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DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES
mission
update

Summer 2017
mission stories from around the world
www.svdmissions.org

Described as the
worst refugee
problem
currently
anywhere
in the world...

over 4,000
refugees are
streaming from
South Sudan
into Uganda
every day.





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Have you already included us in your Will?

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Thank You!

Editor's Note

“I was a stranger and you invited me in.”

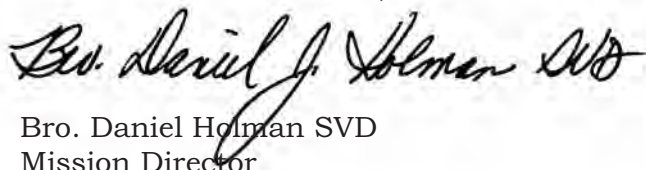
Across the ocean, or just across our own state lines, we read about them or see them on the news: natural disaster survivors, refugees displaced and homeless, victims of violence in the streets. They are a reminder that today prayer is needed more than ever. Our prayers go out to the people of Texas in the wake of Hurricane Harvey's flooding. Our prayers go out to those in the Caribbean hit by Hurricane Irma. Our prayers go out to refugees fleeing from violence in their homelands. Our prayers continue for all who struggle to rebuild their lives.

Together, thanks to your help, we have been able to provide care and hope—along with the basic needs like clean water, food and shelter—to displaced people around the world.

Do you want to help even more? Pass this magazine on to a friend. Build awareness and help support Divine Word Missionaries. Together, we can change the lives of many.

We would like to give a big “Thank You” to Mr. Martin Burrows for lending his time and talent to help build awareness about the plight of refugees in Uganda. His words and photos bring the story into our hands and heart.

Yours in the Divine Word,


Bro. Daniel Holman SVD
Mission Director

Contact me any time, my e-mail address is:
director@svdmissions.org

SPECIAL EDITION SPECIAL EDITION SPECIAL EDITION
SPECIAL EDITION
CRISIS in UGANDA



4

a friend of Divine Word Missionaries
as told by Martin Burrows



... tribal wars have spawned this exodus ... murders, looting, rapes and atrocities caused this mass migration ...



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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.

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

SOUTH SUDAN



3.6 million
people have
fled their
homes

4,000 refugees come into
Uganda every day

6 out of 10 refugees
are children

Over 5.1 million people
are in need of aid, and
4.8 million are facing
hunger and famine



South Sudan is bordered by Sudan to the north, Ethiopia to the east, Kenya to the southeast, Uganda to the south, the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the southwest, and the Central African Republic to the west.

SPECIAL EDITON

CRISIS in UGANDA
*patient
struggle*

a Friend of Divine Word Missionaries



*Story and photographs by:
Martin Burrows*



Not all the refugees streaming across the Ugandan border from war-ravaged South Sudan last year were African. At least five were Divine Word Missionaries.

Divine Word Missionaries had been working with the people of Yei province in South Sudan since 2012. They set up a small mission there shortly after the new country, the Republic of South Sudan, won its independence the previous year. The missionaries worked and lived alongside those poorer than poor. It was a story of patient struggle to deliver the Divine Word to famished and poverty-stricken South Sudanese living with instability and violence. The missionaries worked hard to establish their mission. They built huts in Lainya, a small village near the town of Yei. But two years after independence was achieved, the Republic of South Sudan was in deadly conflict. In March 2015 the mission huts were burned to the ground. In May 2016 Veronika Terezia Rackova, a Holy Spirit Missionary Sister, was shot while driving an ambulance taking an expectant mother to the hospital. She died four days later. In the end, Divine Word Missionaries' superiors evacuated the mission staff and the mission was closed.

About the author:

Martin Burrows writes a travel column for the Sacramento Valley Mirror in Northern California.

A retired businessman and former soldier, Martin was also an intelligence analyst in Germany and the United States as well as a lay Catholic minister. While covering the military coup in Thailand in 2007, Martin met Bro. Damien Lunders SVD in Bangkok. He visited Bro. Damien's mission and has been a supporter ever since. In 2014, while doing research on his autobiographical faith-based travel book "The Final Safari" (available on Amazon.com), Martin met the Vatican's nuncio to Uganda, Archbishop Michael Blume SVD. Archbishop Blume convinced Martin that South Sudanese refugees needed help, and Martin decided to support that effort through Divine Word Missionaries. Martin plans to put more time and funds into helping Divine Word Missionaries get better established on the Uganda-South Sudanese border.

Martin has a bachelor of arts degree in international relations from California State University, Chico. He studied for a year abroad at the American University in Cairo. With extensive travels in more than thirty countries, he has lived and worked in Vietnam, Thailand, South Korea, Okinawa, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Germany. He is the author of three books.

to read more about the fire visit:
www.svdmissions.org/news/magazine
click: Spring 2015

A Fire Sparks Friendship
Photos and story by Andrzej Dzida SVD



A bright, roaring blaze consumed the grass roof, and burning debris filled my hut as the roof collapsed.

As darkness gave way to dawn, we saw the destruction...



patient struggle



Since the mission closing last year, the refugee crisis has escalated into what *The Wall Street Journal* describes as currently the worst refugee problem anywhere in the world. Fleeing famine, drought and violence, nearly 4,000 refugees come into Uganda every day. These people desperately need clean water and food, but the resources of the world relief agencies are being strained. Divine Word Missionaries established a new mission across the border from Yei in Ladonga, Uganda, and with their blessing I observed and reported on the struggle to provide food, water, medicines and other essentials needed to sustain the growing population.

I won't go into details on the tribal wars that have spawned this exodus or the murders, looting, rapes and atrocities that caused this mass migration. You can get those stories from the media that have been reporting this unraveling travesty. This is a continuing story of patient struggle...

patient struggle



Father Francis Joseph Naduviledath SVD and Brother Vincent Oki Knaofmone SVD are the vanguard of the new mission serving refugees from the Yei valley. When I arrived in April 2017 they were still setting up shop. They had been there only three months and their mission was not completely functional. The missionaries live in a small house with occasional electricity from small solar panels. Because their house doesn't have fans or refrigeration they don't need much electricity. This did not appear to be a hardship for these tough apostles who had grown accustomed to an even tougher life in South Sudan. At least here they could find supplies in the market. In South Sudan, they had nothing.

This soft American from California found such a Spartan life in 90-degree temperature and 90 percent humidity almost impossible. Suffering from heat fatigue, I presented myself, tolerably well, the next morning for our rounds to the missions' eight refugee camps. Our first stop was Bidi Bidi, the largest refugee camp in Uganda with about 275,000 people.

At Bidi Bidi, Fr. Francis and Bro. Vincent constantly ran into friends and parishioners they had not seen since their evacuation six months ago. Excitedly, the parishioners flocked around them. With shiny faces and wide grins, these refugees spoke nonstop about their gratitude to see their spiritual advisor from their beloved homeland. Their priest and friend was among them, a symbolic reminder that God was still with them, too.





The only possession Fr. Francis and his confreres were able to bring from South Sudan was the parish's 4-year-old Toyota. The white truck proudly displayed the Divine Word Missionaries flag from Lainya. For the refugees, this flag became a rallying point in a welcoming but alien country.

The majority of refugees escaping South Sudan are women and children. The men stay behind to fight for their homes. Stella Yata is 18 years old and her 2-year-old daughter, Annet, will never see her dad again. He was killed a few months ago. Like most Sudanese men, once he got his wife and daughter safely to the refugee camp he went back to fight for his home.

In the distance was a small chapel, a choir was singing a lovely gospel hymn, and I walked closer to hear better. From books I've read, I knew the South Sudanese were wonderful singers. Never have I heard anything more spiritual as this rendition of "Peace in the Valley" beautifully sung by the refugees displaced from the Yei valley. I went inside. The humble old decayed chapel was being brought to life by the poorest and most disenfranchised of war refugees. As the music filled the air I believe I was seeing the face of God in these now homeless people.

By now I had fallen in love with these refugees. The only way to fully understand what they have endured was to go to the area they had been forced to leave. Against strong warnings from my host, Fr. Francis, I boarded a small plane and flew to Yei.







patient struggle



Fortune was with me. The middle-aged African woman sitting next to me asked where I was going. I imagine she was wondering why an older white American was flying into a black African town in the middle of a civil war. (I was wondering that myself.) I explained that I was a journalist who wanted to interview the bishop of Yei. She smiled and said, "What a coincidence. I work for the bishop. The vicar's driver is picking me up at the airport." She said she would take me to the bishop herself. She advised me to hide my camera in my luggage as any photography was against policy and that I would be arrested.

My new guardian angel further recommended that I choose an identity other than journalist because Western press would be escorted to the border and thrown out or worse. I told her I could live with not being a journalist. (My editor would agree that I wasn't.) From then on, I introduced myself as a friend of Divine Word Missionaries.

Bishop Erkolano Tombe was very welcoming, as befits South Sudanese custom. He was surprised to have me show up unannounced. Why didn't Fr. Francis tell him of my intended arrival? Ordinarily, I believe I get a better view of things if I arrive unannounced, but the simple answer was there had been no cell phone or Internet service at the Uganda mission. I now wished I had been able to call ahead to

patient struggle



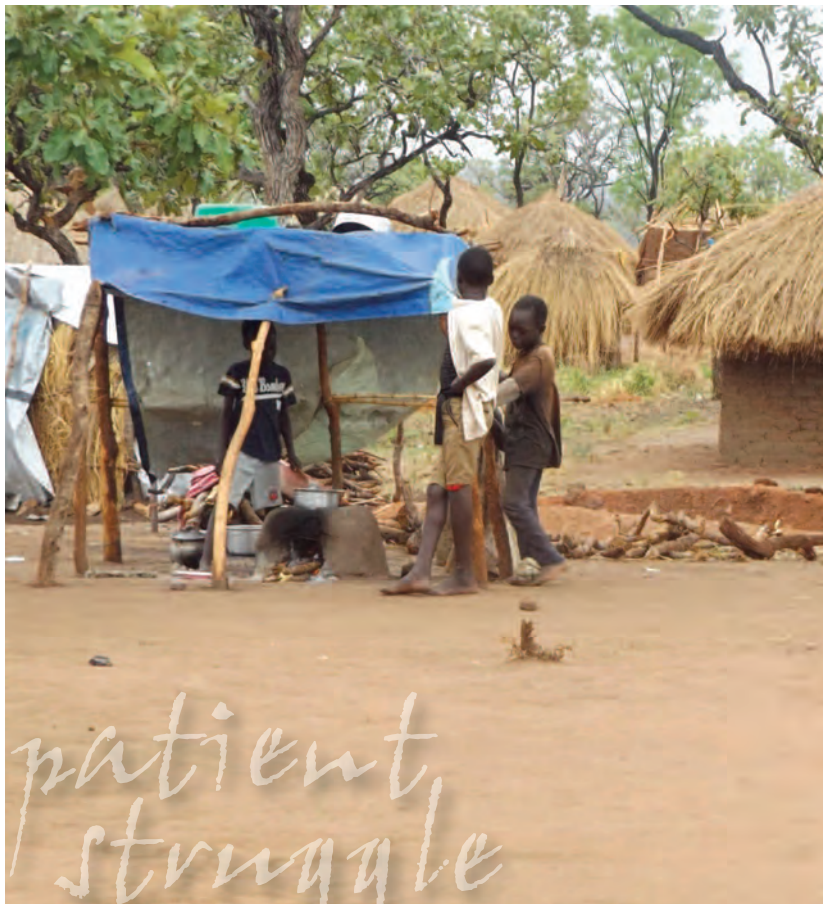
this war zone. If Bishop Erkolano had confirmed Fr. Francis's grim picture—and he would have—I would have remained in Uganda. Before I got on the plane, I had figured Fr. Francis was being overly cautious about not wanting me to get into any danger. After all, he had left South Sudan six months ago, and things change. Bishop Erkolano said things had changed; the situation had gotten much worse since the closing of the mission.



Bishop Erkolano explained that for my own protection I would be restricted to the compound during my four-day visit. Under the circumstances, that was fine with me. I had a powerful telescopic lens that allowed me to photograph from afar. I managed to look inside buildings in the nearby village through open windows and doorways. All along I was thinking ... just what the bishop needed, an "American spy" with the fearful, xenophobic Dinka soldiers just a stone's throw away.







I was Bishop Erkolano's only houseguest. He and I shared many conversations during my stay. In one conversation he told me 50 percent of Yei's people were now in refugee camps in Uganda and another 25 percent were hiding in the bush outside town. Most of the remaining residents were buttoned up in their dwellings and did not move about. This assessment was confirmed by my observations coming into town and my amateurish "spying" attempts from inside the compound. Anyone in the village who saw me with my camera disappeared posthaste. How could they be more scared of me than I of them? They were experiencing post-traumatic stress. They had seen and suffered much. The bishop said his diocese had lost seven of its eight parishes. His little cathedral, Christ the King, was all that was left. He was determined to hold out until the end.

My journey was coming to an end and time soon came for me to leave for the little dirt airport a short way from town. Father Emmanuel Sabity,



the bishop's very able assistant, would take me. The good South Sudanese pastor was a no-nonsense guy. He had been suspicious of me when I arrived and didn't warm to me until an email got through from Fr. Francis confirming my bona fides. Civil wars make everyone cautious, but the bishop couldn't have a better assistant and I couldn't have made a better friend than Fr. Emmanuel.

On the way to the airport we were stopped by Dinka soldiers. They looked into the back of our vehicle and asked whose suitcase was that. Fr. Emmanuel pointed my way and said it was mine. The soldier opened the door, pulled the heavy bag out and dropped it onto the hood. I remained poker faced but trembled inside. The soldier proceeded to unzip the cumbersome bag. It looked like this could be the end. All my photographs, all those beautiful faces, could be lost to these soldiers. My mind raced, remembering the kind woman on the plane telling me "photography was against policy." Inside the suitcase, my camera was on the top, and my editor's letter demanding I be accorded my rights under international press standards was in there as well.

Better timing could not have been found in a spy thriller: The Dinka had my bag half unzipped when Fr. Emmanuel said, in a nonchalant tone, "Why bother? He is a priest, a man of God." The uniformed Dinka said a begrudging, "Yeah," zipped the bag back up and tossed it in the back seat. Fr. Emmanuel is the kind of man you want watching your back in a knife fight. I decided not to reprimand him for fibbing or suggest he needed to confess, though I think absolution is in order!

patient
struggle





Send
some love
their way...

South Sudan, Uganda, hunger, shelter, clean water, disease and abandonment—along this journey I had learned the hardships these refugees had endured. Two thousand huts had been torched in the Yei valley alone. I learned that, apart from food and water, refugees from Yei would need physical, psychological and spiritual help to overcome their emotional duress. The one thing I constantly heard from the refugees themselves was the need for priests, Bibles and missalettes. In my travels side by side with Divine Word Missionaries I had learned that missionaries accomplish Herculean tasks with little or no people or provisions.

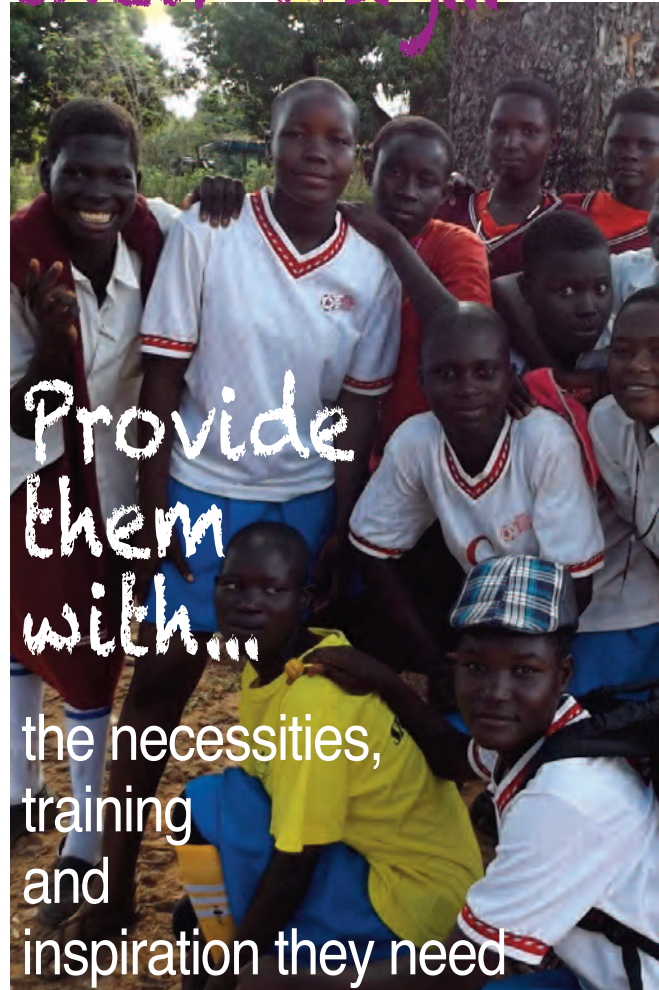
Divine Word Missionaries, in Uganda and in so many corners of the world, are faced daily with the important job of caring for those in need. The Red Cross and United Nations were coming into the refugee camps with food, water and medical aid in a big way. Many other nonprofits were setting up trauma centers and schools to help the residents of Yei deal with this crisis. Along with providing the necessities of life, Divine Word Missionaries continue their patient struggle to bring the loving and life-affirming words of God to these beautiful South Sudanese refugees.

I have been to many war zones—as a soldier, as a helper and now, in my old age, as a reporter. One thing that is constant in these “worst of times” is that people want and need to turn to God.

patient
struggle

I financed this trip myself. Divine Word Missionaries do not have the funds to squander on professional writers. I volunteer only for agencies that are efficient with their donations, and Divine Word Missionaries is the most efficient of all I have seen. This trip was my idea, but without the help of Archbishop Michael Blume, the Papal Nuncio to Uganda, and Brother Dan Holman, Divine Word Missionaries mission director, I would not have been able to accomplish my task.

—M. Burrows



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them
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and
inspiration they need
to develop, grow and
become self-sufficient.



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FROM: Archbishop Michael A. Blume, SVD
Apostolic Nunciature • Kampala, UGANDA
TO: Mr. Martin Burrows

Dear Martin,

Thank you very much for your email with the personal and touching account of your venture into South Sudan. The Lord is good to helping you get out with your testimony.

Things continue to develop in South Sudan. More refugees have fled and Uganda is being stretched to its limits by the flow. But there are some positive things happening. Fr. Francis will come on soon to welcome a new Divine Word Missionary from the Philippines. Originally assigned to South Sudan, he will take his first steps in that country by crossing Uganda and joining our team at the Diocese of Arua until further notice. Then in July, there are three SSs Sisters, united to Divine Word Missionaries by mission and a common Founder, who will come from Ethiopia for an exploratory visit of the camps and settlements with the intention of coming to help. A couple more confreres should also be coming in the not too distant future.

I'm grateful for your help in making the South Sudan crisis better known. A great many of our countrymen do not even know the country exists nor that it is the most dramatic refugee movement of the century and seems to have no end in sight.

I thank God for our confreres and sisters who are seeking and comforting these scattered sheep without a shepherd. I hope to be going back into that area in the not too distant future.

Attached is a photo taken last November in Arua, with some of the missionaries and priests we went along with to see the refugee areas and to meet parishioners and friends of the missionaries who had come across the border.

God's blessings on you.
In the Divine Word,
+Michael A. Blume, SVD
N.A.

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