

NEWS FROM SACRED HEART SEMINARY ARCHDIOCESE OF GULU, UGANDA

Volume 1 No. 19 December 2006

FROM THE DESK OF MONSIGNOR MATTHEW ODONG, RECTOR

Dear American friends and benefactors,

Cordial greetings and prayers from Sacred Heart Seminary in Northern Uganda. The year 2006 has flown by so fast. We do hope that it has been a year of many blessings and graces for you, your family and friends as we look forward with great hope to another year. Know that our prayers and love are with you in your daily endeavors.

I take this opportunity to update you on some of the recent events in our Archdiocese of Gulu. Between July and October 2006 our diocese was blessed with 6 Deacons, 4 Priests and 1 Auxiliary Bishop in the person of the Rt. Rev. Sabino Ocan Odoki. 22 Catholic Bishops, 220 priests and about 3,000 of the lay faithful attended Bishop Odoki's ordination on October 21st. Professor Gilbert Bukenya, vice president of Uganda, was there to represent the Republic of Uganda. Praise the Lord for the gifts of these new shepherds to His Church and thanks for your prayers and support.

The peace talks in Juba, Sudan between the government of Uganda and the LRA (Lord's Resistance Army) is making some progress. Our people here are tired of this bloody conflict and look forward to the day when peace will return, the day when refugee camps will be dismantled and they can return to their homes. The need for more prayers from you and pressure on the two conflicting parties by the International Community are very much needed to speed up the peace process in Juba.

The good news is that since the peace talks in Juba began, there have been no ambushes on roads and almost constant gunshots have stopped. For nearly six months we have enjoyed relative peace with free movement within the region that used to be so risky. However, 1.6 million people are still stuck in the refugee camps where the living conditions are horrible. Children and women remain the most vulnerable in this conflict with many of them killed, wounded, left orphans/widows, some physically and permanently deformed and denied the opportunity for education.

Once peace returns, God willing, there will be another big challenge to address, the issues of resettlement of the people who have been living in the refugee camps for the last twenty years and the reintegration of the former abductees who have returned home from captivity. It is going to be the most expensive part of the struggle to bring peace, healing and restoration of the damages caused by the conflict in Northern Uganda. The people have lost all their personal

property and community social, economic and educational infrastructure. Northern Uganda is counting on your continued prayers and solidarity.

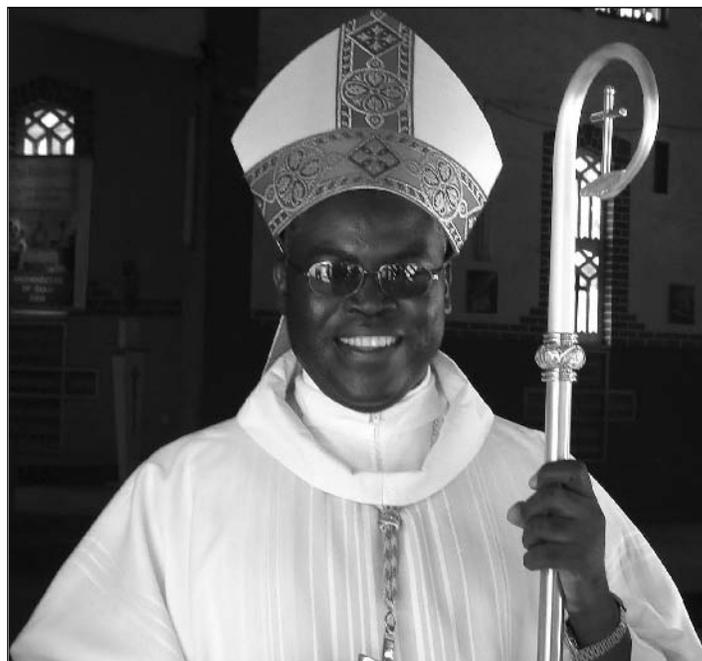
With the prevailing relative peace in place, we are now determined to begin the construction of **Archbishop Flynn Secondary School in Pader**. We think we can begin the work before the end of December. Robert Odong (architect), Mother Superior, Sr. Viola Akulu, Fr. Charles Oloya, some local people and myself were in Pader recently to meet with the local people to discuss and plan the way forward for the construction of the school. The people of Pader are very excited about the school. Our appreciation and gratitude goes out to each and every one of you, our dear American friends.

Wishing you a joyful Advent Season, Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year of peace, good health and prosperity in the year 2007.

Your friend in Jesus' love,



Monsignor Matthew Odong
Rector



Bishop Sabino Ocan Odoki,
Auxiliary Bishop of Gulu

JUBA PEACE TALKS CONTINUE

The peace talks that began in Juba, Sudan in July are continuing. For the last six months, many of us have been working to get the international community, especially the U. S. Government, to take seriously the historic opportunity presented by the Juba peace process. On November 16th, all 15 members of the UN Security Council passed a statement that says the council "welcomes efforts aimed at bringing an end to the long-running conflict in northern Uganda, and is following closely the Juba talks process." The Security Council urges the peace process to be "completed expeditiously."

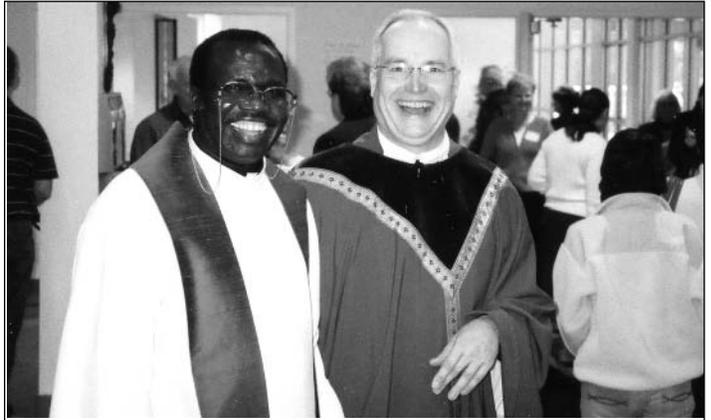
Recent lobby efforts by many supporters of peace in northern Uganda resulted in 22 U. S. Senators signing on to a letter from Senator Feingold, which urges the State Department to definitively support the peace talks. That letter was delivered to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on November 17th, and now we await a response. More than that though we await serious action to ensure that this historic opportunity for peace is not missed. We continue to urge the Bush Administration to live up to its statement earlier this year that ending the war in northern Uganda is a priority. **This war-weary people of northern Uganda deserve all that our governments and we can do to ensure that this peace process succeeds and an agreement is reached.**

The Ugandan Human Rights Commission has urged all Ugandans to **support the peace talks**, no matter how long it takes. UHRC said that these processes take time; meanwhile, the continuation of talks creates zones of peace for northerners to begin rebuilding their lives.

JESUITS ESTABLISHING PRESENCE IN GULU

Father Tony Wach, Delegate of the Provincial, Superior for the 17 Jesuits in Uganda, recently announced the Jesuits would be establishing a presence in Gulu in January 2007. Fr. Tony is from the Wisconsin Province, which includes the Twin Cities. His province has a twinning relationship with the East Africa Province headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya. Within the next few years Fr. Tony wants to build a second-

ary school in Gulu. Some of his fellow Campion Jesuit High School alumni have organized a fund-raising appeal to other alumni with hopes of their school being a New Campion with girls as well as boys in Gulu, Uganda instead of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, location of the original Campion. The plan is for the secondary school to be a regional school drawing from the entire Archdiocese of Gulu plus neighboring southern Sudan. In addition to the Jesuit tradition there will be a special focus on culture and peace education. It will be a coed boarding college prep school with vocational courses also. Ultimately a parish



Msgr. Matthew with Fr. Patrick Hipwell, pastor of IHM in Minnetonka, after mass on September 24th.

and housing for the Jesuit Community will be built at the site of the school, which will be near the new Gulu University. Archbishop Odama wants them to also develop a university chaplaincy. Fr. Tony has two priests ready to come by late January. One to teach physics at the university and another who does ecumenical grassroots mobilization of youth with plenty of music, dance and drama for a culture of peace and familyhood. A local family has already given the Jesuits 40 acres with promise of more land as needed. The local population is already busy clearing the boundaries and planting thousands of nursling trees. He is also looking for a congregation of sisters who could collaborate with them.

Fr. Tony was in the Twin cities on holiday in September while Msgr. Matthew was here. Dan and I and our wives had an opportunity to get together with them and see how well they compliment one another working for the needs of the people in Uganda. In a recent email Fr. Tony advised that Jesuit Refugee Service began a presence last spring in Kitgum, Uganda. There is 8 staff focusing on psychosocial counseling, pastoral and peace education.

YOU ARE ABOUT TO EMBARK ON AN ADVENTURE...

By: Marcia Farniok - Teacher at Epiphany Catholic School

Packed with little more than good intentions, I departed from Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport on July 7th. When I heard of Epiphany Catholic School's relationship with Msgr. Matthew Odong, I leapt, heart first, at the opportunity to visit Uganda. I am not a lifetime activist, or a pro-



Dottie & Pete Truax, Dan & Bobb Vaughan,
Fr. Tony Wach & Msgr. Matthew.

fessional good-deed do-err. However, I felt called to go, even though I knew little about Ugandan history, Gulu and never heard of the LRA.



Marcia Farniok with children at Mother Angioletta's Kindergarten.

I kept a journal during my 30 days in Northern Uganda, and want to share some of that with you. Now that I have returned, how do I best communicate all my learning and experiences? I concluded my journal with top five lists to summarize and organize my over hundred pages of writing. You can read elsewhere what the conflict is about, and ways that you can help these people. What I hope to portray to you is an average person's experience.

There was no way I could be prepared for the adventure on which I was about to embark. My Ugandan itinerary was little more than teaching English at Mother Angioletta's Kindergarten and attending an ordination in Kalongo. However, I had no fear that my days and nights would be consumed with activities that would fill my time and heart.

Top 5 Things I Never Thought I would get Used To in Uganda...But I Did!

1. Cold water showers and baths in my laundry tub with three liters of water.
2. Lack of electricity – In one 48-hour period we had a total of 4 hours of electricity.
3. The mosquito net around my bed.
4. The new smells – There is no trash collection so it is all burned. With the lack of electricity there are numerous fires to provide light. Then there are the new foods, animals, flora and fauna.
5. Getting up early, attending Mass everyday and the lengthy services – the music is **AMAZING!**

Top 5 Things I Never Did Get Used To...

1. The Abundance of Large Flying Termites.
2. Lack of Sanitation – It is an absolutely atrocity the living conditions of those in the camps.

3. New Bacteria – My skin reacted in a rash from the tap water and I ended up in the hospital due to food poisoning from under-refrigerated food (see #2 above).
4. Uganda Time – Nothing, except Mass, was ever on time.
5. The sight of all the internally displaced people and lack of freedom in the North versus the apathy and fear to help in those of the South.

Top 5 Favorite Things I Did...

1. Being Inquisitive – I learned so much by giving up the fear of curiosity.
2. Beginning to learn the Acholi language and customs.
3. Holding the baby in Adilang while singing and talking with the children from the camp.
4. Being allowed the opportunity to become a part of the seminary community.
5. Kalongo – The entire trip to and from Kalongo was an adventure. I was able to meet and speak with Bishop Franzelli, attend an ordination, travel on treacherous roads, see and visit remnants/places of atrocities against Acholi by the LRA and gather together with priests, deacons, sisters and other lay people.

Top 5 Things I Will Miss...

1. Climate.
2. Abundance of Fresh Fruit.
3. Prayer – I will miss the natural integration of prayer into my life each day.
4. Meal Times with all Priests and Deacons.
5. An easier and calmer approach to life – although doing anything took more work and time compared to activities in America, everyone in northern Uganda was happy, hopeful and full of faith.

As my days came to an end, I wanted nothing more than to stay in Northern Uganda. Perhaps it was the legumes, millet or ground nuts that enticed me or maybe it was the tug I felt inside, that feeling of doing more for the people who



Msgr. Matthew with 3 generations of Baldwin family from left to right Dave, Sandy, Pat, Meaghan & Sandy

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.

had given me so much. My last journal entry: "You know, when I was leaving I would say to people, 'It is only for a month.' On the inside I was thinking, 'But it is a whole month, in a new place, by myself,' but on the outside I was trying to pretend it was no big deal. Looking back, it really was only a month – no big deal.

TO HAVE NOTHING IS TO HAVE EVERYTHING

By: Sandy Baldwin – CRS Ambassador of Hope

Christmas carols on the radio, manger scenes appearing in front yards, Advent wreaths in our churches are all clear signs that the 'Season' is upon us. As I begin to unpack the many boxes of Christmas decorations and begin to think about my Christmas shopping list I find it very hard to center my attention on the festive preparations this year. I think this lack of Christmas spirit might be due to the fact that our family has recently returned from a two-week experience in Africa.

This experience was part of the Catholic Relief Service's program, Ambassadors of Hope. This program gives CRS supporters the opportunity to increase their understanding and awareness of the mission and work of CRS. Our contingency was comprised of Vince Walker – CRS Development Officer, Pat and Sandy Baldwin (my in-laws), Dave (my husband) and Meaghan (our daughter) who is a sophomore at Cathedral High School in St. Cloud. We traveled to Northern Uganda and Kenya to see first hand the life-changing work, which CRS is doing in this part of the world.

As we prepared for this experience we were briefed by CRS on what we could expect to see on our visit. No amount of preparation could have prepared us for the dire poverty and lack of basic necessities, which exist in Northern Uganda. The lack of water, sanitation, food, medical attention, and housing is greater than one could ever imagine.

We traveled north of Gulu to the Cooppe Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp to observe firsthand the affects of war. We expected to experience a community filled with despair and hopelessness. Yet, when we arrived what we experienced was the opposite. We were greeted by a group of over 200 people who were very excited to share the good news of their village! We were welcomed with songs of praise, not cries of anguish.

Through the assistance provided from CRS and many joint-partnerships the despair we had anticipated was replaced with hope. We met people who were learning to promote peace, provide water, practice health-care, counsel one another, and develop agricultural production. The elders of the community also talked about future plans for expanding the programs to empower more community members.



Ordination of Fr. Venasio Okidi by Bishop Franzelli of the Diocese of Lira.



Msgr. Matthew telling a story to children at Cedarcrest Academy.

Later in the week, we were able to attend Mass at Sacred Heart Seminary with Father Matthew Odong and the seminarians. As a youth minister who has been involved in many celebrations of the Eucharist, I have never experienced this level of vibrant and spirit-filled worship! The church was filled with the sound of joyful praise, not only in the pulsating music, but also in the energetic prayer responses of the seminarians. As Father Matthew preached it was clear to see that the foundation of this spirit flowed from the Spirit of God, alive in Father Matthew. This same spirit is alive in the IDP community and the people of Northern Uganda. The Sacred Heart of Jesus represents God's divine love for humanity and this same love is being spread thru the work of Father Matthew and CRS.

As I continue my preparations for Christmas my prayer is that each day I will remember in some way the lesson which I learned from the African people: to have nothing is to have everything, if you have hope.