



# OUT OF AFRICA

## UGANDA PILGRIMAGE: SOCIAL CONCERNS

*By Christine Siudak,  
Human Concerns Committee*

As a child of God and a Catholic, I am very interested in the well-being of our Lord's children all over the world. I feel honored and blessed to have been welcomed into one of the most loving communities on this earth - St. Paul Parish in Mukono, Uganda.

Our pilgrimage was truly blessed. From our departure to our return, we were guided and protected by the Holy Spirit. The twinning relationship that began about six years ago, through the help of the archdiocese, brought us to be greeted by so many thankful souls.

But life there is hard for so many people. Imagine living each day not knowing if you will have enough food to feed yourself or your children. Imagine if you or your children get sick, will you be able to see a doctor or get medicine? Will you ever be able to see a dentist? How many orphans will you need to care for when you are already struggling to survive? How do you manage to work all day and have so little to show for it?

Poverty is a problem all over the world. How does one persevere through such darkness? It is the love and hope that we witnessed in our brothers and sisters in Uganda that has so deeply touched my unworthy soul.

Of course, life can be hard anywhere. Through it, we are all walking a spiritual journey that only we and God know. The thoughts and dreams that keep us going are present in all of God's



*Christine Siudak holds a somber orphan girl, after giving her a doll and a T-shirt. Photo by Susan Fehl*

children. So, how do God's sons and daughters in Uganda survive?

This is a country with corruption in government, with no sign of change. A country with war, rape, and brutal killings of innocent people occurring in some areas. A country with the threat of starvation. A country where the life expectancy is 45 years, due to diseases like A.I.D.S., malaria, yellow fever, typhoid and worms.

As far as I can tell the people of Uganda have a connection with God that is far stronger than most of us will ever have the grace to possess. There is a sadness in the eyes of even the youngest orphans that without God's presence they could never withstand. There is a hope in their hearts because they believe that the Lord will provide. They understand that those whom God has taken are in a place called heaven and that someday they will be together again. They under-



*Ugandan children, who had been playing near St. Paul's church in Mukono, hold Tootsie Rolls or pencils given by the pilgrims. Photo by Anne White*

stand pain and suffering on levels that I don't think I could endure.

Education has brought hope, creating a growing middle class, with some financial security. There are government workers and professionals such as doctors, nurses, teachers, businessmen and women, lawyers, accountants, agriculturalists, etc. This has enabled them to provide many services for their own poor. It has made it possible to outreach with more than just the priests; it allows the lay workers to share their skills for the good of the community. From agricultural training to sewing lessons, the people of St. Paul's parish are working together. Those in the middle class that we met are still very humble and take time to help the overwhelming number of people in need of one kind or another.

All nine pilgrims will never be the same. We have all been touched by the smiles, hugs, and prayers of our brothers and sisters in Mukono.

*Advent/Christmas 2006*



We hope to share with you the sincere love they have for our St. Francis Borgia parishioners and all who pray for them. We hope to enlighten our parish to an understanding that somewhere in this beautiful partnership, we need them just as much as they need us. The Holy Spirit has put us together and continues to help us develop and strengthen this relationship.

***Simple Ugandan house with open doorways and cooking done outside. Photo by Martha Slobig***



***Christine Siudak sits with children at the home of a Women's Guild member. One boy's face is bandaged from a burn accident. Photo by Nathan Siudak***

The world is full of injustice. We see it locally, across America, and around the world. We pray for our brothers and sisters here in America as we pray for our brothers and sisters in Africa and those all over the world. May all of the people who walk upon this earth trust in God's plan for tomorrow.

*"Out of Africa" articles have been written by each of the eight pilgrims who accompanied Fr. Tom Eichenberger on a journey to our sister parish in Mukono, Uganda. The other articles were printed in the parish bulletin and are now available for viewing on the parish website, along with photos and Fr. Tom's reflections from his pastor's column. On the [www.saintfrancisborgia.org](http://www.saintfrancisborgia.org) home page, check the News Headlines for a link to Uganda information.*