

Dear Sisters, Associates, Consociates, Ohana and Members of the Familia de San José:

Greetings, gratitude and love from JoAnn, Marion and Pat, our sisters in Gulu !

We spent a wonderful two and a half weeks with our sisters in their new home which is located on the grounds of the catechetical center, not far from St. Joseph's Cathedral and St. Joseph's Primary School. When Archbishop Odama blessed the house, he proclaimed that "this house shall be called St. Joseph House" in honor of the patron saint of the Archdiocese of Gulu and the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

During our time in Gulu, we visited Jo and observed her many patients waiting patiently for her attention and care. We met Sr. Hellen, the Administrator of St. Mauritz Clinic, as well as Jo's other co-workers. We then toured St. Mauritz Primary School with Sr. Rosetta, Headmistress, and Doli, her assistant principal. All of the students attending school wear uniforms and students are identified with their school by the uniforms they wear. This particular school is located on the same property as the clinic and serves more than 1,000 students. Each classroom has close to 150 students in it and most of the teachers don't have access to books for their eager students. St. Mauritz is in a rapidly growing area on the edge of Gulu town. Several days later, we enjoyed a relaxed dinner with these Sisters of Mary Immaculate of Gulu in their lovely house near the clinic. These four sisters, native to the area, have welcomed our sisters so beautifully. Each day Jo has the privilege of going to their home for lunch.

We also visited St. Joseph's Primary School where Pat has taught students in math. We were given a grand tour of the school by Pat's friend and colleague, Bosco. This school also has over 1,000 students enrolled, with huge numbers in each classroom. In order to attend school, all students must pay tuition for each term. The amount per student is equivalent to about \$15.00. Many families are not able to afford that much money so the financial aid that our sisters are able to provide is making a significant difference in the lives of these youngsters.

Pat has also been working at Christ the King Primary Teachers College. There she has taught primary teachers how to teach mathematics. Teachers at the College, students, and Pat are slowly getting organized and settled into their classes in the fourth week of the new term! While we were at the College, we met Sr. Martha, one of the administrators there along with some of Pat's teacher-friends and colleagues. While we were in Sr. Martha's office, several students saw Pat and came in to see her and thank her for her help. One of the students was a student who got an exceptionally high score on the (national) math exam thanks to Pat's teaching and coaching. We recently learned that Pat will be teaching four classes (each, two days a week) at the Primary Teachers College as helping with small group computer classes in the afternoons.

When we spent some time with Marion, we were able to observe the second meeting of the Steering Committee as they prepared for the Arch-diocesan Synod which will be held in the spring of 2011. The Synod will culminate in a celebration of the 100th anniversary of Christianity coming to Gulu. We assured Archbishop Odama that our

sisters and ACOF would remember this Synod very specially in our prayers. Marion serves as the executive secretary for the Synod in addition to her work with the pastoral office and team. Together they work on ongoing formation of catechists throughout the archdiocese.

It was a blessing to experience life in their new home, sharing the state of our hearts in daily prayer. We sang and prayed in Acholi at 7:00am daily Mass at the Cathedral; we sewed pillows for the new chairs and couch; we also shared very simple, tasty meals (peanut butter sandwiches and chocolates for dessert were daily staples and treats). Mangos, fresh from trees in the yards, and all the fresh local pineapple and bananas were plentiful! Even the cold showers were refreshing in the tropical heat! We just heard that the hot water began working shortly after our visit.

Two major highlights of the trip were the blessing of St. Joseph House with Archbishop Odama and our overnight trip to Murchison Falls State Park. For the house blessing, friends from local religious communities, colleagues from ministry sites, the catechetical center staff, and Cathedral parish members joined us for the celebration. Following the blessing, we hosted a fabulous reception in the social hall of the catechist center. (see photo) (Patty and Susan got to bake the cake for the reception on a wood stove- with lots of help from Juliette, the baker at the Comboni Missionary Sisters Animation Center.

Our overnight visit to Murchison Falls State Park was a trip of a lifetime! The sheer power and beauty of the falls was magnificent and seeing antelope, giraffes with their ears twitching right back at us, elephants, baboons, monkeys, hippos, crocodiles, alligators and eagles in their own habitat was unforgettable. All of this was seen on a trip down the Nile in a simple motor boat, the African Queen.

Throughout our stay, we enjoyed many opportunities to experience how warmly our sisters have been received by the people of Gulu. They are learning and speaking, singing and praying in the Acholi language of the people. We experienced how the loving, mutual welcome of the people and our sisters is transforming each and every one.

At the same time, we experienced, first hand, the challenges of educating without textbooks, having minimal school supplies, of providing health education and services with the most basic medical equipment and medicines. Truly we are called to share all we are and have and more. We experienced the difference our sisters are making as they come to know the people of Gulu more deeply and they find themselves at home among them. Our sisters would be the first to say that they have received ever so much more than they have been able to give. Pat, Marion, and Jo have become a part of the people as they join them in their process of rebuilding life in their town and villages and church.

Archbishop Odama has a dream. He is hoping to support a university program to prepare professional counselors to assist catechists and villagers in identifying and treating trauma in oneself and in others. His dream is about to be realized as faculty members from Walsh University in Ohio are getting ready to begin just such a program. Father

Gino will be looking for more faculty and staff for this program and for related programs in the coming year. Are there any other CSJs who can hear this call and respond? Marion, Jo, and Pat hope so and would love to welcome you to “the pearl of Africa” to the “heartbeat of Africa.” (Contact [sehames@csjcarondelet.org](mailto:sehames@csjcarondelet.org) for more information.)

Photos of this trip are on the congregational and St. Louis websites.

Thank you for your support in spirit as we travelled. We felt you with us and Pat, Marion and Jo, our sisters, feel us with them daily.

Patty Clune and Susan Hames  
Congregational Leadership Group