

NEWS FROM **SACRED HEART SEMINARY** ARCHDIOCESE OF GULU, UGANDA

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FROM THE DESK OF MONSIGNOR MATTHEW ODONG, RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,
The peace and blessings of the Risen Lord be with you and all your loved ones. We thank you for your love, prayers and continued support.

UPDATE

I am happy to report that a lot of progress has been made in northern Uganda since the peace talks in Juba, Sudan began July 14, 2006 especially in the area of peace. For almost three years now the situation remains calm and peaceful in Uganda even though the commander of the LRA remains active in Sudan and Congo. The majority of the population has moved from the IDP camps back to their original homes, which were abandoned for the last twenty years. People can now move and drive freely in all of northern Uganda without fear of abduction or ambushes on the roads. Within the last year we have had several visits of solidarity from some of our American friends. Five of them who visited us in August 2008 gave their comments on their visits in our December 2008 newsletter. Two more (Zachary and Gary Ivins) in this newsletter and two more groups will be visiting us in June. The visits of our American friends are always a source of joy and encouragement to all the people in our Archdiocese of Gulu. We encourage all of our friends who are able, to come to spend some time with us. Apparently northern Uganda has moved from conflict to a post conflict reconstruction. With the relative peace in place, a new chapter for building a new northern Uganda is now opened with invitation to all men and women of good will within Uganda and across the globe

to come and join hands with us local people in nurturing the wounds of conflict and giving hope to the people who have lived in darkness for so long.

PRIESTLY FORMATION AT SACRED HEART SEMINARY

Because of your prayers and support, vocations to priesthood at Sacred Heart Seminary continue to grow each year. We have 148 seminarians at Sacred Heart Seminary and 47 at the Major Seminary's studying philosophy and theology this academic year. This year the Lord is blessing us with 3 new priests, who will be ordained in June and July of this year, and hopefully 8 transitional Deacons to be ordained in 2010. These men are the fruits of your prayers and sacrifices, for which we are most grateful. May Jesus Christ, the High Priest, bless you abundantly for your prayers and support.

ARCHBISHOP FLYNN SECONDARY SCHOOL

The school officially opened on February 16, 2009 with 35 students, 10 teaching staff and two cooks. The original plan was to open with 120 students but due to lack of completed accommodations we decided to reduce the number of students for the first academic year. The girl's dormitory, nun's quarters and student's dining hall are now almost complete. We are using the 8 classrooms currently for classrooms, school administration, infirmary, store and science lab. We are really squeezed but it is working out well. The motto of the school is "SAPIENTIS ET SERVITIUM" which translates "Wisdom and Service." The mission of the school is to offer quality education to our young boys and girls to prepare them for service to humanity rooted in the Catholic virtues and understand-



Mother Viola Akulu, Wendy Ivins, Msgr. Matthew Odong, Zachary Ivins with students & staff at AFSS

ing of wisdom/knowledge. One of the biggest challenges of our local church here in the post conflict reconstruction program is to offer our young people the opportunity for quality education that will equip them with better knowledge to fight diseases, ignorance, poverty, bad governance, corruption, injustice and other social justice related issues. I believe Archbishop Flynn Secondary School will help the Ugandan community realize this dream.



Students in classroom.

CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

We have begun construction of our SCIENCE LABORATORY, which we hope to complete by the end of this year. On May 13, 2009 Dr. Gary Ivins visited the school, broke ground and laid the corner stone in the presence of the staff and Board Members of the school. Other future needs are for a boy's dormitory, additional classrooms and other facilities as funds become available.

APPEAL

I ask you to continue to pray for us as you have done in the past and help us with your financial contributions as you can.

With love and blessings to you and all your loved ones.

Msgr, Matthew Odong
Rector

SIX YEARS AFTER LRA ABDUCTION



Seminarian William Akena wrote an article in our December 2003 newsletter explaining his abduction from Sacred Heart Seminary on May 11, 2003 along with 40 other seminarians and his experience in the bush before being left for dead after a blow to his head. A total of 30 of the abductees have found their way to freedom.

Eleven are still not accounted for and are presumed dead. Today William, at age 25, is in his 3rd year of philosophical studies in his formation for the priesthood at Katigondo Major Seminary in Masaka, Uganda. He is from Kitgum Mission parish in the district of Kitgum, the fifth born of six children.

The events of May 11, 2003 and the weeks following has become a memorable event, which will ever remain in my mind, said Akena. An event that kept me in almost a year of abstract confusion. Our own home (the seminary) turned into a very traumatizing environment. When I found my way home from the bush, I became so confused that I stopped my study for that full year; I became so perplexed and could not even think of joining school anymore. This in most cases has been the experience of most returnees, for whom life becomes a mass of unbreakable stone and their end in life takes effect with their freedom from captivity, when in the actual sense, this should have been their starting point. My happiness lies on the point that despite all these ordeals, my conviction in life remained unshaken because it was a conviction not built on faith in the God who is aloof from human suffering, but on a God who is fully responsible for what He Himself created and felt they were good. For philosophers out there, Hegel, the German idealistic philosopher in his view of the absolute described it as; *"The process of its own becoming. A circle that presupposes and has its end as its own beginning. It became actual by its development through its end, meaning reality is a theological process."*

Following this thesis of Hegel, I would wish to assure you, our dear friends, that these ordeals have given me the motivation and the strength to build a better life. My journey back to the seminary bases on the kind of friendship I had built with the life and friends. From childhood, what I have admired most is the magnificence of science (astronomy, geometry technology) and practical lifestyle. The seminary and the army are two institutions so akin in various disciplines and formation; and its in this two that one can draw a perfect example of practical life styles; the virtue of honesty, strict sanctions, allegiances to the various forces of command which for our



School sign.

case is to God. When one deserts the army, for confidentiality reasons, he is hunted and brought back. In the same way, we can't evade when God calls. In the seminary, I am having a different experience altogether of meeting friends from various tribal groups with various stories about life and here you can really feel love and

happiness flowing like a river, amidst personal difficulties that one can overcome by just laughing them off. We have friends who love us and we love them too. By these lives we move on.

I appreciate so much the support of our friends; I appreciate so much Msgr. Matthew Odong who has always been a spiritual father and a friend, I appreciate my parents whose continued support has kept me moving on, and lastly I thank all the readers of this news letter. God bless you,

William Akena

HEALTHCARE IN NORTHERN UGANDA

By Dr. Gary Ivins

I arrived in Uganda on May 10th, looking forward to visiting my son, Zachary and Msgr. Matthew who has been a friend for several years. Since I am a practicing internist in Minneapolis, Msgr. Matthew made arrangements for us to visit three Catholic hospitals in northern Uganda. St. Mary's Lacor Hospital, the largest of the three and located down the road from Sacred Heart Seminary, was founded by the Comboni Missionaries and serves as a teaching hospital. Although they still practice with 1950's technology, their medical care is driven by compassion, love and education. The lack of technology doesn't limit the treatment of the most common illnesses, which include malaria, tuberculosis and pneumonia. The antibiotics for these illnesses are inexpensive and simple, but the cost of the HIV drugs limits those that can receive the life saving therapy. Unfortunately, ongoing management of a hospital like St. Mary's still requires charity gifts to cover 80% of its 3.2 million dollar budget.

We visited the Anaka parish health clinic just one hour from Gulu. The clinic was staffed by a nurse who was skilled at diagnosing and treating malaria. For extensive illnesses, the nurse refers patients to the hospital. They often travel to the hospital by the same means they traveled to the clinic, on foot. The clinic is located adjacent to an IDP Camp, which brings the clinic, on average, 50 cases of malaria each week. At times, the quinine medication for treating malaria runs out and the people must wait for more to arrive before being treated.

Although it's difficult to serve such a large rural area as northern Uganda, the education of Uganda nurses and physicians is on the rise. It only takes five years post high school to become an M.D. Science education is critical for creating future nurses and physicians, which is why the completion of Archbishop Flynn Secondary School (AFSS) is so important. AFSS will provide northern Uganda with its second fully equipped science lab! It only takes one day of traveling and seeing roads filled with walkers and bicyclers, traveling miles to work in fields, to realize how little the families here have to get by

each day. We met a group of children whom had traveled 10-20 miles to attend a one-day sacramental class at a rural church. I can only pray that ongoing charities continue to support this rebel torn area of northern Uganda. Msgr. Matthew and his fellow priests provide hope and spirituality for people who survive on so little material possessions.



Nun's quarters.

MY FOUR MONTHS IN GULU

By Zachary Ivins

During my stay at Sacred Heart Seminary, I taught senior three and senior four students (high school equivalent to freshman & sophomore) in computer studies. They have limited time to practice on the computer since they are required to have a teacher supervising their lab time. Having me live at the seminary allowed the students to increase their computer practice time for academic and personal use. I have enjoyed watching the students develop their knowledge of the Internet as well as their ability to operate Microsoft Excel. To date they don't



Dining hall.

have access to the Internet, but BOSCO Uganda (Battery Operated Systems for Community Outreach) plans to include Sacred Heart Seminary in their project to provide Internet access to northern Uganda. Along with teaching computers at the seminary, part of my free time has been

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.

used working with BOSCO Uganda developing tutorials and lesson plans for teaching computers in the IDP camps. After one of the seminary's teachers noticed my typing speed I went from helping Msgr. Matthew type emails to typing the seminary's science labs and the term finals for all the teachers.



Girl's dormitory & water tower.

I have developed many friendships here in the seminary as well as in the local community. My friendships range from the students (my age), teaching staff and priests at the seminary to a stranger who continued to challenge me to checker games in town until I won (which I have yet been able to do) and a local student who dreams of becoming a hip-hop artist that I helped design music videos for.

African life is simple but filled with a variety of activities that usually occur at least two hours behind schedule (Africa Time). Although I arrived back in Uganda during the dry season, which was 110 F change from the -20 F Minnesota temperature the day I left, I was rewarded the last month with the beginning of the rainy season with cool breezes and daily rains.

I will always fondly remember my four months here. They have truly shown me what is important in life and not only prepared me for my time at University Wisconsin-Madison, but my future career as well. I hope to return again over the summer while studying at the university to see the progress of the Archbishop Flynn Secondary School as well as the ongoing students.

REFLECTIONS OF DEPUTY HEAD TEACHER

By Berna Atim



I am the Deputy Head Teacher of Archbishop Flynn Secondary School in Pader. I am the last born of ten siblings. My primary school education was at Mary Immaculate in Gulu. I then attended Sacred Heart Secondary School also in Gulu for both ordinary and advanced levels. Later I joined Makerere University in Kampala where

I pursued a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education and attained a degree in Education with English Language and Literature as my teaching subjects.

Being part of the team at Archbishop Flynn Secondary School is so exciting. As a teacher of this school, I hope to gain more knowledge as well as prepare myself for greater challenges in life as I humble myself in service to the people of northern Uganda, especially the students of this school and their families who have been victims of war for the last decade. Being a part of this community has been inspirational in achieving my dream of service. I am therefore dedicated to helping these children develop socially, spiritually, emotionally and psychologically in pursuit of their personal development and career to meet the growing challenges of our time. "Wisdom and Service" is what we strive for!

Building a great school like Archbishop Flynn has been the greatest and longest lasting gift that you, our American friends, could give to the people of northern Uganda at the time when they need it most. Northern Uganda is undergoing rehabilitation and education at this time suits best the needs of the people to help the community improve their lives. The entire community of



Zach, Abp Odama, Gary & Msgr.

Pader and neighboring districts of northern Uganda appreciate this precious gift from you the friends in America, for standing with us in this time of need. You have given their children a chance to realize their dreams and shape their future and that of their country and most excitingly, the school is brought nearer their community! This secondary school is the only one in Pader District. On behalf of the teachers, support staff and the entire student community of Archbishop Flynn Secondary School, I would like to send my heartfelt appreciation to all our American Friends who have been and continue to be supportive of us in all ways. May God bless you all; I say this for God and My Country.