



ROBERT DELANEY | THE MICHIGAN CATHOLIC

Mercy High School students Patty Battersby (center) and Sarah Blake show Fr. Sama Muma some of the 50 blankets to be sent back to his home city in Cameroon, West Africa, in time for his brother's funeral.

Teens' Blanketed with Love helps priest's family in Africa

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The Michigan Catholic

GROSSE POINTE FARMS — Msgr. Patrick Halfpenny had just learned about the blanket ministry being launched by a teenager in his parish Sunday, Aug. 17, when later that day his associate pastor got word about the death of a brother in his home country in Africa.

"He told me he would have to go out and buy 50 blankets to send back to Cameroon for the funeral, and I thought 'Aha!'" Msgr. Halfpenny, pastor of St. Paul on the Lake Parish in Grosse Pointe Farms, recounted last Friday.

Parishioner Sarah Blake, 16, and fellow Mercy High School student Patty Battersby, 15 — co-founders and co-chairs of Blanketed With Love — worked with a total of 57 volunteers last Friday to make the 50 blankets Fr. Sama Muma needed.

The volunteers, mostly teens and pre-teens from St. Paul Parish, assembled the blankets in less than two hours.

"That's a good start to their ministry, and it certainly helps Father's family immensely," Msgr. Halfpenny said.

Fr. Muma's brother, Rudolf Dinga, 44, died Aug. 16 in Bali Bamenda, Cameroon from com-

neral. All of his siblings, except one brother and one sister, now live in this country.

Fr. Muma, who was among the new priests just ordained this year, said visa complications make it unwise for him to attend, as it might take him months to receive permission to re-enter the United States. But he said he planned to celebrate a memorial Mass for his brother Thursday, Aug. 28, at 7 p.m., at St. Paul Church.

Why the need for blankets? "When there is a funeral, people come from different parts of the country for the wake-keeping, and they stay outside, and during the night it gets cold," he explained.

Although Bali Bamenda, a city of about 300,000 people in the northwest of the country is only about seven degrees north of the equator, its high elevation makes for chilly nights even in summer, Fr. Muma continued.

Explaining how Blanketed With Love came to be, Sarah told how she and Patty made blankets for their grandparents last Christmas and for Patty's siblings who were going off to college. "They were all so appreciative we thought, 'Why

plications from mumps. He is survived by a wife, five children, his father, Linus Muma, and by five sisters and four brothers – including Fr. Muma.

Traveling between the United States and Cameroon is expensive, and only his father and one sibling will make the trip to attend the fu-

can't we do this for other people – such as the homeless and older persons?" she said.

And they learned about a Detroit charity called Sweet Dreams, "which gives sleeping bags and blankets to inner-city kids, so they will always have

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