



Thank you for your continued support and prayers for St. Patrick's parishioners.

Brett Billman Witness

Sometimes we meet people who can teach us so much, and help us realize how much we have to be thankful for.

Father Simon Peter Wankya is a visiting priest in our parish who has been serving us for the past three or four years. He is from Uganda. (He'll return next June.) (How he came to live in the United States is an interesting story, too long for this already long post.) Recently, I offered to take him to lunch to get to know him. So glad I did. He had much to share.



After lunch, I did a little research. Uganda is a landlocked country in east-central Africa. The equator runs 47 miles south of Kampala, the capital. Uganda is 91,136 square miles (about the size of Oregon) with a population of 47,750,000. By comparison, Ohio is 44,825 square miles with a population of 11,750,000.

Uganda is a beautiful country. "For magnificence, for variety of form and color, for profusion of brilliant life — bird, insect, reptile, beast — for vast scale — Uganda is truly the Pearl of Africa." -Winston Churchill

70% of Uganda is covered by forests, woodlands, and grasslands. More than 10% of the country is protected in national parks, national forests, and game reserves. Uganda has 12 wildlife reserves and 10 national parks. Natives don't visit them. They live on \$1 a day; the entrance fee is generally \$20 to \$30.

Uganda has Lake Victoria, the world's second-largest freshwater lake at 26,000 square miles (Lake Superior in the USA is the largest at 31,700 square miles) and also the world's largest tropical lake. To learn more, one helpful website is <https://storyteller.travel/facts-about-uganda/>.

Uganda is the world's most ethnically diverse country. Most people belong to three main ethnic groups: Bantu, Nilotic, and Nilo-Hamitic. There are also many other ethnic groups. The population is predominantly rural.

The official language is English. Many people also speak the Luganda, Swahili, Bantu, and Nilotic languages. Father Simon Peter told me that over 40 languages are spoken in Uganda; none of them are even similar to each other. He speaks English very fluently, along with four or five other languages of his native Uganda - which means he's smarter than I am!

The country has significant natural resources, fertile land, and regular rainfall. Most of the industry is related to agriculture. Coffee accounts for 65% of its exports.

Kampala, the capital, looks much like any American city. Paved roads, hotels, retail stores, restaurants, etc. Residents live in luxury — politicians and government bureaucrats take care of themselves at the expense of the vast majority of citizens who live outside the capital. This reminds me of Washington, D.C. in the United States.

Life is not as luxurious outside of Kampala. Father Simon Peter is amazed that in our country all the roads are paved, and we even have driveways that lead right up to our garages! Unpaved roads in Uganda get muddy and are difficult to navigate when it rains.

To go anywhere, most people walk. Some have bicycles. Motorcycles are becoming common means of transportation as taxis. (Google Boda Boda bikes.)

His family (mom, dad, 12 children) lived in a hut with a dirt floor. Huts are made of a mixture of mud and thatch. A sheet hung from the ceiling to separate the parents from the children. (Maybe that's how they ended up with 12 children. ;-) Growing up, he had no idea what electricity was. They all slept on the ground. Some people stuffed grass into a cloth bag to make a sort of mattress. Oil lamps provided some lighting. No running water or toilets. Getting water often required a walk of several miles. (Try carrying a five-gallon bucket of water for 100 feet to get an idea of how that must feel.) This is how things are to this day.

Average life expectancy in Uganda is low, but trending higher. Figures vary by source. Life expectancy at birth increased from 49.43 years in 1971 to 63.71 years in 2020. In 2017, females had a life expectancy of 69.2 versus 62.3 for males (which means if I lived in Uganda I probably would have been buried four years ago).

According to Father Simon Peter, your garden is your grocery store. If you don't grow your food, you don't eat. Thankfully, the soil is fertile and rainfall is typically sufficient. But life gets really tough when droughts occur. People use hoes to cultivate their gardens - very physically taxing labor. To help them,

several years ago St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish had an Ox Plow Project. For \$250 people could purchase a team of two oxen and a metal plow. Knowing what I know now, I'm glad I paid for a team and plow. This is life-changing for the recipients. We've also donated money to build a school with a dormitory where students could stay during the week, rather than having to walk long distances each day. I could go on and on. It was fascinating to listen to Father Simon Peter tell me about life in Uganda. This is a long post. I hope it was worth your time to read it. If nothing else, this is another reason to be thankful for all that we've been given in life. I hope it inspires you, as it has me, to help others less fortunate than ourselves.



Maximillian Apedu, Catechist, Witness

I am more than happy to share with you brothers & sisters my story as a long serving catechist of St. Patrick's catholic parish –Madera. I begun as a non-trained catechist in 1970 when two catechists serving in the two Christian communities of Opucet outpost (current Holy Family Parish- Gweri) were sent to the pastoral catechetical training center-Bukedea.

However, before the two catechists were sent for training, I was serving as a vice chairperson of our outpost and that was from 1969-1970. Being a vice chairperson helped to gather courage to stand before Christians and this prompted Christians to front me lead Sunday services for them.

I recall of a day when Fr. Augustine Eeden made a pastoral visit to our church, he asked Christians of someone who was appropriate to lead Sunday services for them of which all Christians shouted my name aloud. Fr. Augustine wondered if I could really lead a service, for he doubted me a lot. I went to church the next Sunday after to officially say the first service which I properly led right from inception to conclusion.

As time went by, my two brother catechists finished their training and I was told that I had been chosen for the next training organized for catechists who at least knew how to speak and write English. I had no objection other than going to Kidetok catechetical pastoral center for two years training from the year 1978-1979.

My positive experience in serving as a catechist is that;

- I am known by many Christians/people given my pastoral mobility for all the past years.
- Serving as a catechists has of recent exposed me to external relationships of which I am proud to have a foreign pen pal.
- Furthermore, this service has enriched me with vast leadership skills having dealt with many prayer groups, families and other related Christian associations.

However, I won't forget to share with you some challenges I have faced in life while executing this ministry for all the past years.

- I escaped numerous deaths especially at a time our country had severe security instability. I remember undergoing several arrests & torture by rebels. I would in several occasions be intercepted on the way while going to pray with Christians or catechize catechumens, but God in grace would preserve me from any harm.

- I have right from the inception of my calling as a catechist relied on either foot or bicycle to fulfill my pastoral engagements. Yes, it's something I have done with zeal for all the past years. However, I am now drained and have resorted to hiring lifts given my deteriorating ability as per age.

Irrespective of the above challenges, I still thank the Lord for having chosen me to be a catechist. I am confident that the few other young catechists I have nurtured will enjoy this humble ministry as we strive to direct God's flock to where there is pasture.

With love,
Maximillian Apedu.

Prayer Requests

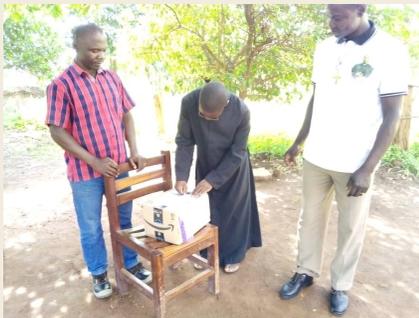
Relief from Sickness, Hunger & Survival
Struggles continue for our brothers and sisters in Soroti, Uganda, and even their very survival is difficult. Pray for the means to become available since both the spring and fall harvests have not provided the food or the funds (from selling the harvest) to live and survive throughout the drought. May our prayers bring them survival,

hope, and love.

Father Henry, David Okwii, and Stephen Kisembo St. Patrick's Twinning leaders need to obtain visas for their approved official visit to St. Max May 2-15, 2022. Obtaining a visa can be very cumbersome and nearly impossible in some instances. May our prayers allow them to obtain the necessary visas for their trip.

Fr. Simon Peter's brothers, Fr. Francis and Joseph
May they also find the means to obtain the necessary documents to visit St. Max in June and the ability to join Fr. Simon Peter on his return home in late June.

Holy Angels School
After being closed for two years, the children have returned to school. Many families are unable to pay the annual \$300 tuition due to the drought which brought no harvest and no funds from the normally bountiful harvest.



Pen Pal Update

St. Max received pen pal letters from the St. Patrick Catechist families at the end of January. Our return letters are due March 6. If you are interested in becoming a pen pal, contact Connie.Spotts@fuse.net.



Water Well - Parish Lenten Project

Fr. Jim and the Outreach Commission approved the water well project for the Soroti Diocese as the parish's annual Lenten project. Lent begins Wednesday, March 2. Our goal is to dig 34 deepwater wells.

Watch for more details regarding how you can become involved and help to provide and attain safe drinking water. St. Patrick's Church has more than 80 outstations/chapels led by two catechists each. Fifty of them have long distances to travel daily, sometimes twice a day, on foot, bicycle, or motor cycle to obtain water. It was determined by plotting St. Patrick's Parish borders on a map that 34 wells were either urgently needed or would improve the travel distance.

We know that many poor countries like Uganda, especially in rural areas like Soroti, have waterborne diarrheal diseases such as rotavirus, E. coli, and cholera which better water quality will help to alleviate. In 2016, diarrhea was the eighth leading cause of death in the world, killing 1.6 million people of all ages, including 446,000 children, making it the third-leading cause of death in the under 5 age group. More than 80% of these deaths are attributable to unsafe drinking water. Better water quality can reduce rates of other illnesses too; reducing rates of diarrheal illnesses seems to reduce rates of respiratory illness.

Deep wells in the water table and new technology such as chlorination and dispensers are making a huge difference and changing mortality rates.



Fish Fry

Our ministry will be providing and selling desserts at the fish fry on Friday, March 18th. We will need baking help...all proceeds go to the Twinning Ministry where 100% of the donations go to St. Patrick's.

Fr. Simon Peter Farewell

Fr. Simon Peter will complete his five-year R-1 Religious Visa in the United States the weekend of June 18/19 as he celebrates every Mass that weekend. We want to wish him well and thank him at a celebration in his honor following the Saturday, June 18, 4:30 PM Mass. Save the date now to be sure not to miss this great event!



St. Patrick's Day

Join us Thursday, March 17 at the 8:30 AM Mass to honor our brothers and sisters at St. Patrick's, as well as the Ugandan martyrs.

Good News

St. Patrick's Church, while still incomplete, continues to find ways to make progress. A goal Fr. Henry Agit requested from us some time ago was to help with the installation of wiring, electric, and lighting. The church was operating without lighting and only using minimal electricity from extension cords. We were able to help them achieve this goal! Fr. Henry asked us to thank St. Max for willingly sacrificing on their behalf in many ways...



Twinning Ministry Leadership

(including representatives from Finance Council, Staff & Parochial Vicar)

- Mission Ministry – Fr. Simon Peter, Fr. Henry Agit & Deacon John Back
- Mission Trip Ministry – Kyle Schafer, Deacon John Back & Lakmé Kodros
- Family Connections/Pen Pal Ministry – Connie Spotts, Carol Klinker & Maureen Normoyle
- Prayer Ministry – Deacon John Back
- Events Planning Ministry Paul Groh & Mike Gardner
- Communication Ministry – Dan & Mary Jo Suer
- Appreciation Ministry – Lana Elliott
- Education Ministry – Bruce Murphy, Jen Klenke & Nancy Prince
- Connecting Catechist Families – All
- Charity/Resources Ministry – Kyle Schafer
- Physical Needs Ministry – Mike Gardner

Thank You!

We close this month with a huge Thank You for being partners in our ministry! We thank God for moving this ministry to support the physically and financially poor, yet joyfully spiritual people, on the other side of the world in Soroti, Uganda, specifically in the remote area of St. Patrick's Church, Madera. May God continue to bless each of you abundantly!

Warm Regards,
Dan Suer
Twinning Ministry Chair
Twinning@saint-max.org