

# Making mercy our mission

By **Father Adam MacDonald, SVD**  
Special to The Witness

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy" (Matthew 5:7). As members of the Catholic faithful, our sharing in the baptism of Jesus Christ is a call to conform our hearts and minds to Christ. In so doing, receiving and sharing God's mercy become essential components of our vocation as missionary witnesses of Christ in our world today!

The Constitutions (or "rule") of our Divine Word Missionary (SVD) community call us to make "His Mission Our Mission" and "His Life Our Life," thus identifying us within the ranks of the faithful while at the same time inviting us to a complete and radical commitment to living for and like Christ as we take on and live out the mission entrusted to him by the Father to inaugurate and point out the Kingdom of God here on earth.

Currently there are over 6,000 priests and brothers of the Divine Word serving to proclaim and give witness to God's word to the people in 78 countries around the globe, and in the midst of the wide diversity of our ministries, one thing is



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common to everything we do, and that is our effort to communicate and share the mercy of God by standing on the side of the poor and the marginalized.

The member of our Divine Word community whom I find most exemplifies this call to make mercy the heart of our mission is none other than the superior general of our community, Father Heinz Kuluke, SVD. A native of Germany, Father Heinz was missioned in the Southern Philippines for nearly 30 years before being elected Superior General in 2012.

During his time in the Philippines, Father Heinz dedicated himself to working amongst and serving the needs of the poor and neglected in various parts of the city of Cebu. Aside from his daily responsibilities as a priest and missionary including teaching philosophy at San Carlos University and at one point serving as provincial superior of the SVD Southern Philippine Province, Father Heinz consistently and selflessly devoted much of his time to reaching out to and serving the needs of the poor and those living on the fringes of society by visiting the children living in open dumpsites, the trafficked women in the city's red light district, and likewise the homeless and numerous informal settlers or "squatters" who make their home throughout the city of Cebu.

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Since being elected superior general of the worldwide SVD community and relocating to Rome in 2012, Father Heinz has continued the mission of mercy by way of regular visits to the Southern Philippines. At the same time, he's added a new dimension to his mission by taking on the commitment of making a personal visit to each of the 60 SVD provinces, regions and missions around the globe during his current term of office, set to expire in 2018. Father Heinz stands out to me as an example of a true missionary of mercy because of the way he remains steadfastly committed to the poor and the neglected while personally visiting his brother missionaries in the SVD community, inviting and challenging them to be evermore faithful, bold and creative in living out the mission of Christ in our own lives!

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