

Volume 4 • 2023

# DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES

# mission

update

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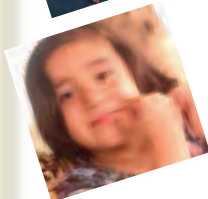




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## EDITORIAL

This issue of **Mission Update** contains articles highlighting the vast variety of vocations that Divine Word Missionaries pursue. Born in Poland, Father Piotr Nawrot SVD has pursued a ministry rooted in culture and art.

Educated as a musicologist, Fr. Nawrot gained renown with his discovery of sacred music that dates to 17th century Jesuit missions in the Bolivian rain forests. Through a series of concerts, including a notable one recorded here at Techny in 1995, Fr. Nawrot brought that music to the world. Fr. Nawrot says his research shows how music was and still can be a significant tool for evangelization.

Healthcare long has been an important ministry for our missionaries, particularly the need to bring healthcare to poor populations with little access to medical treatments. Father Frank Budenholzer SVD shares with us the story of Fu Jen Catholic University Hospital in Taiwan. Fr. Budenholzer, who has had an extensive career in education, is the university's executive trustee.

Having recently celebrated its sixth anniversary, the hospital fulfilled a 20-year dream of giving the university's College of Medicine a teaching facility of its own. Besides training the next generation of physicians, nurses and other medical professionals, Fu Jen Catholic University Hospital also provides medical care with a Christian spirit to the people of the Taipei area.

In Cuba, three Divine Word Missionaries hailing from Slovakia carry out the more traditional aspects of missionary work: They are parish priests who tend to the spiritual needs of their parishioners while also providing care in a harsh economy.

Cuba remains a communist nation with few opportunities for its poorest residents. As more and more people leave the island hoping to find a better life elsewhere, our priests and their parishioners must deal with the gaps these departures leave in their communities.

Yet these three priests remain committed to their mission. They find the land of Cuba beautiful and its people as well. They are resolved to spread the Good News of the Gospel in challenging circumstances.

We are pleased to share these stories that prove that the Word of God can be spread in many ways, through pastoral ministry, through medical care and through spiritual imagination. All these bring hope to God's people, body and soul.

Thank you and God bless you for your support.

Yours in the Divine Word,

Bro. Daniel Holman SVD  
Mission Director

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

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for your  
prayers & support!**



Jeffrey Westhoff

**Hope Amid the Shadows:  
The Unyielding Spirit  
of three  
Slovak Missionaries**



Reprinted from Arnoldus Nota

**a Hospital  
with a Soul**

Frank Budenholzer SVD

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In a little over 20 years, the dream of the Fu Jen Catholic University Hospital has become a well-functioning reality.



Based on reports from Divine Word Missionaries



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# The Soundtrack of Isolation



**a profile of  
Father Piotr Nawrot SVD**  
*By Jeffrey Westhoff*

The Moxo and Chiquito tribes lived in isolation deep in the Bolivian rain forests. It is here that this music was kept far from the influence of the rest of the world. It was a perfect time capsule.

A love for music has shaped the life of Father Piotr Nawrot SVD since his childhood in Poland. He could read music when he was 7. He sang with the famous Poznan Boys Choir.

Fr. Nawrot would become well known for discovering a trove of 400-year-old spiritual music left behind by Jesuit missionaries in the rain forests of Bolivia. Before he became a Divine Word Missionary, though, Piotr Nawrot was a young man growing up in Poland, pursuing an education and a career in music with a secular tone.

He became a fan of jazz music, playing the clarinet in jazz combos. He was proficient as a singer and an instrumentalist, and he studied music at several European institutions.

“I have the whole mosaic of experiences,” Fr. Nawrot says, “but also the knowledge.”

After entering the seminary in Poland in 1974, the future Divine Word Missionary’s musical tastes began to shift from secular to spiritual. During his formation, he played the organ in the seminary and began to study Gregorian chants.



Fr. Nawrot was ordained to the priesthood in 1981. He had hoped to teach music at Nanzan University in Japan, but he was assigned to Paraguay instead. While in Paraguay, Fr. Nawrot became interested in reductions, a type of mission practiced by the Jesuits in South America from the late 17th to the early 18th century. “This [Paraguay] is precisely the milieu of the former Jesuit reductions,” Fr. Nawrot says. “I could see the ruins of the chapels. I could taste the spirituality of the people, which was still very much alive.”

In 1986, Fr. Nawrot enrolled in Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., where he earned his master’s degree in music. While there, he read about indigenous people in Bolivia singing in Latin, a hint that they knew music imported by the Jesuits centuries earlier. He decided to investigate in Bolivia for his doctoral dissertation in musicology.

Also in 1986, the film “The Mission” was released. Starring Robert DeNiro, the film told a story of Jesuit missionaries in 18th century South America. The Oscar-nomi-

nated score by Ennio Morricone was based in part on liturgical music. The soundtrack album became a worldwide bestseller, sparking an interest in the music of the centuries old Jesuit missions, the same music that had captured Fr. Nawrot’s imagination.

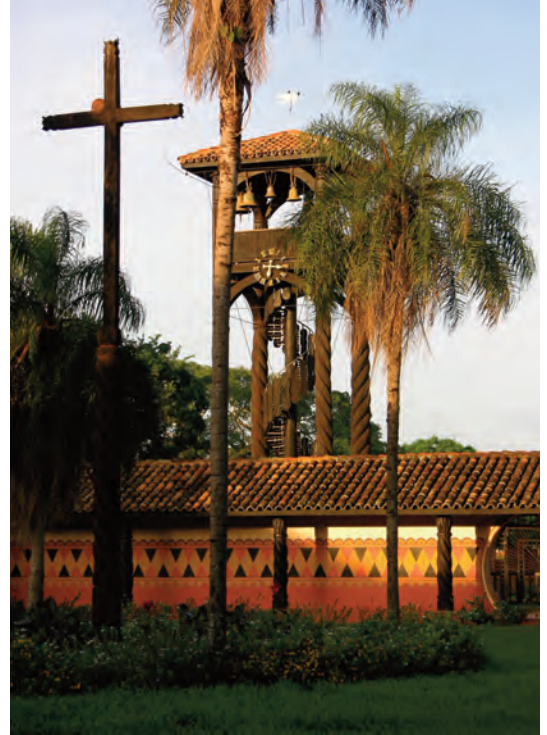
The Jesuits of this past era used music as a tool of evangelization. They introduced a type of music that combined the European Baroque and the woodwind melodies played by the Indigenous peoples. The Jesuits soon realized the music was well-received, Fr. Nawrot says. “They [indigenous peoples] came and stayed for a long time in the church because they liked music.”

When the Jesuits were expelled from South America in 1759, this music was believed to be lost.

Fr. Nawrot hoped to find it.

“In 1991, I began my research,” he says. He journeyed to the Bolivian rain forest, site of the Jesuit reductions. “Obviously, I’m a musician, so I had come to learn the music.”





In the Bolivian rain forest, Fr. Nawrot entered a village where he believed there was a link to the Jesuit music of the past. After he earned the villagers' trust, they revealed to him a treasury of fragile manuscripts left by the Moxo and Chiquito tribes, among others. He found many types of religious music—hymns, Masses, chants, even operas—all untouched by time.

Fr. Nawrot discovered that the tribes continued to play the music of the Mass even after the Jesuits left. "They would not have the sacraments," he says, "but they would have a celebration." He also learned the indigenous tribes adapted the music to their own purposes and their own sounds as they continued to play it.

Living in isolation deep in the Bolivian rain forests, these people kept the music far from the influence of the rest of the world. It was the perfect time capsule. "In the rain forest region of Bolivia, this music was never replaced by new music," Fr. Nawrot says.

In that first research trip, Fr. Nawrot uncovered 5,500 pages

of Baroque music. That number now stands at 13,000. "I have in this collection over 90 polyphonic Masses," Fr. Nawrot says. "I have sacred songs for every moment of the liturgical year."

Fr. Nawrot believes this music holds important lessons for missionaries of today: "For Divine Word Missionaries this is very important because this comes from the context of the first evangelization [in Latin America]. It helps us to understand the method that was applied to make a contact with native communities in Latin America—how important to evangelization the music was."

Sharing this newly discovered music with the world became Fr. Nawrot's next task. He has published 40 volumes of the music and has written hundreds of scholarly articles. He has been invited to speak at 50 universities in Europe, North America, Latin America and India to share his findings with fellow musicologists.

"This is not about me," Fr. Nawrot maintains. "This is about the unique collection of music and the movement we've generated. ... This is a

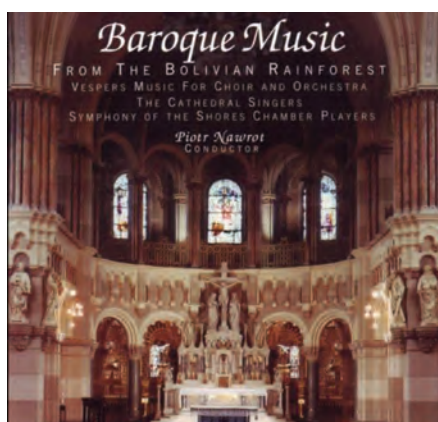


Father Nawrot has dedicated his life to painstakingly reconstructing the unique collection of more than 10,000 pages of music, many of them torn, stained, warped and gnawed by bugs



major activity run by the Divine Word Missionaries.”

A turning point in that movement came in 1995 during a visit to Techny. “Everything started here at Techny,” Fr. Nawrot says. As part of the celebration of Techny’s 100th anniversary, Fr. Nawrot conducted a concert of “Baroque music from the Bolivian rain forest” at the Chapel of the Holy Spirit with its “unique acoustics.” The concert was recorded, and CDs of the concert became a hot commodity in religious music circles.



“This recording opened my career,” Fr. Nawrot says. “It is one of the relevant moments in the whole of this movement.”

The recording led to invitations to conduct the music at famous venues, including the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. “With this music, I’ve been to very prestigious music halls,” Fr. Nawrot says. In 1998, he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for his work in musicology.



The recording also led to another significant step in the movement, the International Festival of American Renaissance and Baroque Music, “Misiones de Chiquitos.” The music festival, which takes place every other year, began in 1997 with Fr. Nawrot as creative director. The festival has been featured in The New York Times and has led to Fr. Nawrot being interviewed on “60 Minutes.”



“In 25 years it has become one of the most visible and prestigious festivals of sacred music in the world,” Fr. Nawrot said.

The festival orchestra features more than 1,000 musicians—800 of them coming from Bolivian villages. Participating in the orchestra can be beneficial for young musicians. “This is a chance for many of them who come from small villages and poor families to have a better life,” Fr. Nawrot says, “because they become quite competent musicians.”

Several of the students who have finished high school have received grants to become musicians. Seventeen have received scholarships to study music in Europe, Canada and the United States. One of his former students, Karina Cuellar, is studying for her doctorate in Canada and will take over for him as creative director of the music festival.

“This is not only the time to include someone else, but to pass this knowledge and institution to the younger generation,” says Fr. Nawrot, who is now 68. The 2024 festival will be the last one he oversees. “Speaking musically, I will be playing the second violin and not the first anymore.”

In addition to his musical duties, Fr. Nawrot serves at San Juan Diego Parish in Santa Cruz, Bolivia’s largest city. He celebrates four Masses every weekend. “I like to preach because I like to teach,” he jokes.

An early riser, Fr. Nawrot makes time for his favorite sports: running, bicycling and swimming. “I’m 68, but I’m still very active,” he says. “For a harmony between mind and body, I believe I need sports

almost as much as I need prayer and studies.”

His outlook is certainly that of a missionary. “It’s not what I want from life,” he says, “but what I can give to life. I am part of the Body of Christ. What do I have that I can give?”

He also expresses his gratitude to the benefactors who support Divine Word Missionaries through the Mission Center at Techny. “We could do very little without the support we get from the mission offices.”

Meanwhile, Fr. Nawrot continues to discover more music. During the COVID pandemic he spent time at a Franciscan convent in Bolivia. He asked to look through the archives—and found 2,000 pages of 19th century liturgical music. “How much I could still locate, I don’t know,” he says.

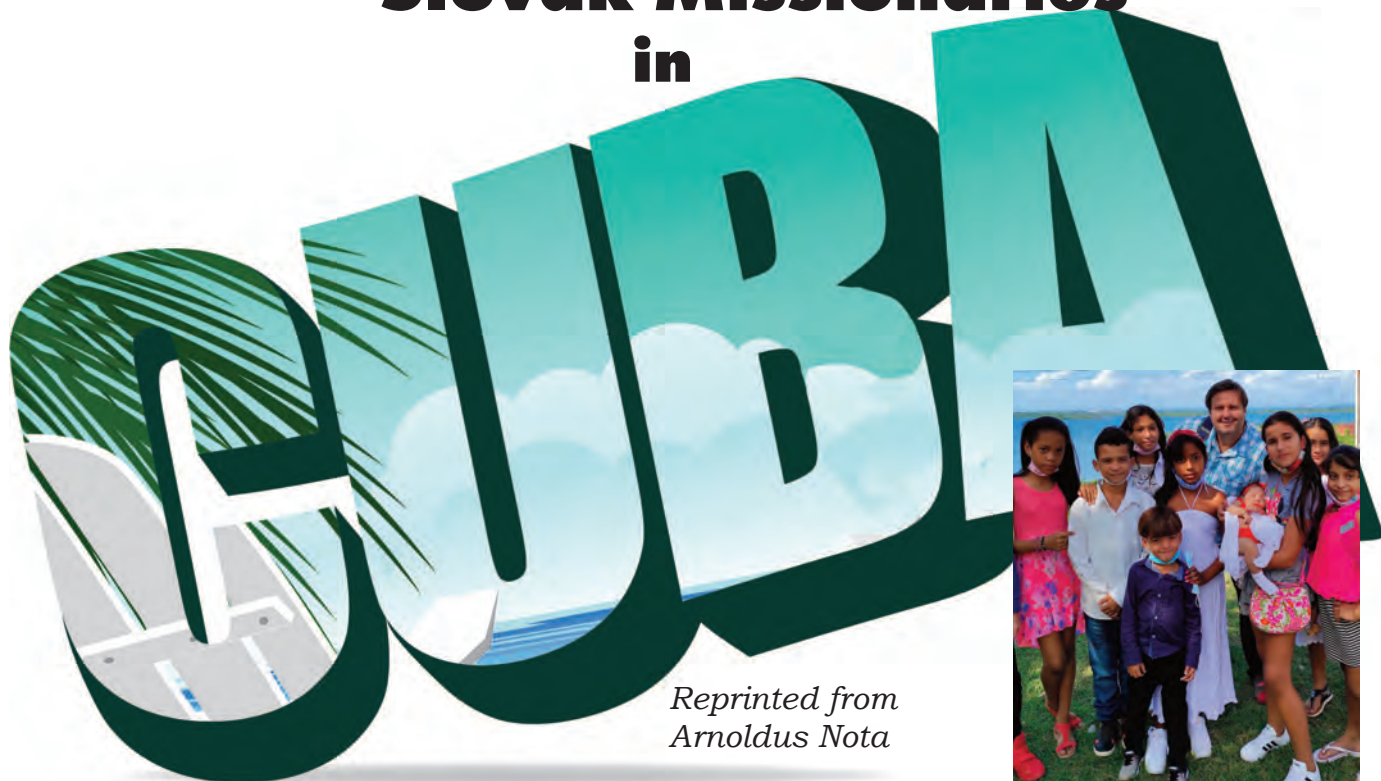
He jokes that he will not have time to transcribe all the music he has unearthed. “To finish what I have, I would have to live my life at least four, five times.”

Even so, Fr. Nawrot is grateful for the music, hidden for centuries, he has been able to share with the world. “Today more than ever, we need this. Lovely, spiritual, full of art—this is a divine liturgy,” he says. “It must be true art to praise God and to elevate our song toward heaven.

“We need to study this,” he continues. “It will give us again the spirit, the energy, the pride of what we are, that we are part of such a community that can create such a liturgy, such a music, such an art.” ♦



# Hope Amid the Shadows: The Unyielding Spirit of three Slovak Missionaries in



*Reprinted from  
Arnoldus Nota*

**In its glory days, Cuba was hailed as the “Pearl of the Antilles” and the “Jewel of the Caribbean,” evoking images of breathtaking beauty and boundless potential. However, the tides have turned, and the island faces a harsh reality. Today there is poverty, a lack of vital resources and a divide between the haves and have-nots. Government suppression of free speech sometimes ignites social unrest and debates over fundamental human rights and civil liberties.**

Amid this turmoil, three Divine Word Missionaries from Slovakia—Father Radoslav Kottra SVD, Father Lukas Mizerak SVD and Father Michal Vrtak SVD—have answered the call to serve. Their ministry in Cuba is a testament to their dedication and desire to alleviate the suffering of the island’s poorest people.





Their journey to Cuba began with a commitment early on. Inspired by encounters with other Divine Word Missionaries, their hearts were set on serving the marginalized in Latin America, particularly in Cuba. They arrived on the island, where economic hardships cast a dark cloud over the lives of the faithful.

### **Perseverance amid challenges**

From his own experiences, Fr. Radoslav intimately understands the suffering endured by the Cuban people. His pastoral work is deeply rooted despite a constantly changing and unstable environment.

Regardless of the obstacles he faces, Fr. Lukas happily recognizes the unwavering faith of the Cubans. They draw strength from their religion in the face of daily hardships. Fr. Lukas finds comfort in the overwhelming gratitude expressed by his parishioners. He sees that their love and compassion can touch hearts.





For Fr. Michal, the most challenging aspect is coming to terms with the tremendous, harsh changes caused by the country's economic struggles. He stands on Cuban soil that lacks necessities and finds the nation's decline heartrending.

The island of Cuba once again witnesses a steady exodus of its people. Historically, Cuba has experienced periods of significant emigration, particularly after the Cuban Revolution in 1959. In this latest wave, many Cubans have left the island to seek better opportunities, economic stability and political freedom. Many also have left to reunite with family members abroad.

In their parishes, our three missionaries have seen departures that have profoundly altered their communities. These departures challenge them to adapt pastorally and support those who remain on the island.

### **Forging bonds across distances**

Fr. Radoslav, Fr. Lukas and Fr. Michal lead lives of simplicity, immersing themselves in the struggles of those they serve. They experience the daily challenges that the Cuban people face, standing alongside them in their struggle to find necessities. Despite their hardships, the missionaries consider themselves privileged, knowing they have the support of their congregation when in need.

They are among the 13 Divine Word Missionaries working in Cuba. Although scattered across various parts of the island, our missionaries in Cuba make it a point to get together twice a year, forging a sense of brotherhood that transcends geographical distances. These gatherings are opportunities for them to connect, share their experiences, evaluate their efforts and strengthen their bonds.

Even though these semiannual gatherings can require long drives over poorly paved roads, the missionaries don't mind. They consider the distance and difficulties unimportant. They understand the true reward lies in the mutual encouragement and assistance they find when they come together.

### **A lasting commitment**

This year, Divine Word Missionaries in Cuba will celebrate 35 years of devoted service, an anniversary that testifies to their commitment. Their success cannot be measured solely by numbers or material projects. It is defined by their perseverance, resilience and unrelenting hope in adversity. Their dedication lies in their willingness to serve, regardless of the outcomes.





The mission in Cuba was graced with a talented team of dedicated missionaries that blazed the mission trail. These pioneers weathered countless difficulties. They fought for what they believe is just, standing by their people to make sure they know they are not forsaken.



Among these remarkable men is one whose light continues to shine even after his passing: Father Juanito Banogbanog SVD. His name is still spoken in every corner where Divine Word Missionaries work in Cuba. He is cherished and remembered by the people, his fellow missionaries and other priests. Fr. Banogbanog's legacy is a constant reminder of the indelible impact a missionary can make. His love for God and his dedication to the Cuban people continues to resonate.



His example still inspires the current generation of missionaries. Amid Cuba's hardships, Fr. Radoslav, Fr. Lukas and Fr. Michal embody hope and strength. They continue to reach out to overlooked people and give them a sense of empowerment. Despite the island's challenges, this trio views Cuba as a precious gem. As missionaries, they have learned to find hope even in challenging times.

When asked whether, after 35 arduous years, it is worthwhile for Divine Word Missionaries to remain in Cuba, these three do not hesitate. All firmly declare, "We are in Cuba to stay." ♦







# “Hospital with a Soul”



*By Frank Budenholzer SVD*



On Sept. 29, 2023—the Feast of the Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael—the Fu Jen Catholic University Hospital celebrated the sixth anniversary of its opening in 2017. The day marked an amazing achievement. In a little over 20 years, the dream of the Fu Jen Catholic University Hospital had become a well-functioning reality.



*The hospital service team at a local temple*

**T**oday the hospital has approximately 680 beds—including 499 general wards—as well as special units such as emergency, intensive care, hospice rooms, pediatrics and so on. Taiwan has numerous neighborhood clinics usually staffed by family practice physicians. For more specialized care, however, most people here seek outpatient services in a hospital setting. During the past few months almost 3,000 patients per day consulted Fu Jen's outpatient departments.

Taiwan has a universal health insurance scheme, where essentially all of the country's population is covered. However, some coverage is limited, especially for experimental therapies.

Through its social work and pastoral care departments, the hospital has programs to help those who either do not have insurance or those who cannot afford more advanced therapy.

### **Careful Management**

Through careful management, private hospitals in Taiwan can make a small profit. In the previous academic year, Fu Jen realized a small profit of approximately 6% in its ordinary expenses. Most of that surplus is used to purchase needed instrumentation as well as to prepare for future expansion.

Fu Jen Hospital has a broad mission. It is located in suburban New Taipei City and primarily serves the local districts of





*The opening ceremony*



*The hospital service team*

Xinzhuang, Taishan and Wugu. As an affiliate of Fu Jen Catholic University, the hospital is also the main clinical teaching facility of the university's College of Medicine.

The College of Medicine was established in 1990, initially comprising the departments of nursing and public health. Gradually other departments were added, including clinical psychology, occupational therapy and respiratory therapy.

In the year 2000 the college established the Department of Medicine to train physicians. It has a six-year undergraduate program. The fifth and sixth years are primarily clinical practicum in a hospital setting. The six-year undergraduate program is followed by a two-year clinical, post-graduate program and then a residency in the various disciplines. Beyond the Department of Medicine, all the departments of the College of Medicine require clinical practice in a hospital setting.

### **Hospital Needed**

In the early years, Fu Jen's student nurses trained in hospitals in the greater Taipei area, including the Cardinal Tien Hospital across town in Xindian. Later, after the Department of Medicine was established, all the clinical practicums were carried out in the same hospitals. Which were not ours.



**pediatrics**



**intensive care**



*Ophthalmology clinic*



*CT scanner*

A consensus gradually emerged that the university needed its own teaching hospital. In 2008, a preparatory office for the planned hospital was established. In June 2013 work began on the new hospital's foundation. Between June 2013 and September 2017, construction was completed and the first phase of the difficult task of assembling the doctors and other health professionals to staff the new hospital was accomplished.

On Sept. 29, 2017, the opening ceremony was attended by Cardinal Peter Turkson, who represented the Vatican; the vice president of the Republic of China (Taiwan's formal name), Dr. Chen Chien-Jen; the president of Fu Jen Catholic University, Dr. Chiang Han-Sun (himself a well-known doctor and the key person in the hospital's development); and the hospital's first superintendent, Dr. Wang Shoei-Shen, an internationally recognized transplant surgeon. The day began with a celebration of the Eucharist and was followed by the opening ceremony.



*Outreach to the local community*

### **Multifaceted Mission**

The hospital's mission is multifaceted: teaching, research, community outreach, and witnessing to the Christian message. Fu Jen Hospital seeks to provide truly holistic care. In this role, the hospital chaplain and the office of pastoral care have central roles.



**hospice**



**emergency**





*Sr. Mariola SSpS in the Pastoral Care Office.*



Beyond the teaching and research, Fu Jen also has a mission to serve the local population. This includes outreach into the community. As a Catholic hospital, besides adherence to the various prescriptions of the Catholic life ethic, the hospital staff has a mission to witness the love, care and concern of a truly Christian healing community—with a particular concern for the poor and medically underserved.

The Fu Jen Catholic University Hospital has come a long way from 2008 when preparations began for the full-fledged hospital now in operation. Challenges do remain, though. Relatively few Christians are among the staff, with an even smaller percentage of Catholics. Especially with a staff drawn from many institutions in Taiwan, tensions can arise. Financial management and repaying the large debt incurred in building the hospital are continuing concerns.

Managing all these issues while bearing witness to the healing mission of Jesus and the Church is what Cardinal Paul Shan, chair of the board of hospital trustees, meant by his phrase, uttered when hospital planning just began: “a hospital with a soul.” ♦

*Father Frank Budenholzer SVD is the executive trustee of Fu Jen Catholic University.*



**ct scan**



**ophthalmology**



Divine Word Missionaries  
5 hours ago



Mission Update from India:

Twenty-two novices professed their first vows on Oct. 9 at the novitiate in Khurda in the presence of more than 50 priests, a good number of religious men and women and a

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# 3 Chapels, 3 Stories

**Chapels are a vital spiritual link between Divine Word Missionaries and the faithful they minister to in many countries around the world, particularly those in Africa, Asia and Latin America.**

In these countries, missionaries in pastoral ministry usually work out of a central parish in a city, town or larger village that functions as their home base. From this base they tend to a network of chapels—sometimes numbering into the dozens—in villages in the surrounding area.

Reaching these chapels sometimes requires arduous treks in pickup trucks or motorcycles through thick rainforests or up steep mountainsides. When our missionaries cannot be at these chapels, which is most of the time, they are attended by catechists trained to look after these small Catholic communities.

Chapels tend to be small, simple buildings. Some are not much larger than picnic shelters, while others may have extra space for classrooms and meeting areas.

Here is a quick roundup of three Divine Word chapels in India, Madagascar and Angola. One is brand new, while the other two have been facing difficulties.



## India

On Nov. 13, 2023, Bishop Lumen Monteiro of the Diocese of Agartala celebrated the inaugural Mass at St. Lawrence Chapel in the village of Kulai Gantachara. St. Lawrence is the newest satellite chapel of Holy Spirit Parish in Ambassa.

The Catholic faith first came to the village in 1998. As it grew, Masses were celebrated in the homes of the faithful, though this community longed for a chapel of its own. A member of the community donated the land where the chapel would be built.

Before the Mass, Bishop Monteiro blessed the chapel and its statues. After the Mass, more than 200 people celebrated the new chapel, welcoming the bishop and Divine Word Missionaries with shawls, cultural songs and dances.

"This event not only marked the establishment of St. Lawrence Chapel but also showcased the unity and faith of the local community in embracing their newfound spiritual home," says Father Ivan D'Silva SVD, pastor of Holy Spirit Parish.



## Madagascar

In September 2023, Divine Word Missionaries took over administration of a mission in Ambohiniaonana at the invitation of the bishop of Mananjary. Part of this new parish ministry is a chapel located 13 miles away in the village of Antaretra. Missionaries must pass through Antaretra on the way to other chapels belonging to the parish.

Father Adam Brodzik SVD, pastor of the Ambohiniaonana church, says the chapel at Antaretra is home to a thriving faith community of about 120 members. "Antaretra parishioners care deeply about God and the Church," he says. "Even though there is no regular weekly Mass, parishioners gather on Sunday to celebrate the Word of God under the direction of a catechist. That is truly wonderful and brings us joy."

However, the chapel building was battered by tropical cyclones in 2022 and 2023. With its roof and walls severely damaged, little of the building remains standing, and many of its furnishings were destroyed. Yet the community in Antaretra remains devoted to their chapel. Although local funds are sparse, Fr. Brodzik hopes to rebuild the chapel to give the village's faith community the home it deserves as well as to give Divine Word Missionaries a rest stop on their way to chapels in the parish that are farther away.





# Angola

A chapel in the town of Kaululo also lacks walls and a roof, but not because of storm damage.

Members of the local faith community began building the chapel, which is to be part of the Kaululo Missionary Center, but they ran out of resources. The chapel is part of Santo Antonio Parish.

Archbishop Zeferino Zeca Martins SVD of the Archdiocese of Huambo says completing this church will give the faithful a much-needed home. "Kaululo Church is the reference point for the Christians of the local community and plays a crucial role in the promotion of faith, culture and togetherness among the residents," he states.

Help us raise the roof...  
and build a Church  
for this faithful community.

**Kaululo Church will be the center of this Christian community.**

The faithful began work on the church, using local resources to obtain discounts and volunteers to help with labor, but now they do not have sufficient resources to finish.



The community needs \$13,000 to fund the completion of this much anticipated church. This amount will be used for the structural work, stonework and placement of the roof, plasterwork, and outdoor painting.

**PLEASE** help the people of Kaululo complete this pastoral and spiritual task—to build and preserve this very special place for future generations.



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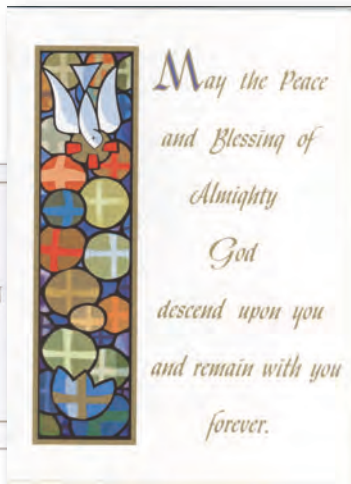
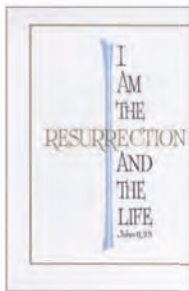


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**Kaululo  
Church will  
be the center  
of this  
Christian  
community  
in Angola.**

**IMAGINE...Wanting a church  
so badly that the community comes  
together obtains discounts, physically  
volunteers to help with labor—uses their  
resources down to the penny—then has  
to stop to raise more money.**

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