



# SVD BROTHERS

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**NEWSLETTER**

Vol. 4 No. 3 September 2011

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**"Called to promote Fraternity"**  
Sharing our call to be an SVD Brother

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## THE FOREWORD OF OUR GENERAL COUNCILOR



Dear friends!

I am happy to write these few lines in relation to the present issue of “SVD Brothers.” You may still remember the last issue of our bulletin (July 2011), when several young Brothers shared with us their vocation journey, especially their pastoral and social exposures. That was the first of this year’s three-part bulletin series focusing mainly on SVD Brother vocation promotion.

I now present the second issue, which focuses on the life and work of our Brother formators. A few articles on mission animation, and working experiences among the poor and marginalized as well as with today’s youth are also included in this installment.

In these articles are examples of dedicated missionary service, of Brothers welcoming and accompanying young people in their education process and formative journey. Reading about the challenges they face and the enjoyment they get from the growth of their formandi, we see a glimpse of their passion for helping our young brothers in their endeavors to become authentic religious and missionaries. For one of these formators, being a Brother is more than a title; it is a lifestyle.

Br. Michael Decker concludes this bulletin with a short article about the gathering of SVD Brothers at East Troy (USA) last July. Our Brothers meet every two or three years in different countries. In October last year, for instance, Brothers working in Argentina met at Cordoba. This year, Brothers met in Indonesia, and soon in Brazil. These meetings and assemblies are meaningful venues for sharing missionary experiences, for ongoing formation, and for strengthening our friendship.

I would like to share a picture the recent assembly of SVD Brothers working in the Asia-Pacific (ASPAC) Zone. Twenty Brothers and three priests attended the gathering, which was held in Hyderabad, India, on August 23-26, 2011. While it may seem that there are not many Brothers here, it is because each of them represented the Brothers of their respective provinces and regions. We had a wonderful time sharing our life and work, discussing ongoing formation, and formulating some recommendations on SVD Brotherhood. More information on this meeting will be found in the next issue of *Arnoldus Nota* in October this year.

**Br. Alfonso J. Berger (ROM)**  
**General Councilor**

We thank all confreres who contributed to our bulletin. The guide questions are the same as those in the previous issue. This time, however, we asked for the following considerations while writing the articles:

- Take into account the call to witness fraternity in the SVD, Church and world (cf. Matt 23:8).
- See our Vocation in the light of Prophetic Dialogue and Characteristic Dimensions.
- Take into account the great challenges of today's world (e.g. JPIC issues, cultural conflicts, youth disorientation, individualism, etc.). As Brothers, how can we contribute to evangelization of and cooperation with others in order to participate in building up God's Kingdom?
- Convey the invitation to potential Brother candidates (who may read this bulletin) to join us. We thank all confreres who contributed to our Bulletin. The guiding questions are the same as in the previous issue. However, we asked this time for the following considerations while writing the articles.

## **WE ARE ALL BROTHERS!**

*(Br. Edgardo Faz, PHS)*



Many Brothers know him, but only a few know that he is the new National Director of Brothers in the Philippines. With a teacher's diploma, long missionary service in Botswana, and several years in Brother Formation, Br. Edgardo "Egay" Faz, SVD really deserves his new office. After his Nemi course, a relaxed Brother Egay responds to SVD BROTHERS' questions.

*-When did you start working as formator? How did you prepare for this ministry?*

"After my return from Botswana, I attended a formators' course in Rome. It was a mixed group of SVDs and SSPS sisters. These two months gave us a good self-preparation, but during such a short time, we could not be introduced to the know-how of formation. I wanted to learn more about useful strategies and methods in the everyday contact with the formandi. After this course in 2003, I was appointed as one of the assistants of the head formator, Br. Romualdo Abulad. With him, I experienced how Brothers' formation in the Philippines became independent from the formation of clerical candidates, and how we moved to the present Formation House. That was a great initiative, although we could not yet realize all our dreams then. The separation is not meant against priests or priest candidates. It rather helps us concentrate on the essential dimensions of Brother formation."

*-How do you cope with the main challenges of Brother Formation?*

"One of the main challenges of being a formator is that it can sometimes be very tiring. In addition to this, it is very difficult here to replace a Brother formator if he feels tired. Why are we tired? Probably because we do not feel the same effectiveness in formation as in our secular works.

Cont. Br. Faz

In numbers, it is much less effective to produce new Brothers than to come up with results in my work as Director of the General Services of our university. However, I love formation and believe in its sense. In my program as new National Director of Brothers in the Philippines, I would like to visit all Brothers in the country and listen to their needs. I am also looking for an appropriate formation training opportunity for Br. Rolando Sanchez, our new Assistant Prefect. I try to ensure that Brothers are represented in all Provincial Councils in the Philippines. By now, we already have Brother Councillors in the Central and Southern Provinces.”

*-What makes you happy in your service as Brother Formator?*

“For sure, it is the comradeship in our formation house. We really are Brothers! We maintain a home atmosphere here. The Brother seminarians appreciate this. We are also prayerful. We are open not only to each other but also to other people in our apostolate and to the parents of our formandi. I can say that I am really very grateful to the Society. Here in the Philippines, all Provincials are caring for Brothers. Nobody looks down on Brothers any more. We are all happy to be SVD Brothers!

*(Noted down by Br. Bela Lanyi, SVD)*

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## DEEFEND MORE AND MORE WITH EVERY CONSCIOUS ACT OF RENEWAL

*(Br. Darwin Loro, ARS)*



1. I have been here in Argentina since September 2008. I was accompanied by a fellow SVD Brother during my initial language course and later on by another Brother who was working with

disadvantaged people in the community. Both experiences were positive. Living in two different SVD communities prior to my current community helped me get to know my confreres and the people they serve.

As of now, I live in the formation house with four confreres in temporary vows and a priest confrere who accompanies them as formator. My main task is to collaborate with one of the NGOs called Open Hands Foundation, a Christian organization that works to mitigate poverty, pain and need. I have been working in two of the various services that the foundation offers, namely, accompanying sick and dying persons, and working with homeless men with whom I usually engage in conversation, exploring their life's choices and encouraging them in their pursuit of a better future. I am blessed with having to accompany individuals and listen to their life's stories, their hopes, joys and struggles.

I am also involved in the health care ministry of the Archdiocese of Córdoba, participating in biweekly group meetings of former drug dependents. Moreover, I coordinate a parish-based group that offers support to people who have personal difficulties. Our program focuses on value formation—spiritual, physical, mental, emotional and social dimensions of healthy living.

These are some great experiences that I really feel I am called to do as of this stage of my missionary work. Above all, I am nourished spiritually by every encounter and sharing. These experiences allow me to satisfy my need to learn, grow and be filled with God's constant grace. Based on my experience, the SVD Argentinean South Province is truly open to dialog and collaboration by working with other groups and institutions. I am very pleased with my experiences so far.

2. Among the challenges that I encounter is the need to adapt to new processes of learning and readjustment in a new socio-cultural environment such as Argentina. With an open mind and heart, this religious missionary way of life is deepened more and more with every conscious act of renewal to a lifetime commitment of love and service to humanity. The journey to serve others is such a joy as I push myself to learning new things, opening up to people, and reaching out to different sectors of society. I am deeply grateful, contented and enlightened by the many friendly encounters with people, especially in my pastoral work.

Cont. Br. Loro

3. The SVD mission in Argentina South Province has three priority mission partners: the family, the youth, and the poor. I guess in just a short period of time I've got the chance to work with these three different groups. I will remain thankful for my past experiences since the time I started my formation in the Philippines and later in Australia. My training and formation provided me a good preparation in my current missionary endeavor. Thanks to the SVD for the years of loving and dedicated service, accompanying new missionaries like me. I would therefore like to invite and encourage anyone interested to come and make God's mission his mission, too!

**A CALL TO CREATE**  
(Br. Alex Szabó, HUN)



I entered the Society in 1999 immediately after I finished high school. I had my novitiate in Kőszeg and thereafter studied Philosophy and Theology in Budapest. I took my final vows in 2007.

Presently, I am working in the mission office in Kőszeg. I started almost a year ago. I am still in the process of learning the operations in the office. We have one lay woman working as the mission secretary. She will be retiring soon. I have been working with her in making correspondences with our benefactors and sending our quarterly magazine, *Világposta*. By the time she retires, I will assume her job.

I have not really done much work in the office yet since I am still in the transition period. However, I already see that looking for benefactors is one of the most challenging tasks in the office. I think this challenge is

not only true in Hungary but also in the whole of Europe.

The missionary spirit that Europe used to have is slowly dying. Unlike other congregations that continued to operate even during the Communist regime, our congregation is not yet well-known. Thus, it is still a great challenge for us to be known in our country. We have to think of new means to promote the presence of our Society.



I am positive that many people are willing to help us in our mission, but not many know much about us and our mission work. One solution that I see is the Internet, where we can reach out to the younger generation. As SVDs, we should keep reading the signs of the times. We have to prepare ourselves to this call and explore all the possibilities presented by modern communication.

Unfortunately, even in the Church, we still lack interested and capable people who can work in media communications. I am very fortunate that I got interested in exploring the modern media with one of our former Brothers in the Society. I don't have formal studies, but I am interested to develop my capacity to serve in the office, especially in connection with tasks related to media communications or something technical.

Aside from media communications, we can personally reach out to people. With the help of new missionaries coming to the province, we can animate people and help them realize that our missionary work continues through the help of our confreres coming from the growing Church in Asia and Africa.



In the beginning, I had to go through the process of adjustment. I was in Budapest for ten years with our young confreres. In Kőszeg I have to live with our retired fathers. It is an overwhelming experience and indeed a blessing that it didn't take so much time for

Cont. Br. Szabó

me to find myself in the community. I am enjoying my stay with them.

Aside from my present assignment, I prepare the liturgy for them, a task that they used to do by themselves. Currently, there are some priest who, even in their old age, still ask me to teach them how to use the computer. One of them, Fr. Imre, who takes care of the garden, is always happy to have young SVDs like me who can accompany him if he needs a companion.

There are so many things that may be small matter for me but are a big deal for them. It is always surprising how grateful they are in every small thing that I do for them. It is very common today that the young and the old can hardly live together under the same roof, but this is an extraordinary experience on my part. What a joy it is to be with them!

Everyone has a place in the mission. The world needs us. The world needs you! The world counts on you!

## **"CALLED TO PROMOTE BROTHERHOOD"**

*Sharing our vocation as SVD Brothers*

*(Br. Nestor J. Benitez, Pedrozo*

*Santiago Chile)*



In our province, training is a priority and has occupied an important place in the reflections at the provincial, sub-zone, and zone levels. I started to work as formator six years ago, first as Director for the Formation of Brothers in Argentina. I am currently doing the course for formators at the Conference for Religious in Santiago, Chile. As National Director I have made, in the field of formation, a personalized program for Brothers, helping

them to grow in their SVD vocation and determining their availability and readiness for the missionary work. I closely followed up the established programs of formation, evaluating them and making necessary changes.

I coordinate with and accompany Brothers, as well as the confreres who accompany them, in the various institutions and parishes where they have their professional studies. As part of a team of formators, I regularly participate in meetings and in provincial, national and international commissions for formators. This helps in making the figure of the Brother present in the different levels of formation and in the life of the province, in the sub zones and in the Panam Zone.

The team of formators is revising and preparing the specific plan of formation for the Brothers in accordance with the recommendations made in the Second General Assembly of the SVD Brother Vocation, and with the possibilities of academic studies in Cordoba-Argentina linked to the mission as a prophetic dialogue, and its characteristic dimensions. In Cordoba, we have several courses related to social work, communications, education, and religious studies; however, we do not have courses in Missionology, Anthropology, and Bible studies.

As religious, we want to be relevant to the historical reality of our people. We have to be exposed to the challenges posed by modernity and post-modernity, and we have to respond to them. Although circumstances vary in different places, there are remarkable similarities in both the virtues and the shortcomings that young people have in relation to their human foundation.

During these years in the formation, I have come to know that the youth have a great desire to be characters and builders of their own history. We want to save these desires since they are in great harmony with the way that Jesus has called them: appealing to their decision and their personal freedom. They also offer us their generosity, their social sensitivity, their value for the group, and their new desire to serve the poor.

With pain, I observe that many of our young people today come to the religious life with several deficiencies:

1. The wounds caused by the breakdown of the family, which they have suffered in the early years of their life, and which creates in them various kinds of frailty, insecurity and lack of affection (traumas, immaturity, lack of acceptance of their own history).

Cont. Br. Benetiz

2. Heterogeneity in the cultural preparation. Some come with a low level of cultural preparation that prevents them from grasping the deep meaning of the consecrated life.
3. Submission to the violence of a society that marginalizes them or values them simply as consumers. Many are marked by complexes.
4. Other deficiencies come from our own limitations and mistakes. We must admit that our structures and programs of formation do not always fit perfectly with the minimum requirements for the initial formation.

As educators we are aware that the young people who come to our congregation are children of modernity.

They are citizens of the cyber-culture, they are more than we. As such, they are split beings because, on the one hand, they claim the important role of being persons, and on the other, they live oppressed by the difficulties and problems that affect and influence them. Already possessing a subjectivity produced by the neoliberal system in which they are immersed, they are weak in the face of narcissistic individualism and consumerism, determined to achieve success at any price.

Our young people have inherited modernity and a unique form of communication. Modernity reveals that we are all beings with deficiencies. In a personalized formation, we must be aware that young people are also:

1. Beings of necessity. They have drives that seek satisfaction.
2. Beings of desires. Having desires is a sign of health. If desires are killed, life is killed as well. Desires, however, must dialectically agree with the law. The desire according to the law is freedom to commit oneself; thus, the true desire of consecration takes to the mission.
3. Beings of demand. A subject with deficiencies turns to others and asks what they can give him, primarily asking to be recognized as a subject. Society satisfies our desires artificially. The trainees ask to be recognized.

The greatest challenge in personalized formation is to respond appropriately to the needs, desires, and demands of young people. What makes forming relation very difficult is the incomplete interpretation of the institutional reality. The relation with the institutional is conceived only between two poles: the institution and the instituted. It is only when the third pole, the act of

instituting, is added that true participation and communion is achieved.

The great challenge before us as religious is to know how to respond appropriately and timely to these requirements without anguish or despair. From our choice to follow Jesus, we are urged to deeply love these times even if they are troubled and difficult because they are precisely our own and in them we have to discover the presence of the Lord. This involves learning to live with change, to be open to what is new and unexpected, and to accept that our own process of formation must be continuous.

I invite young people to share with us our:

Being Brothers:

1. The Brother sees beyond appearances and commits himself to humanity.
2. The Brother sees and hears and feels that he is called to do what Jesus did.
3. The Brother is a man in the way of love.

Identity:

1. We reaffirm our status as lay by belonging to the people of God.
2. Our identity is built in dialogue with all the members of the people of God.
3. Brotherhood is the essential element of our being.
4. Cultural diversity unifies us more than it sets us apart.

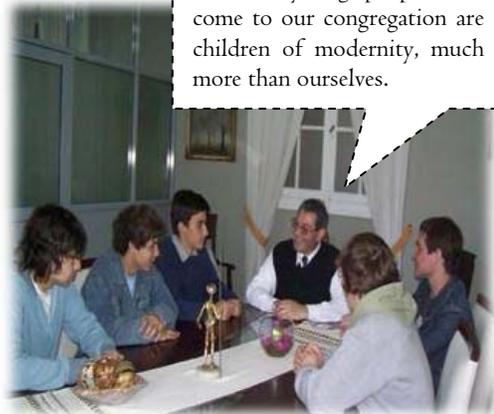
Spirituality:

1. Spirituality is born of a personal relationship with God.
2. The Word is its center.
3. It is fed by the reality of poverty and exclusion.

Mission:

1. To be attentive and present in the new frontiers.
2. To announce Jesus Christ and his kingdom from our condition as consecrated.
3. To act with brotherhood and solidarity in our ecclesial communities.

As educators we are aware that the young people who come to our congregation are children of modernity, much more than ourselves.



## “BROTHER “ IS NOT A RANK

(Br. Bela Lanyi, PHS)



As prefect of junior Brothers in the Baranowicze (=“Russian”) District of the Polish Province, I was not yet fully aware of methods of formation. But since I still remembered how my excellent formators in Austria introduced us to the religious life, I was not empty-handed. We were establishing a new mission there and this made the junior Brothers rather dependent on their apostolates. This experience made me curious for formation strategies.

When the Hungarian Province called me to be novice master and prefect, I had a difficult time resigning from my dream job, that of being construction director of four dioceses. But since it was clearly the wish of the superiors, I left for Hungary to work as a formator.

Before starting, the Hungarian Province generously sent me to Chicago for a formation course. I lived at the Theologate in Chicago and experienced formation from inside. Both formators and formandi were honest and open to me. The programs and lectures also enriched me very much so that I could work in Hungary as novice master, prefect, and vocation promoter. I am thankful to my confreres in Hungary for the trust they gave me.

Since mission means exposure, I realized the difficulty of getting missionary vocations when candidates expect to just continue the well-established work of their home province. In order to awaken a stronger missionary enthusiasm, I volunteered to go abroad again. I was already happy with the invitation of the Ural Region to build a church in Moscow, but Fr. General invited me to teach at the University of San Carlos in Cebu, Philippines.

Today I know that the word of Fr. General was Divine Providence. With great joy and enthusiasm, I started

teaching here. However, I got scared when Fr. Provincial Kulueke called me one time. Is he not contented with my work? To my relief, it turned out that Br. Romy Abulad, rector-prefect of the Brothers’ formation house, gave me an invitation to become his assistant prefect.

I appreciated this call and considered it as an expression of great trust. In fact, I have always found the vibrant and deeply spiritual seminary life fulfilling. Journeying with young people opens broad horizons for me.

Challenges and joys? The Philippines is a “brotherly” country. Even strangers approach you with the greeting “Kumusta ka BRAD?” (How are you doing, BROTHER?) Everybody is a “brother,” although lay ministers, social workers and seminarians are particularly called so. It is like we are all members of a big family of Cebuanos. Even strangers are brothers. Is this not great?

As SVD Brothers, we believe and behave as members of a big family. The difficulties start when we start to apply the term “Brother” as a title expressing a “rank.” This makes people confused: Are you a lay minister? A seminarian? A social worker? What is the difference between you and the priests?

I believe that being a Brother is a lifestyle, not a title. With professional achievement and religious commitment, each of us fulfils this consecrated lifestyle. In the formation, we emphasize religious character and help the candidate find work that is fitting to him. Both physical and intellectual work can be very fulfilling if it is God’s message that we carry out while working.

Today, when some Brothers are given little recognition for their work, it is less a matter of people looking down on Brothers like before, but more a matter of Provinces that cannot accommodate special degrees or experiences that would otherwise be needed in other Provinces. In this regard, the Generalate could promote a good flow of information within our Society.



# REPORTS FROM MEETINGS

## NORTH AMERICA

(Br. Mike Decker, USC)

Dear readers of SVD BROTHERS,

Greetings from Chicago! Recently, from July 22-24, we had our first Brothers Gathering here in North America since the Brothers Gathering in Cebu two years ago.

I would like to share with the readers of SVD BROTHERS an article that I wrote about our Brothers Gathering.

### “BROTHERS ON LAKE BEULAH”

This July 2011, some SVD Brothers from North America spent time together at East Troy, Wisconsin. East Troy is a beautiful location on Lake Beulah.

While we were there, we were able to pray together and spend time together with the SVD community, which always shows great hospitality. Sharing our lives, meeting to discuss ways to promote the Brother Vocation, and just spending quality time together as Brothers were our goals. This was the first time we met since the 2nd Brothers Gathering in Cebu in 2009.

One of the highlights was the presentation by Linh Tran, who talked about his enriching three-year experience in Togo from 2008 to 2011. Linh talked about his struggles and progress in learning the language and culture, and how he grew to love the Togolese people. While on CTP, Linh learned more what it means to be an SVD

Brother. His vocation was challenged, enriched, and strengthened.

Another highlight was our discussion on the recommendations from the Cebu document. Two points were made: 1) Since Brother Wendelin Meyer was the first SVD to come to North America on October 15, 1895, we want to promote the Brother Vocation on October 15.

2) More stories on Brothers from North America should be written.

Taking a ride on Lake Beulah was a great time for the Brothers to spend time together and enjoy the beauty of the lake. Our time together was fulfilling; thus, the Brothers want to do this again in 2013.



# ASPAC Brothers' Zonal Assembly in Hyderabad, India

August 23-26, 2011

(We received the text from Br. Alfonso Berger)



The theme of the SVD Brothers Assembly held at Arnold Bhavan, Hyderabad, India on August 23-26, 2011 was "SVD Brothers' Role in Today's Church." Fr. William Burt (ASPAC Coordinator), Br. Alfonso Berger (Generalate representative) and twenty-two (22) other participants of the ASPAC Zone attended the assembly.

The assembly made the following official recommendations.

1. We recommend that the ASPAC Brothers Zonal Assembly be held every five years.
2. We recommend to include the Zonal area Coordinator for Education-Formation and the National Education Secretary of Formation from India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. We continue to support the participation of a representative from the Generalate in the ASPAC Brothers Assembly.
3. We recommend that ongoing formation for higher studies (M.A. and/or Ph.D.), in line with the priorities of the province, be given to the Brothers for better performance in their given responsibilities.
4. We recommend periodical upgrading of skills and knowledge (seminars, short courses, etc.) for Brothers who have been in the field for at least five years.
5. For Brother vocation promotion, we recommend:
  - a) committing ourselves to write life stories or articles for SVD BROTHERS;
  - b) using materials given in the SVD BROTHERS;
  - c) sharing of other available materials with inter-provincial vocation promoters; and,
  - d) conducting regular vocation promotion in schools and relevant institutions.
6. We highly recommend training for Brother formators, and exchange of Brother formators within ASPAC zone wherever possible.
7. We recommend the evaluation of the implementation of the above-mentioned recommendations in two to three years by the National Formation Coordinator.

# 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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Spiritual Director: Fr. Alejandro Villasante

National Brother Director: Br. Edgardo Faz

Nat'l Brother Vocation Promoter: Br. Edgardo Faz

I-IV Collegians: 12

Associates: 3

Postulants: 3

Junior Brothers: 5



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