

NEWS FROM SACRED HEART SEMINARY

ARCHDIOCESE OF GULU, UGANDA

www.sacredheartseminary.com

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FROM THE DESK OF MONSIGNOR MATTHEW ODONG, RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

On behalf of the seminarians and staff of Sacred Heart Seminary Lacor, we send you our love, greetings and prayerful best wishes for God's peace, love and graces in this year of our Lord, 2008. Know that you and all your loved ones have a special place in our hearts and prayers, always.

Thank you for all your prayers and support to Sacred Heart Seminary/Archdiocese of Gulu. Our pastoral Ministries in this portion of the universal church would not be the same without you. May God reward you in return for your solidarity with us.

OUR BELOVED ARCHBISHOPS: HARRY FLYNN & JOHN NIENSTEDT

The seminarians and staff of Sacred Heart Seminary and the entire people of God in the Archdiocese of Gulu join me in wishing our dear Archbishop Harry Flynn of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis a HAPPY 75TH BIRTHDAY (May 2, 2008) and God's peace in your RETIREMENT after nearly 14 years of dedicated service to the people of God entrusted under your pastoral care. Well-done Archbishop. Be assured of our prayers always. We love you. Continue to be our spiritual mentor.

On this same note, we wish to assure Archbishop John Nienstedt, the new Bishop ordinary of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis our continued prayerful support for God's abundant blessings and graces in the pastoral leadership of the flock of Jesus Christ entrusted to him by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. Congratulations, dear Archbishop Nienstedt. God loves you. We love you.

UPDATE ON SOME IMPORTANT EVENTS

Allow me to update you on some of the important events and activities of our apostolate here at Sacred Heart Seminary/Archdiocese of Gulu.

SEMINARIANS: Our Archdiocese is blessed with a growing number of vocations of young men to the priesthood. This year we have about 174 seminarians in both minor and major seminaries. Last year (2007) we had 2 ordained deacons and 7 ordained priests. This

year (2008), 3 will be ordained deacons in July and 2 will be ordained priests in the months of July and August. These are some of the young men you have been praying for and supporting in their journey to priesthood. Keep them in your prayers as they do for you. Due to recent inflation, it now costs about \$500 to sponsor a seminarian for one full year. We thank those of you who have committed yourself to this noble cause.

DRILLING WELLS/BOREHOLES: Water is life. Over the last few months/years some of you made donations towards the drilling of some wells to provide clean, fresh drinking water for our people. I am happy to inform you that the work of drilling 16 wells has begun and the driller hopes to have the work completed within a month. The wells are spread out in the following parishes within our Archdiocese: Anaka, Amuru, Awach and Pabbo in Gulu and Amuru Districts; Atanga, Pajule, Pader, Padibe/Lokung, Palabek/Gem, Madi Opei/Agoro and Christ the King/Wau chapel in Kitgum and Pader Districts. We worked through the offices of the Deans in the Archdiocese to identify those areas, which are in



Well pipe going into ground.

most need for a well. The beneficiaries of these wells send you their sincere appreciation for giving them clean water. The cost of drilling one well has recently increased to \$7,000. May God bless you for making a difference in the lives of people who thirst for clean water. Remember the words of Jesus: "I was thirsty and you gave me Water."

CONSTRUCTION OF ARCHBISHOP FLYNN SECONDARY SCHOOL: Progress has been made with the two classroom blocks. The constructor will finish the work and hand over the keys to the Board of Directors by the second week of June. Doors are being fixed, painting is in progress and other related activities. Recently, the Board of Directors identified three new constructors and



Classrooms at school.

is in the process of signing contracts with them to put up a dining hall, dormitories for girls and boys, nun's living quarters, one staff house and a water tank. It is our hope that the buildings will be ready by December to enable us to open the school in February 2009. We have dedicated the school to the protection of St. Joseph, to be its patron saint and provider of the needs of this school that is meant to provide quality education to our young girls and boys rooted in the Christian Values and Virtues to be able to translate knowledge into action for good leadership and governance, fight poverty and improve the quality of life of the people. Our biggest immediate challenge now is the need to construct a science laboratory for physics, chemistry and biology. Please join us in a prayer each day to St. Joseph for the needs of this school.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ARCHBISHOP FLYNN

SECONDARY SCHOOL: I first met Archbishop Flynn in 1995 through our dear friends Dan & Bobbi Vaughan in Minnesota. The Archbishop became a great friend and supporter of the work I do. Each year when I return to Minnesota for a visit, Archbishop Flynn invited my friends Dan & Bobbi, Pete & Dottie Truax and I for lunch and ice cream at his residence. He is a friendly shepherd with a warm and compassionate heart who encouraged the people of his Archdiocese to be generous to my work of forming priests at Sacred Heart Seminary. Since

then the American people have been very generous with their prayers and resources. Archbishop Flynn touched my life. He became my spiritual mentor and inspired me to love my priesthood. In October 2002 he traveled to Rome with 12 of his parishioners to attend the beatification of two of our catechists, Daudi Okelo and Jildo Irwa, killed for the faith the weekend of October 18-20, 1918 and beatified by Pope John Paul II on October 20, 2002. My Archbishop, John Baptist Odama, invited him for this historic occasion and had him concelebrate with the Holy Father at the beatification Mass. We were truly honored by his presence. On September 28, 2003, Pete and Dottie prepared a wonderful reception in their home for Archbishop Odama who was in the U. S. for a conference on peacebuilding at Notre Dame and high-level meetings at the National Security Council and State Department in Washington related to the war in northern Uganda. Archbishop Flynn attended this reception. It was on this occasion I called aside Archbishop Flynn, Archbishop Odama, Dan and Pete to get a blessing from Archbishop Flynn for building a secondary school in the Archdiocese of Gulu to be named after him. When I presented my request to him in the presence of Archbishop Odama and others his response was, "That will be an honor for me and my people. Go ahead Monsignor Odong and build that school..." With those words Archbishop Flynn Comprehensive Secondary School was born. Thanks to the love and generosity of Archbishop Flynn and all the wonderful American people. For us in Gulu Archdiocese, this school will be a constant reminder of the love and solidarity of our American friends with the people of northern Uganda especially for the young boys and girls who have suffered so much from the effect of 21 years of conflict between the LRA and Government of Uganda which denied them the fundamental rights to education. It is a school that will give a future to thousands of young people who will be the future leaders of this nation torn apart by the long conflict. The Holy Spirit has interceded and guided us in the decision to proceed with the construction of the school and we trust in that continued intervention and guidance to bring it to completion. Please pray with us and for us.



Msr. Matthew and Archbishop Flynn.

JUBA PEACE TALKS: The struggle continues. After some significant progress was made by both parties on the solution to the causes and solutions to the northern Uganda conflict, what now remains is for the rebel leader, Joseph Kony, of the LRA and the Ugandan Government to sign the agreement. The Rebel leader has on two occasions not shown up to sign the agreement, citing his personal security, ICC (International Criminal Court) and other concerns as the reason for the delay. It is very disappointing time for the people of northern Uganda who remain in the refugee camps for fear of seeing no end to this bloody conflict. Please continue to pray that the Holy Spirit may touch the hearts of the rebels and the Government of Uganda to show their commitment to peace. The Acholi Religious Leaders Peace Initiative, the Acholi Cultural and some civic leaders returned to Juba recently to seek the possibility of meeting with Joseph Kony, the leader of the LRA, and discuss with him some of the concerns he has raised as the reasons for not signing the peace agreement.

PRAYERS & HOPES: I appeal to you for more prayers, for God's merciful and loving intervention to end the long conflict that has brought so much suffering to our people. Please also keep our seminarians in your prayers especially those who are soon to be ordained deacons and priests. Those to be ordained this summer will need motorcycles for their pastoral work. Most of the parishes have received damage from the 21 years of conflict and are in need of major renovation. Drilling more wells for our people as they prepare to leave the camps and return to their homes is an important project that needs continued support. We ask you to join us in praying for us to have the wherewithal to purchase two (2) motorcycles for our new priests, for the science lab at the Archbishop Flynn Secondary School and our need for furnishings and textbooks for the school. Again, I thank you for your prayers and support. May God bless you abundantly.

Your friend in the service of the Church,



Msgr. Matthew Odong
Rector

MSGR. MATTHEW ON RADIO & TV

By Dan Vaughan

Msgr. Matthew again made a winter visit to the Clearwater, Florida area from February 28th to March 10th to be with many friends and benefactors at his host

parish of St. Brendan's on Clearwater Beach. During his stay, Johnette Benkovic had him as her guest, on "Women of Grace", a daily call in one-hour radio program aired on EWTN radio. He also went to Birmingham, Alabama to record a one-hour television show with Johnette. The taped show will be aired on EWTN television sometime in September 2008. Johnette Benkovic's Ministry, "Living His Life Abundantly", has adopted Msgr. Matthew's work in Africa as their special "Apostolate Outreach."

MSGR. MATTHEW AT NOTRE DAME FOR PEACE CONFERENCE

By Pete Truax

My wife, Dottie, and I had the pleasure of being with Msgr. Matthew April 13-15 at the University of Notre Dame for a Conference on the Future of Catholic Peacebuilding. This conference had several purposes. First, it is a capstone to a series of international conferences sponsored by the Catholic Peacebuilding Network. These conferences explored lessons learned from the Church's peacebuilding experience at the University of Notre Dame (2004), in Mindanao, the Philippines (2005), in Burundi (2006) and in Colombia (2007). Second, it seeks to help define an agenda for enhancing the future study and practice of this essential part of the Church's mission. Third, it is the culmination of a major research project on Catholic peacebuilding.



Pete, Fr. Mike Perry, Msgr. Mathew, Dottie.

There were more than 250 peacebuilders there from 30 countries. Many crossed an ocean and many time zones to be there, and all have set aside valuable time to learn from each other and deepen bonds of solidarity. The number and diversity of participants and institutional sponsors is a hopeful indication of the growing interest in the often-unheralded peacebuilding work of the

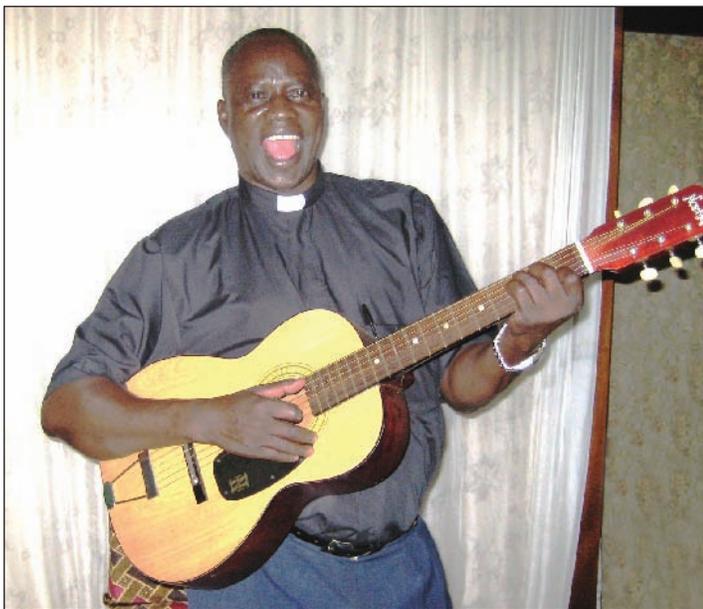
100% of all funds received go directly to Monsignor Matthew for the work of the Church in the Archdiocese of Gulu. All the costs of mailing, printing of the newsletter, accounting, office expenses, non-profit reporting to Federal and State agencies and Dan & Pete's travel expenses to Africa and Washington, DC are paid by the Vaughan and Truax families.

Church. We had an opportunity to interact with many old friends including Fr. Mike Perry OFM, who is now working with CRS (Catholic Relief Services). Several years ago while African Policy Advisor for the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Fr. Mike played a significant role in establishing an Advocacy Relationship between USCCB and the Bishops of Uganda. He was also instrumental in arranging high-level meetings for Archbishop Odama and Msgr. Matthew at the State Department and National Security Council.

You can read more on the Catholic Peacebuilding Network at their website cpn@nd.edu.

APPRECIATION FROM FATHER SAMUEL OKIDI MWAKA

My sincere thanks to the Almighty God through you our dear friends and benefactors, who made it possible for me to undergo successful and efficient treatment for my hip surgeries at Hennepin County Medical Center. I want to especially thank Msgr. Matthew Odong, Pete and Dottie Truax (my US parents), Dr. Leo and Dolly deSouza, Dan and Bobbi Vaughan, Dr. Richard Kyle (my orthopedic surgeon), Dr. David Williams and all the staff of HCMC. I cannot forget the hospitality of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish Community and my AA friends. May the good Lord bless and reward you and all the others not mentioned here for the love and dedicated service given to me. I enjoyed every bit of my stay in the US and look forward to another visit in the future.



Fr. Samuel playing guitar.

It is now seven months since my third and final surgery on October 24, 2007. I feel no pain and steady and smooth recovery and positive improvement in my health. For the last two months I have been using one crutch more as a cane. Within my room I move without support. I am able to drive frequently from Gulu to Palabek, which is 100 miles for pastoral duties.

Since my return, I still serve as the Pastor of Palabek Parish (bordering southern Sudan) and Director of PACTA (Program for Awareness, Counseling & Treatment of Alcoholism) in the Archdiocese of Gulu. Alcoholism and HIV/AIDS remain one of the greatest health and pastoral problems, which has resulted from the 20 years of insurgency. I am working toward establishing a Rehabilitation Center for PACTA to carry out its activities for these suffering people. For more information on PACTA visit the Sacred Heart Seminary website.

Thank you for your prayers, charity and solidarity. Be assured of our love, prayers and cooperation. May God grant you abundant blessings.

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GROUP TO VISIT UGANDA JULY 30TH TO AUGUST 17TH By Pete Truax

On July 29th five of us will depart Minneapolis for Uganda. Wendy Ivins (wife of Dr. Gary Ivins) and their 18-year-old son, Zachary will join Pete, his youngest daughter, Susan Truax, who lives in Portland, OR and granddaughter, Denise Williams, also, 18 who lives in Minneapolis. Wendy told me last year that the next time I went to Uganda she wanted to come. She and her husband, Gary, have know Msgr. Matthew for a number of years and have been very supportive of his work. My daughter and granddaughter are very excited to be going. The purpose of the trip for Wendy, Zack, Susan and Denise is just to have the experience. We will be moving around to many parishes in northern Uganda, attending the ordination of a priest, visiting Archbishop Flynn Secondary School, an IDP camp, two hospitals, two Ugandan Martyr's shrines and a Game Park.

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