

- 3 ... Bro. Jim Donlevy, C.M.
- 4 ... Casa Milagrosa
- 5 ... St. Michael's House
- 6 ... Centenarian Ruth Lang
- 7 ... International Confreres in Chicago
- 7 ... Kenya Appeal

What Must Be Done?

Vice-Province of Kenya launching mission into Uganda

In 1981, the Vincentians of the Western Province started a mission in Kenya, eventually building it into a vice-province. Now, with a robust vocations program and a growing group of priests and brothers, the Vice-Province of Kenya is looking beyond its borders and asking the Vincentian question, "What must be done."

The answer lies in neighboring Uganda, where the Vice-Province recently started a mission of its own, taking on a parish there in the Diocese of Jinja—Our Lady Queen of Peace Kyebando, which sits 83 kilometers from the Kenya/Uganda border. It is home to a shrine and is the birthplace of St. Mathias Mulumba, who was martyred there in 1886.

"The parish covers a large area with 41 outstations," said Fr. Edwin Mugwe, C.M., Superior for the Vice-Province. "We have been thinking about a mission to Uganda for some time, the reason being that they are our neighbors and we have vocations from Uganda. We think of it as a natural progression."

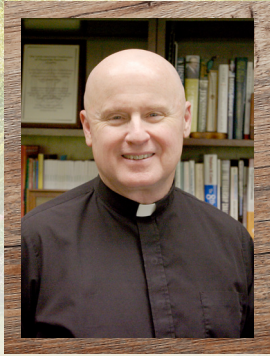
(from left) Fr. John Bosco Idiama, C.M., Fr. Edwin Mugwe, C.M., and Fr. Peter Mutula, C.M., celebrate a Mass on Jan. 25 commissioning Fr. Idiama and Fr. Mutula for their roles in the Kenya Vice-Province's new mission in neighboring Uganda.

The Vice-Province started its own seminary program in 1998 and has had several candidates from Uganda. Fr. Alex Isonga, C.M., was the first Ugandan to be ordained in 2006, and the Vice-Province currently has three priests and one deacon from the country. Initially, Fr. Peter Mutula, C.M., will serve as superior for the Uganda Mission, and Fr. John Bosco Idiama, C.M., will serve as Pastor. On Jan. 25, the anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Mission by St. Vincent de Paul, the two were commissioned in Kenya, reported to Uganda on Jan. 28, and took part in a week-long orientation before being installed in their new positions on Feb. 10.

"In the short term, we will be running the parish, and we want to animate the shrine to make it more functional," Fr. Peter said. "The men who work there will be working in faith formation and delivering the sacraments for the people who come to the shrine."

(continued, p. 2)





Dear Confreres, Colleagues, and Friends,

“The word of God is **alive** and **active**. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” *Hebrews 4: 12.*

The Lenten springtime, the Easter Season, and Pentecost remind us that God is truly **alive** and **active** in our world and in our lives. We witness God’s action in the Congregation of the Mission and the Vincentian Family. This spring issue of *The Vincentian* shows how God is blessing our “little company” with good friends and partners from all over the world to grow and to better serve the mission of Christ Jesus.

I want to thank all our confreres, colleagues, friends, and partners for all your love, devotion, and service to this beautiful and sacred mission to which we have all committed our lives. God Bless you and all those you love and serve.

Sincerely yours in St. Vincent de Paul,

Fr. Patrick J. McDevitt, C.M.
Provincial Superior

(continued from cover)

They will help other Vincentian family groups to work in Uganda by promoting the Association of the Miraculous Medal at the Shrine and working with the Vincentian Marian Youth group. Seminarians from the Vice-Province will conduct some of their pastoral work in Uganda, and the Vice-Province will also establish works of charity to enhance the lives of the people who live there.

“I’m so optimistic,” Fr. Peter said. “The first thing is to listen to the people so I can understand their way of life and needs and incorporate their desires into the mission of the Vincentians there.”

Fr. Peter said the long-term goal will be to grow the Vincentian spirituality in Uganda, starting with the parish and moving to the surrounding parishes, spreading the Gospel and evangelizing the poor, as the Vincentians have always done.





Bro. Jim Donlevy, C.M., with the students of DePaul Woodworking in Nairobi.



Prosper the Work of Our Hands

Bro. Jim Donlevy leaves legacy of DePaul Woodworking in Kenya

For over 20 years, Bro. Jim Donlevy, C.M., has been an integral part of the Vincentian community in Kenya. In the mid-1990s he visited Kenya with then Provincial Fr. John Gagnepain, C.M. That visit put the seed in his mind and heart of returning one day as a missionary. In the early 2000s, plans were laid for a new novitiate building in Nairobi. At the same time, the Daughters of Charity were building a new regional house next door. Both buildings were going to need new furniture, so the confreres invited Bro. Jim to come and start a woodworking program.

Bro. Jim became interested in woodworking when he was a student at St. Mary's Seminary in Perryville, MO, but his affinity for wood also has a family connection.

"I have three brothers who are carpenters," said Bro. Jim, "so you could say it's in my blood!"

In addition to providing furniture for the new buildings, Bro. Jim would train young Kenyans, giving them enough instruction to pass the National Trade Exam – a requirement for getting good employment. This was the start of DePaul Woodworking.

The program started with only three or four students at a time since the workshop space was small. But the two-year program took off. Other religious communities and local parishes began placing orders, especially for pews. There were so many requests that Bro. Jim was able to hire some of his former students to be production workers and help him with the training.

Soon, it was obvious that a larger production space would be needed. Eventually, through the help of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and donors from the Western Province, enough money was raised to build a new and more spacious home for DePaul Woodworking. The number of students increased steadily until finally the program had 21 trainees.

“

"I have three brothers who are carpenters, so you could say it's in my blood."

—Bro. Jim Donlevy, C.M.

Besides learning the craft of woodworking, the students also have classes in life skills, such as budgeting money, social skills, and inter-tribal relationships. These are often taught by some of the older seminarians from DePaul Centre, which is on the same grounds as the woodworking shop.

Although it was hard for Bro. Jim to leave Kenya after over 20 years, he realized that it was time and returned to Perryville, MO, in November.

"I am getting to the age where I don't have the energy or focus needed to keep running a large program like that," he said.

In his place, a Vincentian priest of the Vice-Province of Kenya will oversee DePaul Woodworking.

There is a verse in Psalm 90 that is suitable for those involved in the trades: "May the favor of the Lord our God be ours. Prosper the work of our hands! Prosper the work of our hands!" It was the hands, mind, and heart of Bro. Jim Donlevy that founded DePaul Woodworking, and by the grace of God it prospered.



The guests of Casa Milagrosa enjoy a Christmas meal.



Guillermo (Memo) Vidaurri presents a backpack to one of the guests at Casa Milagrosa in Los Angeles during a give-away event.

House of Miracles

Casa Milagrosa offers homeless guests 'radical hospitality'

Guillermo Vidaurri calls them guests—the homeless patrons who visit Depaul USA’s Casa Milagrosa Day Center in Los Angeles’ MacArthur Park area.

“We don’t call them clients,” he said. “When they come here for breakfast, they are greeted by someone who takes their name and welcomes them. They are invited to take a seat. Their food is brought to them; they don’t have to grab a tray and go through a chow line.”

Guillermo, who goes by “Memo,” said the guests appreciate this and say they feel like they are in a restaurant. Tables seat four people each with placemats and a vase with flowers. After they have eaten, they can go to the lounge areas and relax, or they can use the computer lab to do research or apply for jobs. Volunteers are available to help them create and learn how to use email addresses, and they can even have mail delivered there.

A host of other services—art therapy, AA meetings, and more—are designed to address the challenges and stresses of homelessness and maybe even break the cycle.

Casa Milagrosa, which is Spanish for House of Miracles, has a couple different connections to the Vincentians. The project is co-sponsored by the Daughters of Charity, who own the warehouse that was converted for its use. It was also a 2023-24 recipient of the Congregation of the Mission Western Province’s Walking with the Poor Grant. Depaul USA is itself an organization rooted in the Vincentian charism and tradition.

Memo said on a given day the center will serve 100 to 120 guests. In April, it will have been open two years. When he came on board, he was program director at the center, and with it up and running under Associate Director and Head Case Manager Martha Hidalgo, he has shifted to exploring what else Depaul USA can do in LA. For instance, the Dax Program was set up this year to address homelessness among college students and also provide them resources to succeed in school and apply for jobs.



“I was in a position to do something.”

—Guillermo Vidaurri

Programs like these, Memo said, not only address the needs of the homeless but reduce the future homeless population, which currently stands at 72,000 in Los Angeles.

Memo says he lived in LA and worked in Catholic education with the Daughters of Charity before moving to Phoenix several years ago.

“Every time I came back to visit family, I saw the growth in homelessness and thought, ‘something has to be done,’” Memo said. “Then, I got a call about this job from one of the sisters I worked with in LA. She said they needed someone with Vincentian values to run the place. I realized I didn’t have to wonder what could be done. I was in a position to do something.”



Scan to donate;
enter "For St. Michael's House" in the comments.



'Many threads to this relationship'

Chuck Levesque says Depaul USA is guided by Vincentian values

Embedded in Depaul USA's logo are the words, "Homelessness has no place." The nonprofit was founded 15 years ago, and Chuck



Levesque has served as executive director nearly all of that time. He stressed that, as its name implies, it is firmly grounded in Vincentian values as it strives to address homelessness. As a valued member of the Vincentian family, Depaul USA often works hand-in-hand with the Congregation of the Mission.

For instance, in the past year, the Congregation of the Mission Western Province has provided funding for two of Depaul USA's programs in St. Louis and Los Angeles through the Walking with the Poor grant program (see adjoining stories), and he listed numerous collaborations with Vincentian clergy.

"We are also working with Fr. Gary Mueller (Pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in LA) to brainstorm on other programs for that neighborhood," Chuck said. "Fr. J. Patrick Murphy (in Chicago) delivers Vincentian values training for our staff. Fr. Toshio Sato (in St. Louis) performed the blessing for St. Michael's House, which was a wonderful experience. There are many threads to this relationship."

Depaul USA was formed in Philadelphia in 2009 as an affiliate of Depaul International Group with one program designed to help men transition from homelessness. Today, the organization is based in Chicago and operates 23 programs in 10 cities across the country, including day centers, health clinics, permanent housing, housing for college students, medical respite housing, and more with additional programs in the works.

"The Vincentian charism can be applied to all kinds of work," he said.

For more information, visit www.depaulusa.org.

Putting Down Roots

Ukrainian family thrives in Depaul USA's St. Michael's House

When Russia invaded its neighbor Ukraine in February 2022, countless families were driven from their homes, scattering to wherever they could find safety—some to the United States in cities like St. Louis, MO.

Serhii and Zina Tkachenko, along with 10-year-old Pasha and 7-month-old Mia were one such family. After arriving in St. Louis, they stayed with host families for 11 months before being selected as the first family to live in a new Depaul USA program called St. Michael's House in South St. Louis.

Named for the patron saint of Kyiv, the house is intended as a place for refugee families to stay at an affordable rate while they get established in their new community, up to three years. Rich LaPlume, who heads Depaul USA's operations in St. Louis, said the idea came about after a particularly robust level of fundraising for Ukraine from the city. From there, the project came together in collaboration with the Sisters of Charity Housing Development Corporation and the Congregation of the Mission Western Province. After the Tkachenkos move on, another family will move in. Donations for the project are still being accepted; you can scan the QR code above to contribute.

"It was a great example of Vincentian collaboration," Rich said. "We held a dedication and blessing and handed over the keys on Sept. 27, St. Vincent's feast day."

Today, the family is thriving. Serhii has obtained a full-time job as an assistant manager for a building maintenance operation, while Zina attends English-language classes toward resuming the pharmacy work she did in Ukraine. The children, now 11 and 1, are adapting well to their new surroundings. Serhii shared his goals with Rich in a recent conversation.

"We want to get a house like this one," he said, "a house of our own."



Ruth (left) with her sister Mary and her brother Joseph Lang, Jr., who served as National Vice President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.



Ruth Lang poses next to a tree planted in her honor at Holy Trinity, circa 1980s. Parish staff report the tree is now "huge."

Living in Service and Generosity

Centenarian Ruth Lang recalls her youth and work with the Vincentians



Ruth in 2008 on the occasion of her brother Joseph's posthumous installation as an affiliate of the Congregation of the Mission.

Ruth Lang turned 100 years old on November 30, 2023. She lives at Bradley House assisted living home in Brattleboro, VT, where her niece Judith Reichsman helps care for her. Her memory remained razor sharp until very recent times. Prior to that decline, Ruth wrote out a short biography from which the following summary was taken. She lovingly included the names of many Vincentian priests with

whom she had worked and become friends over the years.

"I was born in Newark, NJ, on November 30, 1923. I grew up with two older siblings, Joe and Mary Jane. Our father worked for the railroad, so we lived in numerous cities. He was transferred to Dallas as I entered college.

"I've lived in Holy Trinity Parish since my parents moved there in 1946.

"I was hired to teach kindergarten half days and assist in the parish office. From 1953 until I retired 38 years later, I worked in the parish office full-time. From Fr. Thomas Stanton to Fr. Dan Borlik, each of the nine Vincentian pastors who served during those years brought his special gifts to the parish.

"The spirit of Holy Trinity has remained alive and well. Not just through its priests and the Daughters of Charity, but also through its many parishioners involved in various ministries.

"My brother Joe founded the parish's Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the 1950s. His wife Betty was one of the first women to join after they opened membership to women.

"In November of 1977, Very Rev. James Richardson, C.M., visited our parish and bestowed on me the great honor of being named an Affiliate of the Vincentian Community.

"In my 90th year of life, I decided to establish a gift annuity to benefit the ministries and dedicated priests of Congregation of the Mission."

From Ruth's niece and goddaughter, Judith Reichsman, with help from her sister, Ann Reichsman

"Our mother, Mary Jane, always called Ruth by her nickname, Ruthie, so she was Aunt Ruthie to us. Ruthie and her brother Joe, Jr are my godparents. Ruthie was 25 when I was baptized at one month by a Vincentian, whose sleeve caught on fire during the ceremony! So I was baptized in fire from the start... left the Church in college and will always credit Ruthie's prayers for my return to the faith!

"Ruthie lovingly invited me to live with her in Dallas when I was studying for my master's at SMU (her alma mater), so I had a number of years with her company and her sweet spirit.

"Ruth will always be grateful for the astounding surprise party, 'Celebrating Ruth' that Fr. Jerome arranged for the celebration of her first 25 years at Holy Trinity. It was a super successful surprise!

"Ruthie had close and nurturing relationships with the priests and nuns and lay people of Holy Trinity. Nowadays, Ruth's memory is failing and she has long expressed her readiness to 'go to heaven.' A fitting ending for a life of service!"

Kenmore House in Chicago Has Taken on an International Flair

BY FR. JOE WILLIAMS, C.M.
SUPERIOR, DEPAUL VINCENTIAN
RESIDENCE IN CHICAGO



You never know who you might meet upon entering Kenmore House in Chicago. Yes, you would expect confreres from the Western Province—right now, eight of us. In addition, there are six international confreres here as well, along with a priest from China.

These men add life to the house in delightful ways. Sometimes they bring friends they have met from their homeland. When that happens, home-made foods frequently come along. Sometimes they cook native dishes for us, and yet more of their friends arrive. The dining room is a-buzz with conversations in many languages and laughter.

When they are ready, these men serve in parishes, ours and others, celebrating Mass in English. They also find their way to churches where they can celebrate in their native tongue.

When someone arrives fresh from Vietnam or Nigeria or Indonesia or Brazil, everyone pitches in to help him feel at home, find his way around, learn to ride the L, and, since this is Chicago, buy winter clothes.



From left: Lenard Kochwa, C.M. (Kenya), Ranjan Lima, C.M. (India), Yohanes Fery, C.M. (Indonesia), and Mikolaj (Nick) Zebrowski, C.M. (Poland).

The great mixture of cultures and ages contributes a great deal to our local community. In our casual conversations over drinks and meals, it is gratifying to hear the men of the Western Province comment on the great spirit the younger international confreres bring to our common life. Also, the international confreres appreciate the interaction, wisdom, and experiences the older men have to offer to them. As one of the older members of the house said, the young international confreres bring such life and joy to us. They are a true blessing to all of us!

Annual Kenya Appeal is Underway



Our annual Kenya Appeal launched last month with a mailing to our supporters seeking contributions for the Vincentians' work in the Vice-Province of Kenya.

This year's goal of \$135,000 will support the St. Louise de Marillac program, which provides food, housing, and medical care for Kenya's most vulnerable, as well as revitalization of sports facilities to engage area youth and seminarians, installation of solar power systems for renewable energy, and maintenance of the DePaul Center poultry farm, which helps feed the Vincentians and the local population.

More specifically, your donations will help the Vincentians provide aid for people like 15-year-old Rose Wanjiku, who was orphaned with her two siblings without family to take them in. The Vincentians intervened to help Rose, her siblings, and her caretaker, a family friend who was already struggling to provide for her own family.

You can scan this code to quickly and easily contribute to the appeal. Donations of any size make a difference in the lives of people like Rose.



Give Now



CONGREGATION
of the **MISSION**

THE VINCENTIAN
WESTERN PROVINCE

3701 Forest Park Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63108



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

2024 SPRING NEWSLETTER

Learn more about the Congregation of the Mission Western Province, join us in prayer, and offer your support. Visit us online at vincentian.org and like us on Facebook at facebook.com/CMWesternProvince.

Kenya Contract Signing Solidifies Working Relationship



On Dec. 6 in Nairobi, Fr. Edwin Mugwe, C.M., and Fr. Patrick McDevitt, C.M., signed a contract that establishes a legal framework for the working relationship between the Vice-Province of Kenya and the Western Province of the U.S. into the future.

The Western Province of the U.S. established a mission to Kenya in 1981. Last year, a Vice-Province was established in the former Region of Kenya in recognition of its growth and its successful seminary program. While still linked to the Western Province, this affords the Kenya Vice-Province more autonomy.

Fr. McDevitt explained that the Western Province and Vice-Province have been operating under a covenant, which he equated to wedding vows. The contract is a legal document more akin to a marriage license.

“The mission in Kenya has been a beacon of hope for the Western Province and for the whole Congregation of the Mission,” said Fr. McDevitt. “The establishment of the new Vice-Province of Kenya and the signing of the contract marks a new and exciting chapter in the growing relationship between our two provinces. We are brothers, colleagues, and partners in the mission.”