

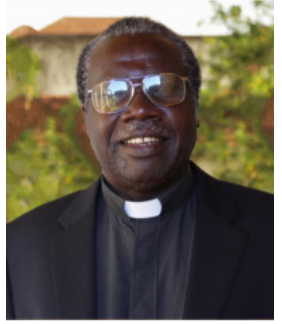
## From the Desk of Msgr. Matthew Odong, Rector

### Fraternal greetings to our dear friends and benefactors, from Sacred Heart Seminary.

On behalf of the staff and seminarians, I want to thank you for your prayers and financial support during this difficult year 2020. We are grateful to Hope For Uganda for keeping you apprised of the progress, achievements, challenges, needs, and activities related to educating young men for the priesthood. The impact of your generosity is always positive change in the lives of the students and staff, and especially this year.

During COVID-19, your donations enable the Seminary to take good care of monthly expenses, including tuition support, educational materials, salaries, utilities, food, repairs, and equipment to fight the coronavirus. Following the mandate to close all schools in March, the government has now lifted that mandate for students in their final years of studies. **I'm pleased to announce all students**

**in years four and six have returned to campus – 34 out of 191 enrolled this year.** We remain hopeful the government will re-open all grade levels before year-end.



Under normal circumstances, the level of poverty in Northern Uganda makes it difficult for many families to pay tuition fees for their sons to pursue the priesthood. With coronavirus, the financial constraints are more serious and much more widespread. **Sadly, a number of our seminarians in both minor and major seminaries have dropped out for lack of funds.** It costs \$900 US dollars to educate a seminarian for one year. Please consider helping an eager, God-filled young man come back to Sacred Heart Seminary. Your gift will change lives.

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## Our Candle Of Hope

by Berna Prisca Atim, Headteacher at AFSS

On behalf of the fraternity of Archbishop Flynn Secondary School (AFSS), I send you greetings of love, gratitude and prayers for a peaceful conclusion of 2020 and happy start to 2021.

The year 2020 has been peculiar. It began with excitement, joy and promise for the most successful year in the school's history. But, as you know, COVID-19 hit very hard and changed lives worldwide. AFSS stands in solidarity with all those grieving for lost loved ones, the sick, quarantined and disillusioned. With the rest of the world we pray for God's comfort, healing and love.

In countries like Uganda, and particularly in the northern part where families were already living below the poverty line, the coronavirus has plunged them further into abject poverty. Families are struggling day and night to feed, clothe, pay medical bills and even pay tuition for their children who will soon return to school after the long lockdown. **It is heartbreaking to listen to parents and students share with me their struggles to provide after loss of job or collapse of business that formerly sustained them.** Our community desperately needs financial support to invest in education in order to transform these families.

Given the plight of our people, I want to thank Hope For Uganda for changing lives at AFSS, especially during this pandemic. **Unlike many other private schools in Uganda, we were able to keep our staff afloat and remain ready to resume our duties as restrictions are lifted.** Hope For Uganda had our backs and we are a stronger team for it. Your sacrifices and generosity bring hope to our families, communities, and, finally, our nation.

The government has authorized schools and institutions of higher learning to reopen in phases. After a vigorous inspection and assurance that we would and could follow the new Standard Operating Procedures, AFSS was licensed and authorized to reopen. The first group of final term students returned in October. The government will continue to inspect schools for adherence to these new standards, so we will remain vigilant as we anticipate a full reopening in 2021.

Because of COVID-19, we have embraced a "new normal" and will continue to build on it in the future. We plan to introduce **e-learning** by designing a website that will enable teachers to reach out to our students online. The lockdown made it impossible for teachers to fully access learners. The e-learning platform will change that.

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Baptism at Sacred Heart Seminary by Msgr. Matthew

## Farm Report by Fr. Paul Peter Rom



No theme is better suited to this time of the devastating coronavirus than **Keep Hope Alive!** Our faith challenges us with that responsibility, our world continues to be shattered by this invisible enemy. In Uganda, we experienced total lockdown, which resulted in job losses

and desperation on many levels but this did not stop us from working very hard at the Farm.

### In 2020, in spite of all the ups and downs, the Farm has had the highest production since its beginning.

Using our principle of "baby steps", we are slowly transforming bush land into a viable farm. With our capable staff, we have produced in one season what we formerly did in a whole year. Thirty acres of cultivated and harvested corn produced an output three times more than ever before, and the second season is flourishing in the field right now!

Too much rain destroyed the first season of beans, but the second season is doing very well, along with cassava and tons of watermelon – enough to sell in the open market. We have produced so many sunflowers, we're assured of cooking oil until April 2021. Other assorted vegetables are also in abundance, sustaining the staff and sold in the market. Our hard work has paid off and we have much to celebrate, before the year even ends.

Despite our progress we continue to encounter bottlenecks. The much anticipated plans to drill a well were delayed because of heavy rains. Current road access to the Farm is weather dependent. Unless it's dry, the road cannot support machinery necessary to bring in fresh water for human and animal consumption along with irrigation for the Farm in the near future.

**Thanks to a generous benefactor, we have the funds to drill the well and expect to drill in December.** However, poor road access will affect our progress in many other ways. **We need more and proper storage for our increasing yield and a drying bay to minimize post-harvest losses.**

*continued on page 2*



AFSS staff equipped to create a safe environment for students returning to campus



Cabbage being harvested to feed students and staff



Crops being transported by HFU-funded tractor/trailer

## AFSS Update continued from page 1

Due to the abrupt closure of schools, staff members experienced a series of challenges. **Teachers will be offered training in business skills and financial literacy so they can supplement their teaching income in times of need.** Training will also include strategies for coping in a crisis to help them keep their families strong as they serve our community. We plan to realign our budget to focus on strengthening all mental and physical aspects of our health to combat long-term effects of our silent enemy, the virus.

We deeply appreciate your continued support. To keep hope alive, we ask that you prayerfully consider giving \$900 through Hope For Uganda to educate a needy student for one full year. More than ever your generosity will uplift vulnerable families as they cope with loss of lives, businesses and formal employment. Our mission remains clear – saving lives through education, one child at a time. You, dear friends and benefactors, light that candle of hope.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

## Msgr. Matthew continued from page 1

Other on-going needs include:

- ♥ Repairs to the church, which is central to the lives of the students and staff. To renew our church with paint and masonry, repairs will cost \$6,756 US dollars.
- ♥ Additional computers for rising enrollment. A desk top computer, printer and cable costs \$495 US dollars. Your support for any of these will make a difference.

COVID-19 has negatively affected all aspects of life, not the least of which is travel. It has been a blessing over the years to make an annual pilgrimage to the United States. Most of my time has been spent in Minnesota where I've made many friends and encouraged many benefactors to join the family of Hope For Uganda.

In recent years, Fr. Paul Peter Rom has accompanied me on this special journey and together we visited churches and schools gaining support for this great mission. Missing a trip to the United States means missing you, my friends, but as many of you know, for me it also means missing ice cream!! As I pray for healing for the world from the virus, I will dream of our next visit, of reconnecting with friends old and new, and eating lots of vanilla ice cream! I look forward to seeing you again in 2021, God willing.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year!



HFU-funded tractor and trailer are vital tools for transporting abundant corn production in 2020



Navigating around the Farm is very difficult during rainy season

The greater glory goes to you, my friends and benefactors. To date, your generosity has:

- ♥ Enabled us to buy a planter that helped us increase planting per square meter.
- ♥ You helped us use fertilizers so every crop has enough nutrients.
- ♥ You provided a tractor, a trailer, and storage containers that allowed us to cultivate more quickly and efficiently, as well as handle larger quantities.
- ♥ With your help, we are reducing post-harvest losses and stored this year's production safely.

**Seasons like this one not only align with the goal of sustainability for our schools, but also provide a model for surrounding farmers who will want to imitate our success.** The year 2020, though fraught with uncertainty, has come to be a great example of how we plan to ultimately use the Farm - as an educational center for teaching and motivating our students and neighbors and to keep hope alive.

Thank you and may God bless and keep you always!

## Farm Report continued from page 1

## Remembering Loved Ones

One of the greatest gifts you can give your loved ones (living or deceased) is to have the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for their prayers and intentions. 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 for the priest (\$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 for their daily needs.

To bless your loved ones, as well as 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 Alumni Testimonial by Simon Peter Okello

Dear friends and benefactors of HOPE FOR UGANDA,

I write to you with gratitude as an alumnus of Sacred Heart Seminary. I stand proud of this great institution which has made me who I am today. My name is Mr. Simon Peter Okello. My road to success began as I was growing up in a strong Catholic family. When I joined Sacred Heart Seminary in 1995, I was motivated and encouraged to one day become a priest and offer the sacrifice of the Mass, a direction I continued until 2000 when I finished Senior Six.

I did not see it clearly then, but I knew God was nudging me in a different direction. Later, when I started university for a bachelor's degree in education with majors in history and religious studies, I felt I owed HOPE FOR UGANDA and Sacred Heart Seminary an enormous debt for giving me the foundation for becoming a respectable man. In gratitude, I decided to go back to the seminary as a teacher, where I have taught for the past 16 years. I am so happy to serve as a teacher, building and forming priests for the Gulu Ecclesiastical Province and the Universal Church.



SHS graduate returns to form future Ugandan priests

Seminarians like me were constantly encouraged by the kind words, prayers, and financial support from HOPE FOR UGANDA and through the inspired work of our beloved Rector, Msgr. Matthew Odong. We felt, and still feel, the seminary was the best place to be because the committed and caring instructors and staff inspired us to be all God intends us to be and prepared us to help generations to come. I truly believe God wants me to be an ambassador for this great life change brought about by HOPE FOR UGANDA and your generosity.

May God bless the founders and all the benefactors of this great mission of hope for our people!

## Executive Notes



Dear Friends,

This year has been one for the ages. The pandemic has reached every person on the planet. Our prayers go out in a special way for those who are suffering due to the consequences of COVID-19.

In addition to reading the updates in this newsletter from Msgr. Matthew, Fr. Paul and Berna, you may be interested in viewing a video from each of them on our web site ([www.hopeforuganda.org](http://www.hopeforuganda.org) – see yellow bar on top of home page). Also included in this issue is a compelling story about how the Lord is bringing talented people into our mission who will have a multi-generational effect on lives in Northern Uganda (see donor profile on back page).

While the pandemic has created many challenges and setbacks, HOPE IS ALIVE in Northern Uganda! Because of your generosity and belief in this mission, teachers and staff of both schools received (reduced) salaries while the schools were shut down, allowing for the retention of dedicated staff to re-open quickly. You also made possible the planting and harvesting of more than 100 acres on the Farm, which yielded bumper crops of corn, sunflowers, cassava, and a variety of vegetables to feed students, teachers and staff. In addition, you provided the funds for the renovation of a classroom block on the aging seminary campus to accommodate growing enrollment of young men preparing to serve the Church in Uganda.

The continuing needs of Sacred Heart Seminary (SHS), Archbishop Flynn Secondary School (AFSS), and the Farm are many, but we have identified three areas to rally around and bring to completion:

1. **Keep Hope Alive Campaign.** Due to the impact of the virus, we are preparing to offer financial assistance to 300 of the total 800 students at SHS and AFSS. Our goal is to raise \$275,000 to help the schools get through 2021. **A few dedicated benefactors are offering a \$45,000 challenge to match dollar for dollar gifts of \$150 or more.** Your gifts are an investment in the lives of young people who will become priests, parents, and community leaders in the future.
2. **Come and See Hope Alive Campaign.** We are in the final stage of completing the Dan and Bobbi Vaughan Priests' Residence and Guest House. **This structure at AFSS will provide lodging for the campus administrator and school chaplain, as well as hosting regional visitors and "volunteers-in-mission from the USA. Your gift will help us open the doors.** Contact me if you are interested in participating in our next visit which will be scheduled when it is safe to do so.
3. **Road to Sustainability Campaign.** While the Farm has made significant progress over the last few years, work is difficult during the rainy season due to a poor road system within the property. **Two generous benefactors have issued a challenge grant and will match all donations up to \$50,000 to install a road system and facilities for drying and storing crops.** We all know a bumper crop is useless left standing in the field.

**We are so grateful to the number of Hope For Uganda benefactors who have increased their support in 2020 and we hope you will also increase your support.** It remains our highest priority to help students from poverty-stricken families attend our private, safe, high-quality schools that ensure a brighter future for them, their families and the nation. Please make Hope For Uganda your preferred outreach of international compassion.

May the Lord bless you with a safe and healthy Christmas and a very Happy New Year!

Todd Ziesmer  
Executive Director

Life-sized statue of St. Joseph welcomes guests to AFSS



## St. Joseph to the Rescue

Dear friends,

A person of faith does not give space to chance or random happenings in life. Everything that happens is Divine Will and providence! **Early in 2020, before the coronavirus became a world threat, desert locusts invaded our country from the south. They had devastated vegetation and crops in Kenya and entered Uganda in full force.** We were terrorized by their advancement and followed their progress with our district agricultural officer. Our government had defaulted on locust control programs, leaving us at great peril. Ironically, the armed forces were employed with hand spraying machines. Besides not having the required pesticides, the locusts flew over them and on to hills and mountains. By mid-February, the locusts were an immediate threat when a swarm reached our farm. We had been warned that wherever they settled they would leave thousands of eggs that would hatch after 21 days.

At this time, the virus lockdown was also a reality. No one would be available to fight the locusts. **Knowing that we were at the mercy of nature, Todd, our executive director suggested we pray a novena to St. Joseph, the patron of all Hope For Uganda-sponsored projects, asking God to bless the work of our hands and divert the course of the locusts.** We entreated St. Joseph and asked God to hear our prayers. When the locusts descended on our farm, we had already put in our first season seeds. If the locusts hatched, it would be exactly when our corn would begin sprouting. I was doing my routine visit the day the locusts came to the farm. I witnessed St. Joseph's intervention as some blackbirds (a kind I had never seen before) descended on the farm and started harvesting locusts for their food. The locusts abandoned our farm, never to return. They had no opportunity to leave eggs behind.

**God listened to our prayers and our first season corn harvest was the best ever!** Thank you St. Joseph and thank you to all of you who support us with your prayers and resources. As the ice cream priest always says, "Our project is the project of God and He will sustain it through His generous people." The year 2020 has challenged us in many ways. God wanted us to learn that He alone is in charge of His creation. May He continue to bless the works of our hands!

Fr. Paul Peter Rom

## Ways to Keep Hope Alive

*A Venture of Faith*

We have all received invitations to support noble causes in a year unlike any year we have seen before. Good stewards are well-advised to consider the advantages of supporting Hope for Uganda, a mission that is changing lives daily in a part of the world where poverty and the pandemic put lives at risk every day.

**Keep Hope Alive** is the theme for the year ahead as Hope For Uganda programs continue to grow. While every gift to this year's campaign will make a difference, the question for people of faith is **"What does God want to do through me to change lives in Northern Uganda?"** In this way, a decision to give is a *venture of faith* more than mere charity.

**Those who spend time with Christians in Uganda often experience a different kind of giving than is common in America.** In our country giving often comes from our surplus, while in Africa giving more often than not comes from their poverty because there is no surplus. The poor consider it an honor to give, and they sing and dance when the offering is accepted.

When discerning a gift this year to Hope for Uganda, consider all the avenues open to you, including cash, appreciated stock, and self-directed gifts from your IRA. Then ask yourself, **"Is there anything important to me that I can do without so that something more important can happen in Northern Uganda?"** Make your decision a *venture of faith*. You'll be glad you did.



HFU supporter, Rich Hetland, sends infrared thermometers to the Archdiocese of Gulu to help parishes and schools fulfill government COVID-19 requirements

# All I Ever Wanted Was a Farm

a donor profile

“All I ever wanted was a farm!” These words readily roll off Ed Baumgartner’s lips to this day. He’s still a farmer at heart, but God had something else in mind. Ed and his wife, Debbie, grew up in farm country and have spent their lives together exploring the power of the soil, not only how it feeds the body, but also how it feeds the soul. In 2004, after twenty plus years in corporate America, Ed and Debbie left the creature comforts of the Midwest and departed for Puerto Rico. **Their mission: Create hybrid seeds that could thrive in spite of drought and resist the devastation of pests.** The weather and soil were perfect for that kind of research and development. Life was good. Ed will tell you that he hasn’t worked a day since he left corporate America – that what they were embarking on was fun, satisfying, and part of the dream.



Ed & Deb in their R&D hybrid fields in Puerto Rico

But it wasn’t the whole dream. They had long wanted to find a way to use their collective knowledge to bring relief to people around the world. Africa, at that time, was a focus for many people of means who were trying to solve the food and water shortage that plagued that vast continent. The Baumgartners watched and waited while efforts provided short-term relief or were



Fr. Paul witnesses modern American farming in Olivia

destined to fail because the goals were misguided. **Too often, the well-intentioned philanthropist was eager to invest in change without understanding the consequences of ignoring culture and sustainability.** Ed and Debbie knew they couldn’t make a difference solely on their own, so they began to accept that helping their friends and neighbors in Puerto Rico was their destiny. They had grown to love the people, could witness first-hand the impact they were having on the surrounding communities, and business was thriving, both at home and in Minnesota.

Enter Hope for Uganda. During his visit to the United States with Msgr. Matthew in 2017, Fr. Paul Peter Rom was on a mission to tell the world about the Rural Development Education Center/aka “The Farm”. The concept was new to the organization, wisely conceived for reducing the cost of educating the students by cutting one of the biggest budget expenses – feeding the kids. An important but secondary goal at that time was to educate students and local farmers through improved methods of growing crops. Todd Ziesmer arranged for Fr. Paul to meet with farmers in Minnesota to give him a grasp of how things are done on a much larger, more efficient scale.

The Baumgartners, long-time friends of Todd’s, were added to the list because of their unique expertise with growing crops in challenging soils and climate conditions. It was a match made in heaven! **Fr. Paul quickly convinced Ed and Debbie that he wasn’t just looking for a handout, that he understands**

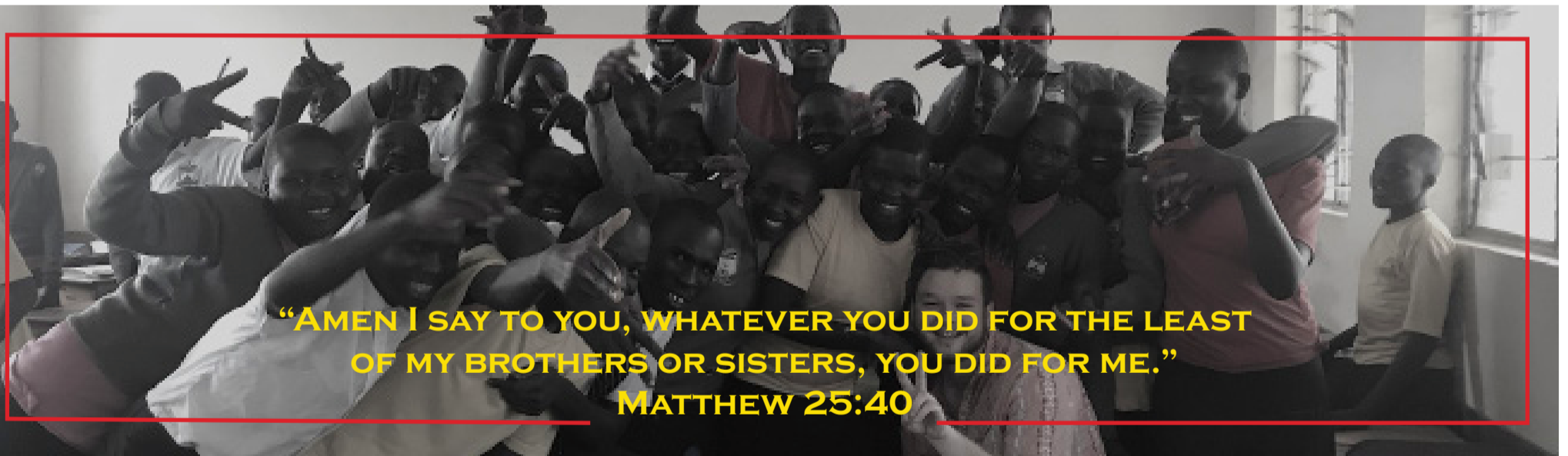
**how any change has to evolve with education and critical engagement by those you are seeking to help.** Regaling them with tales of creative practices, Fr. Paul singlehandedly closed the deal on bringing the Baumgartners into the Hope for Uganda family – a win/win for everyone.

Today Ed and Debbie stand ready to share their wisdom and knowledge in support of the Farm, and are **especially eager to assist with the development of future efforts to expand the concept of demonstration farming.** They are in the process of donating a thresher that will soon be shipped to the Farm to assist with the harvesting of beans. This miracle machine will increase the speed of harvesting by ten times what it takes to manually accomplish the same process, as well as significantly reducing crop loss (see picture below). Ed is itching to introduce hybrid seeds, and ultimately add new products to the mix, while Debbie’s interest in nutrition is being tapped to help improve the nutritional balance in students’ diets. An example of this vision is to use corn as a staple for animals instead of people, providing more and better protein for the students. They are both eager to visit Uganda, their plans limited only by COVID-19.



Thresher being sent to Uganda to improve efficiency and reduce crop loss during harvest

The Baumgartners are contributing to an organization filled with people like themselves, who inspire and are inspired by this mission of hope. Theirs is a story of thoughtful patience with the Lord. The road was not always easy, but it was always faith-filled and strengthened by family support for their dreams. In a very real sense, and to the advantage of Hope for Uganda, Ed finally has his farm!



**“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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**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.