

SVD PARISH OPENS ITS DOORS TO REFUGEES IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA



There were so many refugees sitting on benches, floor, outside the Vienna Central Station. Literally, the station was flooded with people. At that time, most of refugees arriving at Vienna station do not remain in Austria, but proceed to Germany or other northern countries next morning. An SVD parish, Pfarre zum Göttlichen Wort, which is located near the station, has been helping those people and I witnessed a part of their activity on 14th September 2015.

A parishioner said to me, “I read article on Facebook that there is a center set up for refugees beside the main gate of Vienna Central Station.” So he visited the center on 5th September, and then got to know they need tents. The parish immediately decided to offer two big tents. The parish, led by Fr. Matthias Felber, SVD, sought if there is anything else they could do. They soon decided to open their parish hall and some other rooms for refugees one night stay.



The parish asked donation of mat, blanket, food, cloth, and other stuff such as sanitation kits, and the parishioners responded generously. They formed a volunteer team to welcome the refugees through cooking warm food, distribute clothes, and there were even some nurses in the team to meet the needs of sick. Fr. Hans Ettl, SVD always accompany

those people arriving and leaving the parish hall with his big smile, and Fr. Albert Kodjo Pongo, SVD, opened the bathroom in his rectory for bathing since it is the only



bathroom in the parish hall building. The Parish can accommodate maximum of 60 to 70 people, and the volunteer team prioritize women and children to stay one night since they are the one most vulnerable.

When I said to a volunteer at the parish hall “your work is so impressive!” she immediately

replied “this is nothing special. Of course we do”.

By Daisuke Narui, SVD