



DIOCESE OF KOTIDO

Bishop's Residence - Kotido

P.O. Box 3872

Kampala - UGANDA

Phone: +256 (0)77 2470902

E-mail: giu_filippi@yahoo.it

Kotido Diocese - Circular letter N. 16

Kotido, 16th April 2011

To all Parish and Religious communities,
Kotido Catholic Diocese

1. A thought from the Scriptures

Lent began with the invitation to self-denial (fast), prayer and charity (alms-giving). These are the dimensions expressing the relationship with oneself, with God and with neighbours. Jesus' journey to Bethany to the tomb of Lazaro is characterized by self-denial, indeed he is not afraid to face his enemies in Jerusalem so much that Thomas reacted by saying "let us go and die with him" (John 11:16). Jesus acts out of charity motivated by his love for Lazaro and his sisters Mary and Martha; his genuine tears made people to recognise the intensity of his love (John 11:35-36). Jesus' prayer is his final action that brought Lazaro back to life (John 11:41).

As we enter the Passion Week the liturgy will lead us once again to contemplate Jesus' self-denial in his giving up his life for all, Jesus' love for his neighbours through an act of forgiveness and Jesus' personal prayer that enabled him to do God's will up to the end. We can truly grasp the mystery of Easter only if practice a more perfect self-denial, grow faithful to daily prayer and practice charity through qualified service to our brothers and sisters. In this sense Lent never ends and makes of us people of the resurrection. May the light of the Risen Lord shine in our conscience and actions!

2. Diocesan Offices

Strategic Plan: about 30 people, members of the diocesan offices related to the SSD and Parish Priests attended the workshop for the drawing up the strategic plan for the SSD. The facilitator Mr. John Okolong guided the group during the three days workshop and with his team he will prepare the final document which will be approved by the Bishop after having heard the Board of Governors.

Health Office: Sr Bibiana informs that Tse Tse flies has been spotted in various location within the diocese. Whoever becomes aware of the presence of the fly should report to the Health authority of the area.

Caritas: Caritas Kotido has been asked by the government authority to implement a development plan within Regen and Kotido Town Council. The choice was made by the government authorities who assigned a similar task in other sub-counties to other NGOs

3. Movement of personnel

Bro Peter Agaba's one year contract at the service of Bishop's House has ended and his Superior appointed him to a community within Fort Portal Diocese. I thank Bro Peter for his joyful presence and humble service. May God bless him!

4. Vocation Day

In Appendix I, find the message of Benedict XVI for the Vocation Day. Vocations are a gift of God to families and Christian communities where God plants and raises vocations. All baptised people are to be aware of their personal vocation and care about it. This is the precondition for each individual to discover his/her to a special service to the community following the religious life and or priesthood. Only people who are aware of their personal vocation can care and support the vocation of others. Prayer is the first and necessary work that brings light and life into vocations. Secondly good example, clear guidance is needed to help young people to understand the way of God makes Himself present in the them. Our diocese is in great need of good and holy priests and religious ready to serve and guide the community in faithfulness to God.

5. International Solidarity: Holy Land

International solidarity and charity is a characteristic of the Catholic Church. Every year, a number of Sunday's collection are organized worldwide and sent to the Pope who through his Offices will share them according to the intention given. There is a new collection which was started a couple of years ago and organized by the Pope's Congregation of the Oriental Rites and fixed to take place on Good Friday. The offering will be sent to the Holy land to sustain the local Christian community which is under stress because of the ongoing civil war and constant persecution. I invite all Parish Priests with their community to be generous in responding to this appeal. Surely if we are generous with others God will be generous with us. (see attached letter: Appendix II)

6. Launching the Ngakarimojong Bible

The launching of the Ngakarimojong Bible took place as scheduled and all went very well. Archbishop Orombi represented the Church of Uganda and Archbishop JB Odama, chairman of the UEC represented the Catholic Church. It was a very intense ecumenical action which we hope will produce new fruits of collaboration and reciprocal respect. A double cheer to the Steering Commission for the work well done! The only sad note was the shortage of Bibles available for the Catholic Church that compelled us to reduce our orders. Fr Philip will raise a complain with the Uganda Bible Society.

7. Importance of the Sacrament of Confession

In Appendix III is reported the Papal address on the value of the sacramental Confession. Priests are encouraged to give much time to this Sacrament which, where it is practiced produces fruits of genuine conversion.

8. Bishop's commitments

17 th Apr.	Palms Sunday
19 th Apr.	Consultors meeting 3.00pm
20 th Apr.	Chrism Mass
24 th Apr.	Easter Sunday
25 th -28 th Apr.	Kampala Justice and Peace Commission
30 th April	Nebbi: Ordination of Bishop Sactus.
1-2 May	Lira: Peace week for the North of Uganda

6 th – 8 th May	Loyoro Pastoral Visit
7 th May	Remembering the modern martyrs
13 th May.	Pastoral visit: Panyangara
14 th May	Kotido, Consecration of Good Shepherd Cathedral
15 th – 17 th May	Pastoral visit: Panyangara
18 th May	SSDB meeting
19 th May	IGA meeting
21 st May	Sisters' meeting,
22 nd May	Kapedo Confirmations
26 th May	National Catechists Day
27 th - 31 st May	Kampala, UJCC plenary and Centenary Bank
3 rd June	Kampala, Uganda Martyrs Day
4 th - 12 th June	Kampala, Uganda Episcopal Conference
14 th June	Clergy Meeting
21 st June	Deanery Meeting
26 th - 30 th June	Nairobi, AMECEA general meeting
1 st – 7 th July	Nairobi, AMECEA general meeting
9 th – 16 th July	Italy
18 th – 31 ^s July	Jerusalem, Meeting of Bishops
1 st – 2 nd Aug.	Jerusalem
4 th - 13 th Aug.	Namugongo, Spiritual Exercises.
16 th Aug.	Recollection Day
11 th Sept.	Communication Day
20 th Sept.	Deanery Meeting
27 th – 30 th Sept.	Kampala, IRCU Assembly
10 th Oct.	St. Daniel Comboni, Diocesan Liturgical Memoria for the Diocese
18 th Oct.	Recollection Day.
20 th – 29 th Oct.	Namugongo
23 rd Oct.	Mission Sunday
2 nd – 12 th Nov.	Uganda Episc. Conference (to be confirmed)
22 nd Nov.	Joint Deanery Meeting

To all my prayers and blessings fro a joyful and peace-filled Holy Easter!

Yours in the Lord

Giuseppe Filippi
 Giuseppe Filippi
 Bishop of Kotido



**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER
FOR THE 48th WORLD DAY
OF PRAYER FOR VOCATIONS**

15 MAY 2011 FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Theme: "Proposing Vocations in the Local Church"

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

The 48th World Day of Prayer for Vocations, to be celebrated on 15 May 2011, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, invites us to reflect on the theme: "*Proposing Vocations in the Local Church*". Seventy years ago, Venerable [Pius XII](#) established the Pontifical Work of Priestly Vocations. Similar bodies, led by priests and members of the lay faithful, were subsequently established by Bishops in many dioceses as a response to the call of the Good Shepherd who, "when he saw the crowds, had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd", and went on to say: "The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest!" (*Mt* 9:36-38).

The work of carefully encouraging and supporting vocations finds a radiant source of inspiration in those places in the Gospel where Jesus calls his disciples to follow him and trains them with love and care. We should pay close attention to the way that Jesus called his closest associates to proclaim the Kingdom of God (cf. *Lk* 10:9). In the first place, it is clear that the first thing he did was to pray for them: before calling them, Jesus spent the night alone in prayer, listening to the will of the Father (cf. *Lk* 6:12) in a spirit of interior detachment from mundane concerns. It is Jesus' intimate conversation with the Father which results in the calling of his disciples. Vocations to the ministerial priesthood and to the consecrated life are first and foremost the fruit of constant contact with the living God and insistent prayer lifted up to the "Lord of the harvest", whether in parish communities, in Christian families or in groups specifically devoted to prayer for vocations.

At the beginning of his public life, the Lord called some fishermen on the shore of the Sea of Galilee: "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" (*Mt* 4:19). He revealed his messianic mission to them by the many "signs" which showed his love for humanity and the gift of the Father's mercy. Through his words and his way of life he prepared them to carry on his saving work. Finally, knowing "that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father" (*Jn* 13:1), he entrusted to them the memorial of his death and resurrection, and before ascending into heaven he sent them out to the whole world with the command: "Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations" (*Mt* 28:19).

It is a challenging and uplifting invitation that Jesus addresses to those to whom he says: "Follow me!". He invites them to become his friends, to listen attentively to his word and to live with him. He teaches them complete commitment to God and to the extension of his

kingdom in accordance with the law of the Gospel: “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit ” (*Jn* 12:24). He invites them to leave behind their own narrow agenda and their notions of self-fulfilment in order to immerse themselves in another will, the will of God, and to be guided by it. He gives them an experience of fraternity, one born of that total openness to God (cf. *Mt* 12:49-50) which becomes the hallmark of the community of Jesus: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (*Jn* 13:35).

It is no less challenging to follow Christ today. It means learning to keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, growing close to him, listening to his word and encountering him in the sacraments; it means learning to conform our will to his. This requires a genuine school of formation for all those who would prepare themselves for the ministerial priesthood or the consecrated life under the guidance of the competent ecclesial authorities. The Lord does not fail to call people at every stage of life to share in his mission and to serve the Church in the ordained ministry and in the consecrated life. The Church is “called to safeguard this gift, to esteem it and love it. She is responsible for the birth and development of priestly vocations” (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 41). Particularly in these times, when the voice of the Lord seems to be drowned out by “other voices” and his invitation to follow him by the gift of one’s own life may seem too difficult, every Christian community, every member of the Church, needs consciously to feel responsibility for promoting vocations. It is important to encourage and support those who show clear signs of a call to priestly life and religious consecration, and to enable them to feel the warmth of the whole community as they respond “yes” to God and the Church. I encourage them, in the same words which I addressed to those who have already chosen to enter the seminary: “You have done a good thing. Because people will always have need of God, even in an age marked by technical mastery of the world and globalization: they will always need the God who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ, the God who gathers us together in the universal Church in order to learn with him and through him life’s true meaning and in order to uphold and apply the standards of true humanity” (*Letter to Seminarians*, 18 October 2010).

It is essential that every local Church become more sensitive and attentive to the pastoral care of vocations, helping children and young people in particular at every level of family, parish and associations – as Jesus did with his disciples - to grow into a genuine and affectionate friendship with the Lord, cultivated through personal and liturgical prayer; to grow in familiarity with the sacred Scriptures and thus to listen attentively and fruitfully to the word of God; to understand that entering into God’s will does not crush or destroy a person, but instead leads to the discovery of the deepest truth about ourselves; and finally to be generous and fraternal in relationships with others, since it is only in being open to the love of God that we discover true joy and the fulfilment of our aspirations. “Proposing Vocations in the Local Church” means having the courage, through an attentive and suitable concern for vocations, to point out this challenging way of following Christ which, because it is so rich in meaning, is capable of engaging the whole of one’s life.

I address a particular word to you, my dear brother Bishops. To ensure the continuity and growth of your saving mission in Christ, you should “foster priestly and religious vocations as much as possible, and should take a special interest in missionary vocations” (*Christus Dominus*, 15). The Lord needs you to cooperate with him in ensuring that his call reaches the hearts of those whom he has chosen. Choose carefully those who work in the Diocesan Vocations Office, that valuable means for the promotion and organization of the pastoral care of vocations and the prayer which sustains it and guarantees its effectiveness. I would also

remind you, dear brother Bishops, of the concern of the universal Church for an equitable distribution of priests in the world. Your openness to the needs of dioceses experiencing a dearth of vocations will become a blessing from God for your communities and a sign to the faithful of a priestly service that generously considers the needs of the entire Church.

The Second Vatican Council explicitly reminded us that “the duty of fostering vocations pertains to the whole Christian community, which should exercise it above all by a fully Christian life” (*Optatam Totius*, 2). I wish, then, to say a special word of acknowledgment and encouragement to those who work closely in various ways with the priests in their parishes. In particular, I turn to those who can offer a specific contribution to the pastoral care of vocations: to priests, families, catechists and leaders of parish groups. I ask priests to testify to their communion with their bishop and their fellow priests, and thus to provide a rich soil for the seeds of a priestly vocation. May families be “animated by the spirit of faith and love and by the sense of duty” (*Optatam Totius*, 2) which is capable of helping children to welcome generously the call to priesthood and to religious life. May catechists and leaders of Catholic groups and ecclesial movements, convinced of their educational mission, seek to “guide the young people entrusted to them so that these will recognize and freely accept a divine vocation” (*ibid.*).

Dear brothers and sisters, your commitment to the promotion and care of vocations becomes most significant and pastorally effective when carried out in the unity of the Church and in the service of communion. For this reason, every moment in the life of the Church community – catechesis, formation meetings, liturgical prayer, pilgrimages – can be a precious opportunity for awakening in the People of God, and in particular in children and young people, a sense of belonging to the Church and of responsibility for answering the call to priesthood and to religious life by a free and informed decision.

The ability to foster vocations is a hallmark of the vitality of a local Church. With trust and perseverance let us invoke the aid of the Virgin Mary, that by the example of her own acceptance of God’s saving plan and her powerful intercession, every community will be more and more open to saying “yes” to the Lord who is constantly calling new labourers to his harvest. With this hope, I cordially impart to all my Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 15 November 2010

BENEDICTUS PP. XVI

Appendix II

Lent 2011
Congregation for the Oriental Rites

Your Excellency,

Remembering the Good Friday Collection means recalling a commitment that dates back to apostolic times. St Paul testifies to it in his Letter to the Christians of Galatia: they would have us remember the poor, which very thing I was eager to do (2:10). And he reasserted this

to the brethren of Corinth and of Rome (1 Co 16; 2 Co 8-9; Rm 15): However, I am going... to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.

The Holy Land expects the brotherhood of the universal Church and desires to reciprocate it in sharing the experience of grace and suffering that marks her journey. She wishes to recognize, first of all, the grace of the Synod of Bishops for the Middle East, and that of the Papal Visit to Cyprus. These events have increased the interest of the world and the return of a great number of pilgrims in the historical footsteps of the Lord Jesus. Yet also tangible is sorrow at the escalating violence to Christians in Eastern regions whose consequences are felt acutely in the Holy Land. The Christians of the East are experiencing the actuality of martyrdom and are suffering because of the instability or absence of peace. The most disturbing sign of this is their inexorable exodus. Indeed a few positive signs in some situations do not suffice to invert the sorrowful tendency of Christian emigration which impoverishes the entire area, draining it of the most vital forces constituted by the young generations.

It is therefore up to us to join the Holy Father to encourage the Christians of Jerusalem, Israel and Palestine, of Jordan and of the surrounding Eastern countries, with his same words: We must never resign ourselves to the absence of peace. Peace is possible. Peace is urgent. Peace is the indispensable condition for a life worthy of humanity and society. Peace is also the best remedy to avoid emigration from the Middle East (Benedict XVI, Homily at the Mass for the closing of the Special Assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops).

This appeal for the Collection is inherent in the cause of peace, of which the brothers and sisters of the Holy Land desire to be effective instruments in the hands of the Lord for the good of the whole of the East.

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The Congregation for the Eastern Churches acts as spokesperson for these Churches' needs for pastoral care, education, social assistance and charity. Thanks to universal solidarity, they continue to be integrated in the sufferings and hopes of the respective peoples, developing in ecumenical and interreligious collaboration. They will give glory to God and will defend the rights and duties of the individuals and communities, starting with the personal and public exercise of religious freedom. They will stand beside the poor, without any distinction, contributing to the social promotion of the Middle East. Above all, they will live out the Gospel Beatitudes in forgiveness and reconciliation.

Pope Benedict invites us, however, to go beyond the gesture, although it is praiseworthy, of concrete help. The relationship must become more intense in order to attain a "true spirituality anchored to the Land of Jesus": The more we appreciate the universality and the uniqueness of Christ's person, the more we look with gratitude to that land where Jesus was born, where he lived and where

he gave his life for us. The stones on which our Redeemer walked are still charged with his memory and continue to 'cry out' the Good News ... Christians who dwell in the land of Jesus and bear witness to their faith in the Risen One... are called to serve not only as 'a beacon of faith for the universal Church, but also as a leaven of harmony, wisdom, and equilibrium in the life Of a society which traditionally has been, and continues to be, pluralistic, multi-ethnic and multi-religious' (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Verbum Domini, 89

On behalf of the Holy Father I thank . e pastors and the faithful of the whole Church, confident that they will confirm their generosity. My sincere gratitude is shared by the Latin Church, gathered in the Patriarchal Diocese of Jerusalem and in the Franciscan Custody, as well as by the Melkite, Maronite, Syrian, Armenian and Chaldean Churches which together make up the Catholic Church of the Holy Land.

With my most fraternal good wishes ii' Christ Jesus,

Leonardo Card. Sandri
Prefect

Appendix III

Papal Address on Sacrament of Reconciliation
"How Many Conversions ... Began in a Confessional" (Zenit)

Dear Friends,

I am very glad to address to each one of you my most cordial welcome. I greet Cardinal Fortunato Baldelli, Major Penitentiary, and I thank him for his courteous words. I greet Bishop Gianfranco Girotti, Regent of the Penitentiary, the personnel, the co-workers and all the participants in the Course on the Internal Forum which has now become a traditional appointment and an important occasion for deepening the knowledge of topics linked to the sacrament of Penance. I would like to reflect with you on an aspect not sufficiently thought about but which is of great spiritual and pastoral importance: the pedagogical value of Sacramental Confession.

Although it is true that it is always necessary to safeguard the objectivity of the effects of the sacrament and its correct celebration in accordance with the norms of the Rite of Penance, it is not out of place to reflect on how much it can educate the faith of both the minister and the penitent. The faithful and generous availability of priests to hear confessions - after the example of the great saints of the past from St John Mary Vianney to St John Bosco, from St Josemaría Escrivá to St Pius of Pietrelcina, from St Joseph Cafasso to St Leopold Mandi - shows all of us that the confessional may be a real "place" of sanctification.

How does the sacrament of Penance educate? In what sense does its celebration have pedagogical value, especially for ministers? We may start by recognizing that the mission of priests is a unique and privileged observation point, from which it is daily granted to contemplate the splendour of divine Mercy. How often in celebrating the sacrament of Penance the priest witnesses real miracles of conversion which, in renewing "the encounter with an event, a person" (Deus Caritas Est, n. 1), reinforces his own faith! Basically, hearing confession means witnessing as many professiones fidei as there are penitents, and

contemplating the merciful God's action in history, feeling tangibly the saving effects of the Cross and of the Resurrection of Christ, in every epoch and for every person.

We are often faced with true and proper existential and spiritual dramas that find no answer in human words but are embraced and taken up by divine Love, which pardons and transforms: "though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow (Is 1:18).

If, on the one hand knowing and, in a certain way, visiting the depths of the human heart, even its darkest aspects, tests the humanity and the faith of the priest himself, on the other, it fosters within him the certainty that it is God who has the last word over human evil and history, it is his Mercy which can make all things new (cf. Rev 21:5).

Then, how much the priest can learn from exemplary penitents: through their spiritual life, the seriousness with which they carry out their examination of conscience, the transparency with which they admit their sins and their docility to the Church's teaching and to the confessor's instructions.

From the administration of the sacrament of Penance we may draw profound lessons of humility and faith! It is a very strong appeal to each priest for knowledge of his own identity. We will never be able to hear the confessions of our brothers and sisters solely by virtue of our humanity! If they approach us, it is only because we are priests, configured to Christ the Eternal High Priest, and enabled to act in his Name and in his Person, to make God who forgives, renews and transforms, truly present. The celebration of the sacrament of Penance has a pedagogical value for the priest, as regards his faith, as well as the truth and poverty of his person, and nourishes within him an awareness of the sacramental identity.

What is the pedagogical value of the sacrament of Penance for penitents? We should state beforehand that first and foremost it depends on the action of Grace and on the objective effect on the soul of the member of the faithful. Of course, sacramental Reconciliation is one of the moments in which personal freedom and an awareness of self need to be expressed particularly clearly. It is perhaps also for this reason, in an epoch of relativism and of the consequent attenuated awareness of one's being, that this sacramental practice is also weakened.

Examination of conscience has an important pedagogical value. It teaches us how to look squarely at our life, to compare it with the truth of the Gospel and to evaluate it with parameters that are not only human but are also borrowed from divine Revelation. Comparison with the Commandments, with the Beatitudes and, especially, with the Precept of love, constitutes the first great "school of penance".

In our time, marked by noise, distraction and loneliness, the penitent's conversation with the confessor can be one of the few - if not the only - opportunities to be truly heard in depth.

Dear priests, do not neglect to allow enough room for the exercise of the ministry of Penance in the confessional: to be welcomed and heard is also a human sign of God's welcoming kindness to his children. Moreover the integral confession of sins teaches the penitent humility, recognition of his or her own frailty and, at the same time, an awareness of the need for God's forgiveness and the trust that divine Grace can transform his life. Likewise,

listening to the confessor's recommendations and advice is important for judging actions, for the spiritual journey and for the inner healing of the penitent.

Let us not forget how many conversions and how many truly holy lives began in a confessional! The acceptance of the penance and listening to the words "I absolve you from your sins", are, lastly, a true school of love and hope that guides the person to full trust in the God Love, revealed in Jesus Christ, to responsibility and to the commitment to continuous conversion.

Dear priests, our own prior experience of divine Mercy and of being humble instruments teaches us an ever more faithful celebration of the Sacrament of Penance and profound gratitude to God who "gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18).

I entrust to the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mater misericordiae and Refugium peccatorum, the fruits of your Course on the Internal Forum and the ministry of all Confessors, as I bless you all with great affection.

Benedict XVI