



We are eternally grateful for your continued support of Share the Blessings (STB) initiatives: Education and Clean water. We humbly ask for your prayers and that you share the good news of STB with others. We pray you and your family were blessed with a God-filled Christmas and that your New Year will be filled with God's joy, peace, happiness, and love for your neighbor, no matter where the neighbor may be.

We are grateful for the opportunity "to make global connections!"

Nathan Wagner, STB Chair

Fr. Joseph Kakooza (STB's Coordinator in Uganda) Annual USA visit to Cary, NC

On September 27, 2022, members of the STB Board welcomed Fr. Joe Kakooza from Uganda with a southern bar-b-que dinner. New board members, Fr. Pius Wekesa, Katya Zubov, and Joel Oliver were also welcomed. Below is a picture of the STB Board with Fr. Joe. (Board member, Ed Collupy, who resides in the Boston area, was not available for this photo).

During the afternoon, Fr. Joe gave thanks to STB from himself and the students for the tremendous support STB has provided in the past. He said the support STB bestows is so important to the students' quality of life. The students faced many challenges during the pandemic; however, they met the challenges and are now focused on the new school year. During the school year 2022, STB sponsored 29 students: 4 in Primary School, 17 in Secondary School, 2 in Seminary, 4 in Vocational, and 2 in University. Moving forward, for the 2023 school year, STB will sponsor 31 students.

In addition to other travels in the US, Fr. Joe visited STB's Education Chair, Jay Carney in Omaha, NE

"There is no way they can succeed without being educated"

An Interview with Fr. Joe Kakooza

In October 2022, Jay sat down with Fr. Joe to learn more about how and why he became so committed to sponsoring young people in school

Jay: "Fr. Joe, tell me how you got involved in student education and sponsorships?"

Fr. Joe: "Jay that is a long story. You know what? When I was in grade 3, about 9 years old, I wanted to become a priest. Unfortunately, my Dad died when I was in grade 5 before he could take me to the seminary. When I reached grade 7, I dropped out of school because no one could pay for my school fees. It was not until two years later that a gentleman came looking for me. I was in the garden picking coffee. He asked me, 'Are you Joseph? Do you still want to become a priest?' I told him, 'Oh yeah, I still want to become a priest, but I dropped out of school for no one was paying my school fees.' Then he told me to go and dress up, for he was going to take me to the seminary. I couldn't believe what he was saying. I remember running to my small room, I danced! ... My desire to help needy students springs from that experience. Whenever I see a dropout student, it reminds me of when I was out of school, with no one to pay my school fees."

Jay: "How did you start an education sponsorship program?"



Front row, Left to Right: Kevin Green, Fr. Joe, Brenda Powers, Margaret Cross & Lauren Green
Back row, left to right: Nathan Wagner, Fr. Pius, Katya Zubov, Joel Oliver, & Arthur Powers



Fr. Joe: "I began this when I was appointed pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Nakasongola in 1990. I remember the first group, I didn't have much money, so I asked them to make bricks [to support their education] ... Eventually I got friends from America, and they helped me start an education fund."

Jay: "How do you find these needy students?"

Fr. Joe: "I find them when I go to the missions for Mass. I ask them, 'Why aren't you at school?' They tell me it's because of school fees. So I register them, and when I get funds, I take them to school."

Jay: "How do you verify the students' backgrounds in terms of evaluating their actual need?"

Fr. Joe: "I have a team I work with. When I register a student, I send one of these team members to visit the student's home and check with the guardians to see if they really need support. If they qualify, then we take that student to school."

Jay: "What are the most common reasons why young people need sponsorships?"

Fr. Joe: "The most common reason is parents can't afford their tuition, or they can only afford partially. Because with school in Uganda, you have to pay. There are also [additional] requirements like uniforms, shoes, and school bags."

Jay: "So the parents will cover some of those other costs?"

Fr. Joe: "The parents mostly cover the personal requirements like pencils, shoes, uniforms, and textbooks. We use the sponsorships for school fees."

Jay: "Tell me about how you choose the schools."

Fr. Joe: "Mostly I put my students in Catholic-founded schools, although some of the students are Muslims, and some are Anglicans. Yet most of the time Catholic schools are the best-performing schools. I choose schools which are nearby, that I can monitor. It also depends on the level of the student. For university, students often have to go farther away."

Jay: "How do the students contribute to their own education?"

Fr. Joe: "The best way they contribute is through hard work. I meet them during the holidays and tell them to work hard ... We also have an [alumni] group called the Fr. Joseph Francis Group. We meet annually. They have resolved to help support needy students, and they are keeping two students in school right now."

Jay: "What are some of the most common jobs that alumni have gone into?"

Fr. Joe: "Most of them are teachers. Others are medical nurses. Others are electricians, builders, motor vehicle mechanics, secretaries, and even a park ranger."

Jay: "If you had one message for the [STB] sponsors, what would it be?"

Fr. Joe: "A big thank you! There is no message I can give other than a big thank you. Even this is not enough to express the appreciation of the beneficiaries. By sponsoring them, you are giving them a key to success. There is no way they can succeed without being educated. May God reward the sponsors abundantly."

Jay: "Anything else you'd like to share with the sponsors?"

Fr. Joe: "Come to Uganda! They can meet their students, they can see the schools, they can see Uganda, the happiness we have, the challenges we have. It would be a blessing if they came."



Jay: "Thank you Fr. Joe for everything you do for these students and for their families. We owe you a big thank you too. Webale nnyo, webale ddala!"

Clean Water

Clean water is vital to the health and well-being of all. STB's clean water goal is to fund at least two wells per year. We are again looking at various locations in the majority world to install wells, and the pandemic curtailed that search. However, a well location has been identified in Uganda and the STB Board approved the construction of the well in 2023. One well helps hundreds of people. Therefore, any and all donations are appreciated.

Father Boniface Ssenteza Visit

Fr. Boniface Ssenteza was a Share the Blessings' student who graduated from St. Mbaaga Major Seminary in 2014. He was ordained a priest in 2015. He currently serves in Uganda as Youth Chaplain for the Kasana-Luweero Diocese and National Scouting Chaplain. He recently visited St. Michael the Archangel church in Cary, NC and assisted with the mass. Below is a picture of Fr. Boniface with STB Chair, Nathan Wagner, and his wife Sandra. A testimonial from Fr. Boniface is on the next page.



2022 Share The Blessings Graduates - Plenty Good News!

Fr. Joe and STB are especially proud to report that four students graduated and are now working in Uganda. Pictures are shown to the right.



Augustine Ziwa
Motor Vehicle Mechanic



Kamya Emmanuel
High School Teacher



Ssenfuka Matthias
Religious Brother and
Teacher



Silas Ssenyonyi
Laboratory Technician

We ask for your continued prayers for the success of all our students, alumni, and families.



2022 Share The Blessings Graduates - Plenty Good News! Contd.

HOW YOU SHARED YOUR BLESSINGS TO NOW A PRIEST IN UGANDA.

Dear Members of Share the Blessing/reader,

Love and Prayers from Uganda. My name is Fr. Boniface Senteza of the Diocese of Kasana-Luweero here in Uganda. It is always a pleasure to meet people who have been there for your life. Whoever is reading this, know that many people known and unknown, those living and those who have been called back to meet our Blessed Lord and father have been instrumental in my life especially through SHARE THE BLESSINGS.

From the early 2000's I have been a St. Francis student sponsored through Share the Blessings. I will always be grateful to God who enabled me to meet Fr. Joe when he was a Pastor at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish-Nakasongola. He had worked with my dad who was catechist. When he (dad) died my life came to an end, there were no means of escape. It's Fr. Joe, who came in and enrolled me to join a group of other students as a 'St. Francis Student' until 2015 when I was ordained a priest on August 22nd to become the first priest ever to be ordained in the Catholic Church from my tribe.

I have served in different capacities since then. As you read this, I serve as the Diocesan Youth Ministry Director and Chaplain, I am Chaplain at Bukalasa National Agricultural College and also a the Ponens Relator in the Diocesan Tribunal. Working in these various ministries is a special Blessing for me. As a youth minister of the Diocese, and as a person who knows what it means to be helped by people you will never see or meet, it given me joy and hope to work towards the establishment of St. Kizito Youth Center (a diocesan youth center). A place for creating opportunities, uploading and downloading ideas for our dear young people. How would a person who was helped by SHARE THE BLESSINGS GIVE BACK? It a place for; Building Faith, Forming Consciences, Inspiring Hope and Igniting Change.

In 2021, I applied for and constructed a well at this Youth center and for the village. Thank you so much for the resources. In August 2022, I met Nathan Wagner and is dear wife at St. Michael Church in Cary, NC. God is so good; His ways are not our ways. He was a meeting a person from Africa. Only to realize later, I was a St. Francis student who was sponsored by SHARE THE BLESSINGS and now a PRIEST. It was a pleasure to meet people who have been there for my life.

For one and all who have worked tirelessly to further this mission, May God continue to work with you and bless the work of your hands. May you continue this wonderful mission.

Your Son,

Fr. Boniface SENTEZA
Diocese of Kasana-Luweero
Uganda.

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