



Fall 2022

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## EDITORIAL

As we near the end of another year, I find it fitting to look back in gratitude on the ways YOU—our missions friends—have helped us in 2022.

Of course the biggest international story of the year was the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a senseless, cruel and unprovoked war on a peaceful country. Three of our brave priests remained at their missions in western Ukraine, working in tandem with Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters to provide shelter, food and other necessities to refugees who fled the attacks on Kyiv and other cities to the east.

We asked you to help our missionaries and the refugees in Ukraine, as well as the millions of refugees who poured into Poland, and you responded immediately. **Thanks to your generosity we raised more than \$250,000. to aid the people of Ukraine.**

Even though recent news tells us that Ukrainian armed forces have gained the upper hand against Russian troops, the need for aid has not gone away. Russia continues to fire hundreds of missiles at civilian targets, damaging the power grid and other infrastructure even in the western part of the country. The people of Ukraine are still hurting. Please consider making another donation—or give for the first time—at [www.svdmissions.org/ukraine](http://www.svdmissions.org/ukraine).

**You have helped us in many other ways.** In this issue you will meet Father Bao Nguyen SVD, a priest at a remote island parish in Papua New Guinea. When Fr. Bao discovered the generator that provided electricity to his parish was failing, he turned to the Techny Mission Center.

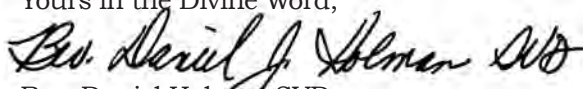
We were able to fund a sustainable solar energy system that now gives Fr. Bao's parish a steady, clean supply of electricity. He reports that his parish is thriving now, with more people attending Mass and more people participating in group activities.

This could not have happened without the support of friends such as you. Without your help, we cannot help our missionaries and the children of God they serve. **So I thank you for being there for us this year** despite a lingering pandemic and a rougher economy. I wish you and yours a blessed and healthy Christmas season and look forward to sharing 2023 with you.

Missionaries bear witness to Christ.

Thank you and God bless you for your support.

Yours in the Divine Word,

  
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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LET THERE  
BE LIGHT

Bao Nguyen SVD

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Andrzej Kedziora SVD

So that night there was an idea and ... nothing more ... but I was made responsible for the endeavor. We started by looking for contacts here in Ghana, people who could help us implement the idea. And we found them!

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Some people greet him with tears of happiness. "They give me sweet potatoes and nice smiles..."

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# LET THERE BE LIGHT

## **The IMPACT of solar power on a Papua New Guinea island parish**

*By Bao Nguyen SVD*

### ***Have you ever spent a night without electricity?***

In America, it can be scary when the power goes out and everything is dark. But living in the dark without electricity in Papua New Guinea is normal. People get used to it. According to the Wantok newspaper I recently read, most people in this country live without dependable electricity.

The lack of access to reliable lighting hinders people's ability to carry out basic activities at night, including household chores, reading, schoolwork and even church events. People use a mixture of fuels—including kerosene, diesel and wood—and lighting resources—including generators and battery-powered flashlights—to meet their needs. This is especially true for remote places such as Karkar Island in Madang Province, where I am now doing mission.

Divine Mercy Church, located in the village of Tabel on this island, is in a rural and remote area with no electrical grid. The islanders still use inefficient and costly diesel generators to power their schools, churches and home.





### ***First Day Problems***

The first day I came to Tabel as the new parish priest I found no electricity in the church and the rectory. I turned on an old diesel generator that dated from the time of our pioneer missionaries, but it did not work. The church and the entire mission ground were completely dark that night. The possibilities of vandalism, theft and crime scared me.

These things happened exactly as I feared. That night, burglars broke into the sacristy. A week later, someone broke into a primary school office and stole a desktop computer. Because of these incidents, I wanted to install security lighting for our church and in the street to prevent crime, disorder and the fear of crime.

More positively, I believed lighting would increase nighttime parish activities, namely youth rallies,

prayer group meetings or choir practice. Most importantly, electricity would support and enhance liturgies with lighting, a sound system and music from electrical instruments.

A new power generator was an option. It is cheaper at the outset, but the cost of transporting the fuel to the island is high. A solar power system was another option. Not only could it reduce the use of fossil fuels, but it also would generate clean and cheap energy. However, installing a solar power system is expensive, and my parishioners are too poor to afford it. They depend on farming and gardening for their livelihood. Their crops are copra, betel nuts and cocoa. The cost of transporting these products from this island to town is steep.

For this reason, islanders do not make much money. They can contribute 100 to 150 kina to the





ELECTRICITY HELPS  
OUR CHURCHGOERS  
HEAR GOD'S WORDS  
CLEARLY AND  
LOUDLY...



collection every Sunday Mass (that's approximately \$29 to \$44 a week). We can do very little to maintain the church facility with so small a contribution. That's why I asked for the Techny Mission Center's financial support to buy a 48-volt solar power hybrid grid, including eight 200-Ah (ampere per hour) batteries, eight 250-watt solar panels and the inverter, connectors and cables needed to wire the system.

### **Powering Up**

With deep appreciation and hearty thanks for the Mission Center's funds, I bought 20 batteries (12 extra), 16 solar panels (eight extra), one inverter and all the necessary wiring equipment. Four of the panels have been installed so far. Others will be put on the roof of the parish hall. Also, a local donor has volunteered to build a 12-volt system that will power security lights for the church and our street. Thus, two systems have come into existence, a 12-volt system and a 48-volt system.

The 48-volt system can produce 240-volt AC electricity not just for all regular church functions, namely lights, musical instruments and a power amplifier for Mass celebrations, but also for electric tools when church maintenance is needed.

Electricity indeed helps our churchgoers hear God's words clearly and loudly with





the assistance of a sound system. More importantly, they can uplift their hearts, minds and souls when they sing and praise God along with the music. Electricity brings joy to all spiritual groups—our youth group, charismatic group, Society of Divine Mercy and Legion of Mary—especially those who come to a gathering like a rally. It also provides ease and convenience for those who stay overnight in the parish hall on the mission ground.

Since the installation of the power system, the church is fully packed every Sunday Mass, and the Sunday collections are getting better. The parish becomes more active and vibrant, with different spiritual groups getting more involved in ministries and activities. Lots of boys and teens are interested in becoming altar servers, cleaning the church and cutting the mission ground's grass.

Again, I thank the Techny Mission Center for helping and supporting me with the 48-volt solar power system project fund. With this project, I am able to improve the church and the mission ground. And I am also able to create opportunities for my parishioners to become more involved in church activities. I believe electricity is a valuable means to help their faith in the Lord grow more robust when they come to church. ♦



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**Above: Br. Andrzej and technician Andrzej Nilad examine Mr. Nte's eyes (all photos: Andrzej Kedziora)**



# Let there be Sight

*By Andrzej Kedziora SVD*



Let me begin by going back to the past—July or maybe September 1996. I am sitting with Father Józef Mazur SVD at the Saboba mission.

Fr. Józef is my pastor and superior and a longtime missionary in Ghana. We talk for hours beneath the moon and stars. That night an idea is born, and we decide to put it into practice. The idea was to establish the New Look Optical Center. It was to be a nonprofit but had to earn income to pay for electricity, water and workers' salaries.

A similar facility previously existed at the Yendi parish, but unfortunately it was burned to the ground during the 1994 great intertribal armed conflict in the north of Ghana. Only a pile of ash remained, blown away by the winds of time.

So that night there was an idea and ... nothing more ... but I was made responsible for the endeavor. We started by looking for contacts here in Ghana, people who could help us implement the idea. *And we found them!*

After much work, the new New Look Optical



**Above: technician Rebeca Nasangma giving an eye exam**





*Above: Br. Andrzej and technicians visit the Merciful Jesus shrine, in Saboba*



*Right: Choosing from a selection of frames*

Center opened in 1997 on temporary premises at the Saboba parish. Two years later we had two new buildings: one with three rooms for the optical department, the other with an office and living quarters, with the hope that we would have volunteers to help. We dedicated the Center to St. Arnold Janssen as its patron.

### **25th Anniversary**

Counting the flows of Harmattan—a strong north-east wind blowing from the Sahara that occurs in our winter season—I calculated that we are in the 25th year of Harmattans. So this year is our silver jubilee. And there is something to celebrate!

During 25 years of work, we have experienced great ups and downs in our activity.

There was a time when the Optical Center was close to being shut down, but our patron saint somehow took us through our problems. We held on and we are still operating thanks to the great support of our missionaries and especially our benefactors in Poland.

In addition to caring for patients here in Saboba, the early years were years filled with many trips to cities and towns within a 190-mile radius. We wanted to reach as many people as possible. We also transported patients to an ophthalmologist in the city of Boku, about 250 miles to the north.

### **Difficult Period**

The last eight years turned out to be the most difficult period. The equipment was old and could not be repaired indefi-







*Above: Br. Andrzej and technicians in front of doctor's office, glass grinding shop and warehouse*



nately. We found ourselves without a car, making it impossible to travel. Our activity was very limited.

Nevertheless, the Optical Center has survived and is now growing. Quite unexpectedly, a well-known Polish ophthalmologist, Professor Edward Wylegala from Katowice, enlisted his doctor friends to come to our aid.

I see these sudden and somewhat accelerated changes as a strong gust of wind power from the Holy Spirit working through our benefactors. Sometimes I wonder if this breeze is too fast and too strong, because I think I have a problem keeping up. Once I mentioned this to Bishop Jerzy Mazur SVD and he said, "What are you afraid of? Roll up your sleeves and go to work!"

### ***Double vision***

Our work as Catholic missionaries for the local Church has a double dimension: physical because we help people to see better with glasses. Spiritual because we use our meetings with people—whether they come to us or we go to them—to share the Word.

To make the spiritual dimension more visible, we built a small chapel, Merciful Jesus, at our optical institute in Saboba. Everyone who comes to us must pass by. Some pause for a moment, others ask what it is. This gives





## *Plans for the new eye clinic in Yendi*

us an opportunity to talk and explain what we believe and in whom.

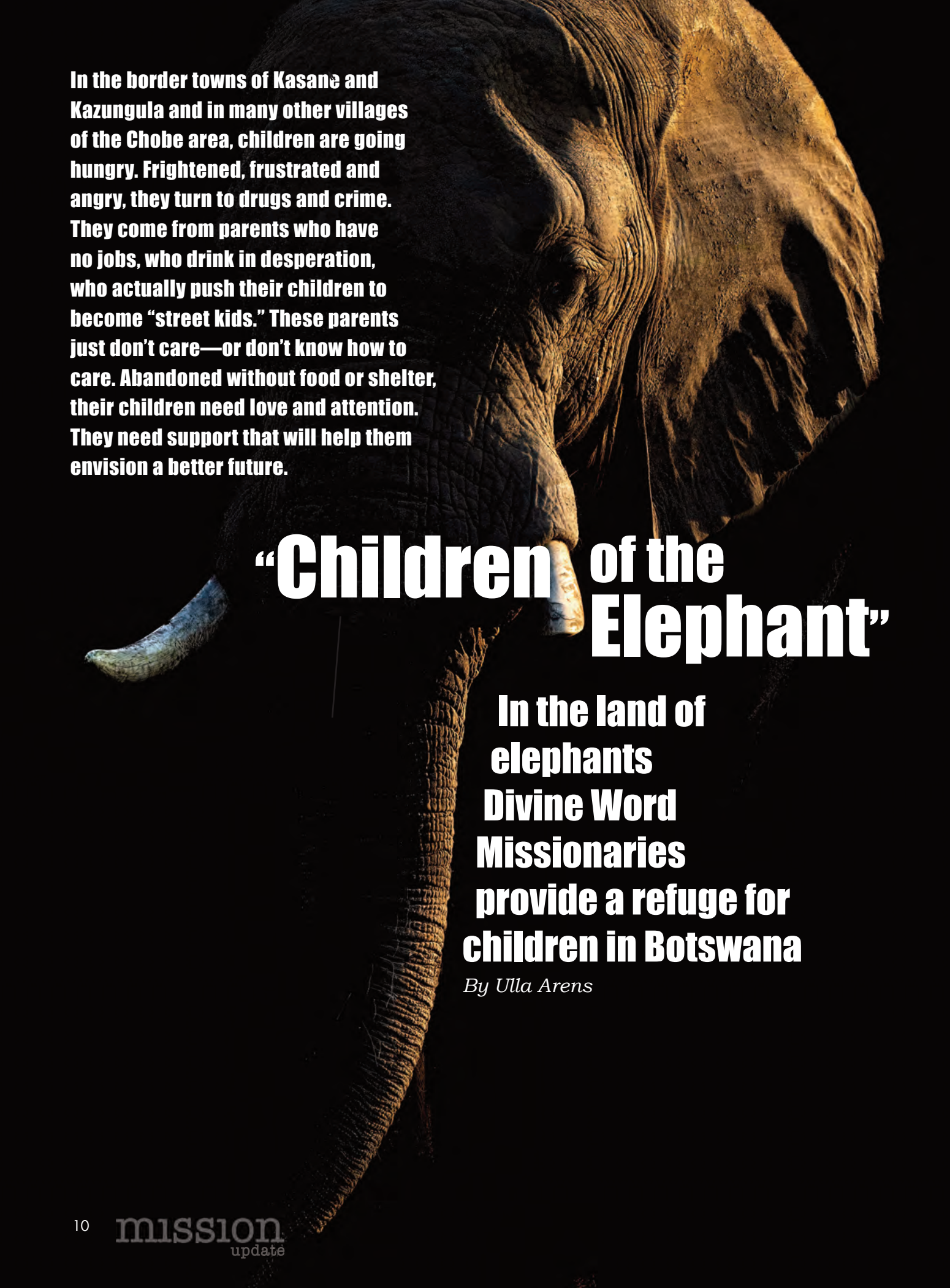
For a while we have been thinking about establishing an eye clinic next to the center. Now, in our 25th year of operation, the opportunity has arrived. The Diocese of Yendi has given us 2 acres of land. The clinic will be built in the city of Yendi in northeastern Ghana, where roads from eight cities and towns and several dozen villages intersect. This location will allow us to reach so many more people.

This new clinic will also have a chapel dedicated to Merciful Jesus. It will be a place of peace and silence, open to everyone. And for those who would like, the opportunity to participate in the celebration of Mass.

Thanks to Divine Word Missionaries in Poland, the generosity of Professor Wylegala, his friends and the many different institutions who donated time and money, we have collected the equipment needed for the glass grinding shop and one ophthalmology office. It is our dream to have two such offices and grinding shops in different locations and the surgical equipment needed to treat cataracts. We are grateful for the many wonderful and caring people who, through their good will, and their generous giving, showed in a practical way the face of Merciful Jesus. We continue to pray for them, and for our dreams... ♦







**In the border towns of Kasane and Kazungula and in many other villages of the Chobe area, children are going hungry. Frightened, frustrated and angry, they turn to drugs and crime. They come from parents who have no jobs, who drink in desperation, who actually push their children to become “street kids.” These parents just don’t care—or don’t know how to care. Abandoned without food or shelter, their children need love and attention. They need support that will help them envision a better future.**

# **“Children of the Elephant”**

**In the land of  
elephants  
Divine Word  
Missionaries  
provide a refuge for  
children in Botswana**

*By Ulla Arens*





In northeast Botswana, where tourists go on glamorous safaris, many children live in poverty. Divine Word Missionaries provide a place to help these children find a better future.

The unpaved roads of the Kgaphamadi settlement are dusty. Only a few trees provide meager shade. Small houses stand to the left and right of the sandy paths as if glued together. One room for each family.

Nothing in this area resembles the chic hotels and lodges at the other end of the small town of Kasane, where tourists descend to see zebras, giraffes, lions, antelopes and hippos in the Chobe National Park. Especially they come to see the elephants. No animal attracts the tourists so much as the elephant. Herds of the great beasts roam the park's savannah.







Away from the tourists, children's laughter sounds from a fenced-in building in the middle of the Kgaphamadi settlement. The building sits right next to the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Mission, a Divine Word parish. The building's walls are painted with colorful pictures of animals. In the yard are monkey bars with a slide that children happily tumble down. Others play ball or catch. A few boys and girls are crouching on the carpeted, covered "boma," a kind of porch, where they are engrossed in building Lego landscapes.

This project, the building and its small playground, is called "Bana ba Ditlou," or "Babadi" for short. In English it means "Children of the Elephant." The children's center offers a cheerful splash of color in a desolate environment.

More than 25 years ago, women from the parish decided to care for the youngest in the poorest part of Kasane. Today volunteers continue to play with the children, nurture them and provide them with regular meals.

*Below: A Kgaphamadi hut*



### ***Perilous Childhood***

Although democratic Botswana, which lives mainly from its diamond deposits, is a kind of model African state, about 20 percent of the population lives in poverty. This is evident in Kasane. Many people moved from the villages to this small town of about 9,000 inhabitants hoping to find work in tourism. Not everyone succeeded.

Those who could not find good jobs now eke out an existence in the huts of Kgaphamadi. Many numb themselves with alcohol and drugs. This often leads to domestic vio-





lence, which the children experience and then suffer. Sometimes the parents cannot be found for days, and their children roam the streets in search of food.

Most children live with single mothers. Or with relatives because the parents died of AIDS, which is widespread in Botswana. Some of the children are also believed to be infected with HIV. Babadi is here to offer the children of Kgaphamadi a refuge from violence in their parents' homes and on the streets.

### ***Mornings for the younger ones***

In morning preschool the children do more than play. The 4-to 6-year-olds learn numbers and colors and a bit about their homeland. After a welcoming song, a game and a prayer, the 34 children sit on the floor to learn about the "animal of the week." The teacher holds up a picture. "What's that?" she asks. "A tshukudu, a rhinoceros," replies 6-year-old Quinton. "And what does it eat?" "Grass," says Angel, 5. "And it has a lenaka, a horn," adds Lesego shyly.



After that, gymnastics is as much a part of the day-care routine as handicrafts, painting or storytelling. Following lunch together, the children go home.

"Babadi gives them confidence. And it helps them to prepare for school," says Nkele John, who works in the social project. "The girls and boys expand their vocabulary, can satisfy their thirst for knowledge and be creative. They don't have the opportunity to do that at home."







### ***Socializing and music lessons***

After school, Babadi is open to children between the ages of 6 and 15. About 25 of them regularly come to the project. "We go from house to house in Kgaphamadi asking the parents and children who are most in need," says Nkele John, explaining the admissions process.

There is no set daily routine for the afternoon group, but in addition to a nourishing meal there are many leisure activities offered by members of the parish community and other volunteers. Children can get help with their homework. A music teacher shows the children how to play the marimba, an African wooden percussion instrument similar to the xylophone. The marimba is particularly popular in Botswana. "For our children and young people, music is more than just a leisure activity," says Nkele John. "It expresses an attitude towards life." ♦

*Reprinted with permission from Divine Word Missionaries—Leben Jetzt, German website*

*Photos:*

*Bana ba Ditlou & St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Mission in Kasane*

## **Bana ba Ditlou**

**A statement from the Bana ba Ditlou website:**

**There continues to be many more children in the area who need support, and we plan to expand our services to help them.**

**On regular basis, about 50 children spend time at Bana ba Ditlou and partake in its activities.**

**At our feeding center we provide food for hungry and malnourished children.**

**Recreational activities, such as games and sports, are integral to our program.**

**Cultural and creative activities include traditional music—dance, singing, drumming, choir, marimba band, flute and guitar group—and other arts such as theater, drawing, painting and sculpture, and skills such as carving, pottery and basketry.**

**We plan to initiate some hobby clubs to help the children find their passion and maybe follow it as a career. We would like to have clubs for children interested in birdwatching, fishing and conservation, bush survival skills, bush food and medicine, tracking and safari skills. We might also have history and archaeology clubs.**

**Spiritual guidance is very important. We would like to provide the children with a system of values that would help protect them from the dangers in life—HIV/AIDS, crime, prostitution, trafficking and pornography—a guide to keep them safe and happy.**

**We hope that conservation will be an integral part of our future activities. This component is vital for the sustainability of our beautiful land. Our children are the future guardians and stewards of creation.**





Divine Word Missionaries  
5 hours ago



Mission Update from India:

Twenty-two novices professed their first vows on Oct. 9 at the novitiate in Khurda in the presence of more than 50 priests, a good number of religious men and women and a

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# Father Peter Kim

## A gift of Presence

*By Jeffrey Westhoff*

Twenty years as a missionary in Papua New Guinea has taught Fr. Peter Kim SVD that the most important thing he can offer to those he serves is his presence.

“Being with the people is important to them,”  
Being with the people.  
Doing for the people.”

**For** the past six years Fr. Kim has been a parish priest based in Dirima, a village in the Simbu Province. His mission encompasses three parishes, with the largest in Dirima, and 17 outstations. Located in the Highlands Region, Dirima is approximately 5,800 feet above sea level. Many of the outstations are even higher, some requiring 10 hours of walking up a mountain for him to visit.

Fr. Kim sees the importance of his presence most clearly when he arrives at one of the far-off outposts to celebrate Mass and deliver the sacraments. Some people greet him with tears of happiness. “They give me sweet potatoes and nice smiles,” he said.

Fr. Kim often receives gifts of sweet potatoes, which are the national crop of Papua New Guinea, and is happy to eat them after trekking up a mountain for eight or seven hours. Sweet potatoes are so commonplace in Papua New Guinea that has used one as a symbol to describe the Eucharist.

Although the highland people call him a white man, Fr. Kim comes from South Korea and is the only Korean Divine Word Missionary serving in Papua New Guinea, something he is proud of.





After completing his military service, which is compulsory in South Korea, Fr. Kim entered a diocesan seminary. But he wanted to become a missionary, so he joined the Society of the Divine Word while in formation. His new congregation sent him to Australia to continue his education and to learn English.

As part of his formation he was sent to Papua New Guinea for the Cross-cultural Training Program. "I didn't know anything about Papua New Guinea!" he remembered. But he learned to love the country for the one year and eight months he was there and said the experience strengthened his vocation.

Fr. Kim returned to Australia to complete his seminary studies. He was ordained a priest in 2002 and was assigned to Papua New Guinea as his mission country.

The tribal people that Fr. Kim ministers to are very religious, he said, and they lead a simple life. "They don't worry about the future," he said. "Tomorrow they never worry about."

Based on their culture and circumstances, the tribal people don't see themselves as individuals, but as members of a community. "Because it's a difficult life, everyone has to pitch in," Fr. Kim said.







While community-centered life is laudable, it does create difficulties for Fr. Kim when he tries to explain Catholic doctrine and its emphasis on family life. In a tribe, a family is part of the community, and the community is more important. Polygamy is not uncommon, and the men don't understand the Catholic teaching that they shouldn't have more than one wife.

Language is another challenge. English is the official language because Papua New Guinea is a Commonwealth nation even though it has been independent since 1975. But the country has more than 850 languages because each tribe has its own language.



**Fr. Kim has become comfortable saying mass in Toks Pisin**

The most common language is Toks Pisin, a pidgin language that Fr. Kim, a non-native English speaker himself, finds easier to use. Many words in Toks Pisin are simple, easy to understand definitions. Tears are called "eye water." Any building or room is the Toks Pisin word for "house" plus a descriptor. A bank is "house money," and a kitchen is "house cook."

Fr. Kim has become comfortable saying Mass in Toks Pisin, though when he celebrates Mass for the parish school he uses English. Hearing confessions can be tricky, he said, because confessors often revert to their tribal language and Fr. Kim doesn't always understand them.





Living in the mountains far from any city has advantages and disadvantages, Fr. Kim said. He likes the climate, and the healthy aspects of living free of pollution. “We drink fresh rain water,” he said. “All food is organic.”

But the comforts of the outside world are missing, too. “We have no entertainment,” he said. “No Starbucks.” Amenities are also lacking. When he has to stay overnight in an out-post village, he must spray his sleeping bag to keep fleas away.

Fr. Kim spoke of his experiences in Papua New Guinea while visiting Techny toward the end of a yearlong sabbatical. In late 2021 his 86-year-old father fell and broke his pelvis. The injury was severe. Fr. Kim was given a year’s sabbatical to return to Korea to look after his father, but his father passed away a month into the sabbatical.

After helping to arrange for his father’s funeral, Father Kim remained in Korea to take a course in spirituality. “It helped me a lot,” he said. Following that he used the remainder of his sabbatical to travel.

His first stop was Europe. In Spain he took part in the famed Camino de Santiago pilgrimage—for part of the route, anyway. Fr. Kim figured that walking up and down mountains to visit outstations would have prepared him for the pilgrimage, but trekking through







the countryside while wearing a heavy backpack was more than he expected. “I was arrogant,” he said. It also didn’t help that he contracted COVID while staying in hostels.

Once he got over the illness, Fr. Kim went to Portugal to visit the site of another pilgrimage, Fatima. While there he stayed at the Steyler Fatima Hotel Congress, which is operated by Divine Word Missionaries. “Four stars!” he declared.

Fr. Kim spent the rest of his sabbatical in the United States. He visited Alaska, Los Angeles, Los Vegas and the Grand Canyon. He came to Techny to visit Father Gerry Theis SVD and other retired Divine Word Missionaries he knew from his early years in Papua New Guinea.

For much of his stay in the United States, Fr. Kim was based in California where he assisted at an Orange County parish with a largely Korean congregation. “It’s been very good for me,” he said.

As much as he enjoyed his sabbatical, he looked forward to returning to his mission and his community in Papua New Guinea. “I am very proud of my mission in Papua New Guinea,” he said. “Thank you, God, for calling me to be a missionary. Especially a Divine Word Missionary.” ♦





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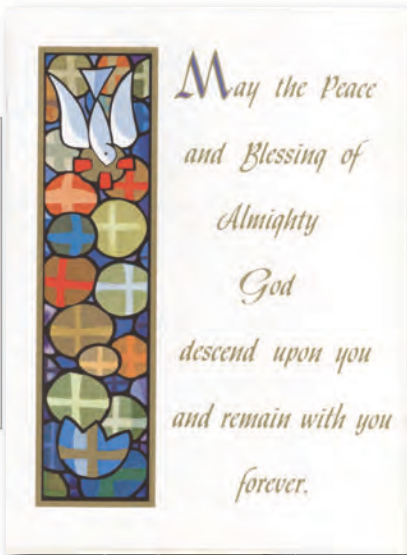
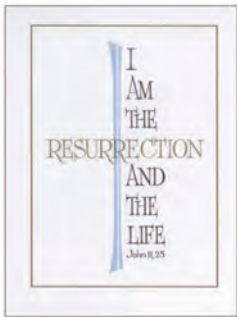


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Our missionaries in Poland have welcomed refugees into our religious houses.

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

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