

Divine Word Missionaries
P.O. Box 6099
Techny, 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.**

Thank You
for
Giving!



**\$10
will give
HOPE
to this
CHILD!**

Your gift will give students in Borneo carpentry training; will provide safe shelter for women forced to work in the red-light district of Cebu City; or may bring much needed clean water to a Maasai community.

give HOPE to their future

Join **Matthew 25 Club** and your gift will enable us to plan for the future and the ever-changing hunger, health and education needs of those we strive to serve.

**your gift will impact the lives
of thousands around the world**

Give a Monthly Gift ... join the Matthew 25 Club

Support Divine Word Missionaries in our mission to change lives and give hope.

You Can make an IMPACT!

visit our website at

www.svdmissions.org

Thank You
for your
Prayers & Support



DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES
mission
update

Summer 2018

mission stories from around the world
www.svdmissions.org



Ways to Give...

The easiest way to give is through cash gifts. But creative gifts of assets can include stocks, bonds and property (real estate and personal property such as artwork). These can not only provide you with charitable deductions but often offer additional tax savings as well.

Here are some ways you can help...

Cash, checks and credit card donations

Donation of appreciated securities

Donation of retirement plan benefits

Life insurance donation

Donation of real estate

Donor-advised fund

Bequest

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



Contact us at
800-275-0626

for information on bequests or
to talk more about different
ways to include

**Divine Word Missionaries
in your Will
or estate plan.**

Seek the advice of your financial or legal advisor.

**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!

Please join us in welcoming Father Paul Budi Kleden SVD as the 12th Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word!

Fr. Budi Kleden was elected Superior General during the society's General Chapter earlier this summer. He succeeds Fr. Heinz Kulüke SVD, who intends to return to mission work.

Fr. Budi Kleden is the first Superior General from Indonesia, a country that is home to roughly one quarter of all Divine Word priests and Brothers. He was born in November 1965 on the island of Flores. He joined Divine Word Missionaries as a novice in 1985 at St. Paul Major Seminary in Ledalero, also on Flores, and completed his novitiate and philosophical studies there. He professed first vows in 1987.

In 1988 he journeyed to St. Gabriel in Austria for his theological studies. He was there when the students decided to share their living space with refugees from the Bosnian war. He professed perpetual vows in 1992 and was ordained on May 15, 1993, at St. Gabriel. Fr. Budi Kleden's first assignment was to Switzerland, where he worked as a parish priest for three years. Then he spent four years in Germany completing his doctoral studies in systematic theology.

After that, in 2001, Fr. Budi Kleden returned to his homeland to teach theology and philosophy at Ledalero. He was member of the provincial council of the Indonesia-Ende Province from 2005 to 2008, serving one year as vice provincial. He was elected General Councilor in 2012 and has been based in Rome since then.

Fr. Budi Kleden's first duty as Superior General-elect was to deliver the homily at a Mass of thanksgiving the day of his election. He used this opportunity to stress our order's commitment to the poor: "As missionaries we need a heart that feels the pain of the people, especially the poor and oppressed."

I ask that you join me first in prayers of gratitude for Fr. Kulüke, whose leadership so wisely and compassionately guided our order through the last six years. And join me in praying for Fr. Budi Kleden as he takes leadership of the world's 6,000 Divine Word Missionaries, that he is able to continue our order's excellence and growth over the next six years.

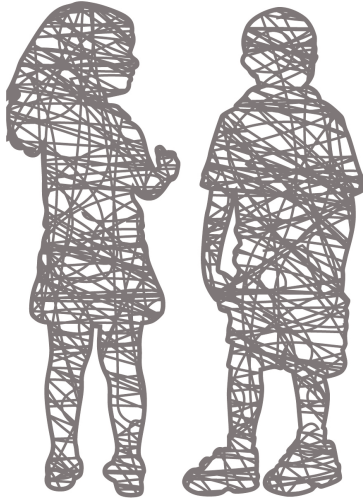
Yours in the Divine Word,

Bro. Daniel Holman SVD
Mission Director

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

**Thank you
for your
prayers & support!**

update



2

If Education
is the Key,
Opportunity
is the Need

Frank Ayakwah SVD

6



HIV/AIDS
Challenge 2018

Thailand

"Sadly a lot of
our patients
are neglected
and rejected
by family.
They have
no home to
return to."



Brazil

Their Blessed Event joined
Christian Faith with

African tradition

Martin Kotchoffa SVD

18



Instagram



DivineWord

STAY

IN

TOUCH



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 84 countries.
Divine Word Missionaries work in over 80 different lands on all continents except Antarctica.

Website: WWW.SVDMISSIONS.ORG

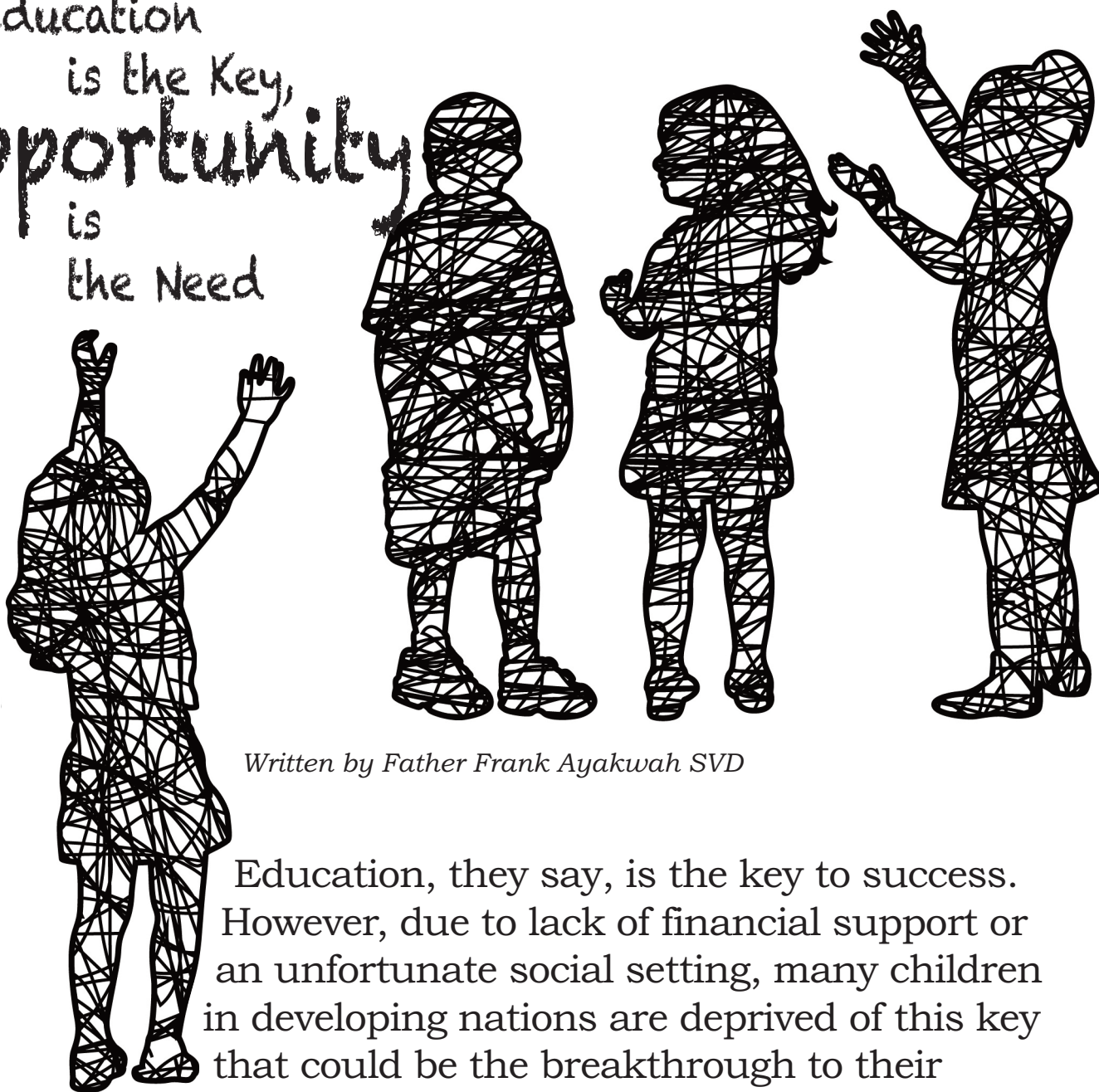
DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES MAGAZINE, Vol. LXI No. 3 Summer 2018 issued quarterly

Divine Word Missionaries • Mission Center, Techny, Illinois 60082

Subscription \$20.00 a year

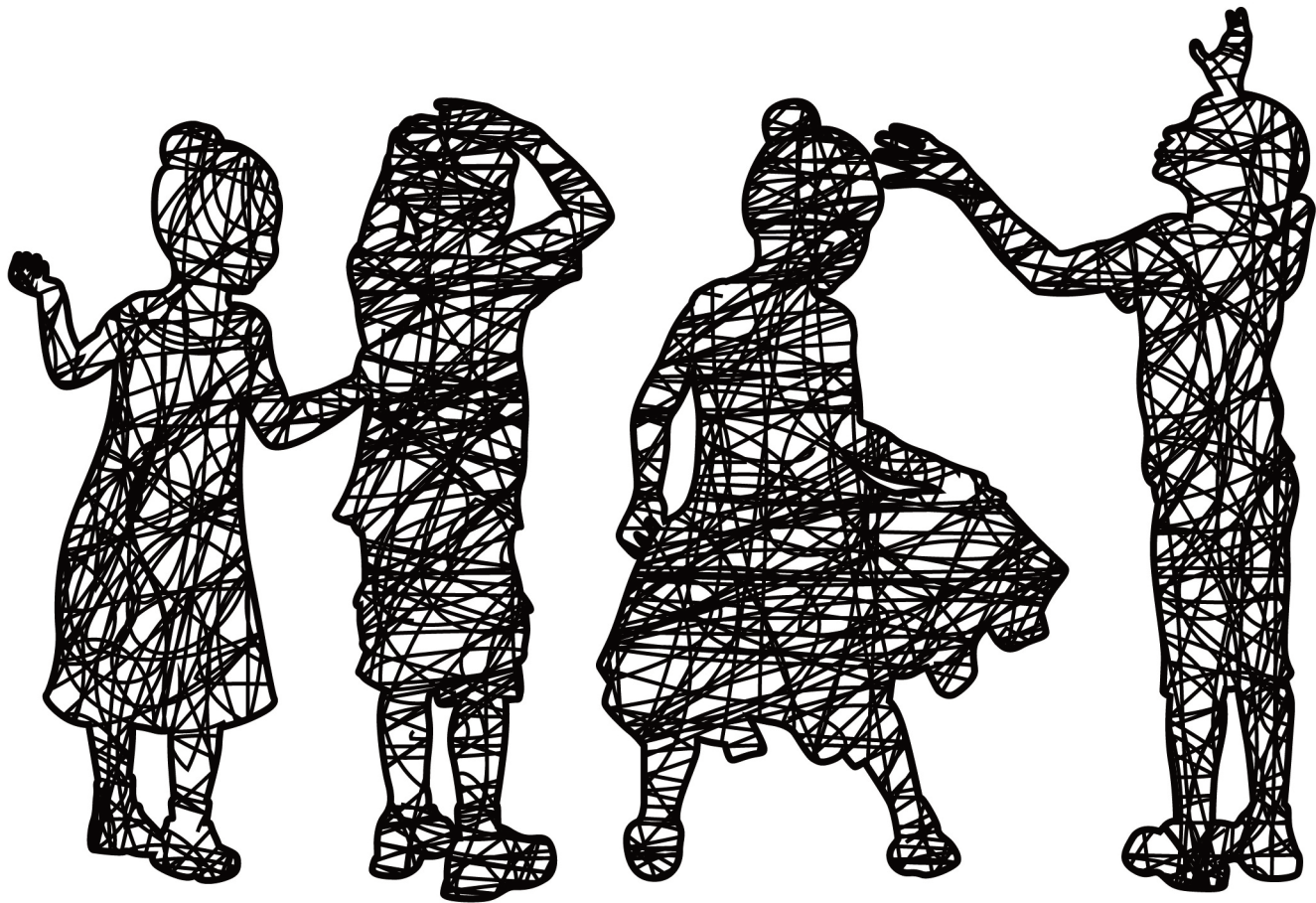
Editorial Team: Bro. Dan Holman SVD • Carmelita J. Linden • Jeffrey Westhoff

If Education
is the Key,
Opportunity
is
the Need



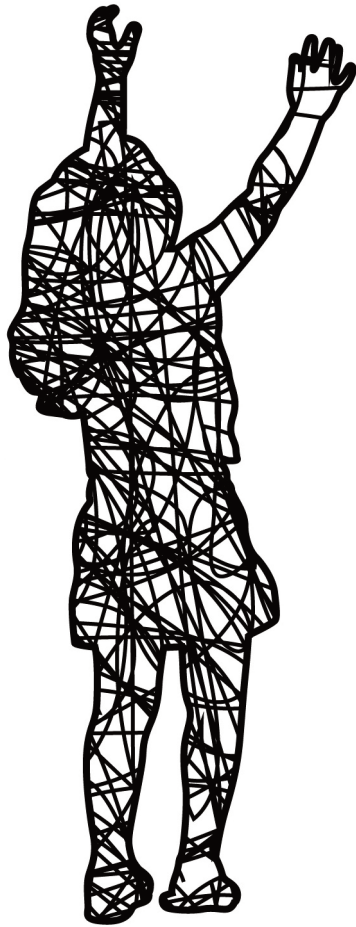
Written by Father Frank Ayakwah SVD

Education, they say, is the key to success. However, due to lack of financial support or an unfortunate social setting, many children in developing nations are deprived of this key that could be the breakthrough to their future. Here in Madagascar so many children could discover their potential if only they had the opportunity to sit at a classroom desk.



Getting the opportunity to arrive at that desk every day from faraway villages can be a huge undertaking. Divine Word Missionaries at Sts. Peter and Paul parish in the village of Vohilava have found a way to provide that opportunity. As part of our education apostolate we have built a set of dormitories, called the “Foyer” after the French word for “home,” so that children from far-off villages can study at our schools.

With a hospital, a dispensary and a post office, Vohilava is larger than other villages in the area. What draws children here are the village’s two elementary/junior high schools. One is a government school and the other is a Catholic school run by the Sisters of St. Joseph. Vohilava also has a government-run senior high school. Unfortunately, the quality of education at



this school is considered low, and the parents who can afford it send their children to continue their studies in Mananjary, the district capital.

Most of the children in the primary and junior high levels come from distant villages that have no schools. These children must walk as far as 6 to 18 miles to attend the schools in Vohilava. Without a home base near the schools, many of the children would be forced to drop out or would never attend in the first place. Seeing this need, Divine Word Missionaries decided to build housing where students could live during the school week.

The Foyer is a set of boarding-house-style dormitories for boys and girls. Next to these buildings are simple, traditional kitchens where students can cook and a well where they can get clean water. Students can stay safely in Vohilava during the week and, if they wish, return home on the weekends.

In addition to providing students with such material needs as housing, food and clean water, we also guide them in the spirit of prayer and Catholic discipline. The children attend morning prayers and daily Mass as well as Sunday Mass. Divine Word

seminarians who are assigned to Madagascar gain their pastoral experience caring for the children and helping them cultivate the habit of prayer. Luckily for us, most of the children have been raised Catholic.

To help cover maintenance on the Foyer buildings, parents are asked to pay a minimal fee in the form of a parish contribution. As most of the students come from rice-farming communities, families short on money often pay with rice. Those students coming from truly underprivileged homes who cannot afford to pay with either money or rice are subsidized for their school fees through Divine Word Missionaries—ensuring that a child’s education is our priority.

To our great satisfaction, most of the students who leave our Foyer program excel as they continue their secondary education in Mananjary or other larger towns. We are proud to announce that the best pupil in the District of Mananjary last year came from a Vohilava school. This proves that creating an environment suited to studies can bring out the highest potential in children once the opportunity is given them. ♦



Make an IMPACT!

Today and for years to come!

Give a monthly gift... join the Matthew 25 Club

Your special intentions will be remembered on the 22nd of each month in a novena of Masses.



Joining **Matthew 25 Club** means your generous monthly commitment in support of our mission programs will automatically renew each year at whatever gift amount you choose.

Joining **Matthew 25 Club** means your prayers will join with thousands of others around the world ... *changing lives around the world.*



Your gift will be sent to our missions overseas to be used in some of the most poverty-stricken areas of the world.

Use the QR Code above

or ... Call toll free: 800-275-0626 OR you can also visit our website at www.svdmissions.org

HIV/AIDS Challenge 2018 THAILAND



An
interview
with
Brother
Damien
Lunders SVD



Over the last 18 years Brother Damien Lunders SVD has been director of the Mother of Perpetual Help Center in Thailand. And over those years he and his team have seen many changes in medication and the care of HIV-positive patients. But recently he has noticed a change that is proving difficult for both patients and the Mother of Perpetual Help Center.

Within the last year or two, the center has been receiving more “hard cases”, Bro. Damien reports. “They come to us in quite bad shape.” Most are adults ranging in age from 30 to 50; these patients are older than those the center has seen in the past. Although Bro. Damien doesn’t have hard facts he does have a theory. “I think many were probably afraid to be tested until it was too late.”

In Thailand there is a stigma against HIV/AIDS patients. Bro. Damien believes this stigma is a reason people delay being tested for HIV. “They’re afraid because they don’t want their friends and family to know.” Unfortunately, Bro. Damien has

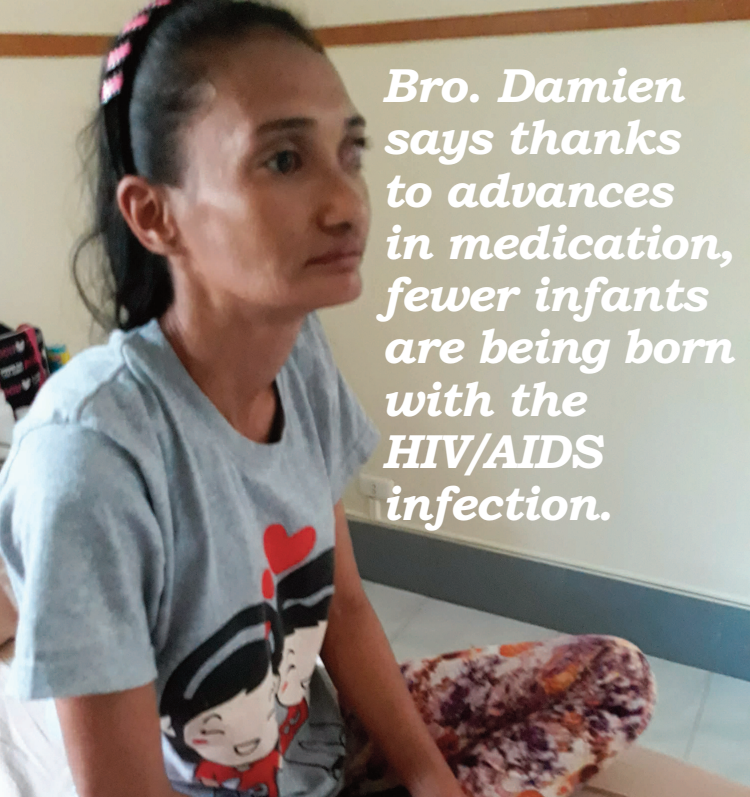


seen these fears prove real for many who come to the Mother of Perpetual Help Center. “Sadly, a lot of our patients are neglected and rejected by family. They have no home to return to.”

The “hard case” patients are admitted to Villa Marie Hospice Care. Established in 2005, this 10-bed facility was built for adults with HIV/AIDS. However over the last few years the severity of the cases has increased, Bro. Damien says, and these patients require more intensive care, which in turn requires more staff and more medication. He speaks of one patient, a 71-year-old man, who must be fed through a tube in his nose three times a day. “Had he not come here, I think he would have been dead a long time ago.”

Over the years, Bro. Damien and his staff have seen patients leave the center in good health only to return months or years later, once again very ill because they stopped taking their medications. The question remains, why do these former patients quit their medications? “It’s a good, good question and we’ve never been able to figure it out,” Bro. Damien says. Part of





Bro. Damien says thanks to advances in medication, fewer infants are being born with the HIV/AIDS infection.

the reason may be that the regimen of antiviral medications is strict, with some doses that must be taken precisely 12 hours apart. Patients are explicitly told the importance of sticking to that regimen when they leave the center. “They know it’s a death sentence if they stop taking their medications.”

At Villa Marie, the staff works with those patients who have stopped taking their antiviral medication and helps to get them back on schedule. “Some of them improve, some of them don’t,” Bro. Damien says. Unfortunately patients who don’t improve become “permanent cases.” Bro. Damien says, “At Villa Marie Hospice they will stay in our care until they die.”



With this change in intensive care for “hard cases,” staff needed to make changes at Villa Marie. Patients who have medically improved and no longer need special care were sent on to Ban Mae Marie (Mother Mary House). Opened in 2010 as a shelter for teenagers with HIV/AIDS, Ban Mae Marie is now shared by both adults and teenagers. “That seems to be working out quite well,” Bro. Damien says. “Together they truly help each other.” Not long ago a woman, suffering from AIDS came to the Mother of Perpetual Help Center with her daughter. Her husband had been abusing them both and it wasn’t safe to leave the daughter at home with him. They are now housed at Ban Mae Marie. While the mother was being treated, other patients in the shelter—adult and teens alike—eagerly look after the little girl, who gained a whole team of parents in this move, Bro. Damien says.

These days there is likely to be room for adults at Ban Mae Marie due to the decline in the number of teens infected with HIV/AIDS. Bro. Damien says thanks to advances in medication, fewer infants are being born with the HIV/AIDS infection. Mothers can now take medication during

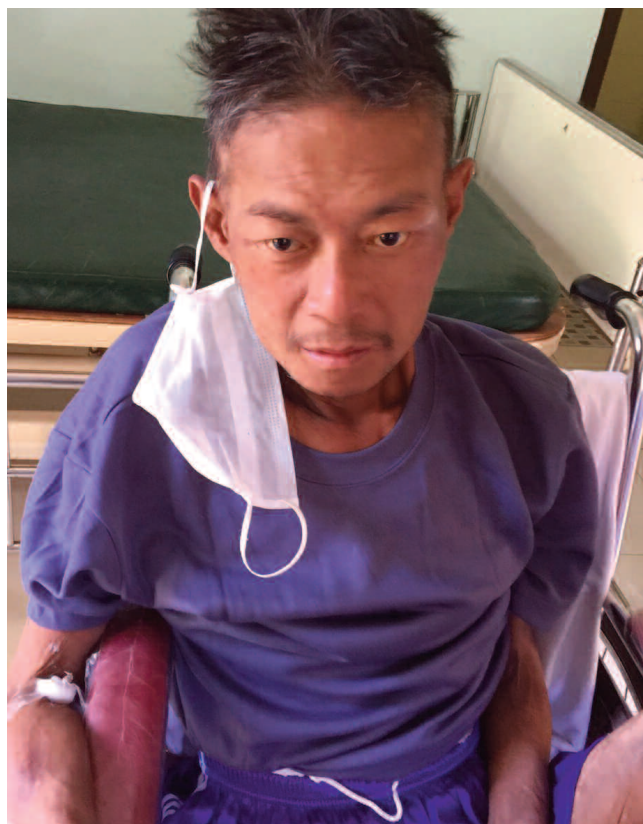
their pregnancy that prevents passing the disease on to their children. Those teens most recently arriving at Ban Mae Marie have contracted HIV/AIDS later in life, through sexual activity, Bro. Damien says.

The Thai government provides antiviral medications to local patients through the hospital. However, it can be difficult to procure medications for patients who come from outside the Nong Bua Lamphu province, which is where the Mother of Perpetual Help Center is located. It is even more difficult when the patient comes from another country, such as Laos or Cambodia. “Sometimes getting medicine is a real problem,” Bro. Damien says. “But we do all we can to look after all who come to us for help.”

The Mother of Perpetual Help Center has gained a strong reputation in northeast Thailand. “The Thai government is very happy with the work the center has been doing over the years,” Bro. Damien says. The Mother of Perpetual Help Center is so respected for its level of care, “Often people in need ... patients from local hospitals and other religious groups, are sent to us for care.”

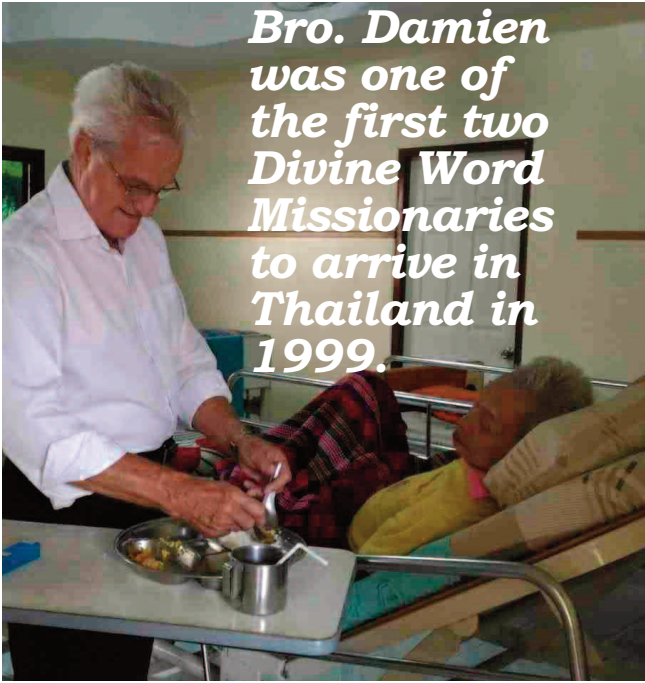
Villa Marie Hospice Care has 10 beds and Ban Mae Marie has room for 20 people, so the Mother of Perpetual Help Center can take care of 30 people at a time. Several more rooms are available for patients at a nearby farm, operated by Divine Word Missionaries, that supplies food to the center.

Including Bro. Damien, the center has a staff of 10 people to look after patients and residents. “Now some of our staff are former patients from the hospice, which is good because they understand the disease and how to care for those who must live with it,” Bro. Damien says.



Once admitted to Villa Marie, the staff works with those patients who have stopped taking their antiviral medication and helps to get them back on schedule.

Bro. Damien was one of the first two Divine Word Missionaries to arrive in Thailand in 1999.



Aside from providing care and shelter to HIV/AIDS patients, the center also offers an AIDS education and awareness program to students in the Nong Bua Lamphu province. For the last 16 years the AIDS education curriculum developed by center staff has been taught in every junior high school in the province's six districts. "All of the students go through this program," Bro. Damien says. This year, Catholic schools in the diocese of Udon Thani have joined the program.

The AIDS education program developed by the center goes into depth into the ways the disease is contracted and spread, how to treat it and how to avoid it. The aim is to make students walk away with an understanding of the disease and its consequences. "It comes from a person, those who have lived with it, rather than just preaching to them," Bro. Damien says.

In spite of years of educational outreach, AIDS remains a problem in Thailand. Bro. Damien believes poverty is a major underlying cause. Poor people with families to feed and with nowhere to turn, men as well as women, resort to prostitution. They leave home and seek work in Bangkok, a city known for its sex trade, and then return to their home provinces for treatment if they get sick. Through trade schools, higher education, and educational outreach on HIV/AIDS, the underlying social discrimination and poverty problems will hopefully diminish, but this will take time and money.

Feeling that poverty and the lack of education is at the root of the HIV/AIDS problem, the Mother of Perpetual Help Center is there to offer assistance to underprivileged children, including but not limited to children of HIV families. "Every year we help 300 children with



This year's event raised over \$64,000!

school supplies and clothes." A big part of Bro. Damien's job as director is to raise money for the center. He works hard and is often successful in securing grants from funding agencies, but many of those grants come with stipulations that will not pay for salaries or overhead. For that he must seek other sources of income.

So, for the last 16 years Bro. Damien has spent three weeks of his summer traveling in the United States—from New Jersey—to Chicago—to Nebraska—to California, telling the story of the Mother of Perpetual Help Center, and raising money for its programs and services. The funds raised during these trips have been vital to the center's survival. "It's probably 60 percent of our yearly budget," he says. "This really, really carries us over. These donations are our lifeblood."

When Divine Word Missionaries took over the Mother of Perpetual Help Center in 2000, it offered counseling for HIV/AIDS out of a rented house. "Eventually as more funds came, the programs grew to today's extended services and care," Bro. Damien says. The center has grown and has added services thanks to the donations of benefactors from around the world.

Bro. Damien was one of the first two Divine Word Missionaries to arrive in Thailand in 1999. "I am the original," he jokes, "the only one left of the originals!" He plans to stay on in Thailand as long as his administrative and fundraising skills continue to benefit the center he has shepherded for 18 years. "It's really important that someone do what I am doing to ensure that [the center's work] continues," he says. "And I feel that I have to do it." ♦

*"...Funds raised during these trips have been vital to the center's survival."
"It's probably 60 percent of our yearly budget."
"This really, really carries us over. These donations are our life-blood."*



Thanks to
All Who Attended!



Mother of
Perpetual
Help Center
Thailand



Thanks to
All Who Helped!

Visit our website

@www.svdmissions.org/thailand

to view photos from this year's event!

And ... if you missed the event
but would like to

GIVE A GIFT... go online

@ www.svdmissions.org/thailand

fill out the on-line form and your GIFT TODAY
will go on to help the Mother of Perpetual
Help Center.

Rather use MAIL? Send your gift to:

Divine Word Missionaries/Bro. Damien
P.O. Box 6099 • Techny Il 60082-6099

Vila de Nazaré

HIV/AIDS Challenge 2018

e p i **BRAZIL** i a
co. unidade católica

When it comes to fighting the scourge of AIDS, Brazil is a model for the rest of the world. Since the mid-1990s the government has used the public health system to distribute medications free of charge to anyone infected with HIV. Children affected by AIDS can look to a bright future—provided they have the good fortune to grow up in circumstances where they are looked after and cared for. Children and teenagers at the Vila de Nazaré near the city of Vitória have that chance. Markus Frädrich recently visited the facility run by Divine Word Missionaries.





The Future is Bright for These Children

*By Markus Frädrieh
(Translated by Father David Streit SVD)*



Even though Stefanie and Paloma are much too old for the swings, the two girls often can be found sitting on them chatting about music, boys and clothes—things that all normal teenage girls talk about. And yet life is not entirely normal for Stefanie and Paloma. They are HIV-positive. They are not alone, either. Along with 10 other children and teens, Stefanie and Paloma share a house here in the Vila de Nazaré (House of Nazareth) on the outskirts of Vitória, a city with a metro area population that exceeds 1.8 million.

The girls are happy to be living at Vila de Nazaré. “I’m actually doing pretty good right now,” says Paloma. “If I follow the advice of the doctors, I can live a normal life. When people react with prejudice on learning of my illness, then of course that hurts.” Ten years ago, after the death of her parents, Paloma found a new home in one of the six group houses that make up Vila de Nazaré, a place where she doesn’t have to fear being shunned.



Nurse Fabiola with the AIDS orphans Paloma and Lazarus

The 15-year-old lives on the campus with the other children in a kind of extended family. The same goes for Stefanie. “After the death of my parents, I lived with an aunt,” the 14-year-old relates. “But no one paid any attention to whether or not I was taking my medications. That’s why I have been living here in the village for the last two years.”

Every morning, Paloma, Stefanie and the other children go to school. Afternoons, they return to the Vila de Nazaré campus, which is surrounded by green space. They are far from the favelas, the slums of the big cities where many of them spent the first years of their lives. On the campus, they eat their midday meal together and spend time doing homework in an educational center built with the help of Kindermissionswerks, the children’s charity of the Catholic Church in Germany. The campus is a place where the children can read and draw or just relax.



The well-ordered daily routine is designed to give the children a firm footing and the feeling of being part of an extended family, says Doris Pereira de Almeida, director of Vila de Nazaré. “The thing about my job that gives me the most joy is living together with the children and teenagers,” she says. “It is good to see how they come to be aware of their dignity as a person, but also as a child of God; to see how they grow, how they become healthier and healthier, to watch them grow up, both physically and spiritually. It is very, very fulfilling to live together with them and to learn from them.”



For this spirited Brazilian woman, her job is her vocation. “The good of the children is my highest priority,” she says. “Each child has his own history, with his or her own very special needs.”

If you ask Doris Pereira de Almeida which child has left the greatest impression on her, many stories come to her mind. One of them is the story of little Carlinus. “When he came to us he was 4 years old. By 12, he was dead from cancer,” she remembers. “But while he was with us he lived a very happy life.

His joy just to be alive was contagious. The doctors who accompanied him during his last days told us that the boy only managed to live that long because he didn't want to die. He was simply too happy to die! Isn't such a strong will to live inspiring?"

The resident nurse of Vila de Nazaré, Fabiola, sees to it that the children take their medications exactly when they are supposed to. "Some tablets have to be taken every 12 hours; others are to be taken once a day," Fabiola says. It is extremely important that the children faithfully take their pills at the prescribed times. Should they miss a dose, the treatment is effectively interrupted. That can lead to serious consequences.

Once a month the children all go together to the pediatric hospital for a checkup. Every six months they get a more in-depth analysis of their clinical data. Through consistent monitoring and treatment, the HIV virus—which the children of Vila de Nazaré all carry in their bodies—can be kept in check.

Thanks to the ever-improving medical care, the life expectancy of the children has increased steadily. Father Hugo Scheer SVD, who together with the members of a Catholic lay movement brought the Vila de Nazaré project to life, stands watching some of the boys from the campus kick a soccer ball around. The boys energetically storm across the field. Here on the field, there's no trace of their sickness to be seen.

"There was a time when we were burying a child every few months," Fr. Scheer recalls. "At the beginning, when the children came to us they had, maybe, three or four years



Father Hugo Scheer SVD with the youngest resident at Vila de Nazaré

to live. We tried to make it possible for them to have a dignified human life until they died at the age of 6 or 7." But now, with the free medication that the state provides to all who are HIV positive, things are looking up. "In the meantime," says Scheer, "we can go about the business of living with the knowledge that the future is opening up for these children. That, in itself, is incredible progress."

But for Vila de Nazaré, the very success of the medical treatments is creating a new challenge. The children and teenagers gradually are turning into adults and must learn to stand on their own two feet. For that reason a new building, a vocational workshop, is just being completed on the campus. As Fr. Scheer inspects the new building, workers tile the floor of a large room soon to be used as both dining area and kitchen for practical cooking classes. The young people will learn to sew and paint in the workshop as well. More advanced classes will teach them the



basics of mechanical and electrical work to help them integrate into the world of Brazilian commerce and live independent lives.



“We also want to prepare the children to someday have family lives of their own,” Fr. Scheer says. “Many of the children have their own dreams. With our help they should be able to accomplish them.”

And do they ever dream! Paloma dreams of opening a beauty shop. Stefanie dreams of studying psychology so she can “better understand herself and others.” Their dreams are a real incentive for Fr. Scheer and his helpers to give these girls and the rest of the Vila de Nazaré children a helping hand toward an independent life.



“Vila de Nazaré started out very, very small in 1993, and since then it has become a genuine success story,” Fr. Scheer says. “Jesus came into the world so that we might have life in its fullness, and that is exactly what we can make possible for these HIV-positive children—life in its fullness. And we are of course very, very grateful to all our wonderful benefactors who generously help us to make it possible for these AIDS-infected children to lead their own independent lives.” ♦



\$8.35

**will feed
a child
for one week.**

**STOP
Hunger**

**feed 180 people
for one week
\$1,500.**

\$36.24
will feed one child for one month

\$434.20
will feed one child for one year

**to donate call toll free
800-275-0626**



visit our website at:

www.svdmissions.org

**Support Divine Word Missionaries
in our mission to change lives and
give hope to a better future.**

**YOUR GIFT WILL MAKE AN
IMPACT!**



**Thank you
for your
prayers & support!**

Their Blessed Event

joined Christian faith with

African

By Father Martin Kotchoffa SVD

Picture Lucien and Julienne Kousse, a young couple from Namab in northern Togo. God has just blessed this couple with twins, a boy and a girl. Having newborn twins, in any part of the world, means double the blessing but also double the problems of sleepless nights, and around the clock feedings. But in Namab, that picture of Lucien and Julienne had the extra problem of being torn between the rites of their faith and the tradition of their culture.

tradition



Lucien and Julienne belong to the Konkomba ethnic group. According to Konkomba tradition, newborn children are considered supernatural beings with the power to grant prosperity and a good harvest to their parents.

Tradition states that an “outdooring” ceremony must be performed to protect the newborn children. In West African cultures, an outdooring is a ritual when children are named and brought outdoors for the first time, introducing them to their village. Until newborns have undergone their outdooring ceremony they are regarded as strangers or visitors from the spiritual world. For Konkomba people, if this ceremony is not performed then misfortune will befall the parents and one of them may die.

Lucien is one of our catechists in Namab, an outstation of our Notre Dame de Lourdes parish in Guérin-Kouka. As a catechist he wanted to set a good Christian example. At first Lucien refused the non-Christian outdooring practice. Despite dire warnings from the family, he wanted his children to be baptized Catholic. Lucien consulted with our Divine Word Missionary priests at the parish, who whole-heartily agreed to baptize all children. With the family rift brewing, the priests tried to find a way to help

“Wherever we work, we always keep in mind that we are missionaries.” (c.102.2)
We must give witness to the universality and diversity of the Kingdom, reach out to our partners, and share something of ourselves.



and fortunately they were guided by our missionary teachings in our Constitutions: “Wherever we work, we always keep in mind that we are missionaries” (c.102.2). We must give witness to the universality and diversity of the Kingdom, reach out to our partners, and share something of ourselves. With these teachings in mind, we made the decision to combine the outdoor rite with a shared ceremony of the Church’s ritual of baptism.

The celebration to receive the children and present them to the community started at Lucien and Julienne’s house. From the house to the church, community members made a long procession filled with songs of joy. At the church’s entrance, the parents with their newborn twins were officially welcomed and led to the altar of the Lord. After the Catholic baptizing of the babies, we invited the family elders, as part of the Konkomba tradition, to come forward and receive the newborns into their family. Then, representing the Christian community, two parishioners and the godparents received the babies and promised to see to their religious instruction. Together we invoked the blessings and protection of God upon these beautiful new children and their parents, so that they might be free from all fear.

As it turned out, the combination of the Konkomba tradition and a Catholic baptism made for a most festive occasion. A wonderful meal was offered to all who came to witness this exceptional event. All who participated rejoiced with the couple and are grateful to almighty God for the gift of these twins, baptized Pierre and Pierrette.

While countries all around the world have customs and traditions surrounding pregnancy, childbirth and the welcoming of newborns into their life, this unique celebration opened the minds and hearts of Christians and non-Christians, well-wishers and the just plain curious. It touched all in the community. A neighbor commented, “We never thought that our traditional outdoor rite could be done in the church.” As missionaries we must read this as a sign that evangelization must continue in order to bring people out of their mistrust of Christianity. But it is a learning process. It is possible only when we understand and work together with cultural and traditional practices and the value attached to them. Only then can we bring the light of the Gospel into people’s lives. ♦



Call toll free 800-275-0626

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

Thank you for your prayers & support!

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



Give the precious gift of faith

Divine Word Missionaries gladly celebrate Masses YOU request!

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)

\$350

Mass Intention:

Living Deceased

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____