

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

www.sacredheartseminary.com

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FROM THE DESK OF MONSIGNOR MATTHEW ODONG, RECTOR

The students and staff of Sacred Heart Seminary and Archbishop Flynn Secondary School in Pader join me in sending our cordial greetings, love and gratitude for your prayers and support allowing us to successfully complete this academic Year.

We hope that this year has been a blessing for you as we continue to lift up each other to Jesus in prayer for a happy conclusion of this year and blessings in the New Year 2010. Below are some of the highlights of 2009 I would like to share with you.

Visit of our American Friends to Northern Uganda: From February to November Sacred Heart Seminary and Archbishop Flynn Secondary School were blessed with the visits of several of our American friends who spent time meeting with people and touring the Archdiocese of Gulu. The visitors included Dr. Gary Ivins, his wife Wendy and their son Zachary, who spent four months teaching computer skills to our seminarians. He also installed a computer at Archbishop Flynn School.

David Fagerlee came in August to witness the official dedication of AFSS, which opened in February, by Archbishop John Baptist Odama. The most recent visit was by our friend Alfred Mashnouk from New Jersey. He and his wife, Marie, sponsored a well and bought a motorcycle for one of our new priests. Alfred brought with him soccer uniforms for the seminarians and students of AFSS. Thank you dear friends for coming to express your solidarity with us. Your love, concern, generosity and sacrifices are true testimony of the universality of the Catholic Church.



Hon. Otto Odonga, Archbishop Odama, David Fagerlee and Prof. Ogenga Latigo at Ribbon Cutting Ceremony.

I wish to encourage and extend an invitation to all our American friends to come, visit us and experience our daily lives. Accommodation and meals will be provided. Ice cream and hot water for showers are not available.

“Having Much and Having Little.” One of our visitors made this remark, “we Americans have so much but you people have so little.” The remark reminded me of a moving story of the encounter of Jesus with a paralytic in Luke’s Gospel when Jesus was teaching in the temple and some sympathetic men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed and wanted Jesus to heal him of his paralysis. Jesus was moved with compassion at the sight of the paralytic and told him, “...rise, pick up your stretcher and go home” (Lk 5:24). The story ends with joyful news that the man was cured and went home singing and praising God for restoring his health and dignity. Like the paralytic man, the people of Northern Uganda have just come out of the long conflict, which caused paralysis in all aspects of life; economic, emotional and spiritual, that requires healing. We need good Samaritans like the men who carried the paralytic to Jesus for healing. Like Jesus, each one of us is being invited to get involved in the struggle of a people who “have so little.” The need for reconstruction, rehabilitation and resettlement in this region are urgent.

Peace has Returned to Northern Uganda: The people of Northern Uganda are thankful to the Lord and all those who prayed for the return of peace to the region. With peace, time has come for all our people living in the refugee camps “to rise, pick up their stretchers and go home” to begin to live a healthy and productive life. Of course, it is not an easy departure and landing because “they have so little” in the words of our visiting American friends. They need your prayers and support especially toward the education of the youth who are the future leaders of Uganda.

Archbishop Flynn Secondary School: We are grateful to all of you for the gift of this school for the education of our young boys and girls. The entire population of Pader District looks at this school as an instrument of hope for all the people in this region. We have a dormitory for the girls but need to build a dormitory for the boys, who currently sleep in classrooms not yet in use. In February the second class of 120 students will begin. Our current accommodations will become very crowded when we begin our second year.

Sacred Heart Seminary: The Lord continues to bless our Church with many vocations to the priesthood. We started this academic year with 150 seminarians at Sacred Heart

Seminary, 48 in the major seminaries, 3 ordained priests and 7 seminarians ordained transitional deacons who will be ordained priests in 2010. We encourage our benefactors to consider becoming a sponsor of one of our seminarians or a needy student at AFSS. It can be very gratifying to give a future to a young boy or girl who does not have the means to achieve their dreams.

Lastly I would like to thank in a special way Bobbi Vaughan who for 20 years has been writing letters to each and every

the previous night. When fully awake both physically and mentally, their first learning session takes place for thirty minutes not in a classroom but during the daily morning assembly where for fifteen minutes the teachers remind the students of what is expected of them, correct them on their previous day's mistakes, positively reinforce them for their good deeds and wish them well in whatever they'll do during the day. By now the students are set to learn, so in to class they go.



Archbishop Flynn accepting a plaque commemorating the dedication of AFSS from Msgr. Matthew.

benefactor each time they make a contribution to our Apostolate acknowledging and thanking them. Thank you, Bobbi, for your devotion.

I thank you wholeheartedly on behalf of all the people of Northern Uganda and wish you a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year 2010.

Your friend in the service of the Church,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Msgr. Matthew Odong".

Msgr. Matthew Odong
Rector

A TYPICAL DAY AT AFSS

By Berna Atim – Deputy Head Teacher

As the sun slowly begins to emerge and the silhouette of the horizon becomes clearly visible, the twilight slowly appears from among the trees with very strong and promising rays of hope for a good day for every living being. The birds awaken from their nests and with their sweet voices, melodiously begin to announce the break of a bright cool day, not only for them but for the students of Archbishop Flynn Secondary School as well. It's half past five in the morning and just like the birds, the students have to get up and prepare themselves for what the day has to offer. Hence leaving their cozy beds only to retire there in the evening after a super busy day punctuated with numerous school activities well stipulated in the day's program.

Learning as we all know is a process that requires one to be alert and ready physically and mentally. The first thing that the students are required to do to prepare them for it is to attend an early morning prep that runs for an hour. A brilliant way to wake up their brains from the sweet dreams of

The first two periods are conducted for eighty minutes after which the students go for breakfast for twenty minutes. Their bellies well stuffed, the students return to class for their third, fourth, fifth and sixth lessons that run for three hours and forty minutes. After this marathon, the students rush out for a short break to catch some fresh air; air free from history, mathematics or biology (depending on what was being taught). This short break gives the students more zeal to start another session of their seventh and eighth lessons from noon to 1:20pm. Meanwhile the cool breeze outside begins sending messages before the bell rings for lunch, (sending the aroma of the well prepared beans, beef, smoked fish, cabbage, posho and rice) depending on the day's menu. The students have one hour to eat lunch and rest before returning to class for their last three lessons, the ninth, tenth and eleventh which run from 2:20 to 4:30pm.

At last! The bell rings again, to announce the end of lessons. All give sighs of relief and out of class they rush to the dormitory to change into their games and sports attire. Just like the old saying goes; "work without play makes Jack a dull boy." The students in the school playground exhibit talents besides academics. This they know happens every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. On Monday, Wednesday and part of Saturday they are expected to do manual work of either slashing, sweeping or mopping. After sweating off the day's mental fatigue through sports or



Children at Holy Family Catholic High School in Victoria, MN Present Msgr. Matthew with a check for \$1,000. They raised the money selling ice cream at school events.

manual work, the students freshen up and later go to say the rosary not only to gain spiritual smartness but also to thank God through our Mother Mary for His protection during the previous night and His blessings during the hectic day. They also ask for protection through the coming night

so that they live to see another beautiful day just like the one they had. They then disperse for supper.

The birds once again melodiously sing as they retire to their nests and the sun gradually disappears behind the horizon. Darkness looms over to announce the end of day for every other living being but for the students who are still expected to go for night preps from 7:30 to 9:45pm. The bell rings for the last time to announce end of preps and finally just like the birds and the sun, the students retire to their cozy nests exhausted yet very satisfied with what the day offered them physically, mentally and above all spiritually.

Hoping to see the sun emerge from behind the horizon, the twilight slowly appearing from among the trees (with rays of hope piercing through the lives of every living being) and the birds melodiously singing the sweet songs to announce the arrival of yet another promising day, the students like a river at its senile stage slowly drift to a deep sweet sleep... For what a day at AFSS!

MY TRIP TO UGANDA

By David Fagerlee

This summer I finally made a trip to Uganda to visit Msgr. Matthew and Sacred Heart Seminary. It was the most eye opening experience of my life. I had wanted to make this visit for a number of years but because of safety issues did not go. When Msgr. Matthew called and invited me to come and join in the dedication on August 2nd of Archbishop Flynn Secondary School in Pader I accepted.

I arrived at Entebbe Airport and was met by Msgr. Matthew who took me to Kampala for the first night. The next day we drove to Gulu, which is about a five-hour drive. As we drove further from Kampala toward Gulu the living conditions of the people continued to get worse. As we were entering Gulu I witnessed many Refugee camps. The Government initially set these up to protect the people from the abduction, murders, rape and pillaging committed by the LRA rebels which went on for over twenty years.

We entered the compound of the beautiful Sacred Heart Seminary. I stayed there three nights before moving to Pader for the dedication. The Seminary was very peaceful with Mass every morning at 6:45am with all of the seminarians in attendance. It was a perfect way to begin each day. I will always have fond memories of the priests and sisters at the seminary.

Msgr. Matthew went to Pader the day before to make sure everything was ready for the celebration. I rode with the Archbishop, His Grace Archbishop Odama the following day. It was a delightful trip with the Archbishop. The dedication was a great success. Hundreds of people attended. Many who held local government offices as well as Members of Parliament who had come from Kampala.

There was traditional dancing, singing and gift giving. The Archbishop was presented with a goat, chicken, vegetables and fruit. An unplanned collection was taken by the people for support of the school, which totaled over 2 million shillings (About \$1,000), a large sum for these poor people.



Bobbi and Dan Vaughan, Msgr. Matthew and Johnette Benkovic during taping of "The Abundant Life" on July 8th at EWTN in Birmingham, AL. The program was aired in September.

The celebration lasted the full day with Mass and ribbon cutting ceremonies for all the buildings at the school. Because it rained very hard late in the day, we could not drive on so we spent that night in the Nun's house on the school property.

We left the next day heading north to visit hospitals, schools, local parishes and wells that had been drilled with donations from benefactors. We ended the day in Msgr. Matthew's village, Adilang, and stayed at his home in the village. Every time we stopped the locals were so happy to see Msgr. Matthew. He stopped to chat with everyone. We were offered food and warm hospitality everywhere. He said Mass at every opportunity, even a funeral Mass in his village.



Alfred Mashnouk and Msgr. Matthew with seminarians in new soccer uniforms provided by Alfred.

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.

The poverty was overwhelming everywhere we visited. I could have never imagined the poverty we witnessed. The smiles, handshakes and welcomes were also overwhelming. Everyone extended their hand and offered a warm welcome. Both tears and smiles were on my face the whole time.



Children at one of the Refugee Camps.

Reflections of Alfred Mashnouk

The daily Mass at Sacred Heart Seminary with the seminarians was very special and inspiring. The music and singing of the boys during the liturgy I will long remember. The simple meals and cold showers made me feel like a true missionary.

I visited many parishes, schools, hospitals and refugee camps driving through Northern Uganda. My overall impression was that everything was broken. With all these problems the work done by the Church, priests and sisters here is amazing. They need our continued support and prayers.

FR. BILL RETURNING TO GULU

Fr. Samuel was in Minneapolis from July to November 2007 for surgery on his hip. It was during this time he met Fr. Bill. When Fr. Bill Whittier left Uganda in February 2009 after spending two months working with Fr. Samuel Mwaka (Founder and Director of PACTA) he was invited and encouraged by the PACTA Staff to return and help them bring AA to the Villages. He is planning to honor that invitation for the month of December 2009. AA is badly needed in the villages where alcohol abuse is rampant and support systems to help bring healing and recovery are needed. Fr. Samuel recently reported that in a two-week period over 30 people died from alcohol poisoning and many more left permanently blind. Fr. Bill and Fr. Samuel ask for your prayers and financial support for this work. You can read more on PACTA on our website and more on Fr. Bill's first visit in our December 2008 newsletter (also on our website).

LEAVE A LEGACY

Many donors have found that using retirement plan assets to make a gift to a charity are an ideal way to "Leave a Legacy." Retirement plan accounts are set up to allow people to save funds on a tax-deferred basis during their working years. The value of a retirement account may increase, over time, beyond what the owner needs in retirement. Leaving these funds to heirs can have undesirable tax consequences, sometimes resulting in a double taxation of them. When these funds are left to a tax-exempt charity like Sacred Heart Seminary, these funds qualify as an estate tax deduction for the full value of the account and results in no income taxes to Sacred Heart Seminary since it is tax exempt under its 501c3 status. For more information, contact Dan Vaughan at 952-473-3660 or by Email at danvaughan@sacredheartseminary.com.



OUR WEBSITE

Visit our website (www.SacredHeartSeminary.com) for the latest updates on what is happening at Sacred Heart Seminary and in the Archdiocese of Gulu. You will find additional pictures and updates on the Archbishop Flynn Secondary School project, videos, back issues of the newsletter and financial reports. Check out the "Get Involved" and "Ways to Give" sections to learn how you can become more involved in this ministry.

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