



Divine Word Missionaries

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*May the light of Christ brighten your
heart and the lives of those you love.*

March 2024

Dear XXXX,

Easter Vigil Mass is considered the most beautiful service of the year.

Unlit candles are distributed among the faithful as they proceed into the church. The service begins in darkness, symbolizing the darkness of Jesus' tomb. The priest lights the year's new Paschal Candle with the words, "May the light of Christ, rising in glory, dispel the darkness of our hearts and minds."



The priest lights another candle from the Paschal Candle's flame and shares the flame with others on the altar—deacons, lectors, Eucharistic ministers and servers. They share the flame with those in the first row of pews, who pass it along to those behind them. One by one, candles are lit with the Easter Candle's flame. Row by row, the intensifying glow spreads through the church until it reaches from the altar to the farthest pew ... and beyond.

Anyone who has participated in this shared candlelight ceremony will tell you it is a stirring representation of the Easter story. Christ had died, but now he is risen! The darkness is gone, dispelled by the light of Christ's Resurrection! His new life is our new life—a life free from the decay of sin, a promised life everlasting with our Father in heaven.



In many churches around the world, Divine Word Missionaries and their parishioners enjoy a more dramatic version of this ritual with outdoor ceremonies. In Wirui, Papua New Guinea, a towering bonfire lights the night sky at outset of the Easter Vigil. Bishop Jozef

Roszynski SVD of the Diocese of Wewak describes the scene: "It starts with the blessing of the new fire representing Jesus rising from the darkness of the tomb to life eternal. ... The joyful 'Alleluia!' lets us know we are in the New Covenant."

By the end of the ceremony, before the liturgy begins, the faces of hundreds of worshippers gathered on the Wirui hillside are illuminated by the candles they hold, and the air is filled with song. It is an inspiring site on a holy night.

(over please)



My Easter Special Intentions:

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This vigil, in Wirui and other communities in other countries, is one way Divine Word Missionaries bring the light of Christ to the world. But the promise of Easter is not limited to the Easter season, and Divine Word Missionaries are committed to sharing the light of Christ throughout the year, in hundreds of ways for thousands of people:

 **In Mozambique**, Brother Moacir Rudnick SVD oversees the Pastoral Center for the Promotion of People, a nutrition center that provides food, water and other care for new mothers and their babies. This outreach has saved many women and children from starvation, a very real danger in a country where crops are destroyed by droughts, cyclones and flooding.

 **In Thailand**, Brother Damien Lunders SVD runs the Mother of Perpetual Help Center, which serves HIV/AIDS patients in multiple ways, from on-site hospice care to preventative education programs taught at local schools. Brother Damien has looked after these patients for nearly 24 years, and his devotion has made him a beloved figure in his community.

In Bolivia, Father Marcin Domanski SVD and the other priests at St. Michael the Archangel Parish take the time to visit the sick and elderly members of their parish. These people worry whether they can afford their medications, and many have been abandoned by children who have left to find better paying jobs in bigger cities. The kind presence of a priest brings great comfort to those facing loneliness as well as illness.

These are just a handful of examples of how Divine Word Missionaries spread the light of Christ throughout the world. You can join us in this mission. Our priests and Brothers need the support of people such as you—people who wish to bring the light of Christ into places where darkness still dwells: slums, wastelands and the homes of the forgotten. The gift you send today, no matter the amount, can enlighten the world with the Easter message of mercy and hope.

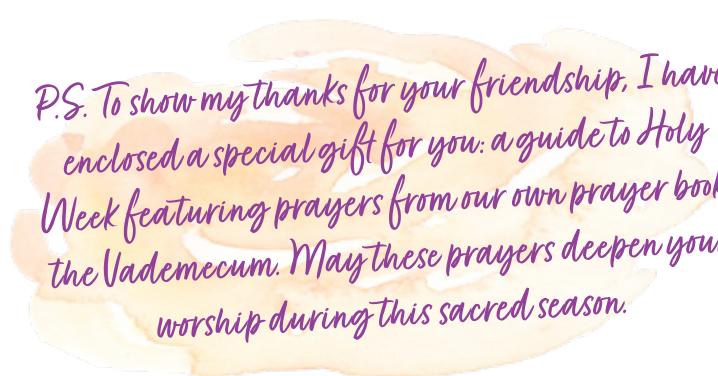
In all of history, no message is more profound than the Easter message. Before Christ's Resurrection, our only future was darkness. Now the Risen Lord has opened the door to an eternity of light. Please allow me to wish you a blessed Easter. May the light of Christ brighten your heart and the lives of those you love.

I ask that during this holy time you pray for our missionaries and those they serve. Know that you will be remembered in their prayers.

Yours in Christ's name,


Bro. Daniel J. Holman SVD

Mission Director

 P.S. To show my thanks for your friendship, I have enclosed a special gift for you: a guide to Holy Week featuring prayers from our own prayer book, the *Vademecum*. May these prayers deepen your worship during this sacred season.