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EDITORIAL

It has been more than two years since war began in Ukraine, two years since Russia's unprovoked invasion across Ukraine's eastern border.

Soldiers are still dying, and people in the country are still suffering. They live in fear of random drone strikes, which have increased this year. They live in fear that they will never see loved ones again as they leave for the battlefield to join the fight.

Members of the Arnoldus Family—three Divine Word Missionary priests and 16 Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters—have been in Ukraine since the invasion began. They are committed to looking after the people of this country who continue to face the hardships of war. Other organizations can offer humanitarian aid to Ukrainians, but our priests, with the help of the Holy Spirit Sisters, can offer something more: spiritual aid.

This issue of Mission Update brings you four reports from Ukraine—two from our missionaries and two from the Holy Spirit Sisters—that illustrate how the spiritual aid they offer is not only deeply needed, but deeply appreciated. In the early phase of the war, the Divine Word parish in Verboviets in western Ukraine became a shelter for 11 refugee families from the eastern part of the country, where the fighting was most intense. The families have since left the shelter, most of them able to return to their homes, but the pastor, Father Wojciech Żółty SVD, remains in touch.

"They call us and thank us for finding their way to God during the war," Fr. Żółty says.


Divine Word Missionaries help people find their way to God in other parts of the world. And sometimes, we help God find his way to them. From Tanzania, Father Lawrence Muthee SVD updates us on the success of the "Wheels to Evangelize" project, which provides motorcycles to his sprawling parish's catechists so they can swiftly reach their mission stations and bring the Word of God to Maasai people in far-off villages.

This project was supported by generous benefactors of the Mission Center in Techny. Fr. Muthee tells us that he hopes to keep the program rolling with new motorcycles for his parish's growing number of catechists.

We hear from other areas of the world in this issue, from Vietnam and Brazil, with news of how Divine Word Missionaries deepen their outreach in those countries, too. Everywhere they serve, in peace or in war, Divine Word Missionaries strive to help people find their way to God.

Thank you and God bless you for your support.

Yours in the Divine Word,



Bro. Daniel Holman SVD
Mission Director

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

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

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**Your prayers and support
make a difference.**

UKRAINE



Christmas Caroling Under the Cloud of War

By Józef Gwóźdź SVD

***Father Józef Gwóźdź SVD
finds his heart with the
people of Ukraine.***

Fr. Józef serves as pastor in the small parish of Nowa Uszyca in western Ukraine. His experiences in this war-torn region are a testament to the enduring spirit of compassion and love for the people he serves. Fr. Józef's reflections provide a poignant glimpse into the challenges faced by this Ukraine community during a Christmas season under the cloud of war.

The Christmas season has passed, yet the festive decorations linger in my parish. The church looks beautiful all adorned for the occasion. Despite the brutal war raging in their country, parishioners chose to decorate the trees with ornaments, signifying hope for peace.

However, the joy of the Christmas season and the New Year was often overshadowed by the intensified rocket attacks across the country. Even though our region is not in the direct line of fighting, the drones and rockets became familiar sight in the sky, and a stark reminder of the continuing conflict.

During the Christmas season, in many places around the world, pastoral visits to family homes are essential. In Ukraine, these visits are accom-



panied by the centuries-old tradition of Christmas caroling. Fathers Wojciech Żółty SVD and Adam Kruczyński SVD, embarked on their caroling journey immediately after the holidays, joined by Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters and a small group of parishioners. Unfortunately, I was down with the flu for a few days, so, my visits, along with my carol singers, were delayed a week.

This was my second year visiting the homes of my parishioners. I did it for the first time last year, just a few weeks after arriving in Ukraine. I was still learning the Ukrainian language. Most of the houses I visited then had no electricity. I have been a priest for almost 20 years; however, it was my first time caroling. I was previously missioned in Nicaragua and Panama, where there is no such tradition.

Despite the dark cloud of war shadowing our parish and the tragic death, from an auto accident, of the previous pastor,

Caroling in Ukraine dates back centuries.

Tradition has it that the singing of carols—known locally as *kolyky*—celebrates the birth of the sun and dates back to pre-Christian times. The tradition eventually evolved as a part of Christmas, where the carols celebrate the birth of Jesus.

The well-known Christmas carol, “Carol of the Bells,” has its roots in Ukraine. The song was composed in 1914 by a renowned Ukrainian composer, Mykola Leontovych, who based the melody on several traditional folk songs.

Originally, the song was meant to mark the new year, which was celebrated in spring. The original title, “*Shchedryk*,” means “bountiful” in Ukrainian. The lyrics describe a swallow flying into a family’s home to proclaim the good fortune they would enjoy in the coming year.

“*Shchedryk*” became a Christmas carol in 1936. American choral director Peter Willhousky, who was of Ukrainian descent, was arranging music for a nationally broadcast radio concert. He wanted to include “*Shchedryk*,” but knew the choir would not be able to sing the Ukrainian lyrics. Because the melody reminded him of bells pealing, he wrote a new set of lyrics describing bells heralding the arrival of Christmas.

The song became an immediate hit during the broadcast. Choral groups and music teachers from around the country begged for the sheet music. Willhousky published the music with the title “Carol of the Bells,” giving credit to Leontovych, and the song was on its way to becoming a cherished Christmas classic.



Father Jerzy Czarnecki SVD, still in their hearts, the people embraced last year's caroling visits with joy. I was warmly welcomed everywhere. Meeting the new pastor—to have a priest to come and pray with them, bless their families and bring God's blessings to their homes—was a great relief. They prayed for protection from evil.

The question on my mind this year was. *Had anything changed?* As I made my caroling visits, I thankfully found that the faith and hope of Christmas continued to bring light and peace this feeling remained strong. The feelings of warmth and joy remained equally strong.

What had changed was the number of tears shed and the amount of pain endured due to the loss of sons, husbands and grandsons in the war,



as well as the immense longing and fear for their loved ones fighting on the front lines. More obvious this year than last, males are missing from the family, as so many have been called to the military, lost to war or have migrated abroad.

Some of the saddest and most challenging situations are in the surrounding villages, where the elderly are without family support—entirely alone. The caroling visits held special significance for them. Their tear-filled eyes, fervent prayers and anticipation of their loved ones' return touched us deeply and pierced our hearts with pain.

I believe—I hope and pray—these innocent people's suffering, their prayers and faith will deliver the much-desired peace and calm and dignified life back to Ukraine. Please keep these families in your hearts with a special prayer. Join us as we pray to God that next year's caroling will take place in a peaceful, free country. ●

**HELP REFUGEES IN
UKRAINE AND POLAND.**



Please help support our missionaries in Ukraine and Poland who are providing food, clothing, shelter, translation services, language classes—and more—to so many families in need.

“How can I help?”
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In War or Peace, the Salvation of the Faithful Remains His Priority

by Jacek Gniadek SVD

Father Wojciech Żółty SVD is a Divine Word Missionary from Poland who has been serving in Ukraine since 2011. As a priest, he wanted to work with and for people where the Roman Catholic Church was marginalized. Ukraine is a country dominated by the Orthodox Church. He had no idea what the future would bring; nobody knows that.

Fr. Żółty took over the parish in Verboviets in the Vinnytsia Oblast, that had been initially run by Father Gzegorz Konkol SVD and Father Luis Talacz SVD, a missionary of Ukrainian origin who was raised in Brazil, where he is now serving.

Fr. Konkol was the first Divine Word Missionary to Ukraine. He arrived in 1992 to accompany the Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters at a Verboviets convent. He stayed for 12 years. During that time, he developed



a project called “Holidays with God,” which started as a summer camp for children whose families could not afford to go on vacation. The local people are generally poor and live on tiny farms; none of the children had even dreamed of attending a summer camp.

In February 2022, when war broke out and Russia invaded Ukraine, Fr. Żółty and Father Adam Kruczyński SVD, who works in a neighboring parish, were on a retreat in Poland. They immediately decided to return to Ukraine and the people of their parish communities.

“When I saw frightened crowds running in the streets and getting phone calls from families needing shelter, I realized the war was real. You could see the fear in everyone’s eyes. It was at that moment Fr. Adam and I knew we wanted to stay right where we were, regardless of what the future would bring,” Fr. Żółty said.



Please help support our missionaries in Ukraine and Poland who are providing food, clothing, shelter and spiritual support to so many families in need.

HELP REFUGEES IN UKRAINE AND POLAND.



The ongoing war has been frightening and disruptive, especially for children. Fr. Żółty and the Sisters continued the summer camp program despite the war. The Verboviets parish campground has been a haven for the children of this war-torn country. Here, they have the opportunity not only to relax and play but also to receive religious education. While relations with the Moscow-based Orthodox Church are not generally good, the Catholic parish in Verboviets welcomes all children without exception.

The parish's summer camp houses were made available at the outbreak of war and quickly filled with refugees. Eleven families lived on the parish compound. They were grateful for the food and shelter, but the devastating effects of war demanded more than just humanitarian assistance. Fr. Żółty was there to accompany them emotionally and spiritually. Together with the Sisters, he helped one couple prepare for the sacrament of marriage. One refugee child was baptized. To his surprise, "Actually, everyone started going to church," Fr. Żółty said.

The refugees left Verboviets about a year ago, but Fr. Żółty remains in contact with them. "They call and

write to thank us for helping them find their way to God during this awful war,” he said.

For a time, the war brought refugees and fear to Verboviets. As the fighting became concentrated in the eastern side of Ukraine, life in Verboviets and other western communities returned almost to normal. For Fr. Żółty, though, his priorities remain the same. Nothing has changed. The salvation of the people he meets is always the most important thing.

On the first day of the war, an altar server from Verboviets was killed. He was a soldier on the eastern border when the war broke out. Fr. Żółty helped his mother return to Ukraine from Moscow through Poland, where she worked before the war. Her son’s burial place is picked out, but his body cannot yet be returned. When that becomes possible, those sad and frightening memories from the first days of the war will come flooding back to Verboviets. The family’s spiritual refuge will be the small parish community with the priest who has stayed to accompany them in good and bad times. ●



Pray for Ukraine





Two Years of War in Ukraine

by Sr Maria Marta Przywara SSsP

I am writing this during Lent. As I reflect on Jesus' suffering and see so much suffering in our wounded world, I pray our hearts be moved with compassion. Not only to those far away but also to those living with us, looking for our presence, hungry for a good word, a listening ear or a smiling face. Every one of us has something to offer to the world to make it more human.

I clearly remember that day two years ago. We Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters had gathered for a seminar in our convent in the small village of Verboviets. I got up very early in the morning and heard loud explosions. I thought there were hunters in the forest, but the shocking news soon came: The war had begun!

At the beginning, we thought one week, one or two months, and the war will be over. **Today it is two years, and we realize that the end is not going to come soon.**

Recently, I was in Zaporizhzhia and could feel people's fear because the Russians were coming closer to the city. Consequently, many shops, grocery stores and pharmacies are emptying and closing. Those people who can find work receive very small salaries. On the campus of the Catholic church, we distribute food four times a week. I saw a crowd of some 1,500 people standing in line to receive a loaf of bread and sandwich fixings. The people had been waiting two to three hours.

At the same time in Zaporizhzhia, in the Church of the Merciful Father, people gather to pray. Morning Mass brings about 200 people.

I met Alona and her husband there. They escaped after the Russians overtook their town and their house. They became our parishioners. During the summer, they married. They had been together for many years. Ten years ago, they lost their three children in a car accident. Now, they have lost their home and livelihoods. Their sharing was very moving. They are an example of many people who suffered so much but are being enriched spiritually. They love and support each other and have deep faith, seeing that the Lord is with them and has a plan for them.

Alona shared so many traumatic stories, but along with them were also beautiful stories.

Hunkered down in the basement, prisoners in their own house, Alona read the Bible aloud and memorized Psalm 91. She said it gave them strength. She ended her story by adding, "It was a miracle that we were able to escape the occupation. I fled first, then my husband followed, taking a car and four dogs—which might have helped our escape."

I visited my friend who opened a small café in our city. A lady came in to buy coffee. I could hear them talking about a soldier, so I asked her if she has someone at the front. She shared a story about her brother: "He left for the war just two months ago. As he left, I offered him a small crucifix. Initially he didn't want to take it as he was not much of a believer. But at the end of our visit, he gave in and took it. Today, he called me and said, 'He saved my life! The battle was terrible, but I remained alive. Thank you.'" As she told the story, she was moved to tears.

Waiting at the train station in Zaporizhzhia, I watched the people on the platforms. Many soldiers were getting on the train. At another small station, I saw a mother saying goodbye to her very young son, a soldier. I saw how she was trying to keep herself composed and not cry. But the pain and worries were written all over her face. As the son turned to get on board, the mother's hand made a big sign of the cross.

Her prayers went with him. ●

"He will shelter you with his pinions, and under his wings you may take refuge; his faithfulness is a protecting shield. You shall not fear the terror of the night nor the arrow that flies by day," —Psalm 91

A Letter of Thanksgiving During Lent

by Sr Maria Śleziak SSpS

I sincerely want to express my great gratitude for every prayer, sacrifice and gift sent to Ukraine.

I have been serving in Ukraine for almost 27 years. I came from Kamesznica, Poland, a small village located in the Beskid Mountains.

As a Holy Spirit Missionary Sister, I started my service here in the tiny village of Verboviets. Over the years, I have worked with children, youth and adults. For 13 years, I served in a shelter for the poor and homeless.

Ukraine is a beautiful country with lots of greenery, forests and grasslands. The people are kind and hospitable. Ukrainian cuisine can be a bit different from others. Soup, potatoes or some kind of hot dish is quite common for both breakfast and dinner. In terms of religious denominations, there is a majority of Orthodox Christians here.

War broke out in 2014 in the eastern part of Ukraine. In 2017, as a volunteer, I went to the east for a month to help people suffering from Russian oppression. It was the first time I experienced a taste of this terrible war, the suffering and sadness. I huddled with children and adults as we hid in cellars during attacks. I remember once we were in a school, and shells started flying. The entire school building began to shake, and I was frightened.

A small child asked, "Are you afraid?"

"Yes!" I replied.

Several children responded, "We are not afraid anymore. We are used to it."

At the time, I didn't know the worst was yet to come.

In February 2022, the Russians invaded Ukraine. Ukraine was at war. At the time, I was in Ireland studying English. A voice in my heart—God's voice—told me I needed to be with people who were suffering. I quickly returned to Ukraine.

Many people from Ukraine took refuge abroad, searching for a safe place for themselves and their children. However, many more remained to face the suffering and torment of war.

As I write this, many people are missing—husbands and sons. My prayers have grown stronger because the war has grown stronger. There are daily bombings, and many cities in Ukraine already are destroyed.

Today is Feb. 24, 2024. It is Lent. In Boryspil, near Kiev, it is relatively quiet, apart from the frequent sirens and sound of explosions. The Russian military is occupying Ukrainian territory, but in our hearts there is hope and faith in God's mercy.

Today, I give thanks to all of you, my dear ones, for your prayers and sacrifices. The Lord Jesus gives us strength. We continue to help as much as we can. We send parcels with water, food and medical supplies to areas we cannot reach personally. We help military families and refugees. In many cities of Ukraine, including Boryspil, people have lost everything. It is a hard reality for them. Some people have given up hope for a better tomorrow.

Sometimes, just being there to talk with them over coffee or tea helps lift their spirits enough so they feel no longer alone in their suffering. **I wish you could see the faces of the children and adults when they receive food, clothing and toys—the simple joy of receiving something normal in life.** I wish you could see the joy on their faces that your generosity has provided.

I know firsthand that the Ukrainian people are most grateful to you for the support they continue to receive. I don't know what will happen next. I don't know when the time will come that the Russians stop bombing Ukraine. But I know one thing for sure: God is with us, with our nation, and for that, I thank him. **And once again, I thank you for your prayers and generosity.**



Success on Wheels: A Project Like No Other

By Lawrence Muthee SVD

In mid-2020, we initiated a “Wheels to Evangelize” project designed to equip our catechists with motorcycles to reach far-off mission stations in our Simanjiro parish in Tanzania. With the help of the Techny Mission Center and its generous benefactors, we were able to purchase 17 motorcycles, and our catechists got wheels to reach all corners of our vast parish.

Thanks to these motorcycles, today, we are witnessing growth in faith among the Maasai people because our

catechists have been able to travel to distant Christian communities more easily. Our catechists are forever grateful for this huge boost to their mission and personal livelihood.

When a catechist receives a motorcycle, a contract is signed. The terms require a catechist to teach religion in the school located in their station on Fridays, teach catechism classes for sacraments for children and adults on Saturdays, and conduct Bible service on Sundays when no priest is available to say Mass. Catechists can then use their motorcycles for the rest of the week as transportation to earn a living for their families.

Because our parish has many mission stations spread over a large region, our



Catechists Wheel





two priests are available to celebrate Mass only once every two to three months at each station. It is, therefore, the catechists who keep the Church running in the stations.

The “Wheels to Evangelize” project has helped our mission in Tanzania in multiple ways:

Having motorcycles has allowed catechists to carry out their apostolate and still return to their families in a timely fashion. Without a motorcycle, catechists often had to walk long distances—sometimes 30 miles—from their homes to their stations and back. This was a hardship for the catechists and their families, who complained that they were away from home for lengthy periods and not there to care for the family’s household needs.

Motorcycle travel has allowed catechists to arrive at their outstation early and conduct Sunday school and Bible service for children and, when needed, Bible service for adults. Thanks to Sunday school, the number of children attending church has increased tremendously. This has been a considerable help in curbing child marriages and a deterrent to the abuse of young girls. The Sunday school program led to a Christmas Day children’s singing competition in 2021. Today, we have over 1,000 children participating.

With motorcycles, catechists are now able to transfer from one station to another to further their sense of a missionary spirit. Now when we hold our monthly meetings and training sessions in the parish, all catechists



Christmas Day children’s singing competition

Evangelization *to keep these girls safe*





attend and arrive on time. This has helped to improve their knowledge and further the ministry greatly.

They say that success leads to more success. As a result of our Wheels to Evangelize ministry, we have opened five more mission stations since 2021 in places catechists could not have reached before.

We continue to recruit more catechists. So far, we have four new catechists who have completed their studies and two more in the running for catechetical training. We ask those willing to become catechists to volunteer for one year and attend monthly meetings and training. If we find them fit, they go on to the catechetical training institute.

The need for new motorcycles arises with each new catechist who joins the ministry. The price for each new motorcycle is the equivalent of \$1,000 in U.S. currency.

As you can see, your donation to this motorcycle fund is directly evangelizing the people in the far corners of Tanzania, and it is assisting the catechists—who are dedicating their time and energy—with the ability to learn and earn towards their future.

We have witnessed a growth in faith among the Maasai and a growth in leadership among our catechists. We are grateful to all who contributed to the realization of the Wheels to Evangelize project, and we hope our benefactors will once again help us to continue this very successful mission program. ●





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Thanks to your generosity the Kaululo Church will be the center of this Christian community in Angola.

We raised over \$36,000

THANKS TO YOUR GIFTS, this church—the structural work, stonework, roof, plasterwork and outdoor painting—will now be completed.

As this fund continues to grow, three more churches in Angola will also grow—and then ***more to come world-wide!***



Thank you for your prayers & support!

For decades, the Mission Center of Divine Word Missionaries has invited benefactors to assist mission communities overseas in building small, permanent chapels. These mission chapels are often in very remote areas and serve as an outstation or “satellite” chapel to the parish church at the mission’s main station. With this gift you become partners with the local community in building a dignified place of worship. Letters from grateful pastors overseas always assure us that our generous benefactors and their intentions are remembered in the daily prayers of the parishioners for years to come.

Formation for Mission:



The Journey of the Vietnam Province

From Arnoldus Nota

Divine Word Missionary priests and Brothers from Vietnam work in nations throughout the world, involved in ministries such as parishes, schools and administrative work. The Vietnam Province itself continues to prosper in terms of ministries, pastoral engagements and an increasing number of candidates entering its formation houses. This success is greatly due to the formation these missionaries have received.



Challenges and opportunities

Formation in Vietnam is different in many ways from other areas around the world. The formation length—from aspirancy to perpetual vows or ordination—is longer than usual. Candidates are accepted as aspirants during college, which adds three to four years to formation. The formation period, including postulancy, novitiate, philosophy, cross-cultural training and theology, spans 11 to 13 years. It is not uncommon for candidates to be ordained no younger than 32.

Learning a new language for mission work in other areas around the world becomes challenging for our Vietnamese confreres due to their age and the complexity of the Vietnamese language itself, with its script and intonations.

“Traveling one day,
gaining a heap of wisdom.”



*Father Stanley Uroda SVD
pictured with students*

Father Huu Duy Nguyen SVD, the current provincial superior for Vietnam, was a formator for 10 years. He sees the need for more intercultural exposure during formation. In Vietnam, formation focuses on the national and local culture, with little exposure to the international character of Divine Word Missionaries. Strict government regulations and limitations on missionary work impede receiving missionaries from outside of Vietnam. Furthermore, when missionaries from other parts of the world are accepted, the complex Vietnamese language poses a barrier, limiting their contributions to the Vietnam mission.

To bolster the international character of the formation houses, Fr. Duy believes that sending seminarians to the Cross-cultural Training Program before their ordination would make a significant change. This exposure to intercultural settings, language learning and missions outside their culture and comfort zone will provide a valuable experience. Seminarians will bring back new elements and ideas that enrich their outlook and the formation process.

“Đi một ngày đàng, học một sàng khôn.”



Addressing formation needs in Vietnam

Even small steps can have a significant impact. To help push them out of their comfort zone, candidates are encouraged to learn English throughout the stages of formation in Vietnam. Fr. Duy specifically highlights the late Father Stanley Uroda SVD, an American, who volunteered to teach English to seminarians in Nha Trang. Fr. Stan's demeanor and simplicity inspired the students, and beyond teaching English, he embodied the true spirit of a Divine Word Missionary. Fr. Duy expresses gratitude for what Fr. Stan brought to the province during his four years there. Even though he spoke little Vietnamese, his witness and motivation were impactful.

Like many provinces with formation houses, the Vietnam Province continually looks to train priests to assume the responsibility of serving as formators. Fr. Duy, recalling his years as a formator, emphasizes the importance of fostering trust and confidence with seminarians through dialogue. These qualities are essential in every formator and cannot simply be learned in schools or workshops. Those entrusted with priestly formation require introspection, discernment and a deep understanding of what truly matters.

The Vietnam Province is committed to improving its formation program. As this

province sends missionaries worldwide, the challenge lies in sending well-trained individuals for the mission. The four focal points of priestly formation, according to the teaching of Pope John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, are human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral. Based on his growth and personal depth in these areas, a candidate is evaluated for his suitability for ministry in today's Catholic Church.

The Vietnam Province strives to instill during formation the values that will build men who have integrity, fidelity and compassion; who are courageous, pure and detached from worldly acclaim; who are selfless and free of all ambition—except to do the will of God.

In all corners of the world—but especially in Vietnam—priestly formation is a long and persistent journey. It begins with the family, continues through discernment, and solidifies during seminary years and pastoral experience. Finally, it is confirmed at ordination, where it becomes a lifetime of collaboration of God's grace and human effort. Considering this, Fr. Duy is reminded of a Vietnamese saying: “Đi một ngày đàng, học một sàng khôn.” This translates to: “Traveling one day, gaining a heap of wisdom.” It signifies that one can achieve success through the persistent pursuit of goals and continuous learning along the journey. ●

“Today, a new economy inspired by Francis of Assisi can and must become an economy of friendship with the earth and an economy of peace. It is a question of transforming an economy that kills into an economy of life, in all its aspects.” –Pope Francis, September 24, 2022



Empowering the People of Vale do Ribeira: A Commitment to Eco-social Justice and Human Dignity

By Jairo Godinho Guimarães SVD

Recently, I joined three Divine Word priests—Fathers Joaquim Rosa de Paula SVD, Daniel Mateque Mateus SVD and Martín Resendes Islas SVD—in Vale do Ribeira, a region in southern Brazil. Here, we immersed ourselves in the traditional communities of the Guarani indigenous village Tekoá Pindóty and the Quilombo do Biguazinho.

Within these villages, Fr. Joaquim leads a dedicated effort to defend rights and implement income-generating projects based on the “economy of Francis and Clare,” the two saints of Assisi known for their simplicity and devotion to the environment.

The project is twofold. It focuses on caring for the environment and creating programs that can sustain the people of this region and their traditional ways of life. The project also serves as a practical training course for our missionaries, preparing them for active involvement in advocacy and the rights of local people concerning land, water and forest in regions such as Vale do Ribeira that are rich environmentally but poor economically.

This visit—and the people in this land—opened our eyes to mission, spirituality and the Divine Word

methodology of Justice, Peace and Integrity. We learned effective ways to advise and assist local people and paths we can take to achieve the program’s goals. A crucial lesson was the importance of harnessing the knowledge of the local women and indigenous youth and including them in the decision-making process. This inclusive approach helps to ensure the program’s strength and autonomy.

After living among the people, we returned enlightened by our interaction with these highly traditional communities. We also returned with a global awareness of the need to support programs worldwide that promote eco-social justice, environmental preservation and, most importantly, human dignity. The Vale do Ribeira project is not merely a one-time intervention. It is an ongoing commitment to building a more just and compassionate world.

Divine Word Missionaries remain unwavering in our mission to be salt and light in the most challenging realities. Our continuous commitment empowers communities, fosters eco-social justice and upholds human dignity in Vale do Ribeira and around the world. ●

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MASS REQUESTS

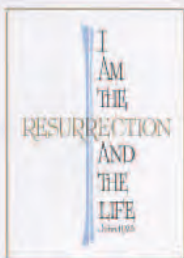
See how quick and easy
it is to request a Mass

Divine Word Missionaries are honored to pray with you for your special intention.

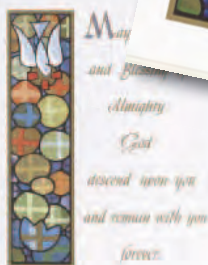
- Your Mass will be celebrated by our missionaries overseas.
- Your offering supports our missionaries and the people they serve.
- Mass requests are also available by calling 1-800-275-0626.



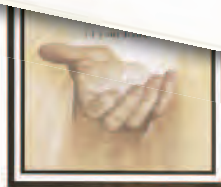
Mass cards can be sent to an honoree or a family member.



☐ **Sympathy Card 1**



☐ **Sympathy Card 2**



☐ **Sympathy Card 3**



☐ **Sympathy Card 4**



☐ **Birthday Card 1**



☐ **Birthday Card 2**



☐ **Get Well Card 1**



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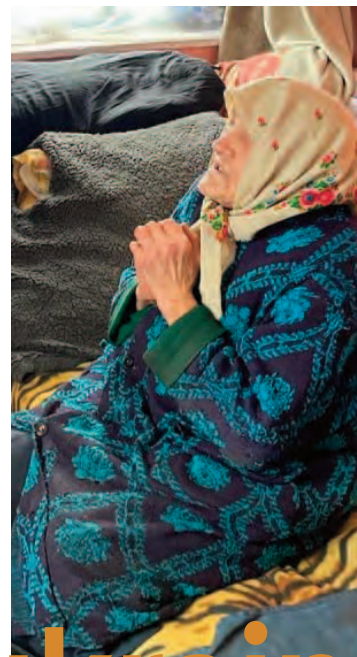
Your prayers and support will make a difference.



UKRAINE

Three of our missionaries remain in the western part of Ukraine caring for their parishioners and displaced citizens.

"Some of the saddest and most challenging situations are in the outlying villages, where many older people are without family support—they are entirely alone. On our visits we witness their tear-filled eyes, hear their fervent prayers and share the hope they feel in anticipation of their loved ones return. It pierces our hearts with pain."



svdmissions.org/ukraine

Your gift, in any amount, will directly help these Ukraine parishes.