

UGANDA: Inflation Threatens Formation of New Priests

GULU, September 2, 2011 (CISA) -Rampant inflation and other severe economic troubles are threatening to close seminaries in Uganda, despite the growing number of catholic priestly vocations.

Rev Fr Cosmas Alule, rector of Alokolum Major Seminary in Gulu, said that increasing fuel prices have driven up the cost of food with staple commodities quadrupling in price over the last year.

Since August of 2010, the rate of inflation in Uganda has risen from 1.7 percent to approximately 19 percent.

“We can hardly meet the costs of our basic needs, despite the fact that we grow rice, beans, maize and vegetables in our gardens in order to reduce our food costs,” he told the Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need.

Rev Fr Alule said that the causes of the economic crisis in Uganda can be traced not only to widespread drought, but the costly parliamentary election campaign last February.

“The government has spent money irresponsibly for political purposes, instead of looking after the well being of the people,” he said.

Alokolum Seminary is based in an area that has endured over 20 years of civil war between the Ugandan government and the Lord’s Resistance Army.

Although the seminary does not have enough land, it has had to stop all building because materials have become increasingly expensive.

However, with 209 students expected this new academic year , 26 more than the previous year , building has become necessary.

Rev Fr Alule said that the economic situation is affecting other seminaries in the country as well.

He also added that despite over 1,000 young men preparing for the priesthood in the country’s five seminaries last year alone, there is still a shortage of priests in many parts of the country.

Forty five percent of Uganda’s population of 33 million, he explained, is Catholic.