

Fall 2019

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the world!**



Everyone likes to brag about results. That's especially true for us at the Mission Center, because when we get to brag about results, we also get to brag about our donors.

This issue contains two articles that show the results of our donors' generosity around the world. Our Spring 2018 issue contained a story about a partially built chapel in remote Paraguay. One of our benefactors read that story and made a donation large enough to pay for the completion of the chapel. You can read how the finished Sagrado Corazón de Jesús chapel has reinvigorated its faith community on page 19.

Our benefactors also have made a positive impact on young people in Tanzania. Thanks to your donations, the Mission Center was able to provide five sewing machines, six laptop computers and more than 30 textbooks to help get the Matepes Youth Center up and running. Father Lawrence Muthee SVD explains the importance of these gifts in an article you'll find on page 2.

Of course, we always have dozens of projects to fund at any given time. A gift you give today will benefit a project in the future. This issue also contains an example of one of our current projects, a youth music education program in Brazil's Amazon region. One of our seminarians, Akizou Kamina SVD, initiated the music program during his time in Brazil during the Cross-Cultural Training Program. He wanted to give the youth in this poverty-stricken area an alternative to alcohol and drugs. You can read about his efforts on page 16.

We selected this project for our Giving Tuesday campaign this year. But even if Giving Tuesday has passed by the time you read this, we still welcome you to contribute to the music program. ***It is never too late to make a positive impact!***

Yours in the Divine Word,

Bro. Daniel J. Holman SVD
Bro. Daniel Holman SVD
Mission Director

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

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

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2 Thank You
 ew Much!



Lawrence Muthee SVD

Follow the Footsteps

Jorge Zetino SVD

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6



10

Youth
 Missionary Gathering
 Charles Lanang Ona SVD



Youth Movement

Jeffrey Westhoff

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16

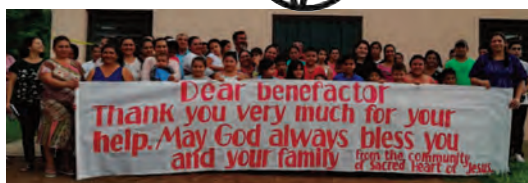
MUSIC
 APPRECIATION



Akizou Kamina SVD

19

Giving Impact
 Jeffrey Westhoff



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DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES MAGAZINE, Vol. LXII No. 4 Fall 2019 issued quarterly
 Divine Word Missionaries • Mission Center, Techny, Illinois 60082
 Subscription \$20.00 a year

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



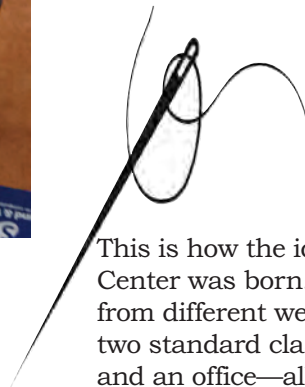
Thank You Sew Much!

by Lawrence Muthee SVD

Two years ago, my friends from KIPEKEE (an organization founded in Spain by some medical students when I was studying there) were running a free medical camp in the village of Matepes in Arusha, Tanzania. The camp saw almost 400 people receive free medical checkups and treatment. About 250 people received free eye checkups and spectacles. Dozens received dental care.

However, the exercise was not as smooth as we would have wanted because of the language barrier and the high level of illiteracy among the village people. Many were in bad shape because of poverty and lacked basic skills to hold down a job.



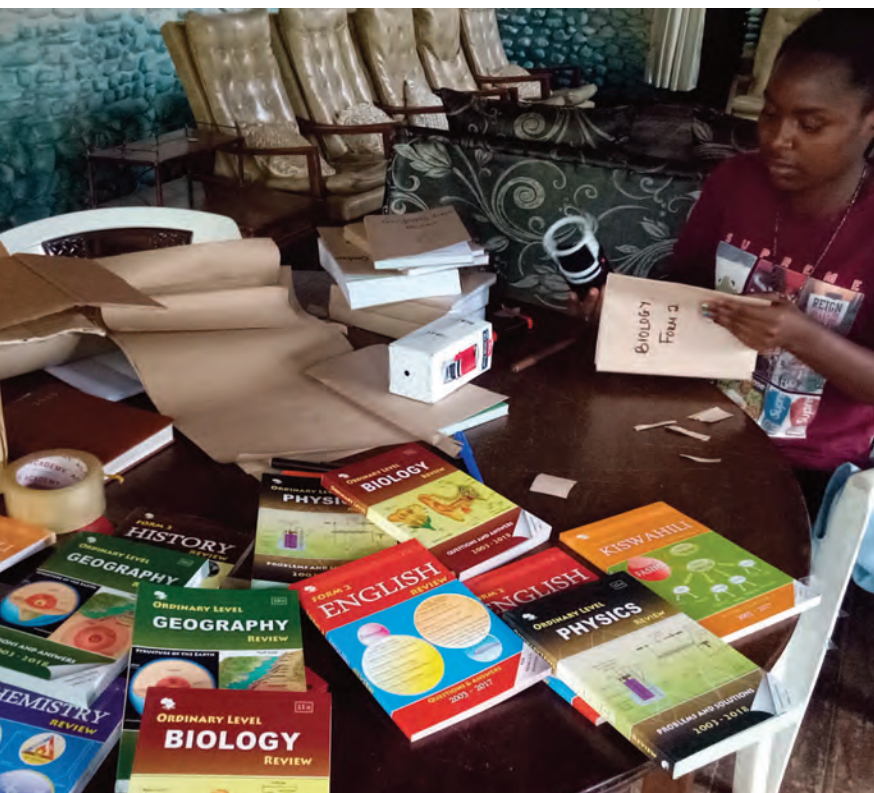


This is how the idea of Matepes Youth Center was born. We put together resources from different well-wishers and constructed two standard classrooms, a computer room and an office—all in one building. This was the first phase of the project. Later on, we installed furniture and the electrical system, but we ran out of funds before we could buy training equipment.

Our plan was to start with computer training for the youth and tailoring classes for women and girls. It was our hope that participants would form a self-help group. Members would invest in tailoring businesses, search for jobs or teach themselves computer literacy skills.

We also planned to provide a library for the village students where they could study in the evenings and weekends. It would be especially helpful to those preparing for the national examinations.

Thanks to YOUR GIFTS we have acquired five sewing machines and six laptop computers and more than 30 national examination review books for the students sitting for the exams at the end of the year. One Sunday this July we presented the





sewing machines to the community after Mass, and that Monday we had our first sewing class. Two days later we installed the computers and began the introductory class.

To sustain the project, the community decided that students would contribute \$5 a month as a donation to the volunteer teachers. The alternative is to pay \$30 dollars per month for training in a town 6 miles from the village—and that doesn't account for the cost of transportation and meals. Many of the villagers cannot afford that. Some of the girls who had been going to those classes whenever they could raise the money have now opted for our youth center, which is only a short walk from their houses.

When we have enough students, the project will be able to run itself. Until then we will need funding sources to pay the teachers, at least for the first few months.

In the future we would like to expand the course selections to include catering, languages and other practical courses. We would like to sincerely thank the Techny Mission Center and its benefactors for this huge boost to our project. ♦



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Follow the Footsteps!

By Jorge Zetino SVD

“Follow the footsteps!” was what came to mind as I stood at a crossroads in the middle of a wintry German forest. I panicked for a bit after realizing I was alone on a January afternoon, not knowing which path to take.

The truth is that I was not alone. I was with a group of fellow young Divine Word Missionaries studying in Germany who were taking a three-day holiday in the resort town of Winterberg. Two activities were available to us that cold Saturday afternoon: skiing or taking a walk in the forest. Since I was not in the mood for skiing, I decided (quite hesitantly) to join the other group for a three-hour walk in the cold snowy forest.



At first, the whole idea of going for a walk in the middle of winter seemed absurd to me. It was really cold! However, because taking walks in the nature is an important part of German culture, I decided to give it a try.

Hoping not to show my discomfort to my Divine Word brothers, I opted to take some pictures and just try (emphasis on “try”) to enjoy the experience and the landscape. And, boy, did I! Once I let go of whatever was holding me back and allowed myself to enjoy the beauty of God’s creation, the scenery was breathtaking. All of a sudden my mood changed and I was so thankful to be there—in the middle of a forest, surrounded by mountains in a country thousands of miles from my home in Guatemala.

I was so contained by awe that I lost track of time and of the rest of my group. I had unconsciously stayed way behind the others. I realized this as



I was standing in the middle of that crossroads leading to two different trails. I did not know which trail the others had taken. I panicked. “Oh @#\$\$%!” I thought to myself. “What do I do now? Which path do I take? What if I take the wrong one?” I looked around. No one was in sight. Just me, in the depths of a white frosty forest.

After taking several deep breaths, a thought came to me: “Just follow the footsteps!” I had been so agitated looking all around that I had not stopped to look down. And there they were, the footsteps my brothers had planted in the snow. They showed me which path to take.

Getting lost and finding my way out of this forest gave me an insight that continues to influence my Cross-Cultural Training Program here in Germany. “Follow the footsteps” was not only a piece of advice for that moment but for my whole experience in this country.

By this point, I had been in Germany for four months. I arrived in Cologne on September 8, 2018, and enrolled in one of the many language institutes for foreigners interested in learning the difficult yet beautiful German language. As I struggled with the language, I also struggled with understanding the culture and mentality of my host country.

My first months in Germany had been like the first 20 minutes of that walk in the forest. I was



challenged to come out of my comfort zone and experience the beauty of embarking on a journey filled with new experiences.

During the rest of my walk through that beautiful winter wonderland, another realization came to mind: There were other footsteps I could follow! Since 1875, tens of thousands Divine Word Missionaries have traveled the world. They, too, faced the need—and struggle—of learning new languages and cultures in lands foreign to them.

What's more encouraging is that many of them not only succeeded in making the unfamiliar familiar but also fell in love with the communities they served and became one with them. St. Joseph Freinademetz, our first Divine Word Missionary to China, for example, after struggling to adjust to and understand the local culture is often quoted on his desire during his last days to be "Chinese in heaven."

So, yes, I am not alone in this journey. Despite the difficulties I have faced—and the more that will come—I know what to do when I feel lost in my CTP journey here in Germany: ***Just follow the footsteps!***

To my good fortune, I have plenty of footsteps I can follow: the footsteps of my fellow Divine Word Missionaries past and present and the footsteps of the one whose message I follow and whose mission I feel called to partake—Jesus of Nazareth, the original trail blazer! ♦



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YOUTH MISSIONARY GATHERING

(JUMPA ORANG MUDA MISIONER)

'Jumpa' for Joy: Young people learn to be missionaries in Sumatra

By Charles Lanang Ona SVD



This past July, all Divine Word Missionaries working in Sumatra, one of Indonesia's largest islands, held a youth missionary gathering—known locally as a Jumpa Orang Muda Misioner. These gatherings bring together young people to build commitment to become missionaries in their own lives.

The gathering opened with an enculturation Mass said in the Nias language (Nias is an island off the west coast of Sumatra with a culture that predates recorded history). The Mass was celebrated at the Franciscan Development House in Pematangsiantar, a city in northern Sumatra.

The successful Jumpa Orang Muda Misioner drew 118 young people from 34 parishes in the Medan Archdiocese, the Sibolga Diocese and the Pangkalpinang Diocese.

Over four days the youth were guided through coaching, training and character-building games to realize that their baptism carried the responsibility of living like Christ as “priests, prophets and kings.” They learned they have the duty to become missionaries to evangelize others. They were assured they need not fear to be a young missionary because the Scriptures hold many





examples of biblical figures called to serve God when they were young, figures such as David, Samuel and Jeremiah.

The young people were guided to reflect on and fulfill the Scriptures in their daily lives, and for that they were divided into 10 groups for Bible-sharing activities. Every Divine Word Missionary of the Sumatra District participated in these Scripture-sharing groups.

The young people also were invited to enter the atmosphere of prayer through Taizé, a type of worship that combines song, chanted prayer and meditation. In the darkness of night, participants were given burning candles. In the candlelight they came to God by reciting Taizé songs and prayers repeatedly until they felt everything dissolving into God's night.

On the last night of the Jumpa Orang Muda Misioner, the young people affirmed their commitment to serving as young missionaries in their parishes and their lives. Then they shared the cultural dances of their regions.

A lively closing Mass was celebrated by the archbishop of Medan. May the missionary spirit remain alive in the hearts of these young people. ♦



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To celebrate the 145th anniversary of the Society of the Divine Word, Divine Word College and I will host a tour to visit many sites important in our history. I encourage you to join me on this exciting tour.

Not only will we spend a day in Steyl, we'll visit St. Arnold Janssen's home in Goch, Germany, and the home of St. Joseph Freinademetz in Oies, Italy, nestled in the beautiful Dolomite Mountains. We will also visit our worldwide headquarters in Rome and the Divine Word retreat center in Nemi, Italy. In between, we'll visit many other exciting places in Europe.

I hope you will join me on this wonderful journey! I would love your company in a shared experience of faith, friendship and exploring the history of Divine Word Missionaries.

In the Divine Word,
Fr. Thang Hoang SVD
*Divine Word Alumni Director
and Rector of Divine Word College*

For more information go to
www.dwci.edu/about-dwc/latest-news/divine-word-heritage-tour



After a total of four years working in Chad—two years as part of the Cross-Cultural Training Program and two years as a priest—Father Huy Tran SVD has come to have great respect for the youth of this African nation.

Youth Movement

By Jeffrey Westhoff

“In the last two years we are seeing a movement. We see a lot of young people come back to the Church,” Fr. Huy says. “It gives me a lot of hope for the near future.”

Fr. Huy is in charge of the youth group at St. Arnold Janssen Parish in the town of Laramanaye located in southern Chad about 20 miles from the Cameroon border. The parish has 48 mission stations in outlying villages. “So that’s a lot of youths,” he says.

“Youth” has a more specific meaning in African than in America, where it can refer to children as well as teenagers. In Chad, “youth” means ages 14 and up. In a country where life expectancy is 49 for men and 52 for women, the members of Fr. Huy’s youth group are nearing middle age. Quite a few are married and parents. “They’re growing up quite fast.”

He is impressed with how quickly they learn. Fr. Huy used to train the youth in computer skills, but found he no longer has to. Now the youth teach computer training to children in the parish’s elementary school. “They can do it very well,” he says.

Fr. Huy says a youth Mass every week in French. After his homily he asks the youth to share their ideas what he just preached—a practice he stumbled upon by accident. “I found the Chadian youth love this,” he says. “It’s interesting to hear



“I put everything I have into the school system,” he says. “I’m convinced that only with education can you break that vicious cycle of poverty.”

what they think.” He is also pleased the teenagers have the confidence to speak in a group.

Fr. Huy also organizes sports days, though the sport is always soccer. He tried to introduce basketball, badminton and volleyball to no avail. “They just love soccer—nothing else.”

Twice a year Fr. Huy organizes a vacation camp, which draws participants from the main parish and all 48 mission stations. Between 300 and 400 campers spend three days in Laramanaye, sleeping on the soccer field (which has access to a water supply) and participating in activities during the day. Fr. Huy likes to close the camp with a good deed, such as cleaning up roads or the marketplace.

The makeup of the Divine Word Missionaries in Chad is a major draw for the youth, Fr. Huy says. The 13 priests stationed in Chad represent eight nationalities and their average age is younger than 40. “It stands out in Chad. We’re very diverse. Very young,” Fr. Huy says. “The charisma of the SVDs is very attractive to the youth.”

Fr. Huy also is involved in the parish school, which is an important ministry in Chad because the government-run schools are in disarray. “Public schools just don’t work at all here.”

St. Arnold Janssen Parish runs an elementary school with a kindergarten. Eight of the mission stations also operate kindergartens. The parish team would like to expand their education mission by opening a high school to complement the elementary school. “We are looking for an opportunity to build a Catholic high school just to complete that circle,” Fr. Huy says.

In the meantime, however, the elementary school faces its own challenges. “Our school has become too small to meet the needs of the people.”

The missionaries also run a vocational school, and Fr. Huy has started a woodshop class that he hopes to expand. He wants as many youth as possible to experience a quality education. “I put everything I have into the school system,” he says. “I’m convinced that only with



education can you break that vicious cycle of poverty.”

Fr. Huy’s commitment to education is rooted in his family. He was born in Vietnam to a Catholic family and a military family. Both his father and his grandfather served in the South Vietnamese military. “That sense of service, that sense of duty, that sense of sacrifice is instilled in me,” Fr. Huy says.

His family immigrated to American when he was 17 years old, settling in Portland, Oregon. His grandfather was truly the family patriarch. After Sunday Mass, the



Fr. Huy also is involved in the parish school, which is an important ministry in Chad because the government-run schools are in disarray. “Public schools just don’t work at all here.”

extended family—65 people in all—gathered at his house for dinner. Even though they knew almost no English when they arrived in America, the grandfather insisted that all the children go to college. And they did.

“In our family, education is the big thing,” Fr. Huy says. “The influence of education in my family has come to work in Chad.”

The Chad Mission itself is fairly young, beginning in 2004 with the establishment of St. Arnold Janssen Parish less than a year after St. Arnold’s canonization. Fr. Huy was the first Divine Word seminary student sent to Chad for the Cross-Cultural Training Program, which served him well when he returned after ordination. “I fit right in when I came as a priest,” he says.

Young men in Chad are interested in becoming Divine Word Missionaries, and the Society is setting up its first formation house in the country. Students have been attending an interdiocesan seminary, and there are currently nine Chadian novices, Fr. Huy reports. “I’m extremely proud and happy, especially since we’ve been in country for only 15 years.”

Fr. Huy notes the many challenges of serving in Chad, many of them related to the sub-Saharan climate and weather. Water is scarce in the parish’s outlying villages. While the missionaries are committed to providing water, drilling a well can cost \$10,000 to \$12,000. The missionaries have found that once a well has been drilled, the villagers fail to maintain it, expecting the missionaries to do it. “They don’t have a feeling of ownership for the well,” Fr. Huy says. After a few months, the well will stop working.

The missionaries have learned to ask local populations to put up 15 percent of the cost of the well. “Otherwise, the spirit of ownership will never be there,” Fr. Huy says.

Tropical disease can be another challenge. Fr. Huy contracted malaria several times during the Cross-Cultural Training Program, but fortunately has avoided it since returning as a priest. “When I got sick, that’s when I got discouraged the most,” he says.

Fr. Huy is grateful to Divine Word Missionaries’ benefactors in the United States for their contributions that help the Chad Mission and also their prayers. “Prayers help a lot,” he says.

In fact, Fr. Huy has a specific prayer request: “Pray for [our] health—because if we are sick, we aren’t able to do everything.” ♦



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MUSIC APPRECIATION

Guitar lessons keep teenagers in Brazil out of trouble

By Akizou Kamina SVD

Seminarian Akizou Kamina SVD was born in 1987 in Togo. He entered formation with Divine Word Missionaries in 2010. After completing his bachelor's degree in philosophy in Togo, he came to the United States in 2013 to study English at Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa. One year later, he entered the novitiate in Techny, where he professed first vows in 2015. After two years of theology studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Akizou participated in the Cross-Cultural Training Program by spending two years in Brazil. Akizou returned to CTU to complete his seminary studies in preparation for his ordination to the priesthood in May 2021.



After spending a short time with the young adults of Humaitá, a city in northern Brazil, I realized many of them faced great difficulties in their lives. They were turning to alcohol, drugs or worse. Wanting to find a way to help them, I came up with a musical solution.

I was missioned to the Amazon region in the northern part of the country. I worked as youth chaplain for two Divine Word parishes and as vocation director for the diocese of Humaitá as part of my Cross-Cultural Training Program in Brazil. Access to the 70 communities of the mission area is by boat. I visited the homes of many teenagers in my parish. The main parish church is located in a poor neighborhood in Humaitá. For most of the families, their only daily meal was breakfast.

Such poverty had led many teenagers to get involved in alcohol, drugs and prostitution. In many cases, their despair led to depression. Some committed suicide. During my time in Humaitá, I counseled many youths between the ages of 12 and 18 suffering from depression. I remember having to talk to a group of teenagers who had been caught smoking weed. This pushed me to think of something that could help them.

To keep these young adults occupied and out of trouble, I started a music project. During my first



Music Project for Teenagers in Humaitá, Amazon (Brazil)





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Drugs, alcoholism, gangs and prostitution are serious problems around the world. In the diocese of Humaitá in the Amazon region, this twice a week program provides guitar classes plus guidance counselors, social workers and many other positive influences. It's a way to create a safe space for young people to learn and to talk.

Our goal is \$5,000 to expand the program and add piano, drums, microphones and speakers.

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This program is making a monumental difference in the lives of these kids. Music is a passion of many young adults in Humaitá

At music class they can make friends and the lessons times are also often a time of healing, especially for those who face hardships and abuses in their family.

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GIVING TUESDAY**

weeks at the parish, I realized that many teens liked music but that their parents couldn't afford to hire a professor or buy a musical instrument. I was able to find a volunteer professor willing to teach guitar to about 10 kids. They had guitar classes twice a week for an hour each session. It was basically a test to see how much involvement we could get from the parents and the children themselves.

Fortunately, it turned out well. To God be the glory! The kids were happy with their classes. They made new friends and always wanted more and more time to learn. The goal of the project was to keep them occupied with something they loved to do but could not get from their parents.

I saw music time as a holy time. It helped the teenagers deal with difficulties at home, stay out of trouble and create new, beneficial relationships. I believe that through this project I was able to make the goodness and kindness of God visible in the lives of the teenagers of Humaitá. ♦



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Giving Impact!

Father Chinh celebrates completion of chapel in remote Paraguay

By Jeffrey Westhoff

Worshippers in a remote area in one of Paraguay's tropical forests have a new faith home, a permanent structure where they can celebrate Mass and the sacraments and learn catechism.



When the Sagrado Corazón de Jesús (Sacred Heart of Jesus) chapel was featured in the Spring 2018 issue of *Mission Update*, it resembled a picnic shelter: a roof held up by six metal pylons. The community of 50 families, impoverished, barely able to feed their own, had run out of money on this construction project. They calculated it would take another eight years to raise the funds to complete their chapel—another eight years of their worship being subject to the weather.

Then the impact of giving happened...after reading the article and being touched by the needs of this community, a generous donor sent a gift large enough to finish the chapel. Work was completed in March of this year. The Sagrado Corazón community is overjoyed to have a permanent chapel for worship and fellowship, said Father Chinh Phan SVD. "It means so much for them. They kept saying it is a special blessing for them. Without the help from this generous 'missionary friend' their dream wouldn't have come true."

Sagrado Corazón is one of 86 communities in Fr. Chinh's parish, San Pedro, located in the town of San Pedro del Paraná in southern Paraguay. Sagrado Corazón is located about 15 miles from the parish's main church. The farthest of the 86 chapels is twice that distance.

Father Chinh and his associate pastor, also a Divine Word Missionary, visit chapels every Sunday. At the 37 most active chapels they celebrate Mass monthly. At the rest they celebrate bimonthly. Whenever a priest arrives, the people are eager to celebrate Mass. "They are waiting for it," Fr. Chinh said.

Each community has one to three laypeople who can preside over a celebration of the Word on the Sundays without a priest. Volunteers also teach catechism at the chapels. "The priest cannot fulfill all the work,"





Fr. Chinh said, especially with so many chapels located over a wide area.

Fr. Chinh travels to the outlying chapels in a sturdy truck. Because the roads can be treacherous, especially during the rainy season, it is “impossible” to travel by car, and not even a motorcycle will do. “It has to be a 4-by-4,” he said.



When he first arrived in San Pedro in 2017, Fr. Chinh had to rely on a “very old truck” that the previous pastor had bought used in 2001. “No air conditioning, no heat, nothing,” Fr. Chinh remarked. Fortunately, three months after his arrival a new truck was donated. The associate pastor continued to use the old truck until it became too expensive to repair.



Even so, Fr. Chinh has become adept at repair work. He is a self-taught electrician, which became a necessity working in a poor parish. Fr. Chinh reasoned it was cheaper for him to do repairs himself rather than hire a contractor. With work done on Sagrado Corazón, Fr. Chinh has other chapels he hopes to upgrade, and he figures he can save thousands of dollars by doing much of the work himself.



He also pitches in at the local Catholic school, St. John Bosco, which doesn’t have the budget for expensive repairs. “The school must work in order to survive,” Fr. Chinh said.

The main focus of Fr. Chinh’s ministry is pastoral care, saying Mass and celebrating the sacraments throughout his parish. Because the parish covers such a wide area, and with only two priests sharing the duties, the work is demanding. The high number of elderly people in the parish makes pastoral care of the sick a particular challenge. The associate pastor



does most of this work. “There’s a massive need for that,” Fr. Chinh said.

The two priests also look after the many poor people in their town. This November they inaugurated a food program to provide one meal a week at the main parish center. “Later on we will augment it,” Fr. Chinh said.

Fr. Chinh has spent 13 years in Paraguay, including two years as part of the Cross-Cultural Training Program. During his CTP he spent three months with a family. He remembered his initial reaction to the people of Paraguay. “The first impression for me was that the people are very nice.”

He continues to admire the Paraguayans and noted that they respect priests “very much.” He said, “The priest is the spiritual guide for them. ... If a priest comes to their house, they see it as a blessing.”

Even with all he does—the driving, the tinkering, even teaching guitar on his day off—Fr. Chinh enjoys working with the people. “I know that they need help,” he said. The help they need is spiritual, pastoral. They need to pray, they need to hear God loves them and they need to receive the Eucharist.

The completed chapel of Sagrado Corazón de Jesús gives that particular community a place to meet their spiritual needs. Fr. Chinh had a message for the donor who helped to finish the building:

“On behalf of the community of Sacred Heart of Jesus, I would like to thank the benefactor who generously gave it a hand to complete the chapel. This community will not forget your kindness and generosity. May God bless you.” ♦

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