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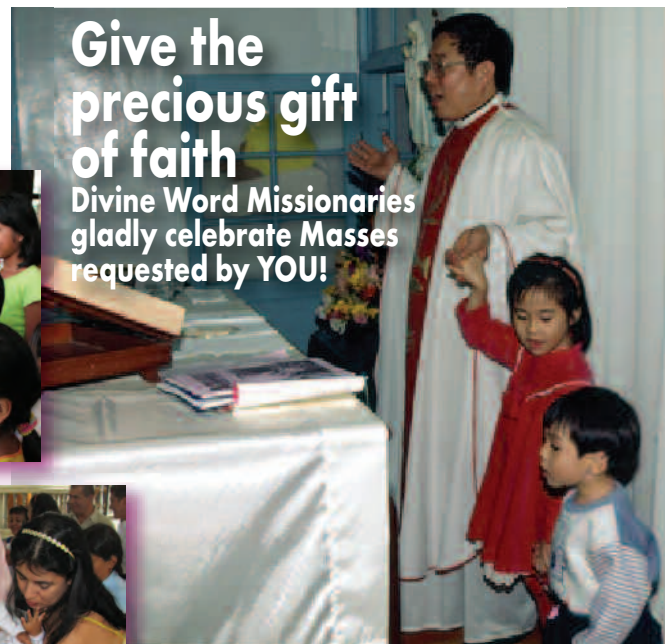
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Divine Word

Missionaries Magazine

Mission Updates from around the World

Summer 2014





Introduction

This special issue of *Divine Word Missionaries Magazine* tells the story of Divine Word Farms and the impact the farms have on our overseas missionary work.

Divine Word Missionaries work first and foremost where the Gospel has not been preached at all or where the local Church cannot survive and grow without the help of missionaries. This missionary mandate takes us to some of the poorest and most remote areas in the world.

The needs of the local Churches where Divine Word Missionaries serve are vast and diverse. Our missionaries proclaim the Gospel, celebrate the sacraments, and give pastoral care. They operate large universities, colleges, and seminaries. They staff hospitals, clinics, and specialized communities to care for lepers, run trade schools and shelters for street kids, and assist local communities in building chapels. Divine Word Missionaries serve the poorest parishes in large cities of the developing world and the most remote jungle areas in places like the Amazon or Papua New Guinea.

In many of our mission communities, meeting even the most basic human needs—food, shelter, medicine—can be challenging. Many of our missionaries, especially those in the poorest parts of the world, struggle daily to make due with less, while the needs of those they serve increase. Many Divine Word Missionaries are gardening and farming or have started self-help programs as sustainable support for the people of their missions.

In this issue of our magazine, we are highlighting some of the people and missionary projects that benefit from Divine Word Farms.

DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES

AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND BROTHERS

Farming Heritage
The Present
The Triple Bottom Line
and Sustainability

Revenue and People Accounts

Thailand

India

Philippines

Papua New Guinea

Planet Account

2



6



8

Every year funds from our generous benefactors are made available to our superior general in Rome for distribution around the world. Last year, in addition to those funds, the Mission Center, through Divine Word Farms, provided grants to our mission in Thailand, three children's ministries in India, a mission in the Philippines, and another in Papua New Guinea.

10

16

18

19

*Divine Word Farms
A Ministry of Divine Word Priests and Brothers*



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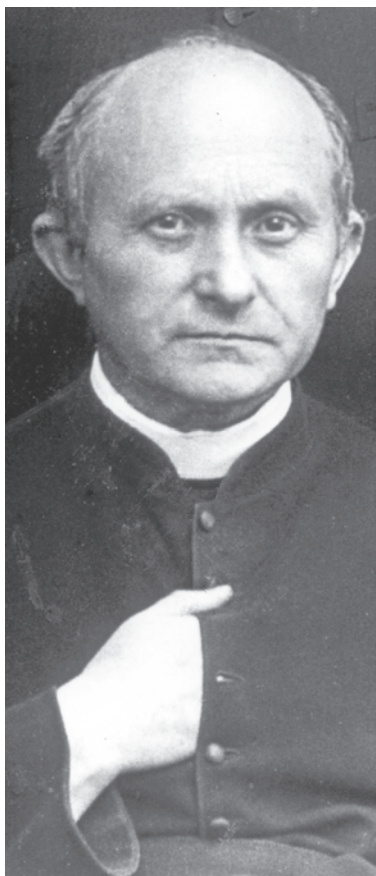
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Editorial Team: Bro. Dan Holman SVD • Carmelita J. Linden • Carolyn Schmit

Branch Office: Pittsburgh, PA

You are stewards of some of the most important resources that God has entrusted to humanity.



Farming Heritage

Our founder, Saint Arnold Janssen, was a hardworking, practical man with innovative ideas, and he instilled those traits in succeeding generations of missionaries.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, St. Arnold was pleased that his young religious order was growing rapidly. However, he knew that money to support this growth would soon be a problem. St. Arnold saw that, in Europe, the missionary community used a printing press to produce income. The newly founded mission community in New Guinea needed funding, and while printing worked in Europe, few people in New Guinea could read. St. Arnold solved the problem in an innovative way: he instructed the missionaries in New Guinea to establish plantations. The crops from these plantations would sustain the missionaries and produce income needed to build churches and schools, train catechists, provide medical care, and support our missionary priests and Brothers.

The first permanent home for Divine Word Missionaries in the United States was established in 1899 when Fr. John Peil SVD purchased the 337-acre Russell Farm in Shermerville, Illinois. The farm eventually became known as “Techny.”

For decades, the Brothers at Techny farmed acres of land, growing row crops of corn, soybeans, and wheat. The Brothers raised cattle, pigs, chickens, ducks, and even honey bees. Techny was basically self-sufficient for many years. The Techny Mission Gardens provided beautiful, award-winning flowers and shrubs for the Chicago North Shore and provided income for the missions for forty-five years. Divine Word Missionaries also farmed in Girard, Pennsylvania; East Troy, Wisconsin; and Granby, Quebec, Canada.



*Therefore, conserve the land well,
so that your children's children
and generations after them
will inherit
an even richer land
than was entrusted to you.*

**-Pope John Paul II
Des Moines, Iowa, 1979**





The Present

Sustainable funding—St. Arnold was ahead of his time!

Today, Techny farmland continues to grow through creative sustainable funding; however, now the growth is in land development, housing, and retail, all in support of the missions.

Beginning in 2004, we acquired farmland in south central Iowa, launched a cattle farm, and developed Divine Word Farm Weldon. The Weldon Farm has row crops and livestock. It also serves as a welcome center for visitors, a spiritual oasis, a recreational and social site for neighbors, and the home of a toy shop, where local volunteers make toys for children in our missions overseas.

As much as things change, some things remain the same. We now have more than 6,000 Divine Word Missionaries around the world working to build churches and schools, run medical clinics, care for orphans, and educate seminarians. The need for creative sustainable funding is even greater.

Creation is not some possession that we can lord over for our own pleasure; nor, even less, is it the property of only some people, the few: creation is a gift, it is the marvelous gift that God has given us, so that we will take care of it and harness it for the benefit of all, always with great respect and gratitude.

-POPE FRANCIS
GENERAL AUDIENCE
St. Peter's Square
May 21, 2014



It is called the triple bottom line...

John Elkington, an English writer and business consultant, coined the term “triple bottom line” in 1994. His argument was that companies should measure three different (and very separate) bottom lines. One measure is the traditional measure of corporate profit and loss—the bottom line of the “revenue account.” The second measure is the bottom line of a company’s “people account”—how an organization is socially responsible in its operations. The third measure is the bottom line of the company’s “planet account”—how the organization is environmentally responsible. When an organization achieves a positive impact on all three criteria—revenue, people, and planet—it is deemed a sustainable enterprise, that is, one that fulfills its purpose, benefits people, and treats the environment gently.

...and sustainability

From the beginning, Divine Word Farms focused on the triple bottom line:

- Our farms provide sustainable funding to our missions overseas.
- Our farm partners are treated justly.
- Our farms have a positive impact on the local farm communities in Iowa.
- The profits from our farms go on to improve the lives of people served by Divine Word Missionaries around the world.
- Our farms respect the environment and use sound farm practices and green technologies when possible.



Custody of creation is precisely custody of God's gift and it is saying to God: "Thank you, I am the guardian of creation so as to make it progress, never to destroy your gift." This must be our attitude to creation: thank it for if we destroy creation, creation will destroy us! Don't forget that.

—POPE FRANCIS
GENERAL AUDIENCE
St. Peter's Square
May 21, 2014





Revenue Account

Farm revenue comes from a variety of sources. Much of our farmland is leased to farm families who grow corn and soybeans, and a few parcels of land generate income through enrollment in a government conservation program. Divine Word Farms also operates a five-hundred-head cattle farm, runs a cow/calf operation on pastureland, and raises goats.

In the past five years, Divine Word Farms has generated revenues of \$1.5 million to support our missionary work around the world, especially ministries dedicated to improving the lives of children.

People Account



Divine Word Farms has touched the lives of people in south central Iowa and worldwide through the ministries of Divine Word Missionaries. This is mostly thanks to Father Michael Hutchins SVD, who has lived on Weldon Farm for over three years. His involvement in numerous ministries and activities throughout Iowa benefited both the local community and our missions overseas. Fr. Mike has traveled many miles to parishes in Iowa and Missouri to celebrate Mass and speak to congregations about the worldwide work of Divine Word Missionaries.



Part of Weldon Farm's beauty is a five-section mural with images of rural Iowa landscape and a short prayer of praise. It beckons all visitors to the Weldon Farm. Acres of well-tended grounds are perfect for picnics, hiking, or praying the outdoor Stations of the Cross. Two ponds are stocked with fish for those who want to drop a line. Local youth groups and other parish groups, like the Knights of Columbus, come to the Weldon Farm for social, spiritual, and recreational activities.

At Weldon Farm, a small brood of Cochin chickens, a breed best known for their unique colorings and beauty, contributes fresh eggs, which are donated to a local senior citizens group in Leon, Iowa. Similarly, a spacious vegetable garden on the farm yields fresh produce for the seniors. Last year, the Knights of Columbus planted two acres of sweet corn on Weldon Farm to raise funds for their charities.



A small goat operation started several years ago has now increased in size, and last year a new barn was built to accommodate the growing population of mothers and kids. Income from the goats supports a Divine Word ministry in Odisha, India. In 2008, an attack against the Christian community in the Kandhamal District of Odisha killed ninety-three Christians. Thousands of homes were destroyed, as were hundreds of churches, convents, schools, and medical clinics. After peace was restored, Divine Word Missionaries, along with Sisters of St. Joseph of Anney and the Daughters of Charity, began working with displaced women to form self-help groups that enable the women to support themselves and their children. These groups initiated a variety of small businesses that manufacture bricks, grow vegetables and spices, and raise livestock. Weldon Farm's goat operation, call "Kids for Kids," provides annual income to the widows and orphans of Odisha.

The newest enterprise on the Weldon Farm is the Joymakers Toy Shop. Volunteers from ages eight to eighty are invited to spend a few hours of fellowship and fun producing handmade toys and dolls in a spacious shop

that would make Santa jealous. Partnering with Joymakers at the Weldon Farm are the Trappist Monks of New Melleray Abbey, located near Dubuque, Iowa. The monks graciously use their woodworking skills and equipment to turn out wooden toy models, which are then hand-painted and decorated by the volunteers at the toyshop in Weldon.

About thirty-five miles northwest of Weldon, near Lorimor, Iowa, is Divine Word Cattle Farm. Revenues from cattle are designated for Mother of Perpetual Help Center in Nong Bua Lamphu, Thailand. Located in one of the poorest areas of Thailand, the center was founded in 2000 by Brother Damien Lunders SVD. Interestingly, one of the center's self-help projects is a cattle program. To date, over one hundred families have received two head of cattle as a "starter kit" for their own small, family enterprise. Families who receive cattle pay a portion of their income back into the program so that additional families can participate.



Divine Word Cattle Farm in Iowa and the many programs begun by Brother Damien have made a dramatic change in the lives of the very poor in Thailand.

Every year funds from our generous benefactors are made available to our superior general in Rome for distribution around the world. Last year, in addition to those funds, the Mission Center, through Divine Word Farms, was able to provide grants to our mission in Thailand, three children's ministries in India, a mission in Papua New Guinea, and another in the Philippines. The following pages tell these mission stories.



Nong Bua Lamphu Thailand

Bro. Damien still scrambles to find clothes for the children and teens, worries about paying bills, and spends much of his time fundraising.

Mother of Perpetual Help Center

Two Divine Word Missionaries, Brothers James Wilkins SVD from Australia and Damien Lunders SVD from the United States, first set foot in Thailand in 1999. After completing a year of language studies in Bangkok, Bro. Jim and Bro. Damien arrived in the Diocese of Udon Thani in northeast Thailand, only a short distance from the border with Laos. Bishop George Phimpisan CSSR asked the two Brothers to go and assume responsibility for the Mother of Perpetual Help Center in Nong Bua Lamphu. At that time, it was a “welcome center” sponsored by the diocese where people with HIV/AIDS could go for counseling.

In 2002, a new Mother of Perpetual Help Center and the first Catholic church in the province were completed. With the new center and St. Michael’s Church now active, people in the area and officials in the city and local government began to take notice. The Mother of Perpetual Help Center became well known and appreciated in the province.

Over the years, with help from many sources and friends, Mother of Perpetual Help Center has expanded to include Mother Teresa Children’s Home for HIV-positive and homeless children, Villa Marie Hospice to care for adults, and Ban Mae Marie (Mother Mary House) for teenagers with HIV/AIDS.

A mobile outreach program brings medicines to the sick and homebound. Families with babies and young children receive milk and food supplements.



*The most enduring constant is God's providential care
and the blessings of good friends.*



Support groups for men, women, and children affected with HIV/AIDS meet regularly in the six districts of the province.

From the beginning, education about HIV/AIDS has been a priority. Each year, teams from the Mother of Perpetual Help Center go out to students in schools to lead education and awareness programs for HIV prevention.

Inspired by our founder, St. Arnold Janssen, who encouraged missionaries to develop farms as a means of sustainable funding, the development of a tract of land outside the city limits began two years ago.

Existing buildings on the land have been renovated to accommodate adults from Villa Marie Hospice now well enough to live independently. Coconut, lemon, and banana trees and vegetable gardens have been planted. Fish ponds have been dug out, and the adult residents are raising ducks and pigs. A large water tank holds water for the trees and gardens and serves as the water source for the buildings.

At present, five people live on the farm and care for the trees, gardens, and animals. The farm gives the residents a new interest in life and the daily exercise improves their health. The new farm development provides nourishing food for the farm residents and the children, teens, and adults served by the Mother of Perpetual Help Center.

Fifteen years have passed and there are now eight Divine Word Missionaries working in the Diocese of Udon Thani, three Brothers and five priests. Mother of Perpetual Help Center has gone through many changes since 2000, but some things are constant. Bro. Damien still scrambles to find clothes for the children and teens, worries about paying bills, and spends much of his time fundraising. The most enduring constant, however, is God's providential care and the blessings of good friends. ▼

Help a mission become self-sufficient!

A gift from you today will transform whole communities and help eliminate hunger and poverty.

GIVE \$21.40

and a mission farm could purchase
TEN DUCKS

\$25.72 could **BUY** A PIG

GIVE \$52.63

and it could feed twenty pigs!

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in the enclosed envelope.**



Vikas Deepti Odisha, India

A sustainable income is defined as the income needed to meet basic needs and be able to save for the future, thus improving the standard of living over time.

Thanks to a faraway farm in Iowa, the children of Vikas Deepti have reliable electricity in the surgical and the physical therapy centers.

A Sunny Outlook

Vikas Deepti, which means “promoting light,” was founded in 1995 by Father John Maliekal SVD to serve physically challenged children.

The center offers comprehensive care by providing surgical procedures, physical therapy, orthotic devices made on-site, education, proper nutrition, as well as social and cultural programs.

The staff and the children of Vikas Deepti are working to make the program as self-sufficient as possible. There are vegetable gardens, fruit trees, a poultry farm, pigs, and several fish ponds. In time, these projects will provide food and generate income to continue the ministry at Vikas Deepti.

In the past five year, Divine Word Farms has provided over \$100,000 to Vikas Deepti. This year, the current director,





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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.

Our legal title is:

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You may plan a specific bequest. For example:

**"I bequeath the amount of \$___
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in Techy, Illinois."**

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a nonprofit corporation
located in Techy, Illinois."**

A residual bequest directs that Divine Word Missionaries will receive all (or a specified portion) of your assets remaining after funeral costs, medical expenses, specific bequests, and administrative costs have been paid.

You may also 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. If you would like to discuss your estate planning with us, please contact us:

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Father Joseph Pais SVD, applied the funding from our farms to solve one of the most serious challenges facing the center: reliable electricity.

In the evenings and at night, electricity is frequently disrupted, and using generators is too expensive. In the physical therapy center, many of the machines need electricity. When unreliable electricity produces low voltage, the machines can be damaged. Reliable electricity is critical in the surgical center.

Fortunately, India averages three hundred clear, sunny days each year, so solar energy is an ideal solution. Fr. Pais installed a complete solar package, complete with an inverter to change DC to AC, sixty solar panels, and twenty-four batteries. The solar energy system now guarantees a reliable source of electricity with very low maintenance costs. ▼



Asha Jyothi Pregnapur, India

A Ministry on the Precipice

Asha Jyothi is located in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It provides comprehensive services to adults and children living with HIV/AIDS through a medical clinic and hospice, psychological and social support, proper nutrition, and educational programs. Last year, income from Divine Word Farms provided funding for the medicines dispensed at the center.

Lakshmi and her children are just a few of the hundreds of people whose lives have been saved by Asha Jyothi.

Lakshmi grew up in a small farming village where her family barely managed to get by. Her father arranged her marriage to Harish, young man who had a good job as a driver with a large transport company, and Lakshmi moved with her husband to a new town. Within a few years, Lakshmi and Harish had two daughters, and for some time, life was good. Harish was frequently on the road with his job, and he began to live a very dissolute life. His absences grew longer and more frequent, and he became abusive when he was at home.

One night, Lakshmi received a call from the police. They had found Harish passed out on the street, and he was very sick. When Lakshmi arrived at the hospital, she discovered he was in the advanced stage of AIDS and was near death. Harish passed away within a few days. Lakshmi had no idea that her husband had been infected with HIV, and doctors urged her and the children to be tested. She was completely devastated to learn that all three of them were infected with the HIV virus.



Founded by Fr. Bali Reddy SVD in 2006, Asha Jyothi cares for abandoned HIV/AIDS patients and provides palliative care and support. Thanks to Asha Jyothi, patients find solace and live the rest of their lives in peace and serenity.

Now widowed with no means of support, Lakshmi faced homelessness and contemplated suicide. Only the intervention and care of Mrs. Swaroopa, an outreach worker from Asha Jyothi, saved her from that fate.

Mrs. Swaroopa took Lakshmi and her children to Asha Jyothi, where they were given shelter, food, and counseling. They also began a regular regime of antiretroviral therapy for HIV infection.

Lakshmi was set up in a rented house and began selling small household items to earn a living. Each month, she and the children come to Asha Jyothi for a medical checkup and for their medicine. The children are enrolled in a local school.

A year ago, the Mission Center received this urgent appeal from Father Jesu Arockiam SVD of the Hyderabad Province in India:

Fr. Alwin Mascarenhas SVD, the director of Asha Jyothi HIV/AIDS care and support center, is a young and dynamic priest carrying on several activities for his mission, for the welfare of the people living with HIV/AIDS. He has taken up this social apostolate of serving the poor, needy, and the downtrodden as his special mission. However, he is facing a crisis in one of his main projects, where 20 HIV in-patients are undergoing palliative care. This project was funded partially by the government and our province for the past six years. Now, the government has suddenly withdrawn its support as a matter of policy. In this connection, he has requested me to recommend his case to you so that you could extend him a helping hand with financial support.

The Mission Center responded by funding the medical expenses of the clinic. Fr. Alwin has been able to maintain the services at Asha Jyothi, but he continues to struggle for funding. ▼



Lakshmi today, selling small household items, earning a living and living with pride.

Asha Jyothi is a light of hope for people threatened by HIV/AIDS.

Help us sustain programs like Asha Jyothi and improve the lives of so many people around the world affected by this epidemic.

Give a Gift 

www.svdmissions.org

Or mail your gift in the enclosed envelope.



Janvikas Society Indore, India

It is estimated that more than six thousand families in Indore earn their livelihood from waste picking.

International Women's Day Celebrated

Janvikas Society is an agency of Divine Word Missionaries in Indore, India, whose director is Father Roy Thomas SVD. It assists poor women engaged in rubbish scavenging, working children, and unemployed youth. Divine Word Farms has provided some funding for this worthy organization.

Each year, Janvikas celebrates International Women's Day with a special program of education and cultural entertainment. This year, the celebration was held on March 8, and 250 women, representing forty of the slum communities of Indore, attended the gathering. After the opening prayer and song, the guest speakers, professors from the local college, applauded the women for their leadership role in organizing laborers and encouraged them to continue the fight for their rights.

Women who had completed the vocational training program in tailoring were awarded certificates, and ten were chosen to receive sewing machines from Janvikas.

The program concluded with a dance performance and a festive meal.





The role of Janvikas is to empower women. Guidance and support are needed so women who are the last, least, and the lost of society will live a dignified life and stand on their own.

For more than 130 years, Divine Word Missionaries have helped men, women, and children build a better future.

Won't you please send a gift today and help our missionaries help those in need. Help spread the Word to those less fortunate.

\$25 will feed a child for one week

\$50 can provide medicine for those in need in India



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God bless you for your generosity!

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and click the **DONATE NOW** button.



Cebu City Philippines

The families that live in the cemeteries are squatters who were evicted from slum colonies. They found refuge in the cemeteries. Some erected makeshift huts on top of tombs; others live inside mausoleums, where they are hired as caretakers.

Father Max's Parish Is Pretty Scary

Parish priests often visit cemeteries to offer prayers and preside at burial services. That is not unusual. Father Max Abalos SVD, however, goes to cemeteries in Cebu City, Philippines, every day because that is where his parishioners live. Hundreds of displaced families have taken up residence in the cemeteries, where they have constructed flimsy shelters of plywood, scrap metal, and tarps.

Some of the families sell candles or flowers to cemetery visitors; others serve as caretakers of tombs and mausoleums; many stay at the cemetery and look for day jobs nearby. While the adults and older children scramble for work, many of the younger children are unattended. Even nominal school fees charged by the public schools make school attendance difficult for the children who live in the cemetery. Fr. Max and his co-workers help as many children as they can with school fees and clothes, and he has also started a day care center in the cemetery to provide children with supervised play, instruction, and meals.

Last winter, Divine Word Farms launched the Joymakers toy shop at the Weldon Farm. Laura Paxson coordi-





nates the program, handling everything from designing the toys, inviting volunteers, producing the toys, and shipping them to our missions.

Laura read about Fr. Max's ministry in Cebu City and was so moved by the story that she was determined to make the first shipment of handmade toys to the children in the cemetery. Youth groups, women's sewing clubs, confirmation classes, and local families came to the farm to paint and assemble toy cars, create simple wooden games, and sew cute dolls and teddy bears. Laura carefully packed up the first batch of toys and shipped it off to Fr. Max. Waiting to hear from Fr. Max that the toys had arrived was more difficult than learning to use a scroll saw.

In mid-March, the toys arrived and Fr. Max was kind enough to take many photos of the kids playing with the toys. Laura and her toy-making helpers were delighted by the photos. Joymakers was a success!

With even more enthusiasm and commitment, the volunteers steadily prepare more toys. Shipments to Thailand and Mexico are next, and by this time next year, Laura expects to have toys in the hands of kids in Africa, India, and Latin America. ▼

GIVE THESE CHILDREN A CHANCE TO ESCAPE FROM POVERTY



Fr. Max wants to improve the lives of his "parishioners."

Help Fr. Max pay for school...

Tuition: \$10 per child

Books: \$25 per child

Shoes: \$10 per child

EDUCATION WILL BREAK THE POVERTY CYCLE

YOU CAN HELP!

Give a Gift Online



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Or mail your gift in the enclosed envelope.



Archdiocese of Mount Hagen Papua New Guinea



Although the life of a person is in a land full of thorns and weeds, there is always a space in which the good seed can grow. You have to trust God.

—POPE FRANCIS
INTERVIEW 2014

No Small Potatoes

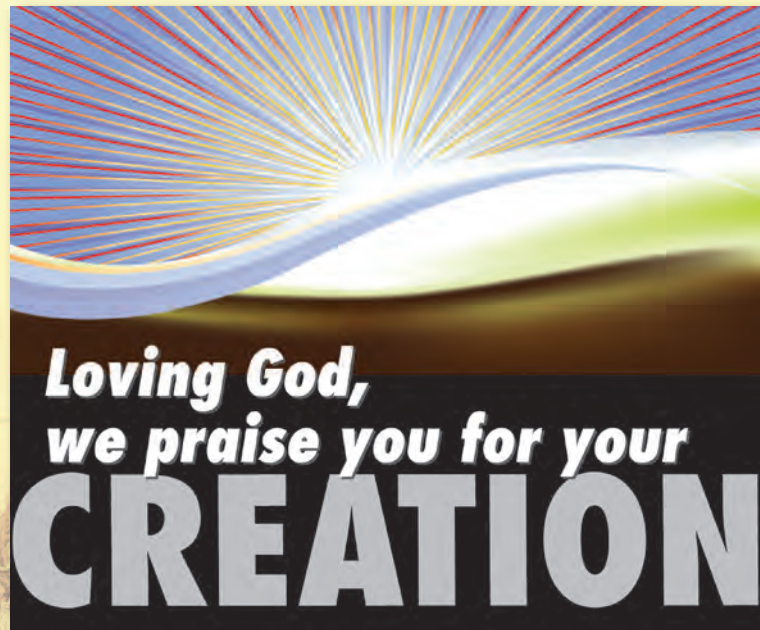
Archbishop Douglas Young SVD of Mount Hagen asked the Mission Center for funds to help a parish become self-reliant. With funds from Divine Word Farms, the parish in Sinsibai acquired about five acres of land to grow potatoes.

The land was divided into five plots and each plot was assigned to a parish group. Families pledged to work on Tuesdays and Fridays for two hours of planting, cultivating, harvesting, and transporting the crops to local markets. A spirit of unity and cooperation among the people made all the hard work seem easier.

Last year, some of the plants were damaged by high winds and a frost, but the harvest still yielded a crop which brought \$1,257 at the market.

The parishioners are optimistic that, through planning and wise use of the land, the potato farm will be an ongoing source of income for the parish for years to come. ▼





Our Divine Word Farms strive to exercise land stewardship as part of a broader commitment to environmental sustainability.

Planet Account

Prairie Grass

Divine Word Farms in south central Iowa rest upon ground once part of America's tall grass prairie. In the mid-nineteenth century, European settlers venturing westward entered a vast and variegated expanse of prairie. From western Ohio to eastern Nebraska, from northern Minnesota to southern Oklahoma, the tall grass prairie formed a 400,000-square-mile ecosystem intricately adapted to the climate conditions of the American heartland. The root systems of prairie grasses, like Big Blue Stem, penetrated the subsoil to depths of thirty feet, assuring plant survival through frigid winters and periodic droughts. Flexible against the harshest winds, this deeply rooted vegetation formed a natural, effective stay against soil erosion. The cycle of plant growth and decay, repeated over thousands of years and enhanced by periodic prairie fires, yielded rich, fertile topsoil. Complemented by shorter grasses and abundant wildflowers, the tall grasses produced a sustainable habitat for a rich variety of insects, birds, small mammals, and large bison herds. Native American communities organized whole cultural systems in harmony with the prairie.



With westward migration and aggressive agricultural settlement, the tall grass prairie was all but eradicated over the course of two or three generations. The tall grass prairie, one of the Creator's natural masterpieces, gave way to foreign methods of agriculture and livestock production. By one estimate, less than one-tenth of one percent of Iowa prairie survived into the twentieth century (Sneed B. Collard III, *The Prairie Builders: Reconstructing America's Lost Grasslands* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005], 11).



At Weldon Farm, we have dedicated a small, three-acre plot to prairie "reenactment." Sown in our three-acre reenactment are six species of prairie grasses and twenty-nine species of wildflowers. By cultivating our small plot, we reverence the Creator for the drama of the original tall grass prairie and its inspiring design and beauty. We voice our sorrow over the loss of the original prairie, our historical failure to heed the wisdom secured in its evolution. The prairie develops slowly, sinking roots deeply before generating vegetation and flowers. We look to our small prairie, just entering its third year, to become a sign of hope to all who visit our farm, a sign that, in the Creator's plan, all people and all living things will experience a harmonious interdependence.

Soil

Each year, our farm managers allocate time and resources for the prevention of soil erosion. Besides employing effective crop management techniques, managers must also at times take corrective measures to prevent destructive water run-off from crop lands. Fields are properly tilled and terraced to preserve rain water and enhance ground moisture and further reduce topsoil erosion. Corrective measures are necessary also as part of the acquisition of new farm properties where attention to long-term sustainability has not been in evidence. Cropping decisions driven only by short-term market incentives negatively impact the ecosystem. Divine Word Farms is committed to responsible land ownership and cultivation as a counter-witness to aggressive, short-sighted land exploitation.

Trees

Since 2007, Divine Word Farms has collaborated with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources in a modest tree cultivation endeavor. Twenty-six thousand young trees, including different species of oak, black walnut, and cherry, are planted on fifty acres at the Weldon Farm. These young trees are cared for, primarily by reducing competition from other ground vegetation. Even now, these plantings provide a stay against soil erosion on several hilly slopes. Eventually, as the plantings grow into a forest, they will offer new habitat for deer, small animals, and birds in wonderful variety. They will also become a harvestable resource with income potential. In the meantime, as part of the Iowa Woodland Stewardship program, the tree acres generate a small annual income.



In addition to the larger-scale hardwood plantings, Divine Word Farms is also engaged in smaller commercial and research tree projects. Growing at the Weldon Farm are seven hundred Chinese chestnut trees. With proper nurturing through sometimes challenging summer and winter weather conditions, the chestnuts will in time yield fruit for which there is an expanding U.S. market.

Most recently, in association with Dr. Jud Isenbrands, international forestry expert, the Weldon Farm is serving as a host location for a research project testing new varieties of poplar trees as potential sources of biofuels. The Weldon Farm manager, Dan Paxson, has been involved in ground preparation, tree planting, and other cultivation requirements.

Tree cultivation by Divine Word Farms is about many things, including soil conservation and water retention, modest income generation, and wildlife habitat. As importantly, tree cultivation is about human participation in the creation of beauty in the countryside. Trees in their various sizes, with their different barks and foliage, whether deciduous or evergreen, can awaken in us a sense of awe, an appreciation for their endurance, a respect for the life lessons they convey. The cultivation of trees can be the gift of one generation to the next.

Alternative Energy: Geothermal, Wind, Solar

Divine Word Farms embraces the idea of non-fossil energy alternatives. These available alternatives have practical and symbolic value for our operations.

Over the course of its short history, Weldon Farm has used a geothermal heating and cooling system in one of the larger buildings now utilized by our Joymakers Toy Shop. The system keeps the building cool during summer and cozy during winter at a reduced expense.

Contributing to reduced electricity costs are two small wind turbines well designed to take advantage of the steady wind currents driving through our part of south central Iowa.

The most recent addition to our energy alternatives is a forty-panel solar system mounted on the south-facing side of one of our barns. Funded in part by a matching grant from Alliant Energy, our regional electricity provider, the system is expected to pay for itself within five years. If the system's first-year production is a true indication of its potential, the solar system has been a wise investment. With relatively low-cost installation and minimal maintenance requirements, the solar system unobtrusively generates a clean source of energy to offset farm requirements.

