

Society of the Divine Word

His mission is our mission.

6,000 Missionary Priests and Brothers in More than 80 Countries



Ladell Brings the Love of God to Trauma Victims

Many of our missionaries are privileged to work alongside some extraordinarily talented members of the parish staff. One such missionary is Fr. Bob Kelly, SVD, who serves as the pastor of Our Lady of Africa Parish in Chicago. He works closely with staff member, Ladell Johnson. Her gifts for serving others who find themselves in the most challenging and painful circumstances are seemingly limitless as you will read below.

Sincerely,

Guy Vaccaro, Ph.D.
Executive Director of Development
Society of the Divine Word, Chicago Province

My name is Ladell Johnson. I am a parishioner of Our Lady of Africa Parish in Chicago. Divine Word Missionary, Fr. Bob Kelly, SVD serves as our pastor. I serve as:

- *the Director of the Our Lady of Africa – Tolton Center Food Pantry (on the corner of 41st Street and Michigan Avenue.)*
- *the Chairperson for the Domestic Violence Ministry in the parish. Cardinal Blaze Cupich, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Chicago, asked us to develop a ministry to serve those suffering from domestic violence.*
- *a liaison with the Chicago Police Department's Alternative Policing Strategy in the Second District of the CPD. (It extends from the shore of Lake Michigan to the Dan Ryan expressway, and from 31st Street to 60th Street.)*
- *a Crisis Responder for Chicago Survivors. This organization reaches out to families who have become victims as a result of having lost a family member to gun violence. We work closely with CPD. In the past couple years, most of the kids have been under 15 years of age. They don't even make it to their sweet sixteen birthday. This is a club that nobody wants to join. The families, relatives and friends don't ask for it, and yet it changes their life overnight.*

Recently, on Labor Day weekend, there was a five-year old child and his parents visiting from out of town. Someone shot through a window of the home where he was staying, and the bullet struck him. He didn't make it.



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I knew he was not going to make it that night, so I got up, even though they had not called me yet. Because of COVID, we don't go to the scene anymore, and we don't usually go to the hospital.

When I heard about it, I got up and went to the hospital anyhow. I just stayed there. It was the most uncomfortable feeling I have ever had. The boy's mother had been cut by glass, so she was in the emergency room. His father was there by himself. Being from out of town, there was nobody there with him. I sat there for three hours and nobody ever showed up to support him. Nobody. And it just really bothered me. After a couple of days, they took the little boy off life support. It really tore me apart.



*Frontside Photos: Ladell Johnson (top); Ladell and SVD seminarian Joao Pinda organizing the food pantry (bottom).
Photo Above: Ladell welcomes a food donation from Amanda Puck, Director, Strategic Brand Development, Mariano's.*

Your gift to the Society of the Divine Word supports the work of parish staff members such as Ladell. Under the leadership of Pastor Father Bob Kelly, SVD, she brings the love and healing of God's Spirit to those traumatized by domestic violence and gun violence. **Thank you for enabling their collaborative ministry to continue.**

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A Mother's Grief Finds Peace Through Our Priests and Local Church

Very few of us have to cope with the challenge of living in a neighborhood with a high crime rate. Beyond that, very few of us will ever have to cope with the loss of a child. Genoria had to cope with both. When her daughter was killed in the crossfire between two gangs, our SVD priests came to her aid. They could not have supported her without your support. Thank you on her behalf and on behalf of all those served by our missionaries.

Sincerely,

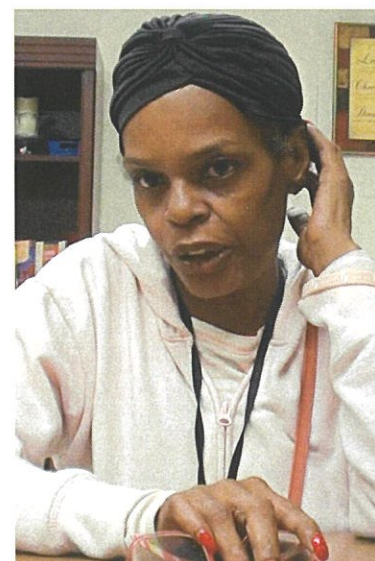
Guy Vaccaro, Ph.D.
Executive Director of Development
Society of the Divine Word, Chicago Province

My name is Genoria Fields. I am a member of Our Lady of Africa Church in Chicago where Fr. Bob Kelly, SVD serves as the pastor. What brought me to the church was the death of my beloved daughter, Albertina.

At approximately 4:10 p.m., on Thursday, April 17, 1997, she went to the store to buy some nachos. When she walked out of the store, two gangs in the neighborhood began shooting at each other. Everyone ran for cover, but Albertina got caught in the middle. She received one bullet wound to the chest and died on the spot. She was 16 years old.

Before my daughter was shot, I used to pass by St. Anselm's Catholic Church in my neighborhood. I never went inside. The pastor was Fr. William Haggerty, SVD. He heard about my daughter and came to my house with a parishioner from the church. They offered their condolences and prayed with us. Fr. Haggerty was a very warm, thoughtful person. He said if I ever wanted to come to St. Anselm's, I would always be welcome.

I waited a month before I took him up on his offer. When I did, Fr. Haggerty told me that if I needed anything, he would do whatever he could. He came by to see me and my two sons again. He used to take us to the Jewel grocery store and buy us food. He and the parishioners did everything they could to help me. As we started going to church, he really brought me and my family closer to God. I love to read my Bible. That helps me get through my day. It makes me feel better inside.



(continued on backside)

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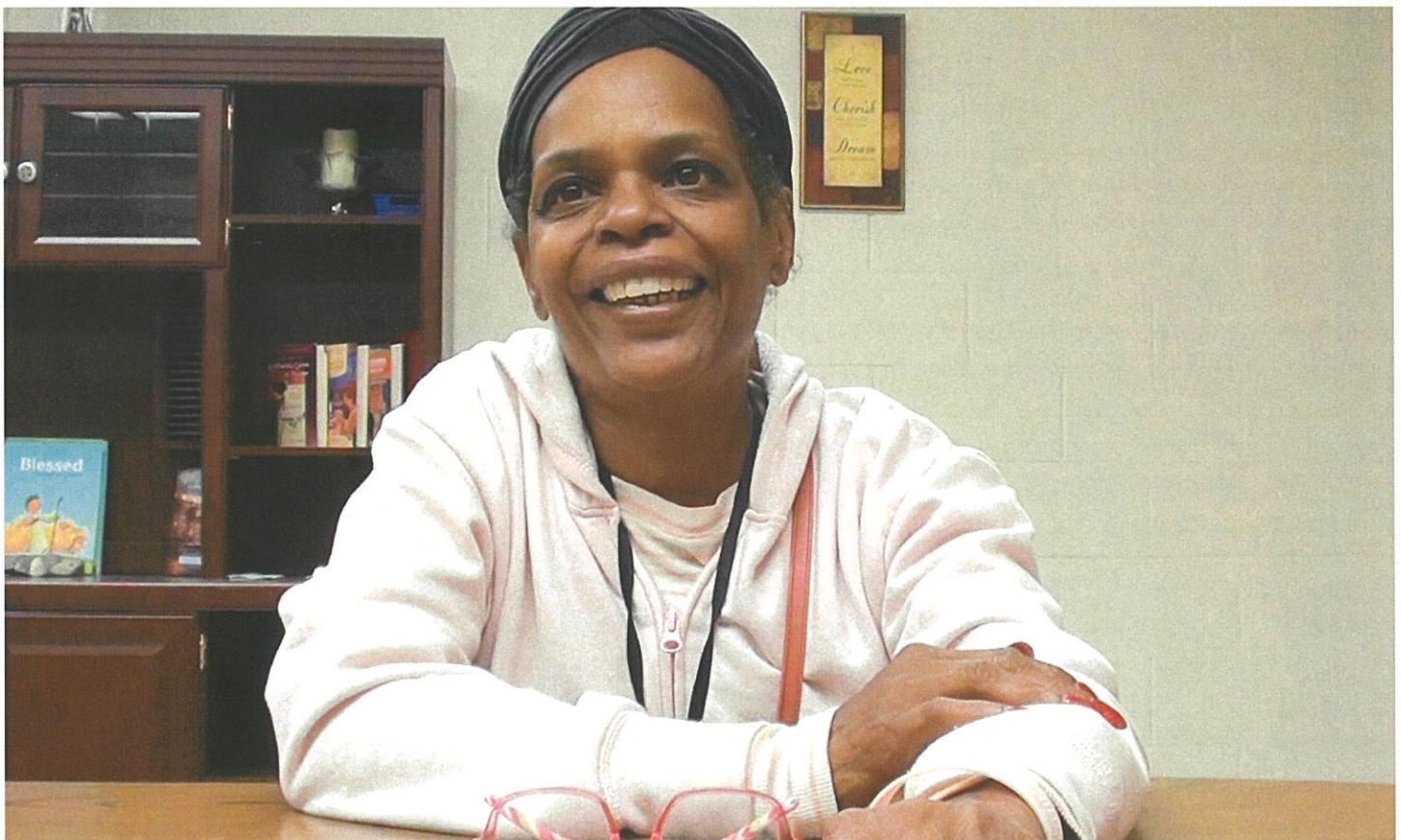


I started singing in the choir at church and never missed a day. It just lit my heart up. I had such a heavy heart, because I am a single parent. My daughter's daddy died right after she died.

I miss my daughter, Albertina, even today. The case is not closed and I think the killer is still out there. I pray to God that nothing happens to me and my three sons who are now 28, 27 and 19 years old. Every day I pray, "Lord, please let me and my sons do our daily commute, go to work, and make our way home without being shot, stabbed, or robbed." I never thought I would ever have to pray a prayer like that. Now, I pray it every day.

I say this from the bottom of my heart. I love Fr. Haggerty and Fr. Gabriel, another SVD priest. There isn't anything I wouldn't do for them. They have been there for me and my kids from day one. And Fr. Gabriel and Fr. Bob are still there.

The Lord is watching over us and he has our back. I pray to the Lord every day. I just pray for strength and healing. I am doing good, though through all this. Just gotta hold onto God and keep the faith. That's all we can do.



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