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Winter 2019

# DIVINE WORD MISSIONARIES

# mission

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Modern communication seems to change by the day. Sometimes by the hour.

Here at the Mission Center we are constantly adapting to communicate our message. In the last few years we have upped our game on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. If you've been following us (or liking us), we hope you've noticed our efforts to keep you in the know.

But an organization's website is the keystone to what the experts call its "social media platform." At the start of 2018 we took a look at our website and realized it wasn't conveying our message of mission as much as we would like. We knew that we needed to build awareness with a larger audience and invite everyone in to view our mission stories.

So, we got to work. After months of ideas and meetings and then more ideas, we launched our new-look website. The URL is the same—[www.svdmissions.org](http://www.svdmissions.org)—but everything else has changed dramatically. Go ahead and take a look. We are confident you will find it compelling and inviting.

We call our new approach "Mission Impact." The life works of our missionaries deserve the widest possible audience. We believe our redesigned site will have a positive impact for our global mission by spreading our story to the world. Mission Impact is our response to today's call to spread the word about our missions and to spread the word about how together we can make an impact on the lives of people who are continents away—but close to all our hearts.

We also believe our longtime friends will enjoy Mission Impact. The new website makes it easier for to get to know our dedicated priests and Brothers, to request Masses, to give a gift and to just be part of our team. We have also included resources to enhance your prayer life.

Don't worry. *Mission Update* magazine isn't going away. We still need a venue to tell in-depth stories. The magazine will work in tandem with our website to give you the full picture of Divine Word Missionaries. We can't wait to hear what you think about Mission Impact. And please, share the website with your friends!

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](mailto:director@svdmissions.org)

**Thank you  
for your  
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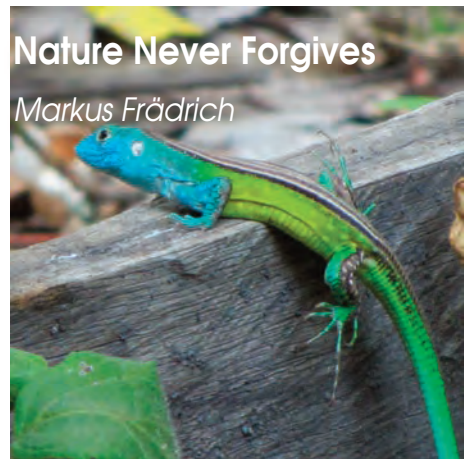
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# Breaking the Cycle of Poverty—Changes Lives

*Written by Rebecca Frank*

(Reprinted from the Austrian *Stadt Gottes*.  
Translated by Father David Streit SVD)

*Rebecca Frank is a fundraiser at Divine Word Missionaries' mission office in St. Gabriel outside of Vienna, Austria. Her work takes her abroad on visits to Divine Word mission sites.*

**I**n the slums of the central Indian city of Indore even the youngest children have to work. Here Divine Word Missionaries are making it possible for these children to get their first steps in education through "bridge schools." To assist older residents, microloans are available to help them start small businesses. Bridge schools and microloans will break young and old free of the cycle of poverty and liberate them from a lifetime of demeaning jobs and living in squalor.



When little Puja held out her small hands to welcome me, I was struck by the roughness of her skin. My own hands do not feel that rough even after a long, cold winter. This 9-year-old girl gained her dry, cracked hands through daily labor in the brickworks. Every morning Puja and her grandmother get up every early (she lives with her grandmother because both her parents are in poor health and unable to contribute to the family's income). After a few quick bites of breakfast, the old woman and the girl set off for the brickworks at first light.

Work starts at about 4 in the morning. At first glance, making bricks looks a bit like baking. Metal forms are dusted on the inside with sand so that nothing sticks to them. Then, with bare hands, Puja and her grandmother fill the forms with the soft clay mixture already prepared by other workers. They pat it down, smooth it out and knock the form to loosen the moist mixture. Finally, they lift the form from the newly pressed brick. Then they move down the line to do it all over again. Puja and her grandmother repeat this process hundreds of times every single day. The bricks they have formed lay row after row to dry in the sun. Once the bricks dry, workers stack them into pyramids so that they can be fired.







## The day we visited the bridge the public sewerage system.

Do not be fooled. This is not at all like playing in the sandbox. The work is hard and difficult. Sooner or later, squatting on the ground all day long over the brick forms will ruin a person's posture. Together, Puja and her grandmother can turn out about 1,000 bricks a day, working 10 hours in sweltering heat. And what does that get them? Between the two of them, they manage to earn 500 rupees, equivalent to about \$7.50, a day. A foreman inspects the bricks they produce, and they are not paid for those that are cracked or chipped or otherwise fail to pass inspection.

Father Roy Thomas SVD, who heads Janvikas Society on behalf of Divine Word Missionaries, brought us to meet little Puja. Together with about 30 of his co-workers and helpers in Janvikas—many of them social workers or teachers—Fr. Roy dedicates himself to helping the slum dwellers of the central Indian city of Indore.

In recent decades, this city of 1.5 million inhabitants has become encircled by hundreds of shantytown slums where shabbily constructed apartment buildings overlook one-room houses made of mud that in turn are packed cheek to jowl alongside rickety shacks cobbled together from stray pieces of timber, metal sheeting, cardboard and canvas. Settlements of tent dwellers have sprung up on small river islands and on plots of unused land.

Indore has become a magnet drawing an unending stream of small subsistence farmers from outlying villages that can no longer eke out a living from their small patches of land. The lucky ones find work in construction. Many earn some money by hiring themselves out as day laborers. Some find work as servants for well-to-do families. Others collect and sort garbage, searching for recyclable material.

When I saw Puja for the first time, she was sitting with other children from 4 to 15 years of age on the floor of a crudely built brick house. Signs and posters hung on the walls displaying the alphabet as well as various kinds of flowers and fruits. This is the bridge school of the Himmat Nagar slum settlement. The “classroom” is actually the living space of a family who makes it available for lessons a few hours

## school, the slum area was finally being connected to

each day. The same kind of cooperation can be found in other slums where Janvikas operates bridge schools.

The day we visited the Himmat Nagar bridge school, the slum area was finally being connected to the public sewerage system. To enter the classroom, one had to jump over an open ditch dug for the sewage flowing through the neighborhood. Each day about 20 boys and girls gather here for lessons. “The goal of our bridge schools is simply to give these children some basic knowledge. They learn their letters, counting, short rhymes and poems, and also a little English and some basic hygiene and health care,” says Fr. Roy. For two or three hours a day, the girls and boys here are able to just be children—and learn.

“Intensive and difficult discussions with the parents are first necessary,” Fr. Roy adds. “It’s not always clear to them why they should give up the work and earning power of their children and allow them to attend school. But the people of the slums know us already. Parents here have learned to trust us. Our long-term goal, of course, is that each of these children will eventually have the chance to benefit from a primary school education in a normal school. The bridge school is the first step in that direction.”

In the bridge schools, the littlest ones sit in rows up front, cross-legged on the floor, with their small tablets in their laps. The bigger children sit toward the back. Puja is among them. Many of the children can attend the bridge school only part time because their families are utterly dependent on the children’s additional earnings. There’s no point talking about hobbies or fun. These children have no time to play.

The bridge schools were created to help the youngest of Indore’s slum dwellers. Janvikas also has programs to provide economic aid to older residents trying to break free of the cycle of poverty. “Janvikas has really changed my life,” says Avanti, a young woman about 25 years old (she does not know her exact age). “I could only get day labor in a chocolate packing factory because the company wanted to avoid having to pay the annoying social benefits that would be due me if I had full employment. From one day to the next







I didn't know whether I would be able to buy dinner for my six children." Now Avanti is the proud owner of a small grocery store. She obtained the capital to buy the store in the form of a microloan from the credit union run by Janvikas. "What's my biggest wish? To see my children in school," Avanti says.

Mr. Sima can tell a similar story. Thanks to a microloan from Janvikas seven years ago, he has been running a small beauty shop that offers skin and hair care, makeup and help in the complicated process of draping saris for festive events. He is even able to share his success with others. Sixteen-year-old Shamila had searched in vain for a job. Now she works as a beautician in Mr. Sima's salon.

"We want to help the slum dwellers achieve a regular income. Owning even a very small business can make a person feel independent," explains Fr. Roy.

Janvikas shows recipients of microloans how to keep books and helps them deal with the necessary and administrative and bureaucratic matters. "We help the rubbish collectors by lobbying together with them in their struggle to obtain fair payment." Fr. Ray says. "If families have a regular income, even though it may be small, they will manage somehow to find a way to send their children to school. These children have much better chances of finding a decent job and to avoid being sucked into undignified working conditions."

And Puja? After her lessons in the bridge school, she quickly runs back to the brickyard to help her grandmother. They still have a long and busy afternoon ahead of them before she can run back home at dusk to take care of the family's two goats, grab something to eat and get a short night's sleep before beginning another busy day. We hope that someday Puja will also be able to say: "Janvikas really changed my life!"



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## SIMPLE HELPFUL SKILLS

*By Lawrence Muthee SVD*

When I was a child in Kenya, my family grew coffee. Coffee is perhaps the world's most preferred hot beverage, but it takes a lot of work to produce every gram of the finished product you enjoy at your breakfast table. I know of no coffee-harvesting machine. Every berry must be picked by hand when ripe. This is an exhausting and time-consuming process.

Our parents taught my siblings and me the value of hard work—not just work for the sake of it, but perfect work. My father used to say, “If you want to do it, then do it well. Otherwise, do not do it at all.” Growing up, every one of my siblings and I were given a portion of the coffee bushes to tend. We weeded, fertilized, pruned and harvested our patch. All these tasks we learned first-hand, watching how our parents did it.

After every harvesting season, which came twice a year, we were paid our proportional cut of the earnings. This money would take care of everyday minor expenses such as buying toothpaste. Our parents taught us how to earn what we spent.

Apart from the coffee business, we learned a number of other helpful skills such as animal keeping, carpentry, masonry, mechanics—and how to repair and maintain almost any device.







This know-how not only helped us to substantially reduce our daily bills, but it also instilled in us the working knowledge of many fields and the ability to innovate and improvise. With all this expertise stored in my brain, I felt the need to share these skills with other young people, especially those who did not have the privilege my siblings and I had.

When I got my first missionary appointment in Arusha, Tanzania, two and a half years ago, I came face to face with the problems of our young people. Most of them never receive a sufficient education to secure a white-collar job and they have little or no technical skills to work a blue-collar job.

Some sort of training was desperately needed. I knew I had a lot of work to do to help these young people. Immediately I set out on a journey.

We began with building self-confidence and self-care skills. Then we built teamwork through games such as volleyball. We also gathered in

groups to discuss issues affecting the youth today.

Our latest project is candle making, which I learned in Soweto, Nairobi, when I joined Divine Word Missionaries. I built a candle-making machine that combines the technologies of a car engine and a brick-making machine.

To save on costs, instead of buying new wax we recycle used candles. Today, many of the students have learned this trade well enough to make candles on their own, without any supervision.

My parents taught me life lessons I continue to use and pass on to those I teach each day. As a missionary I have come to realize that the people we serve remember us—and are most thankful—for what they learn from us rather than what we do for them. My missionary vocation is a platform to change the lives of people spiritually, but also to teach them skills for a better future. I sometimes go to bed exhausted ... but certainly happy and fulfilled.





Look for our **NEW** website

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***When founded in 1875, Divine Word Missionaries made an impact on the world.***

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# Nature Never Forgives

By Markus Frädrieh

(Translated by Father David Streit SVD)

**In the Amazon Region of Brazil, Divine Word Missionaries fight against environmental polluters—and go head to head with politicians and company bosses.**

His neighbors often shake their heads when they see him. “Why are you making so much unnecessary work for yourself?” they ask. But Joaquim will not be deterred and continues to swing his machete. Grass blades fly through the scorching heat. Drops of sweat collect on the *campesino*’s forehead.

Joaquim’s *fazenda* (family farm) is only 240 acres on the outskirts of the small Brazilian town of Rurópolis. The town is located 4 degrees south of the Equator and right alongside the dusty Trans-Amazonian Highway, the famous and never-completed road that stretches 4,000 miles from west to east across the jungle. With laborious swings of his machete, Joaquim sometimes fights for days against the dense vegetation just to clear a small patch of ground where he will plant corn, perhaps, or beans.

Sure, he could make life easier for himself. Sure, he could start a controlled burn and then sit back and relax while watching the flames destroy everything in their path—including all





the trees standing in the way. Here on the Amazon's great monoculture plantations, almost everyone does it. For miles and miles, burning jungle is a common sight. "But I don't want any part of that," says the man with the straw hat and white beard as he continues lopping off some ferns with his sharp machete. "When you practice slash-and-burn farming here, you can only expect to plant crops in this soil two or three times in a row. After that the land is simply exhausted, all the nutrients are gone."

Unlike most of his neighbors, Joaquim wants to practice sustainable agriculture on his land and be in harmony with nature. He doesn't want to completely deprive wild animals of their habitat, and he wants to give the land the opportunity to renew itself on its own. The reward for this philosophy of life and work is evident in the rich green shades that catch the eye everywhere: lush banana plants, mango trees hanging thick with fruit, perfect cacao pods—just like in the picture books. And all of this amid the background noises that give a good idea of the diverse animal species at home here.

Brother Ludwig Kaut SVD waves to his campesino friend before steering his white pickup onto the road back to Rurópolis. In the back of his truck,

the 5-foot stalk of bananas that Joaquim had just given him as a farewell gift bounces into the air with every pothole.



The nature-loving campesino was among the many friends the Divine Word Missionary Brother, who was born in the eastern part of Belgium, had made during his years of pastoral work among the people of this rural community. Although Bro. Ludwig has since been transferred to the distant parish of Alenquer, he still comes often to visit his friend Joaquim. "The environment is close to the heart of both of us," he says. "Joaquim is one of those people who are very clear about the fact that we are not at liberty to do whatever we want with the environment."

Bro. Ludwig doggedly continues to oppose every affront to nature here in the earth's "green lung" of the Amazon. Of course, with that stance, it wasn't only friends that he made in Rurópolis. His initiatives against politicians and company bosses have earned him the reputation as a first-class agitator and troublemaker.





"In our community there was one logging company that was strip-clearing trees illegally," he remembers. "I criticized that loudly and in public. After that, the logger's wife stopped coming to church and some of the men who worked for the logging company also began to avoid me."

For many people it was downright uncomfortable to have a man of the Church get so involved in environmental issues. "And yet, it's part of our duty as Church to get actively involved in the protection of the environment," Bro. Ludwig says. "In the Book of Genesis, it is written that we are responsible for the world which God has given us. The Church stands for life, not death. And so we have to throw ourselves into the fight against everything that produces death."

In this way, Bro. Ludwig encouraged the small farmers of Rurópolis to take a stand against the enormous ecological sins so evident right outside their front doors; to bring an end to the extermination of animal species; to fight against the "logging Mafia"; and to preserve what remains of the rainforest. Because, as he says, "God always forgives. Man seldom forgives. But Mother Nature never forgives. On the contrary, she takes revenge. And we're beginning to feel the effects of that revenge."

### ***And now, a change of scene...***

...to the city of Santarém, approximately 120 miles away, where the green waters of the Rio Tabajós merge with the brown waters of the Amazon. The Casa Central del Verbo Divino, the central district house of the Divine Word Missionaries in the Amazon Region, lies right at the harbor's edge. River boats, large and small, anchor a few meters from the front door. Local merchants sell bread, bananas and maize under brightly colored umbrellas.

"As men of God here in the Amazon, we are called upon to commit ourselves to defending the rights of the people and to the protection of creation, which is God's gift to the whole of







humanity,” says Father José Boeing SVD, former Regional Superior for Divine Word Missionaries in the Amazon.

Fr. José’s white T-shirt with the logo of the Misioneros del Verbo Divino flutters in the warm breeze coming off of the river. He believes that the Divine Word Brothers and priests working in Amazonia have a responsibility to be role models. “Especially,” he says, “when we, as missionaries, show our appreciation and respect for the traditions of the indigenous peoples, who have learned how to live in harmony with nature.”

Fr. José, a 52-year-old Brazilian, motivates his confreres of different nationalities to raise their voices “against the various big companies and the national government in the capital, Brasília, who in the name of a not-very-human ‘progress,’ work hand in hand against the interests of the inhabitants of the region.” Automatically, his gaze sweeps into the distance, in the direction of a structure that has loomed over the port of Santarém since 2001: the soybean loading terminal belonging to the U.S. agricultural conglomerate Cargill.

Today the facility loads giant ocean-going freighters with the yield of thousands of acres of soybean fields that Cargill had clear-cut, burned and leveled with bulldozers. After the terminal began operating, the acreage of the fields planted with soybeans soared from about 4,500 acres to more than 86,000 acres. Indigenous people lost their ancestral lands, and the environment suffered massive damage. All of that for soybeans, which Europe’s mills turn into pellets to be

*“God always forgives.  
Man seldom forgives.  
But Mother Nature never forgives.  
On the contrary, she takes revenge.  
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effects of that revenge.”*

used as animal food for chickens, hogs and cattle in Europe’s intensive mass animal farming industry.

Fr. José is fighting Cargill so vigorously he has received death threats. “They haven’t managed to silence me yet,” says Fr. Jose, who is also a lawyer. “I know that God is at my side even in this difficult situation.”

Fr. José and his helpers were not able to prevent the building of the soybean loading terminal, which was occupied for a while by Greenpeace activists. Instead, he has been working to push through the creation of “protected zones” or reserves for the indigenous peoples and for the small subsistence farmers, the *campesinos*. He is particularly proud of a “collective reserve” that he helped bring into being on the opposite bank of the Rio Tabajós. The reservation is home to 70 villages spread out over nearly 1.4 million acres.

Fr. José glances at his watch, then climbs into his car. His next appointment: a protest march. In recent months local politicians from Santarém have had hundreds of acres of rainforest clear cut—practically at the front door of the little town of Rurópolis—to open up land for the construction of a residential subdivision. Seemingly unaware of the bad taste and the irony, they named the subdivision *Cidade Jardim* or “Garden City.”

Twenty-one thousand tiny houses have already been built, and there are plans to expand the settlement even further. To do so, the developers plan to divert an entire river as well as drain a nearby lake, Lago do Juã.





“We Divine Word Missionaries, together with other church groups and environmental protection agencies, want to put an end to those plans,” Fr. José says as he arrives at the protest site. The first demonstrators have already begun to assemble. “Mother Nature is not a Marketable Commodity,” one of their banners proclaims.

### ***One last change of scene...***

...to a nearby community garden. Here things are noticeably calmer. A woman volunteer waters one of the neatly laid out plots. “Eupatorium ayapana” is printed in green letters on the marker. “These plants belong to the daisy family,” she explains. “The leaves are used as a remedy against headaches, colds and sleeplessness.” Father Eduardo Alfonso Sosa Garcia SVD is also an expert in the field of medicinal plants. “As we go along, everyone gets to know the ropes,” says the missionary from Mexico.

The garden is one of the many such projects that Divine Word Missionaries have built up in Brazil’s Amazon Region. “Although it’s very important to preach environmental protection and to bring lawsuits against illegal clear-cutting of the rainforest and against dams that are being planned,” Fr. Eduardo says, “in doing so we can’t forget that we have to pick up the shovels and hoes ourselves from time to time.”

Using organic farming techniques, the community’s gardeners are growing plant species native to Amazonia. The community members have to learn to appreciate the value of what nature can provide in their own backyards. At the same time, proceeds from the sale of the garden’s produce allow them to earn a bit of extra income.

“In our case, we are raising medicinal plants and preparing herbal medicines from them,” Fr. Eduardo says and opens up a cabinet in the storage building at the edge of the garden. “Qebra Pedra” is printed on one of the cartons. This tincture made from the small, wild plant is known to help against bladder infections. Next to it on the shelf is Copaiba oil, which protects against skin ailments, sunburn and rashes.



"The Amazon Basin is home to hundreds of thousands of different kinds of plants," Fr. Eduardo says. "Many of them are in danger of extinction. With our projects we hope to make a contribution to their preservation." A commitment to "Life in its fullness!" That's the credo and the challenge of the Divine Word Missionaries in Amazonia.

### ***The Amazon Basin...***

...is the region of Brazil with the country's lowest population density. Twelve million people live in an area of more than 2 million square miles. Although the Amazon Basin represents 68 percent of Brazil's total territory, only 6.5 percent of Brazilians live within the zone. Most of Brazil's approximately 200 indigenous groups live according to their ancestral cultures and traditions on or near the banks of the Amazon River and its tributaries.



### ***Divine Word Missionaries in Amazonia***

The first five Divine Word Missionaries arrived in the Amazon Region on Jan. 26, 1980. They began by taking on the pastoral care of the parishes of Oriximiná and Faro. With almost no roads to be found, they regularly visited the people there, traveling by boat or by motorized canoe. Today, about 35 Divine Word Missionary priests, Brothers and seminarians of 15 different nationalities are engaged in the Amazon Region, dedicating themselves to working for a just society and encouraging the people to adopt a respectful relationship to the environment.

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# To the humanization of the world

A few days before Archbishop Michael Blume SVD dropped by the Mission Center in Techny to discuss his work as the apostolic nuncio to Uganda, some surprising news came down. The Vatican had just appointed him apostolic nuncio to Hungary.

Archbishop Blume was expecting a new assignment, but wasn't expecting to be sent to Hungary. In a way, though, it will be a return to his roots. As a boy in South Bend, Indiana, he attended Our Lady of Hungary parish and school. His mother, whose maiden name was Körmendi, came from Hungarian ancestry. "If you say the word Körmendi to a Hungarian, you can almost taste the goulash," he joked.

Hungary will be Archbishop Blume's third assignment as an apostolic nuncio, which is the Vatican's version of an ambassador. Prior to Uganda, he was the apostolic nuncio to Togo-Benin from 2005 to 2013. He was ordained archbishop by Pope Benedict XVI upon his appointment to Togo-Benin.

The future archbishop was ordained a Divine Word priest in 1972 and served as a missionary in Ghana from 1974 to 1990. After that he went to Rome to be secretary general to the Society of the Divine Word. He followed this by participating in the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, including a stint as undersecretary from 2000 to 2005.

During his recent home leave, Archbishop Blume was kind enough to visit us at the Mission Center to look back on his time in

## *An Interview with Archbishop Michael Blume SVD*

*By Jeffrey Westhoff*



Africa and look ahead to his time in Hungary. He spoke first about his experiences in Uganda, where he became witness to one of the world's greatest refugee crises.

Shortly after his appointment to Uganda in 2013, civil war broke out in neighboring South Sudan, where Divine Word Missionaries had established a mission only the year before. "Any time people start shooting, people start moving," Archbishop Blume said.

As the fighting intensified, both sides—the government and the rebels—began to attack civilians, including unspeakable acts of savagery. Fearing for their lives, more than 2 million people have fled South Sudan, with about half of them crossing the border into Uganda to settle in refugee camps.

"In the last two years, the issue has become more serious to the extent that the population of the north of Uganda has increased by over a million people and is still growing," Archbishop Blume said. "I have not seen anything like it. It takes a lot of time for a million people to move from one place to another, especially to cross a border. Unfortunately, since the great world media organizations rarely pay prolonged attention to what happens in Africa, South Sudan remains relatively unknown."

The six Divine Word Missionaries in South Sudan remained in the country until soldiers occupied the mission compound in Lainya for several days in July 2016. "It became unlivable," Archbishop Blume said. The confreres left for Kenya at the end of July.

Archbishop Blume was instrumental in bringing confreres from the South Sudan mission to Uganda to look after the refugees. Upon hearing of the Divine Word Missionaries' evacuation, "I talked immediately to the bishop of Arua [a diocese in northern Uganda] to see if he would welcome the SVDs from South Sudan. ... The bishop was very enthusiastic."

Archbishop Blume then visited Rome to ask the Generalate to send the South Sudan missionaries to Uganda. The Generalate agreed and Father Francis Joseph Naduviledathu SVD arrived in November 2016, followed four months later by Brother Vinsentius Knaofmone SVD. They were joined by Father Lawrence Llona SVD earlier this year. "We're expecting the rest of the South Sudanese community," Archbishop Blume said. "There will be things for them to do."

The missionaries have been busy. "Our confreres, together with three SSsP Sisters, are currently visiting people in the settlements and camps," Archbishop Blume said. One of these camps, Bidi Bidi, is the largest refugee camp in the world. Covering nearly 100 square miles, its population is approaching 300,000 people. "That's several suburbs of Chicago," Archbishop Blume said.

Catholic refugees have built makeshift chapels throughout the camp. Before Fr. Francis first entered Bidi Bidi, Archbishop Blume told him: "You will find your parishioners there, and that's what happened." Fr. Francis' appearance







lifted the spirits of these refugees. “It’s important to see a friendly face in an unknown land.”

Aid workers visit the camps, bringing food, personal items and health care to the refugees. The Church also has a role in the care of refugees, Archbishop Blume said. “The Church’s role is to be part of the welcome that should be given to the stranger.”

The Church’s part of that welcome is pastoral care, which is something Archbishop Blume helped formulate as a participant in the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People:

“What I did on the pontifical council was precisely to encourage pastoral care of refugees and the response of local churches that receive refugees with an emphasis on the pastoral aspect. When you think of refugees, you think of feeding, housing, clothing—these are all important, no doubt about it, but the pastoral aspect is something that is easily forgotten. Yet it is certainly among the most important if people are to be treated as human beings and not simply as objects of compassion.”

Divine Word Missionaries are exemplars of pastoral care. “The refugees are our brothers and sisters in Christ, more than just mouths to feed. There is a personal attention that we can offer that is unique,” Archbishop Blume said. “The pastoral aspect becomes more and more important as the time of the refugees in exile increases. Tensions increase, frustration too. They have to make decisions and do not want to spend the rest of their lives in improvised shelters. ... There are many spiritual and psychological wounds of war that need to be healed. Pastoral-missionary presence is indispensable both now and in the future.”

He added that missionaries help the refugees by “sharing their perplexities and bringing it to the Lord, because this is something that should not

be settled simply on the basis of sociology and psychology. We need to have real, real prayer there.”

Altogether, Archbishop Blume has spent 29 years in Africa. He is bittersweet as he prepares to leave the continent. “It’s a part of my life, an important part.”

He strongly believes in Africa’s potential. “Africa is a region for the future. Its population is on the increase, the youngest population in the world. Just think, 70 percent of the population is under 25 years of age. ... Many good things can happen, and I have seen them happen.”

Archbishop Blume then turned his thoughts to his new assignment in Europe. “Hungary is a country with a strong Catholic tradition. However, so much of it, from what I know anyway, is very secularized.” He also noted that the country “has challenges regarding the reception of refugees.”

His approach, at least to begin with, will be low-key. “I don’t come there as someone who has all the solutions. I come there as someone who in the first place is going to listen.” He plans to talk with the bishops, with the priests and the parishioners. Hungary is also a country with an active Divine Word Missionary presence, including a seminary outside the capital city of Budapest. “I hope to get to know them,” he said. “That will be one of my stopping points.”

As the Vatican’s representative to the Hungarian government, Archbishop Blume believes his experience will add a dimension different from previous apostolic nuncios. “As an SVD, I bring into my ministry a certain missionary perspective that not everybody has,” he said. “To bear a certain witness to the Holy See is not talking about esoteric things, but how our dedication to Christ is really the way in which we make a contribution to the humanization of the world, the humanization of society.”

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