



# Society Matters

A Newsletter of the Divine Word Missionaries Inc - Australia Province

“I was a stranger and  
you welcomed me.”  
(Matthew 25:35)





## Message from the Provincial Superior



Welcome to the Autumn Edition of Society Matters. The world of print magazine deadlines means that as I write this message we are in the week leading up to Christmas, but as you receive it, in the Autumn edition of Society Matters, we will already be in Lent.

Church seasons, like the seasons of nature, signal change – a change in focus, and hopefully ongoing changes within ourselves. On a bigger scale, Pope Francis has given us a fresh opportunity for change this year, by gifting us with the Jubilee Year of Mercy. Special 'years' on the Church calendar can come and go, but Pope Francis has called our attention to this special Year of Mercy by declaring it a Jubilee Year – something that happens only rarely. It's obvious that to him the Mercy of Jesus Christ, shown in the Mercy of the Church, and the Mercy displayed by you and me, is central to the Christian life.

I've been thinking of this as I've moved around the Province recently, and also as I visit other countries and regions, and I see the wonderful mission work being done in SVD communities. If the Works of Mercy include feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, sheltering the homeless, visiting the sick, visiting the imprisoned and burying the dead, then many of our missions are already busy on the Mercy frontline. But there is always more to do. There are always more people in need, more people who are forgotten and living on the margins of society, without any experience of Mercy in their lives. We need to reach those people and to walk with them and to constantly look for new ways of being Mercy for them.

In this edition of Society Matters you will see Mercy in action in our feature story on migrants and refugees. Fr Anthony Le Duc SVD tells us about his work with Vietnamese migrants in Thailand, and Fr Lazar Stanislaus SVD talks about some of the things being done for the huge flow of refugees around the world, but especially those fleeing from war-torn Syria. We also give thanks for the five young men who were recently ordained as priests or deacons, who are being sent out as missionaries to countries across the world. Many of our Partners in Mission will have known and loved the late Fr Liam Horsfall SVD, whose obituary appears on Page 7, and on Page 8 we invite you to join in praying for the beatification of Fr Marian Zelazek SVD, whose extraordinary work among people with Leprosy in India has been featured in previous editions of Society Matters.

Thank you for all you do to support our Missionary works of Mercy. I hope you enjoy this edition of Society Matters.

Yours in the Word,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'H Adler'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Fr Henry Adler SVD  
Provincial Superior

**Cover Story:** Fr Anthony Le Duc SVD with Vietnamese migrants in Thailand.

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# Five young SVD men ordained in Australia and sent out as Missionaries to the world



Five young Divine Word Missionaries, who have undertaken their formation in the AUS Province, were ordained for the priesthood or diaconate recently, and are now preparing to be sent out on their first mission assignments.

Marianus Supardi and Uili Uvea were ordained as priests, during the Mass at St Paschal's Chapel, Box Hill, while Michael Wu Pengfei, Anthony Li and Laurensius Woda were ordained as deacons.

The ordaining prelate, Archbishop Denis Hart, said that the young missionaries, surrounded by the love of their natural and religious families came forward into the wonderful mystery by which God calls them to Orders to serve the people of God.

"It can be said that they are formed by the Word of God and by response to a missionary vocation, so that the Church will be built up and the love of God will be brought to those who have not as yet known it and it will be deepened in their hearts and in their lives," Archbishop Hart said.

"I thank their parents and their brothers and sisters for giving these men to the Church and God's people. While there will be times of separation, by your charity and self-giving, you will have an articulate family member working to help the people of today to engage with the Gospel.

"These young men have been well formed in their Divine Word vocation and will go forward with confidence, trusting in the Lord.

"What is before them, the Lord only knows. However, he is their strength and their shield; he helps them to know that their words and deeds will carry them forward into

the special vocation of priesthood or diaconate to which they are called in today's ceremony.

"By the imposition of hands and the gift of the Holy Spirit, they will be given the grace and strength needed to carry out the ministry which is given to them among the ordained, so that conformed to Christ the Priest, they will be given in the Church for the salvation of all."

The five young men have received their first mission assignments to the Netherlands-Belgium Province, Philippines Central Province, Costa Rica in the Central American Region, Chile Province and Indonesia-Ende Province.

SVD AUS Provincial, Fr Henry Adler says the ordination ceremony was a time of great joy and thanksgiving.

"We give thanks that these young men have given their lives to God and God's people in this way," Fr Henry says.

"We in the AUS Province are particularly glad to have provided the formation for these missionaries at Dorish Maru College in Melbourne, and to have come to know them in community and see their various gifts.

"We now pray for blessings upon them as they are sent out to their first mission assignments in countries around the world."







## Fr Anthony providing comfort and strength for Vietnamese migrants in Thailand

When Fr Anthony Le Duc SVD set off for his mission assignment to Thailand some years ago, he could not have foreseen that much of his time would actually be spent ministering to Vietnamese migrants.

"The truth is, before coming to Thailand, I did not even know that there was the presence of Vietnamese migrant workers here," he says.

"However, upon coming to Thailand and seeing the great need for someone to walk with them, I could not ignore this reality."

Fr Anthony is currently located in Bangkok where he collaborates with other Vietnamese priests and religious of different religious congregations to minister to Vietnamese migrant workers in Thailand.

"There are about 50,000 Vietnamese illegally working in Thailand in various manual labour jobs," he says. "I not only carry out sacramental ministry, but also provide social and legal support, especially in situations of emergency, such as in the case of accidents or death, where they have virtually no other resources to turn to."

The daily life of Vietnamese migrants in Thailand is filled with challenges.

"The biggest challenge that they face is their illegal status," says Fr Anthony. "They manage to bribe the immigration police to enter Thailand as tourists, even though the immigration police know full well that they are not tourists."

"However, they stay on to find long-term employment in the country."

"It is legal for them to travel in Thailand, but not legal for them to work. Thus, any employment that they engage in is illegal. Therefore, Vietnamese migrant workers are subject to arrest, imprisonment, fines and deportation."

"Many local police exploit the illegal status of the migrants to extort money from them or take bribes for not arresting them. Because of their illegal status, they also don't receive any legal protection when they are ill-treated or cheated of their salaries by employers. And they receive no benefits such as health care, which becomes extremely expensive when they receive medical treatment for various illnesses or accidents."

Apart from the practical challenges, Fr Anthony says Vietnamese Catholics are also faced with spiritual difficulties.

"Catholics don't have the means to maintain their spiritual life by attending Church, because of the long work hours," he says. "And many don't work near Catholic churches, which are scarce in Thailand. Those who do manage to find the time to attend Mass often can't understand Thai enough to participate fully in the rituals."

Fr Anthony says the issues surrounding Vietnamese migrants in Thailand are often not given much attention.

"In Thailand, the issues of migrant workers from Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos receive more attention from the government and from social organisations," he says.

"It is perhaps because the people from these countries are greater in number than the Vietnamese. Even though there are as many as 50,000 Vietnamese workers in





Thailand, the number is still relatively low compared to that of workers from those other countries."

Fr Anthony says his work with Vietnamese migrants in Thailand sits right at the heart of the Divine Word Missionaries' commitment to walk with migrants, refugees and the marginalised.

"I believe our Society as a whole has always given priority to migrant issues," he says. "And the Australian Province (of which the Thai District is a part), has in recent years become more focused on this ministry in its various forms and contexts.

"I think those of us who work in the area of migrants and refugees not only carry out these provincial and Society priorities, but we also contribute to making the ministry itself a priority through our commitment and our sharing of personal stories and experiences related to our work."

Through his work with the Vietnamese migrant community in Thailand, Fr Anthony has gained a reputation for being "the priest that gets the phone call when someone gets into a serious accident or dies".

"Part of the reason I get the phone call is because these situations involve complicated things, such as legal, financial, and justice issues that they need my help to handle or resolve.

"I don't mind serving in this way. I find a lot of meaning in knowing that I can not only be the priest that they can contact easily on Facebook to simply chat or to seek advice, the priest to take photos with after Sunday Mass, but also the priest that they can turn to in their most difficult and painful times.

"My satisfaction comes from the fact that I can give them comfort and strength when everything is utterly confusing and overwhelming for them."

Fr Anthony says he sees his ministry with Vietnamese migrants as part of his work of evangelisation in Thailand.

"In Thailand there are only 300,000 Catholics out of a population of 67 million people," he says.

"I believe that by ministering to the Vietnamese migrant workers, especially the Catholics, and encouraging them to live out their faith enthusiastically and devotedly amidst their challenges and obstacles, they can serve as valuable witnesses for Christ among the Thai people, both Catholics and Buddhists.

"How they conduct themselves as young Christians will contribute to the overall mission of the Church in Thailand."

He says this can also contribute to helping the wider community to see the great value that Vietnamese migrants bring to Thailand.

"Vietnamese migrants have been in Thailand for over 300 years, since the days when they had to flee religious persecution in Vietnam to come to Thailand," Fr Anthony says.

"Various generations of Vietnamese Catholics who have come to Thailand in the last 300 years have contributed greatly to the Thai church.

"Vietnamese migrant workers can also contribute in their own ways and in their special context.

"As an SVD, I am always conscious of, and intentional, in having the missionary dimension of my ministry be clear and convincing to myself as well as to those with whom I share my experience."





Photo: Locals giving out raincoats to Syrian refugees in Belgrade



## Sufferings of Syrian refugees “unthinkable” says SVD General Mission Secretary

The conflict in Syria has led to the greatest refugee and humanitarian crisis since World War II, with more than 4 million displaced people pouring into neighbouring countries and European nations, all seeking safety and hope.

Australia has also agreed to permanently resettle 12,000 Syrian refugees and New Zealand will take 600 refugees.

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees says the vast majority of refugees are pouring into Syria's neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Egypt, Iraq and Jordan, as well as Turkey, but about 10 per cent of Syrian refugees have managed to make their way to Europe, where they are seeking asylum in countries like Germany, Hungary and Austria.

Fr Lazar Stanislaus SVD, the General Mission Secretary for the Society of the Divine Word, says the SVD is doing what it can to help the refugees.

“In Europe, everyone is aware of the unfolding stories of refugees,” he says.

“Every day, thousands enter into Europe, mainly from Syria, but also others from other parts of the world.

“The sufferings of these refugees in Europe are unthinkable and the future is unknown to them.”

Fr Lazar says that while caring for migrants and refugees has long been a priority for the SVD, in more recent times,

Pope Francis has also made a strong appeal for Catholics to accommodate the refugees and show hospitality and mercy.

“Our Congregation initiated ministries to immigrants in every province a long time back,” Fr Lazar says. “In each province, confreres are specially working for them in various ways and thus our attention to these marginalised people is our charism and special concern.”

Fr Lazar says that in Austria, refugees have been accommodated in the SVD's St Gabriel Mission House for several years.

“Now, with the recent crisis, they are finding ways to accommodate more people,” he says.

“St Augustine Mission House in Germany has given accommodation to some refugees now and they will be taking more in the coming months. Similarly, many of our houses are willing to accommodate the refugees.

“European provinces' administration and JPIC coordinators are working in various ways to show the refugees hospitality and also find ways and means to show them a good future to live in dignity and peace.

“In the intercultural society where the local people and the refugees live together, the challenge is to accept and respect each other and to live harmoniously in peace.”



## RIP Fr Liam Horsfall SVD –devoted missionary to the young, the poor & the marginalised

Fr Liam Horsfall SVD, who died in Brisbane last year, has been remembered as a missionary who was as much at home taking the Divine Word to the poorest, most marginalised people in India and PNG as he was sitting and talking to the young men or the elderly nuns under his Chaplaincy care in Brisbane.

Born and raised in Brisbane, Fr Liam took his first vows as a Divine Word Missionary in 1949 and his first assignment was to India, where he would spend many years and have extraordinary experiences, including being chaplain for Mother Teresa's new congregation in India.

When he arrived in India he was assigned to Orissa, at Jharsuguda, a small mission station, which would grow to become a major mission over the next 50 years. The major missionary activity for the SVDs in India focussed on the Tribal people, who are among the most marginalised people in the country.

After earning a Science degree to help secure a good school in the local area, he would go on to start up eight schools for the Tribals. In this period Fr Liam also started his work as chaplain for Mother Teresa's congregation and worked with Fr Marion Zelazek SVD at the Karunalaya Leprosy Care Centre in Puri.

In the mid 1960s, Fr Liam was elected as Provincial in India (INE Province) and served three terms, a total of nine years. He contributed greatly to the educational, vocational and developmental policies of the INE Province, and there are many priests, brothers and three Tribal bishops in the SVD throughout India today.

During his time as Provincial, the Catholic missions were attacked twice, resulting in the burning of churches and schools. Each time, Fr Liam, the SVDs, the Sisters and communities would "start again – the only thing to do".

Fr Liam returned to Australia for a holiday in 1976 and was elected Provincial of AUS while on leave. He was heavily involved in the training of missionaries for postings overseas, as well as establishing chaplaincies with immigrant communities, while also serving as chaplain for Marist Brothers College, Eastwood. It was from here that he began taking dozens of groups of students to India during their school holidays, to experience the mission there.

One person who says Fr Liam had a big impact on his life, is Fr Tim Norton SVD, who at the age of 21 took up an

offer from Fr Liam to go to India with him.

"I was mightily impressed with the journey, and the way that Liam was greeted so warmly by so many folk of all levels of society indicated the great esteem they had for him. I remember him fondly as a religious who was intensely interested in the well-being of people. He truly lived Jesus' words of 'Love thy neighbour'," he says.

In 1985, Fr Liam was appointed to PNG, working first in Wewak and then as a teacher at the Divine Word Institute in Madang where he lectured in Theology and was Rector of the community.

Returning to Brisbane, Fr Liam spent a few years as parish priest at Hamilton, where he set up a training college for teachers from PNG. He then received invitations to be Chaplain to the Mercy Sisters' Retirement Home at Emmaus, Nudgee and also to St Patrick's College, Shorncliffe. He remained with both of these chaplaincies until his retirement due to ill health, early last year.

Paul Corfield, Acting Assistant Principal – Identity at St Patrick's, says Fr Liam had a tremendous impact on the school community.

"This is evidenced by the fact that more than 300 people, including current and past students gathered to remember Fr Liam during the Mass for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary on August 15," Paul says. Current students from the College also formed a guard of honour at his funeral, at Emmaus.

In a eulogy delivered at Fr Liam's funeral, Br Christopher Pritchard CFC recalled how, even in his later, frailer, years, when asked how he was, Fr Liam would always respond with, "perfect!" or "fabulous!".

"Fr Liam Horsfall, we give thanks to God for the graces you have received through the Holy Spirit, and used so well in courageously following Jesus in doing the Father's will, making Christ's life your life and Christ's mission your mission, by bringing the Divine Word to places where it had not been preached before," Br Christopher said.

"We say goodbye and through the intercession of the Mother of the Word Incarnate, St Arnold Janssen, the martyrs and confessors of the Divine Word Missionaries and the mercy of God, Rest in Peace."



# Fr Marian Zelazek SVD – a shining example of holiness and service

*"When the late Fr Marian Zelazek SVD started the SVD Mission at Puri in India in 1970 he arrived to find the sick and disabled sufferers of Leprosy living on the sides of the road, with just a tarpaulin to cover them. Nobody would assist them in their medical or material needs for fear of catching the disease or being made unclean. They could not earn a living or find food to eat. Fr Marian, shocked by what he saw, dedicated his life to the care and rehabilitation of the Leprosy patients of Puri.*

*Today, the Karunalaya Leprosy Care Centre, which was established by Fr Marian and continues to be run by the Divine Word Missionaries since his death in 2006, is a well-established and successful centre providing medical, educational and economic activities for people with Hansen's Disease."*

These words appeared in the Autumn 2014 edition of *Society Matters*, in which Fr Marian's life and work was featured.

Fr Marian collapsed and died in India, while walking to his car, falling into the arms of the people accompanying him, the people of the Leper colony, with whom and for whom he had spent so many years of his life. One of those people was heard to proclaim: "Here is a great and holy man, who by his presence at Puri for the last 31 years has made the holy city of Lord Jagannath a holier city and a better place to live".

Fr Marian's personal holiness was noted by many people who worked with him over the years, and has been recognised with the opening of his Cause for Beatification – the first step towards being proclaimed a Saint.

The SVD India East Province in Odisha, to which Fr Marian belonged and where he spent 56 years of his missionary life, is promoting Fr Marian's Cause and has asked people to pray for his elevation to sainthood.

As the life and works of Fr Marian are well known to readers of *Society Matters*, we pass on to you here the official prayer for the Beatification of Fr Marian Zelazek SVD. In this way, you, our Partners in Mission here in the AUS Province, can join with others all over the world in praying to promote Fr Marian's cause for Sainthood in the Church, so that, in the words of the SVD INE Provincial, Fr Luvis Ronald Pereira SVD, "he can be a source of strength to all who are suffering and a shining example to all who are reaching out to them in service".



## Prayer of Petition for the Beatification of Fr Marian Zelazek SVD

Loving God and compassionate Father, you chose Fr Marian Zelazek to be a Religious, Priest and Missionary in the Society of the Divine Word and sent him to India from far away Poland to be your messenger of love and compassion. As your faithful servant he preached your word by his life and actions.

Many drew inspiration from his life of simplicity and dedicated service to the poor, the needy and the suffering, especially the leprosy affected people. Irrespective of cast and creed, people from all walks of life approached him in their material needs, psychological distress and spiritual poverty. He became a true "Bapa" to all through his Fatherly love and care.

Father most holy, we truly believe that as a result of his total self-giving to you and your people, Fr Marian was truly holy and noble and that he is in the assembly of your Saints in your eternal presence.

Therefore, heavenly Father, we pray that you grant us the favour of his being officially acknowledged as a Saint, so that we all may be encouraged to look upon him as a heavenly guide and role model in our daily mission endeavours all over the world. Grant also to us that through the favour of his heavenly intercession in our life here on earth, like him, we too may be enabled to spend our lives in true service of our brothers and sisters.

We make this prayer through the intercession of Mary our Mother and in the name of your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ, Amen.

(Followed by Our Father ... Hail Mary ... Glory Be...).



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