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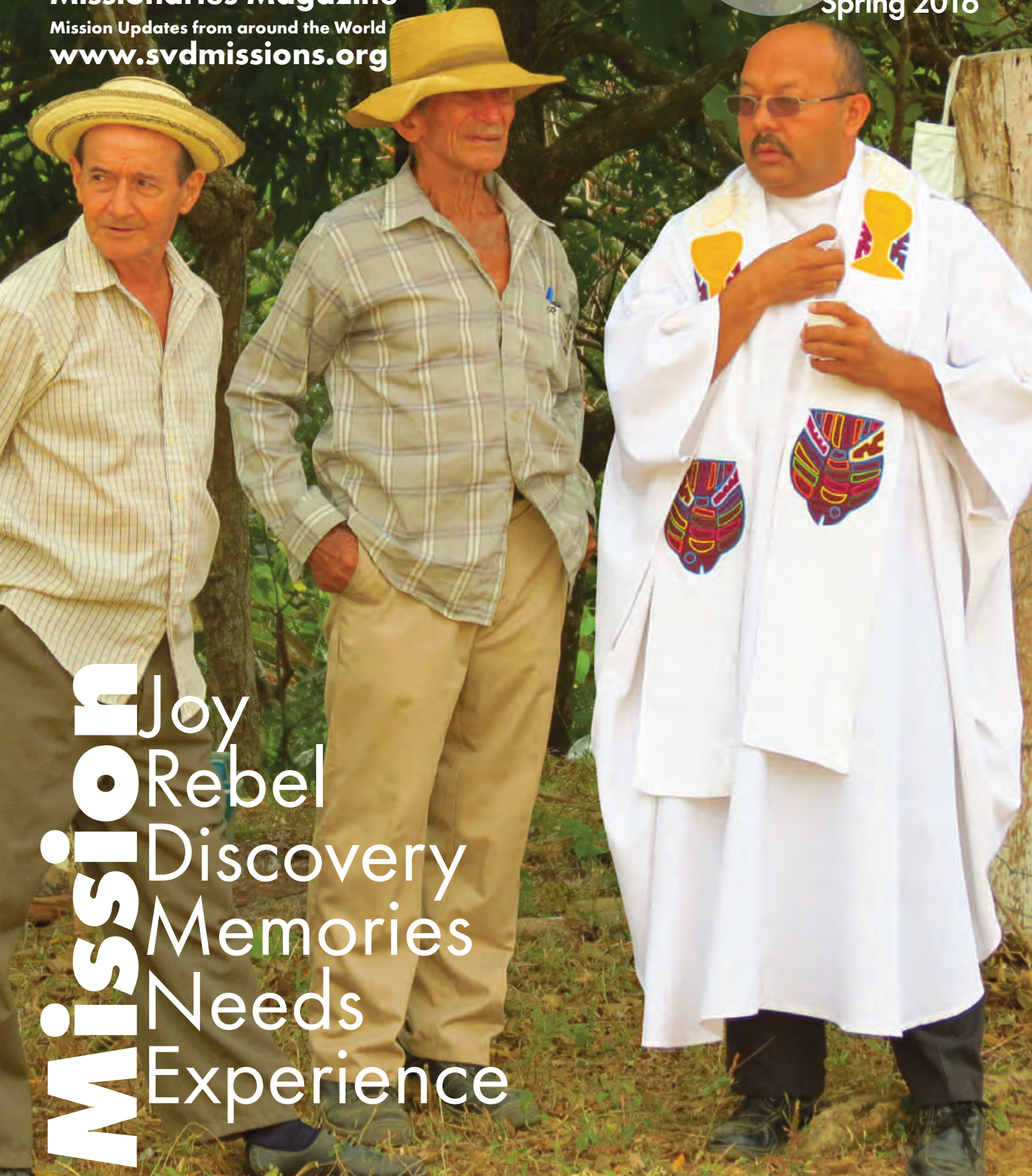
Divine Word

Missionaries Magazine

Mission Updates from around the World

www.svdmissions.org

Spring 2016



Mission Joy
o Rebel
Discovery
Memories
Needs
Experience



From the Desk of Fr. Richie Vaz SVD

Discover the Joy of Mission and Be Disciples for Mission

I convey my greetings to you during this the Easter season, and I ask the Risen Lord to bring new happenings your way. May he bless your home with happiness, peace, and unwavering faith!

I had an enjoyable and heartwarming visit with my family in India. Afterward, I traveled to visit flood victims in the state of Tamil Nadu. My spirit was reenergized when I went to the missions in the state of Odisha, where I spent twenty-nine years of my missionary life before moving to Chicago in 2007.

There is nothing that brings more joy to my heart than to see people being awakened to God's love and mercy by numerous dedicated priests, religious, and the laity, including Divine Word Missionaries. Despite a much-hyped economic boom, Indian economic growth continually fails to benefit its poorest people. Gains seen in the field of health, sanitation, and education are very encouraging, but there is still more that can be done to improve the lives of people in India's poorest communities. I found Divine Word Missionaries fully immersed in restoring human dignity to poor and the marginalized people in those communities.

I was stunned by the generosity of the leprosy patients who offered me two live chickens when I visited the colony I helped establish in 1979. Mission trips can be a life-changing experience because the people you visit make you appreciate all that you have in your life. However, the key to any mission visit is being open to the people we serve. In each place I visited, the local people, our Brothers, and priests all expressed their gratitude and appreciation to you, our donors and friends, for being the answer to their prayers.

Do you wish to have this experience as a friend of Divine Word Missionaries? Like the Emmaus disciples, we need to allow the Lord to open our minds and hearts to the wisdom and joy contained in Scripture. If only we allow Jesus to let the words of Scripture burn in our hearts as the Emmaus disciples did, we will discover the Risen Lord in every stranger on our road. We will recognize the struggles, oppression, injustice, and discrimination they experience. Please remember Divine Word Missionaries in your prayers. Together with us, you bring compassion, mercy, and hope to people and make the world a better place to live!



Mission Memories

Mission Needs



Mission Gratitude

Mission Experience



Fr. Richie Vaz SVD
Mission Director



DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES

AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND BROTHERS

An Invitation to Live in Joy

Luis Antonio Vergara Solis SVD



Sold and Enslaved

Markus Frädrich



In the middle of a traffic island, Bro. Paul comes across a sleeping boy. Those standing around tell him that the boy does not have a father anymore and that his mother has turned to prostitution...

Christ, the Center of Mission

Darwin Loro SVD



My Impressions after Twenty-Two Years

Dariusz Garbaciak SVD



The years passed after I left Papua New Guinea in 1993, and I never had a chance to go back until November 2015. After twenty-two years, I finally had a chance to visit again.

Education, an Act of Love

Emmanuel Anyomi SVD



The plight of schools in Madagascar is similar to that found in many African countries. It is especially alarming here in Madagascar, since it is among the poorest countries...

God Reward You

Binh Quang Le SVD



Mission
Joy
Rebel
Discovery
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Mission Joy



An Invitation to Live in Joy

Luis Antonio Vergara Solis SVD

We cannot deny that we live in a world that is wounded, moves at an accelerated pace, and is plagued by material values. It is a world where we find men and women who feel sad, empty, and dissatisfied despite having a “successful” life. Today’s society has grown accustomed to seeing amazing things almost every day thanks to rapid advances in technology. The incredible has become part of our daily bread. Few things impress us today. The beauty of the humble and simple things is increasingly disregarded.



We put aside our feelings to analyze and reflect on what is happening. However, part of our mission is to restore the importance of joy, the simplicity of the language of nature, the mystery of life, the direct contact with the creation, and the joy of serving—in other words, to recover the spirit of living.

Saint Joseph Freinademetz SVD once said that the missionary is not the Light but someone who reflects the Light. This is the reason why the missionary is al-



joy and optimism have become the missionary's habit, attitude, reaction and decision ...

the missionary is not the Light but someone who reflects the Light



ways in the right place. Wherever he goes, and although people may not know him, his actions have an impact on their lives. This is possible because joy and optimism have become the missionary's habit, attitude, reaction, and decision that results in an invitation to the joy of living despite the difficulties. His joy and optimism serve to question the values of today's society based in economy and power.

It is true that we receive in our seminaries and formation houses a broad preparation for religious life. The essential aspects are covered, and we have experiences such as the cross-cultural training (CTP) or pastoral experiences in parishes and hospitals, which help us to prepare for our religious missionary life. However, when we receive our first mission assignment and reach our new mission place, we have to face a new reality by ourselves. We find unexpected situations that were never taught or spoken of in our formation.

Each new town or city in which we work has its own culture, customs, sorrows, and happy moments.

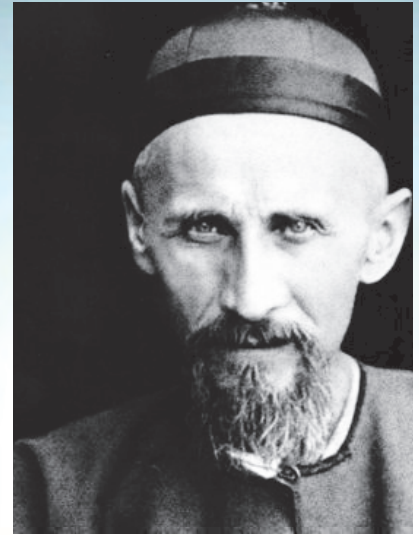




We may be rejected at first, but when people find in us a partner on their journey—someone they can approach, someone who gives them support despite adverse circumstances and encourages them to continue with much optimism—they begin to accept us. Slowly, they begin to understand that “the yoke is easy to carry” if it is shared with the Lord, our neighbor. They begin to accept us when we accompany and serve them. We can be their source of satisfaction, joy, and happiness. At the same time, this also gives a missionary happiness. There is no greater satisfaction for a missionary than to be given the opportunity to experience the joy of serving, to feel that we are part of the Lord’s plan, and to know that we are helping to heal the wounds of people in the places where we serve.

The optimistic and joyful attitude of the missionary committed to the God’s plan has an influence in the battle between material and economic values and Christian faith and values. Both want to take the best place: the hearts of people. It is not an easy struggle, but as long as we reflect the light of the Divine Word and invite others to choose joy and optimism, as long as we give our lives to the service of people, then we will find the satisfaction of a worker who has completed his task or a person who has fulfilled his mission.

This article is reprinted from the *SVD BROTHERS Bulletin* (November 2014). We acknowledge the editorial work of Brother Mark Paglicawan SVD, Brother Hubertus Guru SVD, and Father Nico Espinosa SVD. Without the selfless work of these (and many other) people, the bulletin could not exist. Brother Bela Lanyi SVD is coordinator of the *SVD Brother’s Bulletin*.



“The missionary is not the Light but someone who reflects the Light.”

—Saint Joseph Freinademetz SVD
(1852–1908)



Joseph Freinademetz was born on April 15, 1852, in Oies, a small hamlet of five houses situated in the Dolomite Alps of northern Italy. The region, known as South Tyrol, was then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. He was baptized on the day he was born, and he inherited from his family a simple but tenacious faith.

While Joseph was studying theology in the diocesan seminary of Bressanone (Brixen), he began to think seriously of the foreign missions as a way of life. He was ordained a priest on July 25, 1875, and assigned to the community of Saint Martin very near his own home, where he soon won the hearts of the people. However, the call to missionary service did not go away. Just two years after ordination, he contacted Father Arnold Janssen, the founder of a mission house which quickly developed into the Society of the Divine Word [aka Divine Word Missionaries].

With his bishop's permission, Joseph entered the mission house in Steyl, Netherlands, in August 1878. On March 2, 1879, he received his mission cross and departed for China with Father John Baptist Anzer SVD, another Divine Word Missionary. Five weeks later they arrived in Hong Kong, where they remained for two years, preparing themselves for the next step. In 1881, they traveled to their new mission in South Shantung, a province with twelve million inhabitants and only 158 Christians.

Those were hard years, marked by long, arduous journeys, assaults by bandits, and the difficult work of forming the first Christian communities. . . . His whole life was marked by an effort to become a Chinese among the Chinese, so much so that he wrote to his family: "I love China

and the Chinese. I want to die among them and be laid to rest among them."

In 1898, Freinademetz was sick with laryngitis and had the beginnings of tuberculosis as a result of his heavy workload and many other hardships. So at the insistence of the bishop and the other priests, he was sent for a rest to Japan, with the hope that he could regain his health. He returned to China somewhat recuperated, but not fully cured.

When the bishop had to travel outside of China in 1907, Freinademetz took on the added burden of the administration of the diocese. During this time, there was a severe outbreak of typhus. Joseph, like a good shepherd, offered untiring assistance and visited many communities until he himself became infected. He returned to Taikia, the seat of the diocese, where he died on January 28, 1908. . . .

Freinademetz learned how to discover the greatness and beauty of Chinese culture and to love deeply the people to whom he had been sent. He dedicated his life to proclaiming the gospel message of God's love for all peoples and to embodying this love in the formation of Chinese Christian communities. . . . And he encouraged many of the Chinese Christians to be missionaries to their own people as catechists, religious, nuns and priests. His life was an expression of his motto: "The language that all people understand is that of love."

Father Joseph Freinademetz SVD was canonized on October 5, 2003, together with Father Arnold Janssen, founder of Divine Word Missionaries. The feast of St. Joseph Freinademetz is January 29.

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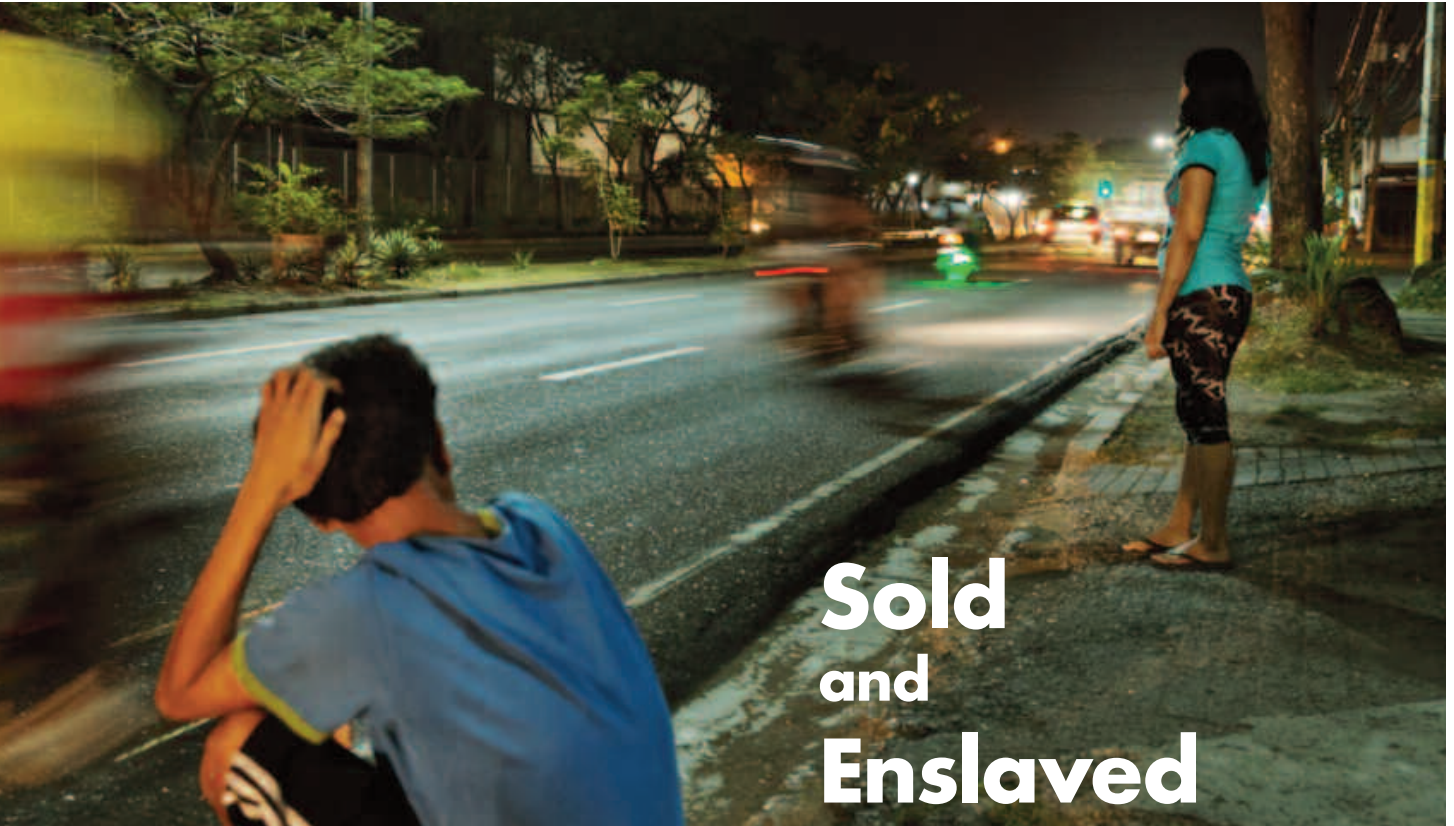
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Mission Rebel



Sold and Enslaved

Markus Frädrieh

Translated by Father David Streit SVD

Every day, in the southern Philippine metropolis of Cebu City, as many as ten thousand young women are forced to sell their bodies.

Priests, sisters, and our own Bro. Paul are there working to help them escape from that life.

Cindy lays her pencil on the table. For three weeks she has been working meticulously, and now her drawing is finally finished. It depicts a young man with his gaze fixed on heaven. Pedro Calungsod was a young Filipino catechist of the seventeenth century who worked as a missionary in Guam. It was there that he was martyred for his faith. Pope Benedict XVI canonized him in 2012.

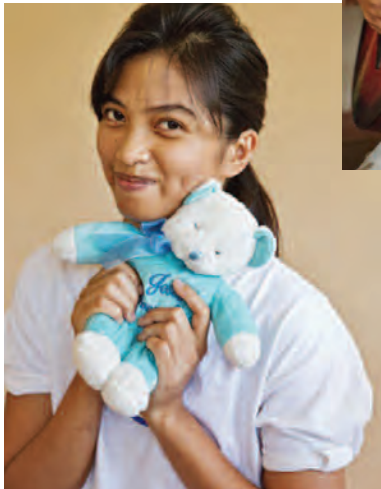
Cindy has not been drawing for very long, but she is very enthused about her new hobby. It helps her to forget. You see, before Cindy arrived at the shelter run by the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, her life was in ruins, a reality which she shares with the forty other young women who have found refuge here.

When Cindy begins to tell about her life “before,” her voice soon breaks. The eyes of the pretty young girl fill with tears. Cindy comes from the island of Mindanao. Her birth mother did not have enough money to feed her, so she sold her child for three hundred pesos, a little bit less than seven US dollars. Her new “parents” beat and abused Cindy.

In the shelter of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Cindy plays her guitar, shows off her drawing of Pedro Calungsod, and her teddy bear



The streetwalker zone of Cebu City



“That’s the reason I ran away,” remembers the now twenty-year-old woman. “At first, I lived on the streets. I had to steal in order to survive. Then I heard that there were a lot of good paying jobs available in Cebu City. And so I made my way there.” Someone promised Cindy a job as a cashier in a bar. Instead, they forced her to work as a guest relations officer (GRO), a euphemistic designation for a prostitute. Prostitution is officially forbidden in the Philippines. But when men escort the barmaids from their jobs and take them to a local hotel room, local officials look the other way. As a result, brothel managers keep the girls like slaves, selling them to ten or more clients each night—business people, sailors, workers, and foreign tourists.

The girls are made docile by filling them with drugs and alcohol, their meals are withheld, and they are thoroughly browbeaten. Even when they inevitably become pregnant, they are forced to continue working until the seventh month of pregnancy. Cindy also became addicted to drugs, until she was arrested by the police one day. She was put in prison, where later her son, Vincent, was born. Behind bars with her baby, Cindy had the feeling that she could not sink any lower. But then someone came along and lifted her up. It was Brother Paul Bongcaras SVD, a Divine Word Missionary Brother.



Brother Paul Bongcaras SVD

In the middle of a traffic island, Bro. Paul comes across a sleeping boy. Those standing around tell him that the boy does not have a father anymore and that his mother has turned to prostitution in an attempt to provide income for herself and her children.



Bro. Paul has white, thinning hair, plays the ukulele, and absolutely loves to tell jokes. Bro. Paul is the very personification of *joie de vivre*, the zest for life. The sixty-nine-year-old religious Brother spends night after night walking the streets of neighborhoods where human suffering could not be greater.

It is 9:00 p.m. as he parks his car at a busy intersection in the middle of Cebu City. Homeless people have camped out on the nearby sidewalks in an attempt to get a night's sleep. They crawl out of their makeshift tents so that the missionary can treat their sores and administer some basic first aid for their many ills.

In the middle of a traffic island, Bro. Paul comes across a sleeping boy. Those standing around tell him that the boy does not have a father anymore and that his mother has turned to prostitution in an attempt to provide income for herself and her children.

“We don’t judge these women for what they are doing,” Bro. Paul says as he gets behind the wheel of his car. “We try to give them the feeling that we are with them on the road they are traveling. Their lifestyle is born out of their need. We’re all sinners. No one is perfect in this world. There is a way that they can escape from the life to which they have fallen hostage.”



Bro. Paul talks to a pimp



Bro. Paul is continually lowering the car window to talk to people. He knows the girls along the sides of the road. He is always ready to listen to them and is constantly encouraging them to pay attention to cleanliness and hygiene for the sake of their health.

"In the beginning, I ran away when Bro. Paul tried to talk to me because I thought that he must be from the police," remembers Georgio, a lanky pimp standing in front of a seedy transient hotel. "But all he ever really wants is to find out whether the girls are alright or not." What? He is talking with the pimps? Bro. Paul is used to criticism of his courageous and unorthodox involvement in the red-light scene, even from other representatives of the Church.

"Anyone who wrinkles his nose at what I am doing should just come with me once when I make my nightly rounds and see for himself how things are," he says. "We can't close our eyes to reality. Just because the rest of society doesn't want to have anything to do with them, it's important that we accept those girls as they are."

Sometimes it is harder to ask for permission than for forgiveness. That is Bro. Paul's motto of life. Already in the early 1970s, the Divine Word Missionary had people talking about him as, in addition to his studies in psychology at the University of San Carlos, he began his social work



Dancing the traditional Filipino Tinikling dance at the shelter, the girls are able to forget their dark past



in the slums and red-light districts of Cebu—without the permission of his superiors. “In the eyes of our provincial superior at the time, I was a rebel,” Bro. Paul remembers. “He was afraid that by doing what I was doing, I would be endangering both my health and my vocation as a religious Brother.”

Then, in the early 1990s, after fifteen years of missionary work in Papua New Guinea, Bro. Paul returned to the Philippines to take up a teaching position at San Carlos University and, quietly at first, resumed his nighttime visits to the homeless people and the prostitutes of Cebu City. “I only got the ‘official blessing’ in 2003 when one of the general visitators from Rome went along with me one night on my rounds in the red-light districts and wound up recommending my work there.”

Today, Bro. Paul has a budget for his socioreligious work with the poor and the marginalized. He now also has the full support of his order’s leadership. Often he sits until well after midnight in the red-light establishments of Cebu City encouraging the girls to make a whole new start. He tells them of other girls who succeeded in finally getting out of the life. He tells them about the shelter of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd where the girls from the red-light districts are always welcome. He tells them about kind Sister Antonietta, whom many of the girls now look upon as their mother. He also tells them about the recovery center on the outskirts of the city for young

women who sincerely have a desire to get away from the life of prostitution.

Today, Cindy is living at the center—and could not be happier about it. “Here, it feels as if we all are part of one large family,” she says. “I am so thankful that I am being allowed to stay here. My life has changed completely. I have discovered that I can do good things.” Bro. Paul visited Cindy in prison and encouraged her to make a new start. The Sisters have supported and helped Cindy free herself from drugs and alcohol. The young woman can now read and write. She has learned to sew and to tend a garden. In every free moment, she either draws or reaches for her guitar. “One of the other girls taught me how to play the guitar,” she says. Closing her eyes, she strums the first measures of Adele’s *Rolling in the Deep* and begins to sing.

Sometimes Bro. Paul comes to visit Cindy when he brings to the shelter a new girl whom he met on his nightly rounds of the streets. When that happens, Cindy tries to be especially caring and helpful. At night in the dormitory, when she senses that the new member of the family is trembling with anxiety, she wordlessly hands the girl her teddy bear named Blue. He comforted Cindy after many a nightmare. “I want to be there for the younger girls just like the Sisters were there for me when I first arrived,” says Cindy. What does she hope to do for a career? She wants to help abused girls. “In that way I can give back a little bit of what God has done for me.”

Mission Discovery



Christ, the Center of Mission

Darwin Loro SVD

When I professed my final vows in 2007, I chose this inspiring verse from the Gospel of John: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (20:21).

It has become clear to me that, to be a missionary in today's world, one must be at ease with listening more than talking. Missionaries have the tendency to work and do something for others with good intentions. But the absence of a listening heart when others need to be heard and the inability to reflect hinder the achievement of an important part of a relationship. Only when this is addressed is a missionary able to understand what people say and want.

To be at ease with listening and reflecting takes time, energy, and awareness. A missionary's previous experience, perceptions, and knowledge must not keep him from listening to individuals in particular places and reflecting on what he hears. Thus, to dialogue is important. I realize that it is the people who lead me back to Jesus, especially at times when I am not attuned to him. It is a joy to know that human experience is full of wisdom and knowledge.

It is a joy to discover that life is full of meaning with Jesus Christ, who is the center of the Church's mission.



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My Impressions after Twenty-Two Years

Dariusz Garbaciak SVD



Papua New Guinea is a small country with a population of about six million people located in the southern Pacific Ocean. When you travel through that “country of paradise,” you see beautiful coasts as well as mountainous highlands. For the past 119 years, pioneering Divine Word Missionaries have served in Papua New Guinea.

My first contact with Papua New Guinea was from 1991 to 1993, when I traveled there as a seminarian for my cross-cultural training program. It is an important time in our formation when we receive a temporary mission assignment for language study and supervised apostolic ministry, often in another culture, country, or region.

During that time, I experienced Papua New Guinea’s cultures and the languages, including Tok Pisin, one of the three official languages of the country. I spent two years in Minj, in the Western Highlands Province, which gave me a very good understanding of the work of Divine Word Missionaries in that part of the world. The training program helped me communicate the Good News to people in the context of their culture and language. At the same time, I under-



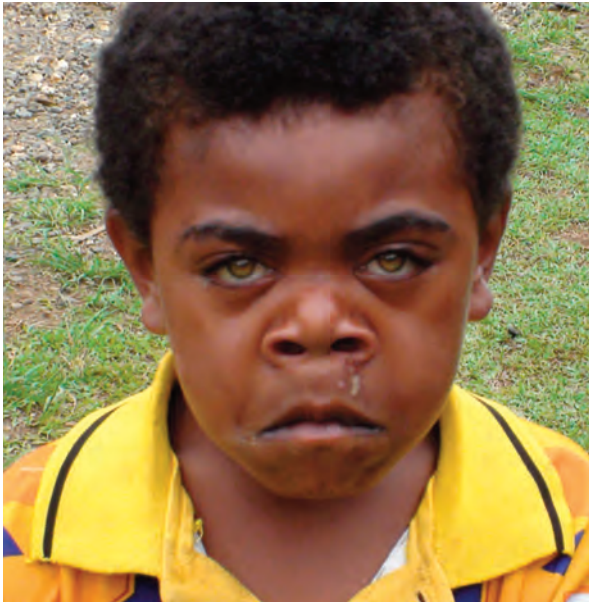
Mission Memories

stood more fully what it means to be a missionary and a member of our religious community.

The years passed after I left Papua New Guinea in 1993, and I never had a chance to go back until November 2015. After twenty-two years, I finally had a chance to visit again. The purpose of my trip was to meet with our missionaries and help them understand banking, accounting, and fundraising so they can obtain the financial and spiritual help needed to continue the missionary work begun years before. I journeyed to Papua New Guinea to share my knowledge and insights with my fellow Divine Word Missionaries, but during the many hours we spent together, I learned much more from them about their struggles, disappointments, and successes.

One of the most memorable moments for me was a visit to my former parish in Minj. It certainly did not look as it did in 1992. The station has grown and more buildings were added. The school that belongs to the parish has newer, bigger classrooms. I was amazed at the number of children who come there for intellectual and spiritual formation. I was also very happy to meet with John, the catechist. When I came to the parish as a





seminarian, John helped me to be accepted by the local tribe. He is an old man now, in Tok Pisin we say *lapun papa*. John and I reminisced for a long time. We both remembered when John was a strong man, and I was very young. We remembered when we used to walk together to visit outstations in remote areas. We also recalled times when we taught the children and adults in small, outlying villages. John still helps in the parish, but does not teach religious education classes any longer.

After a joyful time together sharing our stories and memories, John and I had to say goodbye. John understood me when I said in Tok Pisin: *Me mast go now* (I have to go, and we will most probably never meet again). John was sad. He held my hand with a firm grip and asked: *Wanem time you came back?* (When are you going to be back?). I did not respond to his question, because I knew I had no answer. His eyes were wet and his voice shook since he was keenly aware that we would never see each other again. It was hard for me as well, remembering John from his younger days, still the polite and gentle person he was then. It was time to say, “Goodbye, my friend.” It was time to go, and I left.

During the years since 1993, Papua New Guinea has changed, and there are many new buildings, roads, and schools. The mentality of people is changing as well. Some people are getting better, but some are still the same. Had my friend John changed? No, he had not. He is as he always was—gentle and polite, although a bit older now like me!

Prayer for the Jubilee of Mercy



Pope Francis has composed a special prayer for the Jubilee Year of Mercy which runs from December 8, 2015 to November 20, 2016.

Lord Jesus Christ,
you have taught us to be merciful
like the heavenly Father,
and have told us that
whoever sees you sees him.
Show us your face and we will be saved.
Your loving gaze freed Zacchaeus and Matthew
from being enslaved by money;
the adulteress and Magdalene
from seeking happiness only in created things;
made Peter weep after his betrayal,
and assured Paradise to the repentant thief.
Let us hear, as if addressed to each one of us,
the words that you spoke
to the Samaritan woman:
"If you knew the gift of God!"

You are the visible face of the invisible Father,
of the God who manifests his power above all
by forgiveness and mercy:
let the Church be your visible face
in the world, its Lord risen and glorified.
You willed that your ministers
would also be clothed in weakness
in order that they may feel compassion
for those in ignorance and error:
let everyone who approaches them
feel sought after, loved, and forgiven by God.

Send your Spirit and consecrate
every one of us with its anointing,
so that the Jubilee of Mercy
may be a year of grace from the Lord,
and your Church, with renewed enthusiasm,
may bring good news to the poor,
proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,
and restore sight to the blind.

We ask this of you, Lord Jesus,
through the intercession of Mary,
Mother of Mercy; you who live and reign with
the Father and the Holy Spirit
forever and ever.
Amen.

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Mission Needs



Education, an Act of Love

Emmanuel Anyomi SVD

It is said that education is a right and never a privilege. It is not for only a few, the privileged, and the rich, but for all people. Moreover, it is indispensable for the development of every nation and for unity and peace among nations.

On October 19, 2014, Father Czeslaw Sadecki SVD and I began our mission assignment at Saint Anthony of Padua parish, located in Ipasa, a farming community about four miles from Fianarantsoa, Madagascar. The outgoing pastor, a diocesan priest, introduced us to the faith community. Fr. Czeslaw was the new pastor, and I was the assistant pastor.

Soon afterward, together with some catechists and elders of the parish, we spent a day traveling throughout the parish to visit the eight outstations and five Catholic primary schools located within its boundaries. There are three other schools, but they are closed because the buildings are in disrepair or there are no teachers.

During the daylong trip, we saw many shocking, unbelievable things: dilapidated classroom blocks, pupils with bare feet wearing tattered clothes, no libraries, no toilets facilities, and several grades in one classroom with only one teacher because of lack of funds and educational materials. We learned that many children walk miles to get to school. They trek through rice farms and across rivers and streams, often on empty stomachs. Parents struggling to provide their children with an education lamented to us, "I can't even feed my children. How on earth or where on earth can I get money to pay their school fees?" They try to save a little, and some children help their parents to farm or sell produce at the



“To educate is an act of love, it is to give life. And love is demanding, it calls for the best resources, for a reawakening of the passion to begin this path patiently with young people. . . . Youth are in need of quality teaching along with values that are not only articulated but witnessed to.”

(Pope Francis, February 13, 2014)

market to raise money for schooling. Often, parents and their children turn to priests and religious for assistance with school fees and materials.

The plight of schools in Madagascar is similar to that found in many African countries. It is especially alarming here in Madagascar, since it is among the poorest countries in the world according to statistics provided by the World Bank.

The Catholic bishops of Madagascar are responding to educational needs and strengthening education in many ways. They encourage Madagascans and Christians in particular to make education a priority so that the country and its people will have a better future. Church leaders in Madagascar build schools and provide some scholarships. The bishops encourage religious congregations and individual Catholics to construct schools and do all they can to improve education in Madagascar. A special highlight each year is the celebration of World Catholic Education Day, which brings pupils, teachers, and parents together to celebrate the gift of Catholic education. This day for Catholic schools is to be celebrated forty days after Easter on the feast of the Ascension, but for the convenience of everyone who participates, another day can be set aside for the event, especially in rural areas.

In Saint Anthony of Padua parish, we celebrated World Catholic Education Day last year on Saturday, March 21, 2015. Although not all the students are Catholics, over six hundred children from our five parish schools came to

socialize and to learn about the Catholic faith. Fr. Czeslaw and I were overjoyed to see the children together.

The day began with a Mass planned and organized by pupils and teachers. After Mass, the directors of the schools and teachers gave inspirational or educational addresses. Then children from each of the primary schools made recitations, presented cultural displays, and sang religious and traditional songs. Time for socialization and a meal followed. The day ended after everyone watched the movie entitled *Quo Vadis*. The pupils, teachers, and parents commented about how meaningful the day was for them. They had an opportunity to show their love and concern for one another and to learn from each other.



As I look back on the day, I wonder how those innocent children will receive the help they need for their lives and futures. They are in a situation they did not create that results from the political and economic environment and their familial circumstances.

Since the founding of Divine Word Missionaries in 1875, education has been part of our missionary service. I am filled with enthusiasm and zeal for the educational work we Divine Word Missionaries carry out. I know that it helps break the yoke of poverty, empowers people and promotes their development, fosters interreligious dialogue and understanding, and makes the Word of God present as it diffuses gospel values. I trust and believe that God is close to us, and that he will put smiles on the faces of these pupils one day.

Mission Experience



**God
Reward
You**
Dios le pague

Binh Quang Le SVD

“Dios le pague” (God reward you). These were the words spoken to me by seniors who come to eat lunch twice a week at Divino Niño parish in the Caupichu area of Quito, Ecuador. When translated literally, it means “May God reward you.” It is another way to say thank you in Caupichu.

When I arrived in Ecuador, I took two Spanish language courses at the Pontifical Catholic University in Quito. Then I was assigned to continue my language and culture education at Divino Niño parish in Caupichu, a developing area south of Quito. Because Caupichu is high in the mountains, the weather is cold, and it rains frequently. Unlike places like Chicago, the people in Caupichu do not have heaters to keep warm. They wear layers of extra clothing when they go to sleep. When I went to Ecuador, I brought very little clothing for cold weather since I assumed Ecuador is a hot place near the earth’s equator. Like the local people, I learned quickly to layer up with whatever clothing I brought!

Caupichu is one of the poorer areas of Quito. The people in Caupichu make enough for their day-to-day living. They work hard, but earn little. As with other developing areas, there are problems with drugs, crime, and contamination of the environment with trash. Programs were developed at the community and local Church level to tackle some of these problems. One of the earlier programs was the development of a *comedor* or soup kitchen for the elderly at Divino Niño parish. Other programs to educate youth about the importance of protecting the environment were started by the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters in collaboration with Divine Word Missionaries.



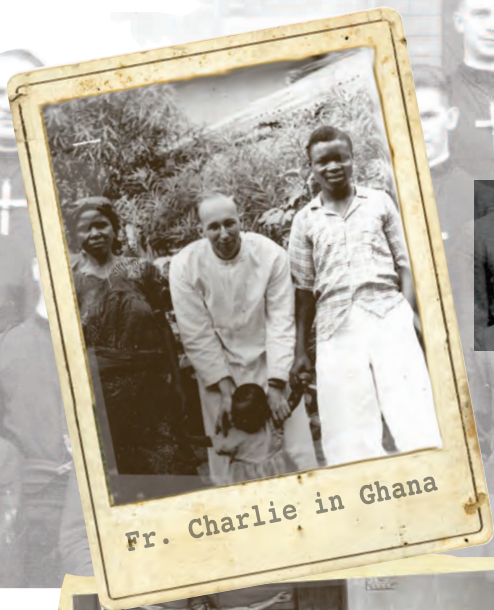
When Father Toan Vu SVD was assigned here many years ago, he wanted to help the senior residents of Caupichu. The seniors come from all walks of life. Some are abandoned by their children. Some wanted companions. Others do not have enough food to eat. With all these needs in mind, Fr. Toan opened a soup kitchen that feeds the elderly twice week. Not only are they fed, there are also activities with them before the meal. Activities include a prayer service and *baile terapia* or dance therapy. A program like this requires a lot of volunteers and donations to run effectively.

Fr. Toan created a framework in which a group of volunteer *cocineras* or cooks comes every Friday and Saturday morning to prepare food. Other volunteers come to cut fruits or vegetables, set up the dining room with tables and chairs, and help to wash the dishes and clean up afterward. Where do they get the money to buy food for cooking? These *cocineras* also cook on Sunday to sell to parishioners to raise funds for the program. Parishioners see the benefits of this program to the community so they bring donations of food. The majority of the time, the feeding program is self-sufficient and does not need financial assistance from the parish. Father Robert Christy SVD continued this program when he was assigned to the parish after Fr. Toan received a new assignment.

I am part of the setup and cleanup crew, so together with Sister Charito SSpS and Sister Ruth SSpS, two Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, I set up tables and chairs in the dining room. When the seniors are seated, I often go into the room to count them so that bowls and plates of food can be prepared. Whenever I enter the dining, many people look up, wave, and say, “¡Buenos días, hermanito!” (Good day, brother!). Often they want me to come over to them so they can shake my hand or plant a kiss on my cheek. And with every bowl of soup and plate of food we serve, we hear, “Dios le pague.” Never mind that sometimes we have only vegetables and rice to eat, they are always grateful.

Moments like this really define my missionary experience here in Ecuador. They take away the hardships of adjusting to life in a new land with all the challenges and communication difficulties. It is moments like this when I say back to the seniors and the volunteers, “Dios le pague.” God reward you for helping me to see Christ in the people I serve and for strengthening my missionary vocation.





Father Charles (Charlie) Schneider SVD was ordained at Techny in 1947. He went to his first missionary assignment in Ghana and remained there until his retirement to Techny in 2003.

When our European and American Divine Word Missionaries, like Fr. Charlie, retire from their active years of faithful service, they are provided with quality nursing care in a Divine Word Missionary residence. Thankfully, this level of care is made possible by the financial support of the local Divine Word Missionary community in addition to the benefits received governmental programs like Social Security and Medicare.

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AUTHORS

Luis Antonio Vergara SVD was born in Tonosí, Panama. He professed first vows in 1986. His training as priest was in Colombia and in England at the Missionary Institute of London. After ordination in 1992, Father Luis received his first assignment in Wellington, New Zealand, where he served as parish priest. Later, he was assigned to Melbourne, Australia, where he was rector of Dorish Maru College. Fr. Luis is currently the regional superior of the Central American Region of Divine Word Missionaries.

Darwin Loro SVD is originally from Cebu City, Philippines, and entered Divine Word Missionaries after high school. He professed first vows in 1999 and final vows in 2007. His training includes studies in theology, psychology, and counseling. Brother Darwin's first mission assignment was to Argentina, where he worked with sick and dying and accompanied youth recovering from addiction. He is currently the human resource officer at Liceo del Verbo Divino, a basic education school in Tacloban City, Philippines.

Emmanuel Anyomi SVD is from Accra, Ghana. He professed first vows as a Divine Word Missionary in 2005. He was ordained in 2011 and received his mission assignment to Madagascar. After arriving in Madagascar, Father Emmanuel served as an assistant pastor and then as a formator at the Divine Word Missionary formation house in Fianarantsoa. Since that time, he has been in parish ministry. Fr. Emmanuel was assigned recently to the Parish of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Pangalana in Ambohitsara after serving in St. Anthony of Padua parish in Ipasa.

Dariusz Garbaciak SVD is originally from Poznan, Poland. He entered Divine Word Missionaries in Chludowo, Poland, and professed first vows in 1987. He was ordained in 1996. Since 1997, Father Dariusz has been assigned to the United States, where he is currently the treasurer of the Chicago Province of Divine Word Missionaries.

Markus Frädrieh studied journalism and music at the University of Dortmund, Germany. He worked as a freelance journalist for various German newspapers, radio, and TV stations. Since 2008, he has worked at the Mission Office of Divine Word Missionaries in Sankt Augustin, Germany, as editor for its website and publications. Markus Frädrieh lives with his family in Bonn.

Binh Quang Le SVD is originally from Da Nang, Vietnam, and came to the United States with his family. He professed first vows as a Divine Word Missionary in 2012. Currently, Binh is assigned to Ecuador for his cross-cultural training program. He will return to Chicago to continue his formation and complete his academic studies at Catholic Theological Union.

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