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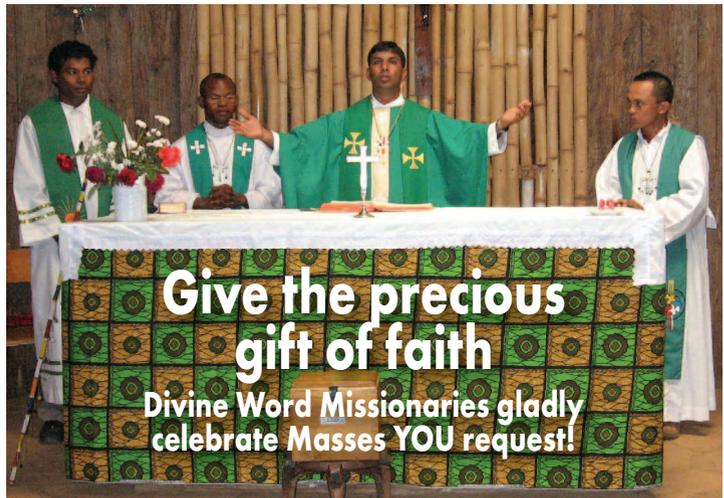
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Divine Word



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Winter 2016

*The Face
of
Mercy*
*Celebrating
2016*
*as the
Extraordinary
Jubilee
of Mercy*

Join us for Mission Friendship Day 2016



Mark Your Calendar

August 13, 2016
Techny, Illinois

October 8, 2016
Toronto, Canada



View photos from
Mission Friendship Day
2015

From the Desk of Fr. Richie Vaz SVD

“Today I ask you in the name of Christ and the Church, never tire of being merciful.”

—Pope Francis, April 21, 2013

Dear Friends,

Warm and cordial greetings to you from the Mission Center at Techny during the Jubilee of Mercy!

The jubilee year began on December 8, 2015, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, when Pope Francis opened the Door of Mercy at St. Peter’s Basilica. He extended an invitation to all believers to enter into a renewed relationship with God and to be witnesses of mercy.

Our mission as Divine Word Missionaries is to build a better society by uniting people, building bridges, and breaking the barriers that separate humanity. We live our lives in the works of mercy toward our needy sisters and brothers in Christ because God himself deals mercifully with us. Mother Teresa of Calcutta once said, “We will only know in heaven how much good has come to us through all those who are in need, such as the sick, the hungry, and the homeless. This is because we cannot do anything for God in heaven! Let us touch the dying, the poor, the lonely, and the unwanted according to the graces we have received and let us not be ashamed or slow to do the humble work.” What Mother Teresa was saying in her humility and spirituality of the poor was that we have as much need to give to Jesus in the poor as the poor have need to receive from us as Jesus’ disciples. How true it is that, as we serve the poor, we put ourselves in a situation where God must bless us.

During this Jubilee of Mercy, may we be thankful recipients of God’s grace and mercy toward us. I am grateful to you for being merciful, generous, and kind to the people of the missions through your giving. In your name, Divine Word Missionaries continue to serve Jesus who comes to them in the disguise of the poor, the ostracized, the homeless, the exploited, the abused, the widows, and the destitute children.

Join Divine Word Missionaries during this Jubilee of Mercy in reaching out to alleviate the needs of our sisters and brothers. Continue to be our treasured partners in transforming the world through words and actions based on justice, peace, love, and mercy.

God bless you,

Fr. Richie Vaz SVD
Mission Director

DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES

AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS AND BROTHERS

Merciful like the Father . . . is the "motto" of this Holy Year.

In Mercy, we find proof of how God loves us.

He gives his entire self, always, freely, asking nothing in return.

He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him.

Divine Word Missionaries celebrate works of mercy

Mercy and Compassion

Heinz Kulüke SVD

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As Divine Word Missionaries we ask ourselves, who are the people who need God's mercy and compassion in a very special way?

A Lifetime for Others

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Everyone who knows Fr. Silverio says that he believes caring for the well-being of people's souls and bodies is the heart of missionary service.

The Joy of the Gospel

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Martha's Story

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I saw in their faces the compassion they felt for Martha. During Mass, she sat on the floor because she was more comfortable there. She was in pain, but did not groan or cry out. She listened intently as the Scripture readings were proclaimed.

The Face of Mercy

Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

Pope Francis

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Friendship Corner Heart of Mercy and Lucy

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I knew immediately that Lucy was the dog meant for us. Alan was less certain. He thought she was a bit of a "show off"!

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The Society of the Divine Word is an international Catholic missionary congregation with over 6,000 members from 70 countries.
They work in over 70 different lands on all the continents except Antarctica.

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Mercy and Compassion

Heinz Kulüke SVD

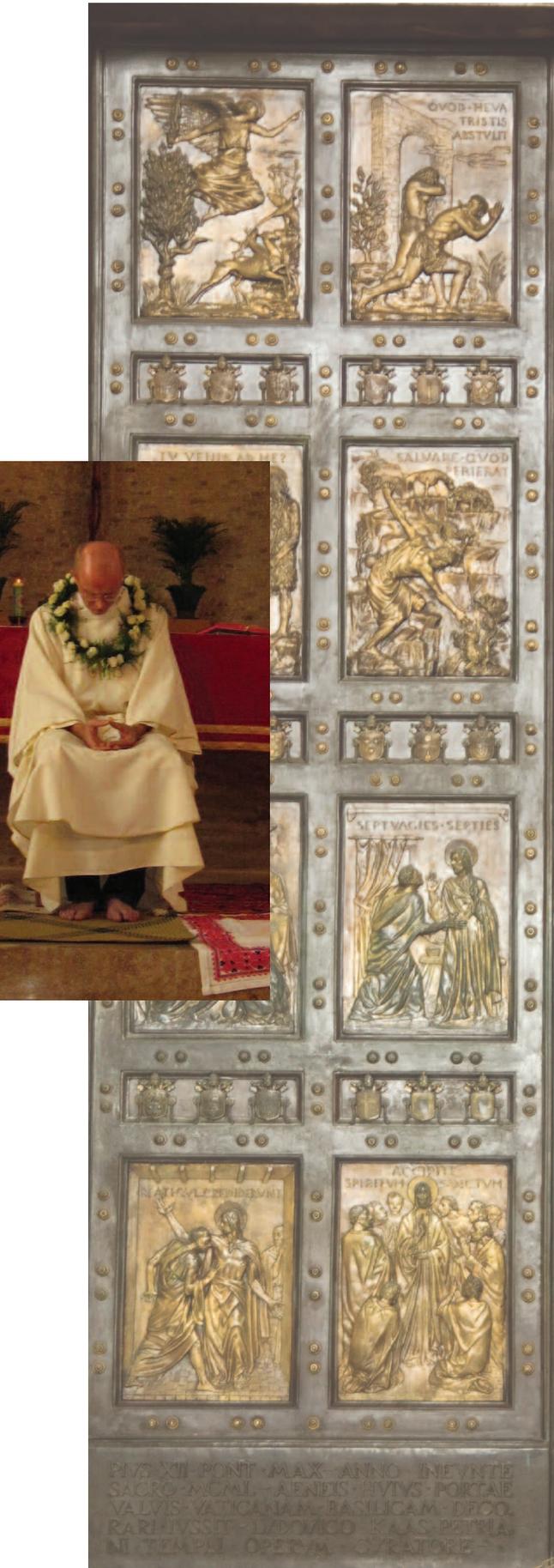
Pope Francis inaugurated the Holy Year of Mercy on December 8, 2015, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception. The Holy Door in Rome and many other churches around the Catholic world were opened that day. The Jubilee year will culminate with the feast of Christ the King on November 20, 2016.

In writing about mercy and compassion, the Pope reminds us of an essential element of the image of God. From the beginning of his papacy, Pope Francis has put special emphasis on the themes of the joy of the Gospel, mercy, and compassion.

For Pope Francis, “the mercy of God is not an abstract idea, but a concrete reality with which he reveals his love as of that of a father or a mother, moved to the very depths out of love for their child” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 6). Many of the psalms make God’s expression of mercy very concrete. For example, we read: “He secures justice for the oppressed; he gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down; the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the sojourners, he upholds the widow and the fatherless; but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin” (Ps. 146:7–9). Or in another psalm “He heals the broken hearted, and binds up their wounds . . . The Lord lifts up the downtrodden, he casts the wicked to the ground” (Ps. 147:3, 6) (Ibid.).

Pope Francis leaves no doubt about what he wants us as Christians to do: “In this Holy Year, we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates. . . . Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! . . . It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the *corporal and spiritual works of mercy*. . . . Let us rediscover these *corporal works of mercy*: to feed the hungry, give

At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on



drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget *the spiritual works of mercy*: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offenses, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead” (Ibid., 15).

As Divine Word Missionaries we ask ourselves, who are the people who need God’s mercy and compassion in a very special way? And together with our generous benefactors around the world we may ask, what else can we do concretely to make people experience God’s mercy and compassion in a special way throughout this year? Addressing both the spiritual and physical needs of our people, what concrete initiatives can we take to make this year of mercy and compassion meaningful and a blessing for people with whom we journey?

A special concern that calls our attention throughout the world is the growing refugee crisis. In the year of mercy and compassion, we could make this a priority of our concerns and ask ourselves, given our worldwide network and our resources, what does the Lord want us to do so that refugees and also migrants across the globe experience God’s mercy and compassion?

With deep gratitude to all our benefactors and mission friends for their touching and generous support throughout the years, we trust in the guidance of the Lord and the generosity of our mission friends also in the time to come. Together we can make God’s mercy and compassion felt by the people who need it most—those who are poor and at the fringes.

Pope Francis expresses his wish that all who read his letter may experience God’s grace, mercy and peace. This is what we as Divine Word Missionaries wish all our mission partners throughout the New Year.



Mercy so that
we may become a more effective sign
of the Father’s action in our lives.

Mercy

*the bridge that connects God and man,
opening our hearts to a hope
of being loved forever . . .*

*Playing volleyball with other
Divine Word Missionaries.
Silverio: pictured back row
fourth from left*



A Lifetime for Others

Franciszek Wojdyla SVD

His name is Father Silverio Maurutto SVD, and he is the assistant pastor of St. Amand parish in Kinshasa. This year he celebrates his eighty-fifth birthday in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he has served for fifty-seven years.

The Maurutto family welcomed Silverio into its midst on June 20, 1931. Like his eight siblings, Silverio's childhood was spent helping in the family's house and fields near the village of San Giorgio al Tagliamento in the province of Venice, Italy.

Even at a young age, Silverio was inspired by the prospect of working as a missionary. After completing primary school, he entered the minor seminary of Divine Word Missionaries at Varone di Riva di Garda, Italy, in 1942. He was eleven years old.

Silverio began his two-year novitiate at Varone in 1948 and professed first vows as a Divine Word Missionary in 1950. He set out for St. Gabriel's Mission House near Vienna, Austria, in 1952 for his studies in philosophy and theology. He professed final vows in 1956, was ordained a priest in 1958, and then studied French for a year to prepare for his mission assignment.

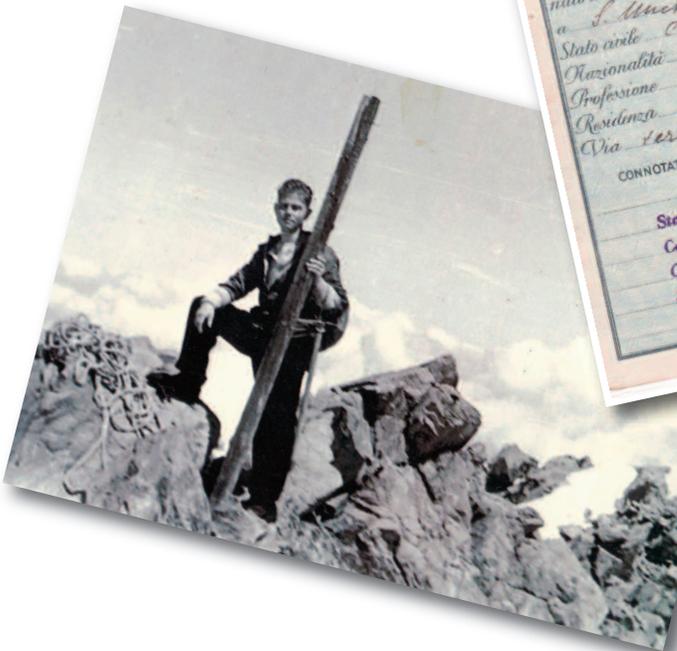
In 1959, Fr. Silverio arrived in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly known as Belgian Congo and Zaire) and immediately plunged into parish work. For fifty-seven years, he has devoted his missionary life to the people through this work.



*Silverio with his father, sisters,
and extended family*



In the Bernina Alps in 1958 just after ordination

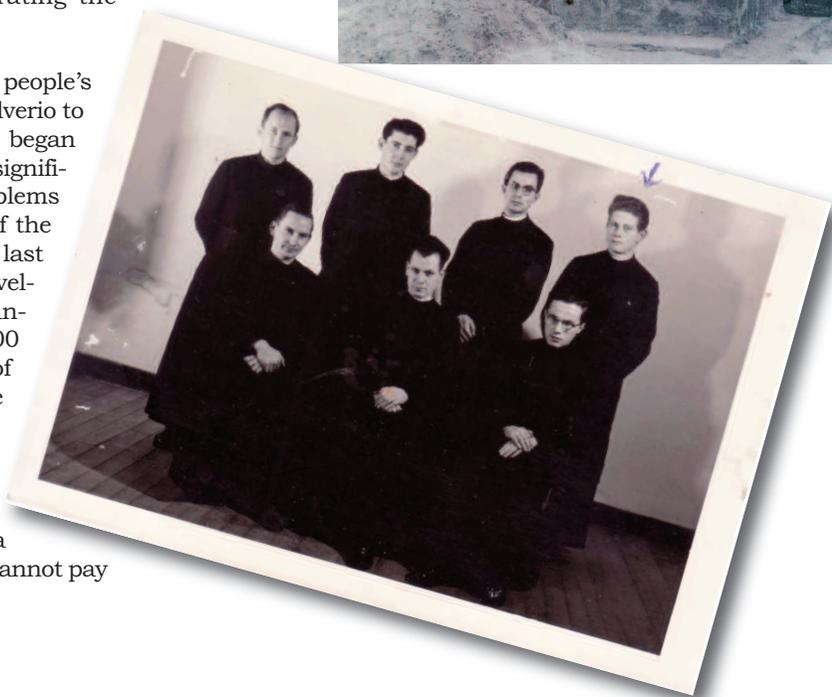


During construction of the Mompono bridge in Kinshasa in 1981



Everyone who knows Fr. Silverio says that he believes caring for the well-being of people's souls and bodies is the heart of missionary service. He builds bridges between people and God by restoring hope, giving encouragement, and nurturing faith by proclaiming the Word of God and celebrating the sacraments.

His commitment to improving people's lives and futures has led Fr. Silverio to literally build bridges also. He began to do this in response to the significant economic and social problems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The country is close to last on the list of economically developed nations. The average annual income per person is \$700 (USD). Sixty-three percent of the population live below the poverty line. The plight of the poor, the children, the sick, and the elderly is especially difficult. Millions of Congolese children do not receive a basic education because they cannot pay



In Christ the King parish in Kinshasa in 1963



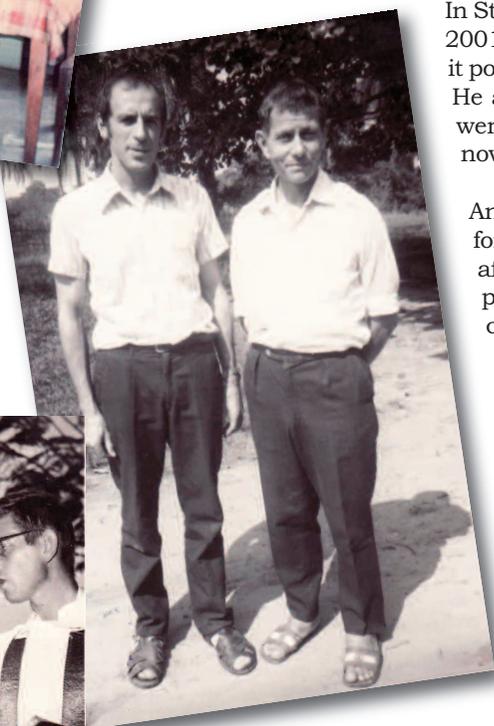
for schooling. Thousands of sick people die because they lack funds for medical care. People do not have money for basic necessities of life because of high unemployment.

Fr. Silverio noticed that poverty in rural, undeveloped areas is often caused by the isolation of people living in villages by a river that separates them from other villages. He reasoned that if bridges could be built, it would allow for faster and more efficient exchange of goods, increased incomes, and greater motivation for work.

Despite not having professional training for bridge projects, he decided to take up the challenge. He solicited funds from various institutions in the country (mostly embassies), as well as from abroad. And he succeeded. In the bush missions where he worked, he oversaw the building of five bridges spanning relatively small watercourses. In Kinshasa, he built two large and impressive bridges and was awarded the prestigious Knight of the Republic of Zaire Medal.

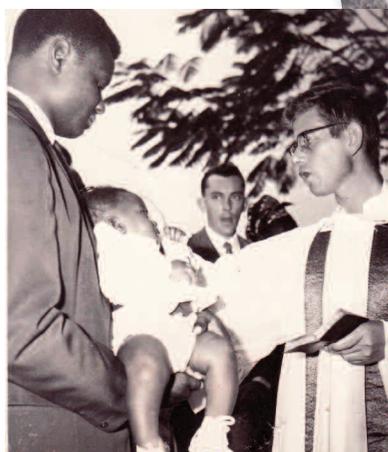


In St. Amand parish, where he has been working since 2001, Fr. Silverio has built three bridges, which make it possible for people to move about on foot and by car. He also built a sewage system for two roads, which were once full of mud in the rainy season and are now relatively clean and passable.



Another one of Fr. Silverio's traits is his compassion for the sick and aged, regardless of their religious affiliation. Some individuals here laugh at Catholic priests and the care they give to people with dire cases, but this does not stop Fr. Silverio.

One day, a woman from the parish told Fr. Silverio about a family in which the mother was critically ill and at the brink of death. He understood that she needed immediate attention, so he took her to Pauvres de Bergamo hospital, which is run by Catholic sisters. After a thorough examination, the woman was diagnosed with advanced AIDS, and she died soon afterward.



Fr. Silverio with Fr. Edward Tulowiecki SVD in the missions in 1986

Baptism in the parish of Christ the King in Kinshasa

Fr. Silverio with workers who built the bridge in the Mobele district

The woman and her family were not members of the parish. Many people in the area where she lived were well aware of her condition, but only Fr. Silverio came forward to help the family get medical care for her. Inspired by his selfless example, the woman's sisters decided to embrace the Catholic faith and are practicing it faithfully.

Fr. Silverio's commitment to improving people's lives in practical ways and the pastoral care he gives to any person are well known. Because of this, he never needs to fear for his safety as he travels around the towns and countryside. Should he ever be threatened, people would quickly come to his rescue.

Oftentimes it is Fr. Silverio who explains events in the Middle East and other locations in the world. He is well versed in history and geography and has an amazing memory. *Echoes of Saint Amand* is a sixteen-page, monthly magazine distributed in the parish and to anyone who is interested. Fr. Silverio is its writer, editor, and publisher. He includes commentaries on the Sunday liturgies, holy days, and saints commemorated during the Church year. Issues also contain short summaries of world and local news and news from the parish.

Fr. Silverio is still an avid, active athlete. Every Monday we Divine Word Missionaries play volleyball together. He plays if there is enough room on the field, and if not, he gladly referees the game. Fr. Silverio does it all with a great sense of humor and is the first among his confreres to play volleyball. He also likes long walks. During some of those walks, he goes to N'djili International Airport, which serves the capital city of Kinshasa. It is a trek of about ten and a half miles, so Fr. Silverio makes the return trip by taxi.

For Divine Word Missionaries working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Fr. Silverio is our *baobab*, our oldest brother. We are all thrilled to have him here. He is our model for authentic and complete missionary commitment. May there be many more missionaries like Fr. Silverio, who help the Catholic Church reflect the true face of Christ!



YES! I Want to Help the Missions



YES!

I want to help the missions so that around the world, children and adults will know that Jesus loves them.



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The Joy of the Gospel

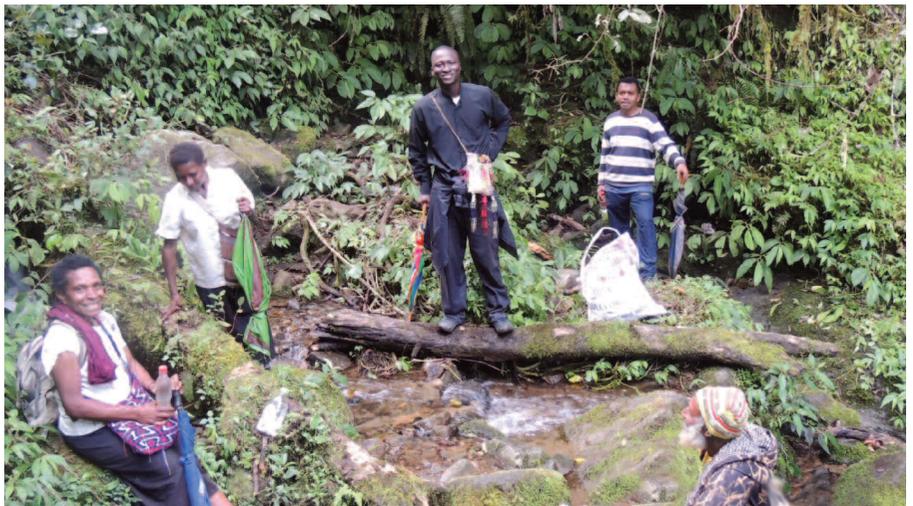
Eric Ankamah SVD

It was last year on the First Sunday of Lent. Solomon Ankaya, a diocesan seminarian, and I were on our way to Konguan, one of the ten mission outstations of Holy Trinity parish in Bogia, Papua New Guinea. We traveled by car along a narrow road through the mountains.

That day, the road was wet and slippery from heavy rain the previous night. We crossed a creek, and our car slid from side to side as we moved up the road. Then, just a little ahead of us, we saw a four-wheel drive vehicle mired deep in the mud. It was so covered in mud that it looked like a large hut in the middle of the road. Every attempt the driver made to free the SUV from the muck proved futile. The road was blocked.

I considered the options available to us. The obvious thing was to go back to the parish. After all, there was nothing we could do in this situation. However, I felt the disappointment of the people waiting for us in Konguan. I am only able to visit the outstations once every month, so they look forward to the celebration of the Eucharist when I visit.

Solomon and I decided to walk. I took my Mass kit, and with our trousers rolled up to our knees, we began our long hike. With the muddy conditions, what is usually a thirty to forty-five minute walk took an hour and fifteen minutes.





May the balm of *Mercy* reach everyone, both believers and those far away, as a sign that the Kingdom of God is already present in our midst!



After some time, I began to pant heavily. Finally, with a deep sigh, I exclaimed, “Oh my God.” I called out to Solomon to stop so we could rest. As I sat on a log by the side of the road, my mind was flooded with many thoughts, especially regret for the decision I had made to walk to Konguan. Gradually, I began to smile at the sight of my sweat-soaked clothes and my memory of the words of Pope Francis:

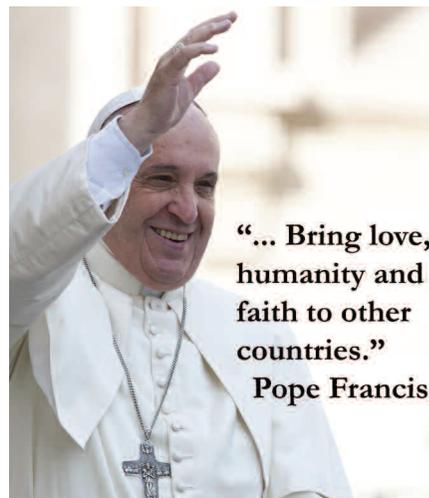
The Gospel, radiant with the glory of Christ’s cross, constantly invites us to rejoice. . . . instances of joy flow from the infinite love of God, who has revealed himself to us in Jesus Christ. . . . Thanks solely to this encounter—or renewed encounter—with God’s love . . . we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human . . . when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being. Here we find the source and inspiration of all our efforts at evangelization. For if we have received the love which restores meaning to our lives, how can we fail to share that love with others? (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 5, 7, 8).



My regret gave way to a sense of joy at bringing the Gospel to God's people in spite of difficult circumstances. My spirit became cheerful, and I felt my strength renewed. Solomon and I continued our journey up the mountain.

When we arrived at Konguan, the people welcomed us, grateful that we made the long trek to celebrate Mass with them and enjoy the warmth and hospitality of the village community. I felt a special connection with the people throughout the day. I could see in their eyes their appreciation and their acceptance of us. They seemed to understand what we had endured physically and mentally during our long journey on foot. Many people shook my hand and wanted to hear about our experience.

I am glad I made it to Konguan, where I experienced the life-giving joy of the Gospel uniting me with the people. Administering the sacraments was one way for me to bear witness to the people. That I shared more deeply in their lives also made God's love present to them. My fatigue and regret were strong as I sat on the log by the side of the road, but the joy of the Gospel was stronger. It helped me move beyond myself so that I could live out my missionary vocation to be a joyous messenger of the Good News.



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Pope Francis**

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Wherever the Church is present,
the **Mercy**
of the Father must be evident



Martha's Story

Mariusz Pacula SVD

About a year ago, my cell phone rang in my pocket while I was in Tamale shopping for my mission, Christ the King parish in Gushiegu, Ghana, which was sixty-five miles away. The urgent call was from James, our catechist, who told me that an elderly, sick woman named Martha Fusheni was asking to be baptized.

I learned from James that Martha had been hospitalized a number of times, most recently for surgery that resulted in complications. She was afraid to leave her home to go to the hospital in distant Tamale because relatives had gone there for medical care and had died. James and I discussed Martha's situation, and we agreed that I would baptize her the next day, although James would baptize her if she became weaker or seemed to be dying.

The following day, I traveled to the chapel in the village of Zamashiegu, about fifteen miles from the main parish church in Gushiegu. When I arrived, the chapel was closed, and no one was there. After an hour, James came. He thought that the baptism was to take place at Martha's home. I asked him if she was strong enough to come to the chapel so she could receive the sacraments during the celebration of the Eucharist. He thought she could, especially with the help of family and friends.

*... wherever there are Christians,
everyone should find an oasis
of Mercy.*

A little later, family members and people from the Zamashiegu Catholic community gathered with the frail, suffering woman at the chapel. I saw in their faces the compassion they felt for Martha. During Mass, she sat on the floor because she was more comfortable there. She was in pain, but did not groan or cry out. She listened intently as the Scripture readings were proclaimed. When she was baptized, she accepted Martha as her Christian name. Martha also received Holy Communion for the first time, as well as the anointing of the sick.

After Mass, I spoke with Martha's daughter Monica and asked why her mother did not go to a hospital. Monica explained that Martha did not want to go and that they had no money for treatment. I urged Monica to take her mother to the closer hospital at Yendi and offered some money for Martha's treatment. Martha went to the hospital that same day. She died the next day in the evening.

Martha began to learn about Catholicism from her daughter, Monica, and son-in-law, John. They were baptized in 2014 during the Easter season in the village of Nabaliba, another mission outpost of the parish. Martha's desire to become a Catholic grew stronger after James, our catechist, gathered people interested in the





Catholic faith in Zamashiegu, the village where she lived. In the beginning, religious instruction and Mass took place in a classroom or under a tree. In December 2014, a permanent chapel for the new faith community was blessed and dedicated in honor of Divine Mercy. After being baptized, receiving Holy Communion, and receiving the anointing of the sick, Martha's final wish was to be buried according to the rites of the Catholic Church.

On the day of Martha's burial, I was away from the parish for a diocesan meeting, so James was to celebrate the rite of committal at the graveside. For a time, it seemed that Martha's final wish would not be carried out.

According to local customs, Martha was to be buried in the traditional way. All the elders of the village came to perform the traditional rites by the grave located at the entrance of Martha's house. James was not allowed to speak or make known that she wanted to be buried according to the Catholic rites. In keeping with tradition, the youngest son is responsible for his mother in her old age. Thus, the elders turned to Martha's son, Abukari, and asked about her last wishes. The young man, with his wife and two children, stepped forward and told the elders that his mother was baptized and wanted a Catholic burial.

At this, the elders stepped back so that James could celebrate the committal. The Catholic community of Zamashiegu surrounded the gravesite. As James led the prayers, Martha's cloth-wrapped body was laid to rest. A simple tomb with a wooden cross was formed over the site. Finally, everyone departed.



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Two weeks later, Martha's family asked me to offer a memorial Mass. Friends, neighbors, members of the Zamashiegu Catholic community, and Martha's family gathered for a joyous celebration of her life and faith. That day, we also went to Martha's grave, which I blessed while we prayed.

Martha's new life in Christ began in the waters of baptism and was nourished with the Bread of Life. In her illness, Martha received strength, peace, and courage through the anointing of the sick. Martha was the first person from the Catholic faith community at Zamashiegu to die and be buried according to the rites of the Church.

What an impact Martha had on me and on all the people who shared her journey of faith! We were all touched by the example of her perseverance and her fervent faith. During those days, the Catholics of Zamashiegu were united and became stronger as a faith community. They supported Martha when she professed her faith in Jesus and the Church. In her experience, they witnessed the Christian meaning of death. By their active participation in the funeral rites and memorial Mass with Martha's family, they embraced the ministry of consolation proclaimed by Jesus in the Beatitudes: "Blest too are the sorrowing; they shall be consoled" (Matt. 5:4).

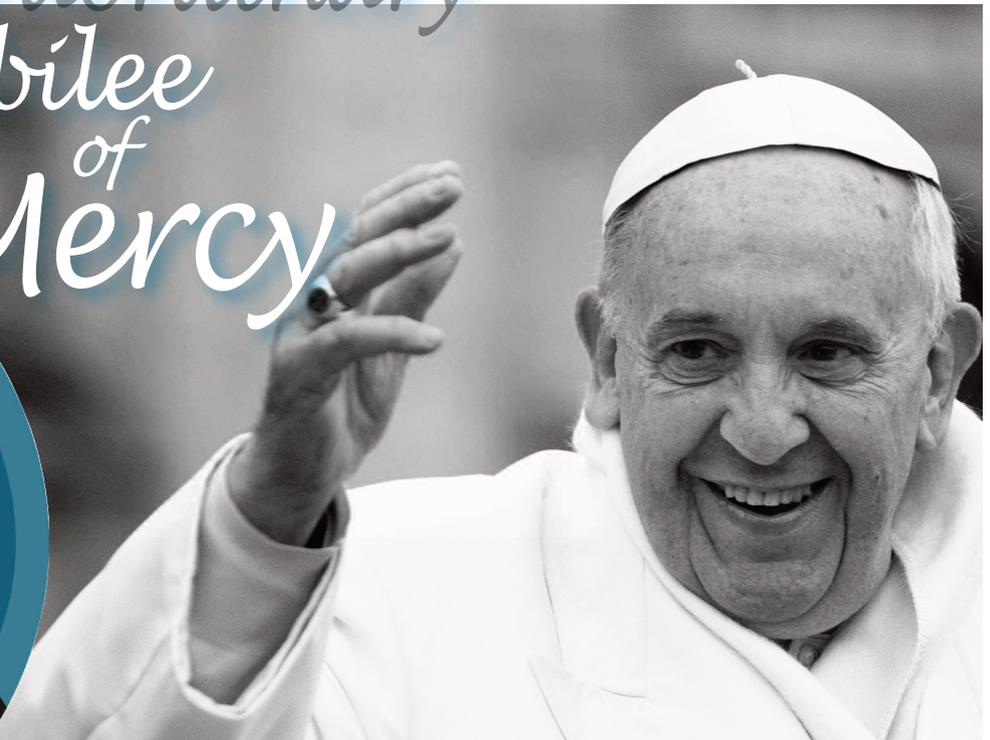
Later, as I reflected on all that had happened in such a short time, I thought of the consoling words from the Liturgy, "Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is changed, not ended, and when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven" (Preface I for the Dead). As it was for Martha, so may it be for all of us!





The Holy Father's message has been abridged. The full message may be viewed on the Vatican website. [ed.]
http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html

Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy



The Face of Mercy

Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy

1. Jesus Christ is the face of the Father's mercy. These words might well sum up the mystery of the Christian faith. Mercy has become living and visible in Jesus of Nazareth, reaching its culmination in him. The Father, "rich in mercy" (Eph. 2:4), after having revealed his name to Moses as "a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex. 34:6), has never ceased to show, in various ways throughout history, his divine nature. In the "fullness of time" (Gal. 4:4), when everything had been arranged according to his plan of salvation, he sent his only Son into the world, born of the Virgin Mary, to reveal his love for us in a definitive way. Whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. Jn. 14:9). Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.

2. We need constantly to contemplate the mystery of mercy. It is a wellspring of joy, serenity, and peace. Our salvation depends on it. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us. Mercy: the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life. Mercy: the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness.

3. At times we are called to gaze even more attentively on mercy so that we may become a more effective sign of the Father's action in our lives. For this reason I have proclaimed an Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy as a special time for the Church, a time when the witness of believers might grow stronger and more effective. . . .

8. With our eyes fixed on Jesus and his merciful gaze, we experience the love of the Most Holy Trinity. The mission Jesus received from the Father was that of revealing the mystery of divine love in its fullness. "God is love" (1 Jn. 4:8, 16), John affirms for the first and only time in all of Holy Scripture. This love has now been made visible and tangible in Jesus' entire life. His person is nothing but love, a love given gratuitously. The relationships he forms with the people who approach him manifest something entirely unique and unrepeatable. The signs he works, especially in favor of sinners, the poor, the marginalized, the sick, and the suffering, are all meant to teach mercy. Everything in him speaks of mercy. Nothing in him is devoid of compassion. . . .

12. The Church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person. The Spouse of Christ must pattern her behavior after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception. In the present day, as the Church is charged with the task of the new evangelization, the theme of mercy needs to be proposed again and again with new enthusiasm and renewed pastoral action. It is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father.

The Church's first truth is the love of Christ. The Church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself. Consequently, wherever the Church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes, commu-

nities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy.

13. We want to live this Jubilee Year in light of the Lord's words: Merciful like the Father. The Evangelist reminds us of the teaching of Jesus who says, "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful" (Lk. 6:36). It is a program of life as demanding as it is rich with joy and peace. Jesus's command is directed to anyone willing to listen to his voice (cf. Lk. 6:27). In order to be capable of mercy, therefore, we must first of all dispose ourselves to listen to the Word of God. This means rediscovering the value of silence in order to meditate on the Word that comes to us. In this way, it will be possible to contemplate God's mercy and adopt it as our lifestyle.

14. . . . *Merciful like the Father*, therefore, is the "motto" of this Holy Year. In mercy, we find proof of how God loves us. He gives his entire self, always, freely, asking nothing in return. He comes to our aid whenever we call upon him. What a beautiful thing that the Church begins her daily prayer with the words, "O God, come to my assistance. O Lord, make haste to help me" (Ps. 70:2)! The assistance we ask for is already the first step of God's mercy toward us. He comes to assist us in our weakness. And his help consists in helping us accept his presence and closeness to us. Day after day, touched by his compassion, we also can become compassionate towards others.

15. In this Holy Year, we look forward to the experience of opening our hearts to those living on the outermost fringes of society: fringes which modern society itself creates. How many uncertain and painful situations there are in the world today! How many are the

wounds borne by the flesh of those who have no voice because their cry is muffled and drowned out by the indifference of the rich! During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care. Let us not fall into humiliating indifference or a monotonous routine that prevents us from discovering what is new! Let us ward off destructive cynicism! Let us open our eyes and see the misery of the world, the wounds of our brothers and sisters who are denied their dignity, and let us recognize that we are compelled to heed their cry for help! May we reach out to them and support them so they can feel the warmth of our presence, our friendship, and our fraternity! May their cry become our own, and together may we break down the barriers of indifference that too often reign supreme and mask our hypocrisy and egoism!

It is my burning desire that, during this Jubilee, the Christian people may reflect on the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. It will be a way to reawaken our conscience, too often grown dull in the face of poverty. And let us enter more deeply into the heart of the Gospel where the poor have a special experience of God's mercy. Jesus introduces us to these works of mercy in his preaching so that we can know whether or not we are living as his disciples. Let us rediscover these corporal works of mercy: to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, heal the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. And let us not forget the spiritual works of mercy: to counsel the doubtful, instruct the ignorant, admonish sinners, comfort the afflicted, forgive offences, bear patiently those who do us ill, and pray for the living and the dead.

We cannot escape the Lord's words to us, and they will serve as the criteria upon which we will be judged: whether we have fed the hungry and given drink to the thirsty, welcomed the stranger and clothed the naked, or spent time with the sick and those in prison (cf. Mt. 25:31–45). Moreover, we will be asked if we have helped others to escape the doubt that causes them to fall into despair and which is often a source of loneliness; if we have helped to overcome the ignorance in which millions of people live, especially children deprived of the necessary means to free them from the bonds of poverty; if we have been close to the lonely and afflicted; if we have forgiven those who have offended us and have rejected all forms of anger and hate that lead to violence; if we have had the kind of patience God shows, who is so patient with us; and if we have commended our brothers and sisters to the Lord in prayer. In each of these "little ones," Christ himself is present. His flesh becomes visible in the flesh of the tortured, the crushed, the scourged, the malnourished, and the exiled...to be acknowledged, touched, and cared for by us. Let us not forget the words of Saint John of the Cross: "as we prepare to leave this life, we will be judged on the basis of love." . . .

20. It would not be out of place at this point to recall the relationship between justice and mercy. These are not two contradictory realities, but two dimensions of a single reality that unfolds progressively until it culminates in the fullness of love. Justice is a fundamental concept for civil society, which is meant to be governed by the rule of law. Justice is also understood as that which is rightly due to each individual. In the Bible, there are many references to divine justice and to God as "judge." In these passages, justice is understood as the full observance of the Law and the behavior of every good Israelite in conformity with God's command-

ments. Such a vision, however, has not infrequently led to legalism by distorting the original meaning of justice and obscuring its profound value. To overcome this legalistic perspective, we need to recall that in Sacred Scripture, justice is conceived essentially as the faithful abandonment of oneself to God's will.

For his part, Jesus speaks several times of the importance of faith over and above the observance of the law. It is in this sense that we must understand his words when, reclining at table with Matthew and other tax collectors and sinners, he says to the Pharisees raising objections to him, "Go and learn the meaning of 'I desire mercy not sacrifice'. I have come not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Mt. 9:13). Faced with a vision of justice as the mere observance of the law that judges people simply by dividing them into two groups—the just and sinners—Jesus is bent on revealing the great gift of mercy that searches out sinners and offers them pardon and salvation. One can see why, on the basis of such a liberating vision of mercy as a source of new life, Jesus was rejected by the Pharisees and the other teachers of the law. In an attempt to remain faithful to the law, they merely placed burdens on the shoulders of others and undermined the Father's mercy. The appeal to a faithful observance of the law must not prevent attention from being given to matters that touch upon the dignity of the person. . . .

The Apostle Paul makes a similar journey. Prior to meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus, he dedicated his life to pursuing the justice of the law with zeal (cf. Phil 3:6). His conversion to Christ led him to turn that vision upside down, to the point that he would write to the Galatians: "We have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ, and not by

works of the law, because by works of the law shall no one be justified" (2:16).

Paul's understanding of justice changes radically. He now places faith first, not justice. Salvation comes not through the observance of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ, who in his death and resurrection brings salvation together with a mercy that justifies. God's justice now becomes the liberating force for those oppressed by slavery to sin and its consequences. God's justice is his mercy (cf. Ps. 51:11–16).

21. Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe. . . .

If God limited himself to only justice, he would cease to be God, and would instead be like human beings who ask merely that the law be respected. But mere justice is not enough. Experience shows that an appeal to justice alone will result in its destruction. This is why God goes beyond justice with his mercy and forgiveness. Yet this does not mean that justice should be devalued or rendered superfluous. On the contrary: anyone who makes a mistake must pay the price. However, this is just the beginning of conversion, not its end, because one begins to feel the tenderness and mercy of God. God does not deny justice. He rather envelops it and surpasses it with an even greater event in which we experience love as the foundation of true justice. We must pay close attention to what Saint Paul says if we want to avoid making the same mistake for which he reproaches the Jews of his time: "For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified" (Rom. 10:3–4). God's

May the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end:

justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the Cross of Christ is God's judgement on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life. . . .

23. There is an aspect of mercy that goes beyond the confines of the Church. It relates us to Judaism and Islam, both of which consider mercy to be one of God's most important attributes. Israel was the first to receive this revelation which continues in history as the source of an inexhaustible richness meant to be shared with all mankind. As we have seen, the pages of the Old Testament are steeped in mercy, because they narrate the works that the Lord performed in favor of his people at the most trying moments of their history. Among the privileged names that Islam attributes to the Creator are "Merciful and Kind." This invocation is often on the lips of faithful Muslims who feel themselves accompanied and sustained by mercy in their daily weakness. They too believe that no one can place a limit on divine mercy because its doors are always open.

I trust that this Jubilee year celebrating the mercy of God will foster an encounter with these religions and with other noble religious traditions; may it open us to even more fervent dialogue so that we might know and understand one another better; may it eliminate every form of closed-mindedness and disrespect, and drive out every form of violence and discrimination.

24. My thoughts now turn to the Mother of Mercy. May the sweetness of her countenance watch over us in this Holy Year, so that all of us may rediscover the joy of God's tenderness. No one has penetrated the profound mystery of the incarnation like Mary. Her entire life was patterned after the presence of mercy made flesh. The Mother

of the Crucified and Risen One has entered the sanctuary of divine mercy because she participated intimately in the mystery of His love.

Chosen to be the Mother of the Son of God, Mary, from the outset, was prepared by the love of God to be the Ark of the Covenant between God and man. She treasured divine mercy in her heart in perfect harmony with her Son Jesus. Her hymn of praise, sung at the threshold of the home of Elizabeth, was dedicated to the mercy of God which extends from "generation to generation" (Lk. 1:50). We too were included in those prophetic words of the Virgin Mary. This will be a source of comfort and strength to us as we cross the threshold of the Holy Year to experience the fruits of divine mercy.

At the foot of the Cross, Mary, together with John, the disciple of love, witnessed the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus. This supreme expression of mercy towards those who crucified him show us the point to which the mercy of God can reach. Mary attests that the mercy of the Son of God knows no bounds and extends to everyone, without exception. Let us address her in the words of the *Salve Regina*, a prayer ever ancient and ever new, so that she may never tire of turning her merciful eyes upon us, and make us worthy to contemplate the face of mercy, her Son Jesus.

Our prayer also extends to the saints and blessed ones who made divine mercy their mission in life. I think especially of the great apostle of mercy, Saint Faustina Kowalska. May she, who was called to enter the depths of divine mercy, intercede for us and obtain for us the grace of living and walking always according to the mercy of God and with an unwavering trust in his love.

25. I present, therefore, this Extraordinary Jubilee Year dedicated to living

out in our daily lives the mercy which the Father constantly extends to all of us. In this Jubilee Year, let us allow God to surprise us. He never tires of casting open the doors of his heart and of repeating that he loves us and wants to share his love with us. The Church feels the urgent need to proclaim God's mercy. Her life is authentic and credible only when she becomes a convincing herald of mercy. She knows that her primary task, especially at a moment full of great hopes and signs of contradiction, is to introduce everyone to the great mystery of God's mercy by contemplating the face of Christ. The Church is called above all to be a credible witness to mercy, professing it and living it as the core of the revelation of Jesus Christ. From the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God, the great river of mercy wells up and overflows unceasingly. It is a spring that will never run dry, no matter how many people draw from it. Every time someone is in need, he or she can approach it, because the mercy of God never ends. The profundity of the mystery surrounding it is as inexhaustible as the richness which springs up from it.

In this Jubilee Year, may the Church echo the word of God that resounds strong and clear as a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid, and love. May she never tire of extending mercy, and be ever patient in offering compassion and comfort. May the Church become the voice of every man and woman, and repeat confidently without end: "Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old" (Ps. 25:6).

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 11 April, the Vigil of the Second Sunday of Easter, or the Sunday of Divine Mercy, in the year of our Lord 2015, the third of my Pontificate.

FRANCISCUS

Be mindful of your **Mercy,**
O Lord, and your steadfast
love, for they have been from of old (Ps. 25:6).



Friendship Corner

LETTERS FROM OUR MISSION FRIENDS

Our readers send in some great letters and personal essays. Want to see your piece featured? Send your story to: chaples@svdmissions.org and we might be in touch!

Heart of Mercy and Lucy

Kathleen Shaw



One summer day several years ago, I paged through our diocesan Catholic newspaper and saw an article about the widows in Orissa, India, whose husbands had been killed for their Christian faith. The article was my first introduction to Divine Word Missionaries. The women were receiving help from the missionaries, and the article mentioned the need for financial help. How could one turn aside from such a need, I thought, and I mentioned it to my husband, Alan. He agreed we needed to support this ministry.

At that time, Alan and I had been married about forty years. He retired from a twenty-two-year career in the US Army, then became a stock broker, a second career that spanned twenty-four years. I am a fundraiser for a shelter for victims of domestic violence.

We have one grown son who followed his father's footsteps in the US Army. Alan also has two grown children from a previous marriage.

Lucy came into our lives thirteen years ago. One Sunday after Mass, we decided to visit a dog rescue shelter. We thought about adopting a dog for some time. As we walked into the shelter, a young couple had just dropped off a small, gray and white dog. The owner was in the military and being deployed. His wife was returning to Puerto Rico and could not take their dog. I knew immediately that Lucy was the dog meant for us. Alan was less certain. He thought she was a bit of a "show off"! But I prevailed, and we brought Lucy home. As is often the case, Lucy ended up being Alan's dog. He delighted in her, and she in him. Lucy was a kind, sweet Lhaso Apso. The breed originated in Tibet, where the dogs were sentinels or watchdogs in Buddhist monasteries.



True to her breed, Lucy was not a lap dog. She had a job to do, and that was to guard us. When anyone came to the door, she barked and made sure that the visitor was not a threat. She loved to ride in the car, so we took her with us on trips. Besides being a great traveler, Lucy was a bit of an entertaining comedian. More than anything, Lucy was a sweet, extremely loyal animal.

As years passed, Alan's health declined. Heart disease and kidney disease took their toll. During the three years he received dialysis, we were unable to go out much. Lucy continued to be a wonderful companion for us. On January 21, 2015, Alan's heart and lungs failed, and he died peacefully at home, with Lucy guarding him of course.

After Alan died, Lucy became depressed and slept most of the time. But she came out of it and accepted me as her most important and only owner. She did not like to be left alone when I went out, so I took her with me as much as I could. Lucy was such a comfort to me during the months after Alan's passing.

As I write this, it is November 21, 2015. Two weeks ago, Lucy and I visited friends who kept three large dogs in their backyard for friends who were inundated during recent floods in South Carolina. The large dogs were not allowed in the house, but when they saw Lucy, they pushed their way through the kitchen door and viciously attacked her. We freed Lucy from their jaws, but not before she suffered extensive injury. We rushed her to the emergency vet, where they did surgery and brought her around. Lucy was able to come home after a few days; however, it became apparent that she had lost the use of her hind legs. The vet told me that back surgery offered the best possibly of

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Eric Ankamah SVD is from Accra, Ghana. He began his studies and formation at St. Augustine Major Seminary in Tamale, Ghana, in 2003. Eric entered the Divine Word Missionary novitiate in 2006 and professed first vows in 2007 at Nkwatia, Ghana. He went to Papua New Guinea in 2008 to continue his theological studies at the Catholic Theological Institute in Bomana-Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. In May 2012, he professed perpetual vows in Bomana and was ordained to the priesthood in 2013 in Accra, Ghana. Father Eric returned to Papua New Guinea for his mission assignment.

Mariusz Pacula SVD is from Laszki, Poland. He professed first vows in 1992 and was ordained a priest in 1998. Fr. Mariusz is the pastor of Christ the King Parish in Gushiegu in northern Ghana.

Heinz Kulüke SVD was born in Spelle, Germany, in 1956. Before entering Divine Word Missionaries, he was an electrical engineer and served in the German Air Force. He joined Divine Word Missionaries in 1979, professed first vows in 1981, and was ordained in 1986. He was assigned to the Philippines, where he served for twenty-six years. Father Kulüke has a master's degree and doctoral degree in philosophy and taught philosophy at the University of San Carlos in Cebu City, Philippines. He was elected superior of the Southern Province of Divine Word Missionaries in the Philippines. During his years in the Philippines, Fr. Kulüke was dedicated to helping the poorest of the poor. His has brought his commitment to the poor to his leadership as superior general since he was elected in July 2012.

helping Lucy regain the use of her legs. I struggled with that option because she was thirteen years old, and it is very expensive surgery. I love Lucy so much, and wanted her to be well more than anything, but I wondered about the ethics of saving her at any cost. All we have comes from God. What would he want me do?

After thinking about it, I remarked to my friend Jeannie that I decided against the surgery. When there are people and children all over the world in dire need, I do not feel right about using more of the financial resources God has given me on our sweet dog, who had had a full life. But, if I did not actually donate the cost of the surgery to a charity, then how I felt would only be theoretical, emotional, and nothing more.

Jeannie and I took Lucy to our vet for a peaceful release, and Lucy is out of pain now. I pray she and Alan are once again delighting in each other's company. Since then, I wondered what charity I would support.

This morning, Father Richie Vaz SVD from Divine Word Missionaries called to wish me a happy Thanksgiving. I had only received thank you letters from Divine Word Missionaries, so this call was completely unexpected. Was this a coincidence? I do not think so.

Divine Word Missionaries had been in my mind as the charity I would support. I am honored to support the vital work that Divine Word Missionaries do to share Christ's message of service and care for the sick and poor of the world. For thirteen years, God blessed Alan and me with Lucy, our wonderful and sweet companion. I cannot think of a better way to memorialize her.

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If you would like to discuss your estate planning with us, please contact us:

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