weekends when they would not manage to get much sleep. They used this house until they bought and moved to the actual Bugala in 2002.

The challenges and difficulties in the first years were the usual ones. They needed to get jobs, to meet people and to get money to pay the bills. At the beginning some cooperators and members of the Work in Kenya helped them as they did not manage to cover all the expenses at the end of the month.

Izael got a job in Makerere University as a lecturer, and this helped a lot as they also got in touch with university students. Juanjo started doing a masters in internal

medicine and worked in a hospital, and John got a teaching job at an international School called Rainbow International. With all these jobs they managed to start things and to meet people and to explain the spirit of St Josemaria to the many Ugandans they would meet.

Little by little people started coming to the center and knowing Opus Dei. The first years they organized workcamps and they met many students and people from other countries came to give a hand.

These are some ideas of the humble beginnings of Opus Dei in Uganda. The ladies of Opus Dei came to live permanently months later in 1997 and I guess they will have similar stories. All of us give thanks for this simple beginning that has already given so many fruits of sanctity in ordinary life. With God's help we

pray that many more fruits will come in the years ahead.

We already have in Uganda some people that live and try to practice the spirit of St Josemaria and these will be the instruments that God counts on to spread the seed even further.

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