



Early HFU supporters, Ed and Wanda Sweeney, encouraged and inspired Msgr. Matthew 30 years ago.

Farm Report by Fr. Paul Peter Rom



Greetings from Archbishop Flynn Rural Development Education Center! Our sustainability program through agriculture is growing every year. Each "baby step" is taking us to the next step with strength and confidence. **We have successfully harvested a bounty of corn and soybeans in the first season, thanks in large part to the dry planting techniques we learned from our Hope for Uganda partners.** Now we eagerly await the second season harvest of rice, sunflower, corn, and assorted vegetables at the end of November and early December. We were able to install the first phase of the road project, use the corn sheller and bean thresher to improve processing for season 1 crops, and provide clean water for the farm and surrounding communities from the Donita Springs well. And our demonstration fish farm is proving a potentially viable investment. All these achievements have been accomplished because of your generous support. You, my friends, are a great part of our success and progress!

Post-harvest handling is still a big hurdle because we lack the proper drying and storage facilities. Season 1 harvest had an unacceptable amount of loss due to poor drying conditions. Our goal is to build a corn crib to help dry the corn to the required moisture content, and to purchase and install grain bins to store our bountiful harvests as well as milling

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HFU-donated corn sheller dramatically reduces processing time.

From the Desk of Msgr. Matthew Odong

Dear Friends & Benefactors of Hope for Uganda,

Greetings of peace to you in our Lord Jesus Christ! It is my pleasure, on behalf of the seminarians and staff at Sacred Heart Seminary, to share some thoughts with you.

Something quite wonderful happened on the evening of the Annual Appreciation Dinner at Providence Academy, while Fr. Paul and I were visiting the U.S. It was a delightful, fruitful evening when many friends and benefactors gathered to share their stories with each other, listened to the Board's enthusiasm about progress and the future, and gained inspiration from messages expressed personally by Fr. Paul Peter Rom and me. Many thanks to all who organized the event and who attended that night.

Near the end of the evening, one of our longest, most faithful and generous benefactors, my dear friend Ed Sweeney, along with his wife Wanda, approached me with joy on his face to proudly proclaim **"Hope for Uganda is a Miracle of God!"** I have thought a lot about this since that moment and found reasons to believe that what we have in this apostolate is, indeed, a miracle of God. A miracle is a divine power at work and its purpose is to draw a believer to faith in God. Just as a miracle is intended to change lives in all aspects – spiritual and physical

– Hope for Uganda is an instrument of change, with its mission to change lives through education and spiritual growth. Many boys and girls in desperate situations in Northern Uganda, at both Archbishop Flynn Secondary School and Sacred Heart Seminary have experienced this change. Children who benefit from your generosity often refer to the charity as "a miracle". They look at your financial assistance as a miracle of God, when any hope for breaking the bonds of poverty and opportunity seemed impossible. Also, many seminarians who felt the need to abandon their studies because of the financial hardship on their families, found hope again when the assistance arrived from Hope for Uganda. One such young beneficiary persevered, became a priest, and has recently completed his doctoral studies in Rome. It is a miracle. Praise God!

Ed Sweeney's comments bring to mind the history of this "Miracle of God", which goes back to July of 1990 on my first mission trip to the United States. Hope for Uganda was born in the home of Dan and Bobbi Vaughan... *continued on page 2*



AFSS Update

by Miss Atim Berna Prisca / Headteacher

I greet you all and thank God for his unending love for all of us. On behalf of the entire community of AFSS, I thank you for the support that you always offer this institution. Your generosity ensures that we shape the future of the many youths who are the next generation. I also greatly appreciate the Board of Governors (BOG), Parent-Teacher Association, and staff for their dedicated service to our fine school. You have all supported our institution to realize its mission and vision.

The year 2022 is one of the most action-packed years of our lives. It is punctuated with many activities needing to be accomplished in a timely manner, in an effort to catch up for two years of lost time during the COVID-19 lockdown. I will highlight here what we have experienced during the last two terms:

Academics – All academic activities have been going on very well. We are happy to report the successful completion of the 2019 UCE and UACE examinations (no examinations in 2020 or 2021). Also, the introduction of a new lower secondary curriculum has helped students attain knowledge and skills. The Business Department initiated a Business Club. Students make products such as liquid soap, popcorn, and cookies and sell their products to the BOG, staff and other students. In this way they make money, create jobs, learn to save, and pass exams.

Games and Sports – Students qualified for netball, volleyball and athletics national competition, which took place in Lira District. Due to financial challenges we were unable to send participants. We were honored to be invited to Gulu to play the national netball team in their preparation for the Common Wealth games in Birmingham. And in December 2022 three of our students have been invited to a national students debating competition in Kampala. We look forward to their best performance.







Senior 4 and Senior 6 students and parents celebrate a farewell party together.

S.4 and S.6 Party – Annually senior four and six students are accorded a farewell party prior to their national examinations. This year the students decided to combine the dedication prayer and prom parties. 75 senior four and 23 senior six students, their parents, and staff prayed and dined together in an evening that went very well.

Community Service – Out of the many schools in the district, **AFSS is blessed to have been selected to host a radio talk show every Saturday** on one of the local radio stations, Radio RAPP, *continued on page 2*

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who had invited me for dinner. Perhaps it was ice cream the Spirit used that gave life to the story I shared that night, but they were sympathetic and gave generously to help fund Sacred Heart Seminary and promised to continue their support. Each year more of their friends listened to our story, giving of themselves as God touched their hearts. The joyful news today is that Hope for Uganda has changed, and continues to change, the lives of many young people who had only hoped for a miracle!

As we enter the season of Advent and Christmas, please pray for us as we will pray for you. May God bless you as you gather with family and friends. We too will gather and give thanks to the God who, through a miracle, put us all together.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



The newly ordained priests receive their HFU-sponsored motorcycles to assist their ministry.



Used pickup recently purchased for use on the Farm.



Business Club makes liquid soap for sale in school and community.



AFSS students inform and entertain the community during their weekly radio program.

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machines to add value, especially to our corn. We are grateful to Hope for Uganda for helping us buy a used single-cabin pickup truck. And, we are also still struggling with the protein gap in the students' diet, as we currently can only provide one meal per week with meat on Sundays. The introduction of pig farming is our solution to that problem, as pigs multiply and grow quickly.

I, therefore, appeal to your generous support towards these very urgent priorities of the farm. Please prayerfully consider a donation to help us continue this important program of sustainability that touches the lives of our students, families and broader community.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2023!

Sincerely,
Fr. Paul Peter Rom, PhD

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which has a relatively wide coverage. They share with the listeners (parents, students, teachers, politicians, etc.) on many topical issues that affect the nation and globe at large. This has helped the students by boosting their confidence and research skills, and above all, by advertising our school.

As AFSS expands, we appreciate the fact that many young people view the school as one of the "must-attend" institutions. With the introduction of the new curriculum, there is a consistent increase in student applications. We are already faced with limitations in learning spaces, tools, and resources like the library, computers, computer laboratories, and the need for a safety fence around the school. We, therefore, appeal to you to continue your support of AFSS in order to protect what we have worked so hard to build, and to continuously uplift our efforts to yet another level every new year through.

Thank you and God bless!



Fr. Paul Peter Dr. Rom shares progress updates about The Farm.

Historic 2022 Annual Appreciation Dinner

Our annual Hope for Uganda appreciation event was held on October 5th 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, and was offered by Fr. Paul Peter Rom, and con-celebrated by Msgr. Matthew Odong, Fr. Allen Paul Eilen, and Fr. Mark Juettner.

Following Mass, the record number of guests in attendance (130) 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 began his comments with a heartfelt tribute to former board members, Pete Truax and David Fagerlee, Sr. He then 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 in a relatively short period of time. Advancement Committee Chair, Jerry Powaser, expressed gratitude for the generous support received and appealed for continued support of our brothers and sisters in Northern Uganda.

A special thank you goes to our volunteer coordinator, Terri Bowman, who took everyone's experience to a new level.

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.



Msgr. Matthew inspired guests at the Appreciation Dinner (pictured with members of the Don & Rita Pouliot family).



HFU board members meet with Msgr. Matthew and Fr. Paul during US visit. From left to right – Mark Whims, Bill Kottemann, Joe Ditsch, Fr. Allen Eilen, Jerry Powaser, Fr. Paul, Corrina Conley, and Msgr. Matthew. Not pictured – Todd Ziesmer (photographer). Thank you for volunteering your time, talent, and treasure to lead this mission of hope!

Executive Notes

Dear Partners in Restoring Hope,



Finally, after three years, we were blessed to have Msgr. Matthew Odong and Fr. Paul Peter Rom visit Minnesota this fall. Our schedule was filled with so many wonderful encounters with friends and faithful benefactors.

In particular, we are grateful for the warm welcome and generous support from our parish partners – Immaculate Heart of Mary in Minnetonka, St. Patrick's in Oak Grove, St. Anne's in Hamel, and St. Aloysius in Olivia. These communities of faith are a firm foundation for our missionary work in the Archdiocese of Gulu, Uganda.



Msgr. Matthew greets friends after Mass in the Twin Cities.

In addition to parish visits and other personal engagements, **Msgr. Matthew was invited to appear on EWTN's Women of Grace program with his long-time friend, Johnnette Benkovic Williams.** His compelling story touched the hearts of many viewers, who then eagerly shared their financial resources to help the students and families in Northern Uganda. **For a link to the program, please visit our website at www.hopeforuganda.org.** You will also have access to past newsletters and other mission-related information.

Appeal For Restoring Hope

Thank you for helping accomplish so much in 2022! Because of your generosity, HFU was able to fund more than \$250,000 in scholarship support for the students at Sacred Heart Seminary (SHS) and Archbishop Flynn Secondary School (AFSS) during a very difficult year. A security fence will be built around the campus of AFSS because of your generosity. The investment needed to deliver reliable internet access for the AFSS campus has been secured. A corn crib can now be constructed on the Farm.

And a summary of other projects completed in 2022 through your support include: repairing the primary vehicle used by SHS staff; renovation of the SHS science lab; replacing solar batteries and purchasing furniture for the AFSS school and Priest/Guest House; buying a used pickup truck and installing a reliable road at the Farm; and securing motorcycles and Mass kits for newly ordained priests. We are grateful for your generosity!



Your generous support helped renovate the SHS Science Lab. Thank you!

A very generous gift from Bob and Joan Cummins was presented to Msgr. Matthew while he was in Minnesota. The Cummins' gift will help provide more scholarships for needy students in the 2023 school year and reach funding goals for some of the highest priority projects at Sacred Heart Seminary (SHS) and Archbishop Flynn Secondary School (AFSS). Our many thanks to Bob and Joan, who continue to be our faithful friends and partners in the mission.



Fr. Paul with long-time friends of HFU, Karen and Terry Werner, in Clearwater FL.

Before Msgr. Matthew and Fr. Paul returned to Uganda, we traveled to the Tampa/Clearwater, FL area to see friends of Msgr. Matthew whom he had met years ago through Dan and Bobbi Vaughan. A special thank you to Karen and Terry Werner for hosting a reception for us at the Church of St. Brendan in Clearwater Beach. It was a blessing to see all who were able to attend. We hope to make this an annual visit during the priests' time in the U.S.



Msgr. Matthew shared his story on EWTN's Women of Grace program with Johnnette Benkovic Williams.



Mass kits for recently ordained priests.

Looking ahead to the needs for 2023, here is a list of the highest-priority needs:

1. **Providing scholarship support** for needy students remains our top priority. We expect the number of students needing help in the next academic year (February to December) will increase due to the difficult economic situation in Uganda and the increasing costs of educating the students.
2. **Sponsoring transportation costs for two Ugandans** to travel to Puerto Rico to participate in a 2-year internship with BASS Conventional Hybrids seed company to learn modern agriculture methods.
3. **Completing SHS chapel repairs.**
4. **Purchasing 8 motorcycles/Mass kits/chasubles** for newly ordained priests of the Archdiocese of Gulu.
5. **Building grain bins on the Farm** to store the abundant crop production.

As you can see, your charitable dollar goes a long way in Uganda and touches many lives. If you are inspired by our progress, please make the most generous gift you can to help us continue this mission of hope in the Archdiocese of Gulu, Uganda. Our heartfelt gratitude and prayers are with you always!

Your generosity has helped us accomplish a lot this year! The Sacred Heart science lab renovation is complete; much-needed furniture and equipment were purchased due to increased enrollment at AFSS; and the Farm was able to buy a used Toyota pickup truck, just to name a few. Praise God! But with progress and a struggling world economy, more needs arise. Both AFSS and SHS are feeling tremendous financial pressure as inflation is negatively affecting the cost of operating the schools. For example, government-run schools are offering to pay science teachers more than double what private schools can pay. Tuition for 2023 will increase to help offset some of the rising costs. The average cost to educate a student at SHS and AFSS is now \$1,000, which is reflected on the enclosed donation card.

Please take a moment to read the RESTORING HOPE column below for an update on our current and newest high-priority funding needs at AFSS, SHS, and the Farm. Prayerfully consider making the most generous gift possible so, together, we can continue to support the students and their families during this very challenging time. As always, and on behalf of the Hope for Uganda Board members, I thank you for choosing HFU as your partner for international outreach.

May you and your loved ones be abundantly blessed during this holy season and through the new year.

Your brother in Christ,

Remembering Loved Ones

One of the greatest gifts you can give loved ones (living or deceased) is offering their prayers and intentions with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Unfortunately, because of its popularity, many U.S. parishes are booked months in advance or do not have dates available that are meaningful to you.

There is a way to address your wishes AND encourage priests in Uganda. For a modest stipend (\$7-\$10 per Mass), you can have your special intentions offered by a priest from the Archdiocese of Gulu, Uganda. Because priests in Northern Uganda receive no other compensation, a Mass stipend is often the only money they receive to help perform their ministries.

To bless your loved ones, as well as to help support the priests in Uganda, 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 worship space requires maintenance.

Gratitude to God for Blessings

A Reflection by Msgr. Matthew Odong

The fourth Thursday of November is a special holiday in the United States. It is an annual get-together to celebrate the blessings that God has bestowed on this great nation. Family members fly or drive from one state to another for a reunion with their families on Thanksgiving Day. The day is special because it unites all Americans - believers and non-believers, families and friends - in festivities of joy and happiness.

For more than 150 years, the United States has celebrated this day as a "Thanksgiving to God for His goodness to the American people". Similar expressions of faith are widely used in the United States, such as One Nation Under God and In God



Fr. Paul, Tony, and Msgr. Matthew pray for America's return to God at the State Capitol.

We Trust, found on your national currency. Those words are a clear testimony to the common belief of the founding fathers of this great nation and clear evidence that the United States of America was founded on very strong religious values. They believed that the God who had journeyed with those seeking religious freedom was the same God who blessed them with abundance as they strived to survive in their new land. These early Americans were grateful. Hence, the reason for the Thanksgiving celebration.

I was born, raised, and educated in northern Uganda and Nairobi, Kenya, in East Africa. Ordained a Catholic priest and incardinated in the Archdiocese of Gulu since 1987, I have had the privilege of traveling



Fr. Paul and Msgr. Matthew attend Candlelight Rosary Procession in St. Paul – praying for America.

to many countries in Africa, Europe, the Philippines, Thailand, and the United States. My experience is there is no country in the world that is greater than the United States of America. God has blessed this great nation in so many ways. It is a country of opportunity, prosperity, food security, health care, technology, transportation, excellent roads, clean water, electricity, and superb infrastructures – all fruits of hard work. In my opinion, the citizens of your great nation owe so much to God in gratitude and thanksgiving. Permit me to say that every American has reason to thank God for living in the land of plenty. I believe that recognizing the existence of God and His abundant blessings on this nation would make Thanksgiving Day even more meaningful. How happy God would be if the peoples of this great nation would walk in the way of God in return for His many blessings on their land.

The American people have the founding fathers as their role models. History tells us these men had strong faith in God, the creator of heaven and earth. They included strong religious values in the founding documents, such as respect for fundamental human rights – the right to exist, freedom of worship, and the right to freedom of speech, to name a few. All who are lucky enough to be citizens of the United States are granted these inalienable rights and should

be grateful to God, not only on Thanksgiving, but also on every day of their lives.

I wrote this article with the intention of reminding the reader that irrespective of national identity and religious affiliation, the founding fathers were Christians, meaning they believed in God and His goodness to humanity. I encourage everyone to reflect with thanksgiving and gratitude for the gift of life and the resources to sustain it.

I wish you a happy and grace-filled Thanksgiving Day!

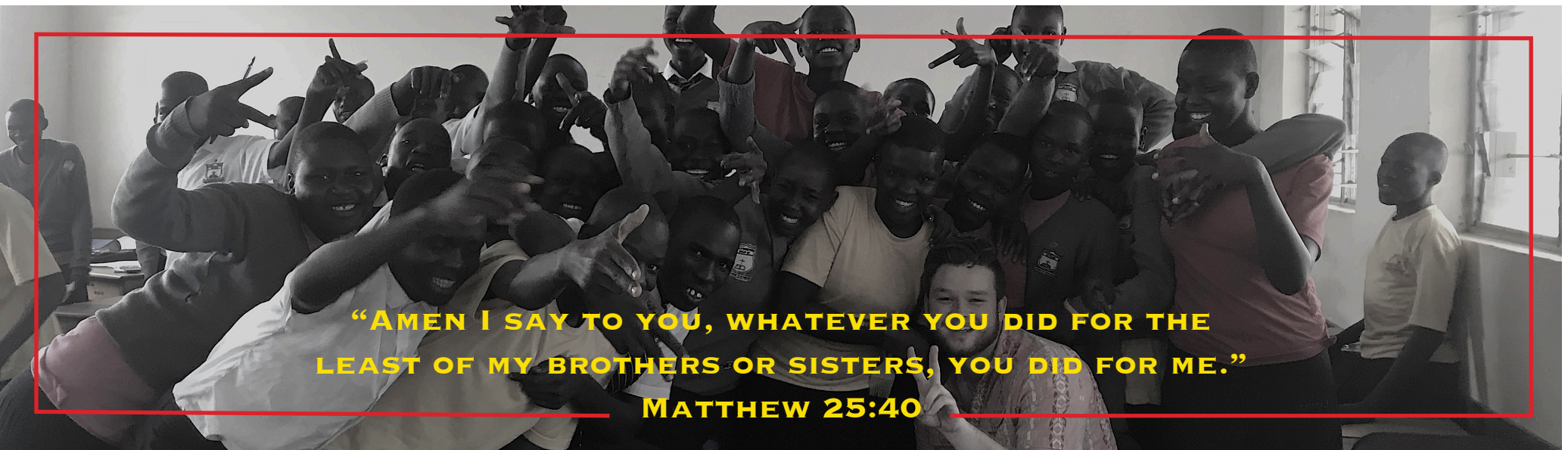


Marie Ziesmer and Fr. Paul enjoy abundant food options at the Minnesota State Fair.

Are You Being Called to Serve?

Does the Lord have your attention after reading this newsletter? That could be God's call to serve and bring hope to the people of Northern Uganda by sharing your talents as a committee or board member of HFU ☺

Right now our greatest need is for a communications specialist who can help in communicating our amazing story in parishes and beyond. Please contact Todd at info@hopeforuganda.org to learn more about how you can help.



"AMEN I SAY TO YOU, WHATEVER YOU DID FOR THE LEAST OF MY BROTHERS OR SISTERS, YOU DID FOR ME."
MATTHEW 25:40



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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.

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.