



Volume 2 • 2023

DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES  
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update

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South Sudan  
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## EDITORIAL

In this issue you will read two articles about our missionaries in Africa. Pope Francis' pastoral visit to South Sudan brought Divine Word Missionaries back to that strife-torn nation for the first time since they were forced to flee in 2016 during the country's civil war.

Those same missionaries are now serving South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. Father Andrzej Dzida SVD shares the good news of a new church, the Church of the Divine Mercy, dedicated in Uganda's Bidibidi Refugee Settlement, bringing hope and fellowship within this vast refugee camp.

Divine Word Missionaries serve in 12 African countries, where there are always many projects in progress. Currently we are raising funds for one such project that would increase educational opportunities for high school students in Mozambique.

***View a video to learn more  
about this project.***



**Snap  
the QR code**

Our missionaries would like to construct student housing. This building would include a kitchen, dining hall and chapel. There would also be a farm on the grounds where the students could work to grow their own food and defray their housing costs. *SEE PAGE 19 FOR THE ENTIRE STORY.*

These students are eager to learn. They just need this opportunity to live within walking distance of their school. We want to raise \$10,000 to fund the construction of this student housing project. ***Your generous help would be appreciated.*** To make a donation, snap the above QR code.

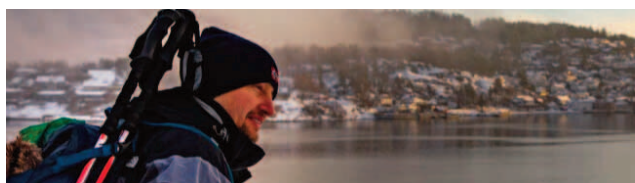
Remember, education is the surest way to break the cycle of poverty.

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



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The Society of the Divine Word is an international Catholic missionary congregation.  
Divine Word Missionaries work in over 79 different lands on all continents except Antarctica.

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# NORWAY: LIGHTS ON THE WAY TO HEAVEN

A Polish priest begins a new mission in Scandanavia

By Hubert Łucjanek SVD

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On the afternoon of Sept. 29, 2022, a Norwegian plane made its last slight course corrections before beginning its descent to Oslo Airport. Several minutes later I found myself on Norwegian soil ready to begin my new mission.



*View from the fortified island of Oscarsborg on the Oslofjord  
(photo: Hubert Łucjanek's archive)*

I was picked up from the airport by Father Antoni Erragudi SVD together with a local priest I knew.

We arrived at the parish in Stabekk, a quiet and picturesque town adjacent to the capital, Oslo, where Father Antoni and Father Piotr Śledz SVD lived and ministered at that time. They both currently work at St. Olaf.

I spent my first days in Stabekk talking with my fellow Divine Word Missionaries, hearing about the realities of life and ministry in the local church, walking around the neighborhood and taking photos every few dozen meters. But my time to work came quickly. Already on Oct. 1, I was introduced to the Poles from the parish of St. Hallvard in Oslo, where I celebrated my first Mass that day. It is one of the largest Roman Catholic parishes in Norway with a congregation of 15,000. It is more or less the same size as the parish of Our Lady of Sorrows in Nysa, Poland, to which I said goodbye very warmly a few days earlier.

With an area of 140,000 square miles, Norway is inhabited by fewer than 5.5 million people, which makes it one of the least populous countries in Europe. Most of the terrain is made up of mountains, forests, tundra, swamps





and lakes. One third of the population lives in Oslo and the surrounding area. Thirteen of the nation's 40 or so Roman Catholic parishes are in this region.

Immigrants make up 15% of Norway's population. Among them, the largest group are Poles (120,000), followed by Lithuanians (50,000), Somalis (44,000), Pakistanis and Syrians (40,000 each). According to religious statistics, over 64% of the population belongs to the Norwegian Church, a Protestant church whose head is the king of Norway. It can be said to be a national church, but there has been a clear decrease in church attendance in the last few years.

About 25% of people do not admit any religious identity. Muslims make up 3% of the population. Most of them live in Oslo, and the sight of women in burqas is already part of the urban landscape. Christians who do not belong to the national church constitute less than 7% of the population. Apart from various Protestant churches, the largest group are Catholics (3%), mainly due to immigrants from Poland.



*Fr. Hubert Łucjanek SVD with Poles belonging to the Group of St. Józefa  
(photo: Hubert Łucjanek's archive)*

*Fr. Hubert Łucjanek SVD celebrating Mass  
(photo: Hubert Łucjanek's archive)*





*Catechesis for Polish children at St. Hallvard in Oslo  
(photo: Hubert Łucjanek's archive)*

*Mass of all language groups during the New Year's feast in the parish of St. Hallvard in Oslo*

This is the reality of my parish of 15,000, which occupies an area of approximately 19 miles in diameter, covering the eastern and southern parts of Oslo and beyond. Our parishioners make up less than 4% of all inhabitants of this area.

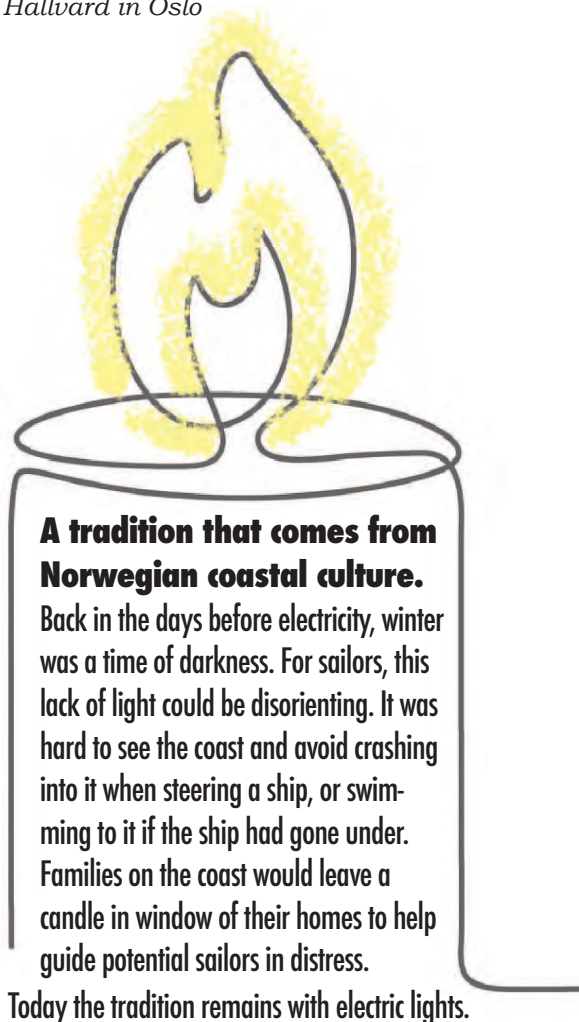
Among all registered Catholics in the parish, Poles constitute the largest group, almost 40%. The others are Vietnamese, Filipinos, Eritreans and Tamils. Additionally, there are some native Norwegians, with many converting to Catholicism from Protestantism in adulthood.

We pastors are also an interesting mixture. I am responsible mostly for the pastoral care of the Polish-speaking group. The Norwegian and English-speaking pastoral care is primarily the responsibility of the parish priest, Father Ragnar, a Norwegian from the south of the country. He is assisted by Father Henry from Myanmar and Father Andreas, a Marist from Germany who also works for Norges Unge Katolikker, an organization of young Norwegian Catholics. This diversity is complemented by Father Myron, a Greek Catholic priest destined to serve among Ukrainians. He is married with three children.

The diversity of our parish was especially visible during the New Year's holiday, when all language groups gathered at one Mass singing their native songs with some wearing native costumes. After the Mass, we went to the parish hall for further celebration, where we could taste traditional dishes, get to know each other better and talk. It was a moving experience for many of us to come together as people of different origins and different languages, yet children of the same father, glorifying our Lord in the same liturgy and in the same spirit.

My work is primarily saying Masses in Polish and providing sacramental services. We care about the solid preparation of children and youth to receive first Communion and confirmation as part of monthly catechesis, which I conduct with our volunteers.

The example of parents practicing their faith and their involvement in these preparations are crucial, especially in the circumstances here. Last time we counted, of the previously mentioned 15,000 registered parishioners, only about 1,000 regularly attend Mass. My Norwegian parish priest says, "Det er bra" ("That's good"), and I say to myself: "Well, I guess I'm on mission after all."



### **A tradition that comes from Norwegian coastal culture.**

Back in the days before electricity, winter was a time of darkness. For sailors, this lack of light could be disorienting. It was hard to see the coast and avoid crashing into it when steering a ship, or swimming to it if the ship had gone under. Families on the coast would leave a candle in window of their homes to help guide potential sailors in distress.

Today the tradition remains with electric lights.





My joy is, as it was in Nysa, a group of people who want something more and who can be relied upon to participate, such as the men who belong to the parish's St. Joseph Group. There is no shortage of those who are involved in the life of the parish. My email address and phone number are officially listed, so it's hard to completely forget about the parishioners. Recently, I have been receiving calls from hospitals. I just experienced my inauguration into this type of ministry. I think I will be called there more often.

I am currently learning Norwegian through a basic language course. I can get along a bit, but so far I do not perform Norwegian-language services on a permanent basis. My parishioners and fellow priests reassure me that I am doing well, but I know I still have a long way to go to speak the language fluently.

I did not experience any major culture shock after arriving in Norway. After all, it is a European country, just like Poland. I've been here twice before. I already knew about some differences.

Before arriving, I had a picture of a country where everything works very punctually. However, it turns out not always and not everywhere. One of the local mottos is "ikke stress" ("don't stress"). This translates into having to wait a while for some things to be dealt with. The locals respect their free time. On Friday everyone wishes each other "god helg" ("good weekend"), and then they go out of town for a "hytta" (a more or less primitive hut in the bosom of nature), climb the surrounding peak to light a bonfire, or hike cross country.

Despite the image of Norway as a rich country, in the era of the Ukrainian war crisis there is a lot of talk here about saving energy, especially electricity. Yet when I go out late in the evening, I often see the lights on in houses, even when it appears no one is inside. "What an inconsistency," I thought.

Recently, though, I heard at least a partial explanation for this phenomenon. It dates back to a time when most Norwegians worked at sea. When a seafaring Norwegian returned to land, the lights in the houses were supposed to help him get to a safe place.

**So I leave you with this prayer: May we see lights that show our way to heaven, and may we be such lights for others.♦**



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**support!**





# A hope, a prayer and trust in God

*Mother of Perpetual Help  
Center grows to meet needs  
of AIDS patients in Thailand*

*By Damien Lunders SVD*

**“Courage and trust in God always helps  
at just the right time.”**

*—Aug. 28, 1902, letter to Joseph Freinademetz, sent by Arnold Janssen*



Want to learn more  
about Divine Word's  
history?  
Snap the QR code and  
scroll to view our  
time-line.

**This quote from our founder, St. Arnold Janssen, reminds me of the struggles we too had in our simple beginnings here in Thailand.**

Arnold started to build our congregation with only a hope, a prayer and trust in God. Help did come at the right time, and today, Divine Word Missionaries is 147 years old, working in 79 countries, with nearly 6,000 missionaries worldwide.

Our Thailand mission began 23 years ago with nothing more than a hope, a prayer and trust in God. At times one felt like giving up. But like St. Arnold, we believed in this mission and believed that help would come. Help did come. We too, are where we are today because of hard work and so many good people who believe in us.

***“When we serve the poor and the sick, we serve Jesus. We must not fail to help our neighbor because in them we serve Jesus.”—St. Rose of Lima***

All of our works here at Mother of Perpetual Help Center are with the poor and the sick. It is our privilege to serve them, while providing care and dignity of life.

Brother James Wilkins SVD and I were sent to the Diocese of Udon Thani in northeast Thailand to help those infected with HIV/AIDS. At that time, Mother of Perpetual Help Center was merely a rented house where people with AIDS





could come for counseling. As the years progressed, the needs increased. With hard work and the help of funding agencies and generous benefactors, the center gradually has grown into what it is today: Villa Marie Hospice, caring for adults infected with AIDS and Ban Mae Marie, caring for children and adults.

Throughout the province we visited house to house those infected with HIV/AIDS. We found adults and children, at home suffering but receiving little care. It became clear a hospice was needed. Villa Marie was built, and the hospice has become an integral part of the center and an important apostolate. HIV/AIDS patients often require special care due to disabilities. They can be affected by blindness, mental problems or physical disabilities. All patients are welcome and treated with loving care and respect.

Often people arrive in fairly good health, but because they are diagnosed with AIDS they are shunned, rejected by family and left homeless. Here they are welcomed as permanent residents, learning skills like cooking, gardening—and raising ducks, chickens and fish—all while working and living on the premises.



*Above and at right  
house to house visits in the province*





Some patients who have returned to good health have been hired as employees of the center. They are wonderful workers because they themselves know what it is like living with HIV/AIDS and they are able to relate and offer good counseling.

Before AIDS antiviral medications became available, many of our patients passed away each year. Today's antiviral medications offer the best chance of preventing HIV from multiplying, allowing the immune system to stay healthy. By far fewer patients are dying. These new medicines are helpful, but their success depends on the condition of the patient when they arrive seeking care.



After learning the importance of taking their medications, patients are often able to go out on their own to find work and care for themselves. It is always a good feeling to know they now have a future. But after having cared for them for so long, there is also a bit of sadness in seeing them go.

To hear a patient say that *if they had not come to Mother of Perpetual Help Center they already would have died*, is the quiet and solemn joy in ministering to the vulnerable and disadvantaged here in northeast Thailand. It is a joy to know that they are being well looked after and have found an example of good Christian living while with us. Many patients who have spent time at the hospice and attended Mass at our church have requested to become baptized.



Over the years the Mother of Perpetual Help Center has provided AIDS education and awareness



programs for youth in schools throughout the province. Every year up to 20 schools participate in the program with camps and follow-up classes in each of their schools. This program has extended into the training of teachers and even interested government personnel to pass on to other groups what they have learned about HIV/AIDS.

More programs and activities are in place to help children with scholarships and ensure their education. One such a program started 14 years ago with the help of families in France giving monthly donations to sponsor a needy child in the province. Every three months the children will gather at the center to write their thank-you letters, which are translated into French in Bangkok then sent to their sponsor in France. From time to time one of the sponsors will come to visit their child.

Over the past 20-plus years, much has been achieved by building an infrastructure that has made the center's activities possible. HIV/AIDS education and awareness, small business startups, farming, ministering to the poor are all a part of life at Mother of Perpetual Help Center.

It has given us great joy to see the growth of the center starting 23 years ago and where it is today—knowing that it is serving the poorest and most disadvantaged people in this area. Our hope, dream and expectation is that the center will be able to continue into the future, to grow and to change with the needs of the times. Our ministry has truly been blessed.◆



*AIDS education and awareness programs in schools throughout the province.*





Left to right: Wojciech Pawlowski SVD, Father Andrzej Dzida SVD and SVD confreres during the meeting with the Pope (photo: author's archive)

## Divine Word Missionaries return for Pope's visit

*By Andrzej Dzida SVD*



**Pope Francis' pilgrimage to South Sudan in February was not only a pilgrimage for the pope, but also a pilgrimage for the four Divine Word Missionaries who work with refugees from South Sudan in Uganda's Bidibidi camp. It brought us back to the mission country we were forced to leave in 2016.**



We had the opportunity to meet Pope Francis in the Cathedral of St. Therese in Juba, the nation's capital. We met the pope along with clergy from Sudan, South Sudan, Congo and Ethiopia.

The pope's next event was the following day at the John Garang Mausoleum, which resembles a parade ground connected to the stadium. It was an ecumenical prayer service the pope celebrated along with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, and the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, Iain Greenshields—the three of them representing the largest Christian congregations in South Sudan.

The service consisted of common prayers, songs and readings from the Word of God. The only problem was that we had to be at the mausoleum a few hours before the pope arrived, and the place was

(AP PHOTO)





(AP PHOTO)



**“pilgrim of peace”**

open to the bright sun. Waiting for the pope in 104 degrees Fahrenheit was not quite a pleasant experience!

The next day’s conditions were supposed to be a bit better because the pope was to celebrate Mass in the same place at 9 a.m. However, in order to get there early enough, and to have time for safety inspection, we had to leave at 3 a.m.! But, hey, it was a pilgrimage!

Interestingly, priests and Sisters from the Democratic Republic of Congo were with us. Although the pope had visited Congo a few days earlier, it was easier for them to reach nearby South Sudan than distant Kinshasa.

Word of a papal visit to South Sudan began circulating a long time ago. The first such whispers reached us in 2015, when he went on a pilgrimage to neighboring Uganda and the Central African Republic at the end of that year. Then when he visited Egypt in 2018. He was supposed to visit South Sudan in July 2022, but had to postpone due to his health problems. So doubt crept in: “What about this pilgrimage of the Pope?” Finally, in February 2023, he arrived!

# **“When politicians fail, when nepotism, bribery and tribalism spread, there is no other way than through unity and Jesus.”**

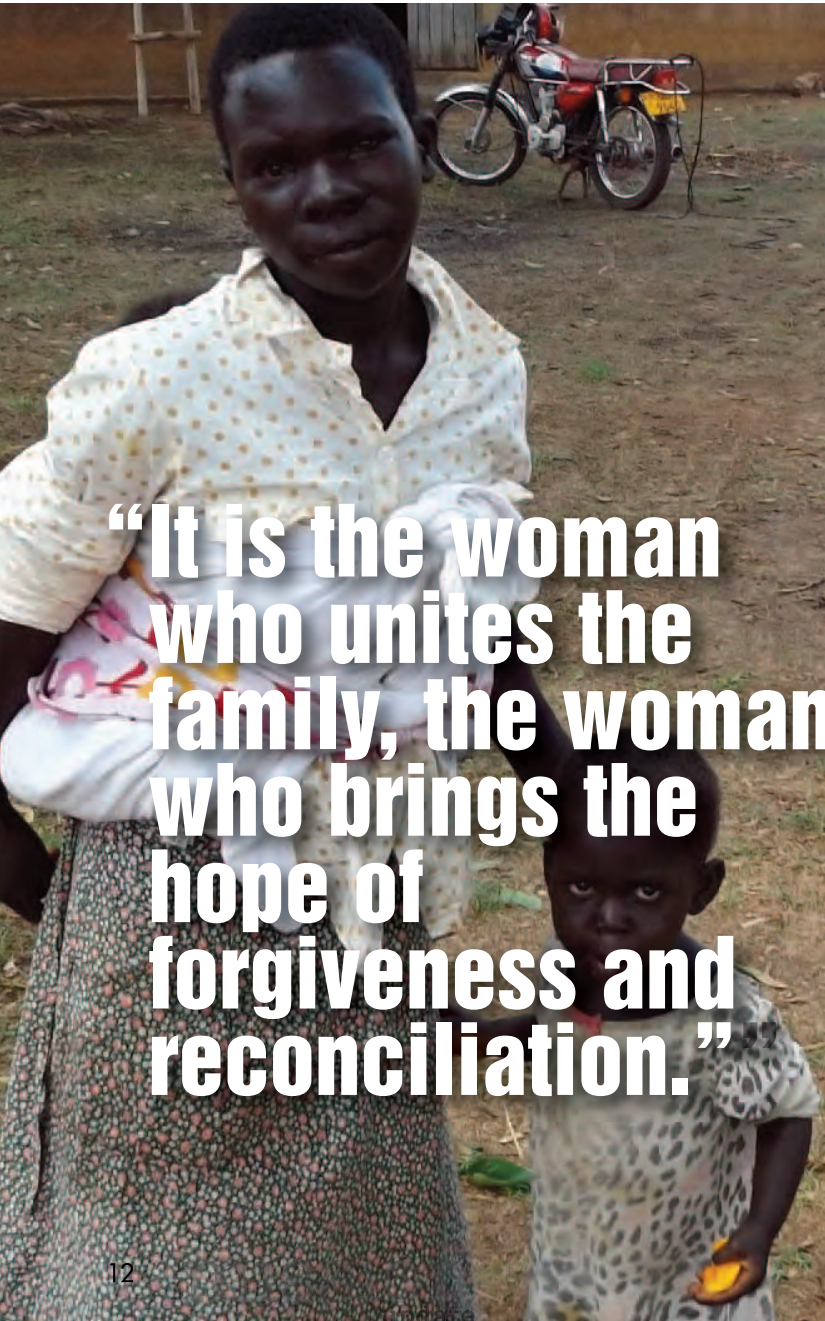
During the Mass, Pope Francis preached the Gospel message of love, faith, hope and the possibility of forgiveness and reconciliation through Jesus. When politicians fail, when nepotism, bribery and tribalism spread, there is no other way than through unity and Jesus. One who cares only about himself and robs his country of the benefits of raw materials such as oil cannot be a child of God. The one who unites and uses common resources and talents is a child of God. War, hatred, division, tribalism and disrespect of others do not come from God. When you hate and divide, you cannot be a child of God.

The pope also appealed for the dignity of women. It is the woman who unites the family, he said, the woman who brings the hope of forgiveness and reconciliation. It is the woman who is the symbol of South Sudan, and children and youth are the future of this youngest country.

Pope Francis' pilgrimage ended after a few days, but ours continued. From the capital we went to the Diocese of Yei, home to our South Sudan mission from 2012 until 2016. It took us all day to drive nearly 100 miles. The roads are still dangerous, so we traveled in a convoy with several cars and a bus from Congo.

A few days before the pope's arrival, 27 people were killed in the Kajo Kejy area of the Yei diocese. It was the result of a conflict between the tribes, who were looking for new grazing land for their cattle, and local farmers, whose crops are being destroyed by cattle.

Fortunately, we reached our destination without any problems. On the way, however, we saw “shepherds” armed with rifles, and we were reminded of the death of Sister Veronika Racková SSps. We visited her grave in nearby Lutaya and then our burned huts in Lainya. Along the way, we also visited our Chapel of St. Arnold Janssen in Logwili and Holy Family Parish in Lainya. A small group of people still lives there.



## **“It is the woman who unites the family, the woman who brings the hope of forgiveness and reconciliation.”**





Children from the chapel of St. Arnold presented us with an inscription saying: “We were born in war, we live in war, we die in war. Peace, peace, peace.” We sent this same message to Pope Francis earlier, giving him 30 mission rosaries made by our children in Bidibidi. I was able to convey them through Bishop Alex Lodiong of the Yei diocese. He said the pope was happy to receive them and most importantly, he will pray just like we pray on these rosaries for all continents. We pray for peace in Ukraine, South Sudan, and our Lainya, Logwili, Yei and many other places. We hope that we will all join together in praying the Rosary, asking for God’s peace in our hearts. Peace, peace, peace!



Father Andrzej Dzida SVD with pilgrims (photo: author's archive)



South Sudan was established in 2011, but already in December 2013 a creeping civil war began. It intensified in July 2016, when many Sudanese fled the war to neighboring countries. Over 1.1 million people went to Uganda, and another 2 million to Congo, Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia. About 3 million people have relocated to other parts of South Sudan where fighting is less intense. Some took refuge in camps in Juba as well as in Bor and Malakal.

Divine Word Missionaries were forced to depart South Sudan in 2016, sad to leave our parish in Lainya behind. Since 2017 we have been among the refugees from South Sudan in Uganda.

Currently there are four of us at Bidibidi: Father Wojciech Pawlowski, Father Romy Suri Roja from Indonesia, Brother Bernard Onyango from Kenya and me. There are 30 mission stations for 270,000 people. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters are with us. There are five of them. There's nothing like the Arnoldus Family! ♦

**We gave Pope Francis 30 mission rosaries made by our children in Bidibidi. I was told the pope was happy to receive them and most importantly, that he will pray on these rosaries just like we pray—for all continents.**

**Please join us in praying the Rosary, ask for God's peace in our hearts. Peace, peace, peace!**



# Uganda

# Bidibidi

Established in 2017 and occupying 100 square miles in northern Uganda, the Bidibidi Refugee Settlement is the largest refugee camp in Africa. It is home to more than 270,000 refugees, the great majority of them South Sudanese who have fled the civil war in their home country. South Sudan borders Uganda to the north.

Divine Word Missionaries began a mission to South Sudan in 2012, one year after the nation was established. It is still the world's youngest country. Civil war began in 2013. By 2015, hostilities had reached our missionaries, and their mission compound in Lainya was burned to the ground.

They left the country the following year, shortly after a Holy Spirit Missionary Sister, Veronika Racková SSPS, was shot and killed while driving an ambulance.

Today, several of the same missionaries from the South Sudan mission are in Bidibidi, ministering to their former Lainya parishioners—and many others seeking aid and mercy in that environment.



## Divine Mercy a new church in Uganda's vast Bidibidi camp brings hope and beauty to refugees

*By Andrzej Dzida SVD*

2014: The image of the Divine Mercy arrived from Poland at our former mission parish in Lainya, South Sudan, just as civil war was brewing in that young nation.

2023: A new church has been built in Uganda's Bidibidi Refugee Settlement. The Church of the Divine Mercy will serve many of the same parishioners from Lainya who fled South Sudan. With God's Mercy we hope to unite the Ugandans with the South Sudanese living in our refugee camp.



*The beautiful new Church of the Divine Mercy*



The first refugees crossed the border into Uganda in July 2016. When Divine Word Missionaries started this ministry among them in 2017, we never thought such a beautiful church could ever be created here, in a refugee camp, in Bidibidi.

But why not? By the very definition, refugees are people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country. Many had to flee with little more than the clothes on their back, leaving behind homes, possessions, jobs and loved ones. They have lost everything. The need for beauty and hope—to feel God’s love—is at its greatest.

Grateful to God’s providence, it is our hope that this beautiful new Church of the Divine Mercy will unite everyone in this mercy and become a safe and prayerful sanctuary for all.

These refugees once were happy just to pray in a clay chapel with a roof that collapsed every so often and leaked water in the rainy season, turning the dirt floor to mud. The refugees of Bidibidi now rejoice and celebrate Mass in this new church dedicated to the Divine Mercy. The first two Divine Word chapels—St. Joseph in the settlement’s Abrimajo zone and the Immaculate Heart of Mary in the Swinga zone—were built through the generosity of Divine Word Missionaries benefactors around the world.

We now have three places of worship within the camp’s five settlement zones. It is our hope that before the end of the year we will open a fourth, the Church of the Sacred Heart. Then in the next two to three years, with God’s help, a fifth building, the Sanctuary of the





Holy Family, which is intended as an educational and pastoral center for children and youth.

Planning the Church of the Divine Mercy's opening celebration on this Divine Mercy Sunday began over a year ago. The celebrations began with nine days of novenas and daily prayer combined with Masses. On Good Friday, during the recitation of the novena and litany to the Divine Mercy, we opened our hearts. Holy Saturday we celebrated Easter Vigil Mass with groups of children, youth, women, catechists and representatives from the Yoyo zone.

The Friday before Divine Mercy Sunday pilgrims began to arrive on foot. Some of them hiked four to five hours. Most of these pilgrims, about 500, slept on mats at the school. Pilgrims from closer areas—that is, up to two hours away—arrived on Sunday before the ceremony.

The night before the celebration, we decorated the church, putting up the cross and several paintings. We placed the icon of Our Lady with the Holy Spirit on the same side of the church as the stained-glass window of the Holy Spirit. Father Wojciech Pawtowski SVD put the final touches of paint on the stained-glass windows. Embellishments to the image of the Divine Mercy were made by our sister congregation, the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters. African-style decorations and balloons that read "Divine Mercy" and "Happy Divine Mercy" finished off the festive look. Adorning the altar were a beautiful tabernacle and monstrance with angels, a gift from our friends at the sanctuary of St. Joseph in Kalisz, Poland. Everything was filled with God's spirit.







The procession to the church with the risen Christ testified that he is alive in our hearts. Our prayers went out to all refugees, here in Bidibidi and around the world. During the general prayer, Peter Lopusa, one of our catechists from the Swinga zone, prayed especially for refugees from Ukraine, Syria and Congo.

Bishop Sabino Ocan Odoki of the Diocese of Arua not only consecrated the new church on Divine Mercy Sunday but also established a Eucharistic center there to serve the South Sudanese and the local community. They can spend time with Jesus Christ every day now.

In angelic voice we joined the cherubim and seraphim guarding the tabernacle and sang praises. We managed to learn common songs of Gregorian choirs in Latin: "Misericordias Domini in aeternum cantabo" ("The Lord's Mercies Will Sing Forever") and "Ubi caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est" ("Where Charity and Love, Where Charity Is God"). Sister Francesca Ratajczak SSPS accompanied us on guitar.



Bishop Sabino recited the Divine Mercy litany and prayed the Divine Mercy chaplet with us, singing one part with guitar accompaniment. The words of the chaplet, "Jesus, I trust in you," came in sincere voice, flowing from the hearts of our South Sudanese people. After the experience of war, the loss of loved ones, the loss of all possessions, and the loss of trust in the promises of politicians about peace, there is no one left to trust but Jesus, affirmed by saying these words together.

The traditional bells and incense put everyone in a prayerful mood of being with God. Our prayers rose like incense smoke to heaven. They say the prayers of the poor, abandoned, orphans and widows go straight to God's ears, and there is no shortage of such prayers among our refugees.

After the Mass and adoration, we had speeches, performances by the children and songs and dances from members of the Catholic Action and Women's Association.

Of course, there was also a meal. Thanks to people of good will and God's blessing, there was food for everyone!



The meal's most prominent attraction and biggest surprise was the meat from two bulls. Bidibidi refugees rarely have the chance to eat meat; their diets consist of cassava, sorghum flour and a small portion of beans. So, in addition to spiritual nourishment, the celebration meal provided much needed strength for the pilgrims' long travels home.

We hope that our celebration and our new Church of the Divine Mercy will be a source of strength for our Bidibidi families and be a message for all of South Sudan to be immersed in God's Mercy. ♦





# NURTURING DREAMS: Empowering Students through Education & Agriculture in Mozambique

**In the heart of Mozambique, where poverty and limited access to education prevail, Divine Word Missionaries are embarking on a transformative journey. The vision? To construct a residential building and farm for high school students. Divine Word Missionaries understand that education is the key to unlocking a brighter future, not only for these students, but for the entire nation.**

In the Liúpo district, a small house made of mud, bamboo and coconut leaves accommodates 17 students. It serves as a humble sanctuary for those who have the opportunity to study. But the demand far exceeds the capacity. Imagine the struggle faced by economically challenged students from far-flung villages, desperate to pursue an education. With no schools in their own areas, they are faced with insurmountable barriers. Even if they journey to Liúpo, finding a place to stay would be costly and near impossible.

That's where the Divine Word Missionaries' student housing project comes in. With your support, plans are in place to

construct a sturdy residential center with 10 rooms, including dormitories, study hall, chapel, kitchen and dining hall. But this is not just a place to sleep and study. It's a place that instills dignity, resilience and the value of hard work. Alongside the housing, a sustainable farm will be cultivated, providing fresh produce and poultry. The students will contribute to the farm, learning vital skills and experiencing the power of partnership and commitment to their goals. Through this project, these students will not only receive an education but will become agents of change, empowered to uplift their own communities.

Join us in this inspiring journey. Together, we can create a brighter future for these students, transforming their lives and the lives of generations to come. Your support will not only build a physical infrastructure but will shape the minds and hearts of these students, empowering them to overcome adversity and embrace their dreams. Let's sow the seeds of change and cultivate a harvest of hope in Mozambique.

## Ignite Joy and Empower Dreams



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Snap the QR code to learn more about this exciting project!



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# Roma children in Slovakia celebrate First Holy Communion

*By Matej Reiner SVD*



**The Divine Word Parish in Nitra-Kalvaria, Slovakia, recently witnessed a momentous occasion as 22 children from the local Roma community received their First Holy Communion.**

Concluding the school year with a memorable event, these young individuals embraced the Eucharist into their hearts for the first time. I had guided the children to this moment, preparing them through catechism and watching with pride as I saw their diligent preparation during classes and church meetings. I have been working with the Roma people in Slovakia since my ordination in 2019.

The First Holy Communion holds great significance for the Roma community, bringing together extended family members and relatives to partake in the Mass. During

the liturgy, friends from the local Roma community played and sang, providing an inspiring moment for other Roma to contemplate their faith. After the ceremony the festivities continued in their homes, filled with music, singing and feasts. Children's laughter echoed through the neighborhood.

I have been working hard to nurture the spiritual growth of the Roma community in Nitra, serving as their parish priest since my appointment. Through my efforts to foster unity and faith among this minority community, I believe I have earned their admiration and respect. ♦



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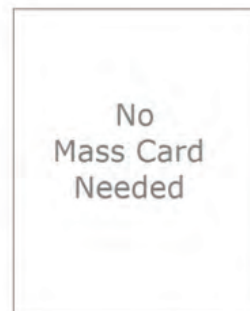
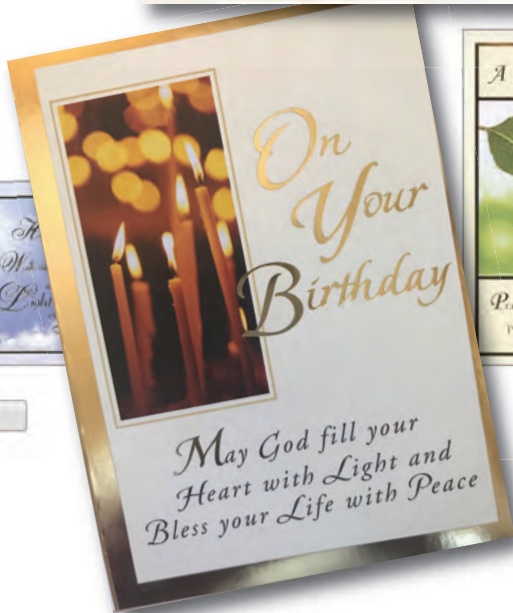
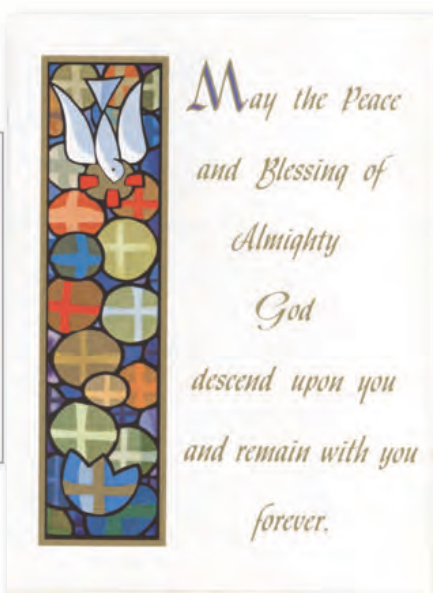
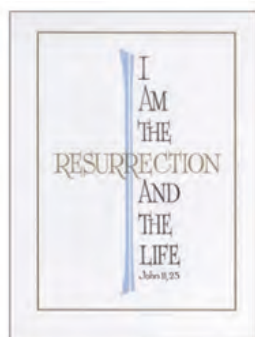


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*Thanks to the refugee relief fund, our missionaries were able to immediately jump into action, providing food, clothing, shelter, translation services, language classes and more to those fleeing the war in Ukraine.*



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Three of our missionaries remain in the western part of Ukraine to look after their parishioners and displaced citizens.

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