

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

www.sacredheartseminary.com

Volume 1 No. 28 June 2011

FROM THE DESK OF MONSIGNOR MATTHEW ODONG, RECTOR

Dear Friends,

The Uganda National Priest's Association, the staff, the seminarians and the entire community of Sacred Heart Seminary join me in sending you our cordial greetings and prayerful regards for "the Year of the Priests, 2011." Allow me to thank you dear brothers in the priesthood for your dedicated service to the flock of Jesus Christ entrusted under your pastoral care. May Jesus, in whose priesthood we share, bless you with all the necessary means you need in ministering to everyone who needs your guidance.

We are preparing to celebrate 100 years of the gift of faith brought to us by the Comboni Missionaries who arrived in Gulu in early 1911. I admire the faith, courage and determination of those great missionaries who came and settled among the people whose language and culture they had to learn in order to evangelize. Indeed, their lives of witness, sacrifice and faithfulness to the mission remind us of the words of Jesus to his apostles: "No greater love than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Among the fruits of their missionary witness was the erection of Sacred Heart Seminary in 1937 for the formation of the local priests. Since its foundation, many priests and hundreds of young men who chose not to become priests were educated in this seminary. They include Archbishops, Bishops, Priests, Doctors, Lawyers, Teachers and many other professionals who now serve the Church in their various capacities.

The seminary's teachers face many challenges in forming future priests:

Lack of sufficient funds for maintaining and paying wages of the teaching and non-teaching staff. The transition from the missionary Church to the Local Church calls for finding a way toward self-reliance.

Many young men who enter the seminary need to be guided, encouraged and financially and spiritually supported in their journey to the priesthood.

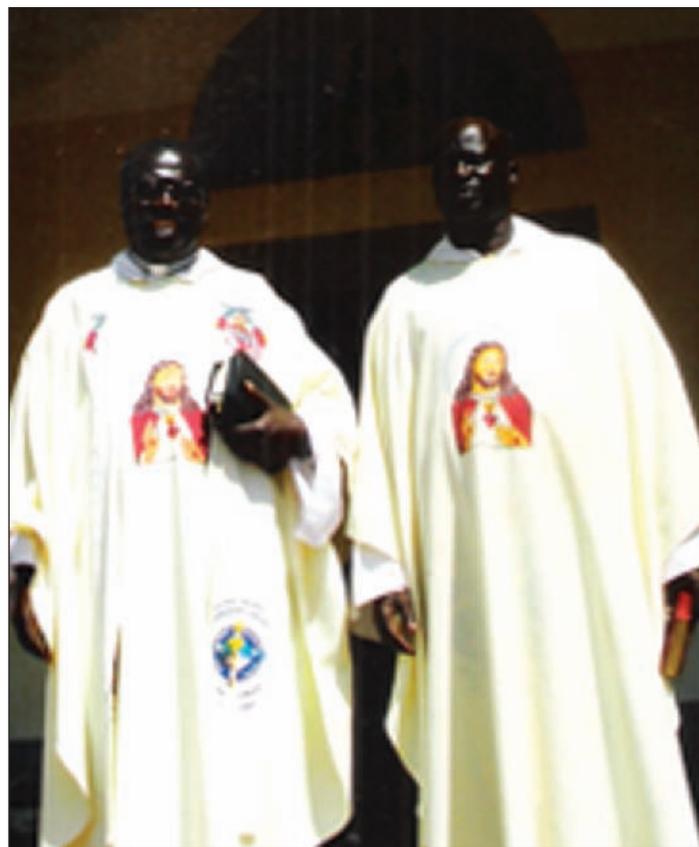
The staff has a big task to present priesthood and the life a priest lives in a way that can attract and motivate the young men to priesthood, otherwise many of them get discouraged and quit.

It is the love of Jesus Christ, which urges a priest to put

his life at the service of humanity even to the point of accepting death for the good of the flock. The institution of priesthood is meant to bring new life of holiness to the world. Hence, a priest is a man of God with duties to pray, preach, sanctify and lead the people of God along the paths of peace, truth, justice and sanctity.

I wish you God's blessings and graces in this Year of the Priests.

Fraternally yours,



Msgr. Matthew Odong & Fr. Samuel Mwaka to celebrate 25 years in the priesthood on July 19, 2012

I WANTED TO BECOME A PRIEST

By
Fr. Paul Peter Rom

The desire to become “Something” or “Someone” is in every young person, even from the beginning of his or her conscious life. The first desire is to become what we frequently see and approve of as the best to be – it is our first desire. It soon becomes our dream and eventually we set goals and begin to strive for our dream. This is how we listen to the voice of God calling us. The fact that desire remains strong even as we grow is a clear sign there is something more than just our will involved.



Fr. Paul Peter Rom.

I joined Sacred Heart Seminary in 1993 after the visit of Pope John Paul II to the Gulu Diocese. I remember being one of the youngest among the foot pilgrims who walked 120 kilometers in three days from Kitgum to Gulu.

Before all this, I saw my elder brother, Michael Gabriel Okeny, join the seminary three years before I joined; he dropped out after the fourth year. They were a group of altar boys who looked smart, handsome and holy when they returned from the seminary during their vacation. I wanted to be like them and above all to be like Fr. Paul Luroromoi, an American Comboni missionary who baptized me. I grew to love him and to love the priesthood. Whenever I was asked what I wanted to be in life, my response was always, “*I want to be Father Paul.*” I wanted to be a priest even when I did not understand very well what it entailed.

Joining the seminary was not easy. Besides requiring that a candidate come from a good Catholic family, one has to apply at least one year before joining. I applied but my application hit a snag when the Pastor of my home Parish rejected me. I was living in a near by Parish because of the LRA war but wanted to join the seminary from my home parish.

When God calls, no one can block His voice.

I was planning to join St. Joseph’s College Layibi or Gulu High School. But there was a passion that drove me to witness how my classmates sat for the interview exams which was fortunately done at my parish of displacement. It was there the Pastor of that Parish, at whose feet I always sat as an altar boy, asked me, “*Why are you not among those to sit for the interview? Did you not apply?*” I related to him the whole story of my rejection. He responded by saying, “*I know you are a good boy, let me talk to the Vocations Director.*” I felt good not because he was going to talk to the Vocations Director but that he knew me. This was a big affirmation that renewed my desire to be a priest.

The Vocations Director at the time was Fr. Samuel Mwaka who encouraged a good number of us to apply there and then bent the rules that guided applications. I was shocked about the contrast between him and the one who tore up my earlier application. I was allowed to sit for the interview that saw me join Sacred Heart Seminary.

Msgr. Matthew Odong, whose love was displayed on his face right from the first day, received us in the Seminary. He was fond of many of us because we were really small boys. In him we saw not just a Rector but also a Father.

It took only two weeks before seven of us were to be dismissed for playing soccer in an empty dormitory. This was another test of my vocation. The Rector verbally dismissed us but by evening he had relented and we became his best boys.

Out of 47, two of us became priests. For me, when I survived that dismissal, I knew I would become a priest. This conviction saw me through to the priesthood. I finished my six years at Sacred Heart Seminary and was admitted to Alokolum National Seminary for three years of philosophy and to Ggaba for four years of theology. When we finished our philosophical studies, out of 14, seven left. In all these periods there were many difficulties that could make one leave but I never left. One



Fr. Samuel & Staff of Radio Maria.

thing was clear, the Priests were among the poorest men you would meet and yet they did their work with conviction and joy.

I must say that in this entire journey, Msgr. Matthew was the pillar and the torch to show us the way. I wanted to become a priest and I became a priest on July 14, 2007 with the help of many US benefactors whom I do not even know. Following ordination I was sent to St. Mauritz Parish in Gulu for one year. In 2008 I was sent to Alokolum National Seminary to teach philosophy. Currently I am in Rome, Italy studying for a master's degree in philosophy, which I will complete in June 2013.

My greatest fulfillment as a Priest is to minister to the people of God.

FR. SAMUEL MWAKA TO MAKE APPEAL FOR PACTA

Fr. Samuel will be in the Twin Cities June 23rd to August 8th to make appeals at three parishes for PACTA (Program for Awareness, Counseling and Treatment of Alcoholism) that he is Director of in the Archdiocese of Gulu.

In addition to his responsibilities as Director of PACTA Archbishop Odama recently appointed him Director of RADIO MARIA, which provides the evangelical message in keeping with the doctrine of the Catholic Church. The station covers 90% of the Archdiocese and even extends to part of Arua Diocese and Congo. There is a plan to put up a booster on Kalongo Mountain to cover the remaining 10% and extend the coverage into Southern Sudan. The station is on the air 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

This will be his second visit to the Twin Cities. He was here from July through November 2007 for hip surgery.



Msgr. Matthew Odong (center) with priests who studied at Sacred Heart Seminary. (L to R): Fr. Nyeko Anthony, Fr. Oryem John Mark, Fr. Obina Wilfred and Fr. Opoka Joseph.

PRIESTS ORDAINED/ARCHDIOCESE OF GULU/LAST 10 YEARS

2010 – 6

Fr. Ocan Charles Ray
Fr. Odong Robert
Fr. Okello James
Fr. Odello Ronald Reagan
Fr. Okello Thomas
Fr. Okullu David

2009 – 3

Fr. Obina Wilfred
Fr. Opoka Joseph Jong
Fr. Oryem John Mark

2008 – 2

Fr. Akena Loensyo
Fr. Odongo Cyprian

2007 – 7

Fr. Agwe Martin
Fr. Nyeko Anthony
Fr. Ocaya Moi Norbert
Samuel
Fr. Opio Seraphene
Richard
Fr. Opio Thaddaeus
Fr. Otim Lakwera Patrick
Fr. Rom Abim Paul Peter

2006 – 4

Fr. Komakech Christopher
Fr. Ochora William Ongom
Fr. Okidi Venancio Bernard
Fr. Onen Santo

2005 – 0

2004 – 4

Fr. Kolo David Masaba
Fr. Oloya Charles
Fr. Olweny Charles
Fr. Uma Eric Justine

2003 – 1

Fr. Apiya Phillip Maurice

2002 – 0

2001 – 1

Fr. Obol Robert Nyek

TOTAL – 28

TOTAL PRIESTS IN DIOCESE – 70 (49 Diocesan & 21 Missionary).

The missionary priests are Comboni, primarily from Italy, who brought the Catholic Church to northern Uganda early in the 1900's. 57% of the diocesan priests have been ordained in the last 10 years. The primary focus of our apostolate (Sacred Heart Seminary) from its foundation in the early 90's is for the Formation of Priests and continues to be so today. By the Grace of God, we have been able to build a secondary school (AFSS), drill wells and satisfy the needs of the people in many ways but we have not changed our primary focus from FORMATION OF PRIESTS. These young men will bring the WORD OF GOD to the people for the salvation of their immortal souls.

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.

PRIESTS FROM GULU ARCHDIOCESE STUDYING OUTSIDE UGANDA

By Pete Truax

During the Christmas Season of 2010 I had the opportunity to spend a week with Fr. Godfrey Torac, a priest from the Archdiocese of Gulu, Uganda who is studying at Walsh University in Canton, Ohio for a master's degree in counseling. In the 14 years I have been involved in working on behalf of Msgr. Matthew Odong and Sacred Heart Seminary I have been aware of a number of priests coming to the U. S. for studies but did not understand why. Fr. Godfrey made me aware of Archbishop Odama's intent to raise the Catechetical Center, which trains Catechists to teach beliefs of the Catholic Church to the people, to a University level in cooperation with Walsh University. In addition to training



Fr. Godfrey with Denise & Susan—Christmas 2010.

priests from Gulu, Walsh intends to have their professors spend time in Gulu to implement some collaborative programs.

After 23 years of war in northern Uganda many people have been traumatized by attacks by the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) and the Government of Uganda. In addition to the attacks the people were herded into IDP (Internally Displaced Person) Camps where living conditions were horrible. Since 2006 the fighting has stopped and people are moving back onto their own land. However, the effects of the trauma remain for many people in need of counseling.

Fr. Jino Mwaka recently received a Doctorate in Business Administration and has returned to work in the Archdiocese of Gulu. Fr. Lawrence Komakech received a Doctorate in Dogmatic Theology and will be returning to Gulu soon. Fr. Robert Obol is currently doing graduate studies in Ohio, Fr. Paul Peter Rom who taught

Philosophy at Alokolum National Seminary in Gulu is currently in Rome, Italy doing graduate studies in Philosophy.

I am most impressed with the planning and progress Archbishop Odama is accomplishing on behalf of the Church.

MONSIGNOR MATTHEW VISITS FLORIDA

By Dan Vaughan

After having to cancel his trip to Florida in April 2010 due to the volcanic eruption in Iceland, Msgr. Matthew was able to visit his many friends in the Clearwater/Largo/St. Petersburg area of Florida during early April this year.

While there he was interviewed by Johnette Benkovic on her daily one hour EWTN radio program "Women of Grace" along with Berna Atim, an English teacher at Archbishop Flynn Secondary School. Berna was in Florida as a guest of Terry & Karen Werner of Clearwater Beach, Florida. An informative discussion was held concerning the education program at the school and the plight of women in war torn northern Uganda.

Msgr. Matthew also did an Appeal at St. Matthew's Catholic Church in Largo, Florida on the weekend of April 9th and 10th. In addition Msgr. Matthew and Berna visited the St. Peter Claver Catholic Elementary School near downtown Tampa and Clearwater Central Catholic High School.



L to R: Bobbi Vaughan, Terry Werner, Berna Atim, Msgr. Matthew, Karen Werner, Johnette Benkovic, Dan Vaughan.

For more information call Pete Truax at (952) 934-2720 email at petetruax@sacredheartseminary.com or Dan Vaughan at (952) 473-3660 email at danvaughan@sacredheartseminary.com Contact information for Msgr. Matthew Odong is +256-772-481903 email at mattodong@sacredheartseminary.com U.S. Office: Sacred Heart Seminary, c/o Dan Vaughan, 3440 Bayside Road, Orono, Minnesota 55356-9218