

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,

I salute you in the name of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ to whom I never forget to commend your good intentions for His continued blessings and graces in return for your generous support to Sacred Heart Seminary and Archbishop Flynn Secondary School.

I am pleased to inform you that on July 19, 2012 I shall be celebrating 25 years as a priest, my Silver Jubilee, and I take this opportunity to extend my personal invitation to you to come and share in my joy in thanking the Lord for the gift of priesthood. This celebration will also allow me the opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all men and women of good will who supported my vocation with their prayers and financial support. May the Lord Jesus bless your good intentions and grant you peace, love and good health.

I was ordained a priest on July 19, 1987 by Bishop Cipriano Dr. Kihangiore, then Bishop of Gulu Diocese, in St. Joseph's Cathedral, Gulu. It was at a difficult time when the long Northern Uganda conflict between the Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony was at its peak. Insecurity on all roads within Gulu and Acholi sub-region as a whole made it impossible for easy movement. My parents, brothers, sisters, relatives and friends at home could not travel from Adilang (my home village) to Gulu to witness my ordination for fear of ambushes, land mines or abduction into captivity by the rebels. For the same insecurity reasons, it was a year and a half after my ordination before I could visit my family at home. Indeed, it was a tough time but thank God that the bloody conflict that claimed many innocent lives ended in late 2006. The conflict left the population in abject poverty. This could be seen from the collection and gifts presented to the three of us ordained priests on that day. It was a very humble one, not enough to buy even a bicycle for pastoral work.

In the month of July 1990 the Holy Spirit led me to St. George Parish on a mission on behalf of the Consolata Missionaries to a small parish in Long Lake, MN where I met Dan & Bobbi Vaughan. Coincidentally, it was this same year on January 28, 1990 when I was appointed Rector of Sacred Heart Seminary. I was to inherit a Seminary that had been looted by the rebels on several

occasions. Out of obedience, I accepted the appointment. The start was very hard. The total number of seminarians I found at Sacred Heart Seminary was only 38. Today we have over 150 students in the Seminary.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

St. George Parish was the place where God, through Dan and Bobbi Vaughan, manifested His Providence in support for Sacred Heart Seminary's needs. As the years went by, it became clear to me that God had prepared Dan and Bobbi to support the work I was assigned to do on behalf of the Church in forming and educating future priests. They became very generous with their money to enable me to meet the many needs of the Seminary. Also, through them I came to know many good and generous American friends' who joined in support of the apostolate. They include among many, Pete & Dottie Truax, John & Mary Desautels, Jack & Clara Dolan, Bill & Melanie Passulka, Archbishop Harry Flynn, David & Vicki Fagerlee, Doug & Sandy Milroy, Gary & Wendy Ivins, Ed & Wanda Sweeney, Bill & Jean Kottemann, Johnette Benkovic, Fr. Francis Kittock, Fr. Patrick Hipwell, Charles & Bernadine Bird, Jim & Mary Rivers, Msgr. Michael Devine, Matthew & Chris Dunbar, Fr. Paul LaFontane, Jim & Carol Mengelkoch, Fr. Arnold Weber, Scott & Evelyn Sayer, St. Brendan Parish, Holy Name of Jesus Church, Jon & Sue Westerhaus, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Fr. David Ostrowski and many others whose names the limitation of space cannot allow me to mention. I thank all of you for your



Archbishop Odama cuts ribbon dedicating multipurpose hall in Pader.

solidarity and friendship, which have been very instrumental in my ministry over the last 25 years.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Significant achievements have been made in recent years. Increase in vocations and a good number of new priests, transportation (motorcycles) for new priests for pastoral work, 40 wells, support for orphans, Mass Kits for the newly ordained priests, renovation work at the seminary and construction of Archbishop Flynn Secondary School to mention a few.

APPEAL

We have 4 transitional Deacons to be ordained priests in June & July. They will need Mass Kits, transportation and Mass Stipends to support their pastoral work. Solar lighting is needed at Archbishop Flynn School and lastly we appeal for some staff housing on the school campus.

God Bless you abundantly,



BOOK BEING WRITTEN IN HONOR OF MSGR. MATTHEW

Fr. Paul Peter Rom, one of his former seminarians currently studying for a master's degree in philosophy in Rome, is writing a book in his honor. Fr. Paul had his first book "The Spill of Blood" published which covers his experience during the war. Here is a recent statement by Fr. Paul: **"We saw him serve the Church in Gulu in the most difficult moments in our history. He was ordained in the midst of the war in 1987. He was accused by the military government of Uganda with other priests as rebel collaborators. This was to silence the voice of the voiceless. He spent most of his priestly life in Sacred Heart Seminary raising shepherds for the Church in Gulu. I am proud to have passed in his hands. He is a model for many of us."**

Fr. Samuel Mwaka, whom many of you have met when he was in Minnesota in 2007 and again in 2011, was ordained with Msgr. Matthew and is also celebrating his Silver Jubilee.

FACTA BIDS FAREWELL TO MARY BERTH JOHNSON, PREPARES TO WELCOME FR. BILL WHITTIER

By Fr. Samuel Mwaka

Mary Berth Johnson, a US Peace Corp Volunteer, a specialist in drug/alcohol addiction and family counseling returned to the US on April 4, 2012. Mary will be remembered for her service at the Caritas Counseling Training Institute and above all for her tireless effort



Michael Okeny, Mary Berth Johnson, Fr. Samuel in front of PACTA center.

with PACTA (Program for Awareness, Counseling and Treatment of Alcoholism) in training over 90 inmates on alcohol/drug addiction and establishing the International Fellowship of the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) in Gulu. She has been in Gulu from December 2010 to April 2012.

This is an example of a great ongoing support that PACTA has been receiving from our friends in the USA. All of this started with the initiative of Pete & Dottie Truax who made all the arrangements to welcome me to Minnesota and took care of my corrective Hip Surgery from July to November 2007.

PACTA is very grateful and has put to good use the assistance that it received from my Mission Appeal in the Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis in July and August 2011. This was again possible with the help of Pete Truax and Fr. Bill Whittier. The funding from this appeal has enabled us to establish a wonderful Computer Centre for recovering alcoholics.

PACTA is again looking forward to the third visit of Fr.



Boys in front of New Boys Dormitory at AFSS.

Bill Whittier in December 2012. He first came to Gulu in 2008 and returned again in 2010. This time he comes to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of Fr. Samuel Mwaka and Msgr. Matthew Odong, train PACTA staff and witness

the naming of some buildings and Halls in the PACTA Center in his honor and that of Pete & Dottie Truax, my and PACTA's greatest friends in Minnesota.

NUNS COMMUNITY AT AFSS INCREASES

Two additional nuns have moved into the Nun's Quarters with Sr. Viola (head teacher) and Sr. Catherine (teacher).

Sr. Dorine Lamwaka is Matron for the students and is also a trained professional counselor with vast experience in handling war-affected children helping them with psychological and social problems. Her arrival will also reduce the workload of the School Nurse who was



Sr. Viola, Sr. Dorine Lamwaka & Sr. Catherine in front of nun's house.

the only trained counselor in the school. Prior to coming to AFSS Sr. Dorine spent five years at St. Bakhita Vocational Center in Kalongo as matron and counselor to young women who spent time in captivity of the LRA.

Sr. Julie Apio will be teaching at a primary school near AFSS. Prior to coming to the Pader area she taught at a school in West Nile. The Primary School she will be teaching at is just 100 meters south of the AFSS campus toward Pader Town.

FR. FELIX MOVES TO PADER

On March 1st Fr. John Felix Opio, chaplain at AFSS, moved into one of the two rooms for priests in the Multi Purpose Hall in Pader, only 1.5km from AFSS. He can now walk to the school. Prior to this move Fr. Felix was living at Pajule Parish about 25 miles away, which was a 30 to 40 minute, drive to the school. With diesel fuel cost of about \$10 per gallon his daily commute was expensive. This will have a very positive effect on the overall school budget as well as making him more accessible for his duties as Chaplain.

ARCHBISHOP ODAMA DEDICATES MULTIPURPOSE HALL IN PADER

By Fr. Felix Opio

On April 28th Archbishop Odama dedicated the Multipurpose Hall to Blessed Daudi Okello and Jildo Irwa who were martyred for the faith in 1918. They were beatified by Pope John Paul II in Rome on October 20, 2002. Many priests from other parishes were in attendance as well as local government officials, cultural leaders and many local men and women.

In addition the Archbishop declared this place a Eucharistic Center and officially appointed me as administrator. Much as the people wanted a parish opened, the Archbishop found it difficult to open a new parish without assigning a Parish priest. He explained to the Christians that it was not possible for him to open a Parish without assigning a Parish priest. We have an acute shortage of personnel and he could not do otherwise. He also explained that I already have a substantive appointment at AFSS, as Chaplain and he could not give me additional responsibility beyond what he has given as Administrator. We must wait for a future opportunity when we'll have a priest to be assigned. However, the Archbishop assured me that he would assign a seminarian in his pastoral year of service to live with me for the next year. I appreciated that suggestion because it is not easy to live alone.

During the Mass of the official blessing of the Hall, the Archbishop confirmed 104 young men and women and witnessed the wedding of two couples.



Archbishop Odama with couple married at dedication in front of multipurpose hall.

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.

AFSS NEEDS TO INSTALL SOLAR ENERGY

In a recent staff meeting regarding the school budget with Msgr. Matthew the staff advised him they had to cut about an hour of study and prep time in the evening due to the high cost of fuel (\$10.00 per gallon) to run the generator. This of course is not good for the students but they have little option at the moment. The commitment made by the Minister of Energy to extend the power grid to the school continues to not materialize. Even if it did, electricity from the power grid is very expensive and unreliable. Typically 6 to 8 hours per day can be expected and that is available during daylight hours which is not when it is needed. All the hospitals and many schools have installed solar as their primary electricity or back up source. While solar has a high cost of installation, maintenance cost is minimal and reliability is fantastic. Solar will offer more opportunity to students and teachers to start lessons early morning and study longer in the evening. It appears the cost of installing solar will be about \$25,000. We don't have this in the current school budget so are hoping a benefactor will come forward to cover this cost.

58 STUDENTS PREPARE TO RECEIVE SACRAMENTS

We have 31 students in the new Senior 1 class at AFSS preparing for Baptism and First Communion. Among them we have 4 converts. Those preparing for Confirmation are 27 in number.



Catechumens preparing for sacraments.

MSGR. MATTHEW IS ON EWTN RADIO

By Dan Vaughan

During late February and early March, 2012 Msgr. Matthew made his annual visit to the Clearwater area of Florida. While there he was able to renew many

acquaintances with his faithful benefactors and meet many more new friends. This was his tenth visit to the Clearwater area. The St. Brendan's Parish pastor, Fr. Eric Hunter, once again warmly greeted him.



"76 ers" Arlene & Tom Marian, Msgr. Matthew, Dick & JoAnne Schickel, Dan & Bobbi Vaughan.

His very good friend, Johnette Benkovic, of EWTN Television and EWTN Radio had him as her guest on her daily one-hour radio show, "WOMEN OF GRACE". The radio show is broadcast from Oldsmar, Florida and is heard throughout the United States and by short-wave throughout the world. Her television program, also entitled "WOMEN OF GRACE", is seen daily at 11:00 EST each day on EWTN. During her interview with Msgr., Johnette made an appeal for "Tuition for Orphans" and for "Plows and Cows" while discussing progress in northern Uganda on the program. He was also able to attend a "Divine Will Conference" in Clearwater on the weekend of February 25th which highlights living in God's Divine Will as prayed for in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Will Be Done On Earth As It Is Done In Heaven". A local Divine Will prayer group holds a benefit meal for Msgr.'s work in Uganda every two months and sends the entire proceeds to support his work.

He also consented to be the chaplain of the "76ers", a local group of men and their spouses dedicated to the study of God's Divine Will in their lives. They met for the first time last fall at St. Brendan's and call themselves the "76ers" because the three men were all born on the 8th day of the month (different months) of the same year, 1935, and are all now 76 years "young".