

NEWS FROM SACRED HEART SEMINARY ARCHDIOCESE OF GULU, UGANDA

Volume 1 No. 16 June 2005

FROM THE DESK OF MSGR. MATTHEW ODONG

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

Prayer and cordial greetings to you from Sacred Heart Seminary. I trust that the good Lord continues to bless and keep you in the palm of His loving and caring hand. Time has flown by so fast. It is incredible that we are now half way through another year. The year has been a year characterized by many events of concern, sadness and joy.

We have witnessed the death of the great Vicar of Christ, Pope John Paul II and God's gift of Pope Benedict to succeed him in leading humanity along the path of peace, truth, justice and holiness. From the way the whole world was moved by his death, one can conclude that Pope John Paul II was a special gift of God not only for the Catholic Community but also for the whole of humanity. Apart from his intellectual ability, he was a spiritual leader who allowed himself to be inspired and guided by God in his teaching and every decision made for the good of humanity. He was a man of God, a friend of humanity, promoter of peace in the world, defender of the dignity of human life and one who made a big impact in the lives of the young people. May God reward him for all that he did to promote the values of the Kingdom of God in the world, in the Church, in our families and in our hearts.

With great joy, we welcome our new Pope Benedict XVI and wish him good health and God's blessings. May his papacy strengthen the unity of humanity for which Jesus prayed. The Pope, the Bishops, Priests, Deacons and all the pastoral agents need our prayers so that they remain faithful in witnessing to the values of the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity.

PEACE BUILDING ACTIVITIES

The 19 years of conflict continues to cause great suffering to the people in Northern Uganda. The most vulnerable are children, women and the elderly. It is one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world that has not been taken seriously by the International Community. Various groups of peace loving people have come to contribute toward ending this bloody conflict. These include the Acholi cultural and Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, the District Reconciliation team, the Presidential Peace Team, the Justice and Peace Commission, various Non Governmental Organizations and the International Community. Five approaches to ending the conflict have been proposed.

- * The military option
- * Dialogue
- * Amnesty
- * Reconciliation and forgiveness
- * The ICC (International Criminal Court of Justice)

Each group is identified and associated with one or two of the five mentioned methods. The government of Uganda advocates for a military solution. This approach has failed to achieve total peace for the last 19 years. The International Criminal Court of Justice advocates for the arrest of the top LRA leaders for the purpose of trying and prosecuting them for the atrocities committed against the people. The ICC came in at the invitation of the Ugandan government. The questions I have related to this approach are who, how soon and where will the ICC find the top LRA leadership and effect their arrest before more people are killed by the LRA? How many more innocent people including the children in captivity will be killed before the ICC finds and arrests the LRA leadership? What method will be used by the ICC to carry out the arrest? Military option? What will happen to thousands of children taken against their will?

The Acholi Cultural Leaders, Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative and the majority of the population advocate for Dialogue, Amnesty, Forgiveness and Reconciliation as a means to ending the conflict. This approach has bore some positive results in that some rebel commanders have voluntarily surrendered to the government of Uganda and have been granted amnesty.

On December 28, 2004, I was among the peace team led by Betty Bigombe to meet with the rebel leaders in the bush. One important point, which surfaced in that meeting, was the need for confidence building between the LRA and the Ugandan government. The LRA does not trust the Ugandan government. Unless a solution is found for confidence building, the road to peace is going to be very long. We wish to express a plea to our government of Uganda to demonstrate the political will to end the conflict and to the International Community to put pressure on the government of Uganda, the government of Sudan and the LRA to end the conflict. The people of Northern Uganda do not deserve this terrible and inhuman treatment.



Children demonstrate for their right to peace.

POLITICAL TEMPERATURE IN UGANDA

With preparation in high gear for holding a referendum to decide on which form of government the people of Uganda want; there is fear that this political exercise may overshadow the present peace effort. There is a move by the government to amend our constitution to remove the article limiting a president to only two terms. This would allow future presidents of Uganda to rule without limit. The donor countries, which finance the annual budget of the Ugandan government, could help bring change to the political system. They have a voice that will be heard in bringing true democracy and prosperity to Uganda.

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

The Church has ever been and shall continue to be the voice of the voiceless and the conscience of society especially in conflict where human rights and dignity are threatened. Since the beginning of this conflict in 1986, the Church has identified herself with the suffering people. Many Church Institutions and parishes in the Archdiocese of Gulu have become a home to the displaced persons. The Church is involved not only in the salvation of souls but in bringing salvation to the whole human person, body and soul: to feed the hungry, cloth the naked, nurse the wounds of those afflicted by the conflict, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. The Church built most schools and health centers in Northern Uganda. In Pader District, our American friends are helping us build a secondary school to be named after Archbishop Harry J. Flynn of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. The land has been acquired, a well has been drilled and local materials (bricks, stones and sand) are being ferried to the building site. We intend to build a quality school that can accommodate 800 boys and girls. This would be impossible without your generous support.

SACRED HEART SEMINARY

Of the 41 Seminarians abducted by the LRA on May 11, 2003, 11 are still missing. Please keep them in your prayers.

The Seminary is operating normally. God continues to bless us with many vocations to the priesthood. Last year we ordained 5 to the priesthood. Another 4 are expected to be ordained deacons between now and August.

The construction of a parish hall at Adilang chapel to be used for conducting seminars and workshops on the danger of HIV/AIDS for the youth has been completed.

The tractor has been a blessing to both the Seminary and the population surrounding the Seminary. Each week we receive several requests from families requesting the Seminary tractor to plough their gardens. It is good we are able to help our people increase crop production.

The Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu at Patongo parish express their gratitude for the completion of the building of their living quarters in Patongo.



Renovation of sister house at Sacred Heart Seminary.

The opening of computer classes in the Seminary has made a lot of progress in the education of our Seminarians. Toward the end of this year our fourth year Seminarians will be taking the government examinations for computer skills. We are excited and look forward to the outcome of the exams.

The renovation of the house of the sisters working in the Seminary is finished. The sisters thank you for their new living quarters.

The books we received the beginning of this year from "Books for Africa" was a source of joy to many schools here. The teachers and students of all those schools who received the textbooks thank you for this wonderful gift.



Sisters house in Patongo.

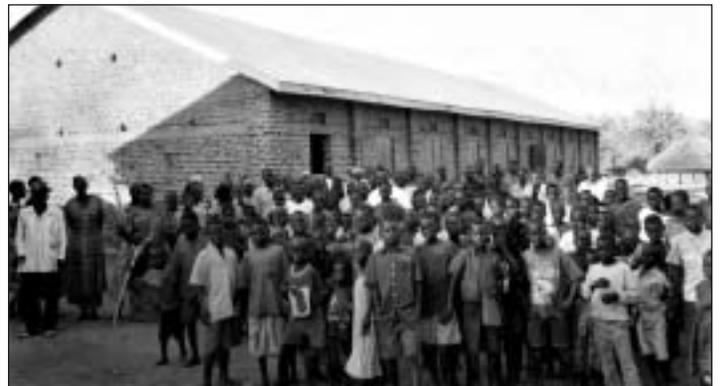
WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN UGANDA

- * Put the people in your daily prayers.
- * Present to the Lord the urgent need for peace.
- * Write to your government leaders and make them aware of the problems in Uganda and ask them to intervene on behalf of the suffering people.
- * Continue to support the ministry of the Church in Northern Uganda by sharing your blessings.

Wishing you God's abundant blessings and graces in your daily endeavors.

Your friend in the service of the Church,

Msgr. Matthew Odong - Rector



School in a refugee camp.

THE VOICE OF THE SEMINARIANS

To our dear American friends,

On behalf of the Seminarians of Sacred Heart Seminary I would like to extend our greetings, prayers and gratitude for your continued prayers and support. Know that your love for us has been a source of encouragement to each one of us in our journey to the priesthood. Thank you for the gift of five motorcycles to our newly ordained priests. We also appreciate the recent purchase of 300 chairs for our refectory and auditorium. Be assured of our daily prayers for you and your dear ones.

May God bless you abundantly with good health, peace, love and joy in the Risen Lord,

Ayella Simon Peter
Head Prefect

FROM THE TEACHERS

Dear Friends,

We, the teaching staff of Sacred Heart Seminary, write to you on behalf of over thirty schools to acknowledge your generous donation of textbooks to improve the source of knowledge for our teachers and students. As teachers, we scrutinized the textbooks and found many of them relevant and in agreement with our Uganda school curriculum. Others are good for general information in the respective subjects. The receipt of these books was very timely because many schools lack basic textbooks for learning. There is hunger for books in many of our schools from Nursery to Secondary schools.

As teachers in a developing country, many challenges impede our good intentions to give quality education to our students. The challenges include the conflict, high student to teacher ratios, lack of textbooks and lack of desks and chairs in many schools. We are very happy because your donation of books has broken this stereotyped insufficiency of academic resources. Our government has come up with a strong emphasis on learning science subjects in depth. The problem with this emphasis is that many schools lack science facilities in their schools. These include relevant science textbooks, laboratories, equipment, chemicals, apparatus, etc. We accept the emphasis but need to equip our laboratories with basic equipment for learning science. Perhaps you could consider sending some science equip-

Secondary School, music, world history, political science, education, economics, geography, mathematics and health science.
Thank you for your benevolence and may God bless you abundantly.

Yours faithfully,

Opira Charles
On behalf of the teachers



Books being loaded for delivery to schools.



Books arrive at Sacred Heart Seminary.



Books being sorted before distribution.

ment for our schools. Since science is a universal subject, we think whatever you send will be relevant to our educational curriculum and will definitely prepare our students for National Examinations. Here in Uganda the ministry of Education designs the syllabus and each syllabus has some specific textbooks. Of the many books sent by Books for Africa, we found that most science text books (Physics, Chemistry and Biology) correspond to our syllabus. Under arts subjects we recommend you consider English Grammar from Nursery to Senior

APPRECIATION FROM SISTER JOSEPHINE

Greetings from the sisters in my community. On behalf of my Community of Sacred Heart Seminary and the Sisters' Community of Patongo parish we would like to thank you for the renovation of our living house at the Seminary and for the assistance given for the construction of the house for our Sisters at Patongo parish. We promise you our daily prayers.

May God bless you in your work on behalf of the Church and the people of God in Northern Uganda. Please remember us in your prayers for peace for our people.

Sincerely yours,

Sr. Josephine Bongo, LSMIG Superior of Sacred Heart Seminary Community

UGANDAN PRIEST DOING MINISTRY IN THE TWIN CITIES

This summer we the friends of Sacred Heart Seminary will be blessed to have Fr. Robert Obol, a Priest from the Archdiocese of Gulu, giving service in our midst.

100% of all funds received go directly to Monsignor Matthew for the work of the Church in the Archdiocese of Gulu. All the costs of mailing, printing of the newsletter, accounting, office expenses, non-profit reporting to Federal and State agencies and Dan & Pete's travel expenses to Africa and Washington, DC are paid by the Vaughan and Truax families.

Fr. Robert is a student at Walsh University in Canton, Ohio, where he is studying for a master's degree in ministry. He is a beneficiary of our long-standing relationship with the Archdiocese of Gulu and his service in the Twin Cities is a sign of his appreciation.

He was ordained a Priest on the 18th of August, 2001 and sent to Pajule parish where he served as Associate Pastor and later Pastor until last August when his Archbishop sent him to the United States for two years of study.



Father Robert Nyeko Obol.

While he is with us Fr. Robert will be living with Pete and Dottie Truax and be involved in hospital ministry. We hope that this experience and service will enable him to share the good news with the sick, be beneficial in his studies and above all enable him to take this useful experience with him back to Uganda.

UGANDA PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION - MARCH 2006

By Pete Truax

President Yoweri Museveni has been president of Uganda since 1986 when he led a military takeover of the government. The Ugandan Constitution currently states that a president cannot serve more than two terms. Museveni held elections in 1996 and 2001. The period before 1996 it appears is not counted. Museveni is currently trying to amend the constitution so he can run for a third term. The Monitor newspaper in Kampala recently ran a story telling of bonuses Museveni paid to selected members of Parliament. The bonuses were paid only to members of Parliament belonging to the Movement Party who are supportive of Museveni. This is clearly a bribe to get this amendment passed.

In 1995 an amendment to the Ugandan Constitution was adopted. Article 269 does not allow political parties other than the Movement Party (Museveni's party) to exist. Other political parties that existed in Uganda for years are forbidden from holding meetings and speaking to the people about changes they would make if elected. Kizza Besigye ran against Museveni in the 2001 election and was placed under military surveillance following the election. He later fled to South Africa. He is one of many Ugandans I am aware of who fled Uganda because their lives were threatened because of having differences with the Ugandan Government.

I met with Edith Ssemपाला, Ugandan Ambassador to the U. S., on January 16, 2002 in Washington. In response to Article 269 Ambassador Ssemपाला's comment was: "The road to democracy is a long hard road. It is the feeling of the Ugandan Government that it is in the best interest of the people if the 'ELITE' of our society, which she said was 10% of the people, lead the people until they are ready for true democracy. I made the statement that Uganda received its independence in 1962 and it did not seem that adopting Article 269 in 1995 was moving toward democracy. Ambassador Ssemपाला did not respond. It appears the Ugandan Government still feels that as the ELITE of their society they need to maintain power in the best interest of the people.

I wrote to President Bush on April 11, 2003 asking him to urge Museveni to hold truly democratic elections. On May 20, 2003 President Bush's Senior Director for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer,

wrote on his behalf and stated: "We have been encouraged by President Museveni's recent moves to improve political openness and democracy, particularly the announcement that political parties will be allowed to field candidates in the 2006 elections. We will continue to press for additional positive measures from the Government." I also heard from a source at the National Security Council that President Bush told Museveni at a meeting in June 2003 that he needed to step aside in 2006 - that twenty years of leading the country was enough. At this point Article 269 is still part of the Ugandan Constitution and no political candidates have announced they will run against Museveni. The U. S. Government and the International Community have made significant progress in ending the conflict between the Ugandan Government and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Northern Uganda. The next move should be National Reconciliation to guide Uganda to a more inclusive and unified socio - economic - political environment. I don't see how this can happen unless Museveni steps aside in 2006 and allows a truly democratic election.

In the five years of my political advocacy related to ending the war in Northern Uganda I have seen a lot of progress. I know advocacy works. The more people we can get to raise their voices the better are the chances of improving the lives of our brothers and sisters in Uganda. I encourage each of you to write to President Bush and Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice and ask them to take steps to assure a truly democratic election in Uganda in 2006. You can write to the following addresses:

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20502

Secretary Condoleezza Rice
U. S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 2052



Msgr. Matthew encourages benefactor to learn to play the Adungu.

UGANDA CONFERENCE IN MINNEAPOLIS SEPTEMBER 2-5, 2005

The Uganda North American Association is sponsoring the Convention with the stated purpose of providing a platform and venue for Ugandans and their families and friends throughout the world to get together and promote Social, Cultural, Academic and Economic relationships. The Key Note Speaker is current US Ambassador to Uganda, Jimmy Kolker, who has been in this post since October 2002. He has served in his diplomatic career for 28 years, including 15 in Africa. Details of the conference can be found at www.unaaminnnesota.com.

For more information call Pete Truax at (952) 934-2720 or Dan Vaughan at (952) 473-3660
U.S. Office: Sacred Heart Seminary, c/o Dan Vaughan, 3440 Bayside Road, Orono, Minnesota 55356-9218