

Summer 2022

DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES
mission
update

mission stories from around the world
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EDITORIAL

On Oct. 23 the Catholic Church will celebrate World Mission Sunday. This year's theme is "You shall be my witnesses," taken from the words Christ spoke to his disciples just prior to his Ascension in the Acts of the Apostles.

In the full quote from Acts, Christ tells his disciples they will be his witnesses "to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). In his message for this year's World Mission Sunday, Pope Francis notes, "For all the benefits of modern travel, there are still geographical areas in which missionary witnesses of Christ have not arrived to bring the Good News of his love."

The highlands of Papua New Guinea were such a place when Divine Word Missionaries took to that country's mountains in the 1930s. Although Divine Word Missionaries first arrived in Papua New Guinea in 1887, they initially stuck to the coastline and the lowlands.

It was not until the late 1920s that airplanes arrived on the island, making it feasible for our men to establish missions in the high mountains. They discovered tribes that had never been seen by the Western world. Two of our missionaries, a priest and a Brother, were killed by indigenous highlanders fearful of outsiders.

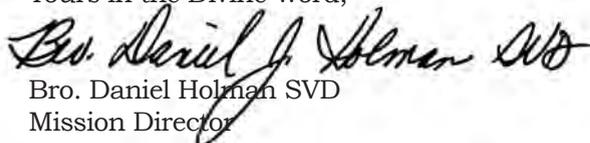
Divine Word Missionaries have since played a major role in the modernization of Papua New Guinea. One significant step was to establish Divine Word University, which has five campuses spread across the country. In this issue, Father Philip Gibb SVD, the school's current president, shares DWU's history and its goal to become a national place of learning. You can find his story on page six.

In this year's message Pope Francis states that "every Christian is called to be a missionary and witness to Christ. And the Church ... has no other mission than that of bringing the Gospel to the entire world by bearing witness to Christ."

Establishing learning institutions such as Divine Word University is just another way that Divine Word Missionaries bear witness to Christ.

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

The war in Ukraine continues to shock the world. We can't end the war, *but with your help we can assist as many refugees as possible.*

To give online visit **www.svdmissions.org/ukraine.**

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

Deep Wells in Togo



Divine Word University in Papua New Guinea

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On a wasteland behind the high-rise complexes, homeless families create shelters from worn plastic tarpaulins hanging over long sticks. They live in inhumane conditions. The children of the slum are already outside looking for the bus. When it turns onto the grounds, they run happily toward it waving and yelling. Finally, back to school!

STAY
 IN
 TOUCH



Brothers



Brothers: A Diversity of Gifts

Victor Hirsch SVD



Divine Word Missionaries Mission Center • P.O. Box 6099 • Techny, Illinois 60082-6099

The Society of the Divine Word is an international Catholic missionary congregation.
 Divine Word Missionaries work in over 81 different lands on all continents except Antarctica.

Website: WWW.SVDMISSIONS.ORG

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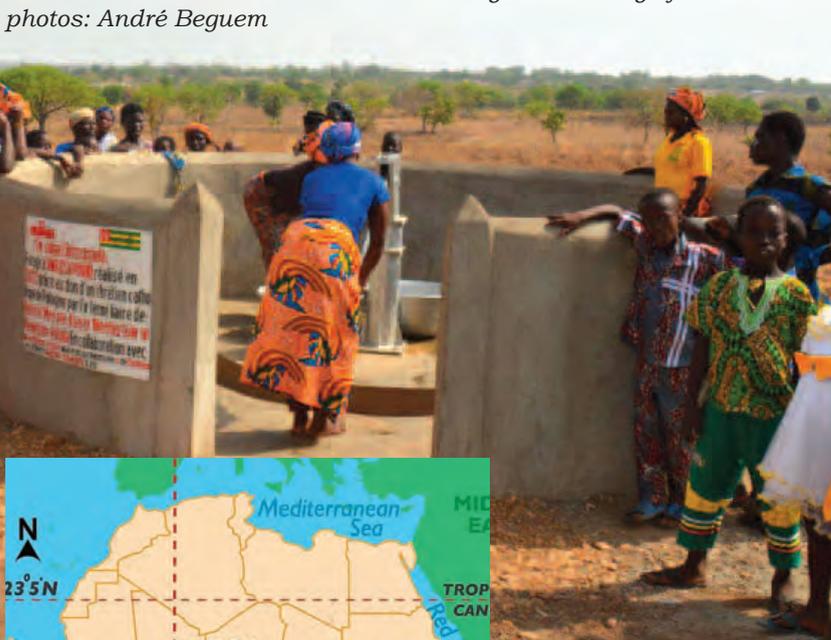
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More and More Deep Wells in Togo



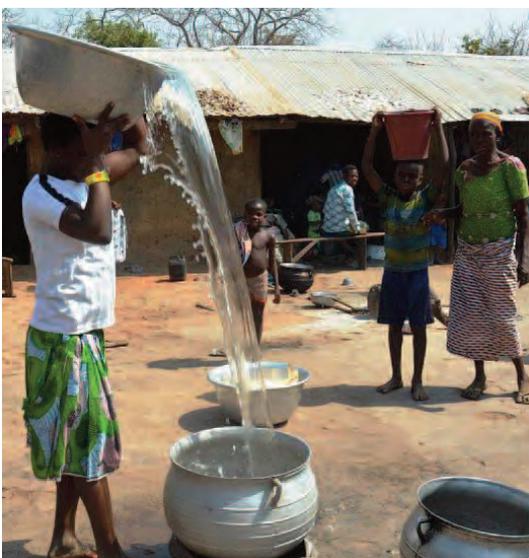
above: Father Marian Schwark SVD during the blessing of the well in Bikamando
photos: André Beguem



© WorldAtlas.com



photos: André Beguem



Father Marian Schwark SVD was busy this spring.

As coordinator of the well construction project in northern Togo, Fr. Schwark was busy consecrating wells.

He consecrated nine new wells in Togo's northern Dankpen Prefecture.

"Including the previously drilled wells, there are no more villages in the Dankpen Prefecture without at least one well," Fr. Schwark said. "It's absolutely amazing and unique. I can't find the words to express the gratitude for such generosity."

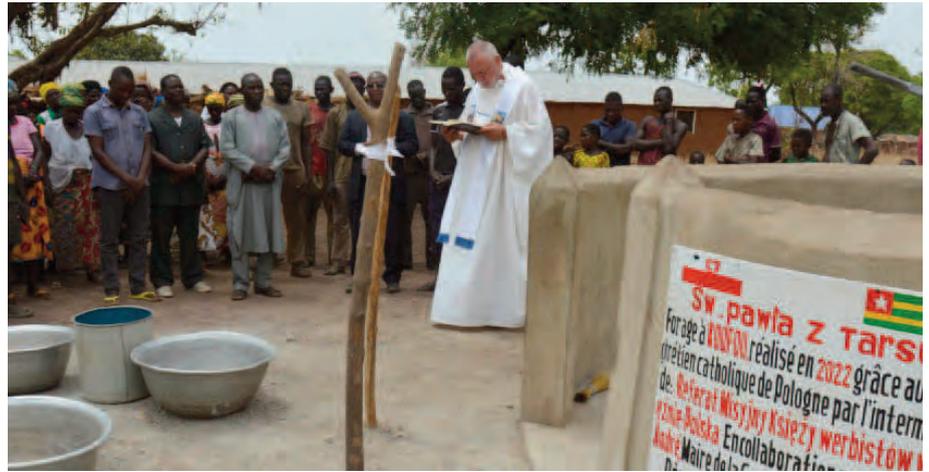


Over the past few years benefactors to Divine Word Missionaries in Poland have donated funds to help dig 30 wells in northern Togo. Twenty-one of them have already been put into operation, and the last nine are waiting for completion and dedication.





Mary Magdalene (c. 1524)
by Andrea Solari



The wells have been named for Catholic saints as a way to bring the saint's stories to the villagers. Wells have been built in the following villages.

- Sadori—Well of St. Anna
- Ikpassole—Well of St. Juan Diego
- Bouadjal—Well of St. Mary
- Kpabol—The Stefan Well
- Kouboutoum—Well of St. Faustina
- Sakarado—Well of St. Mary Magdalene
- Madoguin—Well of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus
- Nakodjabobodom—Well of St. Joseph
- Tchardom—Well of St. Alice
- Nampua—Well of St. Anthony of Padua
- Nayombou—Well of St. John the Evangelist
- Bowido—Well of St. Wojciech
- Makpando—Well of St. John Paul II
- Diab—Well of St. Teresa of Ávila
- Koufou—Well of St. Paul of Tarsus
- Lewolbo—Well of St. Mark the Evangelist
- Gmassapouni—Well of St. John the Baptist
- Namandjol—Well of the Patriarch Abraham
- Bikamando—Well of Prayer for All Souls
- Kinagnan-Bikpadjado—Well of Guardian Angels
- Teleba—Well of St. Michael the Archangel



Victory of St. Michael by Raphael



Anthony of Padua
by Francisco de Zurbarán





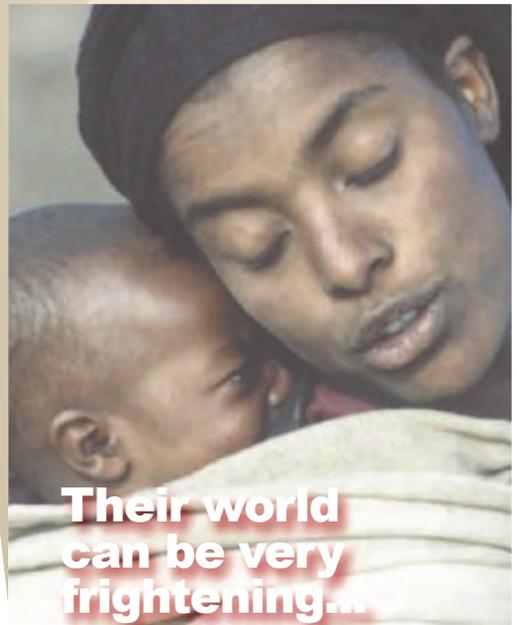
Fr. Schwark explains it is difficult to describe the joy of local communities when a well opens in their village. The women, especially, are thankful because they no longer need to carry water from rivers, streams and springs that are several miles away.



“Women literally fell to their knees in front of me expressing their gratitude,” Fr. Schwark said.

All wells have been drilled in the center of their village or within roughly 100 yards of it, depending on where the water sources were found. Their capacity ranges from 10 to 18 cubic meters of water per hour.

Fr. Schwark has been overseeing the construction of deep wells in remote villages of northern Togo since 2013. He says, “We choose the villages that have the greatest difficulties with access to clean water, either because they do not have any wells or they have a well that is not adequately supplying water for all the inhabitants.” ♦



Their world can be very frightening...

Often conditions—due to natural disasters, poverty or the conflicts of war—tear at the hearts, souls and everyday lives of those most in need.

This is where Divine Word Missionaries help with guidance, courage, and the strength of God to relieve suffering and provide the immediate needs of food, clothing, medicine and shelter.

Help by giving a gift:

**to the poor and neglected
to those who are hungry**

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YOUR GIFT WILL MAKE AN
IMPACT.
AROUND THE WORLD

**PLEASE HELP US
CHANGE
THE WORLD**



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

**“Sic currite ut
comprehendatis”**



Above: Students from Simbu Province in traditional attire

Right: Students in classroom



Run to win

Divine Word University in Papua New Guinea

By Philip Gibbs SVD

Education always has been an integral part of our mission in Papua New Guinea.

The education ministry took on new importance in 1968 with the establishment of Divine Word Secondary School in the provincial town of Madang. The school, with Father Ken Feehan SVD as headmaster, began with 110 students (68 boys and 42 girls) split into two seventh grade classes. By 1977 the school had 20 teachers and 500 boarding students.

After political opposition arose to the school accepting students from outside Madang Province, the administrators decided to convert the Catholic high school into a junior college. So in 1979 the high school transitioned to Divine Word Institute, which offered four-year courses beginning in the eleventh grade. It began with two departments: communications and business studies, soon to be joined by the religious studies department.

A national university

Divine Word University evolved from the Divine Word Institute in 1996. Today the school is a national university with five campuses in various parts of Papua New Guinea. The institution is ecumenical, coeducational and privately run, with some government support. The university motto, “Sic currite ut comprehendatis” (“Run to win”), calls for success—not in a ruthless, competitive way but as an



Above: Fr Philip Gibbs addressing gathering for International Womens Day

Below: Students making their own masks during COVID





In the face of economic challenges, Michelle excels at DWU

Papua New Guinea's school system has four levels: elementary (two or three years), primary (six years, grades 2-8), secondary (four years, grades 9-12), then tertiary. Students are often 18 to 20 years old by the time they might begin tertiary education, such as university.

Schooling in this country is not compulsory, and in order to progress students have to sit for exams at the end of grades 8, 10 and 12. Because many families have little money to pay school fees, they often give first preference to sons rather than daughters.

Life is not easy for young people in Papua New Guinea. Students attending university are required to pay annual school fees equivalent to approximately \$3,000 in the United States. With Papua New Guinea's weak economy and high rates of unemployment, students and their families often struggle to meet financial requirements. Take Michelle's story as an example:

Michelle is the second eldest of four children from a family that lived in an isolated village in the Gulf Province. Her education journey began at home when, with the help of her dad, she taught herself to read and write at the age of 5. To earn school fees, Michelle and her siblings would fish with their parents, missing classes for weeks at a time.

Later they moved to the capital city of Port Moresby, where they stayed with relatives in a slum. Michelle missed several years of school but finally enrolled in a local primary school in 2011 to complete eighth grade. Her father did not have work, and just before Michelle could take the eighth grade exams their relatives told the family to move out. They were taken in by another relative, and Michelle remembers weeding grass on school grounds as punishment for not having the required school sports uniform.

At the end of eighth grade Michelle, then only 14 years old, found a job at a local store packing goods at a checkout counter from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. each day, earning approximately \$40 each week. During her ninth grade year at secondary school, the family lived in a makeshift shelter made from pieces of timber and plastic. On rainy nights they would shift their belongings to the dry side of the house and sleep hugging each other until dawn. The next day they would dry their belongings in the sun.

Michelle graduated from DWU with a bachelor's degree in communication arts (journalism) in 2019. ♦

—Philip Gibbs SVD



Fr Philip Gibbs with some student leaders



Students from Huli tribe at culture day celebration



Students at DWU



Reading Bible verse at student retreat

honest effort to achieve one's full potential. DWU aspires to open to all, serving society through the quality of its teaching, learning, research and community service in a Christian environment.

The university offers a chance to those interested in improving themselves spiritually and intellectually to become responsible citizens and contribute to the development of society. Students come from all 22 provinces of Papua New Guinea and from abroad, including from the Solomon Islands. DWU is dedicated to advancing opportunities for individuals from isolated rural communities to help them build the economic and social capacity of their regions.

Rooted in the Catholic tradition

DWU's educational philosophy is rooted in the Catholic tradition. The university's charter states it should be a Christian community based on love of all people for each other because each is a child of God. The community should be an authentic model for national unity in Papua New Guinea because the Christian philosophy that "all [people] are equal as sons and daughters of God" is perhaps the only philosophy that can unite the nation's diverse cultures. This Catholic philosophy promotes total human development expressed in



Student Dominica Wiliyelo in traditional dress

self-reliance and community service. The university aims to turn out graduates with the skills required for national development as well as professionals who will provide Christian leadership for the nation.

In a country with very high levels of violence against women, DWU promotes educational opportunities for women. Parents favor the university as a place where their daughters can grow and mature in peace, safety and respect. We encourage female students and graduates to take an active part in national life and in improving the status of women in society. Of more than 1,700 students currently enrolled at the Madang campus, more than half are women. This is true at the other campuses as well.



Students at International Women's Day event

DWU has four faculties: Business and Informatics, Arts and Social Sciences, Medicine and Health Sciences, and Education. The university offers flexible learning, undergraduate degrees, master's programs and doctoral studies. Master's and doctoral studies can be done full time or off campus with occasional attendance. In 2021, 773 students graduated from the Madang campus, including 14 graduating as medical doctors.

DWU has invested significantly in information technology infrastructure to improve teaching, learning, research, administration and community engagement. The university has pioneered the policy of one laptop for staff and students.



Divine Word University entrance



Students in class with laptops

With this program, students and staff are issued a laptop when they arrive at the university.

Christian ethical values and personal growth are integral to the courses, and graduates are trained as competent professionals who will contribute to the growth of the nation. Professional ethics learned at DWU hopefully will stay with graduates throughout their working lives. At the end of their courses, students attend a missioning ceremony that begins with Mass and continues with each graduating student receiving a special missioning cross.

Missionaries at Divine Word University

Currently DWU has six Divine Word Missionaries and two Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters (SSpS) on the faculty. Archbishop Douglas Young SVD of the Archdiocese of Mount Hagen is chair of the university council.

Originally from New Zealand, I have been president of Divine Word University for the past two years. It is a real challenge and a privilege to be in charge of a young multicultural university in a developing country. While there are serious financial and social issues to deal with, each day I am encouraged knowing that we are providing an educational opportunity for some 4,000 students and that our publications contribute to new knowledge.

The first Divine Word Missionaries who arrived in this land in 1896 witnessed to the Word in isolated villages. Here we are today witnessing to the Word at a university with internet access to the educational resources of the global village. ♦



Students singing at memorial ceremony for the late Prime Minister Michael Somare



The Divine Word Community at DWU consists of confreres from Poland, Mexico, Ghana, Australia, New Zealand



University staff entering for graduation



| Photos: Deepti Asthana

India's

Rolling Classroom

By Ulla Arens

Reprinted with permission from *Leben Jetzt*, German website

For the street children of Pune, education is their only chance for a better future. That's why the school must go to them.

The white bus meanders through the busy traffic of the Indian metropolis of Pune, past honking cars, rickshaws and trucks. Its destination: one of the many slums in this city of 3 million.

On a wasteland behind the high-rise complexes homeless families have tried to create shelters. In tents made from worn plastic tarpaulins hanging over long sticks, they live in inhumane conditions. The children of the slum are already outside looking for the bus. When it turns onto the grounds, they run happily toward it waving and yelling. Finally, back to school!

Together with the driver and teacher, Pushplata Rodrigues, around 25 children take a large carpet out of the interior and spread it out next to the bus. Less than five minutes later they are sitting on the carpet and their lesson begins—with a short prayer: “Dear God, how beautiful your creation is, we thank you for this world.”

Then Ms. Rodrigues hands out a slate to each child. “Today we repeat the numbers from one to 10,” she says. “Please write them down properly.” Chalk





On a wasteland behind the high-rise complexes homeless families have tried to create shelters. In tents made from worn plastic tarpaulins hanging over long sticks...

| Photos: Deepti Asthana



squeaks as the 3- to 7-year-olds set about their task with surprising quiet and discipline.

Not only are numbers practiced on the carpet next to the bus, the preschool lessons also include singing and dancing—appetizers intended to make learning fun.



For years these families have been eking out a living as day laborers or beggars. The children also have to help secure the family income. The older children sell cheap toys, balloons or plastic bags to passersby or collect garbage like their parents do. The younger children beg. Hour after hour, they wait for passersby to throw a few coins into

“We want to motivate the children to attend a mainstream school,” says Father Mathew Korattiyil SVD. For four years he has been head of the Divine Word Missionaries’ social organization Sarva Seva Sangh, which stands for “at everyone’s service.” The organization works to educate street children.

The fate of Indian street children: collecting rubbish or begging

Around 14,000 homeless children live with their families in Pune, a city with a booming software industry in the state of Maharashtra. They live in the improvised tent camps. Or they sleep on the side of the road, on traffic islands, in construction sites and in front of the train station. Many of the families have come from rural areas to search for work in the city.

their bowls. Most simply pass by. There are just too many beggars populating Pune’s streets.

Without school, the children can only dream of social advancement. “The only way to break out of the cycle of poverty is through education,” emphasizes Fr. Mathew. But many parents do not send their children to mainstream schools. So Sarva Seva Sangh sends the school to the children.

The bus, which looks like a normal municipal bus, makes five stops daily. Each lesson lasts one hour. Before COVID, lessons took place inside the bus, from which the seats were removed. There’s even a video screen on the inside so the kids can occasionally watch cartoons.



The children are motivated to take part in the lessons. They are inquisitive and would rather study than beg on the streets.

| Photo: Deepti Asthana



A boy proudly shows his tablet with the numbers one to 10 in Marathi.

| Photo: Deepti Asthana

Lessons in the middle of the sidewalk of the Indian metropolis. First a short prayer, then the children learn numbers from teacher Pushplata Rodrigues. She has been teaching street children for over 30 years.

| Photo: Deepti Asthana



Even if lessons aboard the bus are not possible at the moment, school is still fun for the children. “I come to the bus regularly,” 7-year-old Shankar says proudly after he has written numbers on his slate. Laxmi, who is 6, hopes her education will lead to a career as a tailor “or something with machines.” The bus has had its desired effect: Both children want to attend a real school.

Convincing parents to send their children to school

However, the parents must first be convinced of this. And that is very difficult, says Fr. Mathew. Many parents don’t recognize the need and either don’t want to or can’t do without their children’s daily begging. Children’s big eyes are more likely to tempt a passerby to give money. There is also a lack of trust: These families are used to being treated badly, so they are wary of strangers who say they mean well.

A lot of persuasion must be done. The social workers go daily to the individual families, explaining to mothers and fathers that their children have a future only with schooling. A single conversation is not enough; it can take five or ten visits. Sometimes it takes a year for the parents to finally agree. Sometimes all efforts are in vain.

For children who go to a regular school, Sarva Seva Sangh covers the costs for school materials, satchels and uniforms. Children who are willing to learn and whose parents cannot look after them are given a place in a residential home. Fourteen-year-old Ganesh is such a child. He lives with other children and young people in a house run by Divine Word Missionaries. The polite boy is a good student. “I can already read and write,” he says proudly. He also has a career picked out: “I want to serve in the army and my country.” Perhaps Ganesh will also take one of



the professional training courses Sarva Seva Sangh offers all students. The courses teach students to become mechanics, drivers, tailors or hotel workers. In any case, Ganesh won't have to go back to begging.

So far Sarva Seva Sangh has given hundreds of street children the opportunity to attend school. The aid organization cares about more than their education. The employees investigate when the children do not show up for class. They are concerned about the children's safety because life on the street is dangerous. The risk of being sexually abused is high, especially for girls.

Regular workshops on site, in the slums and on the streets, are held to strengthen and protect the children. Fr. Mathew and his co-workers explain to them that they have rights: to protection, to education, to healthy development and to participation in society. They also instruct the children to contact the police if they or other children are in danger.

Back at the slum site, school is now over for Shankar, Laxmi and their friends. The hour has passed quickly. The slates are cleaned and collected; the carpet is rolled up and stowed away. As a farewell gift, all students receive a packet of cookies. Then the bus rolls off to the next stop. The children follow for a ways, already looking forward to tomorrow when the bus will arrive again. ♦



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\$36



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Thanks to the refugee relief fund, our missionaries were able to immediately jump into action, providing food, clothing, shelter, translation services, language classes and more to those fleeing the war in Ukraine.

GIVE TODAY at www.svdmissions.org/ukraine

Brothers: A Diversity of Gifts



By Victor Hirsch SVD

“Certainly, there are varieties of gifts, but they all come from the same Spirit. There is a diversity of ministries, but only one Lord. There is a diversity of activities, but it is the same God who does everything in everyone. In each one, the Spirit is manifested for the common good.” (1 Cor 12:4-7)

Bro. Victor Hirsch SVD

The Church is enriched with a diversity of gifts. Among them is the vocation of the Brother, men consecrated through the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, who, responding to God’s call, provide a variety of services for the the good of all.



Victor Hirsch SVD, Argentina,
a Divine Word Missionary
Religious Brother,
Lic. in Social Work,
President of the Association
“Una mano que ayuda”
(Helping Hand Association).

In his apostolic letter on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life, Pope Francis invites us to take a triple look at consecrated life: “Look at the past with gratitude, live the present with passion and embrace the future with hope.” Undoubtedly, the three topics fit the vocation of the Brothers within the wide range of consecrated life.

Divine Word Missionary Brothers laid the foundations of a rich, significant and virtuous tradition since the foundation of our congregation. The Brothers were particularly appreciated by our founder, St. Arnold Janssen, and counted on his special appreciation in community and missionary initiatives.

Today the Brothers, in smaller numbers, live diverse and significant missionary presences. They open the congregation to renewed mission spaces and provide meaningful services. The Brothers are appreciated in their areas of life and mission and draw the attention of the people of God to consecrated, generous self-giving with their diversity of gifts and talents.

Looking at the uncertain future of consecrated life as we conceive it today, the Brothers are a joyful and hopeful presence. Their particular way of being present in the communities as well as in the missions speaks of a vitality that comes from being led by the Holy Spirit and that places its trust in the Spirit and his presence in the mission.



“Look at the past with gratitude, live the present with passion and embrace the future with hope.” -Pope Francis

Bro. Jerzy Kuźma SVD,
Papua New Guinea

Brothers today

Within the consecrated life, the Brothers are a present expression, though not well known. They live a double tension in their particular consecration. In ecclesial contexts there is a tendency to clericalize their presence, and in lay contexts there is a tendency to secularize their contribution. However, the Brothers have a particular identity and it has a specific purpose. Fidelity to this identity over time has led to updating its ecclesial presence without changing the fundamental definition: “Men consecrated to the Kingdom of God at the service of the Church.”

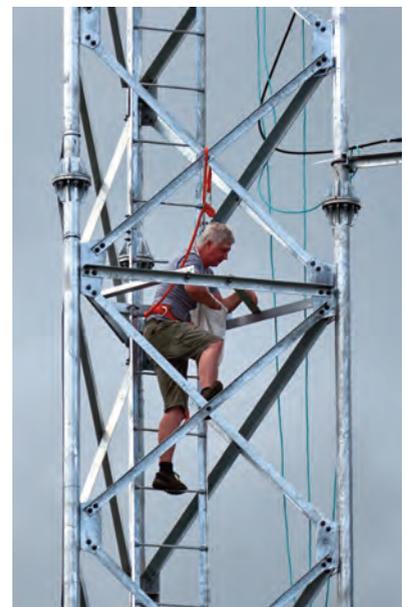


The first ministry the Brothers carry out in the Church is to keep alive in the baptized the awareness of the fundamental values of the Gospel and to remind the baptized to respond with holiness to God’s love poured out into hearts by the Holy Spirit. All other services and ministries spring from this first ministry.

This function of sign, recognized by the Second Vatican Council and repeatedly underlined in the apostolic exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, is essential to consecrated life and determines its orientation. It does not exist for itself, but rather as a function of the ecclesial community.

Religious consecration—which presents life as a witness to the absoluteness of God—is a call to all the faithful, an invitation to each one to consider their own life as a radical response open to the gifts and invitations of the Spirit. The fraternity of religious Brothers is a stimulus for the whole Church because it makes present the evangelical value of fraternal relationships in the face of the temptation to “look out for No. 1,” to exercise authority as power.

Communion is proposed today to the Church as a pressing challenge in the new millennium so that she may become the home and school of communion. The Brothers are active inhabitants in that house and are both students and teachers in that school. That is why they mani-



Bro. Wiktor Kanarski SVD,
Papua New Guinea



Bro. Krzysztof Walendowski SVD, Bolivia

fest the urgency that the Church poses to herself: to unfold and promote the spirituality of communion.

Gift for the Church.

The value of a Brother is not what he does but what he is. The existence of men totally consecrated to God who fulfill their consecrated life by putting their gifts at the service of the Church is a message in itself. This message is not measured in quantity and magnitude but in uniqueness and significance.

The Church is invited to receive this gift within her as well as to value its particular contribution to the ecclesial mission. Her appreciation is expressed in the vocational awareness that speaks of the Brothers' gift and spreads it to awaken concern in restless young people and those who seek their own way of living consecration.

The Church shows her appreciation when she accepts this vocation with a unique way of formation in religious and consecrated life. She values it when she discovers the Brothers' particular contribution to religious families, to the church and to the mission; when she discovers—through them—new mission spaces and strengthens them with presence and resources.

A private contribution.

The contribution of each gift in the Church is its uniqueness. Precisely in this way, the Brothers will continue to strengthen the invitation to fraternity and the construction of spaces for dialogue and communion.

The Brothers will contribute to the opening of new mission spaces. In simplicity they will establish bridges between their presence and expressions of faith and education, of health, of social promotion, of communications and of culture. ♦



Bro. Albert Kurczab SVD, Congo



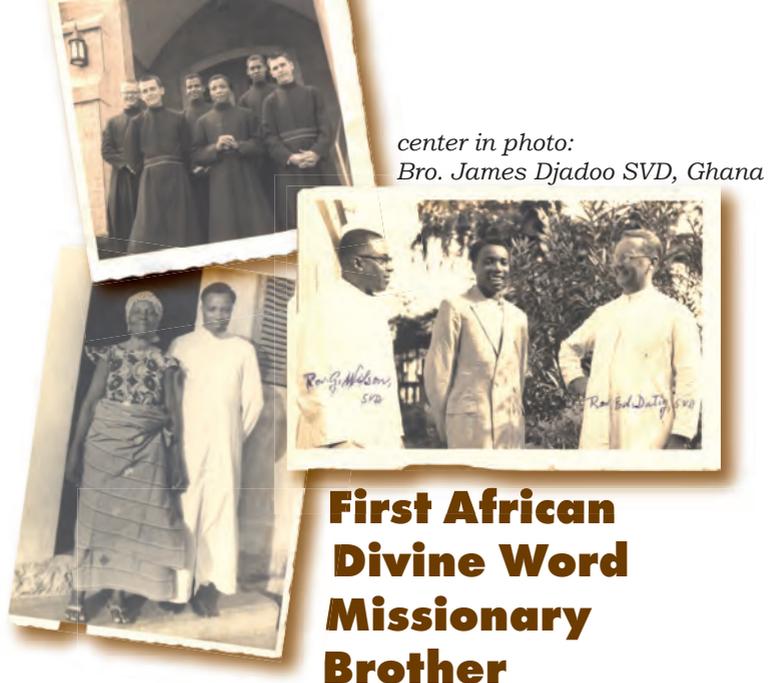
Bro. Sjaak Swinkels SVD, Papua New Guinea



Bro. Jan Potyka SVD, Botswana



Bro. Ryszard Horowski SVD, Congo



center in photo:
Bro. James Djadoo SVD, Ghana

First African Divine Word Missionary Brother

reprinted from DWM 2010 Brothers issue

STAGES OF BROTHER FORMATION

1. Candidacy

Before novitiate, Brother candidates spend a period of time living in community and studying. In the United States, Brother candidates attend Divine Word College, a four-year liberal arts college in Epworth, Iowa.

2. Novitiate

Brother candidates and seminarians participate in the same one-year novitiate program. During novitiate, novices learn more about the three vows and religious life as a Divine Word Missionary. The novices attend conferences and also participate in a number of retreats and spiritual exercises. At the end of novitiate, novices profess their first vows and become vowed members of Divine Word Missionaries.

3. Temporary Vows

For a period of three to six years, young Brothers profess temporary vows, usually for a one year period. At the end of the vow period, the Brother will renew his vows or choose to leave the community. During the years of temporary vows, a Brother often goes back to school or works in a supervised ministry in his home country or in another country.

4. Perpetual Vows

After a period of temporary vows, a Brother may apply to make a life-long commitment by professing perpetual vows. After professing perpetual vows, Brothers receive their first permanent assignment.

In August 2008, Divine Word Missionaries in Ghana celebrated the golden jubilee of first profession of Brother James Djadoo SVD. Bro. James was the first African to become a Divine Word Missionary Brother.

In 1892, Divine Word Missionaries established a mission in Togo. When World War I broke out, the missionaries were forced to flee, leaving a well-established and vibrant mission. Divine Word Missionaries did not return to Togo until the 1970s.

James Djadoo was born in 1930, but the memory of the Divine Word Missionaries who served in Togo was still fondly honored in his home parish. When James decided that he wanted to become a missionary

Brother, he left Togo and went to Ghana, where Divine Word Missionaries had a formation program for seminarians. The Ghana Province still did not have a formal program for Brother candidates, so after his candidacy period, James was sent to Conesus, New York, for his novitiate. He professed his first vows on August 15, 1958.



After returning to Ghana, Bro. James served faithfully and zealously in many places throughout the country and in several capacities. He was a teacher, catechist, manager, an caregiver for the aged and retired missionaries in Ghana. Bro. James is a pioneer who led the way for many Ghanaian Brothers who followed in his footsteps. ♦

Blessed Gregory Frackowiak SVD, Martyr

On June 13, 1999, Pope John Paul II beatified 108 Polish martyrs of World War II. Among the beatified were four Divine Word Missionaries, including Brother Gregory Frackowiak SVD.

Blessed Gregory was born in 1911 in Lowecice, Poland. He entered Divine Word Missionaries in 1938 and was assigned to work in the press, where he specialized in bookbinding.

Bro. Gregory was described as a hardworking, affable man. When he took his perpetual vows in 1938, his novice master described him as a “faultless Brother.”

World War II changed everything in Bro. Gregory’s life. The Nazi Gestapo took over the Divine Word mission house in Gorna Grupa and interned all the priests and Brothers of the area. In February 1940, all of the priests were transferred to a concentration camp, and Bro. Gregory fled to his family home.

The Nazis learned that Bro. Gregory knew bookbinding and they forced him to work in a printing press. When the Gestapo discovered that Gregory was helping to produce anti-Nazi materials, he and some other individuals were arrested. Bro. Gregory counseled those with him to put the blame on him so that they might be spared. That tactic evidently worked, for he was the only one transferred to Fort VII, the Nazi camp in Poznan, Poland.

The Nazis treated Bro. Gregory more viciously than other prisoners after they found a religious medal he had sewn inside his cap. When he refused to implicate others who were involved with printing the pamphlets, the Nazis beat Bro. Gregory mercilessly. He was transferred to the concentration camp in Dresden, Germany, and sentenced to death. Bro. Gregory was beheaded on May 5, 1943.



Brother Wendelin: Founder of the American Mission



Joseph Meyer, who became Brother Wendelin in religious life, was an elementary school teacher when he entered Divine Word Missionaries. Because of his pleasant manner and easy way with people, he was assigned to travel about German-speaking Europe to sell publications produced at the society’s headquarters at Steyl in the Netherlands.

Because he had numerous aunts and uncles in the United States, Bro. Wendelin volunteered to be sent there to sell publications among the German immigrants. Father Arnold Janssen, the founder of Divine Word Missionaries, took nearly two years to decide in favor of sending Wendelin.

A 10 day voyage by boat brought Bro. Wendelin to Hoboken, New Jersey, and within a year, another Brother was sent to work with Wendelin. By 1899, more personnel had arrived in the United States and Divine Word Missionaries purchased a farm that became Techny in Shermerville, Illinois, now known as Northbrook, about 30 miles north of downtown Chicago.

In 1909, the community began St. Mary’s Mission Seminary at Techny, the first seminary in the United States established primarily for the purpose of training priests and Brothers for the foreign missions.

Brothers with a history

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