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‘Miracle child’ now a priest

ANNE DIBERNARDO - FORT LAUDERDALE
Florida Catholic correspondent
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ANNE DIBERNARDO | FLC
Father Linus Nangwele cuts cake with children from St. Anthony Parish and School after a celebration June 13 marking the groundbreaking for a new church and kindergarten in his home village in Ghana, Africa. The parish, also named St. Anthony, is now the sister parish to the one in Fort Lauderdale.

When Father Linus Nangwele was barely four years old, he became very ill and stopped breathing. But his mother, Margaret, refused to believe that her son was dead so she created a fabric sling and carried him 25 miles on foot to the nearest clinic.

She arrived 14 hours later and begged the nurses to help her son. But they declared him dead, advising her to return home and bury him.

Refusing to believe, Margaret raised such a commotion that the doctor agreed to perform an autopsy, only to discover that little Linus was not really dead. The doctor performed emergency surgery and Linus spent the next two years in the hospital recovering.

Thirty-three years later, the people in Kalsegra still believe Father Nangwele is a ghost or, at best, a mystery.

Father Nangwele often tells this story about his childhood, in part to explain his vocation. As an expression of his infinite gratitude to God, Father Nangwele responded to the call to the priesthood in 1993 and was ordained in 2000 as a priest for the Archdiocese of Tamale in northern Ghana.

He came to the United States in 2005 and earned a master's degree in theology from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles. In an effort to contribute to peace-building efforts in the world and in Africa, he is pursuing a doctorate in conflict analysis and resolution at Nova Southeastern University in Davie.

St. Anthony School's second grade teacher, Lynn Hoffman, said her students are especially drawn to Father Nangwele, whom they call Father Linus.

"They reach out to touch him because they can feel that he is doing the work of God and they sense the Holy Spirit is working in him," said Hoffman's assistant, Tracy Bartholomew.

"We love Father Linus because he makes up songs and tells us stories," said Brandon Kelly, 11, as his sister, Sheena Kelly, 15, nodded in agreement.

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