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A Land of Missionaries, Immigrants and Saints

O'Meara Ferguson Acquires SchoolOne SIS Software Business

(GSN) Stewards of Religious Liberty

(podcast) I Thirst



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## On the Feast of the Ugandan Martyrs, O'Meara Ferguson Continues to Lay the Foundation for the Pelican Africa Fund

**By Patrick O'Meara**

I recently returned from East Africa where I spoke to the Ugandan Episcopal Conference on the Development of the Lay vocation through actions in Investment vs Aid. This talk was very much derived from *Caritas in Veritate* where the Holy Father tells us, "The development of man cannot be achieved on his own, nor can it be handed to him." (CV, #11) The talk was received quite well and was followed by very lively discussion by the bishops. The next day Philip Ashton and Bob Chronowski presented a similar talk to 40 men's and women's religious order superiors within Uganda.

This was the third trip to East Africa by teams from O'Meara Ferguson looking at whether we could effectively invest in the local economies, stimulate the development of man where he believes fully that he must be the primary agent of change in his own life, stimulate the economy, build up the People of God locally, and return investment capital with increase to the investors. In short, can we successfully engage in the work the Holy Father called for in *Caritas in Veritate*? Our response is that we believe that we can incarnate the Holy Father's vision of development in partnership with Caritas Uganda, the Ugandan Episcopal Conference, a local catholic university, and with local business leaders.

In my presentation to the Episcopal Conference I began with a passage from St. Paul because Christ must be the foundation of this work:

"Therefore, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who causes the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters are equal and each will receive wages in proportion to his labor. We are

God's co-workers, you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But each one must be careful how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light for the day will disclose it." (1 Cor. 3:7-13)

The presentation had three main points. The first point was that real development is based on a true understanding of the vocation of man. In *Lumen Gentium* we are told that the lay vocation is to engage the temporal world and order it to the building of the Kingdom of God. While we consider partnering with the Church, the investments to be made would be in lay run businesses, with some possible church ownership, but always with the clarity that these investments are to be made as investments in the development of the human person. Much private equity in Africa is being invested in natural resources exploitation (mines, oil, etc.), where man is the grist in the mill of unlocking the value of the resource. We are not seeking to do this, rather seeking to invest in people who create value as part of their inherent vocation as human beings made in the image and likeness of God.

The second point was that our approach is fundamentally full of hope; hope in the human person. Pope Benedict explains, "It is therefore a serious mistake to undervalue human capacity to exercise control over the deviations of development, or to overlook the fact that man is constitutionally oriented to

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being more.” (CV #14) This hope is in man, but is also in the unseen, in Christ's power as we gather in his name and use our gifts to invest in the expansion of existing businesses with a history of performance, and in people who better their environment, and who support the People of God wherever they find their home.

Lastly we spoke of a partnership with the Episcopacy as shepherds of all the people with whom we would be in relationship. “Authentic development has to promote the good of every man and the whole man.” (CV #10) We must seek to not only develop the economic good, but the whole person, and the community itself. For this we will rely upon our partners using a mechanism called for in Proposition #17 of the Second Synod of African Bishops which called for greater self-reliance, while working towards social justice and the eradication of poverty. This Proposition out of all the propositions received the most positive votes at the Synod. Archbishop Cyprian Lwanga, Primate of Uganda and Archbishop of Kampala, repeatedly referred us to Pope Benedict's *Africae Munus* as the Church's roadmap for Africa to evangelization, integral human development, and self-reliance. He also cited the Holy Father's words at the Presidential Palace in Cotonou, Nov 19, 2011, “Take Courage, Africa and Rise up.”

This exhortation is one that calls for solutions that build the vocation and dignity of each human person...namely partnerships of investment, not aid.

While we were in Uganda we had the blessing of being with over 1 million (estimates went to as high as 2 million) other pilgrims at the Shrine of the Ugandan Martyrs on their feast day located at Namugongo in Kampala. This wonderful six hour Mass was a grace filled event where the offertory procession evidenced a giving to God gifts of the literal first fruits of the people's labor such as goats, calves, chickens and produce, that I had not ever understood as fully as I do after seeing the gifts brought up at Namugongo. This and the faith evidenced as the Eucharist was distributed were fantastic. I was amazed at the peace, faith, and devotion of pilgrims who walked for days, or even weeks, to reach the shrine, sleeping on the ground on the way, and after arrival. It was a witness of faith alive that all “developed countries” should behold first hand.

We are very close to completing the structure for a new business initiative and we are looking forward to bringing to fruition this good work, that we pray the Lord has begun and will continue to bless.