

Spring 2022

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UKRAINE AND POLAND.**

Our missionaries in Poland have welcomed refugees into our religious houses. Three of our missionaries remain in the western part of Ukraine to look after their parishioners and displaced citizens.

Thanks to the refugee relief fund, our missionaries were able to immediately jump into action, providing food, clothing, shelter, translation services, language classes and more to those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

**\$12**



Feed and shelter one refugee for one day, in our communities.

**\$36**



Provide food, clothing and basic necessities for a mother and her two children for one day.

**\$360**



Support a refugee for one month with food, clothing and shelter.

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Let us know so we can  
**Thank You!**

## EDITORIAL

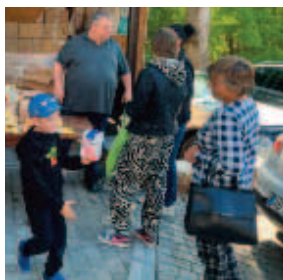
A phrase we like to use around the Mission Center to describe our missionaries' commitment is:

**"In the face of need, we act."**

In the face of needs that, unfortunately, are common throughout the world—hunger, homelessness, disease—Divine Word Missionaries act. When extraordinary needs occur, events such as natural disasters, Divine Word Missionaries **act**.

Right now, the people of Ukraine are facing extraordinary needs, and Divine Word Missionaries have acted. Right after Vladimir Putin's unjust invasion of that country, our three missionaries serving in Ukraine vowed they would remain to look after their parishioners and other Ukrainians devastated by the war.

All three missionaries serve in western Ukraine, a region mostly spared the violence experienced in the eastern half of the country. At the Divine Word parish in Verboviets, a summer retreat center was transformed into a shelter for refugees. The parish also has become a collection center for food, medical supplies and other necessities.



Meanwhile, our missionaries in neighboring Poland have acted as more than 3.6 million Ukrainian refugees have poured across the border. Not only have our missionaries been providing or

finding shelter, they have tried to ease the refugees' transition to their new country by providing Polish language classes and job-hunting workshops.

The Ukrainian refugees could use your help as well. We have started an emergency fund so that Divine Word Missionaries in Ukraine, Poland and other European countries can minister to those caught in this sudden refugee crisis.

***Your gift of \$12 can feed and shelter a refugee for one day.***

***Your gift of \$360 can support a refugee for one month.***

The war in Ukraine has shocked the world. We can't end the war, *but with your help we can assist as many refugees as possible.*

To give online visit **[www.svdmissions.org/ukraine](http://www.svdmissions.org/ukraine)**.

Thank you and God bless you for your support.

Yours in the Divine Word,

*Bro. Daniel J. Holman SVD*  
Bro. Daniel Holman SVD  
Mission Director

Contact me any time, my email address is:  
**[director@svdmissions.org](mailto:director@svdmissions.org)**

**Thank you  
for your  
prayers & support!**



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Jeffrey Westhoff

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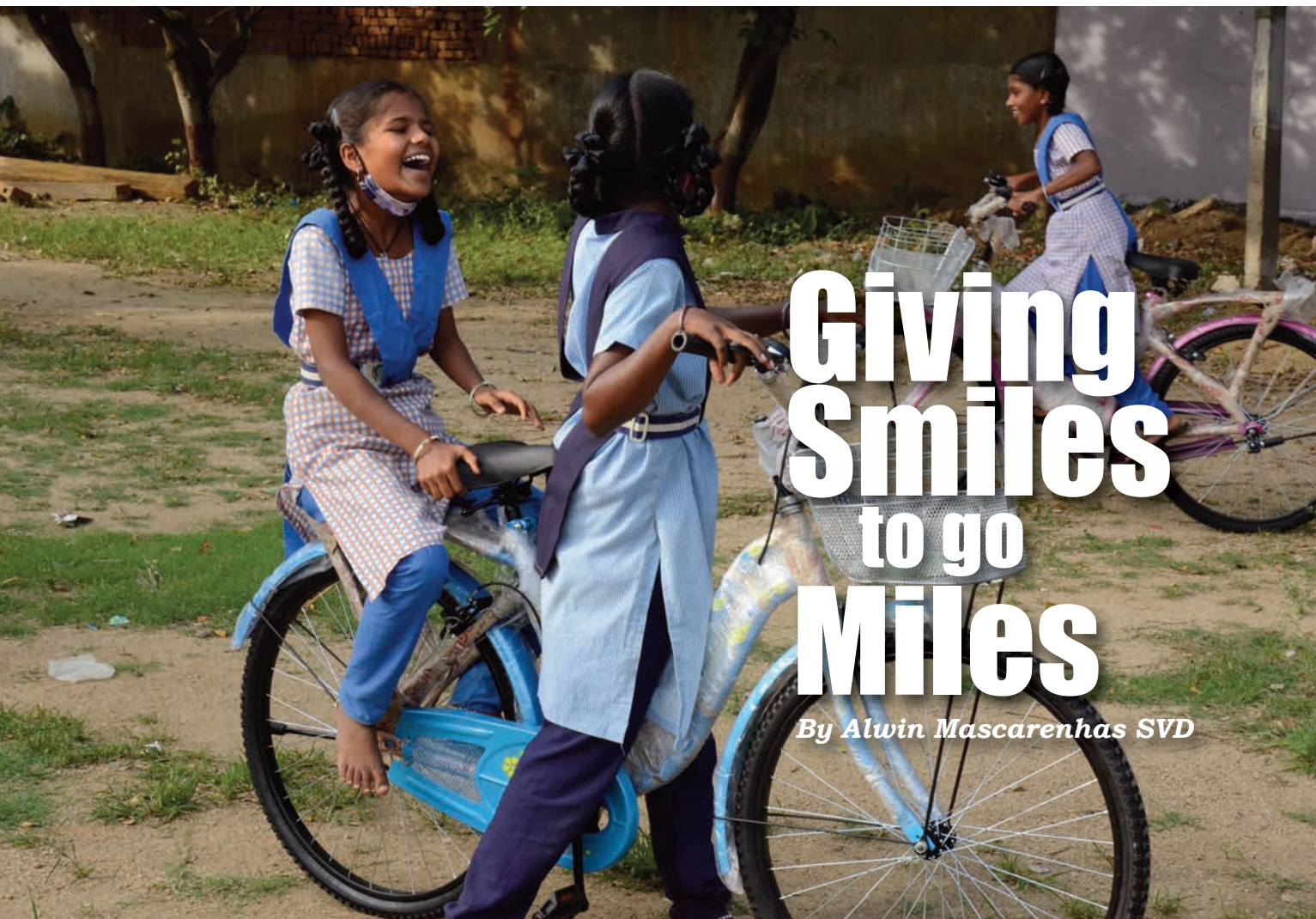
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# Giving Smiles to go Miles

*By Alwin Mascarenhas SVD*

## **In India, girls receive bicycles to improve their education**

Girl by girl they rode away, with bright smiles on their faces. These high school students from the Hyderabad area of India were joyfully pedalling bicycles given to them by Divine Word Social Service Society.

These bikes were not just gifts to make them happy. These young women received bikes to improve their education.



Divine Word Social Service Society is a multipurpose organization operated by Divine Word Missionaries in the India - Hyderabad Province. It strives to bring about economic development and social stability while reducing disparity in all its forms. Through its multifaceted programs, DWSSS works with various sections of society regardless of caste, creed or religion.

The idea for the bicycle giveaway came from a series of seminars and cultural awareness talks conducted in our re-





*Father Alwin Mascarenhas SVD (pictured left and below) is the director of Divine Word Social Service Society in Hyderabad, India.*



gion's high schools. The seminars promoted awareness of children's rights and the protection of girls. The goal of this program was to educate children about their rights and to help them understand the laws that protect them.

During these seminars, one important issue came to our notice: the dropout rate among girls.

One of the reasons attributed to this high dropout rate was a lack of reliable transportation to school. Talking with the students, we learned that many of the girls live in small hamlets lacking public transportation. There might be only one or two public buses a day that could take them to school. If the girls missed the bus, they had to walk long distances to reach school and were often late for class.

DWSSS discussed how to discourage these disadvantaged girls from dropping out by helping them get to school. To resolve the transportation problem, it was

suggested that the girls ride to school on bicycles, a simple means of reliable transportation. However, in talking with the girls we found that many of their parents could not afford to buy them a bicycle.

Thus the bicycle giveaway program was established. The main objective of this program is as follows:

- Promote formal education among girls from interior tribal hamlets
- Provide the best means of transport without dependency on public transit
- Motivate dropouts to return to school
- Ensure completion of formal education by girls to reduce gender disparity
- Encourage the inclusion of girls in all activities

We started with a test program. The girls had to be hardworking and they had to excel in their studies. Several female students were selected from remote rural schools and were given bicycles. The pilot pro-





**To resolve the transportation problem, it was suggested that the girls ride to school on bicycles, a simple means of reliable transportation. However, in talking with the girls we found that many of their parents could not afford to buy them a bicycle.**

gram proved successful! So, DWSSS made plans to continue this good work in several more remote schools of Telangana state.

We asked the parish priests and high school principals in several interior rural hamlets to identify female students who were maintaining high grades. They selected 250 girls, so we purchased 250 bicycles in bulk. Then at these various villages we staged events to distribute the bicycles. The students were delighted!

The main objective of this program was to encourage these girls to continue their high school education without worrying about how they will get to school. As the program progressed we have seen other benefits emerge. The girls have gained self-confidence as well as motivation. Because it takes them less time to get home from school, they now have more time to study. And, as hoped, we have seen many dropouts return to their studies.

This project has also given the girls' parents peace of mind. They are happy that their girls will continue to better themselves through education. They are happy their girls don't have to rely on inefficient and costly public transportation; their bicycles are an economical way to travel to school.





The bicycle giveaway program has proved to be a very effective and popular project. The smiles we see on the girls' faces speaks volumes about the gift they received and its usefulness in their lives. This success has prompted DWSS to continue the project in more remote schools in our province. We hope as word gets out that the project will motivate more girls to study harder so that, one day, they might be eligible to receive the gift of a bicycle.

This project already has shown hundreds of female students that they are second to none—they can achieve anything through perseverance and hard work. The bicycles have been a priceless gift to them. Although these girls may be economically poor, the bicycles have made them academically wealthy, giving them the means and confidence to complete their education and go on to a better future. ♦



**This project already has shown hundreds of female students that they are second to none—they can achieve anything through perseverance and hard work.**

**These bicycles are a priceless gift to them and their future...**

**www.svdmissions.org DONATE TODAY**

**YOUR GIFT WILL MAKE AN  
IMPACT  
AROUND THE WORLD**

**PLEASE HELP US  
CHANGE  
THE WORLD**



**Thank you  
for your  
prayers &  
support!**





## One Year as a Priest

*Looking back with gratitude,  
looking forward with hope*

*By Clement Baffoe SVD*

**Editor's note:**

**Father Clement Baffoe SVD, a missionary from Ghana now serving in Australia, wrote this reflection on completing his first year as a priest in November 2021. Even though several months have passed since this anniversary, we believe our readers will appreciate the honest thoughts of one of our missionaries as he reached a milestone in his vocation.**

As the saying goes, “They who do not know where they are coming from would not know where they are going.” This saying indicates that once in a while it’s worth pausing and reflecting on where you have come from. I look back not because I have nostalgic feelings for the past, but because it helps me to appreciate God’s grace in the past and to help me to reorder my future.

It has been exactly one year since I was ordained a priest. On that fateful day of Nov. 28, 2020, I was full of mixed feelings. I was happy that God had found me, even though unworthy to work in his vineyard. At the same time I was afraid and felt very much inadequate. I think this feeling of inadequacy has always reminded me to be humble. I wasn’t called because I merited it but because God wanted to glorify himself through me, a broken vessel.

When I arrived in Townsville at the beginning of this year, my first shock began at the airport. Having arrived in a jumper [a sweater – ed.] from a cold morning in Melbourne, the humidity outside the Townsville airport taught me I was in a different environment.



*Pictured left: Jonathan Thurston, popular football player of North Queensland, with Fr. Clement, and Fr. Dave, at the baptism of Mr. Thurston's daughter.*

*Pictured right: Fr. Dave explaining some parish activities.*







I was warmly received by the people of God and by Father Dave Lancini, the former pastor who retired shortly before my arrival. Fr. Dave's presence and guidance in the early days was a huge blessing. Even though the task ahead looked daunting, he kept encouraging me. He shared many things with me, but the one that stood out was when he said, "Clement, always be there for the people and don't stop smiling."

What has the experience been in this first year of my priesthood? It's been a time of great learning. I have tried to unlearn some things and learn new things. I have experienced love from parishioners and many non-parishioners. I have laughed with families at baptisms and weddings, and also I have cried with families at hospitals and funerals.

I have been privileged to share in people's sacred stories around meals. I have equally been privileged to celebrate many school Masses and liturgies. These have been opportunities for encounter as I get to share stories with our beautiful students.

My first year of the priesthood has been a ministry of

presence. That is, being where I am most needed at any point in time.

I have experienced challenges in this first year as well. Some of the challenges have been my inability to celebrate my Thanksgiving Mass after my ordination with my family and my inability to be around my father in his last days and for his burial. Whereas these have been some of my challenges, they have also helped me to understand what the priesthood is about. It's about letting go of some of my comforts in order for God's will to be done.

As the first year of my priesthood ends, I am encouraged to look to the future with hope. In the coming months and years, it's my hope that God will continually use me for his purpose. It is my soul's desire that God always visits his people through my ministry of breaking his bread, through confessions and even through casual encounters. Please when you say your prayers, remember me in that sacred space of yours. ♦

*Fr Clement Baffoe SVD is assistant priest at the Ministerial Region of the Good Shepherd in Townsville.*



*Pictured left:  
At the home of a parishioner whose husband's death anniversary was marked with a prayer service.*

*Pictured right:  
SVD confreres at retreat in North Queensland sharing mission experiences by the fireside*





# Khawaja... Falata, I am here!

*By Shiju Paul SVD*



***Father Shiju Paul SVD is the first Divine Word Missionary to serve in South Sudan since the original mission there was evacuated in 2016 in the midst of that country's civil war.***

***Three Divine Word pioneers established that mission in March 2012, less than a year after South Sudan won its independence from Sudan. The three missionaries settled in Holy Family Parish in Lainya, a village about 30 miles north of the Uganda border. They were eventually joined by two more confreres.***



***At the end of 2013, civil war broke out in the young nation. In May 2016 Holy Spirit Missionary Sister Veronika Terézia Racková SSps was shot by soldiers while driving an ambulance in Yei. She died of her injuries four days later. Hostilities reached Lainya in July 2016. After soldiers occupied the Holy Family compound for four days, killing a local man who had sought shelter there, the South Sudan mission team was evacuated to Kenya.***

***Four members of that team have relocated to Uganda to look after the thousands of South Sudanese refugees now living in the Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement.***

***Fr. Paul also looks after refugees. Working with Jesuit Refugee Service, he cares for refugees from Sudan's civil war now living in refugee camps in South Sudan. Here he discusses the challenges he faces.***





Children and adults scream, “Khawaja.” It means a foreigner! Some on the Jesuit Refugee Service staff call me “Falata” because of my dark brown skin. Falatas are nomadic Muslims of Arab tribes who rear vast herds of cattle and move across a wide territory in Chad, southern Sudan and South Sudan’s Upper Nile state.

In 2011, South Sudan gained its independence from Sudan, ending Africa’s longest-running civil war. Two years later South Sudan’s own civil war began. Today South Sudan ranks behind Syria, Venezuela and Afghanistan in the number of refugees: 2.2 million, most of whom have fled to neighboring Uganda.

Since April 2021, I have lived in Maban County in the Upper Nile State of South Sudan. It borders the Blue Nile State of Sudan to the east. Ethnic Mabanese people make up a significant majority of Maban’s population.



The Blue Nile State in Sudan is rich with fertile soil and minerals. It is into this state that the Blue Nile River enters Sudan. Historically, everyone wanted a share of Blue Nile’s rich agricultural and grazing fields; mineral resources such as gold and chrome; and various natural resources such as trees and Nile water. Frequent conflicts to control these resources between the indigenous tribes of Blue Nile and others can be traced back well before 1956 when Sudan became an independent country.

#### **SOURCE OF CONFLICT**

After the country’s independence, these resources fed the political elites of the north with revenues, hydroelectric

power and industrial-scale gold mining. The socioeconomic development of the indigenous tribes was ignored. The Khartoum government encouraged new groups of Arab origins to occupy and settle this fertile land to exploit its natural and mineral resources.

As a result, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army was formed in 1983 to counteract such exploitation. Sudanese armed forces regularly carried out aerial bombing and shelling of rebel positions and civilian villages, resulting in the collapse of social services and health and education. Residents were forced to flee to neighboring countries. Nearly 800,000 people lived in the Blue Nile region before the conflict. Now only 40,000 to 60,000 live there.

In December 2013, civil war in South Sudan erupted when tensions within the ruling Sudan People’s Liberation Movement led to the outbreak of armed conflict between the SPLM and the opposition movement that became known as the SPLM-IO (“in opposition”).

#### **REFUGEE CAMPS AND DIVISIONS**

There are currently four major refugee camps in South Sudan’s Maban County. They are Kaya, Batil, Gendiras

and Doro. They host more than 141,500 refugees. Even though all these refugees hail from Blue Nile State, the camp dwellers carry their bitter ethnic divisions, and that has created a huge gulf between those in Doro camp and those living in the other three camps.

The majority arrived in 2011 and rapidly outnumbered the Mabanese host community. As a result, there has been sporadic violence between the refugees and the host community over competition for limited resources: trees for firewood, grazing land for livestock and land for farming. Access to employment has been another source of conflict.



In 2019, a vast crowd of youth forcefully entered the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees compound and those of 14 other aid agencies in Maban. That resulted in looting and arson and the destruction of vehicles, structures and lifesaving supplies including medicines. It began as a protest over NGO resources benefitting only the refugees, NGO hiring practices and lack of employment opportunities for the local community. Today there are various proxy militia groups operating both in the camps and in the local community that are supported by government factions on both sides of the border.

It is in this extremely challenging and complicated environment the Jesuit

Refugee Service is working. The agency provides psychosocial care and education. Most refugees are Muslims. JRS conducts various psychosocial programs in the camps for youth, women and men through home visitation. For young babies with physical challenges, regular physiotherapy is provided. Every refugee has stories of multiple losses and trauma. Therefore, providing care, compassion and support is an area I am fully involved during the weekdays.

### COMING TO SOUTH SUDAN

After spending four years at Divine Word Theologate in Chicago, I responded to the call from our general leadership by joining Jesuit Refugee Service. Subsequently I was sent to South Sudan where the ongoing conflicts are a multifaceted reality that takes on new dimensions because of the unresolved and unaddressed ethnic tensions.

We are two priests in JRS Maban. My companion priest is a Jesuit from Kenya who has been here for a year. I work in the camps during the week and render sacramental works during the weekends. I accompany the psychosocial team to the camps as they conduct various programs for men, women and youth. These programs run for seven to eight weeks with one module per week per group.

Those group sessions are safe spaces where participants can share their experiences and struggles. We provide an atmosphere in which participants can tell their stories of gender-based violence, pain and struggles. Women go through a lot. They have been traumatized deeply while fleeing through areas controlled by the rebels or by the military. In the camps they walk miles to get firewood on a wooden carrying pole that rests on their shoulders. They need the firewood to provide cooked food for children and the elderly.

Two months ago I joined the JRS IT team. We teach basic computer literacy skills to the youth in the camps. The team transports the necessary laptops, generator and other accessories in a pickup truck to the sites and caters to three groups a day for



approximately three months. Those who successfully complete the program receive JRS-issued certificates in basic computer literacy.

Another major commitment of JRS is providing education opportunities for children and adults. It includes a teacher training program conducted at Arrupe Learning Center at the JRS compound.

### PASTORAL WEEKEND WORK

I do pastoral and sacramental work during the weekends. The Catholic communities in the surrounding areas have been without a parish priest for many years because of the ongoing conflicts. The main church building was built of simple brick and mortar by early Comboni missionaries. It has survived wars and floods. Other centers are constructed using poles and grass or tents. This area falls under the Archdiocese of Khartoum. There are more than 55 centers scattered all over the area, and they are often not accessible due to floods and conflicts.

Most of the pastoral outreach is made possible through the catechists who stay in the villages and at the main center. They are the ones instrumental in keeping the Christian communities together and progressing in their faith. Above all, the presence of religious priests gives the host community a deep sense of hope they are not forsaken. It gives a unique identity to JRS as a faith-based organization different from other NGOs active in the area.

The presence of priests in JRS teams has given the teams protection and safety during times of conflict and violence. We have had no major damages to our property or injuries to our personnel. The pastoral program is fully integrated into the wider vision of JRS. As a Catholic organization, inspired by the compassion and love of Jesus for the poor and excluded, JRS commits to accompany, serve and advocate for the rights of the refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

Religious personnel are held in esteem as a source of guidance for the community. We are present with the community at all major life events, from birth to death, and in their formational and educational journey. Our biggest challenge is to provide ongoing human and catechetical formation programs for the catechists and leaders.

Except for the Bible and a hymn book there is nothing much available in the locally spoken Mabanese language. Most resources are in Arabic (all catechists are trained in this language). It adds extra struggle in our pastoral accompaniment as everything must be done through translators. ♦



## Typhoon Update

In the last issue of Mission Update we ran an urgent appeal to raise funds for the victims of Super Typhoon Odette (also called Rai), which ripped through the southern Philippines on Dec. 16, 2021, causing \$459 million in damage and destroying or damaging millions of homes.

We are grateful to report that **YOU gave more than \$31,000 to the fund**, enabling our missionaries in the Philippines to provide emergency food supplies in the typhoon's wake. "Thanks to your generous support, we can continue the daily distribution of food," Father Heinz Kulüke SVD reported. Fr. Heinz lives in Cebu City and has a longstanding ministry to that city's poor.

Our missionaries have moved on to the next phase of the relief program, which is to repair or rebuild homes in the south Philippines. **We thank everyone who kept the people of the Philippines in their hearts and contributed to the typhoon relief fund.**





# “Let’s Talk”

***Empowering  
the Maasai Women***

*By Lawrence Muthee SVD*



# Semezana



Last November the Christian women from Good Shepherd Parish in Simanjiro, Tanzania, gathered in one of the parish's 30 outstations for their annual forum known as Semezana—Swahili for “let’s talk.” In this forum, the women talk about the issues affecting them in their homes and how they can help one another.

The forum follows a celebration of the Eucharist. After the Mass, the women discuss a selected topic on empowerment. Then they present their challenges and talk about possible solutions. Afterward, they write all these challenges on pieces of paper. The priest prays over the pieces of paper and then sets them on fire to symbolize the women triumphing over their challenges.

The most recent Semezana focused on how women, especially the Maasai women living in cattle and sheep herding cultures, can grow their own economy independent of their husbands, who own all the sources of income in the family. It is important to note that in Maasai culture, women are counted as part of men's property. Women do not own land or profitable livestock (cows, goats and sheep). Instead, they have donkeys they use to transport water across long distances.

In my input, I focused on alternative sources of income for the women. One of my suggestions was to raise chickens. The Maasai in general do not eat chicken meat because chicken is a bird. While most men will walk away from a meal containing chicken, the women have no problem eating it.



I have had some experience with this aspect of Maasai culture. I am allergic to red meat, and when I first moved here the people had a difficult time finding what to offer me when I visited the villages for Mass. For the Maasai, to give chicken meat to a visitor, especially a priest, is considered an insult to the visitor. However, after I explained to them my red meat allergy and that chicken was my favourite meat, they started preparing chicken dishes for me. After my arrival, more women began keeping chickens at their homes.

For the last two years I have been urging women to raise chickens both for food and as a source of income. The local chicken is commonly known as Kienyeji chicken, and it is a hearty breed. Men are not interested in chickens and so the women can sell them and have some income for themselves. This has turned around the economy of women here because there currently is no homestead without chickens. I normally buy chickens from the women for my kitchen.

The next project we talked about was beekeeping. Here in Simanjiro we have a lot of wild bees. Honey has been always in demand, and people cannot produce enough. This too is not a concern for men and only women keep bees. We discussed how to keep bees for honey on a large scale.

The Christian women have groups and leaders both at the outstation level and at the parish level. Using this platform they can start common projects. The income generated by those projects can



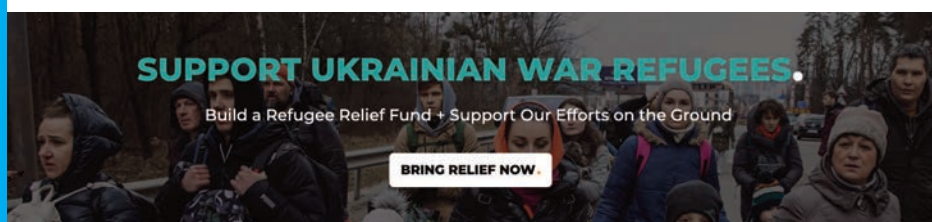


be given as soft credit to individual women and the profit shared as dividends. What the women need is capital to buy beehives and to pay for training on how to raise chickens in greater numbers.

Finally, we talked about food security. During the rainy season when there is plenty of grass, life is smooth. However, during the dry season life can be very challenging, especially for women. Though men are the ones who provide food in the family, during droughts they are not seen in the homestead. While some go with their livestock to search for grass, others keep away from home because there is nothing in their pockets. The women have to provide food for the children.

An average homestead has more than 10 to 20 children and five to 10 adults. Men care so much about the animals that during a drought they will give maize, a valuable grain, to the cows. On this challenge, we talked about how to store foodstuff such as maize and beans so that women and children do not suffer during dry seasons.

I strongly believe that as Semezana "let's talk" continues to grow it will empower the Maasai women, and the fate of the Maasai herding community will change for the better. ♦



# Help Us Support Ukrainian Refugees



## HELP REFUGEES IN UKRAINE AND POLAND.

**\$12**



Feed and shelter one refugee for one day, in our communities.

**\$36**



Provide food, clothing and basic necessities for a mother and her two children for one day.

**\$360**

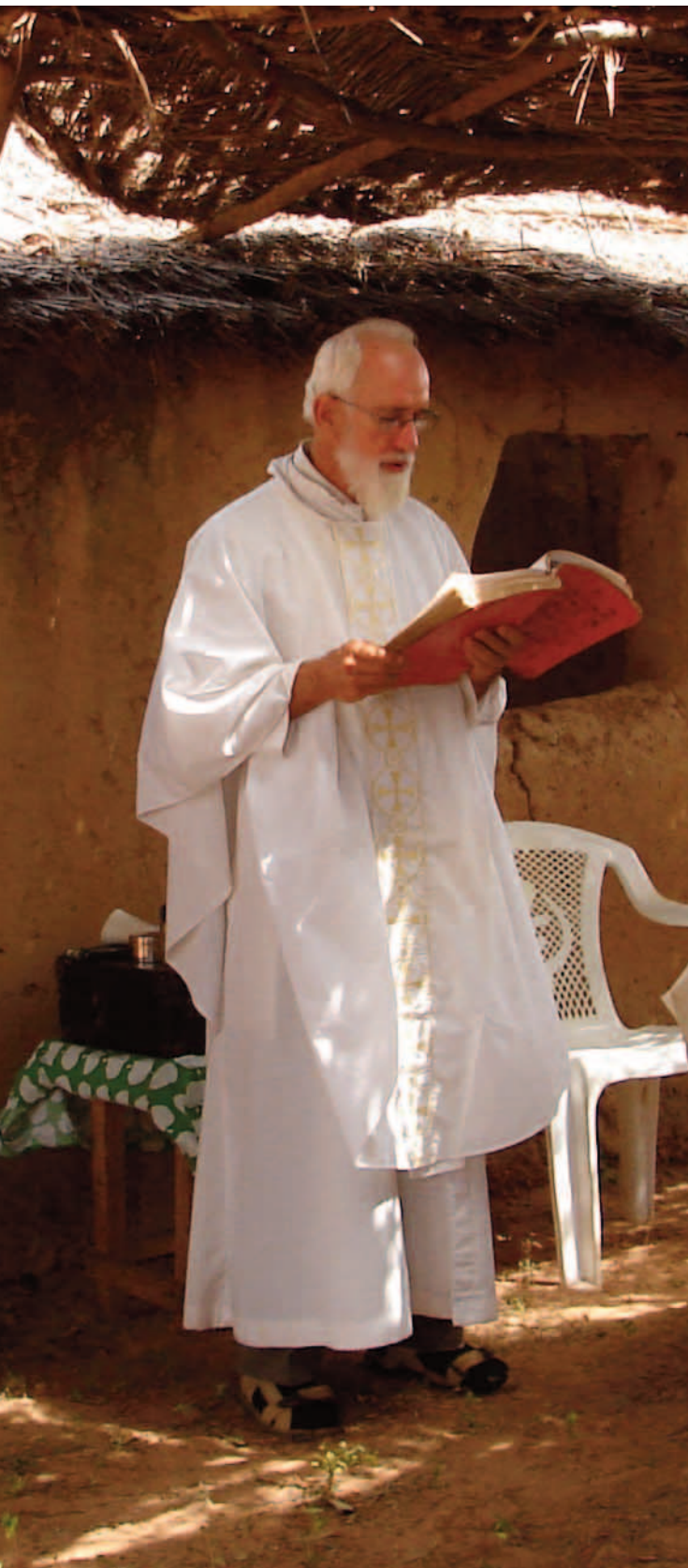


Support a refugee for one month with food, clothing and shelter.

Our missionaries in Poland have welcomed refugees into our religious houses. Three of our missionaries remain in the western part of Ukraine to look after their parishioners and displaced citizens.

Thanks to the refugee relief fund, our missionaries were able to immediately jump into action, providing food, clothing, shelter, translation services, language classes and more to those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

GIVE TODAY at  
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# 40 Years in Ghana

## PROFILE:

## Father Fred Timp

*By Jeffrey Westhoff*

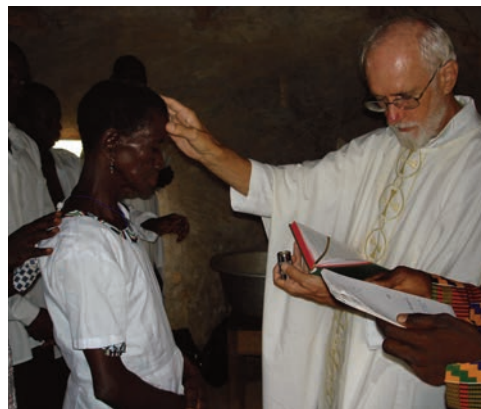
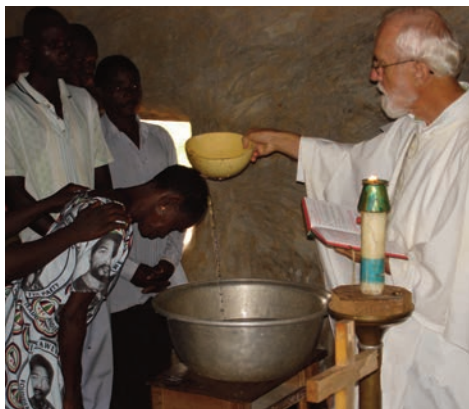
For nearly 40 years, Father Fred Timp SVD served as a Divine Word Missionary in Ghana. Today, retired from his mission work, he reflects on his beginnings and his happiest years as a missionary in the Yendi District, in the northern part of Ghana. When Fr. Timp arrived in Yendi in the early 1990s, he thought, “This is the kind of primary evangelization that I always wanted to do!”

It was at Sacred Heart Parish School in Freeport, Minnesota, that first-grader Fred Timp entertained thoughts of joining the priesthood. His teacher, Sister Lorenzia, gave a talk on vocations and asked any student thinking about becoming a priest or nun to raise their hand. Fred’s hand went up.

“And when my hand was sticking up in the air, I said, ‘Hey, maybe I could be a priest.’ And I started thinking about it.”

Those thoughts had mostly faded by sixth grade but came back in the eighth grade when he saw a





**“This is the kind  
of primary  
evangelization  
that I always  
wanted to do!”**

magazine ad for a group that made rosaries to be sent to missionaries. To join the group, he needed a letter of recommendation from his pastor.

By coincidence, Fred talked to his pastor at the beginning of Lent. The pastor asked if he had thought about becoming a priest, and said, “I want you to think about it and pray about it, and at the end of Lent let me know what your thoughts are.”

At the end of Lent, Fred told his pastor he would give the priesthood a try. Initially he thought of joining the Benedictine order or becoming a diocesan priest. Then



**“To get to some of the lake stations I had to go by canoe or walk through a small path for an hour or two from one village to another.”**

another option occurred to him: “A missionary—that would be a lot more exciting!”

Fred’s uncle was a Divine Word Missionary, and he put his nephew in touch with the vocational director. In the fall of 1959, Fred was a high school freshman at the Divine Word Missionary minor seminary in East Troy, Wisconsin.

After graduating high school, he pursued his seminary studies in the midst of—and then the immediate aftermath of—Vatican II, a time when requirements for formation changed frequently. He attended Divine Word institutions in Massachusetts, Iowa, Mississippi and Illinois before completing his theology studies at the Washington Theological Coalition in Washington, D.C., and the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

“I kind of bounced all over the country for my education,” he said. “It was a good experience, but also a little bit unsettling. For six years in a row, I was in a different place every year.”

Fr. Fred Timp SVD was ordained a Divine Word Missionary priest in 1971.

The following year he received his first assignment to the minor seminary at Bordentown, New Jersey. He taught there for two years and then did vocation work for another nine.

Toward the end of his time at Bordentown, in 1980, Fr. Timp visited Ghana. He liked the country and believed he could work there as a missionary. Three years later, he was assigned to the West African country.

First, he was sent to southeast Ghana for pastoral work. His mission took him to land stations that served farmers and lake stations that served fishers. “To get to some of the lake stations I had to go by canoe or walk through a small path for an hour or two from one village to another.”

He recalled the first time he visited a village called Maame Krobo, which was named for the woman who founded it. He went during the rainy season and was forced to stop and leave his car 5 miles from the village,



because the road had become too muddy to complete the drive. He walked the rest of the way.

When he finally arrived at the chapel, he was surprised that people expected to be baptized that day, something his predecessor had promised them. After assuring himself that they had sufficiently prepared themselves for baptism, Fr. Timp began to administer the sacrament. “And one of the people I baptized was Maame Krobo herself,” he said.

Fr. Timp was reassigned to Tamale, in northern Ghana. At St. Joseph Freinademetz House of Philosophy he did vocation work and taught theology and philosophy. At first he found it a difficult assignment, because he had replaced a vocation director who was very popular with the seminarians. “But in the end,” he said, “I found it to be very rewarding to see how these young men turned out and grew and developed.”

His time at the seminary lasted five years, and after that he was assigned to do primary evangelization in the Yendi District. The people in the district had asked for him personally. “I was very happy that day,” Fr. Timp said.

For Fr. Timp, primary evangelization is the essence of missionary work—“Announcing the Gospel for the first time to people who haven’t heard it before”—something he had longed to do since his seminary days in East Troy.

As he began to practice primary evangelization, he saw how the Ghanaian people responded to hearing the Gospel for the first time. “There’s different reactions,” he said. “Some people aren’t interested at all. Others find it interesting, but because of various factors, some are reluctant. And there are some who accept it quite readily.”

Fr. Timp noticed that many were reluctant to accept the Gospel because they considered it wrong to forsake the beliefs of their ancestors. “They would ask, ‘Is it right to leave my ancestors behind?’ To give all that up is very difficult for some people.”

People also felt the Gospel didn’t address the needs of their traditional beliefs. “One of the things we tried to do,” Fr. Timp said, “was to find ways of meeting those needs, sometimes developing additional rites that the Church doesn’t have.”





## “The people are kind, gracious, and welcoming.”

For example, among these Ghanaian people is the concept of the “bad death.” Being killed by lightning would be considered a bad death, and a person who suffers such a death is never spoken of again. Fr. Timp and his colleagues had to develop a rite to address a bad death and make sure that the poor soul who suffered a bad death was not forgotten.



One of the things Fr. Timp has most enjoyed about his time in Ghana is the friendliness of the people. “The people are kind, gracious and welcoming,” he said. “They have time for you. It is amazing that the poorest of the people are very, very generous.”

One of the things he learned from those he served was the importance of human relationships. “The need to have time for people, to help them in their needs—these are things that I knew, but this came out much stronger in that situation. People really depend on one another. It’s not just nice, it’s necessary for survival sometimes.”

He added, “My understanding of the scripture also deepened because their way of life, their culture and situation, is much closer to biblical times than our situation in developed countries.”

Finally, Fr. Timp was grateful that serving in Ghana gave him a new outlook. “Going to a place—Africa or Ghana, a different culture—you get a different perspective on life. You don’t have to accept all of it ... but you learn there is more than one way to do things. Doesn’t mean one is better than the other, but we shouldn’t look down on people who are different, because what they’re doing is sometimes at least as good or better than what we are doing.”



After serving in the Yendi District, Fr. Timp was called to serve as an officer in the Ghana Province. He was provincial secretary from 2008 to 2016 and provincial treasurer from 2016 to 2018. He is now officially retired and living at the Bishop Noser SVD Retirement Residence in Accra, but he still serves at the provincial archivist.

Fr. Timp looks back with satisfaction on his life as a missionary. “I’ve enjoyed being able to do what I was called to do. God has used me to do what he wants.” ♦



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