



Deacon Fred Mulumba (Photo by Anne White)

Deacon Fred Mulumba Dies

His Mother Visited SFB

“Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.” (John 12:26)

by Linda Fehl

It was a shock in early November to hear that Deacon Fred Mulumba, only 27 years old, had died in a car accident. But it was not a shock that this happened when he was giving service to the church.

For those of us who journeyed to Uganda last August, he was a regular companion, joining us for most of our activities. We got to know him as a gentle, cheerful and spiritual person – “a fine young man” as Anne White described him. Deacon Fred was special because he was so close to ordination (less than a year away when we visited), and also because he was the son of Mary Mulumba, who visited our parish in 2003. So there was a closeness felt, even though we had not met before.

It sounds strange, but many of our memories of Deacon Fred are associated with a “bumpy bus.” Some of the memories are of conversations, friendly banter and riddles. Others are spiritual. Tom Guszowski recalls that Deacon Fred was the one who reminded us, before getting on the bus, that we needed to pray for a safe journey. Sometimes, with many lively conversations going on in the bus, someone would try to get our attention, and we would eventually realize that we were supposed to be quiet. Not for an announcement, but for a prayer – led by Deacon Fred.

Perhaps Anne got to know Deacon Fred the best. During a short walk with him near our hotel, she knew that he was well-loved, simply by observing those who approached him on the streets. She told him about the Tablesetters social justice group that she leads at our school. In an e-mail, he later told her that the Tablesetters’ motto (“That all may have a place at the table”) “has touched many.” He was talking up the idea with students and planned to follow up with staff members. He continued, “Please thank you for coming

and . . . though we are a distance apart this will keep us in touch till one day when we shall again get to see each other.”

Christine Siudak learned that she and Deacon Fred shared the experience of converting to the Catholic faith. He also told her that one of the best days of his life was when he was ordained a deacon and received his father’s blessing.

Nathan Siudak, age 13, related to Deacon Fred in a different way, often kidding around with him, prompting Deacon Fred to say that Nathan was like a little brother. After the trip they kept up their brotherly conversations through e-mail.

On November 5, as part of his normal weekend duties, Deacon Fred was traveling to a parish school where he was to lead a service. In heavy rain, driving a car loaned to him by one of the priests, he lost control and was fatally injured when his car left the road.

The people of St. Paul Mukono continue to appreciate our prayers. Denis Lule, president of their parish council says “Thanks for all the prayers you offer for him and his family. They and the entire parish of St. Paul still need a lot of consolation . . . It’s only God who knows the reason of taking him before (he was ordained a priest).”

Deacon Fred inspired the SFB pilgrims who knew him for only a week. We know that he has inspired countless others, and that he continues to do that today, from heaven. As Fr. Tom Eichenberger said in his homily at the memorial Mass held here, Deacon Fred is “a saintly figure for people who knew him.” And Fr. Tom reminded us of Jesus’ words that “unless a grain of wheat falls to earth and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat. But if it dies, it produces much fruit.” (John 12:24)