

# 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,

Warm greetings and prayers from the staff and seminarians of Sacred Heart Seminary along with the staff and students of Archbishop Flynn Secondary School. I hope that this year has been good for you and your loved ones. You have a special place in our hearts in the daily celebration of the Eucharist and prayers as signs of our gratitude for your continued support of the needs of Sacred Heart Seminary and Archbishop Flynn Secondary School.

### FROM CONFLICT TO PEACE

The 23 years of conflict which economically and socially crippled life in northern Uganda has ended for which we are so grateful to God and all those peace loving men and women from across the globe who stormed Heaven with their prayers and used all Diplomatic means to see an end to the miseries caused by the conflict. With the coming of peace to this region in 2006, a new and dignified life has been born. Many families have left the refugee camps to return to their homeland to engage in a productive life. As a church, it is our duty to teach our people the danger of conflict and urge them to unconditionally say NO TO WAR because of its destructive effects to human lives, environment and property. Peace is a precondition for development.

### CHALLENGES

The challenges of living in a post conflict era includes resettlement for the people who have lived in the internally displaced camps for a decade with no income generating activities, high levels of poverty, lack of clean drinking

water, need for rehabilitation of social infrastructure including schools, addressing health related issues and renewal of the faith of the people so they maintain their link with God. The post conflict era is one of those times when we can see the face of Jesus in the victims of conflict. Thank you for helping us to meet these challenges.

### SACRED HEART SEMINARY

God continues to bless Sacred Heart Seminary with many vocations to the priesthood. A total of 157 seminarians aspiring to become priests are studying at Sacred heart Seminary this academic year. We have about 50 in the Major Seminaries studying Philosophy and Theology. In July and August of this year we will ordain 6 men to the priesthood. The cost of supporting a seminarian for one full year is \$600. Please consider joining this sponsorship program. Since the people lack transportation and walk to where they must go, our priests need transportation to get to the people. Once a priest is ordained we need to provide him with transportation to minister to his flock. A motorcycle has a cost of \$5500. He also requires a Mass Kit for keeping and carrying sacred items for the celebration of the Eucharist. The Mass Kit has a cost of \$1400. Thank you for supporting our priests.

### ARCHBISHOP FLYNN SECONDARY SCHOOL

The new academic year, which began in February, has started very well. A total of 80 students were enrolled this year bringing the student population to 114 since the school officially opened on February 16, 2009. This year the school administration was forced to deny admission to many students because of lack of a dormitory to accom-



Msgr. Matthew with students at AFSS in front of Classroom Block under construction.

moderate the boys. We had planned 120 new students. The girls have a dormitory. The school's Board is being challenged to find funds to build the boy's dormitory so more students have the opportunity to join in the New Year, 2011. Our students have committed themselves to special prayers through the intercession of St. Joseph, asking God to provide means for putting up the dormitory. Please join us in these special prayers. The other good news is that AFSS was recently inspected by the Government of Uganda's Ministry of Education and Sports who verified its suitability and recommended it fit for the license. The Head Teacher, Rev. Mother Viola Akullo and I went to Kampala to apply for the license. The license allows the school to operate legally.

May the Lord bless all the benefactors of Sacred Heart Seminary along with all who support the growth and development of Archbishop Flynn Secondary School. With prayers, love and blessings to you always,



Msgr. Matthew Odong

### MEDICAL SUPPLIES FOR GULU

By  
Wendy Ivins

Although it has been over a year since our visit to Gulu, the community and its needs are never far from our thoughts. I often find myself having a difficult time reconciling the abundance of my world with the overwhelming destitution of theirs. And yet, my memories of Uganda are happy ones. I laughed more than I cried and I felt more joy than despair. As strange as it sounds, my time at Sacred Heart Seminary was one of happiness for me. And I thought it would be the same for my husband, Gary.

Of the two of us, Gary is the optimist. Always positive and hopeful, Gary is the rose colored glass to my sometimes gray and cloudy view. So when he came home with a sadness so profound that he struggled to give it a voice, I realized that he had experienced something that I had not and never could... Gary had seen northern Uganda through the eyes of a doctor, not a tourist. Where I had seen children playing, he had seen children suffering from malnu-

trition. Where I saw beautiful thatch huts in distant landscapes, Gary saw a village with no access to emergency care. And where I saw people lying quietly on a small metal cot in the hospital, Gary recognized patients dying in silence, without any hope of recovery. For a man who has committed his life to the service of healing, being a witness to so much unnecessary disease and death has been very difficult.



Msgr. Matthew with students at Well Dedication.

So when Dan Vaughan asked if we would help with a project to assemble a shipment of donated medical supplies and equipment for St. Mary's Hospital in Lacor, and its clinics in Amuru, Pabbo and Opit, we responded with an immediate "Yes!" Dan put us in touch with Hope For The City, a Minnesota based non-profit that collects overstock products from retailers, medical companies and food distributors and donates the items to people in need throughout Minnesota, the U.S. and the world. Although most of the donated goods are locally distributed, the medical equipment is a good fit for international needs. Items such as suction machines, which are operated by hand, or foot pumps may be outdated by U.S. standards but are especially useful in less developed countries where the resources are scarce and the technology is limited.

Our next step was to assess the specific needs and capabilities of St. Mary's Hospital and its clinics. Luckily for us, a Minnesota native, Dr. Michael Westerhaus, is currently working in the Gulu parish clinics and has been a wonderful resource for information. Dr. Westerhaus, a Harvard trained physician who is completing his residency in Brigham & Women's Global Health Equity program, and Dr. Martin Ogwang, Medical Superintendent for Lacor Hospital, have been working with Hope For The City to complete an in-depth evaluation and develop a specific request list. Their needs are simple by our standards; blood pressure cuffs, infant resuscitators, suction machines, oxygen concentrators, a culture incubator, a stretcher, otoscopes for looking in the ears, nebulizers, forceps, surgical scissors, examination lamps for the clinic maternity room, and even hospital beds that can be raised up and down rather than the current metal cots. Finally, after months of communication, a shipment is just about ready to go. By tightly packing the



Science Lab nearing completion.



equipment in 40 foot containers and using trusted transportation agents, Hope For The City can get a shipment valued at approximately \$150,000 to St. Mary's Hospital for the cost of about \$10,000 in transportation costs. Though the doctors and nurses in northern Uganda courageously fight to save as many people as they can, the reality is that every single day too many people die from

Africa advisor) and Johnnie Carson (assistant sec of state) were also present.

Together, we have just reached a historic summit. As we soak it in, we also recognize that a tough climb remains ahead. Joseph Kony and the LRA are still at large, and vulnerable communities across central Africa remain under attack. Overcoming decades of international neglect toward this crisis will take more than a single meeting – even with the President – or one piece of legislation alone. But yesterday's accomplishment provides concrete hope that change is possible. We now have an unprecedented chance to ensure President Obama uses this mandate to lead an international effort truly capable of ending LRA violence once and for all.



Second Floor of Classroom Block being built.

preventable illnesses simply because they lack the resources that we take for granted. The hospitals and clinics operate with minimal equipment and limited supplies. Items that would be otherwise discarded in the U.S. can mean the difference between life and death in a place like northern Uganda. This shipment won't solve all their problems, but it will help. Please consider supporting Sacred Heart Seminary's partnership with Hope For The City for this project. We have it, they need it. Please help us get it there.

### LRA DISARMAMENT AND NORTHERN UGANDA RECOVERY ACT BECOMES LAW

On May 24<sup>th</sup> President Obama signed the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act into law, and released a personal statement recognizing the "hundreds of thousands of Americans who have mobilized in response to this unique crisis of conscience." In doing so he became the first U. S. President to publicly pledge that ending LRA violence and recovery for affected families across central Africa would be lasting priorities. In a rare move of recognition for the nationwide movement that made this moment happen, the President invited Michael Poffenberger, Paul Ronan and Lisa Dougan of Resolve Uganda to join him in the Oval Office for a ceremony as he signed the bill. Also in attendance were 3 staff members from Invisible Children, Reps Royce and McGovern, Senator Inhofe, John Prendergast, one rep from each of IRC, ICG and InterAction. Michelle Gavin (the President's

### ST. MARY'S EDIOFE SCHOOL RECEIVES GENERATOR

**THE SCHOOL:** St. Mary's Ediofe Girl's Secondary School is one of the three boarding schools for girls in Arua District in northwestern Uganda. It is located three kilometers west of Arua town. Arua is approximately 150 miles west of Gulu. The school was founded in 1983 with the aim of increasing opportunities for the girl child to attain formal education and to prepare her to be a self-reliant citizen. The school started after a period of turmoil of the Liberation War of 1979. The people of West Nile had to flee to Congo and Sudan. On their return it was difficult to travel outside the region. St. Mary's Ediofe was started to provide easy and safe access to education for girls in the region. It was also meant to chase academic ignorance and backwardness from the area. St. Mary's Ediofe offers both Ordinary and Advanced level education. Since its foundation with 80 students as the first enrolment, the school has steadily grown to over 700 students currently. In 2008 the school celebrated its Silver Jubilee under the theme "**striving to attain perfection for the girl child.**"

**BRIEF BIO OF SR. GRACE ACIRO:** I am the first born of the eight children of Matthew and Caroline. Of my seven siblings three are boys and four are girls. As first-born my



Sr. Grace with the top class (Senior 6 students).

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.

dad always cautioned me that my siblings would be successful if I am and on the contrary, if I fail in life, none of them will ever succeed! This thought never left me, so I worked very hard in my primary school and passed to secondary school. I successfully completed my secondary education and went to the University for my Bachelor Degree in Education. By the grace of God, in 2007, I received my Master's degree in Linguistics from Makerere University. When I graduated, I heaved a sigh of relief even though I recognize my education continues every day of my life. Also in 2007 one of my brothers was ordained a priest. Fr. Paul Peter Rom now teaches philosophy at Alokolum Major Seminary in Gulu.

I was inspired to be a nun when I was in primary two. I was a flower girl in a wedding and my colleague and I were adorned like little princesses. After the wedding, I never wanted the dress to be removed from me. The person who prepared us was a nun, which was the beginning of my journey. This dream was realized on January 6, 1990 when I professed my vows and became a member of the **Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate**, which is a diocesan order in the Archdiocese of Gulu with over 400 nuns.

objection to it. I sought guidance from friends and people I trusted and all of them encouraged me to accept the assignment. They said my ability in management is unquestionable, I should just go. My little sister, Teddy, told me that there is no challenge greater than the Grace of God. I had to come to terms with myself and report to my new place of work.



Students in front of some classrooms and thatched hut where staff have their tea breaks and lunch.



The School Prefects.

**CAREER:** I loved teaching and my students as well. Even the stubborn students attended my classes. They always said I was strict but they enjoyed my lessons. The feedback from them testify that I have been a successful teacher and mentor. I hope I will be a good administrator. I was also the Vocation Directress of the congregation of the Little Sisters of Mary Immaculate for ten years. During that time the number of girls who joined the congregation increased. I requested to be relieved from that office because of my new assignment.

**MY RECENT APPOINTMENT:** I was assigned as headmistress of St. Mary's Ediofe on Feb. 16, 2009. This appointment took me by surprise and my first reaction was

**CHALLENGES:** The challenges are many: Learning a new language. Some of the parents do not speak English and I don't speak Lugbara, the local language. The secretaries are my translators. I will learn Lugbara among many other things I will need to do. Nobody likes change. Some of the students and some members of the staff are hesitant to receive this new headmistress.

This region had no electricity so it was very hard for me to start ironing my clothes using charcoal. To charge a cell phone and laptop one has to go for miles. It was painful to see students struggling with kerosene lamps to read at night. Now we are so relieved because of the generator. Solving problems of the needy students e.g. school fees, uniforms, scholastic materials, personal needs, etc. is difficult because the means to solve these problems are not available yet a solution has to be reached.

As administrator of the school I am also the accounting officer so I no longer have time to do any teaching. Since the students spent most of their time in school, my staff and I play the role of parents looking after their needs. When one of the girls is sick they need love and attention. I think I need a bigger heart!

We are most grateful for the gift of the generator. We will pray for you, please pray for us.

Sr. Grace Aciro