



Share The Blessings, Inc.

Lent 2010

“Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: to break unjust fetters, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break all yokes?” (Is. 58: 5-6)

Welcome to the Lenten Season! During this special time of intense *Prayer, Fasting* and *Almsgiving*, Share The Blessings would like to invite you to journey with us.

While Lent is a time of preparation for the celebration of the Lord’s resurrection, such a celebration, indeed such a resurrection, even for the Lord, doesn’t come to pass before the Way of the Cross. Only through His own total self-giving, up to death on a cross, does the joy of the resurrection become possible. In preparation for such a celebration, therefore, we, each, go through our own “ways of the cross” during Lent.

Consequently, although Lent is a time of

intense prayer, introspection, self-evaluation, fasting and repentance, most of all, it is a time of total self-giving; total and voluntary self-sacrificing for the good of others. It is a season of dying to ourselves so that others may have life, and have it to the full. That is why Lent is not only and simply a withdrawal from business-as-usual but a journeying back into the inner recesses of our very Christian identity as well. In turning inward to discover who and what we are, we at the same time are attempting to understand the meaning of our Christian positioning in the world and the difference such posture might concretely make in the world around us.

When we do that, we discover that ultimately Lent is a call for bold action: indeed a unique form of “Christian radicality” capable of counteracting the unjust fetters and undoing the thongs of the yoke—setting

people around us free. It was this boldness that, in 2002, Share The Blessings decided to engage after discovering the fetters of illiteracy and the yoke of preventable diseases in Uganda.

This very same radicality, our own form of “total self-giving” is, in fact, what has kept Share The Blessings’ programs of Clean Water and Education not only going but indeed developing and growing. It is this same self –sacrificing that will continue to see them thriving. These two programs are Share The Blessings’ bold attempt at breaking the unjust fetters and undoing the thongs of the yoke, - setting people free! In a word, these two are our humble attempt at doing the sort of fast that pleases the Lord.

We kindly ask you to journey with us.

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COME AND SEE!

Arriving in Entebbe, Uganda, for the 8th time was as exciting as the first. We answered a call to go to Uganda in 2002, and have been every year since. We arrived on Dec. 29, 2009 and spent most of our time at Bethany House in Entebbe. Bethany House, a dream of Fr. Emmanuel Katongole, - himself an STB Board member - is two-in-one: it is part guest house for travelers and part conference and retreat center for Christian leaders and parishioners.

We spent several days visiting friends. First, we visited Fr. Joseph Kakooza, the elder brother of Fr. Emmanuel Katongole as well as co-ordinator of STB's Education program in Uganda. He welcomed us to his new Parish. Transferring from Katikamu Parish where he has served a number of years as Pastor, Fr. Joe has been recently assigned as Pastor to the Cathedral Parish in Kasana -Luwero Diocese.

We toured the church campus and saw first-hand the challenges he is up against. His rectory has no roof and he needs a generator. The power in his area is very unstable and at night they have no electricity. This makes doing anything after dark very difficult. We delivered 5 computers to him for use at St. Cyprian Chavanod College. They were very grateful as they had no computers in the school for student use. In fact, in addition to helping with students school fees, STB has been donating computers to schools as well. Through STB, John Fitzgerald has always been kind to refurbish the donated

computers before shipping them to Uganda. Over the years, at least not less than four different schools have received these computers.

Second, we visited with Fr. Charles Lugenda and Fr. Achilles Muwanga. Fr. Lugenda, who was assigned to St. Michael's parish in 2007-2008, is now pastor of Kiganda Parish, a church with many missions. It is in his home-diocese of



Donna, John and Fr. Joe at Kasana- Luwero Cathedral Parish—2010.

Mityana. Fr. Muwanga, also a priest of Mityana diocese, who spent some time at St. Michael's, was among those that greeted us. It is always a pleasure to be received and welcomed by these friends. It is also interesting to see them navigating life in their own environment while doing what they love.

After Mityana, we traveled to Bbiina to visit

Fr. Sebastian Bukenya., and later to Kisubi to visit Fr. Stephen Kiggundu. Both were seminarians when we first met them in 2002. Sebastian is now both curate at Bbiina Parish as well as diocesan Assistant Commissioner for Justice and Peace. Stephen is teaching in the Minor Seminary at Kisubi.

As pilgrims to Uganda, every trip brings something new. Through our experiential trips, we have been able to see first hand the difference STB, with the help of its donors, has made in the lives of many people in Uganda. And while these trips are part of our continuing attempt to journey with our friends in need, they at the same time offer us an opportunity to better understand - and thus respond in a more informed way - the critical challenges that our brothers and sisters are going through.

It has been our pleasure to visit all of the well sites, watching while clean water flows into the jerry cans for use as safe drinking water. We have visited the school children who are so appreciative to be able to attend class as a result of funding from STB.

To date STB has sponsored several experiential trips to Uganda. It is exciting to watch the pilgrims return with a passion to help based on their experiences! The cost runs about \$3500 for 10 days. If you are interested in a trip please email us at pilgrims@share-the-blessings.org.

Donna



STB has been blessed with a new chair of the Water Committee: Mr. Agata Bonaventure. Bonaventure, well experienced with water projects, will help STB's Water program thrive.



DARE TO SHARE: SACRED HEART AND STB

The outside of Sacred Heart Catholic Church is fairly unassuming. A small church building, an adjoining meeting hall, and an old rectory – the physical facilities sit in the midst of a poor neighborhood scarred by gang violence, unemployment and institutional neglect.

But here, in this predominantly African-American church in Joliet, Illinois – a town once known only for its prisons and blue-collar industries – an improbable connection has been made between Christians in Africa and America. For here, in addition to being of service to its immediate neighbors, the people of Sacred Heart have discovered the gift of sharing water with others.

After meeting Father Emmanuel Katongole in 2004, parishioner Terri Budde decided to recruit parishes in her area to join in

building clean-water wells in Uganda through Share the Blessings. Several affluent parishes refused her a hearing; only her home church, Sacred Heart, allowed her to make a presentation.

Terri created a photo display mounted on poster board and an accompanying book of photographs; she and her husband Michael invited Fr. Emmanuel to Sacred Heart to celebrate the Mass and talk about the work of Share the Blessings. The visual aids and Fr. Emmanuel's words moved the pastor of Sacred Heart, Father Raymond Lescher, to make a dramatic and unexpected pledge – that his small parish would donate money to construct a clean-water well in Uganda, that year and every year as long as he remained pastor. A bold declaration for such a small church, burdened with countless local demands on

its limited resources – yet it proved to be one that was embraced by the parishioners themselves.

Since then, Sacred Heart Church has donated money to construct five wells in Uganda. Money for a sixth well came directly to Share the Blessings from a member of the parish via another anonymous donation; one family helped pay school fees for Ugandan students for several years, funded in part by summer garage sales. And in the summer of 2010, seven lay members of Sacred Heart Parish will make a pilgrimage to Uganda with Fr. Emmanuel, to deepen the ties already created by the shared waters provided via Share the Blessings.

Thanks Sacred Heart!

To find out how your congregation can share the gift of clean water, please contact info@share-the-blessings.org

SHARE THE BLESSINGS' RETAIL CONNECTIONS

As a supporter of Share The Blessings (STB) we're sure you will be glad to know that the Retail Community that we all need and support through the many purchases we make throughout the year are helping our efforts in/with education and water projects. Particularly two Retail Organizations have been very supportive of STB's work in Uganda. One is Retail Orphan Initiative and the other Boston Retail Partners .

The **Retail Orphan Initiative** is a young non-profit made up of people primarily in the retail technology industry. It is working to raise awareness and provide real solutions to the more than 400 million at risk children worldwide. The focus of their charitable foundation is to provide grants to charities, like STB, who have ground level

endeavors that support their mission including orphan care and life-skills training for vulnerable children.

Share The Blessings is very thankful to RetailROI for being amongst the first to receive a \$1000 grant from them. We've put it to great use in our Uganda Education program. To learn more about this wonderful Organization, and about their first major and successful fundraiser held in New York City during the National Retail Federation conference, visit www.RetailROI.org. There you will also see and read a Case Study on STB's education program.

Boston Retail Partners, a firm of seasoned retail consultants, recently completed a systems survey in which

respondents who completed the survey would be eligible to have Boston Retail Partners send a \$500 donation to the charity of their choice. Ed Collupy, STB's Treasurer, was informed that his name was selected. Members of Boston Retail Partners are familiar with the work Share The Blessings has done with providing clean water in Uganda and were pleased to know that their donation would go to one of our next well projects.

STB is most thankful to both groups and for opportunities like these. If you know of organizations that could support our work in a similar way please let us know – write to Ed Collupy (edcollupy@aol.com).

Ed

Volunteer With Us

"Jerry cans on the way to villagers to carry water home at a Gas Station/ Convenience store near Kampala, Uganda. Think of this picture and the need for clean water in Uganda the next time you are filling up your gas tank!"



HOW TO SHARE...

GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT EDUCATION

In recent newsletters we mentioned a change coming in education - that time is now. What an opportune moment since Lent is a time to set habits that will get us through the rest of the year!

Those who attended our annual dinner last fall heard a very compelling speech by Father Joseph Kakooza, our Ugandan in-country Education Coordinator who also coordinates St. Francis Education Program. For a synopsis of the speech or any of the past articles on Education see the article in this newsletter on page 7, and this equivalent article on our website www.share-the-blessings.org in the Education area. Bottom line, we have successfully supported 50 children a year and would like to solidify that support.

We have set two key goals for this year to enhance our Children Education program:

1. To increase our regular support for Faith-Based Education in Uganda.
2. To establish a Correspondence Program.

With regard to increasing our regular support for Faith-Based Education (which we all know of individuals benefiting from or perhaps would wish for our children), we hope you will join us by utilizing basic banking functionality to make automatic tax deductible contributions 3 times a year. Indeed some of you already requested and are doing this. *Particularly Jay, our first Education Chair, who has literally run for education multiple times, has been instrumental in this. He wants many of you to join him in this endeavor.*

We are very grateful that we already have regular support from many of you to help us cover education expenses in Uganda. Fortunately in Uganda education is much cheaper - 60\$ a trimester for a day-student and 150\$ a trimester for a boarding-student. We make 3 payments a year for each of the students we support. For more details please email us at education@share-the-blessings.org if you are interested in setting up automatic payments 3 times a year to cover each trimester. Of course if those of you currently supporting us want to automate your current contributions that can be done

as well, just contact us at the same email address.

Concerning the Correspondence program, we would like to establish what many of us have always known as a pen pal program. We know that this will take a lot of coordination and therefore need arms and legs to help us. Foremost we need a new coordinator - Carol our prior coordinator has gotten serious about her religious education and has entered a 3 year religious education program. If you are interested in the coordinator role or helping with the correspondence program please email at education@share-the-blessings.org!

Thank you and God Bless! *Kevin S.*



PRAYER REQUESTS

1. Let us pray for STB, that they may continue to demonstrate their firm resolve to make a positive difference in the life of those in need.
2. Let us pray for all supporters of STB's activities and programs: that God may reward them abundantly for the enormous sacrifices they make.
3. Let us pray for Uganda, its leadership and its people: that through their tireless efforts, they may all work for the development of their country.
4. Let us also pray for St. Francis Group: that they may grow into good and God-fearing Christians.
5. Let us pray for Fr. Emmanuel Katongole: that God may continue to use him as His instrument to touch the lives of as many people as possible.
6. And for all people of good-will engaged in someway with helping our brothers and sisters in less advantaged societies, we pray.

EDUCATION SPOTLIGHT

Share the Blessings participated in the first annual St. Michaels Holiday Craft Fair. Ugandan paper bead necklaces and Ugandan crafts donated by the students in the St. Francis group were sold throughout the day. The event raised \$340 for STB's education fund.



PARTNER WITH US

☐ *I would like to share the gift of education.*

I'll Help	One Student	One Term	One Year
	Primary Day	\$60	\$180
	Primary Boarder	\$100	\$300
	Secondary Day	\$80	\$240
	Secondary Boarder	\$150	\$450
	Seminarian	\$160	\$480

STB EDUCATION FUNDRAISER—2009

STB Board would like to extend its sincere appreciation to Carol Shay for her well completed term of service as Education Chair. It has been a wonderful service that has seen the Education program grow and expand in number and scope and quality. Thanks Carol, and many Blessings!

Consequently, STB is in the process of looking for a new Education Chair to continue with the beautiful work Carol has done. All Board and non-Board volunteers are eligible for this noble duty.

☐ *I would like to share the gift of clean water.*

☐ *I would like to help with other projects (classrooms, computers, Center for Adult Education in Bolivia)*

Amount —————

Name:

Address:

Email: Phone:

Please make checks payable to Share The Blessings, or donate online using PayPal at www.share-the-blessings.org



NO LONGER BARTIMAEUS: ST. FRANCIS GROUP

It was in 2001, when, as Pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes, Nakasongola Catholic Parish, I started supporting needy children. These are children whose parents died during the civil wars of 1971 to 1985 in central Uganda. And recently, we have also enrolled some children orphaned in the 23-year civil unrest in Northern Uganda. Others still are just orphans whose parents died of Malaria and AIDS. A few do have parents but are too poor to pay for their children's education.

What I was trying to do was to help get these children into school. But this meant not only paying their school fees but also helping with other school requirements since they had no one to help them even with these other scholastic material. Because of limited resources I started with 7 students. The following year, in 2002, the number tripped! In fact it more than tripped, for it grew to 23. I was scared. And it was in that year during one of our meetings that we chose St. Francis as the Patron Saint of these children. Hence the name St. Francis Group.

In that same year, 2002, a group of pilgrims led by Fr. Emmanuel Katongole, my brother, and a teacher at Duke University, NC, U.S.A, visited Nakasongola Parish where I was serving at the time. They were very much moved by what I was trying to do, and in 2003, they started supporting our students. Since that time STB has

STB STUDENTS IN UGANDA (St. Francis Group: Total 57)

- 13 are in Primary School
- 21 are in Secondary School
- 16 are in Tertiary Schools
- 26 are boys (still in sch)
- 24 are girls (still in Sch)
- 17 are orphans who lost their fathers
- 15 are orphans without both parents
- 9 are needy children with both parents
- 9 are orphans who lost their mothers
- 2 are secretaries (have completed sch)
- 2 are tailors (have completed sch)
- 1 is a builder (has completed sch)
- 1 is a teacher (has completed sch)
- 1 is a shop-keeper (has completed sch)

supported 57 students. I can say that before this program began, the majority of its beneficiaries were like Bartimaeus, that blind beggar of Jericho, we read about in the Gospel - Mk.10: 46-52 .

They were blind: seated helplessly at the side of the road to development and happiness, and no one saw them. In fact even when they tried to make themselves noticed by 'crying out for help' no one was yet willing to listen to them. Joy and happiness and hope had withheld away from their hearts. Although the three of these were always there, these people could not experience them. Now, however, because of the love and financial support of the members of Share the Blessings, they have happiness, Joy and hope. What a blessing!

Dear friends, on my behalf and on behalf of all the people of my Diocese especially the beneficiaries of STB's Education Program, I do thank you very sincerely for your love for us and for your continued financial support.

There is no way we can show you our gratitude. But I want you to know that we do appreciate. You have a very special place in our hearts; we shall always remember you in our prayers and we shall never forget you. We love you.

Fr. Joe.

"Providing basic human needs and dignity for all through prayer and acts of love."

Share The Blessings, Inc. is a recognized non-profit organization under section 501 (c) 3 of the International Revenue Code, FEIN 14-1882445.

Share The Blessings, Inc.
500 Francisca Lane
Cary, NC 27511



“LENT”

Live Examples Not Talk

“FAST”

Firm Action Substitutes Talk