

February 2016

Dear Students, Staff & Patrons of the Howells Community Catholic School,

The time has flown so quickly since Christmas and Fr. Francis' visit to West Point and to Howells! We are so very thankful for your generous support and contributions to the St. Dennis School. Thank you for being so very welcoming to us when we visited your school. Father particularly loved concelebrating the mass with Fr Leo and he especially loved the interaction with the students. Here are some updates on the St. Dennis School...

The school complex, which was very dilapidated, unsafe, and terribly overcrowded, has now been almost completely overhauled. Since the inception of our mission project in January of 2013, the school has been given a new face and new life. Two brand new school buildings have been erected and all structures deemed safe enough to remain standing, have been repaired and painted. A new teacher's house has been built to house 2-4 teachers and a new kitchen has been built. Porridge and beans for their meals have been provided for several of the past semesters. The school population has nearly doubled! Many children that were merely existing in their village now have new hope and a new future! Some German friends have taken on the task of constructing a new Vocational School on the premises so that the students can continue after their 7th grade education and learn a skill such as carpentry, hairstyling, mechanics, sewing, welding, etc. just to name a few.

All of these wonders are because of you & members of the wonderful area faith-filled Christian communities. The selfless love and generosity that you have shared with these people is beyond words. Now that some from our mission group have actually traveled to Nkumba, Uganda and seen it with our own eyes, the living and school conditions have a new reality for us. These people live on so very little and most lack the basic necessities for life, yet they are happy, proud, and hopeful people. They expected nor asked us for nothing, and they were extremely grateful for anything given to them. We'd like to continue to help and their education is at the forefront of our mission. Following are words from Fr. Francis:

Yes, I am already a month old back to Uganda and we have already done so much! I can say that the kitchen is almost ready to fully serve its purpose. The builders are working on the final finishing on the sinks. The stoves have been used already and they do an awesome job. We have electricity in the house, racks for drying the cups and plates. We painted the kitchen and put the smooth bit of the floor. Then the teachers' house! I left West Point with the plan to build for two teachers! I instead dreamt bigger and decided to lay a foundation for 7 units to accommodate 7 teachers! Our faith is that we have NOT AT ALL DONE ANYTHING OUT OF OUR OWN STRENGTH AND MONEY! We have always relied on REAL FAITH and we trust that this is God's work. He knows where to lead us. Our work is to keep working, planning and praying. That is the testimony for all the projects we have accomplished. So I made no hesitation as soon as it clicked in my brain to build for seven teachers. AND we are almost ready for the roofing part! Just unbelievable! I am always there to supervise and see that work is done. In less than a month, that is what we have to show. And I have my soul at peace. God knows it all.

Our students at St Dennis Primary School, like the rest of the students in primary and secondary schools, reported for school for the new year on the govt. ordered day of Monday February 22nd. We had presidential elections on Feb 18th. The government wanted teachers to take part in the voting but also to keep the children home and safe from possible uprisings during the voting time--BUT we are set for another wonderful year. The population is likely to increase a little BUT that is still ok. We have enough classrooms and other facilities except the number of teachers! Like I have always said, I still have to see that the number we have competes for our resources. Then they will utilize them as we all want. The kitchen has been built with stoves and other parts to serve at least 1000 students. So we are safe too.

The whole idea is that we are humble servants of the Lord. We just keep doing what He has enabled us to do and wait till He shows us the next step. Therefore and from our own experience, it is now clear that we just have to begin on something, work slowly and patiently. God knows where to lead us. It is that faith that always drives me in all this mission work. We are not doing personal work. God has blessed us with the blessing to give His people a better life. That is why I can afford to dream big.

I want to thank you again and again for being so loving to us! Thank you for all the care for "my children" in Nkumba. I pray that we see you here soon! I know what it takes and I am very patient BUT I am praying! You deserve to see the community and children who receive your most wonderful LOVE AND CARE.

I want to thank you more and more that you chose to be part and family of the St Dennis Missions! Like I told you, this one is a life changing experience. I pray that you continue to feel the effects of the prayers of so many fellow young people whose lives you are changing in such awesome ways. I am looking forward to hearing from you and maybe seeing some of you visit us in Nkumba in time to come. I wish you an abundance of God's blessings especially during this Lenten season. I am praying for you in a very special way. You are so special to me and I thank God always for you. God bless you,

Fr. Francis

As we continue with our Lenten season we are conducting our 3rd annual "Raise the Roof" fundraiser. As we've done in the past, we have 144 numbers, 1 thru 144. If 144 people choose one of those numbers and donate the dollars equal to the number they've chosen we will have raised \$10,000! That will enable Fr. to order roofing supplies for the new teacher's house. If you're interested in choosing a number, please contact us. No amount is too great or too small! We thank you for all that you have done for the kids at the St. Dennis School and we pray that God continues to abundantly bless you!

With grateful hearts, The St. Mary's African Mission Committee

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