



SVD BROTHERS



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NEWSLETTER



*His
Birth was
a Miracle*

*His
Love is
a GIFT...*

Theme:

SVD MISSION PARTNERSHIP,

Brothers and Priests Working Together

FOREWORD:



Dear confrere, dear reader,

It is my pleasure to present you this last issue of the series that have been focusing mostly on the SVD Brother Vocation promotion. The present bulletin is entitled “SVD Mission Partnership: Brothers and Priests working together” to stress the fact that Brothers are not living or working alone, but together with their Priest fellows. This “teamwork approach” enhances our witnessing to the Gospel wherever we are.

Following the previous two issues, in which some Brother candidates and Brothers in temporary or perpetual vows shared their vocational journey, this time too, we have some Brothers and Priests who will share their missionary experience, in particular, from the teamwork perspective.

Fr. Jakub Blaszczyzyn, Regional Superior of URL and Fr. Eduardo Rocha, Vice-Provincial of PHS answered a few questions related to the role of the SVD Brother vocation in today’s common SVD mission. Furthermore, they also gave some examples of cooperation between our Brothers and Priest, as well as some proposals to improve it.

Two young Brothers (Bernd Ruffing and Linh Tran) tell us about their recent OTP experience, one in Thailand (Asia) and the other in Togo (Africa). Both of them felt enriched by this cross-cultural exposure. Other two Brothers (Sandy Ashadi and Brian McLauchlin) offer us a witnessing of their missionary work with our Priest confreres, and even beyond them, as in the case of Brian.

Our bulletin concludes with a nice article on Bro. Tarcisius de Ruyter, a senior Dutch confrere, who has been working in Ghana for the past 50 years. “Just call me Brother” is more than a title for his story; it represents a fraternal relationship with people that all of us should develop in our life and mission, based on the Gospel teaching, “you are all brothers” (Matt 23:8).

I take this opportunity to wish you and your community a blessed Christmas celebration!

Br. Alfonso J. Berger (ROM)

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Fr. Jakub Blaszczyzyn

(URAL Region, Regional) Poland



1. What do you like most about the SVD Brother vocation?

- It is a missionary religious vocation that demands from a person a deep union with God in the search of HIS WILL and a careful analysis of what is happening in the world around.
- The professional preparation, the constant deepening of personal knowledge, and the development of possibilities.
- The open and creative approach to service, which considers personal capabilities and the requirements of the missionary context.
- The close collaboration with the laity, which entails a deeper understanding of the difficulties and joys in the daily life of a common person.
- The dialogue with non-believers in the background of professional work.
- Our presence in communities: there cannot be a community without Brothers, and there cannot be Brothers without a community.
- The service of Brothers reminds us of the “yeast” parable from the Gospel, which from the inside transforms the world into the Kingdom of God.
- The participation of Brothers in pastoral work as catechists, parish assistants, and parish administrators.

2. Could you share a few examples of cooperation between our Brothers and priests in your province/region?

In many of the communities of URL, priests and Brothers have a common apostolate. The big communities in Baranovichi (Belarus) and Saint Petersburg (Russia) and the small community in Blagoveshensk (Russia) are concrete examples.

Baranovitchi – Br. Kornel is the Praeses of the community, prefect for the postulants, director of the Catechetical college, and chief editor of the journal Dialogue. Bro. Jaroslav is the treasurer. Priests are in charge of the parishes and the regional Treasury. The sharing of work enables the priests to focus more fully on the pastoral work.

St. Petersburg – In the formation house, the treasurer and officer-in-charge of the retreat house at Avkalevo are Brothers. In the past, the vice-prefect for the seminarians and vice-rector of the community was a Brother.



Blagoveshensk – A Brother is the praeses of the community and administrator of one of the two parishes, while a priest is in charge of the other parish. The nearest parish is more than 600 kilometers away; therefore, a Brother has to handle many aspects of the parish life in the absence of a priest.

- Without cooperation and involvement among confreres, these communities would not have been able to live and continue the missionary apostolate according to the charism of the Society.

3. Do you have any suggestions to improve our living and working together as Brothers and priests in the SVD Mission?

- The collaboration of priests and Brothers is to be understood as mutually fulfilling. We should not try to change the order of things: a Brother is a Brother and should act like one, while a priest should not act like a Brother.

The difference between the service of Brothers and priests is not a hindrance, but a deep expression of unity according to the image of the Holy Trinity.

- Brothers are missionaries, not collaborators of missionaries. They must understand their service as Witness to the Word. They carry the same responsibility for the missionary service that priests do.

- Brothers and priests do not live only for themselves. They live in order to realize one and the same mission.

- The professional training of Brothers is of utmost importance because it makes them able to meet life head-on and to act according to the tasks laid before communities in any given context.

FIRST OF ALL, WE ARE MISSIONARIES

*RUFFING, Bernd (GER)
(In preparation for Final Vows.)*



1. Where did you have your OTP?

Australian Province. I spent six months in Australia and two-and-a-half years in Thailand.

2. How did you prepare for that stage of your formation?

I received a mission cross for my OTP six months before I left Europe. Except for studying Thai back in Austria, there was no particular

preparation, at least not an organized one as part of the formation.

3. Having completed that stage, what would you like to share with us? (E.g., one experience that marked your life during that time).

- MISSION is being one with them, being of them, and being one for them in HIM and with HIM!
- It's not about doing big things. Rather, it's all about being a part of healthy relationships.
- I rediscovered the beauty of my own faith, such as when I explained to some Buddhist friends what Christmas is all about or the fact of forgiveness that was so important for many people I lived with.
- It's not about HIV/AIDS, but about PEOPLE living with HIV/AIDS. The virus became more than a disease. It became a face – more than one actually.

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

- I'm so thankful for these three years! My understanding of my identity both as an SVD Brother and as a missionary has deepened. For instance, whenever



people asked me about my profession, I would always tell them that I'm a Registered Nurse and a Nursing Educator, and that there is a dimension of mission in my profession! During my OTP in Thailand, I learned to be, first of all, a missionary.

- We have a group of young missionaries who have been living with SVD's and SSpS sisters in Austria and Germany for some time now. I should have joined their intensive preparation program and their activities for those who come back. An organized returning program might be helpful.

- The OTP is an excellent part in our formation!

MISSION THROUGH PROFESSION

Fr. Eduardo R. Rocha (PHS, Vice-Provincial)



What I like most about the SVD Brother vocation is the fact that the aspirants/seminarians are encouraged to pursue a degree that is in line with both their interests and the needs of the congregation in terms of expertise. This tells us that the SVD Brothers carry out their missions by practicing their professions. This affords them the great opportunity of living a life of witness.

When I was assigned at the University of San Carlos as the Vice President for Administration, I had wonderful experiences working with an SVD Brother who is an architect. I always tapped his expertise in making the designs for the renovation or construction of offices. He really did well in sharing his expertise for the good of the university. The Cabinet later approved my recommendation for him to be the Administrator of the USC – Talamban Campus, a position he gladly accepted. He was directly under my office and we had wonderful moments of working together. He is Br. Antonio Andres Flores, SVD.

In 2005, I was appointed Rector of the F. Sotto SVD Community, which was composed of Brothers and clerics who had different tasks in the PHS Province. As Rector, I must say that we had then a unique and happy community. During the day, we would go to our respective areas of work, so we usually saw each other only during breakfast and supper. The community's togetherness was felt most during

supper time because it was an opportunity for us to recount the experiences of the day, share jokes, plan some activities for the community, or recall fond memories. I felt that during that time, each one of us, the Brothers and the clerics alike, developed a sense of respect and appreciation for one another. The SVD Brothers who were with us were Br. Paul Bongcaras and Br. Noel Tecson.

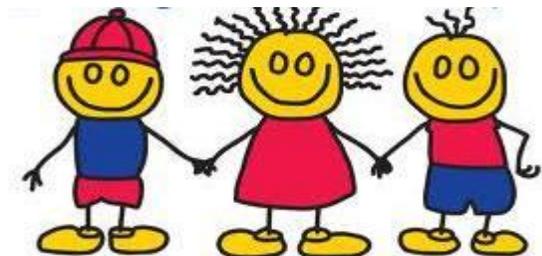
The best experience I had working with SVD



Brothers was when I was appointed Rector of St. Joseph Freinademetz Formation House. Despite being the only

cleric there, I had wonderful and memorable experiences living and working with the SVD Brothers. Our community had a healthy atmosphere for cooperation because each of us fostered an attitude of respect, openness, understanding, honesty, and sincerity. This made me enjoy my work as Rector of that formation house. Though I held the position only for one year, I must say that it was a great privilege for me to have worked together with the SVD Brothers: Bela Lanyi, Edgardo Faz, and Rolando Sanchez.

I must thank you for the good time of living and working together as SVDs!



I ENDURED WITH PATIENCE AND HOPE

Br. Sandy Ashadi, GEN

I am Sandy Tjandra Ashadi from Indonesia. My present assignment is assisting the Publication Department of the Generalate in Rome. I work



closely with Fr. Sebastian Mataphalil, head of the department, and I am in charge of publishing the Ordo Divini Officii, a book that contains the list of our confreres and sisters who passed away and those who celebrate their jubilee. It will be sent to our confreres throughout the world. Father General has also asked me to help with the website of the Generalate. Furthermore, I help with the layout of Arnoldus Nota.

This is my first assignment and I am privileged to work at the Generalate community. Fr. Sebastian Mataphalil is a good person to work with. He gives me good explanations on how things are done. I also work with Fr. Sonny, who works next to my office, with the layout of Arnoldus Nota. He told me that he was having a hard time with it so I offered to help him. After all, this kind of job suits my skill in graphic design and I do not really have a lot of things to do. Working with him is pleasant because he knows how to work in a team and he communicates well.

At the Publication Department, there are no laypersons working with us and I do not have ministry outside the house. As such, I do not have much collaboration with laypersons except when I communicate with people at the printing house in order to get some materials printed. I experienced this during my first year in Rome and I felt uneasy. But fortunately I can do the layout for the Arnoldus Nota so that I have regular work every month.

Another challenge is a lack of communication. Sometimes it is hard for me to communicate with a person I am supposed to work with.

Life in Rome was hard at the beginning because I had to adjust to the surroundings and deal with communication problems, and there was not much to do. But now life seems to be normal because I endured it with patience and hope. I always hope for a better future.

For me, the task given by Father General and the General Council is always relevant to the SVD mission. I do not go around preaching the gospel, but I participate in the SVD mission through my skills. The Ordo Divini Officii, for example, helps our confreres and sisters in their prayers for our deceased confreres and sisters. I recently created a website for Centro Ad Gentes Nemi to promote the SVD mission for the ongoing formation of our confreres and sisters. I think that our Society should make good use of media communications as a means of preaching the Gospel. I hope that more people will be involved with media communications.

We do not have as many Brothers today as in the past. We should be able to encourage parish priests to promote the Brothers vocation by involving Brothers in certain activities in the church. This way, many people will know something about the SVD Brother's life and might be interested to follow this kind of lifestyle.



RESPONDING TO IMMIGRANTS

Br. Brian McLaughlin, USC



I am the JPIC Coordinator for the USC province. As coordinator, I have assembled a JPIC Commission to help guide the province's work in JPIC efforts. The committee is composed of SVD Brothers and priests, and one layperson. We are fairly new as a committee, but thus far the collaboration has been good. We recently have worked out some goals to help guide us for the new triennium.

One of the projects I am a part of is called the Joint Venture Responding to Immigrants, a coalition of SVDs, SSps, and SSpSAP. The committee is thus composed not only of SVD Brothers and priests but also of the members of the other two branches of our Arnoldus family. In addition, there are two laypersons who are a part of the Joint Venture. Our team meets about once a month and we send our meeting minutes to the SSpSAP so that they may have some material they can take to prayer. As a coalition, we work in four areas: prayer, advocacy, awareness/education, and action.

FROM TOGO TO TECHNY

Br. Linh Tran, USC, noted by Br. Mike Decker, USC

Mission Sunday is always a great celebration for all SVD's, especially since, on Mission Sunday, October 5, 2003, we all celebrated the Canonization of Arnold Janssen and Joseph Freinademetz. This year on Mission Sunday, October 23, 2011, in Techny, there was a presentation by Brother Linh Tran. He talked about the 3 years he spent in Togo during his CTP from USC.



The three main points that Linh emphasized were time, culture, and ministry. First, let's look at time. The concept of time in Togo is different from that of the Western society. Linh said that people in Togo would usually tell him, "You have a watch, but we have TIME."

When Linh arrived in Togo in 2008, he was a stranger to the culture and language. Young people would call Linh "Dovo! Dovo!" which means "white person," even though Linh is Vietnamese. Over time Linh learned the language and culture as he interacted with the people of Togo. Linh did ministry with the SSps sisters in Bassar, where they fed malnourished children. Linh's ministry also involved educating and treating women and children who had HIV/AIDS. It was difficult for Linh to see someone die of AIDS after treating them for months. Linh's three years in Togo helped him mature in his vocation as an SVD Brother. What is important, Linh said, is to share God's love to those who need it.

JUST CALL ME BROTHER

Br. Tarcisius de Ruyter (GHA, noted by Sr. Elizabeth Newman, SSND)



When someone asks Brother Tarcisius de Ruyter, SVD, his name, his response is always the same, “Just call me ‘Brother.’” Throughout Ghana, in villages, towns, and cities, you can hear people say, “I am going to Nsawam to see Brother.” Though his life started eighty-three years ago in De Bilt, near Utrecht in the western part of the Netherlands, Br. Tarcisius has been in Ghana for the past forty-eight years. For him, Ghana is home.

Brother’s call to religious life came in 1943. In spite of having a good job and a promise of taking over the real estate and insurance business from his boss, he knew he was being called to another type of life. As he expressed it, the call was “away from future business, away from girls, up to Jesus.”

Although Br. Tarcisius came from a long line of shoemakers (beginning in the sixteenth century on his father’s side), he did not want to be a shoemaker. However, his novice director decided that shoemaking was what he should do. The struggle began, and a compromise was found. Bro. Tarcisius was the first Brother to be given permission to study. He started with a private teacher within the safe walls of the cloister, then soon advanced to trade schools, all kinds of side courses, a teacher’s diploma, and finally to orthopedics and physiotherapy.

Over the years, Ghana has benefited greatly from Brother’s determination and skills. When Br. Tarcisius came to Ghana in 1961, polio was endemic and he immediately had his work cut out for him. He began his task of training young

Ghanaians to be shoemakers, brace makers, and limb makers. They learned from him the theory and had supervised study. Slowly, the workshop was established, and they began to use their skills to manufacture orthopedic appliances for the physically challenged.

The center grew from the workshop to a mobile unit that was initiated in 1965. This mobile unit made it possible for the center’s services to be extended to all of Ghana. Approximately 3,600 patients were seen by the mobile unit team in 2008. In 1967, a children’s department was established to provide facilities for those who need intensive therapy. In 2008, 250 children were admitted.

Br. Tarcisius had heart surgery and received a pacemaker in 2004. With his determination and hard work, he was able to return to Ghana six months after the surgery. In June 2008, he had a slight stroke, but he is doing very well today. Bro. Tarcisius still acts as a consultant and continues to see patients. No written or spoken words can better express Brother’s vocation than his own:



*Br. Tarcisius Ruyter and
Sr. Elizabeth Newman
(Golden Jubilee of OTC, Nsawam /
Adoagviri Ghana, West Africa)*

Yes, my calling was a mixture of contemplation and longing for God’s presence, and the desire to do something for the “mission.” Slowly my task unfolded, often opposed, but always relentless, because of the crying need of the many physically challenged children and adults. I love the story of Jonah because I also told God to find someone else to do this work. I even remember having a kind of aversion to physically challenged people, yet I am living among these children and adults and I love them. I don’t see deformities, but only people and all kinds of personalities to be restored to acceptance of themselves and helped to take their rightful place in society. We form a wonderful family together—staff, patients, myself—God has blessed all of us. I praise the Lord for His providence and for using me as a tool to help so many. I believe that I will be asked at the end of my life, “Did you double the talents I gave you?” I pray that I will be able to answer “Yes.”

A LASTWORD, FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Confreres,

As you have read in the introductory message of Br. Alfonso, there are some changes in our SVD BROTHERS bulletin in 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 are grateful not only for your acknowledgments but also for your critical remarks. Having read your observations, we will try to update both the content and the 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 communication among Brothers in order to highlight the many opportunities of witnessing through the Brother vocation. May an updated and an even more effective 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 or 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



Merry Christmas!

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