



# SVD BROTHERS

**NEWSLETTER**

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The Spirit of the Lord fills the whole Earth.

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## **THE FOREWORD OF OUR GENERAL COUNCILOR**

**Dear confreres and friends,**

Greetings to all of you!

I am glad to share with you the SVD BROTHERS, a quarterly bulletin published by a group of our Brothers in Cebu, Philippines.

This issue, as well as the next two issues for 2011, will focus mainly on the *vocational journey* of some SVD Brother candidates or Brothers in temporary vows, who will share some of their interesting experiences by answering a few questions, such as: What attracted you to the SVD Brother Vocation? What helps you the most in your vocation journey at present?

These confreres will also share with us their ideas regarding the SVD mission today. Finally, an open-ended question offers them the opportunity to comment on the Brother vocation according to their views and experiences.

But our bulletin would not be complete without a few articles from our Brothers in perpetual vows who have been working in the formation of our Brothers or in other fields of work in our Society (e.g., education, social work, communications, etc.). Thus, we will also get to know a few of our Brothers' experiences that are related both to their work and personal life.

It is worthwhile to note that what attracts several youngsters to the Brother vocation is not only the work but also the call to live out a true *fraternity* within the Society and with other people in the community based on the Gospel values. In some cases, the cultural diversity of our Society and its various needs motivate young people to join our Brotherhood.

Others see this vocation as a "gift and a blessing from God" for the human society. Some are also fascinated by the call to be part of a Society that is committed to the Word of God (SVD), and, particularly, by doing it through a variety of services and ministries. Through different means, Brothers live and work together with priest confreres engaged in the same mission.

These and other aspects of the Brother vocation you will certainly discover by reading the following stories and vocation journeys that our young Brothers share with us in this issue. May their enthusiasm to follow Jesus Christ as religious and missionary Brothers renew in us our commitment to Him and to his Kingdom wherever we are!

**Br. Alfonso J. Berger, SVD**  
(General Councilor)

## **GUIDING QUESTIONS** *given by: Br. Alfonso Berger, SVD*

The last issue of SVD BROTHERS (March 2011) reported on the *evaluation* of our bulletin, which was carried out at the beginning of this year. Now, after taking note of the remarks and suggestions that were made by the confreres who participated in the said evaluation, we will try to improve the layout of the bulletin, its length, and its content.

Therefore, we will focus mainly on *SVD Brother vocation* in the next issues. For that purpose, some Brother candidates and formators in different zones were contacted to share their experiences in their vocational journey.

Obviously, by implementing the above approach, our bulletin did “lose” its openness to the contribution of several confreres. However, we can already foresee that in 2012, our bulletin would focus more on the General Chapter. We also request that digital copies of this bulletin be posted on the websites of our Society (Provinces, houses, ministries) to boost the vocation promotion for our Brotherhood. As it was also suggested in the evaluation, some confreres need to print copies of this bulletin for the main houses of provinces/regions that do not have access to the Internet, or for confreres who do not have e-mail addresses.

We sent some formandi and formators the following questions:

### **Questionnaire for Brother candidates**

1. What attracted you to the SVD Brother vocation? (Please explain briefly).
2. What helps you the most in your vocation journey at present?
3. Considering your capacities and the SVD mission today, what kind of professional training are you undertaking now or willing to take in the near future?
4. Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding the SVD Brother vocation?

### **Questionnaire for the interview with Brother formators**

1. When did you start working as a formator? How did you prepare for this ministry?
2. How do you cope with the main challenges of Brother formation?
3. What makes you happy in your service as Brother formator?
4. Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding Brother vocation?

# THE RESPONSES

## THE HOLY SPIRIT ATTRACTED ME

*Br. Adam Bojanowski (POL)*



I was born in Poznan (Poland) in 1982. I am a Brother in third temporary vows and I am going to take another in September. For now I work in our seminary library in Pieniezno (Polish Province).

1. When I was joined the SVD in September 2007, I wanted to be a priest and never thought of going for Brotherhood. One thought entered my head during the novitiate: be a Brother. I ignored this in the beginning, but after constant prayers to the Holy Spirit for guidance, I finally made a decision. Now, after three years in temporary vows, I am really happy I decided to be an SVD Brother.

It was the Holy Spirit who attracted me to choose the SVD Brother vocation.

2. I find greatest help in my intimate relationship with the Word of God and my immediate religious community.
3. I would like to study pedagogy with an emphasis on a branch that deals with troubled youth and their re-adjustment to society.

## I WILL CONTRIBUTE TO OUR EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

*Br. Reagan Kangi Kikula (CNG)*



1. What attracted me to the SVD Brother vocation is a brochure entitled "Prayer and Missionary Service" in which an article spoke about the vocation of the SVD religious. This article explained in detail the role of the religious Brother, somebody who gives witness to Christ through his activities, prayer and work. I was also attracted by the lifestyle of the SVD Brothers through which they become witnesses to Christ and contribute to human and community development.

2. Prayer, spiritual accompaniment, recollections, dialogue with formators, spiritual readings and praying the Holy Rosary, among others, help me in my vocation journey.

3. I am studying applied pedagogy, majoring in French and African languages. I would like to become a teacher in order to contribute to the education of the youth.

4. As our name indicates, the Society of the Divine Word is a congregation dedicated to the Word of God. Being full members of this community, SVD Brothers are not exempted from proclaiming the Word. Therefore, if it is possible, Brothers should have at least two (2) years of theological formation in order to deepen their knowledge for the benefit of the SVD society.

## I THOUGHT “EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE IN THE SVD”

Br. Bernd Ruffing (GER-AUS, OTP in Thailand)



### 1. What attracted you to the SVD Brother vocation? (Please explain briefly).

- I liked the SVD as a big international congregation and the fact that Brothers and priests live together.
- I saw the SVD as a still growing congregation, which means I saw myself with other young people in formation.
- Religious BROTHER congregations are often committed to one particular apostolate such as nursing or education. When I joined a come-and-see program, I kind of liked the ministry, but thought that the whole lifestyle appeared as kind of too tight to me. During lunch and dinner, Brothers would only talk about “hospital life.”
- I thought: Everything is possible in the SVD—working with street children, working in the film industry and working in universities—that variety attracted me.
- I saw SVD Brothers who were really committed to their life and I liked to see that. Their simple example, just by being what they are, attracted me.

### 2. What helps you the most in your vocation journey at present?

- Doing OTP is just a great experience in itself!
- I really need time to get some spiritual input and time to reflect and pray. Daily life, of course, offers spiritual experiences, but I need to leave that daily life routine. Besides an annual retreat, I need some days to get spiritual input throughout the year.

### 3. Considering your capacities and the SVD mission today, what kind of professional training are you undertaking now or willing to take in the near future?

- Right now I do not really see what the future will bring. I’m ready! Right now I really want to prepare myself for final vows. Sometimes I ask myself where I’d like to live and work in the future which goes together with undertaking a professional training. I can see myself in different places and different ministries. Formation, of course, should be based on mission appointments. If I’d apply for Germany or Thailand, I probably would prepare myself in getting totally different knowledge. Not having a clear plan in mind does kind of retard developing future perspectives. But this might only be my own struggle at this part of my formation and I do see the preparation of final vows as the main thing to do next.

### 4. Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding the SVD Brother vocation?

- I’m so grateful for my OTP!
- See point 3.

## CHALLENGES AND JOYS – AS AN SVD BROTHER FORMATOR

*Br. Michael Decker (USC)*



1) I started doing formation work in January 2003 at the Divine Word College. After doing this for 4 1/2 years I was given the opportunity by the Chicago Province (USC) to take a one-year course called Institute of Religious Formation (IRF) in Chicago from August 2007 to June 2008. This prepared me more to do my formation ministry better. On June 1, 2008, I was appointed Director of Brother Formation in the Chicago Province. Since that time I have been the formator for five Brothers who have been in vows. I am now in the Theologate (Hyde Park, Chicago) with the Brothers in formation along with the seminarians. That those in formation here are together is good both for the students and the formators.

2) One of the challenges I encountered as a formator was the fact that at first, Brothers and formators lived in a separate formation house. When I took over in June 2008, all of the Brothers, seminarians and three formators started living and working together in one house. This gives support not only to those in formation but also the formators. Working as a team in the formation house provides a great support system for me.

3) It is good to see the progress of Brothers who are in formation. When one starts out in his formation, the Brother first learns what it means to be an SVD Missionary Brother. Living in an international community, praying together, going to school, and doing ministry help the Brother become a good SVD Missionary Brother. This is what makes me happy.

4) When I was in Formation in the 1980's, I never thought that I would be assigned work in the formation ministry. Yes, it is difficult sometimes, but to those Brothers who have the ability and desire to form future SVD Brothers, it is an honor and a privilege to use our abilities in the formation of young SVD Brothers with God's help.

## I TOOK TIME TO ADJUST

*Br. Muktlal Ekka (INE)*



1. After working for eleven years in the formation, I am now in St. Paul's School, Rourkela, one of our biggest schools in INE. I hold office in administration as a vice-principal and I handle classes as well. This is my fourth year in the school.

2. Entering the school apostolate from formation is tough indeed. I found the disciplined and silent formation atmosphere quite different from the noisy atmosphere in school. It took some time for me to adjust. To maintain the discipline and the standard is always a tough job. A good number of students are brilliant, and I need to be well prepared in advance for every class. It needs a lot of patience to be a good teacher and administrator.

3. I find this ministry quite relevant. Through education we make students become worthy citizens for a better world. We make the students realize that they can make a difference in the world by their contribution to the community and the country in general. Our work is a ministry, not a job. I do enjoy my school apostolate.

## HIS MISSION IS MY MISSION

Brother Seminarian Rino Manliguez (PHS)



*"His mission is our mission."* Challenged by these words of our founder St. Arnold Janssen, it is my desire to become an SVD Brother. Although this quote can be easily understood, it envisions a deeper meaning that is hard to realize.

Some of my friends and classmates often ask me: *"Why did you join the SVD Brotherhood?"* My answer is simple: *"I want to share Christ's Brotherhood in doing his mission. In this way, I believe that I will be more productive. It entails great sacrifices, since I am away from my family, but it also strengthens my relationship with God through prayer and community life."* I am glad to say that my family also gives me inspiration to continue my vocation journey, since they love God and they are devoted to the Blessed Mother.

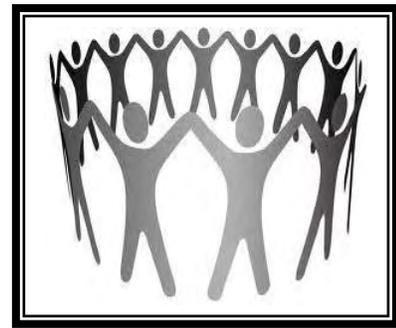
In a world of rapid changes, we need people who continue the commitment of our founding generations in building God's Kingdom. I am now pursuing a degree in Religious Education and as a future educator, I hope to be able to mould the minds of the young in order to deepen and strengthen their faith, making them responsible believers and God-fearing citizens. I want to awaken them to the consciousness that they are children of God. Sharing my God-given skills, especially in making the liturgical celebration alive through my talent in music, I strive after a committed animation of Christ's Mission.

I believe that the Brother vocation is an authentic gift and a blessing from God for the human society. While Brothers strengthen the

religious missionary community, they present another way of serving the church of today through different ministries. The Holy Spirit himself inspires us through the many-sided service of the Brothers. "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same spirit gives them. There are different ways of serving, but the same lord is served." (1 Cor.12:4-5)

## BROTHERHOOD AND PRIESTHOOD GO TOGETHER

Nikodeme Eluka Obula (CNG)



1. First of all, the lifestyle of the pioneer missionaries attracted me to the SVD Brother vocation. Later on, their dedication, spirit of prayer and well-done work strengthened my interest. They contributed a lot to the welfare of the SVD.

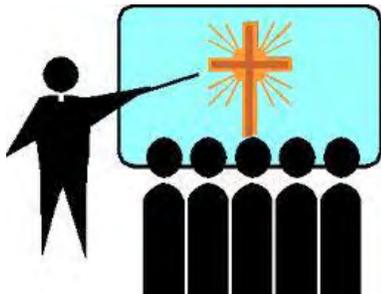
2. Prayer, trust in Christ, and love of my work assist me in my present vocation journey as an SVD Brother.

3. I am still a student trying to develop my knowledge in electronic science. I would like to help form the new generation of SVDs.

4. The SVD Brother vocation is very important, even if it is neglected at times. It is equally important to the vocation of those who would like to become priests. Brothers are called to work and render multiple services in the Society. Therefore, this vocation is not less important than priesthood. Brotherhood and priesthood go together, because we work for the Kingdom of God. We must not forget to give witness through our own lives, so that we all become true Brothers witnessing the Gospel.

## I WANT TO INTEGRATE TEACHING AND WRITING IN MY FUTURE MINISTRY

*Brother Seminarian Ramcel Supat (PHS)*



“What attracts me to the SVD Brother vocation?” It took me some time to answer this question. I believe that my presence in the Seminary for almost four years means a calling from God: a calling to become a Brother! But why a Brother? Why particularly an SVD Brother?

After high school graduation, I planned to take a college course, but that dream did not come to reality. The nearest university was 15 kilometers away from our town. At that time, my service as a knight of the altar stirred my imagination about priestly and religious life. Of course, I knew more about the priestly vocation. However, when I realized that there were also Brothers, I understood how little I knew about them. Therefore, I became interested in their work and life.

One time I met our high school principal who asked me if I would want to enter a seminary. I said yes. I would like to think that it was the will of God that brought me to a formation house for young people aspiring to become SVD Brothers. As time went by, I met different Brothers. I was amazed at how they perform their missionary vocation. Brothers are workers, teachers, engineers, architects, lawyers and many others. Moreover, Brothers are also community builders. These things attracted me. But what makes me really proud of our Brothers is that they serve the Lord and his people through their chosen professions.

There are a lot of challenges in our life, whether inside or outside the seminary. It is prayer that helps me most in my vocation journey. I believe that prayer has the power to strengthen my vocation. It can build up a closer and a stronger union with God. My personal prayer and reflection support me in dealing with my everyday life in the seminary. Prayers are an important part of our Brother formation.

I am now pursuing a degree in Religious Education in an SVD-run university in Cebu, Philippines. I am now in my fourth and final year. I also want to take up journalism or a course related to communication, since it is my desire to integrate teaching and writing as a future SVD missionary.

## WHEN GOD CALLS, HE SHALL CALL AGAIN

*Br. Tomasz Michalowski (POL)*



I joined the SVD in 1999, at the age of 24, after graduating from vocational school, one-and-half year of compulsory military service and three years of work in my profession.

My formation began with a six-week Postulancy period and a year in the novitiate. In 2000, after the novitiate, I was sent to Belarus, where I continued my intellectual formation in the Catechetical College. After graduating from the college, I was sent to a community in St. Petersburg, Russia, where, together with the Sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, I worked among the homeless.

*Cont. Br. Michalowski*

2004 was a very crucial year for my vocation. I left the Society because of a difficult situation in my family. I communicated regularly with my classmates and their interesting life in the Society made me miss them.

After solving my family problems, I asked for re-admission into the SVD. I received a very positive response from the Generalate. Ten years after my first admission to the SVD, I rejoined the Society in 2009, and on September 9, 2010, I pronounced my first vows again.

At present, I work as an assistant of the House Treasurer. I am responsible for buying food, for the renovation of the novitiate house and the park. These tasks I treat as a practical experience in the economy of our community. I realize that in this area I also need an additional training, which I am going to take soon.

My current assignment interests me a lot because I like to contemplate a nature that God created. There is a beautiful park in our novitiate house, which is on the list of must-see natural monuments. Spring is the time of hard work in the park as we have to mow the grass, prune the trees, and clean the pond, etc. Here live beautiful swans, wild ducks, geese, and of course, several varieties of fish. Around this time birds sing their daily concerts. Tourists visit the park to admire the beauty of nature.

I thank God for the grace of calling (re-calling in my case) to the Brotherhood. I believe that God knows each of us. He knows where we are and what we do, what we long for and who we want to be.

I know that God remembered me when I wrote an application for admission to the Society. When I wrote a letter to leave it for the sake of taking care of my sick mother, He remembered me. After He received my mother to the heavenly house, He called me again to join the Society. I am really happy that I can continue my formation once again. I know that to be a

religious Brother is to be a happy man, no matter where else He would send me.

## **I WORK FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE**

*Br. Brian McLaughlin (USC)*



I am Brother Brian McLaughlin, the JPIC Coordinator for the Chicago Province. Thankfully I have been involved in this ministry for 6 years, and with our recent election of a new provincial and administration, I have been appointed the JPIC Coordinator for the next triennium. This is exciting for me because I enjoy my ministry in peace and justice. As coordinator in the coming triennium, I hope to highlight some of the peace and justice works that other SVDs are performing presently. Oftentimes, the JPIC works of others are avoided or brushed aside, so I would like to highlight some of these accomplishments. This could be beneficial for the province, because when we hear some of the work others do, then this in turn gives us ideas about how we can do similarly. Such a narrative, then, gives us a broader understanding of what JPIC entails and how the province is working together to fulfill this important dimension of the Society.

A good deal of my broader work as JPIC Coordinator is carried out through the 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center for Justice, a Catholic-based NGO for social change. Several religious communities, including the SVD Chicago Province, fund the 8<sup>th</sup> Day Center. We work on a number of issues at the Center, for example human rights, equality and dignity for all, and nonviolence. If you would like to find out

Cont. Br. McLaughlin

more about our work, please check out our website at: [www.8thdaycenter.org](http://www.8thdaycenter.org).

In addition to this, I also help co-coordinate an immigration project with the SSpS and SSpSAP sisters called the Joint Venture on Immigration (rather than attending the physical meetings themselves, the SSpSAP Sisters have promised their prayerful support for our work). In our first meetings together, we saw a need for “4 pillars” or main points of action for the Joint Venture; we identified these as: prayer, action, advocacy, and awareness/education. Briefly, the prayer pillar involved prayer services on immigration to the various communities, as well as days of recollection. Action included a detailed questionnaire that was sent out to the SVD and SSpS members so that we could see how we could best respond to the issue of immigration. Presently we are looking for possibilities of providing services for immigrant populations. On the advocacy level, we urge our political leaders to work toward immigration reform. Recently, Sr. Rose Therese Nolta, SSpS and I visited the office of a local political leader, Congressman Robert Dold. We, along with other religious, urged him to work toward comprehensive immigration reform and to immediately halt deportations. For awareness and education, we have provided a few films on immigration for the SVD and SSpS communities. In addition, we had a talk by Fr. vanThanh Nguyen, SVD on Biblical Perspectives on Immigration. Along with this talk, we also had a panel discussion on the human face of the immigrant experience. The talk and panel discussion were well received by both communities and stimulated some fruitful discussion.

This is some of the work I do as the JPIC Coordinator. Please feel free to contact me about my work and the Joint Venture on Immigration: [bmclauch62@aol.com](mailto:bmclauch62@aol.com). I think the work of peace and justice needs to be accomplished together, because it is in unison, I believe, that we hear the voice of the oppressed.

## INSPIRED BY THE DIVINE WORD

Br. Fábio Knebel Klein, BRC



### 1. What attracted you to the SVD Brother vocation? (Please explain briefly).

To live as Brother of the Society of the Divine Word, I believe it is important to witness about Jesus Christ and be in dialogue with the Divine Word that became flesh and dwelt among us. I have always been inspired by the missionary vision of our Founder: to work with children, the youth, the poor, the sick, the marginalized, the victims of injustice... However, those things can be still handled outside of the Congregation (SVD), as people sometimes challenge me. But when we are invited to the mission, in order to become a missionary, we will work with the charisma of our founder Saint Arnold Janssen. This precisely reveals the reason, why this dimension is so strong in the SVD. It particularly calls my attention and stimulates me every day to walk as a (future) missionary committed to the plan of God, Our Father, so that I can be his instrument in a real and effectively possible way.

However, I believe that I cannot give you a perfect answer to the question, what exactly called my attention to become a missionary and to follow Jesus Christ (as a Brother). What I can say is just that I am more identified with being a “Brother missionary” and I also feel the deep desire to strengthen this spirit day by day. When I already knew what this mission (religious Brother, SVD member) did mean, how was the corresponding formation and that

Brotherhood includes a greater vision than solely a parish or a job, I realized - this is what I want! And I will also continue this vocation, fulfilling the will of the God and the superiors

**2. What helps you the most in your vocation journey at present?**

I do my best to persevere and not to be discouraged by difficulties. I can affirm that the formation helps me to grow day by day as a missionary. I constantly search for aid from the Brothers who have already done their vocational journey. I also ask for help from some priests who are open to talk with. I can add that there are some confreres/friends (Brothers) that are in this same process, however some years ahead of me. They inform me about SVD Brothers' life.

**3. Considering your capacities and the SVD mission today, what kind of professional training are you undertaking now or willing to take in the near future?**

At the moment I am taking philosophy. This is a very rich field, but I do not intend to work in it. An area that I love and where I intend to get my qualification is the health care. There is a great need for this work and I can imagine working there, for the health of my brothers and sisters. This is very much needed, because of so much suffering in the world.

**4. Is there anything else that you would like to share regarding the SVD Brother vocation?**

What I can particularly share is that I find happiness in this way of life. I believe that the better days will come, with my contribution. I know that difficult times will certainly appear as well and I hope to be prepared for them. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us - and

with His assistance, we will overcome the challenges of the missionary life.

I am from Rurópolis city, Pará (Amazon region), where our congregation is still present. That is the place where I had the chance to know get acquainted with the Societas Verbi Divini (SVD), through missionaries who have been working there. Having heard their witnessing, I felt the invitation to follow their experience and to live the same charisma. Currently (2011), I am attending a course 5<sup>th</sup> period of philosophy in Juiz De Fora City (JF), Minas Gerais (MG). This is my 4<sup>th</sup> year in the congregation SVD. Here in JF, beyond studies and formation classes in the house, we also performance some pastoral works in the weekends, in one of the communities of this parish (Our Lady of Fátima Parish) that is administered by the SVD. Until the end of the last year, I worked in catechetics, specifically with a preparatory group for Confirmation. This year I again assist in catechetics and work with a group of adolescents and youth of the same community.

Generally, I hope that I understood the questions and answered to what it is asked for. If not, I am sorry. I am thankful for your questionnaire and for your consideration. Hearty greetings in the Light of the Word and the Spirit of the Grace!



# A LASTWORD, FROM THE EDITORS



*Dear Confreres,*

As you read in the introductory message of Br. Alfonso, there are some changes in our SVD BROTHERS bulletin, since the bulletin became now a tool of preparation for the next General Chapter. However, it is still written by the readers. Considering the changes, your reflection is very important for us. We will thank you for the acknowledgments, but also for your critical remarks. Having read your observations, we will try to update both content and layout of the bulletin.

The initiative of this bulletin was born at the 2006 General Chapter where a group of Brothers (and Fathers) decided to intensify contacts among Brothers, in order to highlight the many opportunities of witnessing through the Brother vocation. May an updated and effectively serving bulletin become a part of our contribution to the next General Chapter!

We continue counting on your echo. Please write to the following addresses: [newlanyi@hotmail.com](mailto:newlanyi@hotmail.com) or [svd\\_brothersphil@yahoo.com](mailto:svd_brothersphil@yahoo.com). You may use your favorite language, English, Spanish, Indonesian, Polish, German, etc.

In the Divine Word,

*Your SVD Brothers in Cebu City*

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