



Msgr. Michael Devine welcomes Msgr. Matthew Odong and Fr. Paul Peter Rom during Florida visit.

Farm Report by Fr. Paul Peter Rom



Greetings from AFRUDEC, the agricultural sustainability project in Northern Uganda. As we come to the end of the year, we cannot be but grateful to God for all the blessings He has bestowed upon all of us. We must also thank you, our friends in Christ, for your generosity and constant support for the development of the people in Northern Uganda through HFU.

The beginning of 2023 was very challenging for farming activities. A prolonged period of drought from March to August provided only 3.15 inches of rain, causing the loss of much of our crops. As farmers, though, we don't lament natural calamities. Instead, we learn ways to mitigate them. This also presented an opportunity to test the new corn seed donated by Ed Baumgartner/BASS Hybrids for drought resistance. Results were very encouraging – nearly two tons of corn from only one acre during a drought!

Despite the weather conditions, the first season yielded the following harvest:

- 232 gallons of sunflower oil, enough to meet cooking needs for term three
- Five tons of soybeans
- Nearly seven tons of corn
- Assorted other produce, including onions, tomatoes, carrots, eggplants and watermelon

Looking forward, we are anticipating a robust second season. We planted 40 acres of corn, 20 acres of sunflowers, and 10 acres of cassava. In an attempt to diversify our yield, we have also cultivated 1000 pineapple plants and are managing 4000 tilapias donated by The Ministry of Fisheries and Development.

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Andrew, the Farm Manager, introduces pineapple production as a cash crop.

From the Desk of Msgr. Matthew Odong

Dear Friends & Benefactors of Hope for Uganda,

The staff and seminarians of Sacred Heart Seminary (SHS) join me in sending you our love, gratitude, and appreciation for your prayers and generosity during 2023. Our hearts are filled with joy as we celebrate several significant accomplishments, largely attributable to your continued support of our future leaders in Christ.

In this academic year 2023, the total number of students at SHS was 223 – a big increase over previous years. It costs \$1,000 to support a student at SHS for one academic year. May God bless you for giving these young men the opportunity to discern the priesthood, all the while becoming useful and productive citizens through education in a nurturing and safe environment. In July and August, seven seminarians became transitional deacons, with the intention of being ordained priests in 2024. What a blessing their calling will be in this troubled world!

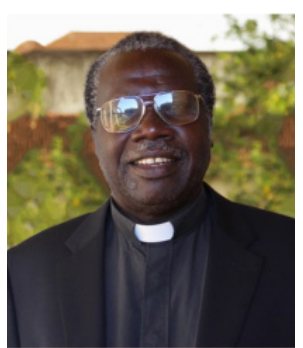
SHS also celebrates our newly renovated guest house. It is a joy to welcome visiting priests, major seminarians, pilgrims from the US and all other guests. Previously lacking in showers and washrooms, we now have 8 showers and 5 washrooms to help provide comfort and convenience. It is with great anticipation that we can receive our wide range of guests, who come

to share their God given talents and gifts with our community, and to whom we gratefully give in return.

Phase One of the new technology upgrade was launched at SHS on November 22, 2023 by Archbishop John Baptist Odama. The Archbishop thanked Hope for Uganda for its generosity in support of this project. The upgrade fits well into the government's newly mandated curriculum and enables teachers and students to use the internet to access information and carry out research online. Phase Two involves the provision of enough computers for all students and teachers. For completion of this valuable project, we trust in the generosity of our friends and benefactors who continue to change lives for the better.

Allow me to close with a quote from my dearly departed friend, David Fagerlee. David witnessed first-hand the ravages of poverty in my country and, in addition to financially supporting Archbishop Flynn Secondary School, he was moved to build a medical facility in an area in the north that previously had only very difficult access to medical care.

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AFSS Update

by Miss Atim Berna Prisca / Headteacher

Archbishop Flynn Secondary School (AFSS) is focused on providing holistic education for the mind, heart, and soul of our students. Academics, of course, remains our primary function, but at the time of admission each student is also required to join at least two extra-curricular activities offered by the school. There is a whole wide world full of possibilities and we want to prepare our learners as best we can.

One very critical area of holistic focus is leadership. We have established a system for a democratically elected council of students, called prefects, who assist the administration in the day-to-day running of the school. Each elected official has well-articulated duties that are keenly followed for the entire term – acting as a link between the student body and the administration in whatever area they represent. For example, there is a prefect who is particularly responsible for identifying students with special needs and forwarding their concerns to management. Many other areas of interest are included in this system, each set up to encourage critical skills in communication, problem solving, and negotiations for future use in the outside world.

In addition to this highly effective system of student government, AFSS partners with other agencies and institutions to help nurture our future leaders. We are currently working with AVSI, an NGO offering support and education to students interested in business. Among 200 students involved, three groups emerged winners of business plans that will be funded by the partner organization. We also linked up with the United Nations for an essay writing contest. Please read the article included in this newsletter about AFSS student, Fortunate Lusaka, whose essay won her the privilege of being a UN Ambassador for a day!

There are many more ways in which we support our students to become the leaders of tomorrow. From competitions among residential housing to the all-important celebrations that follow their



AFSS students have a reputation for being very disciplined and excellent nursing candidates.

hard earned efforts in sports and academia, the AFSS students have opportunities to prepare for leadership in any sector of society, even religion. In 2024, two former AFSS students will be ordained deacons!

We want to thank all the different stakeholders who support us in making AFSS a great, all-encompassing educational experience. A very special thanks goes to our friends from Hope for Uganda. Merry Christmas to all!

Thank you all,
Berna

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He said, **“At the end of the day, it’s not about what you have or even what you’ve accomplished. It’s about who you’ve lifted up... about what you have given back. People who really want to make a difference in the world usually do it, in one way or another. They are willing to feed one stomach, educate one mind, and treat one wound.”**

Thank you to so many of you, like David, who truly understand that giving facilitates grace. May God bless you during this most wonderful holiday season and grant you a peaceful and healthy conclusion to 2023!

Rev. Msgr. Matthew Odong



A painted picture of the founders of Hope For Uganda welcomes visitors to the Guest House – (L to R) Bobbi Vaughan, Archbishop Harry Flynn, Msgr. Matthew Odong, Dan Vaughan, and Pete Truax.

2023 Annual Fall Update

The annual fall visit by Msgr. Matthew Odong and Fr. Paul Peter Rom is always a highlight of our year. They travel more than 8,000 miles to share the immeasurable gratitude of their people for the support they receive from Hope for Uganda. Nothing touches the human spirit more deeply than a smile, a hug, and a good story.

We are so grateful to our Parish Partners who welcomed Msgr. Matthew and Fr. Paul this fall. Our thanks to the following Minnesota parishes for their hospitality and generous support:

- St. Therese in Deephaven – first-time visit
- Immaculate Heart of Mary in Minnetonka
- Ss. Joachim and Anne in Shakopee – first visit
- St. Patrick’s in Oak Grove
- St. Francis Xavier in Buffalo
- Holy Family in St. Louis Park
- St. Aloysius in Olivia
- St. Anne’s in Hamel
- Our Lady of the Lake in Mound – first visit

One of the traditions associated with the fall parish visits is the opportunity to double the impact of your gift through a Challenge Grant. This year’s \$77,000 challenge was fully funded by qualifying gifts of \$100 or more, matched dollar for dollar. Thanks to everyone who has donated so generously to make this annual fall campaign a huge success!

2023 Annual Appreciation Dinner

Our annual Hope for Uganda appreciation event was held on September 27th at Providence Academy to say “Thank You!” and celebrate the progress being made in the Archdiocese of Gulu. As we always do, the evening began with Mass, which was offered by Fr. Paul Peter Rom, and concelebrated by Msgr. Matthew Odong.

Following Mass, our 106 guests were welcomed by live music performed by Music x Four during the social time and dinner. HFU Board Chairman, Bill Kottemann, served as emcee for the program. Msgr. Matthew gave an encouraging and challenging update on the activities occurring at Sacred Heart Seminary and Archbishop Flynn Secondary School. Then Fr. Paul inspired all with pictures and a presentation of progress being made on the Farm – so much progress is being made! Four members of Immaculate Heart of Mary parish shared personal and heartfelt stories of their pilgrimage to Uganda in July - thank you, Silvia, Mike, Jeremy, and Corrina (see Corrina’s reflection on this page)! Marie and Todd Ziesmer concluded the evening by recounting highlights of their visit to Uganda in August – touched by the joy and warm hospitality of the community.

Please consider joining us next year as we celebrate how your commitment to the HFU mission is changing lives, both in Uganda and here in the United States.



Assistant Farm Manager, Bonny, inspects season 2 corn crop for fall armyworms.



Msgr. Matthew and AFSS board member visit a demonstration pig sty on the Farm.

My Pilgrimage Reflections

by Corrina Conley

I was privileged to be among the 16 pilgrims from Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in Minnetonka, MN, to visit our friends in Northern Uganda in July 2023. We spent 12 fascinating days visiting the schools, farm, and medical center supported by Hope for Uganda, as well as the two shrines of the Ugandan martyrs and Murchison Falls National Park.

The students, teachers, and staff at Sacred Heart Seminary (SHS) and Archbishop Flynn Secondary School (AFSS) are so impressive. They wake up before the sun for morning prayer and final preparation for the day ahead. Their work ethic was inspirational, their dreams are big, and they all have such appreciation for the chance to attend and work at these great schools.

We found the farm staff to have the same enthusiasm. They were so happy to show us what they’ve done and their plan to provide food and support for AFSS. By employing local people and engaging the students, they are sharing and teaching the use of modern farming techniques and animal husbandry with the broader community.



IHM pilgrim, Dr. Jeremy Springer, visits the David Fagerlee Medical Center in Adilang.

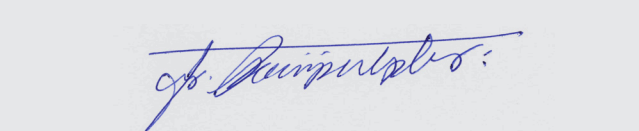
Farm Report continued from page 1

The Farm was chosen as a recipient because of the impact we have on the community. A corn crib is being built and will handle the second-season harvest with ease.

It is our goal to introduce animal husbandry to The Farm in 2024, beginning with pigs and poultry. Lack of funding has delayed this important quest, but we are determined to provide quality animal protein for the health of our students and staff. The Farm is still in the phase of being established, and as we develop, more is needed to create a self-sustaining environment to meet the needs of our school populations. Please consider helping us make sustainability through modern agriculture a reality in Northern Uganda.

I would like to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year 2024.

Fr. Paul Peter Rom - PhD



Other highlights included a tour of the David Fagerlee Medical Centre where we witnessed the life-saving work they do for the surrounding villages. We also attended a Mass in Adilang, the remote childhood home of Msgr. Matthew. Parish priests in Northern Uganda travel difficult distances to reach these villages, but the churches are packed with people joyfully participating in the Eucharist!

My biggest takeaway was this: **There is a very real distinction between charity and generosity.** Charity is the compassionate response to a person or persons in need. This defines the work of Hope for Uganda – to share the real-life stories of our sisters and brothers in Northern Uganda, and to inspire charity. Generosity is what we witnessed and experienced in Uganda. Generosity is the overflowing of gratitude and grace that has no basis in need at all. It is a pure gift out of the kindness of one’s heart, and does not take into account the need on the part of the recipient. As pilgrims in a distant land, we were the benefactors of such beautiful generosity, from the warm welcome to the many thoughtful, useful, loving gifts our friends bestowed on us from their hearts. I strongly encourage anyone who wants to experience real generosity to meet it face-to-face in Northern Uganda. Charity and generosity are both forms of expressing love and there you will see them come together brilliantly. Praise God!



IHM pilgrims wear custom-made clothing received from the AFSS community.

Executive Notes

Dear Friends of Hope for Uganda,



May this season of Advent bring you peace and joy as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior. 2023 has been an amazing year for Hope for Uganda (HFU)! Join us in also celebrating your generosity as illustrated in the highlights below:

- Our 25-year parish partner, Immaculate Heart of Mary (Minnetonka, MN) pioneered the first group pilgrimage to Uganda in July. Please read the reflection by board member, Corrina Conley.
- Two weeks later my wife, Marie, and I followed in their footsteps. One of our many takeaways was meeting with the Director of Nursing at St. Mary's Lacor Hospital in Gulu. She told us how impressed she is with the discipline of the AFSS graduates who come her way. You, too, can be affirmed firsthand by our mission in Northern Uganda. If you're interested in visiting in 2024, please contact me (tziesmer@hopeforuganda.org or 952-222-8330).
- A record nine parishes hosted appeals by Msgr. Odong and Fr. Paul Peter Dr. Rom during their annual trek to the US in September and October. Their message was well received and resulted in many generous donations and hundreds of new supporters. Over 275 benefactors made a qualifying matching gift of \$100 or more, totaling more than \$100,000, well exceeding our goal of \$77,000. Thank you so much!
- Your generosity made it possible to fund more than \$572,000 in scholarships and projects in 2022, and almost \$900,000 in 2023. See Delivering Hope for a Brighter Future for details.

- The HFU website has been redesigned and will post new information at least monthly, including updates on projects, news, and calendar activities.
- A 2022 audit of HFU finances was recently completed and is available for viewing on our website (www.hopeforuganda.org/about).
- The HFU Board of Directors wish to express their gratitude to Sheila Kruesel for her service over the past year. Sheila has chosen to resign for personal reasons. We wish her well in her all her future endeavors.

On behalf of the HFU Board of Directors, Msgr. Matthew Odong, and Fr. Paul Peter Rom, I wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2024!

Your brother in Christ,
Todd Ziesmer



Celebrating Mass with SHS seminarians was a highlight of our visit.

Delivering Hope for a Brighter Future

As we close another year in our mission of hope in Northern Uganda, we thank you for responding so generously to our call. Only through your support can we continue to bring a brighter future to the students at AFSS and SHS and promote sustainability at the Farm.

This year we celebrate funding grants approaching \$900,000, including the full scholarship needs requested by SHS and AFSS, as well as completing the long-awaited security fence surrounding the AFSS campus; the completion and dedication of the Priest



The ¾ of a mile of completed security wall & fence will keep animals and intruders off the AFSS campus. Thank you for making this possible!

Residence and Guest House at SHS; the distribution of eight motorcycles, Mass kits, and chasubles to the newly ordained priests; and the successful implementation of Phase One of the technology upgrade at SHS. Wow! It's been a very bright year!

There are several projects that are funded but not yet completed:

- Much needed corn crib on the Farm
- Two-year agricultural training program for two people in Puerto Rico
- Security fencing for the Dan and Bobbi Vaughan Priest and Guest House at AFSS
- Phase One Technology Upgrade at AFSS
- Boys' bathrooms and showers at AFSS

Finally, the top priority projects for funding in 2024:

- Scholarships for AFSS and SHS - \$390,000 is our goal; your generosity this fall has given us a great start to meet this goal!
- Motorcycles/Mass kits/chasubles for 7 new priests - \$47,500
- Building for administration at AFSS - \$300,000
- Phase Two of Technology Upgrade at AFSS - \$50,000



AFSS students pack the small computer lab and eagerly await additional space and equipment.

- Additional girls' dormitory at AFSS - \$150,000
- Pickup truck for SHS - \$42,000
- Phase Two Technology Upgrade for SHS - \$30,000
- Auditorium renovation at SHS - \$120,000
- Construction of grain bins and acquire conveyors for the Farm - \$96,000
- Construction of pig barns at the Farm - \$90,000
- Building a warehouse to store Farm equipment and supplies - \$150,000



The 8 newly ordained priests receive their Mass kits funded by HFU.

Remembering Loved Ones

One of the greatest gifts you can give loved ones (living or deceased) is uniting their prayers and intentions to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Many US parishes have Masses booked months in advance or don't have dates open meaningful to you. For a modest stipend for the priest (\$7-\$10 per Mass), you can have your special intentions offered by a priest from the Archdiocese of Gulu, Uganda. In fact, because priests in Northern Uganda receive no other compensation, a Mass offering is often the only money they receive to help perform their ministries.

To honor your loved ones, as well as to support the priests in Gulu, please send a list of your intentions, preferred dates, and a donation to Hope for Uganda and we will coordinate with the Archdiocese of Gulu. Thank you!



SHS Guest House offers expanded access to washrooms and showers to visitors.

As you can see, some needs never change. There will always be an earnest ask for scholarship assistance for hard-working children whose families simply cannot afford to send them to our schools. And priests will always need our help with transportation and the tools for their trade, as they humbly serve very God-fearing, and hard-to-reach, people. But the other items listed above represent the exciting and expanding mission in Northern Uganda. **Please consider joining our heartfelt quest to provide a brighter future for these truly grateful citizens in our new and ever-changing world.**

Remember, you can visit our website for status updates and additional details for current and past projects (www.hopeforuganda.org/projects). God bless you!



HFU benefactors provide recently ordained priests with new motorcycles.

AFSS Student Wins United Nations Award

In March 2023, Berna Atim, Headteacher at AFSS, clicked on an intriguing link to the UN website, inviting female students between the ages of 13-18 to submit essays on the prescribed topic ‘If you were an ambassador for a day, what would you do to give equitable business opportunities to women entrepreneurs in Uganda?’ Berna asked one of the AFSS English teachers to select five girls to compete. Early in the second term, Berna received a call notifying her that one of her students, Fortunate Lusaka Lamaro, had won the competition and would receive an award in Kampala. On May 31, the UN sent a car to AFSS (5 hours from Kampala) to deliver Fortunate and Berna, as her chaperone, to the Hilton Garden Inn in Kampala, where they began their VIP experience. The next day they were driven to the UN headquarters where they met the Ugandan Ambassador and other important dignitaries. Later that day they went to the British High Commission residence for the award ceremony. As Ambassador for a day, Fortunate was awarded a certificate and given accolades for her outstanding performance.



AFSS Headteacher, Berna Atim, with award-winning student, Fortunate Lamaro (age 15), and Msgr. Odong.

A reception followed the ceremony, wrapping up a wonderful day in the life of an AFSS student and her headteacher! A UN car and driver returned them to campus the following day. All the students enjoyed Fortunate’s good “fortune”, as she shared her exciting and life-changing experience. They hope and pray many more events such as this come their way!



The following is a transcript of Fortunate’s winning essay:

A Fight to Support and Uplift A More Equitable Business Environment for Young Women in Uganda

An article by: Fortunate Lusaka Lamaro – UN Ambassador for a day

Gone are the days when we could look down on women and girls as people of the weaker sex. This mentality has over the years denied women of actively participating in the social, political, and economic transformation of our country Uganda.

As an Ambassador of Uganda, I would like us, the citizens of this country, to carefully analyze and evaluate whether there is an equitable business environment for women in our country. I personally felt very much touched by the difference in the percentage of women in business compared to their male counterparts.

The fourth edition of the MasterCard index of women entrepreneurs ranked Uganda at 38.2% of total female business owners, an indication that nearly four in every ten business owners in Uganda are women. Despite the fact that women entrepreneurs own at least 31% of all registered small and medium Enterprises (SMES) in Uganda, they still face many issues such as the fact that they are concentrated in sectors that are heavily hit by the economic downturn, the pronounced digital gender gap in an increasingly virtual world and the mounting pressures of childcare responsibility, leaving them most vulnerable.

To begin with, my embassy together with the Ministry of Information Communication Technology shall embrace the use of E-Commerce in the conduction and management of the business. This is because when women entrepreneurs embrace opportunities offered by digital technology, their markets shall expand beyond their immediate vicinity and the digital space will expose their business to a wider customer base with differing preferences.

In addition to that, studies have shown that male and female entrepreneurs are often evaluated differently when accessing funds from credit institutions. Therefore, in a fight for equality in the business environment, I urge the finance sector to offer equal

financial assistance to women and girls because female entrepreneurs should easily access credit to grow their businesses, sustain self-employment, and create more job opportunities compared to their male counterparts. To add to that, investing in women is investing in over 70% of the country’s informal sector economy and over 51% of the country’s total population.

Furthermore, we shall encourage vocational and technical courses by sponsoring young women and girls to acquire these skills to provide them with special focus; especially those from underserved communities with practical skills and work opportunities to become innovative technologists and entrepreneurs.

In conclusion, we shall enhance and focus on mentoring young women and girls with the techniques of business management. The mentors shall include successful women entrepreneurs since their words will be of inspiration.

There is a saying that ‘Where there is a woman, there is a magic’. I thirst and yearn that we stand to speak the same language for the women of this country. To value their participation and role in the development of our economy and to develop a world where both men and women are equally strong, perhaps more in the business environment than anywhere else.



The Letter to Lions Pen Pal Program continues to grow as Brooke Hohenecker and Leightyn Ferrell, Seniors at Providence Academy (PA), are recognized as Student Ambassadors for the program. This winter, more than 40 students between PA and AFSS will participate as pen pals. While the distance between students is more than 8,000 miles, there are many shared interests and aspirations.



Make a Difference

Pray
Please keep the people of Northern Uganda and our mission in your prayers.

Volunteer
If you would like to offer your skills or time to the organization, please contact us.

Donate
Financially support the organization, which in turn provides hope to the people of Uganda.

YES! I want to give hope to the people of Uganda through my generous donation.

See enclosed donation form.



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Visit us on the web at
www.HopeForUganda.org



Hope For Uganda is a Minnesota 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation legally established in 1998 to support educational, faith formation, and relief activities in the Archdiocese of Gulu in Northern Uganda.