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Divine World

Missionaries Magazine

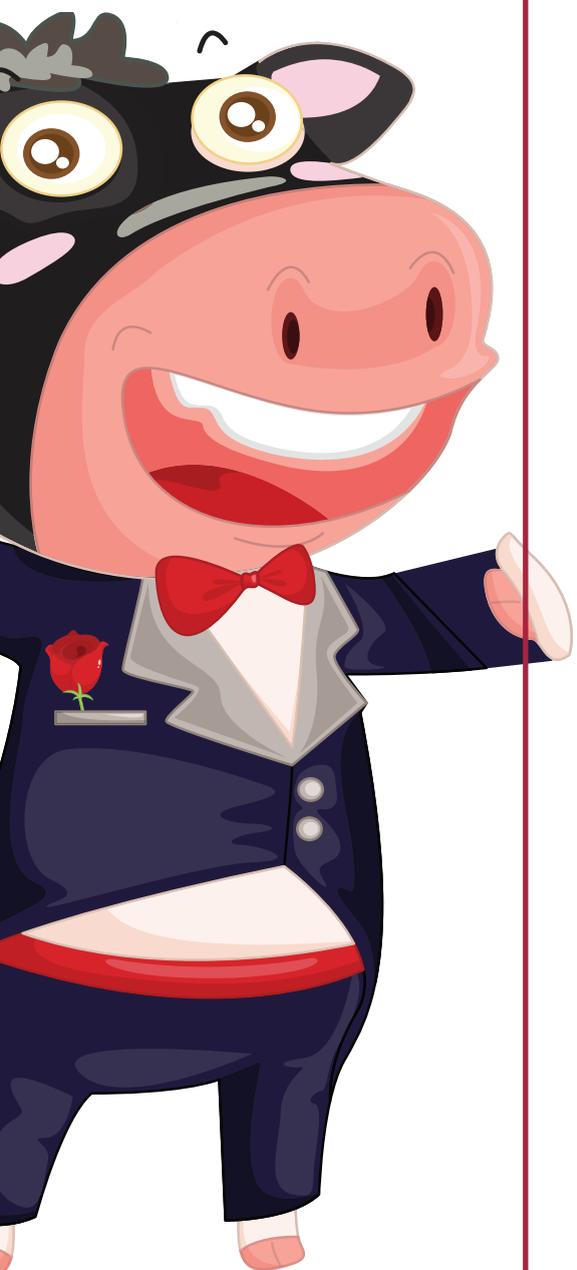
Mission Updates from Around the World

Fall 2010



Alleluia we have a name! “Mooleluia”

R.A. Leach provided us with the winning name. Mary Duce's entry “Larry Moo” was selected as the runner up. Special “Thanks” to all of those who submitted their name entries.



Editorial

Offering Friendship, Closeness, and Support

In his annual message for World Mission Sunday on October 24, Pope Benedict XVI exhorts all believers to offer “friendship, closeness, and support” to all missionaries who are “in the vanguard of the Gospel’s proclamation.”

Through *Divine Word Missionaries Magazine*, we attempt to introduce you to individual Divine Word Missionaries and the people they serve in order to strengthen their bond with you, our friends and benefactors, who make our work around the world possible.

In this issue of *Divine Word Missionaries Magazine*, you will meet Samuel Balkano SVD, a seminarian, and retired Bishop Joseph Bowers SVD. Samuel is not yet thirty years old and is participating in supervised ministry in Papua New Guinea. Bishop Joseph Bowers SVD just celebrated his one hundredth birthday.

Fr. Philip Gibbs SVD describes his unusual ministry in Antarctica, and you will read about Fr. John Hung Le SVD, who entertains young and old with magic. Veteran missionary, Fr. Vincent Burke SVD, describes his newest undertaking in his diverse missionary career, and Fr. Max Manu SVD writes from Flores, Indonesia, about the important work of interreligious dialogue and cooperation between Catholics and Muslims.

The prayer book for Divine Word Missionaries, the *Vademecum*, contains a beautiful prayer for missionaries. As we celebrate Mission Sunday, I invite you to offer this prayer for all missionaries:

Father of all, you sent your Son to carry out your mission of redeeming the world.

Many still have not heard his message of truth and love. Our world is torn by war and conflict, by poverty and injustice. Let the light of your Gospel of love so shine in the world that it may be transformed into a worthy home for all your children of every race and country.

Bless all missionaries throughout the world that their work may bear fruit. Together with them, may we too share in the missionary work of the whole Church that your Kingdom of justice, love, and peace may come into all hearts and in all nations.

Bro. Dennis Newton SVD
Mission Director

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

DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES

AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND BROTHERS

**Muslims and Catholics
Work Together on Flores**
Max Manu SVD



Madagascar Meets Ghana
Vincent Burke SVD



My superiors asked me to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) to a group of our non-English-speaking missionaries at the Divine Word Language and Cultural Center, located on the campus of St. Peter Senior High School in Nkwatia-Kwahu, Ghana.

To the Ends of the Earth
Phillip Gibbs SVD



**Bishop Bowers
Marks His
One Hundredth Birthday**



Climb Every Mountain
Samuel Balkono SVD

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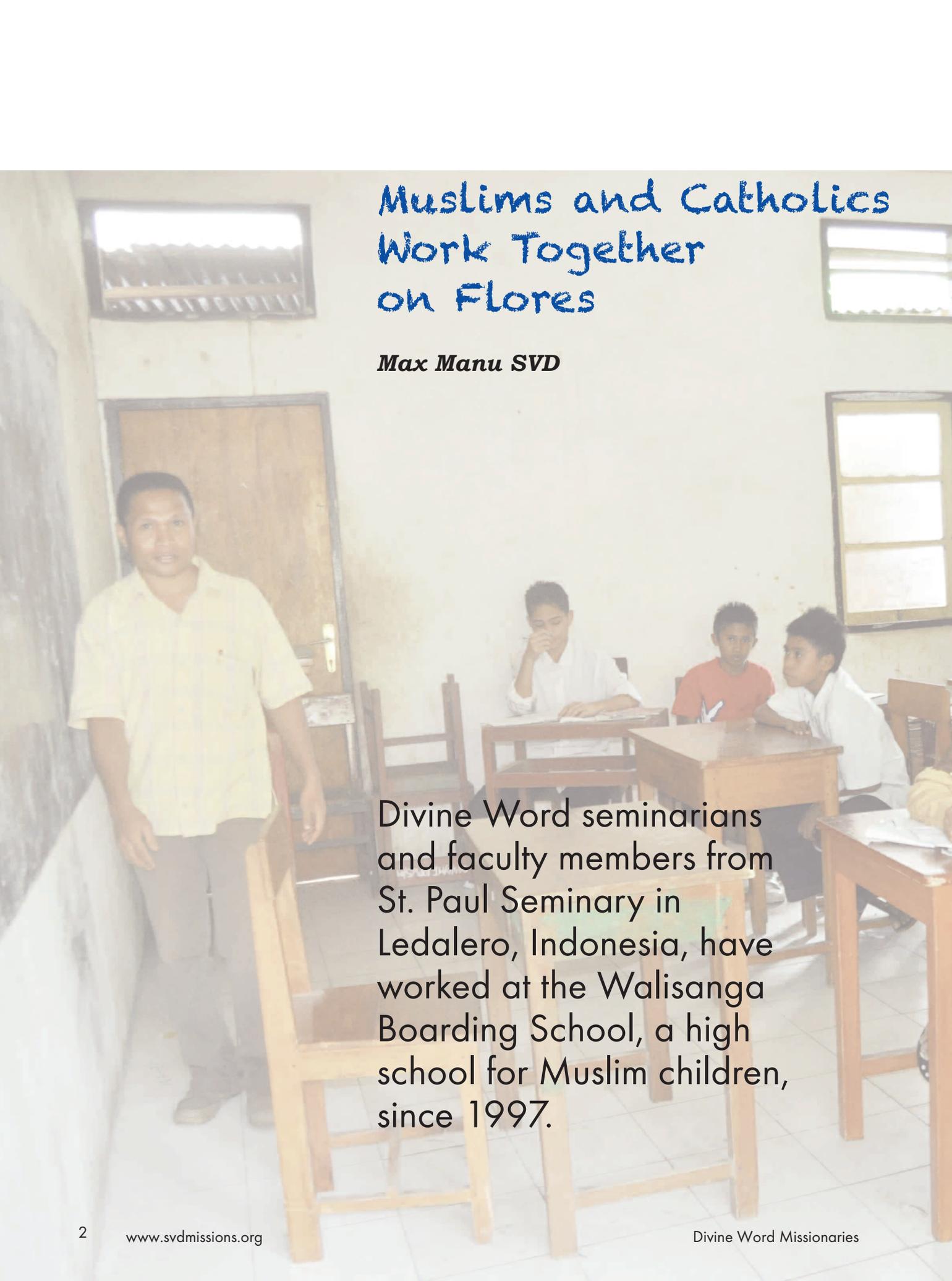
**Inspirations for Mission
Samuel Ajayi Crowther:
African Missionary to Africans**
Roger Schroeder SVD

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The most famous resident of Freetown and probably the most famous African Christian of the nineteenth century was Samuel Ajayi Crowther. He had been captured as a slave in Yorubaland (present-day Nigeria) and was bound on a Portuguese slave ship for the Americas.

Although Indonesia is predominantly a Muslim nation, Christians are the majority on the island of Flores. In fact, the eastern portion of the island is more than ninety percent Catholic.

Cover photo: Two staff members take time out of their busy schedule from Walisanga Boarding School to pose for a picture.



Muslims and Catholics Work Together on Flores

Max Manu SVD

Divine Word seminarians and faculty members from St. Paul Seminary in Ledalero, Indonesia, have worked at the Walisanga Boarding School, a high school for Muslim children, since 1997.



Although Indonesia is predominantly a Muslim nation, Christians are the majority on the island of Flores. In fact, the eastern portion of the island is more than ninety percent Catholic.

Walisanga was founded in 1989 by Mr. H. Mahmud to serve Muslim children between the ages of twelve and eighteen on the island of Flores. Since the number of Muslims on Flores had been on the rise, Mr. Mahmud felt there was a need for a school where Muslim children, especially those from poor families, could receive religious instruction and a quality education. Mr. Mahmud, who was a participant in a Catholic leadership course, was also committed to promoting dialogue and interaction with other religions, especially Catholics.



Mr. Mahmud's mission to promote interreligious harmony was a perfect match for the Divine Word community at St. Paul Seminary in Ledalero. The first two seminarians, Augustine Naba SVD and Leonard Gade SVD, moved to Walisanga in 1997 to serve as mentors and teachers. Other seminarians who followed them have taught English, citizenship, and sociology. They have also organized sports programs and served as mentors in the boarding house. Faculty members from St. Paul Seminary have taught at Walisanga. Most recently, Fr. Philip Tule SVD, the former rector of St. Paul's who earned his doctoral degree in Islamic studies, taught Islamic philosophy. Fr. Alex Ganggu SVD has lectured in sociology.



Some conservative Muslims strongly opposed the interaction between Christians and Muslims and criticized Mr. Mahmud. He was undeterred and insisted that Islamic teaching included pluralism and respect for different faiths.

The involvement of Divine Word Missionaries at Walisanga has furthered collaboration between Muslims and Catholics. Our missionaries have become involved in an island-wide program of positive interaction between Muslim and Christian youth. According to the Indonesian Leaders Conference of Ende, interfaith association provides young people of good will with the opportunity to improve society and to express themselves in an atmosphere of harmony.

One of the outgrowths of this collaboration is the willingness of Christian youth to help staff major Muslim events. Likewise, during Christian celebrations, Muslim youth help to make those celebrations successful. Archbishop Vincent Sensi of Ende praised this kind of collaboration as an excellent model worthy of imitation by others, not only youth.



The Divine Word seminarians have benefited greatly from the program at Walisanga. They feel welcomed and appreciated by the staff and students, and they have learned a great deal about their Muslim brothers and sisters. The daily and real dialogue between Muslims and Catholics reinforces what the seminarians are learning in their graduate theology classes at St. Paul's and it strengthens their Catholic faith. Because of this experience of interfaith dialogue and cooperation, these young seminarians will be more effective missionaries. ♦



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every day,
desperately searching
for food to eat
and clean water
to drink?



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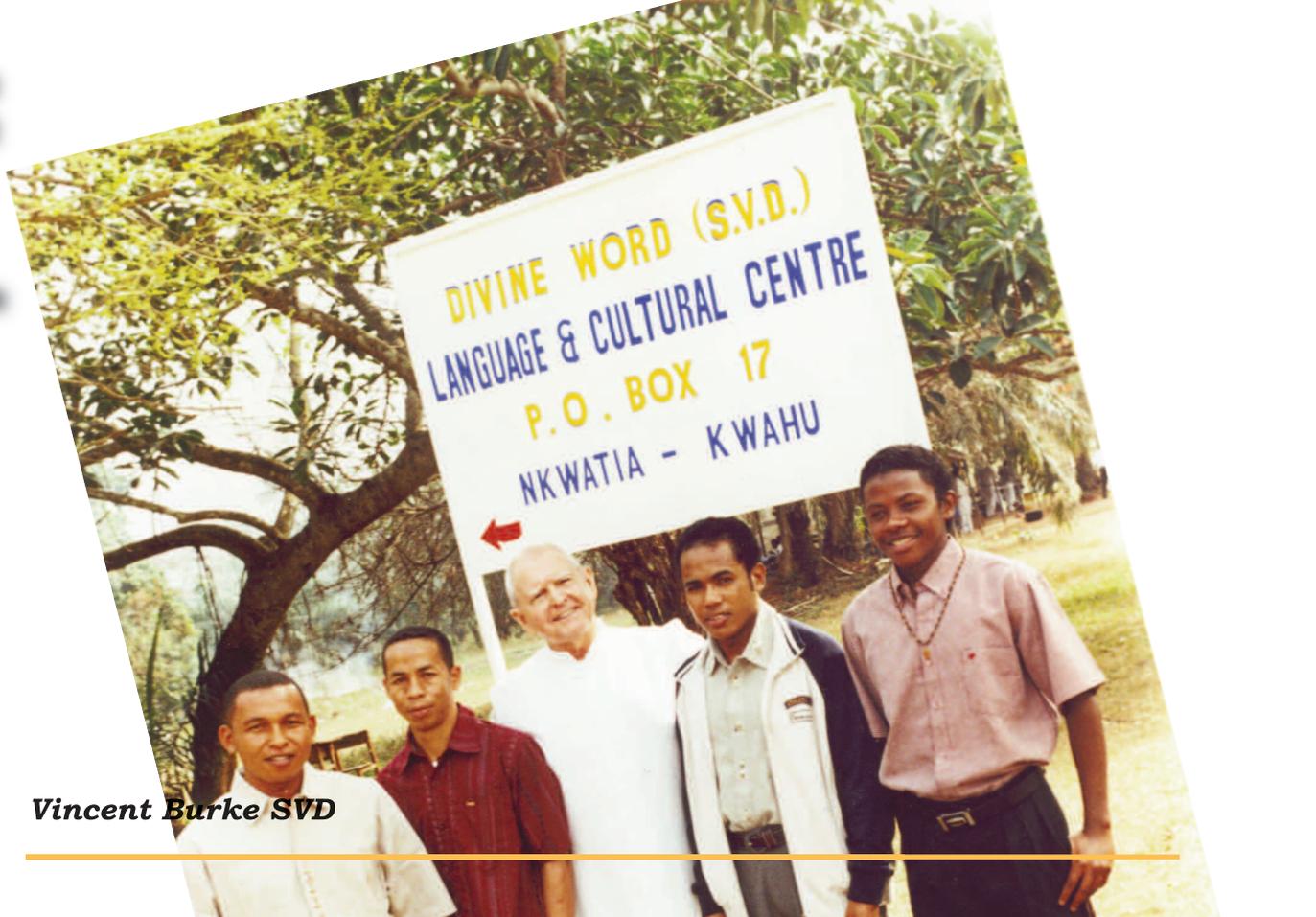


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Vincent Burke SVD

In the sticky, humid heat of Washington, D.C., during the summer of 1962, I was working on an master's degree in English literature at the Catholic University of America. Georgetown University was offering a special summer course called "Linguistics for Missionaries." I thought to myself, I wonder if I could take the Georgetown course and use the credits for my degree at Catholic University?

With that in mind, I approached the kind and scholarly Dr. Cain, dean of the English department at Catholic University, to request the cross-registration. Although it was a bit unusual, he made an exception and allowed me to take the course at Georgetown. In 1963, when I began to teach in Ghana and learn the local Akan language, that course turned out to be one of the most useful and practical courses I took.

I completed a three-year term of teaching study skills and Biblical ethics at the Catholic University College of Ghana in July 2009. My superiors asked me to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) to a group of non-English-speaking Divine Word Missionaries. A few months later, I was appointed director of the Divine Word Language and Cultural Center, located on the campus of St. Peter Senior High School in Nkwatia-Kwahu.

The first group of students was four young, enthusiastic Divine Word seminarians from Madagascar. These French- and Malagasy-speaking seminarians were sent to English-speaking Ghana to participate in the novitiate program. Their goal was to

become proficient in spoken and written English before beginning the novitiate in July 2010.

We immediately tackled the four main aspects of English language learning: speaking, listening, reading with comprehension, and learning to write essays with correct grammar and vocabulary. All four of the highly motivated seminarians succeeded quite well in the course.

Besides focusing on English skills, the center helps students adjust to their new Kwahu cultural environment. Adapting to a new culture is a prerequisite skill for all missionaries.

As an American Divine Word Missionary, I am thrilled to be a catalyst between the Divine Word Missionaries in Madagascar and Ghana. Internationality is one of the hallmarks of our religious community, and my hope is that these four young Malagasy students will one day be proclaiming the Gospel message of salvation in English, French, and Malagasy. ♦



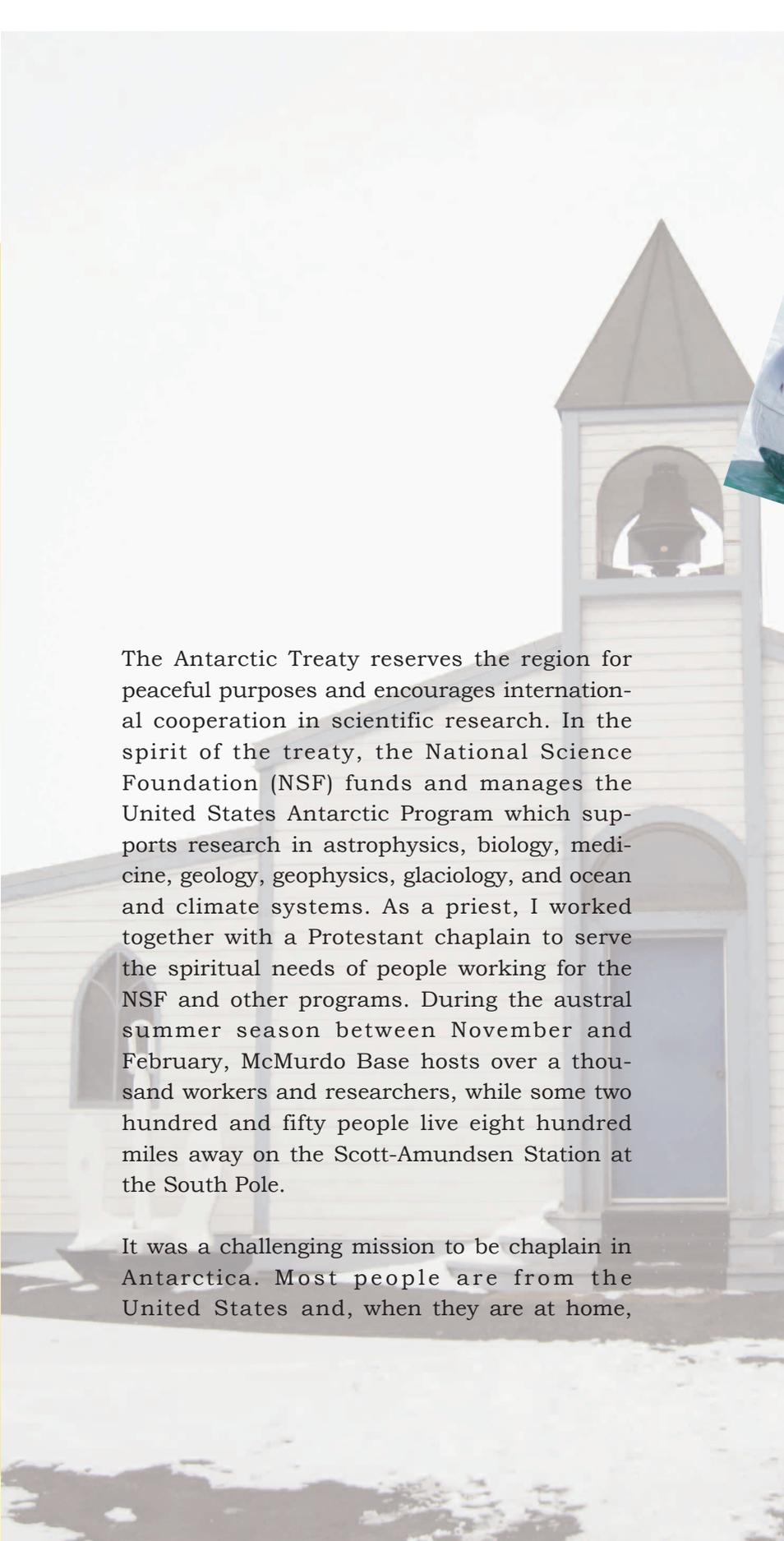


To the Ends of the Earth

Philip Gibbs SVD

In Psalm 104 we pray, “You created the moon to mark the months; the sun knows the time to set.” Yet in Antarctica, at least during the austral “summer,” the sun never sets. I experienced sunlight twenty-four hours a day during my month-long stay in the Antarctic in January 2010. For many years, priests from New Zealand have taken turns serving as Catholic chaplains in Antarctica. I was fortunate to be one of them. While I was in Antarctica, Divine Word Missionaries were serving on all seven continents of God’s creation.

Antarctica is the world’s fifth largest continent, bigger than Europe and Australia. It is very different from the North Pole. The North Pole lies below three kilometers of ocean. By contrast, the marker for the South Pole lies atop three kilometers of ice and rock. Antarctica is the windiest, highest, driest, coldest place on earth. In many ways, it is literally the “ends of the earth”!



The Antarctic Treaty reserves the region for peaceful purposes and encourages international cooperation in scientific research. In the spirit of the treaty, the National Science Foundation (NSF) funds and manages the United States Antarctic Program which supports research in astrophysics, biology, medicine, geology, geophysics, glaciology, and ocean and climate systems. As a priest, I worked together with a Protestant chaplain to serve the spiritual needs of people working for the NSF and other programs. During the austral summer season between November and February, McMurdo Base hosts over a thousand workers and researchers, while some two hundred and fifty people live eight hundred miles away on the Scott-Amundsen Station at the South Pole.

It was a challenging mission to be chaplain in Antarctica. Most people are from the United States and, when they are at home,





they regard church attendance as normal activity in the context of their family and neighborhood. Life at a research base in Antarctica is not “normal” and it is very far removed from the environment and culture to which they were accustomed. The “Ice” can be a new “wilderness” where one may be tempted to set aside one’s Christian identity. In fact, more people come to yoga sessions than to Mass. We tried to make the “Chapel of the Snows” and its activities a welcoming place for everyone. Some responded; others did not. I was present for a medical evacuation and a medical worker informed me that, if the person died, they would call for me. I could not help wondering how many think the priest is the one to call only when someone is dead or dying. I would hope that our faith has much to do with life in its fullness (Jn. 10:10).

As part of the Antarctic Geological Drilling program, scientists have set up drill rigs on the ice to drill down through the vast ice shelves and the sea below and then into the sediment of the ocean floor. In this way, they can drill “back in time” through the Antarctic marine sediment to recover information on the history of climatic change going back seventeen million years.

The layers of Antarctic ice have a significant impact on global climate, influencing the amount



of solar radiation reflected back into space; the exchange of heat between the polar oceans and the atmosphere; and the amount of freshwater entering the sea. The Antarctic ice holds seventy percent of the world's fresh water, so research in Antarctica into climate change is very important. Researchers continue to find new ways of extracting data from ice cores about atmospheric composition, temperature, solar activity, volcanic eruptions, and other types of information. Pockets of air trapped as microscopic bubbles in the layers of ice have become tiny, atmospheric time capsules in the compressed ice.

Research done at the astrophysics center at the South Pole reaches back even further by sensing primordial waves of energy from distant galaxies going back thirteen billion years! "You spread out the heavens like a tent . . ." This phrase from Psalm 104 has new meaning for me now as I become more aware of Antarctica's role in climate research.

One day as I sipped a drink of water, a doctor (who also happens to be a Catholic deacon) told me how the water we drank came from melted ice from five hundred feet below the surface. At the rate of snowfall and the freezing





and pressure over the centuries, ice five hundred feet below the surface would come from snow that fell about two thousand years ago. In other words, I was drinking water from snow that fell from the heavens around the time of Jesus!

While in Antarctica, I reflected on how I could understand the Word in a land so different from what I was used to. Living in such a place, hardly affected by humans, I developed a strong sense of the sacred in the immensity of the natural environment. Could its magnificence hide secrets of the cosmological beginnings of space, matter, and time? The opening words of the Prologue to John's Gospel link the Word as *Logos* to the primordial beginnings. In the silence of the icy continent, the creative Word continues to call forth life in so many ways as it has done for eons. Time is relative, and through my experience in Antarctica, I realized more deeply that we share in the love of God which is timeless. ♦





Bishop Bowers Marks His One Hundredth Birthday

On March 28, Bishop Joseph Oliver Bowers SVD celebrated his one hundredth birthday. The public celebration took place on Easter Monday, April 5, at the motherhouse of the Handmaids of the Divine Redeemer in Agomanya, Ghana.

Among the Church officials who presided at the celebration were Archbishop Charles Palmer-Buckle of Accra; Archbishop Leon Kalenga, the papal nuncio to Ghana; Cardinal Peter Turkson, the president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace; Bishop Joseph Afrifah-Agyekum of the Diocese of Koforidua; and Bishop Gabriel Kumordji SVD of the Vicariate of Donkorkrom.

Nicholas Liverpool, president of the Dominican Republic, traveled to Ghana to honor his fellow Dominican. Many Ghanaian civil authorities and a delegation of Krobo chiefs were also in attendance. John Atta Mills, the president of Ghana, released a statement praising Bishop Bowers for his contribution to the spiritual, moral, and academic development of the Ghanaian people.

Bishop Bowers was born on March 29, 1910, in Rousseau, Dominican Republic. He entered Divine Word Missionaries in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and professed his first vows in 1933. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1939. In 1953, he was ordained a bishop and appointed bishop of Accra, Ghana. In 1971, the Holy Father transferred Bishop Bowers to the Diocese of St. Johns-Baseterre in the Caribbean. He retired from that position in 1981. After some years in the Caribbean, he returned to his beloved Ghana. ♦





Climb Every Mountain

Samuel Balkono SVD

When I left my homeland of northern Ghana, I had never seen mountains. Now, a year and a half later, I feel quite at home in the mountainous terrain of Papua New Guinea. I must admit, however, that my first foray into the mountains was both terrifying and exhausting.

After arriving in Papua New Guinea, I spent the first year at the Catholic Theological Institute near Port Moresby, the capital city. At the end of the school year, I was given the opportunity to spend two and a half months in the Diocese of Kundiawa with my countryman, Father Joseph Sakite SVD. During my time with Fr. Sakite, I was invited to visit Father John Hung Le SVD, an American who is pastor of some very remote parishes and mission stations in the mountains. Just getting to Fr. John's parish was quite an adventure.

With Fr. Joseph at the wheel, we set out on roads that went from rock to mud, from river beds to the top of hills. Even a small slip or shift of the vehicle would have sent us off a cliff. I believe some of the scenery was probably beautiful, but for most of the journey my hands covered my eyes. We finally arrived at Fr. John's station in Waramon and all I could behold were mountains on all sides.

Fr. John told me, "Tomorrow, we will go there," pointing to a mountain, "and after that, we will go there," pointing to another mountain. More to my



surprise, he said, “We will start our climb in the morning.” Climb, I thought? Fr. John must have read my mind, so he relayed some stories of his treks into the mountains. He told me of the many hours it might take to reach one of the small communities on top of the mountain, but without our effort, the community would not be able to celebrate Mass.

We awoke early, said our morning prayers, and had a simple breakfast. Then we prepared for our journey. I came out of the hut dressed like someone ready for a trip to the moon. I had many layers of clothing because I assumed it would be cool on the mountain top. As we began our ascent, I immediately began to sweat and to remove layers. After twenty-five minutes, I needed to rest. Fr. John had said the trip would take several hours and I had not yet completed a half an hour! I wanted to roll down the mountain and land in the village, but I was too ashamed to admit my weak condition. We pressed on.

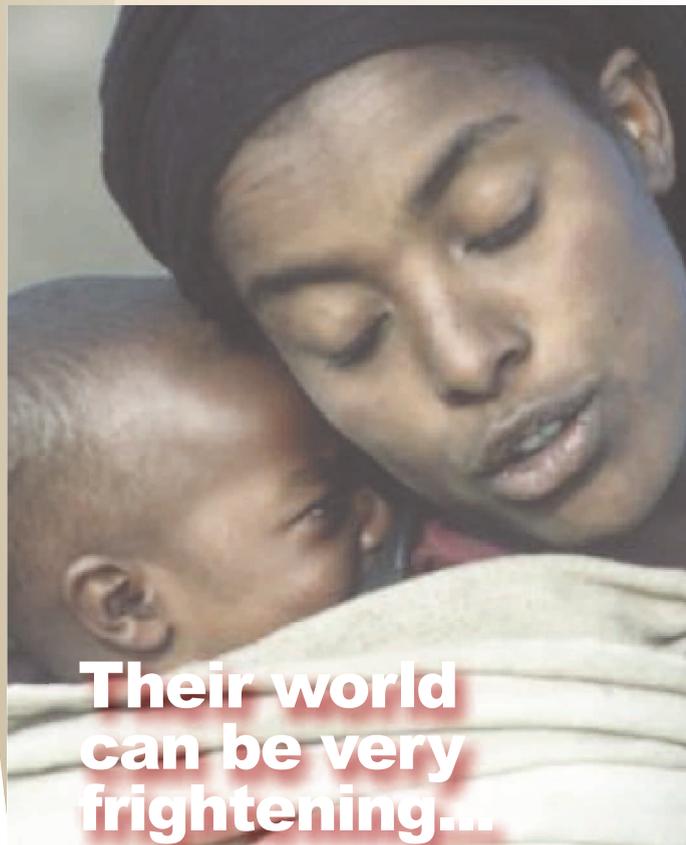
Finally, three hours and a few rest periods later, we arrived at the first village. We took a short rest and shared a simple meal of sweet potatoes with our hosts. Then, Fr. John celebrated Mass for the entire community. It was a joyous occasion. After Mass, Fr. John distributed rosaries to the elderly in the community. The rosaries were sent from the Mission Center at Techny, Illinois. After a short while, we were on our way for another three-hour hike to the next settlement.



When we arrived at the second community, it was nearly six o'clock in the evening. After greeting everyone, we were shown to a small hut made of brush. Inside there was no furniture, but at one end of the room there was some hay, which had been prepared for our beds. We sat around a fire and shared stories. After a few hours of fellowship, we "hit the hay."

Early the next morning, Fr. John celebrated Mass with the people and we set off for the parish house. I struggled to get up the mountain and I assumed that going down would be quite easy, but my legs shook with pain during the descent. The return trip took us nine hours.

As I think back on the trip, I am glad I had a chance to go. I have a much greater appreciation for my fellow missionaries who work in places that require so much patience, dedication, and commitment. Indeed, it is a mission of love. ♦



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Divine Word Missionaries



The Magician Priest

Michael Bonner SVD

Father John Hung Le SVD was interested in magic for many years. As a youth, even before he entered the seminary to study for the priesthood, he was captivated by magic and magicians. Little by little, John started practicing simple magic tricks. But mechanical tricks, as good and interesting as they may be, are not what a real, professional magician does.

Fellow seminarians used to say that John was always practicing his magic trade alone in his room and often on them. After years of practice, he approached smooth professionalism. John was often invited to give shows at parties, seminary feast days, or parish occasions. People marveled at his expertise. "How could a future priest be so good at magic? He's almost professional," they would say.

Once John was ordained, he was missioned to Papua New Guinea for his first assignment. He had been there for two years as a seminarian, testing his vocation as a future missionary. Participation in the Overseas Training Program (OTP) is required by Divine Word Missionaries to acquaint seminarians with the difficulties and hardships of missionary life.

Televisions are rarely found in the bush country of Papua New Guinea. As a modern missionary priest in Papua New Guinea, Fr. John can always get an audience for the Gospel. People know of his skills and come for catechism lessons, as well as a few magic tricks afterward. Children and adults are always captivated by his shows. They love to see Fr. John put something over on someone in the group and then laugh and tease each other uproariously.

It only goes to show that any and every skill a person learns in life can be used for the sake of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. ♦



Inspirations for Mission Samuel Ajayi Crowther: African Missionary to Africans



Roger Schroeder SVD

So far in this series of “Inspirations for Mission,” we have looked at the example of women and men from Europe, North America, and western Asia. However, we will now turn to an African missionary to fellow Africans, Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

In 1792, a colony was established for freed slaves in Freetown, in present-day Sierra Leone. The original eleven hundred African settlers had been soldiers in the British Army, farmers in Nova Scotia, and plantation workers in the United States. They brought their own preachers and soon Freetown became the center of missionary activity in West Africa. This was an amazing accomplishment at a very horrible time of history when many people considered Africans as less than human.

The most famous resident of Freetown and probably the most famous African Christian of the nineteenth century was Samuel Ajayi Crowther. He had been captured as a slave in Yorubaland (present-day Nigeria) and was bound on a Portuguese slave ship for the Americas. A British squadron intercepted that ship and brought Crowther to Freetown in 1822. He was very talented and became a respected teacher. After study in England, Crowther was ordained as an Anglican priest. From Freetown, he led an all-African mission back to his homeland. He was consecrated an Anglican bishop in 1864. While worship was conducted in English in Freetown, Crowther introduced the use of Yoruba, his own language, for his people. He also took the lead in translating the Bible into Yoruba. Not surprisingly, Crowther spoke out



against the evils of slavery and he also had friendly relationships with Muslims. He usually relied on the words of the Bible to respond to questions and problems.

In the 1880s, imperialism and racism grew even stronger and the new missionaries who arrived had less respect for Africans and did not support Crowther. They eventually pushed aside the aging bishop and replaced him with a European bishop. This led to tension and division within Christianity in that part of Africa. Crowther died in 1891. Such sad and scandalous events were also happening in the Catholic Church where, for example, African Americans were not allowed to study for the priesthood in the United States until the 1920s.

This makes the work and person of Samuel Ayaji Crowther even more remarkable at that time of history. He was a precursor of what was to come. The twentieth century became the “Christian Century of Africa.” The number of Christians in Africa multiplied from 10 million in 1900 to 360 million in 2000! Many missionaries from outside of Africa contributed to this tremendous growth, but many Africans, like Crowther and his companions of earlier years, spread the Christian faith throughout the continent of Africa. And today many Africans are working as missionaries outside of Africa as well.

I am writing this article from southern Africa, where I have spent two months. I have seen vibrant African Catholic communities



gathering to celebrate Holy Week and Easter in cities, towns, and villages. I have met many dedicated African catechists, priests, Brothers, and sisters. I have also met Catholic lay leaders of groups for women and youth and of what they call small Christian communities. In Mozambique and South Africa, I have encountered missionaries from other African and non-African countries, including several Divine Word Missionary priests I taught in Chicago.

Samuel Crowther was an exceptional person of mission in his time. He went from being enslaved and despised by many for the color of his skin to being an outstanding bishop and missionary. May we avoid the sins of the past so that we can accept men and women of any race, nation, or language as the bearers of the gospel today in the United States. ♦

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MEET THE AUTHORS

Max Manu SVD is from Ende, Indonesia. Fr. Manu professed first vows as a Divine Word Missionary in 1993 and was ordained a priest in 2000. After serving for a number of years in parish work in the southern United States, Fr. Manu returned to Indonesia to teach philosophy at St. Paul Seminary in Ledalero.

Vincent Burke SVD is from Cambridge, Massachusetts. Fr. Burke entered Divine Word Missionaries in 1951, professed first vows in 1953, and was ordained in 1959. For most of his missionary career, Fr. Burke has worked in Ghana.

Philip Gibbs SVD is from New Zealand. He professed his perpetual vows and was ordained in 1978. Fr. Gibbs is an anthropologist and directs the Melanesian Institute in Goroka, Papua New Guinea.

Samuel Balkono SVD is a seminarian from Kintampo, Ghana. He professed his first vows in 2007 and is now participating in a supervised ministry program in Papua New Guinea.

Michael Bonner SVD is originally from Chicago. After professing first vows in 1957, he was ordained in 1966. Fr. Bonner is a veteran missionary who worked for many years in the Philippines and is now in pastoral work in the United States. He is pastor of St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Wheeling, Illinois.

Roger Schroeder SVD professed first vows in 1972 and was ordained in 1979. Fr. Schroeder earned a doctoral degree in missiology from the Gregorian University in Rome and is a professor of cross-cultural ministry at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

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