

## **Ugandan Bishop Visits SFB, Advocates Stronger Twinning Ties**

During a visit to Milwaukee four years ago, he proposed an idea that would one day unite Catholics from our archdiocese with those in his homeland of East Africa. On September 23-24, Bishop Matthias Ssekamanya of Uganda's Lugazi diocese returned to Wisconsin to examine the fruit that original idea has borne. He also came to encourage the growth and nurturing of the parish-to-parish twinning relationship he had a hand in creating.

SFB's Twinning Committee, along with those of All Saints and St. Eugene's parishes, owe their start to Bishop Matthias' proposal, which he took to the archdiocesan World Mission Office in 1998. SFB was the first parish to establish twinning ties with a Lugazi parish, St. Paul the Apostle in the town of Mukono. Since then, all three parishes have sent delegations to Uganda to visit their respective 'twin' parishes.

The bishop's brief stay in Cedarburg was very busy. Within 24 hours, he met with SFB's Twinning Committee, celebrated Mass at SFB school and visited the teachers and several classrooms, had lunch with members of the SFB parish staff, toured the parish facilities, met with religious education leaders and with Fr. George and Deacon Paul, and joined the parish council for an evening meeting.

His message to each group was the same: The purpose of twinning is to witness to the growth and development of the universal Catholic Church. We need to look beyond our social and economic differences, he said, to recognize our common Christian responsibility toward one another.

To the students, the bishop spoke about the lives of their young Ugandan counterparts-lives that are quite different in terms of material possessions and life opportunities, but identical in other respects. "God wants us all to be happy as brothers and sisters," he told them during his homily. "Let us thank God for the good things we share, like trees, plants, and animals. And let us love one another as God loves us."

Earlier, he called on the Twinning Committee to develop a long-range plan to guide SFB's twinning efforts. He also emphasized the importance of mutual enrichment within the twinning relationship, of sharing in each other's life experiences through travel and other means. Visa problems stalled a planned visit to Cedarburg by members of St. Paul parish in September. Although the committee is working to address those problems, the bishop urged the group not to become discouraged by such setbacks. Instead, he told them, carry on in faith and hope.

The parish council heard Bishop Matthias describe his work in a country whose annual per-capita income is about \$330 and whose daily adversity makes any kind of social or organizational progress difficult. In Uganda, he added, many parish priests are young and inexperienced. The lack of resources and the abundance of parishioners and their needs pull the priests in different, and sometimes conflicting, directions.

Throughout his stay, the bishop repeatedly invited his parish hosts to send a second group of SFB visitors to Uganda some day. "The more people travel back and forth, the stronger our twinning bonds will become," he said. He also advocated other forms of exchange, such as the regular sharing of parish news and the development of more people-to-people contacts.

-Written by John Schauble for the *Messenger* parish newsletter, Fall 2002.