“ROTA HELPS A LITTLE AFRICAN BOY’S DREAM COME TRUE”

For this little six year old, never having to watch his father leave him behind again was a dream come true. For six years, this little boy enjoyed time with his dad in their African home. But several times a year, when he would go to sleep and wake again, his father would be gone. His father would go back to America to continue to study in school and work to support his extended family members who relocated from the Sudan to the capital city of Kampala, Uganda, East Africa. Now after years of pleading, his father finally would allow him to travel with him back to America. January 15th 2015 this newly turned six year old American Citizen landed on American soil for the first time right into one of the coldest winter seasons that Buffalo had seen in years. However the cold could not dampen the joy of being with his dad. Cold temperatures and snow, winter boots and coats, first grade in a new school, making new friends, discovering new cousins, choir rehearsals in a new church, learning to operate his daddy’s smart phone and playing the “war” card game with Abuna, Fr. Ron all created chapters in a new life in America for former lost boy, Fidele Diing Dhan’s first born son, Diing. At first the little boy acquired the personality of his father: quiet, private, “laid back.”

Little Diing came with the understanding that mom and his sisters would soon follow. Plans were being made, immigration paper work submitted, Interpol investigations in other countries completed, many documents filed appropriately, and ROTA funding submitted but there always seemed to have been one “hang up” after another. Ten months after his son arrived in Buffalo, Fidele made his way alone back to Uganda to check on the rest of the family and monitor the immigration progress there. Originally we had hoped that all things would have been completed by this time and the whole family reunited when Fidele would return in December 2015. The day came and though excited to remain up past his bedtime, little Diing was glad to see his dad return but somewhat disappointed that he returned alone without his mom, sisters, and new born brother. The new year 2016 brought with it the excitement that the “Green Card” application was accepted and plans now were being made to reunite the Dhan family. Little Diing was reservedly excited but apprehensive as well. He colored in the “Welcome to the USA” sign and made sure it had the names of his mom, two sisters and new brother that he had not yet met. In the airport he waited nervously truly wondering if this would really happen. However, little Diing was not alone. Fidele also spoke to his wife as she, the two girls and baby son were boarding their first jet plane ride on a three stop trip to bring them to this new land of the USA. There was no further communication with them assuring us that they made their connections, handled all the immigration materials in the US and finally made the brief trip to Buffalo. Before we knew it though we saw them arriving, greeting, and being welcomed to Buffalo. The balloons, flowers, and expertly crafted sign all helped to make the family welcome. The trip back to the St. Lawrence Residence was short and many South Sudanese joined in the welcome celebration. The family would make their transition to USA by a nine month stay in the St. Lawrence Residence. Through your generous support of ROTA, Fidele Dhan, former “Lost Boy” has reunited with his family and little Diing begins to relax, smile, laugh and be filled with joy now that they are all together again. Thanks for making dreams come true.
“REUNITING ROTA FRIENDS FROM AFAR”  
By Fr. Ron Sajdak

Last year I became aware of a conference being planned in Rome, Italy to celebrate the fiftieth year anniversary of the Charismatic Pentecostal Revival in the Catholic Church. Forty eight years ago I was invited to my first prayer meeting at St. Francis Parish Church in Buffalo in order to provide music for the gathering. The spontaneity of the worship was very unsettling to me as I wondered if I could truly be of assistance and if I would know and be able to accompany the songs requested. Being a teenager at the time I found the coffee and doughnuts that concluded the prayer time a reasonable consolation and payment for my services. Shortly after though I too was prayed over and received gifts from the Holy Spirit joining in the unique style of prayer and worship.

The thought of being able to visit Rome for the first time and return to the spiritual source of my initial personal walk with the Lord through my experience with the Renewal I found attractive. I also learned of members of Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary who also belong to the People of Praise Community were planning to attend. After some discussions with them I decided to join them on the journey. The travel, site seeing, walking through and spending time in prayer at the spiritual sites around Rome, as well as the conference itself were most renewing. In addition to these times well spent were opportunities to meet, greet and unite with friends of ROTA who were in Rome at the same time.

The first encounter was with one of my spiritual sons whose name was Farah Fousey Zekery. Farah was a student in formation at the Coptic Rite Seminary in Maadi Egypt. Maryknoll Missionary Fr. Douglas May brought Farah and others to the USA for a Summer Formation Experience which for Farah included a three week stay with me at St. Bernadette in Orchard Park. His visit was a joy as I shared many experiences of the Roman Rite Church with him throughout his stay. When leaving he told me that he was going to keep in touch with me and invite me to his ordination.

In 2005 that invitation became a reality and I was traveling for my first international trip to Egypt to stay briefly at the Seminary in Maadi and then travel to Farah’s Diocese and village Church for his Ordination to the Coptic Rite Priesthood. What a blessing that was. Now twelve years later he is meeting me at the airport in Rome, where he was sent for further studies. What a blessing to see him and have his expert assistance to negotiate the transport from the airport to the train terminal in Rome so I could catch the train to Florence in order to meet my group already on vacation there. What a wonderful experience it was. I was aware that Fr. Jude had been sent for further studies to Rome as well and so I was anxious to get back in touch with him. We were able to meet up on two occasions capping off each meeting with some famous Gelato. Oh how sweet it is…….

On my second visit to the Diocese of Masaka Uganda in 2008, I met a wonderful young pastor named Fr. Jude Charles Jjuuko who was pastor of Nkoni Parish. He invited me to preside at Mass and invited many Diocesan priests to attend. What a wonderful experience it was. I was aware that Fr. Jude had been sent for further studies to Rome as well and so I was anxious to get back in touch with him. We were able to meet up on two occasions capping off each meeting with some famous Gelato. Oh how sweet it is…….

While in Rome I received a message from a Sudanese Priest friend, Fr. Onesimo, also in Italy, that Bishop Paolino Lukudu Loro, Archbishop of Juba, South Sudan had just arrived in Rome at the Camboni Mission House. The Archbishop stayed at St. Martin de Porres in a brief visit to Buffalo years ago and I also stayed with him in Sudan for a few days in 2009 before the birth of the new nation. Now eight years later, independence achieved but ethnic tribal conflicts beginning a new civil war, he spoke slowly and carefully about the desperate situation that now faces the poor people of this new nation. We continuously pray for Bishop Loro and his brother bishops working for peace in this new land.
**ROTA SPONSORED SEMINARIAN UPDATE**

During a recent gathering of the Diocesan Priests in Buffalo for their annual Convocation, Christ the King Seminary Celebrated the Rite of Candidacy. The Admission to Candidacy rite offers the candidates for ordination the opportunity to publicly express their intention to receive ordination as a Deacon and later as a Priest. The aspirant composes beforehand and then signs and dates before the start of the rite in the presence of the Bishop a declaration in one’s own hand stating his/her conscious intention to serve others in the Spirit of Compassionate Presence as an ordained cleric and is making this intention freely on his or her own accord. The Bishop also signs and dates this declaration attesting acknowledgement of receipt thereof in the name of the Church. What a great joy it was for me to be present as Moses Ikuelogbon was welcomed to the future reception of Holy Orders. Congratulations Moses.

Denning Achidi spent ten weeks of his summer involved in a CPE: Clinical Pastoral Education Unit at a hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. CPE is the primary method of training hospital and hospice chaplains as well as spiritual care providers. CPE is both a multicultural and interfaith experience that uses real-life ministry encounters of students to improve the ministry and pastoral care provided by caregivers and also assists in the personal grow of individual students.

Over the past few years ROTA has been assisting a Kenyan seminarian Richard Odour who is studying in Weston MA at the Pope John XXIII seminary and will be ordained for the Diocese of Torit in South Sudan. Their former Bishop now retired, Parade Taban visited us here in Buffalo. He is a most impressive man with an untiring spirit and fierce passion for Justice in South Sudan. As a layman, Richard had quite a bit of exposure to him and he was the one who asked if Richard would ever consider the priesthood. Richard did and was accepted by the Diocese of Torit. Grateful for the support from ROTA, Richard made his was to Buffalo to visit us May 12th. It was a quick weekend visit but to my surprise Richard was headed to Rome Italy for a one month program sponsored by his new Diocese. While in Rome, we had the opportunity to again meet for lunch. Deacon Richard will be ordained to the Priesthood in May of next year most likely in Kenya due to the civil disturbances currently underway in the newest republic of South Sudan.

**MORE AND MORE SCHOOL CHILDREN HAVE LESS OF A “LONG WALK TO WATER”**

Three water tanks, a new Kitchen building and cooking stove have been the result of $4,800 dollars in donated funds by the: Our Lady of Black Rock, East Aurora Middle, West Seneca EAST, and CleveHill Middle schools. These were proceeds from student fundraising in response to their reading “Long Walk to Water” by Linda Sue Park. This outreach is forever changing the quality of life of many school students across southern Uganda. Another $3,500 will be forwarded this fall to continue the primary school outreach. When Fr. Emmanuel Katababazi, from Masaka Diocese visited Buffalo he brought letters of appreciation from the students to the students of the various schools that contributed to their assistance. New to outreach, we welcome students from Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Harris Hill. Fidele Dhan, Fr. Ron and Ms. Joan Ersing had the opportunity to give a presentation and welcome them on board our student to student, school to school initiative Reaching Out 2 Africa…………..
ANOTHER DREAM COMING TRUE WITH ROTA’S ASSISTANCE

Back in 2012, when five representatives from ROTA and the Diocese of Buffalo were able to travel to Masaka Uganda for the dedication of the Medical Store Project, we had the opportunity to visit with Fidele and his family at their homestead in Uganda. There, as we were standing by the entrance gate was a young 9 year old girl with two children at her side. The boy was Fidele’s young Diing Diing and his baby sister Abuk. The young child was Fidele’s niece Monica. The joy of Fidele’s family being able to reunite in USA in July 2016 was tinged with a bit of sadness for Monica, who had been raised by Fidele’s wife and regarded Abang as her mom and Fidele as her dad, had no documentation and could not move with the family. She was sent to yet more relatives to continue in school and live in Uganda until some plan could be devised. After consultation with immigration officials both in USA and Uganda, the only way the child could reunite with her family was by the formal adoption of Monica by Fidele’s wife. An attorney in Uganda was hired and the process began in April of 2016. After a year and a half, a change in Ugandan Adoption Law, and many donated dollars of support from ROTA for this initiative, the adoption was approved. It is our hope that young Monica, now fourteen years old, will be able to travel to USA, reunite with her family here, resume school, and begin her new life in America. Thank you to all our supporters who allow us to bring gifts of joy to families from around the whole world. Congratulations Dhan family.

SHILLUK TRIBAL INITIATIVES

Our youngest board member, Jenaro Olwak Aken recently took part in the The 15th annual Chollo Conference and Cultural Day that was held July 4th, 2017 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. A registered 501(c)(3), the Pashodo Community Mutual Assistance Association (PCMAA) is a charitable organization that strives to address the changing needs of Shilluk people in the USA and raise awareness of the deteriorating humanitarian conditions faced by the Shilluk people in South Sudan. The Chollo kingdom is the third largest ethnic community in South Sudan. The Chollo kingdom is the third largest ethnic community in South Sudan and has been devastated by the ongoing civil war in the newly established nation. We ask for your thoughts, prayers, and support for the Chollo community. More information at: www.thepcmaa.org Thank you Jenaro for your leadership.

AFRICAN CLERGY ASSISTANCE

This past year we had the delightful opportunity to welcome back to Buffalo, our good friend and ROTA agent in Uganda, Fr. Emmanuel Katabaazi from the Masaka Diocese. For six weeks he was our guest at the St. Lawrence Residence, visiting with us throughout the week and conducting Mission Appeal weekends: Three here in Buffalo and three in the Diocese of Albany. We pray that his meeting, preaching, and sharing with so many will produce much fruit that will benefit his ministry of Health Care for the many in need in Masaka Diocese. We also received a call from our good friend Fr. Philip Pitya of the Diocese of Juba in South Sudan who requested that we welcome back to Buffalo Fr. Emmanuel Jada, a teacher of Canon Law at the Catholic University in Kenya. Fr. Jada had three parishes assigned to him as well for Mission Appeal. It was delightful having his company throughout the next three weeks. A few days after Fr. Jada left to attend other Mission Appeals, we welcomed Most Reverend John Baptist Kaggwa, Bishop of Masaka, Uganda. This was Bishop’s first visit to Buffalo where he was welcomed to conduct the Annual Mission Appeal at St. Gregory the Great in Williamsville. In the past we have hosted Fr. Evarist Lubega, may he rest in peace, Fr. Emmanuel Katabaazi, and Fr. Peter Paul, all from the Masaka Diocese. What a extraordinary blessing for us through the years. May the Lord continue to bless our partnership in Mission.

ROTA APPRECIATES OUR SUPPORTERS

Our Reaching Out 2 Africa ministry has been proud to support the Bagley Open Golf Tournament which, in its inaugural year back in 2007, dedicated its proceeds to ROTA and our Young People’s Pickle Jar Project for our work in South Sudan. We appreciate all the support of our many contributors. We get very little by way of grants and rely solely upon your generous support to do the work that our Lord Jesus places in front of us. Thank you for your assistance in “Welcoming the Stranger.” Working together mountains can be moved.

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