

## Binaisa endorses Prayer for Peace

*Godfrey Binaisa, former President of Uganda and chairman of the African Civil Rights Movement, endorsed the Prayer for Peace walk called for Nov. 2 by Emmanuel Cardinal Wamala, with this statement issued from New York on Oct. 31:*

I salute Your Eminence Cardinal Wamala, head of the Uganda Catholic Church, for your leadership of the peace march. I also salute the leaders of the Episcopal Churches and other Christian denominations, the Muslim leaders, and leaders of African Traditional Religions who have joined in this glorious march for peace. I wish I was with you all in Kampala to march with you. You are walking the last mile to the freedom of our country. You are marching in peace, dignity, respect for the rule of law, and a yearning for true democracy that has now reached its peak by your march.

You intend to hurt nobody, but merely to pass on the message for peace, that the time has come to supplement our long march for matters spiritual, which in our history produced martyrs among Christians and Muslims, with a great concern for matters temporal, and thus confirm that

all men were created equal in the image of God, and are entitled to liberty and the pursuit of happiness. These words from the American Declaration of Independence prove that the human species has no lower forms of men, who should be treated as if they were cows. By your action, you have rejected ethnic origin, caste, religion, sex, and political opinion, as a basis for opportunities in education, business, or office. This means that everybody's human rights have to be protected. Democracy is for all. Full participation in the economic development of the country is a birthright of everyone, but not a right enjoyed as a divine right by those in power, to be handed out to foreign interests, particularly the interests of our former colonial masters in their aim to control our natural resources.

Finally, military adventurism, which has now lasted 20 years, 1978-1997, must be brought to a quick end. It has been proved over and over again throughout the history of many nations, that militarism in the long run creates more problems than it purports to solve. Your peace march is the only lasting solution for a happy and prosperous Uganda.

Remember the words of a great African-American freedom fighter, Frederick Douglass, "You are the ones to put a limit to how much you can endure."

We all pray that this time the Uganda government will enter into negotiations with the rebel groups seriously, and fully committed to abide by the decisions reached by all parties to the conflict.

Dear brothers and sisters in God, we should reflect on the challenges contained in our National Constitution which relate to our commitment to peace and reconciliation. This reflection will enable us to visualize the aspirations of the people of Uganda in this respect.

Both the Preamble and the National Objectives pay much attention to peace and nation-building among all people.

"We the people of Uganda

"Recalling our history which has been characterized by political and constitutional instability,

"Recognizing our struggles against the forces of tyranny, oppression, and exploitation,

"Committed to building a better future by establishing a socio-economic and political order through a popular and durable national Constitution based on the principles of unity, peace, equality, democracy, freedom, social justice, and progress. . . ."

These paragraphs recover the sense of bitter history we have lived and offer the vision and hope for the future. Our aspirations are to change from a history of instability to stability, from a reality of war to a reality of peace, unity, and social justice. . . .

8. National Objectives paragraph III. National unity and stability

This paragraph is at the center of the theme of our prayer service today. I strongly urge every Ugandan to read, study, and reflect on it in order to find the challenges it gives to all of us:

- "All organs of State and people of Uganda shall work towards the promotion of national unity, peace, and stability.
- "Every effort shall be made to integrate all the people of Uganda while at the same time recognizing the existence of their ethnic, religious, ideological, political, and cultural diversity.
- "Everything shall be done to promote a culture of cooperation, understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and respect for each other's customs, traditions, and beliefs.
- "There shall be established and nurtured institutions and procedures for the resolution of conflicts fairly and peacefully.
- "The State shall provide a peaceful, secure, and stable political environment which is necessary for economic development."

. . . My prayer is that all of us, and each one of us should take up this constitutional challenge most seriously in order to have peace in all parts of the country, peace which can only be achieved with forgiveness and reconciliation. . . .