

Twinning Team Returns from Uganda, Prepares for Open Presentation to Parish

Returning from a journey they all acknowledged had changed their lives, five members of the St. Francis Borgia Twinning Committee are preparing to present their findings and impressions to the committee and the Cedarburg Catholic faith community.

The five — Jodimae Glugla, Karen and Tom Guszowski, John Schauble, and Marge Sebern — visited our twinning community of St. Paul Mukono in Uganda from July 3-10. Their primary purpose was to meet with and learn from the people of St. Paul so that our Cedarburg parish might determine how to build a rewarding, mutually productive relationship with our twin community.

Bordering Lake Victoria to the south, in a country brimming with breathtaking beauty and heartbreaking struggle, St. Paul serves 26,000 Catholics, including 17,000 children, within a 135-square-mile range. Because of those numbers, distances, and the lack of transportation, parishes like St. Paul typically serve several ‘subparishes.’ The local residents of the subparishes rely heavily on catechists to lead them in worship and help shape and organize their faith lives.

The central parish of St. Paul, in the town of Mukono, shares whatever spiritual, economic, and social resources it can with its 10 subparishes. As the visitors were frequently reminded by their hosts, “the harvest is great but the laborers are few.” This, despite the large numbers of vocations and the prevalence of convents and seminaries throughout the region.

Guided by their Mukono hosts, the travelers rode more than 1,000 km. down dusty, rutted roads to visit subparishes, schools and hospitals. Everywhere they went, they were greeted by joyous singing and dancing, enthusiastic gestures of friendship, and generous gifts. The constant outpouring of love and welcome left the visitors emotionally overwhelmed and grappling to understand what they had witnessed.

“The gift that the people of St. Paul give to us in Cedarburg is their great faith,” said Karen. “It’s central to their lives. Their abundant prayers and overflowing churches were a constant reminder of their vibrant Christian faith.”

For Jodimae, one striking scene was the procession at Mass just before the reading of the Gospel. The Scriptures were brought to the altar wrapped in banana leaves, symbolic of the way the traditional regional food of matooke is served. “The image of the Gospel being received as the sweet food of God, to nourish us, was very moving,” she said.

“I will always remember the unique Ugandan hospitality of our hosts and the richness of Christ’s presence among them, amidst their material poverty,” said Marge. A registered nurse, she also noted the lack of essential health care resources in the hospitals and clinics the group visited.

“The images are haunting,” said Tom. “The classrooms with no books, papers, or equipment to speak of; children on the economic fringes who gaze longingly at their former classmates,

hoping one day to be able to rejoin them. We're trying to process all that we've seen, but it's been difficult."

This is a small portion of the information the travelers hope to share. Parishioners will be invited to attend a full presentation soon. Announcements will be made once plans are completed.

-Written by John Schauble for the *Messenger* parish newsletter, Late Summer 2001.