UNLESS YOU BECOME LIKE LITTLE CHILDREN YOU SHALL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD!
By Fr. Ron Sajdak

Excitement filled the air as the children of Our Lady of Black Rock School performed their spring concerts at the Church of the Assumption in Black Rock. The school is one of the few internationally populated Catholic schools. When it came to deciding where the profit from their concert would go they decided on ROTA: Reaching Out 2 Africa. Because the funds were raised by these school children, ROTA identified a young gentleman from South Sudan, Angelo Gum, who’s goal was providing educational supplies for children in his Village within South Sudan. With tons of smiles he shopped at Wal-Mart and collected a substantial collection of school supplies. The challenge was getting them to the Village and to the children who needed them. Angelo looked for anyone who was traveling back home. We purchased soft sided suitcases in which the supplies could be carried. Soon, before you knew it the supplies began to get to the children who needed them the most. Many thanks to the school’s youthful choir, music director Mary Lou Wyrobek, School Principal Ms. Martha Eadie, and Pastor Rev. Fr. Richard Jedrzejewski. In addition to this project, this past spring the children of the school had the opportunity to meet Fr. Emmanuel Katabazi, back row, first from the right in the photo, the coordinator of the Catholic Health Care System of the Diocese of Masaka, Uganda. He spoke at the school’s concert program this past spring. He is pictured here with students from the school at the former home of St. Charles Lwanga. The school needed a water purification system and so the profit from this past year’s concert will go toward that particular need. Blessing to the youth from Our Lady of Black Rock. It is good to know that they are not alone. This past November, former “Lost Boy of the Sudan” Fidele Dhan and I were requested to receive a donation of children’s T-shirts that Mrs. Suzanne Walsh, Mrs. Pat Bonn, and the kindergarten classes at Queen of Heaven School had collected. Over one hundred new T-shirts were presented to Fidele who will personally carry them to the Village of Koiyom when he prepares to make his next journey home during the month of December. “Unless you become like a little child you will not enter the Kingdom of God! Blessings to all God’s Children.
KOIYOM CLINIC FINAL PHASES

It was just last year that the HOPE FUND from St. Vincent de Paul Parish enabled ROTA to purchase a forty foot shipping container which began another phase of the Koiyom Clinic project. Thanks to generous donations of our ROTA 365 members, our Medical Supplies Subcommittee attended auctions, purchased much needed equipment at drastically reduced prices, received donations of mechanical beds, office equipment donations as well as a variety of medical supply donations. Local area hotels and motels donated gently used linens. Thank you to students from D’Youville College who assisted us in sorting, refolding and packing the many pounds of linens that we were able to add to our supplies. There was still more room available and so we initiated a “summer clothing” drive that collected usable clothing for the many people of the village of Koiyom. The youth from St. Martin de Porres kicked in and assisted in sorting and repackaging the clothing which was then used to assist in packing and stabilizing the shipping container load. With the container all packed it began its multiple stop journey to its final destination.

From St. Martin de Porres it was returned to “Room For Rent” who initiated the first steps in the shipping process; moving the container safely to a NJ port. Marine Transport Logistics took over from there and assisted in loading and transporting it across the Atlantic to Mombasa Port in Kenya. Special thanks again to St. Vincent de Paul Parish HOPE FUND that paid the “over the Atlantic” transport costs for the journey. Arriving in Kenya, our ROTA Container is met by Horn of Africa Transporters who will receive the container and carry it across land through Kenya, Uganda and into Southern Sudan to it’s final destination in the Village of Koiyom north of the town of Aweil. A special “Thank You” goes out to each and everyone who contributed to ROTA in the Summer Mission Cooperative Appeal. This year our participating congregations included: St. Leo the Great, the Shrine of the Sacred Heart, St. Gabriel, and St. Gregory the Great. Your support helped us complete this long awaited journey for these medical supplies and equipment. Former “Lost Boy” of Sudan, Fidele Dhan will travel back in December in order to complete the paper work so that our transporters will have no difficulty at the border of Uganda and South Sudan. It will be at that point that we will then turn the project over to the Chief and Village of Koiyom. Many of the AID agencies currently working in the medical field in the area of our clinic building will not work in connection with a USA NGO: Non Government Organization like ROTA. Our best future hope for the clinic is to have the Village Chief, Diing Diing Dhan, seated, second from the left, negotiate on behalf of the village and its needs to organizations like “Doctors Without Borders” which already are in the Town of Awil assisting the people. Fidele will also be traveling with a building plaque which will dedicate portions of the completed structure in memory of our very good friends, the late Fr. Gary Bagley and Sr. Karen Klimczak. This whole project began through the energy of the youth of the Diocese of Buffalo who heard former “Lost Boy” of Sudan Fidele Diing Dhan’s story and desire and jumped on board to make his dream a reality. In their enthusiasm, they collected the initial funds that allowed us to break ground and begin this massive project. We pray that the Village Chief will be guided by the miraculous hand of our Lord who was able to bring us this far in such a massive undertaking. St. Josephine Bakhita, assist our friends in Koiyom Village, South Sudan.
Many thanks to the 58+ donors to the ROTA 365 outreach last year and those who have renewed their support for the 2014/2015 season. Through your efforts and contributions large volumes of much needed medical equipment and supplies had been purchased at auction. These were added to our forty foot shipping container that is bound for South Sudan. What an accomplishment. As a sign of our appreciation, we invited many of our ROTA 365 friends and supporters to Anchor Bar back in June for a time of “Appreciation.” Special thanks to the Anchor and its Owner & Manager, Ivano Toscani, a contributing member of ROTA 365 who welcomed us and provided most of the rich fare for our gathering. Special thanks to the Jazz Example who moved to the front room for this special event. Multiple thanks to our many friends, new and returning, who joined to make the late afternoon and early evening such a fine success. Our special guest was Fr. Emmanuel Katabaazi. Father Emmanuel is the coordinator of Catholic Health Ministry in the Diocese of Masaka, Uganda. Through our partnership with him, many more miracles have happened for the many people in need throughout his Diocese. May the Lord bless all those who support this ministry of love and concern for so many in the motherland…..

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AFRICAN CLERGY ASSISTANCE

Ever since meeting Fr. Evarist Lubega, an African priest who was on a Sabbatical stay in Buffalo in 2002, the ministry that would become known as ROTA has been dedicated to assisting African clergy. Compared to the challenges of ministry in America, most African Clergy work under more desperate circumstances, longer hours, and drastically less remuneration. Since these early years we have tried to collect Mass Stipends that we would share with new Coptic Priests in Egypt, Western Rite friends who are priests in Uganda and bishops and priests both in South Sudan. We have furnished travel tickets for a variety of clergy friends to come and stay with us in Buffalo while conducting Mission Cooperative Appeals in area parishes. We’ve also provided funding for ongoing education for clergy in various countries. We’ve been able to expand this outreach to include African Seminarians whom the Lord sends to our doors. We have been able to assist Daniel Ogbeifun from Nigeria, who has come as a missionary seminarian to Buffalo.

The assistance took the form of but had not been limited to: course required books, supplies, clothing, and computer technology. We rejoiced as Daniel was ordained a transitional Deacon and who will be ordained a priest this June. Fr. Ron will accompany Daniel after his ordination when he will return to celebrate with his family and friends in his West Africa homeland of Nigeria. Members of St. Columba Brigid welcomed a young man to stay with them for his first month visiting Buffalo. Moses Ikuelogbon, also from Nigeria, came to inquire if he would be able to be a seminarian for Buffalo. After his first month in Buffalo he moved in with Fr. Ron at the St. Lawrence Residence and over the next nine months learned about the Diocese of Buffalo as well as the parishes of St. Martin de Porres and St. Lawrence. This past August, Moses was accepted by Bishop Malone as a candidate for formation. This past August, we welcomed Denning Achidi, born in Cameroon, who was a seminarian with the Order of Mary Immaculate (OMI) priests at Holy Angels. After discussions with Fr. Walter, the vocation director of the Diocese of Buffalo, Denning moved into the St. Lawrence Residence and he too has become aware of the Diocese and the parish families of St. Martin de Porres and St. Lawrence. In January he will be joining Christ the King Seminary. May God continue to bless them. ROTA continually is committed to assist them in their needs throughout their seminary career.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS & DIRECTIONS

Members of Reaching Out 2 Africa Ministry as well as the ROTA Development Group Inc. are in dialogue with a few new directions for our ministry. We are continually requested to join a variety of ministries currently active in counties like: Tanzania, Uganda, South Sudan, even in Nigeria and Kenya. We are continually exploring these possibilities. We also are aware of the many African Priests and Women Religious who are gifted with scholarships to study at many of our fine institutions here in Buffalo but their communities back home have little to share with them in regard to medical insurance, living expenses, and even food and educational supplies. We hope to expand our African Vocation Fund to include these our new friends here in Buffalo who are trying to develop their skills that will greatly enhance their ministries when they return back to their homes. Our board is also exploring a joint project with many first generation Africans here in Buffalo. We envision an African Cultural Center which could be able to offer a home base for most of these communities to strengthen their cultural traditions while still adapting to American life. May the Lord bring success to the work of our hands.

WHERE DID WE INVEST YOUR DONATIONS?

The chart at the left assists us in understanding how your most generous contributions to our ministry have been shared during the last fiscal year. As one can see our South Sudan Project took a majority of our funding and we are content with the progress we have been able to make. Our African Clergy Assistance took second place and our local refugee assistance third. The reminder is specified in the chart. The Tanzania project listed indicates funds directly wired to the Franciscan Sisters of St. Bernadette who have an orphanage and school ministry in Tanzania. Many in our Diocese have supported these efforts and we are happy to be the forwarder of the funds. May the Lord bless all of you who sacrifice so much to support our many international friends. Blessings to you.