

Divine Word Missionaries
P.O. Box 6099
Techy, Illinois 60082-6099

Non-Profit Org
U.S. Postage
PAID
Divine Word
Missionaries

Give a gift **TODAY!** @www.svdmissions.org

Or use the enclosed envelope at the center of this magazine.
PLEASE add your name, address and **GIFT CODE** to the form.

May the Lord accept this sacrifice for the praise and the glory of his name...

Mass Intentions

Please arrange for these Masses to be celebrated
by Divine Word Missionaries.

Accept my Mass offering of:

- Individual Mass \$10
Triduum of Masses \$30
Novena of Masses \$90
Gregorian Masses (30) \$500

Mass Intention:

Living Deceased

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____



Give the
precious
gift of faith

Divine Word
Missionaries

gladly
celebrate Masses
YOU request!

Your Mass offering directly helps support our
missionaries in their ministries.

Ask about prearranged Masses to be offered at a later time.

Call toll free 800-275-0626

or visit our website at:

www.svdmissions.org

Spring 2017

DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES

mission stories from around the World

www.svdmissions.org

mission

update



Why we ask for your help...

I read somewhere that we have entered an era where it is “in” to give. Social media has created a vivid awareness of the many needs around the world. That awareness in turn has raised an outpouring of support. People are taking up causes they discover online. Mid-career professionals, retirees and especially millennials want to make a difference. They want to give and want to make an impact on something larger than their immediate surroundings.

We have been told since our earliest catechism lessons that it is better to give than to receive. Now science is backing that up. Some scientists have found evidence that giving to or helping others relieves stress in the body and is therefore beneficial to your health. It turns out giving is good for your body as well as your soul!

Speaking for those of us on the receiving end, Divine Word Missionaries takes your giving very seriously. When you give a gift through our magazine you are making a donation to Divine Word Missionary programs in 78 countries around the world. We are dedicated to using your donation to help those who are among the world’s most vulnerable. We help them receive life’s essentials: food, shelter, medicine, education and, most importantly, God’s loving care.

Why do we ask YOU for help? Because as you read our articles and view our photos, YOU hold our missions in your hands. YOU see the needs of today, as in Lembata, Indonesia, where children flourish under an orphanage’s loving guidance. YOU see your gifts put to good use, as with Brother Bernie’s Letter of Thanks. And YOU get to journey alongside a young Ecuadorian as he becomes a Divine Word Missionary. With YOUR mission support, he will strive to make the world a better place.

Each donation you give benefits programs in our missions worldwide. Your donation will be used to provide assistance where it is needed most. **We can’t thank you enough for your kindness**, but we can continue to show you, through our magazine, our website and our letters, just how grateful we are and how much good your giving is doing!



Yours in the Divine Word,
Bro. Daniel Holman SVD
Interim Mission Director



Contact me any time, my email address is:
director@svdmissions.org



Charitable Bequest



Remembering Divine Word Missionaries in your Will is a powerful way to leave a meaningful legacy

When you are preparing your Will or estate plan, please consider including Divine Word Missionaries. Through your legacy gift, you will help Divine Word Missionaries continue the Church’s missionary work you so generously supported during your life.

**Contact us at:
800-275-0626**

for information on bequests or to talk more about different way to include Divine Word Missionaries in your Will or estate plan.

Seek the advice of your financial or legal advisor.

Fund your donation with...

CASH • STOCK • SECURITIES
PERSONAL PROPERTY

Discuss with your legal or tax advisor other options in your estate planning, for example using life insurance, retirement plans, and other financial resources to benefit the charities you have supported during your lifetime.

**Divine Word Missionaries
P.O. Box 6099 • Techny, IL 60082**

Have you already included us in your Will?

Let us know so we can Thank You!



2

Don't Give Up

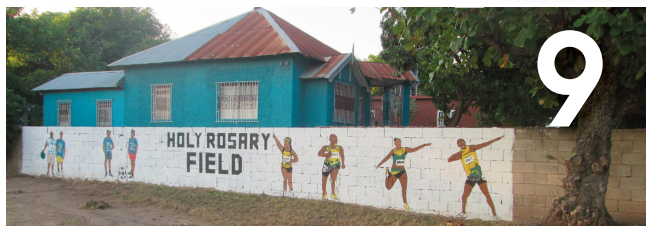
Antonius Eko Yuliantoro SVD

**Christian Family,
 A Seedbed of Vocations**

Eric Lacandula SVD

6

Like so many Divine Word Missionaries around the world, in Mexico, I am fully involved in the apostolate to the indigenous peoples who are very poor and marginalized.



9

Dream Fulfilled

A Thank You letter from
Bernard Spitzley SVD

Mission Focus

Patrick Kodom SVD

10



"Our duty as missionaries in the European migrant and refugee crisis is to help the ones who do not have anybody to help them. ..."



a Home of Care and Love
Andrzej Danilewicz SVD

12

Often children end up here due to the death of their grandparents, with whom parents leave their offspring before emigrating abroad, mainly to Malaysia. Others come to the orphanage from dysfunctional families.

**What books can't teach
 is revealed by God!**

16

If I traveled back in time exactly 13 years I would be face to face with my younger self—an automotive sales executive preoccupied with reaching his personal goals and earning lots of money.

**¡Lo que los libros no te enseñan,
 Dios te lo revela!**

19

Carlos Javier Villavicencio SVD



Divine Word Missionaries Mission Center • P.O. Box 6099 • Techny, Illinois 60082-6099
 The Society of the Divine Word is an international Catholic missionary congregation with over 6,000 members from 78 countries.
 Divine Word Missionaries work in over 78 different lands on all continents except Antarctica.

Website: WWW.SVDMISSIONS.ORG

DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES MAGAZINE, Vol. LX No. 2 Spring 2017 issued quarterly
 Divine Word Missionaries • Mission Center, Techny, Illinois 60082
 Subscription \$20.00 a year

Editorial Team: Bro. Dan Holman SVD • Carmelita J. Linden • Jeffrey Westhoff

Marius building a bed

Written by: Antonius Eko Yuliantoro SVD
Father Antonius is the local superior of the community in Surabaya, Indonesia, and a member of the provincial leadership team.



Don't Give Up

Two years ago, during hot season, Marius came to our St. Francis Training Center in Tayan, West Kalimantan, which is on the Indonesian island of Borneo. Wearing a T-shirt with the slogan "Don't Give Up," he drove four hours by himself, from a small village, to train as a carpenter. Marius is the first born in his family. Unfortunately, during his childhood Marius contracted polio, which caused his left leg to wither. He needed the help of a crutch to walk, limiting his ability to perform daily activities. Because of this, he could not complete his elementary school education.





Our first impression of Marius was that he was a determined person with a strong will. The words “Don’t Give Up” in his T-shirt truly reflected his personality and spirit of life. He didn’t want pity from others for his disability. I remember him saying, “I don’t want to be a burden to my family. I should manage to support my own life. That’s why I come to this place to learn something for a better life in the future!”

Marius received treatment for his left leg and now can wear a special pair of shoes and walk without a crutch. He is a quick learner and so talented. For the last three months he has been mastering his skills through on-the-job training in a small furniture factory.



Computer Classes

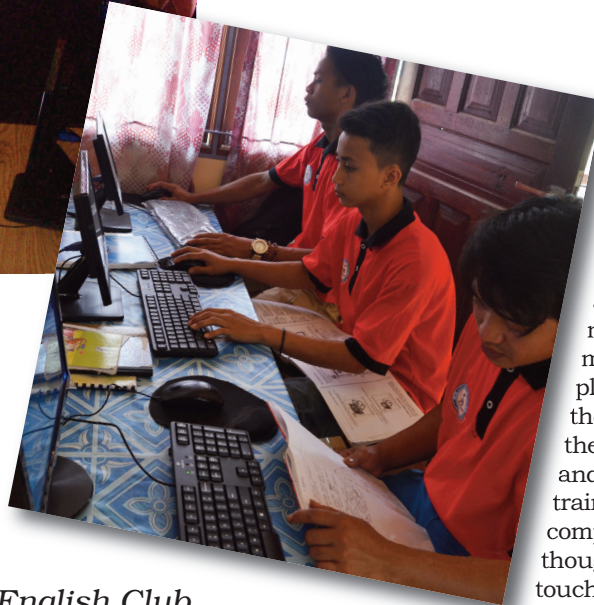


The story of Marius and the spirit of “Don’t Give Up” illustrate the essential character of our training center. Students come to rebuild their shattered hopes. Various problems brought them here: incomplete education, poverty, drinking problems or juvenile delinquency. They don’t find easy work here, though! Discipline, encouragement, optimism, commitment and willpower are words we stress every day.

**Discipline
encouragement
optimism,
commitment
willpower**



Teaching computer class



Kamto and Andi, for example, are dropouts learning computer skills. After they quit their secondary school they just roamed around doing nothing and spending most of their time playing. After a while, they got fed up with their purposeless lives and came to our training center to take computer courses. Even though they had never touched any computer before, their knowledge is now proficient. As a part of the training program they are now teaching a computer course for the schoolchildren and youth in the villages nearby.

Brother Pius with the English Club



Brother Budi and Brother Pius planting





villages, we established an English Club and open computer course for the children and youth. Brother Pius Himaang SVD, a Borneo native, organizes a farming community to preserve the traditional trees of Kalimantan. He goes from one village to another to talk about the importance of organic agriculture and preserving the forest. We also are forming a handicraft community in partnership with a business unit in Yogyakarta to empower women in the villages.

This outreach program is designed to elevate peoples' standard of living. The training center should touch and meet the need of the people around us. Without it, we would be losing our main mission here.

It has been two years since the training center's official opening. For some people it has become a place for redemption. It is where they can leave behind their past and see their future in God's plan. Here, we focus on giving them an opportunity to empower themselves. We provide them with tools to regain their hope. As long they embrace the spirit of "Don't Give Up," they will survive to achieve their dreams!

Join a special group of friends who are the heart and soul of our mission

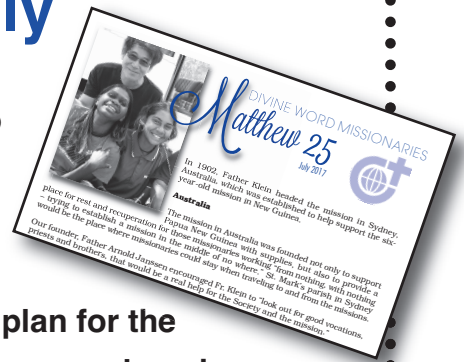
a group that gives our missionaries around the world the confidence of knowing that life-changing care is always near.

As a monthly donor,

you'll help to keep our programs

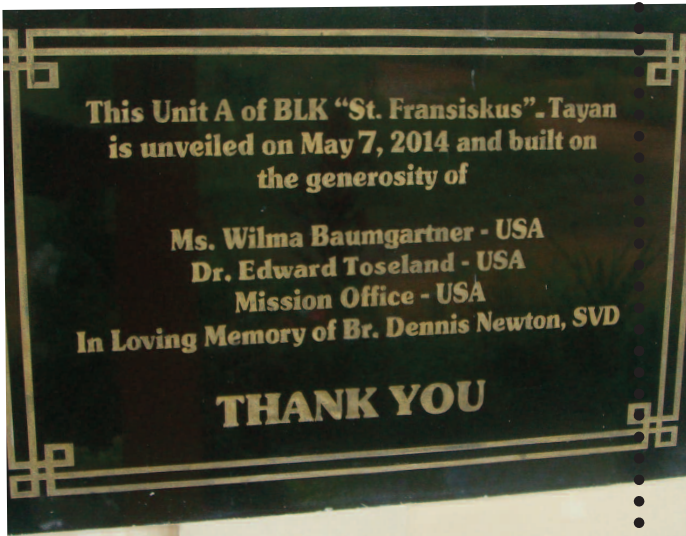
running and

enable us to plan for the future and the ever-changing hunger, health and education needs of those we strive to serve.



Be a Mathew 25 Club member...join your prayers with thousands around the world... then make a difference around the world!

www.svdmissions.org



the Christian Family • a Seedbed of Vocations

Written by: Eric Lacandula SVD

Missionary to Tanzania, currently working as assistant parish priest of St. Augustine parish Orkesumet, Philippines



One of the best occasions as a missionary to meet Christian families is at the celebration of baptism. During the rite several important questions are addressed to the parents. I strongly emphasize one of these questions every time I administer the sacrament.

The question goes: “You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training your child in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to raise your child to keep God’s commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you really understand what you are undertaking?”

I always invite the parents to respond to this question actively. For me, this is where the parents profess their full responsibility toward the child and their acceptance of their role as primary educators of faith.

In *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis said that “the Joy of Love experienced by families is also the joy of the Church.” In other words, the dynamics of the family reflect in the life of the Church. This joy of the family engenders a profound love and harmony between persons. It flows from the spirit of togetherness, mutual support of each member and above all the presence of God’s love. If God’s love is lacking, the family loses its harmony. Self-centeredness prevails, and joy fades. If this happens, the Church suffers.

According to St. Arnold Janssen, “Vocations usually come from good families.” It is indeed true that the family is the most important institution responsible for fostering vocations. Let us not forget that Jesus himself was born into a modest family. We read in the scripture, “And when they had performed everything according to the Law of



You have asked to have your child baptized.



In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training your child in the practice of the faith.

It will be your duty to raise your child to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you really understand what you are undertaking?

the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth. And the child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him” (Lk 2:39-40). In this passage, Mary, Joseph and Jesus are presented as a faithful Jewish family, pious and righteous before God. In a Christian family, the parents should manifest good examples to their children in hope of creating and fostering a culture of vocations for consecrated life.

Our own family is our first school, our first school of human values where love is learned through word and deed. St. Arnold Janssen would say, “If the Church is to have more priests, more men ready for sacrifice and apostolic work, the good Lord must grant that Christian marriage becomes ever more holy.” When I was a child, my parents would always encourage me to attend Sunday school and participate in various church activities. From these childhood experiences, I believe my vocation for the religious missionary life was nurtured through the influence and encouragement my family. As a young missionary, I truly believe vocations for the consecrated life are always present in the hearts of the young people—vocations waiting to be nurtured and cultivated by our prayers and encouragement. In our parishes and communities, we need to appeal to parents, to families, to instill a sense of vocation in our young ones.



Although I struggle to speak the local language, the class is always filled with joy and sometimes laughter because my students love to participate in teaching me.

In my apostolate, my presence at the Orkesumet Secondary School every Friday afternoon is an avenue not just to teach catechism but also to promote vocations. In my shakey *Kiswahili*, I try my best to impart knowledge to my students. Although I struggle to speak the local language, the class is always filled with joy and sometimes laughter because my students love to participate in teaching me. Through my ministry I try to show my students the beauty of life as a missionary.

My regular weekend visits to the *jumuiya*, a small Christian community, to join my students in prayer are a good opportunity to get to know them and their families. This visit allows me to listen to their stories, reflect and interact with them. I learn about, and understand their daily struggles. I am always lifted in spirit that despite their many struggles these families remain firm in their faith. The proof of the strong faith among these Christians families is in the large number of churchgoers every Sunday. Their enthusiasm to support parish projects and their charismatic celebration of the liturgy leave me with a profound sense of joy. I wish everyone could experience seeing these vibrant Christian families celebrating in Church and at other festivities throughout the year.

God is the sower of vocations. In order for vocations to flourish and the harvest to be plenty, **the seedbed itself—the family**—must be of rich, fertile, fine soil. We need to pray persistently and encourage our Christian faithful that our families and homes become a most excellent seedbed of vocation in the service of God’s Kingdom.




You can HELP

Your support is vital to furthering our work around the world.

Help a young man plan for his future... and the future of the Church

www.svdmissions.org/seminarians

You can scan the QR code (above right) with your cell phone, and it will take you there directly!



Dream Fulfilled

*A Thank You letter from
Bernard Spitzley SVD*

Bro. Bernie was assigned to Holy Rosary parish in Kingston, Jamaica, in 2012, where he serves as administrator.

"I thank my God each time I think of you..."

In the Fall 2016 issue, I wrote about our local Jamaican Field of Dreams. This project took more than two years to complete and entailed removing debris, discarded furniture and two old foundations for houses from the land designated for the field. Thanks to **your generous support** and help from Divine Word Alumni Association volunteers, our Divine Word College mission experience group and the local community, we now have a sports field for our Holy Rosary School and the community!

The Holy Rosary Sports Field front wall has a painted mural that depicts Brother "Coach" Gilmar Dias da Conceição, three Holy Rosary students and four Jamaican sports heroes: Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce, Asafa Powell, Veronica Campbell-Brown and Usain Bolt.



A large blue stone was left over from one of the foundations. Greg Steiger, a Divine Word alumnus, recommended that we place it

under a tree as a bench so that children can sit and watch the sporting activities. Greg died last October, prompting the children to paint his name on the stone in remembrance of his many trips to Jamaica and his love for the Jamaican people.

On Oct. 10, 2016, we were blessed to have Divine Word Missionaries Superior General Heinz Kulüke SVD visit Jamaica. We used this opportunity to have a pre-opening ceremony with Father Heinz and Holy Rosary Principal Bernice Beckett-Duhaney cutting the ribbon.

The actual grand opening took place Feb. 24, 2017. Ceremonies began with a poetry reading and a performance by the Holy Rosary dance troupe. For this magnificent, memorable event we were graced with Her Excellency Lillian Onoh, the Nigerian ambassador to Jamaica. She gave a rousing address to the students about the importance of education, sports and teamwork to help develop as a person of good character for Jamaica and the world.

With helium-filled balloons trailing from their wrists, the Holy Rosary dance troupe led the procession to the field, where Mrs. Beckett-Duhaney, Ambassador Onoh and Barbara Kamatha (the principal when we started this project) made the opening official by cutting the ribbon at the field's entrance.

Next, Father Walter Dorsey, a diocesan priest who worked with us, blessed the field, the monument to Greg Steiger, the wall, the bleachers and the goal posts.

We now have a home, a center where members of the school and community can run, play football (soccer to Americans) and dream dreams of being the next Jamaica sports hero! With the words of St. Paul to the Philippians: **"I thank my God each time I think of you, and when I pray for you I pray with joy"** (Phil 1: 3-4). So let the games begin!



Divine Word Missionaries Superior General Heinz Kulüke SVD with Bernice Beckett-Duhaney, Holy Rosary School principal

Mission Focus

Refugee crisis in Europe: Doing what is needed to be done



When asked about Europe’s refugee crisis, Father Patrick Kodom SVD made this decisive statement:

“Our duty as missionaries in the European migrant and refugee crisis is to help the ones who do not have anybody to help them. ... We should be able to help these people, and I felt called to beg out from my traditional apostolate and do what is needed to be done.”

“The deep sense of appreciation and gratitude I get from the refugees I work with is the energy that keeps me going.”

It is unfortunate that, because of European laws, refugees here in Austria have been deported to Italy. Because the refugees cannot be registered, Caritas and other relief organizations cannot help them.

Reaching out to those who are marginalized and have no one to turn to is nothing new to me. For many years I have been committed to the pastoral care of prisoners in Vienna, most especially those who have entered the country illegally. My primary work is to give them strength, dignity and self-worth, especially in the eyes of God—even if their future brings deportation from Austria. My mission is clear, to advocate for the prisoners.

The migrant emergency now facing Europe has turned my mission toward refugees. For the first time in world history the number of people on the move, migrants and refugees, has exceeded 60 million. The crisis has hit Austria hard. This small country in Central Europe has struggled with its share of the biggest human movement since the Second World War.

The Catholic Church has responded positively to the refugee crisis by being the voice of the voiceless. The number of volunteers has increased in recent months, and the engagement of Caritas Austria has doubled. This is a sign that people are ready to help alleviate the suffering of the displaced.



Divine Word Missionaries in Austria are doing all we can to accommodate a number of refugees in our Mission House of St. Gabriel, and several of our missionaries are assigned to work directly with these families.

My biggest challenge is the feeling of helplessness. As I work with these refugees in the midst of so much pain and torment—of traumatized families with small children and of people having continuous sleepless nights—I keep asking myself: What can I offer these people? And yet the deep sense of appreciation and acknowledgement I get from the refugees I work with keeps me going. My engagement with migrants



and refugees is basically to be there for them and listen to them, make them feel respected and welcome. I consider this my “widow’s mite” in this vast area of uncertainty and need.

My personal call to work with refugees and migrants has prompted an ever-growing reflection on compassion. As Divine Word Missionaries we are sent to work outside our own home countries. We too are migrants. As missionaries—far away from home—we understand, we have compassion for the many migrants and refugees, for that is who we are.

It can’t be ignored that there is a considerable amount of fear in the general public regarding the acceptance of refugees. This was reflected in the 2016 Austrian presidential campaign and election, which saw the anti-migrant and refugee party gain political weight. Hopefully in time, people will find their compassion and learn to change their attitudes toward foreigners, and not equate migrants and refugees with criminals and terrorists.

Last Oct. 14, Pope Francis told a group of German pilgrims, “You cannot be a Christian

without living like a Christian.” He said he does not like “the contradiction of those who want to defend Christianity in the West, and, on the other hand, are against refugees and other religions.”

“You cannot be a Christian without practicing the Beatitudes,” the Holy Father continued. “You cannot be a Christian without doing what Jesus teaches us in Matthew 25,” which is to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and welcome the stranger.

“It’s hypocrisy,” the pope went on, “to call yourself a Christian and chase away a refugee or someone seeking help, someone who is hungry or thirsty, toss out someone who is in need of my help.” These are words we must heed during this refugee crisis.

Historical experience and commitment to the marginalized traces back to St. Arnold Janssen, founder of Divine Word Missionaries. His concern for the less fortunate is shown through his devotion to building mission outreach around the world. We have a privileged position for a unique mission in Europe, and we have chosen the better path.

Andrzej Danilewicz SVD

A Divine Word Missionary since 1985, Father Andrzej has worked in Slovakia and studied Christian Communications and Development in Ireland. Later, he returned to Poland to work in the field of mass media. In the years 2007-2013 he served as Provincial in Poland and since then had been appointed the Mission Secretary.



a Home
of
Care
and Love



The island of Lembata is not No. 1 on Indonesia's plentiful list of tourist attractions. It was little wonder, then, that I was the only foreigner on a ship traveling from the nearby island of Flores. My destination was an orphanage in Lamahora.

It is there that I met Regina Sura, a middle-aged woman with a serious look in her eyes and a smile lurking at the corners of her mouth. Regina learned how to work with orphans from the local nuns. The beginnings were simple. She gathered eight abandoned children and tried to be a mother to them.

Word of her endeavor reached Father Eugene (Gene) Schmitz SVD, district superior for Divine Word Missionaries. Fr. Schmitz worked for 36 years as a missionary pastor and seminary dean on Lembata. Two months before his death in 2005, he had begun a new assignment as vicar general of the Diocese of Larantuka. He was the last North American Divine



Word Missionary allowed by Indonesia's government to remain in the country on a permanent assignment.

In 2003, shortly after hearing of Mrs. Regina's work, Fr. Schmitz collected funds to buy some land for an orphanage. Brother Damian Watun SVD, together with students from his carpentry school, built a house. Then, following prolonged negotiations, city authorities formally recognized the orphanage's existence. Nevertheless, the authorities limited their material support to 100 kilograms of rice per month.

After only one hour at the orphanage—"Eugene Schmitz's House," as the locals call it—my companion, Father Francis Laka SVD, and I became enchanted. Not just by the welcome songs and dances that greeted us. And not just by the delicious bread baked by Mrs. Regina. We were captivated by the overall atmosphere—a home of care and love. We watched as the older children cared for the younger ones and as the younger ones shared the sweets they had just been given, forgetting their own wants. When a 4-year-old boy hurt his knee, his little friends—like seasoned nurses—took care of the wound and tried to comfort him.





There was a buzz of excitement all over the orphanage, yet the excitement was orderly. Except for the smallest ones, each of the 39 children had a task: tending a vegetable garden, looking after the small farm of chickens and a few goats and pigs, cleaning the house and the grounds, laundering clothes, cooking, washing up, gathering firewood from the forest. Older girls were taught the arts of sewing and embroidery. You could see that Mrs. Regina and Pius Kulu, a retired teacher who helps at the orphanage, are determined that the children learn all the skills they normally would have learned at home. It will make life easier for them once they are on their own in the real world.

The playful mascot of the house is 3-year-old Vera—pure quicksilver, a bundle of energy, interested in everything. She laughs as often as she cries. A few days after birth, Vera had been abandoned in the city market; she was found and brought to the orphanage. Her mother was eventually located, but tragically she died soon after, and Vera was sent back to the orphanage.

Often children end up here due to the death of their grandparents, with whom parents leave their offspring before emigrating abroad, mainly to Malaysia. Others come to the orphanage from dysfunctional families. While conditions in the orphanage are modest, these children from dysfunctional families can get more out of living at “Eugene Schmitz’s House” than they might at home—above all, and no matter what, they are loved.

It was five o’clock in the morning and the sound of prayers woke me. To my surprise, I discovered the children reciting the morning prayers of Divine Word Missionaries, even singing the *Veni Creator*. Older and younger, they sang with one voice, without any adult supervision. I could not believe it.

You can



Prior to their morning prayers, the younger children already had watered the garden and swept the grounds and the older children already had prepared breakfast. At the meal, all primary, secondary and high school pupils wore a uniform: white shirts and red trousers or skirts. It is not particularly far to their respective schools, but classes start at an early 6:30 a.m.

Again, the children gathered for prayer at 3 p.m. to say the Chaplet of the Divine Mercy along with many other prayers they have learned from Bro. Damian. They prayed sitting on the floor in a hall, which also serves as their main dining room, a playroom and a place to do homework.

Sadly, our visit lasted only two days and it was soon time for Fr. Fransiscus and I to say our goodbyes. The children were given the day off to walk their "Polish guests" to the plane. The airport was only a few hundred meters away, but we proceeded slowly, matching our steps to the 2- and 3-year-olds. Vera, timid at first, and another girl each took me by the hand and we marched like that.

I regretted the airport being so close, as it seemed our trip came to an end all too quickly. We boarded our plane. Adults and children waved to us as they waited for the plane to depart and continued to wave even after our plane was high above the ground. On board the Indonesian TransNusa aircraft, the traditional safety announcement finished with a call to pray for a good flight. I said a prayer for the beautiful children we had just spent two unforgettable days with. I prayed that their journey through life would be full of love.

help them...

Spring 2017

Send some love
their way...



Provide them
with...

the necessities, training
and inspiration they need

to develop, grow and
become self-sufficient.



Please
Give a Gift
Today!

www.svdmissions.org



*Carlos Javier Villavicencio SVD
studied Theology at the
Pontifical Catholic
University of Chile
and is currentl living in
Angola serving his
Overseas Training
Program at the
Caungula-Cuilo
Catholic Mission,
Verbo Divino parish.*

**What
books
can't
teach
is
revealed
by
God!**



If I traveled back in time exactly 13 years I would be face to face with my younger self—an automotive sales executive preoccupied with reaching his personal goals and earning lots of money. I would tell the younger me that in the future these goals would be forgotten, that the happiness he found in professional success and worldly possessions would be meaningless in 2017. Then I would reveal to my younger self that he would travel across the world to another continent as, of all things, a religious missionary. I am sure my younger self would laugh in my face and scoff at my words.



M My name is Carlos Javier Villavicencio. I am Ecuadorian and I've been in Angola for a year doing the Overseas Training Program as part of my Divine Word Missionary formation. Prior to my trip I gathered many books and videos on Angola to learn about its people, culture, language, economic indicators, etc. This information was useful up to a point, but what I have discovered on my missionary path far exceeds this elementary knowledge.

After I completed my Portuguese studies, the provincial superior assigned me to the Divine Word Parish in Caungula, which is on the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo. I have been living in our multicultural community with Father Bento Sindula SVD (from Angola) and Father Joaquim Leu SVD (Indonesia), as well as with our Holy Spirit Sisters Aldina (Angola), Swarnalatta (India) and Bernadette (Indonesia), for seven months.

Our mission work covers many miles and serves the villages in various ways. When we are in the parish seat we attend to parish matters: distributing the daily Eucharist, training different parish groups, teaching classes at the municipal school, providing healthcare and medications. I am currently responsible for training the acolytes and readers and leading literacy classes for adults. Recently I have been teaching computer science to the community's young people during their school holidays.

Our parish is made up of two municipalities spread across a vast area that is divided into six regions with a total of 64 villages. The pastoral team I work with has a schedule of missionary visits. This project consists of visiting all the villages throughout the year. During our visits, we may baptize new Christians or give First Communion to catechumens. Village Masses are true celebrations, accompanied by songs and dances throughout the Mass. With every town we visit and with each Mass we celebrate, I am profoundly moved by the joy of the villagers.





As we go from village to village sharing our faith, I am continually moved by the generosity of each community. The villagers are very observant when it comes to following their cultural practices on how to cater to visitors and make them feel welcome. They ensure nothing is missing at mealtime. As missionaries, we are made to feel at home—so much so that in most communities there is a home especially for the missionaries. It is built using the village’s techniques and customs, made with sticks, mud and a thatched roof.

The food took a bit of getting used to. The Angolan diet is based on mandioca, a root vegetable also known as cassava. After drying the cassava, villagers get a type of flour called fuba de bombó that they use to prepare the funje or pirão. This is generally served with chicken or hunted game—deer, boar, mountain rat, etc.—and crushed cassava leaves, which are then cooked and called kizaca. As I said, very different from my hometown cooking! However, the villagers’ love and affection when offering us the food and sharing in the meal makes everyone feel welcome.

From all corners of the world, the purity of a child’s laughter can ring joy in anyone’s heart. For me, when we visit the villages my greatest joy is to see the children. At first the children would look at me from far away with suspicion and hesitate to come near. They were afraid. But after I smiled and greeted them in their language, Còkwe, they edged closer and sometimes even wanted to hold my hand. Children are the real energy of the mission. I always make time to pray and play with them, to sing and enjoy their spontaneity.



As night comes to the community, the villagers prepare a fire outside the missionaries’ house. Men warm up on the goatskin drums, which is a prelude to hours of song and dance. They have a type of dance for each song. They laugh as they watch me try to imitate their moves. But even as they laugh, they stand by my side to teach me how to do each step. They enjoy sharing something intimate about their community and feel that the missionaries appreciate it. The morning of the following day we pray together and leave for the next community, where, 50 meters outside the village, a choral group greets us in song and another joyful visit begins. These village visits may last up to six days.

In each village, the catechists play an essential role: accompanying their brothers in the faith, training and directing them. Thanks to the catechists, the faith remained in these villages even during times of war. Despite the lack of priests, the catechists continued to pass on the teachings to their community. These catechists are genuine people with hearts full of love for God. They understand their commitment to community and joyfully carry it out every day.

In a few days it will be my one-year anniversary in Angola. As I write to you I think about how wonderful God is. He always exceeds our expectations and takes us far beyond where we think we can go. Books can teach us facts and figures, but life as a missionary has brought me closer to the reality of other people. Much more so than facts and figures, it is sharing with people that influences our lives. That is why I stress once again: What books can’t teach is revealed by God!



¡Lo que los libros no te enseñan, Dios te lo revela!

Si viajara en el tiempo exactamente 13 años, me encontraría cara a cara con mi yo más joven: un director de ventas de automóviles preocupado por alcanzar sus metas personales y ganar mucho dinero. Le diría a los más jóvenes que en el futuro, estos objetivos se olvidarían, que la felicidad que encontrarán en el éxito profesional y las posesiones mundanas carecería de sentido en 2017. Entonces, revelaría a mi yo más joven que viajara por el mundo a otro continente como, entre todas las cosas, un misionero religioso. Estoy seguro de que mi yo más joven se reiría en mi cara y se burlaría de mis palabras.

Mi nombre es Carlos Javier Villavicencio. Soy ecuatoriano y he estado en Angola durante un año haciendo el Programa de Capacitación Transcultural como parte de mi formación de misioneros de la Palabra Divina. Antes de mi viaje, reuní muchos libros y videos sobre Angola para conocer su pueblo, cultura, idioma, indicadores económicos, etc. Esta información fue útil hasta cierto punto, pero lo que he descubierto en mi camino misionero excede con mucho este conocimiento elemental.

Después de terminar mis estudios de portugués, el superior provincial me asignó a la Parroquia de la Palabra Divina en Caungula, que linda con la República Democrática del Congo. He vivido durante siete meses en nuestra comunidad multicultural con el Padre Bento Sindula SVD (de Angola) y el Padre Joaquim Leu SVD (Indonesia), así como con nuestras Hermanas del Espíritu Santo Aldina (Angola), Swarnalatta (India) y Bernadette (Indonesia).

Nuestro trabajo de misión cubre muchos kilómetros y sirve a las aldeas de diferentes formas. Cuando estábamos en la sede parroquial, asistimos a tareas parroquiales: distribuyendo la Eucaristía diaria, entrenando a diferentes grupos parroquiales, enseñando clases en la escuela municipal, proporcionando atención médica y medicamentos. En la actualidad, soy responsable de la capacitación de los acólitos y lectores así como de las clases de alfabetización para adultos. Recientemente, he estado enseñando informática a los jóvenes de la comunidad durante sus vacaciones escolares.

Nuestra parroquia se compone de dos municipios repartidos en una vasta área que se divide en seis regiones con un total de 64 pueblos. El equipo pastoral con el que trabajo tiene un horario de visitas misioneras. Este proyecto consiste en visitar todos los pueblos a lo largo del año. Durante nuestras visitas, podemos bautizar a nuevos cristianos o dar la Primera Comunión a los catecúmenos. Las misas de pueblo son verdaderas celebraciones, acompañadas de canciones y bailes a lo largo de la Misa. Con cada ciudad que visitamos y con cada Misa que celebramos, estoy profundamente conmovido de observar la alegría de los aldeanos.

Al ir de pueblo en pueblo compartiendo nuestra fe, me siento continuamente conmovido por la generosidad de cada comunidad. Los aldeanos son muy observadores cuando se trata de seguir sus prácticas culturales sobre cómo atender a los visitantes y hacer que se sientan bienvenidos. Se aseguran de que no falte nada a la hora de comer. Como misioneros, nos sentimos obligados a sentirnos en casa,



tanto que en la mayoría de las comunidades hay un hogar especialmente para los misioneros. Este se construye utilizando las técnicas y costumbres del pueblo, hechas con palos, barro y un techo de paja.

Tardamos un tiempo en acostumbrarnos a la comida. La dieta angoleña se basa en la mandioca, una raíz vegetal también conocida como yuca. Después de secar la yuca, los aldeanos consiguen un tipo de harina llamada fuba de bombó que utilizan para preparar el funje o pirão. Esto generalmente se sirve con pollo o ciervo cazado, jabalí, rata de montaña, etc. - y hojas de yuca machacadas, que luego se cocinan y se llaman kizaca. Como he dicho, ¡la comida es muy diferente a la de mi ciudad natal! Sin embargo, el amor de los aldeanos y el afecto cuando nos ofrecen la comida y el hecho de compartirla hace que todos se sientan bienvenidos.

De todos los rincones del mundo, la pureza de la risa de un niño puede sonar como alegría en el corazón de cualquier persona. Para mí, cuando visitamos los pueblos, mi mayor alegría es ver a los niños. Al principio, los niños me miraban desde lejos con recelo y dudaban en acercarse. Estaban asustados. Pero después de sonreír y saludarlos en su lengua, Còkwe, se acercaron más e incluso a veces, querían tomarme la mano. Los niños son la energía real de la misión. Siempre saco tiempo para orar y jugar con ellos, para cantar y disfrutar de su espontaneidad.

Cuando llega la noche a la comunidad, los aldeanos prenden una hoguera fuera de la casa de los misioneros. Los hombres se calientan en los tambores de piel de cabra, que son un preludio de horas de canto y danza. Tienen un tipo de baile para cada canción. Se ríen mientras me ven intentar imitar sus movimientos. Pero incluso mientras se ríen, están a mi lado para enseñarme cómo hacer cada paso. Les gusta compartir algo cercano a su comunidad y sentir que los misioneros lo aprecian. A la mañana del día siguiente, oramos juntos y nos vamos a la siguiente comunidad, en la que 50 personas en las inmediaciones del pueblo y un grupo coral nos saluda en el canto. Entonces, comienza otra visita alegre. Estas visitas pueden durar hasta seis días.

En cada aldea, los catequistas desempeñan un papel esencial: acompañar a sus hermanos en la fe, entrenarlos y dirigirlos. Gracias a los catequistas, la fe ha permanecido en estos pueblos incluso durante tiempos de guerra. A pesar de la falta de sacerdotes, los catequistas han continuado transmitiendo las enseñanzas a su comunidad.



Estos catequistas son personas auténticas con corazones llenos de amor a Dios. Comprenden su compromiso con la comunidad y lo llevan a cabo con gozo todos los días.

Dentro de unos días, cumpliré un año en Angola. Al escribirle, pienso en lo maravilloso que es Dios. Siempre supera nuestras expectativas y nos lleva mucho más allá de donde creemos que podemos ir. Los libros nos pueden enseñar hechos y cifras, pero la vida como misionero me ha acercado a la realidad de otras personas. Mucho más importante que los hechos y las cifras, es compartir con la gente que influye en nuestras vidas. Es por eso que insisto una vez más: ¡Lo que los libros no nos enseñan, no lo enseña Dios!

Fr. Carlos Javier Villavicencio SVD

STAY IN TOUCH



View a bit of history on the Techny Post Office, Divine Word Missionaries magazine, and the beginnings of our fundraising program

<https://youtu.be/lhTx1QsU7q8>



Visit us at:
www.annuitysvd.org

E-mail us at:
annuity@uscsvd.org

Divine Word
GIFT ANNUITY
(SVD Funds, Inc.)
since 1904

Trusted Name

The Society of the Divine Word started the Charitable Gift Annuity Program in 1904 and our annuity program has grown steadily over the past century.

Unwavering Commitment to Our Mission and Our Annuitants

Society of the Divine Word is one the largest Catholic religious missionary congregations with 6,000 priests and brothers serving God and God's people in 78 countries around the world.

Conservative Fiscal Policy

We follow a conservative investment policy. That's why we can proudly say for the past 100 years we have never missed an annuity payment!

Call toll free: 1-800-461-3064

For a personalized analysis, mail this coupon to:
Rev. Dariusz Garbaciak, SVD
Divine Word Gift Annuity (SVD Funds, Inc.)
P.O. Box 6067 • 1985 Waukegan Road
Techny, IL 60082-6067



Name (Please print) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

In the amount of: \$5,000 \$10,000 or _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Date of birth _____ of joint annuitant _____

DWM2015