

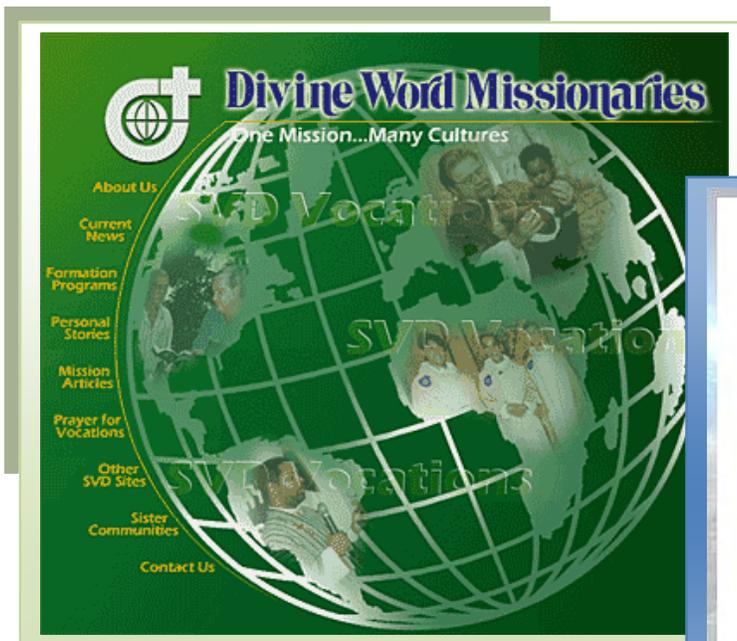


SVD BROTHERS

Vol. 6 No. 3 September 2013

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NEWSLETTER



Theme:

**BROTHER VOCATION IN THE INTERCULTURAL
SVD COMMUNITY.**

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FOREWORD

SVD INTER-CULTURALITY: A CHALLENGE AND A CHANCE

Br. Guy Mazola, SVD (General Councilor, Rome)



God leads all creation to be reconciled to Himself in Christ, as expressed in the eschatological image of the multitude from every nation, people, and language standing before the throne of the Lamb. We feel especially called to this aspect of God's mission in our world today because of our inter-culturality, which is our heritage, commitment, and mission from the foundation of our Society by St. Arnold Janssen, a particular gift of God to us.

(Introduction of the document of the 17th General Chapter; Congregational Directions no.3)

Inter-culturality has become an inescapable dimension of social, economic, and political reality of our world. People of various cultures live in close contact with one another and share the richness of each culture. In their diversity, they seek to complement each other. On the other hand, fears and anxieties about the people from other cultures and ethnic groups who live in close proximity create situations of conflict.

In the same manner, religious institutes are also directly affected by this phenomenon of cultural diversity, both within their living communities and the reality of their mission locations. Inter-culturality is, therefore, a challenge and an opportunity for us religious – a *challenge* to transform the threat of the strangeness of others in promise of new fraternity and a *chance* to revisit the meaning and the missionary vocation of religious life in today's world.

We, SVDs, are blessed to be part of an international and intercultural congregation where we can witness God as the Father of us all through the lives of members from various cultures forming one family. This is a prophetic sign of harmony and communion *in our world today that are contrary to God's plan for the unity of the human race and all creation*(Congregational Directions no.3). But it is not easy to live internationality and inter-culturality. Living together from different cultures as one family is still challenging. Challenge of learning new customs and traditions, challenge of prejudices and stereotypes that contribute to misinformation, etc. Hence, this issue should be addressed properly in our communities. Avoiding difficulties and refusing to address the issue may give a temporary sense of well-being, but in the long run, it will only promote individualism.



We are at an opportune time to create a congregational culture which goes beyond merely tolerating cultural differences of our members, but rather tapping them to celebrate our charism and mission at the service of life.

In this bulletin, we would like to share our experiences of living inter-culturality in our communities. How would you evaluate your own experience of growing towards inter-cultural competence? What has been particularly helpful for you in attaining intercultural competence? What would you suggest to better prepare our candidates for inter-cultural life and service?

Let us all *participate in God's mission of reconciliation by sharing our intercultural life and mission.* (Congregational Directions no 46)

Dear Confreres,

We thank you very much for reading this bulletin. As you probably already know, SVD BROTHERS is the SVD Generalate's digital bulletin edited by Brothers in Cebu, Philippines. Since it is written by its readers, we were asking the confreres for responses to some guide questions focusing on the theme of this issue which is BROTHER VOCATION IN THE INTERCULTURAL SVD COMMUNITY.

- 1. What challenges have you encountered in an SVD inter-cultural community?*
- 2. What graces have you received through an inter-cultural SVD community?*
- 3. What suggestions do you have for the SVD Brother formation to prepare candidates for inter-cultural life and service?*

The present bulletin contain responses from confreres who responded to us.

The Editors



INTERCULTURALITY: A BLESSING or A CURSE?

Br. Franco Luige Camasura (PHS)



We bear with each other's personal weaknesses patiently and with the tensions that result from differences of temperament, age, nationality, and culture. We avoid jealousy and aversions, dissensions, and all criticism that impairs brotherly love; we refrain from anything that can bring harm to a confrere's good name. We help each other through fraternal correction. If dissensions arise, we quickly seek to be reconciled. (SVD Constitution 303.6)

It is a fact that the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) is an international congregation. Whatever community a confrere belongs to, he is to expect that there would always be this so-called *inter-culturality*. The SVD is quite known for this.

Is this a blessing or a curse?

I acknowledge that everyone has his own background and culture which make us different and unique from each other. Moreover, I also acknowledge that in living in a community, struggles and challenges are inevitable. Language is a common difficulty; dealing with other members of the community, whether we have the same nationality or not, is another thing. However, I still believe that *inter-culturality* is not all bad.

As of the present time, I am on my third year of my junior brotherhood formation. I have never experienced leaving my country. However, I do not consider myself unfortunate as regards to the experience of SVD interculturality. In my community here in Cebu City, Philippines, this is very evident. I had experienced living and/or dealing with missionaries from Germany, Columbia, Brazil, Hungary, Papua New Guinea, Japan, Indonesia, and others. They bring with them their

cultures and are generous enough to share it with others. This gives me a good taste of and close look at inter-culturality. In this sense, it is a blessing!

Graces of inter-culturality are overwhelming. Learning from them as we develop friendships and brotherhood is more than enough. It also teaches me to have deeper appreciation of my own culture and respect for others which, in the end, promotes unity. Our diversity helps us be mindful that it complements us.

In my formation, I am thankful that our program helps us prepare for this reality of community life. We have a lot of immersions and apostolates which teach us the value of living and sharing with others – e.g., the urban poor people of Quezon City during my Postulancy, the Mangyans (an indigenous people of Mindoro) during my Novitiate, the different parishes of the southern Philippines now that I am a junior Brother, and the like. And I am ready for more.

These are my experiences of inter-culturality. These are my experiences which tell me that, more than a curse, inter-culturality is a blessing!

THE RAINBOW

Fr. Fidelis Regi Waton (GER)



Internationality is one of the major focuses of the spirituality of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). It is wonderful, as well as a blessing, that people from different backgrounds can live together. The reason why we, as Divine Word Missionaries are here is not just to work together in the first place, but to live together.

For me, the first challenge is the awareness and acceptance that not only I do exist, but others as well.

Cont. Waton

Therefore, there is a need for me to accept and to respect the *otherness* of other people.

Allow me to use an analogy to explain my point. Living together in an intercultural community is like a rainbow. The beauty of the rainbow does not lie with the fact that its different colors exist independently from each other. The rainbow is not a mixture of colors. It is a coexistence of different colors side by side! While accepting other colors, I will never lose my own color. Through the existence of other colors, my own color will be even more gorgeous.

Beauty arises from the togetherness, the cooperation of those different colors.

For me, living in an international community is an important blessing. It is because of it that I am able to bear witness to my true colors, to keep my roots, and even to deepen myself through them. I am and will always be an Indonesian even though I have been living here in Germany for several years now. If I keep my roots and deepen them in a conscious way, these will make me accept, respect, and honor the roots of other people.

It is nice to know that I have my own roots and that these roots will be strengthened and more deeply anchored through my encounters with other people. In this context, I have only two recommendations. First, I must first accept who I am and not always search who I should be. Secondly, I have to accept the *otherness* of other people which means to let them live and grow as they are.

Let us all be like the rainbow – i.e, sharing beauty without losing identity!



THE GLASS MOSAIC

Br. Alex Szabo (HUN)



I imagine living in a community as a huge glass mosaic. At the beginning there are many different, uncut, and rough pieces in a heap. Then, the creator cuts them and places them next to one another. In the end, the pieces form a whole where each one has its place, charisma, and role to take.

Unity in Diversity! This phrase explains it all. Whenever I would hear or read this, I remember the days when I joined the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) thirteen years ago. Initially, in Hungary, there were only us, Hungarians. Then, we gradually opened up to the whole world. Both missionary priests and seminarians arrived from all over the world. There was a time when our community in Budapest was consisted of confreres from eleven nations.

We had no previous experience in this field. We started from scratch. We faced challenges. One of them was being open to the other person, his culture, and his nation. As time passed, I learned the value of trusting my brother. I learned to accept his different way/s of thinking, solving problems, and most of all, carrying out his personal relationship with God.

I would also like to mention the many blessings and strength that I and our whole community gained by becoming international. We live in unity; still we are diverse. Everybody who was, who is, or who will be a member of our community adds something in enriching our spirituality.

To end, as we continue valuing interculturality, let us not forget to allow our Creator put us – the pieces of His great mosaic masterpiece – where we could serve more as gifts to God's people.

HAPPY SUNDAY

Br. Hugo Andrey (SWI)



In 1963, after my first vows, I got the mission appointment from Switzerland to Australia. I just attended a farmers' school for two winters, and I did not know any English. At that time, it took one month on the Loyd Triestino boat, to reach Sydney. After arrival, Fr. Provincial brought me to a town, Marburg Old. It was a long journey of 1000 km. Luckily, he knew a little German: whenever a hill came he would to say: *"steyleraufgang or abgang"*.

In Marburg was the novitiate, with some resident Brothers and Fathers. Most of them were refugees from the war-afflicted Papua New-Guinea. Together with a German Brother, I was assigned to the farm. Since I did not know any English, I just spoke German. But as a migrant, I was allowed to apply for a short correspondence course in English. Although I also tried to listen radio for a better English, I still remember how much time it took me to understand even the simple information that Kennedy was killed.

The majority of the community in Marburg was composed of Germans, with some Australian confreres, and 8 novices. We had a good time together. A friendly novice tried to explain me the local culture, flora and fauna. We went for walks. I collected butterflies that I never saw at home. I met snakes and unknown birds. Discovering the place, new experiences cheered me up.

After one year I was transferred to Kellyville, near Sydney, to a dairy farm. There, I lived with two American confreres. At every meal, the topic was America. Thus I had nothing to say! What a different feeling from Marburg! But there was plenty of work which I loved, it did not worry me much that I could not understand my confreres. I did additional English courses, and so my English got better. My contact with the workers gave me strength. Then in 1967, the priest

in charge left and I was appointed as head of the farm. But it was sold in 1981, and I had to transfer to another farm in Singleton. For 3 years, I was working there alone, far (250 km) from our community in Epping. As it was the plan to continue farming, we made preparations for a new dairy farm, and we built a silo. However, the decision came that we had to sell the whole property. I had a hard time, but at the same time, it was also a blessing: I was free and could decide what to do in the future.

I applied for PNG, as some of my former companions, Br. Fridolin and Br. Tony, were already there. It was already 11pm when I arrived at Port Moresby, but the community was waiting for me and greeted me with a welcome drink: whisky! I received the appointment for a school. But prior to that, I had to learn the local language, Pidgin English. At the school, I met 400 students, boys and girls, under the care of Del La Salle Brothers, one SVD Chaplain and one Brother. It was totally new to me to teach every afternoon 100 students how to plant Kaukau. Despite the rain, we marched out with spades to work in the fields. We had also to pick coffee and prepare it for sale. Soon I got involved in a new Brassband, since I knew from Switzerland how to play trumpet and the typical "Alpinehorn" instrument as well. Thus I managed the new challenge to teach music. Around forty students wanted to learn from me. I felt appreciated and I enjoyed it.

Then a new appointment changed my life in 1986: I became Postulancy Director. From this batch of postulants, we have the first Papua New-Guinean SVD priest who works at present in Ghana. With the postulants, I experienced the kindness of the PNG people as we went to different places. At the same time, I was training three Brassbands. With them, we performed at different occasions. After eight years, my work with the postulants finished and I left for the Divine Word University. These 14 years was a time with many contacts with the students and the staff. Plenty of students would tell me: "I will never forget you".

In the foreign countries of my assignments, I always made efforts for contacts with the local people, since I had to live and work with them. For me, a deep God connectedness was the most important power, together with the intensive prayer life, especially meditation in the morning. I have included the people's problems into my prayer. To say: "God bless you"

Cont. Br. Andrey

became my habit. In fact, I wanted to be there for the people, in order to attend their needs.

How could the SVD Brother formation prepare the candidates for inter-cultural life and service? The most important is our prayer life, but not only the prayers that we say together in the chapel. Our private meditation and daily God connectedness must be emphasized. I can just recommend to young Brothers: Do not neglect meditation! Be connected with God, Jesus and your Guardian Angel.

CELEBRATING ALL CULTURES!

Br. Mike Decker (USC)



Sometimes, in living with an SVD community, the dominant culture controls the things happening in it. If one belongs to the minority, he would not have any other choice but to take the back seat and just accept the fact that his voice would not be heard most of the time. Thus, the beauty and gifts of his culture are not given a chance to be experienced by others. Respect for ALL cultures in an SVD community is what we need. Even if there are only one or two persons from a certain culture, let us also celebrate their culture. Let them express it.

My communities in the past (i.e., formation years and previous ministries) and in the present (i.e., present assignment as a formator for students here in Chicago) have something in common. They all try to promote sharing. With this, I am grateful to God. We celebrate each culture by sharing not only the food but life experiences that have always been very enriching for me.

With regards to the SVD Brothers who are still in formation, I suggest that they get out of their comfort zone. They must learn to live with and share their lives with people from different cultures at all stages of their formation. This would help them when they will do missionary work in the future living in an intercultural community. Training starts from the first day living in an SVD community and ends when we die. We are always learning at all stages of life.

MY PREFERENCE

Br. Franz Schneider (GER)



At the beginning of my life as a Divine Word missionary, the international character of the SVD was not a real problem because the majority of the SVD communities in Germany were national, which means consisting of only German members. Later from about the 1980s, the internationalization increased. It became usual, the normal case.

Later, I was assigned as a missionary to Africa. That time, I was the only German national in my community. When the other Germans arrived, I preferred to be far away from them because I really wanted to immerse myself to the local culture. At present, I am staying in the St. Augustine Mission House back here in Germany which is very much international now. More is not to be imagined.

In my perception, the blessing is probably the fact that I have obtained a completely wide horizon. And ultimately, this was my original main motivation – i.e., to become an *SVD missionary*.

I have no recommendations, for it is clear that SVD candidates must be aware that this is a missionary vocation for those who are willing and ready to be

Cont. Br. Schneider

"internationalized". It just depends on one's attitude if he could cope with this or not. What is important is my own mental state to be open for others.

BE TOLERANT!

Br. Zoltán András (HUN)



Living in intercultural communities may be really difficult; especially, if some members are arrogant or stubborn. These confreres will refer to alleged privileges so that they would not need to bother with works they do not like.

On the other hand, the intercultural community may also be a great blessing; especially, if we understand how to be tolerant with other members. Through proper communication among ourselves, we can solve a lot of problems. If we take time talking with other confreres, we would be able to handle opinions different from ours.

It would be better for the community if we do not immediately lecture other confreres on what they are to do in their situations. Instead, we have to assist them in a way that lets them discover the correct solution regarding their difficulties. Scolding foreigners in an impatient way with comments like: *"How long have you already been here?"* and *"You do not know even this basic thing"*, is a painful humiliation that we have to avoid. Giving time to other confreres and being tolerant with them are the correct attitudes in religious communities like SVD.

IDEAL BUT ACHIEVABLE

Br. Bernie Spitzley (USC, Jamaica)



I believe we all know that true internationality or interculturality does not come about automatically by simply putting together under one roof people from different nations or cultures. Rather, I am convinced that TRUE intercultural communities need to be consciously-created, intentionally-promoted, carefully-cared for, and attentively-nurtured. Likewise, to live interculturality requires some basic personal attitudes, certain community structures, and a particular spirituality. Consequently, it calls for a specific program of formation (both initial and ongoing) which prepares us to live effectively and meaningfully in international or intercultural communities.

The ideal intercultural community is not just a community composed of people from different nationalities or cultures; nor it is a community where people of different cultures or nationalities co-exist side by side with each other. It seems to me that we need to move beyond mutual tolerance of one another –i.e., mutual tolerance of our cultural differences to the point where our cultural differences interact with each other and, eventually, enrich our individual members and communities. Therefore, the ideal is a community where different cultures of the members can interact with each other and, thereby, mutually enrich the individual members and the community as a whole. Thus, a genuine intercultural community needs to incorporate the following:

- a) Recognition of other cultures allowing minority cultures to be visible;
- b) Respect for cultural differences avoiding any attempt to level off cultural differences by subsuming the minority cultures into the dominate culture;
- c) Promotion of a healthy interaction between cultures seeking to create a climate where each

Cont. Br. Spitzley

culture allows itself to be transformed or enriched by the other;

- d) Create a space of openness within one self to receive the other's culture; and,
- e) Use of non-violent language when in dialogue with the other

I am sure there are many more principles which one can employ in order to live interculturality with passion. Therefore, our communities need to be *laboratories* of interculturality. If we could do so, then we would be effective intercultural missionaries.

These I believe would help all Divine Word missionaries to live and grow in dynamic intercultural communities. These may sound ideal but, through God's grace and our joint efforts, I believe it is achievable!

A REALITY CHECK OF INTERCULTURALITY

Br. Stephen Kofi Bonsu (GHA)



As a community of brothers from different nations and speaking different languages, we become a living symbol of the unity and diversity of the church. -Prologue (SVD Constitution)

In both our SVD community and missionary lives dealing and working with diverse peoples, our hope is to move from the simple fact of being multicultural to forming a true intercultural community where people from all cultures present interact, learn from one another, respect and celebrate their diversity, and form one community. Intercultural life and mission can challenge all of us to reflect on how we interact with those who belong to other cultural backgrounds other than our own.

Do I reach out to a neighbor and try to learn about and understand a behavior I find puzzling? Do I actively participate in a Eucharistic Celebration administered in a language alien to me? Can I help bring understanding and harmony between peoples who are experiencing a clash based on cultural values?

These are some of the questions which one may find himself asking as he lives in a community where diversity, in all its aspects, is present.

Some of the memorable challenges I have encountered as I live in an SVD intercultural community are eating *fufu*, *banku*, and *kenkey* with the hand which is not done in other cultures. I also had experienced culture shock when a confrere made a comment referring to me when we were at table during lunch time: "*Who is this black monkey sitting there looking like a chimpanzee?*" At that time, I had just finished learning the local language and not a master of it yet. And so after lunch, I asked one of the confreres the meaning of that comment and when he explained it, I felt very bad. There was lack of respect for certain class of people, tribe, nationality, and culture.

Looking down on confreres should be avoided in a community. Some confreres finds it difficult to forgive an offense done against him by another confrere. And so, they seek revenge by pulling him down which they believe is the only way that they could be "happy". It is a saddening fact that seeing a confrere not performing in his duties is the joy of some confreres instead of lending a helping hand for the benefit of everyone. Moreover, I also find it bad when it happens that people speaking the same language, from the same tribe, and with the same culture and nationality dominate the community. This makes the other confreres handicapped in making decisions.

On the other hand, living with and in a community is a grace-filled experience. With this, I am able to enjoy the community prayer, the life-sharing experiences, and the opportunities to work together which sustain me and others in our common purpose to reach out through prophetic dialogue. Like the early Christians, we are a community centered on the Word of God and the Breaking of the Bread. The Eucharist and the Bible inspire, strengthen, and energize us. Truly, each confrere is responsible for his personal prayer and should entrust himself to regular spiritual direction but, on the other hand, by praying together and for one another and in celebrating the Eucharist in the spirit of

solidarity, respect, and love, we form a spiritual community.

These are the ups and downs of community-living – the realities which we have to accept and deal with.

The suggestions I have for the SVD Brother formation are to prepare candidates for intercultural life and service are: to teach them community prayer and the values of a community with shared life and work; to build teamwork; to cultivate a faith-filled international/multicultural/intercultural community, to foster a welcoming community; to show love and affection for each other; to participate in community meetings; to be serious in mind, and to avoid discrimination.

CHALLENGES AND SUGGESTIONS

Br. John Daton (BOL)



Basing this on my personal experiences as an SVD Brother, there are cultural differences between each confrere. It is something that I believe we all agree. We are all unique human beings. We are what we are because of several factors – e.g., family, environment, history, genes, etc.

Allow me to enumerate, in general, the challenges which I experienced in my dealings with other members of the communities I lived and am living with. I also wish to give some suggestions on how the formation programs of the Brothers could be made better so as to lessen, if not eradicate, the problems they would encounter when they become members of the Society.

Challenges I encounter while living in an SVD intercultural community

- a. *Cultural Differences*. These create stereotypes towards members of the community who come from other cultures. These may cause members of a certain culture feel that their culture is superior and better than the other.
- b. *Selfishness*. There are confreres who live in the intercultural community but show little initiative in participating in the community activities. When I say *selfish*, I am referring to those who are excessively critical and disrespectful of the other confreres. Moreover, they are incapable of recognizing their own errors.
- c. *Racism*. It is a dangerous problem in an intercultural community.
- d. *Personal Arrogance*. The person feels that he is more important and better than the other members of the community.
- e. *Spiritual Crisis*. Some confreres lack interest in the spiritual activities of the community – e.g., celebrating the Holy Eucharist and the like.
- f. *Alcoholism*. Some members of the community find refuge in drinking too much alcohol to overcome the intercultural challenges of our life and mission. This is a terrible witnessing for our mission work and relationship with our mission partners.

Suggestions for the formation of the Brother candidates

- a. *Minor seminaries*. Many of our candidates left after some years. One of the reasons is that they came from public schools and entered the Congregation after finishing high school. They did not receive in public high schools the proper spiritual formation. Having minor seminaries would help to prepare and train Brother candidates from early stages in the specific aspects of the Brotherhood vocation.
- b. *Formation houses in each province and region*.
- c. *Formators for the Brotherhood formation houses should be SVD Brothers*.
- d. *Good intellectual preparation for our Brother candidates*.

AM I WILLING?

Br. Samuel Joseph D. de Guzman (PHS)



One of the challenges of living in an SVD intercultural community is being able to understand and adapt to others' perspectives and ways of doing things which are rooted in their culture, such as work habits, both verbal and non-verbal expressions, ways of reasoning, etc. I realize that it takes an attitude of respect, patience, openness, and not to mention a certain degree of maturity to live and grow within an inter-cultural setting.

Difficult as it may seem, living in an intercultural environment has a grace. With it, I am able to better and intimately feel and realize that I am bonded with others as God's children. Moreover, I learned that there is so much which can be accomplished if one is able to go beyond his/her cultural biases. By living interculturally, I am able to witness the giftedness of others and the things that we have in common.

There may never be an ideal community. There may always be those areas in need of constant improvement both individually and communally. However, what matters is that as Divine Word Missionaries, we have taken that big step towards a stronger foundation of multiculturalism among us. And this, I strongly believe, has to be continually nourished and cared for.

One area, that can be given to those (Brothers or clerics) who are in formation, is the initial foundation of inter-cultural integration. If possible, they are to be allowed to mingle or socialize more with those outside of their own culture – may they be religious or lay. Their programs could be designed in a manner where they would be given regular sessions on interculturality. Foreign missionaries could also share their cultural experiences overseas – something which is being done in some, if not all, SVD provinces/regions/missions. And

finally, those who are in formation could also take initiative in studying other cultures – something I would also suggest for those who are already professed (like me) to continually do.

Intercultural living and sharing are beautiful things, but they are definitely not easy at times. The question now is: *Am I ready and willing to challenge myself to live it?*

WITH SEVENTEEN NATIONALITIES

Br. Eduardo Reba (ARS)



Our community life comes now as a challenge and opportunity due to a growing intercultural living in the world. This involves building up a religious fraternity with the purpose of not only living under the same roof, but also sharing life and mission. This creates a sense of belonging and renews our missionary commitment which includes the spirit and the praxis of "shared mission."

The interculturality aspect of the ARS province can be seen in the 17 nationalities present in the province. Coming from diverse cultural backgrounds, we live together and share a community of life and mission. Living in a multicultural and international community can be perceived not only as an advantage in our missionary presence and dialogue with our hosts, but also as a challenge or a problem among ourselves.

Following are some enriching aspects and some challenges of our life and mission in an intercultural community:

A. The riches that I find in living in an intercultural SVD community are:

- It creates a space for an interpersonal communication. This helps to have healthy community life.

Cont. Br. Reba

- It facilitates the learning of new visions and beliefs and therefore becoming a space for mutual formation.
- It brings the members of the intercultural community to live in a simple style of life-sharing, meals, celebrations, recreation time, etc.
- It helps the members of the intercultural community to build up a community in which relationships are warmer, more fraternal, more open towards cultural diversity, and always at the service of the mission.
- It enables intercultural community to open up to the mutual care and compassion amidst our differences.

B. The challenges are:

- It may become a space in which there is a rivalry among the different nationalities present in the community. Therefore, members of the community tend to ask, *“Why do more and more foreigners arrive to the community?”*
- It can create a lack of respect and understanding of local members towards the members coming from other nationalities.
- It may cause a fear syndrome – i.e., the local members believing that members of other nationalities are taking over the province. This generates a cynical and negative attitude of local members towards the members of other nations.
- It can bring some members to block and hinder space of real communication initiated by others.
- It may result in members not listening to each other. The intercultural community can become a place in which suggestions and corrections are not accepted. There is always destructive criticism.
- It may become an intercultural living experienced in one way – i.e., local members of the community demanding members from other nationalities to adapt and learn everything from the local culture without being interested in learning from the other cultures present in the community.

C. For the formation of Brother candidates, my suggestions are:

- Train and form Brother candidates for a intercultural living. They should know both the

positive and negative aspects of living in an intercultural community.

- Give training and elements to Brothers in formation which will help them face and approach the intercultural mission in where they will be assigned.
- Prepare our young brothers in formation to face the challenges of an intercultural life and mission – e.g., language, culture, traditions, climate, etc.
- Invite always to the Brother Formation houses confreres arriving from mission abroad to share their own experiences in living in intercultural communities.

I AND THE OTHER: A CHALLENGE

Br. Jose Amaro (POR)



What a great challenge life is! Living with the other person even doubles this challenge. But life would be incomprehensible and, I would say much more, impossible without the presence of the other who gives meaning and direction to mine and to yours – to our lives. Living with someone from another culture is an even greater because he represents a mysterious world that approaches us and a world on which we have minimum control of. The other person is more challenging because we cannot reduce him/her to a mere machine that we can use or dispose at any time.

A person of another culture is a challenge because it is necessary to enter his/her world which will always be distant for a thousand and one reasons. Among them, the most obvious, is the language. But there is more!

Learning the language implies learning to see the world from a different point of view: education, emphasis on values, understanding of life and reality, the personal ambitions, etc.

Cont. Br. Amaro

But if living in an intercultural community means a challenge, it also involves a great enrichment at all levels. One learns new ways of existing and valuing time and space, sobriety and abundance, communication and silence, and other little things. One learns to respect the togetherness of different cultures, without overestimating one over others. It is a challenge to know how to listen with sensitive and open ears, to taste other shapes and colors, to appreciate the other's human integrity and to relativize small differences in habits and customs. It is, at the end, an invitation to live in harmony and to appreciate the differences. These elements enrich and enhance the personal and human growth. But, on the other hand, it also challenges my certainties, principles, and values. Since I own them, they lead me many times to the temptation of universalizing and imposing them as if they were almost a dogma.

Only GOD is absolute. Everything else can be put in the realm of the relative and circumstantial matters, avoiding both extreme relativism and dangerous/pernicious absolutism. In short, the intercultural coexistence is a challenge to what is now called "comfort zone". We must do so because our world is moving rapidly towards intercultural communities that are increasingly numerous, complex and challenging.

I agree that the culture of another person is not something you learn as a discipline in the school. I am deeply convinced that it is a world to discover slowly with intelligence, patience, effort, hardwork, dedication, concern, and humility to acknowledge an inability to understand and to assimilate. Moreover, all things which happen in direct contact with others' culture, once they are started, the rest will come just in addition.



BROTHER AWARENESS IN OUR ZONES

BRAZIL: A MEETING OF SOME FOR THE GOOD OF ALL

(Meeting of SVD Brothers – Brazilian Subzone)

Br. Alfonso Berger, SVD (BRC).



From 23 to 25 of August, 2013, the XV Meeting of SVD Brothers of the Brazilian Subzone in Suzano (SP), Brazil took place. The meeting was attended by twenty-one (21) Divine Word missionaries, mainly Brothers and some priest confreres from two provinces (BRC and BRN) and of the Amazon Region (BRA)

We had Br. Roberto Duarte, SVD (ECU) as the main resource person. At present, he is the assistant of the secretary general of the SVD formation, especially for SVD Brother Formation. Additionally, he is also the JPIC coordinator of the PANAM Zone.

The meeting was held to assess our journey as Brothers, particularly from 2009 when we had the *Second General Assembly on the SVD Brother's vocation* in Cebu, Philippines until today. There, we tried to answer several questions such as: What kind of forward steps had we achieved so far? Also, what do we still need to implement?

In this regard, we noticed that many recommendations of that general assembly were implemented partially in our Zone; a few, completely; but others still remain without implementation.

The meeting took place in an atmosphere of true fraternity where we reflected upon our vocation and shared the joys and challenges we have encountered. We appreciated this time of integration in which the missionary life and work of somebody strengthened the missionary life and work of all. And this is not only for the Brothers, but also for the whole Congregation. This is because we are part of this great family – the SVD.

INDIA: EMPOWERING BROTHERHOOD VOCATION

(The 7th National Assembly of SVD Brothers, India)

Br. Raju Soosai (INC)



The 7th National Assembly of SVD Brothers, India was convened by the National Coordinator, India cum ASPAC Coordinator for Brothers, Br. Rajesh Soreng, SVD at Arnold Bhavan, Habisguda, Hyderabad.

Fr. Telesphore Bilung, SVD, the chairperson of Inter-provincial Forum addressed the assembly and conveyed to everyone, *"It is time to be together. Though we have been working in different ministries, we have come together to share our mission and life. I noticed last evening that there was a spirit of saying hello and inquiring about the well-being of each one. Religious life is committed to live together. As Brothers, our mission in India is to be always ready in carrying out what the elder generations had handed over. To be able to do this, we need to know our identity – who we are. We need to work out the purpose of why we are doing the things we do. Indeed, these are the needs of the time to redefine our life in the Congregation. If we do not work, we would become irrelevant as we are experiencing."*

Likewise, when Fr. Stanislaus Lazar, SVD was given the chance, he told the group that as we look at the challenges, we need to see the context. He pointed out three challenges, namely: *Globalization, Fundamentalism, and Patriarchy*. He explained in detail all the three challenges.

We were also fortunate to have Br. Varghese Thekandathu, SG in the assembly. His sharing was about INNOVATION – A Call of the Spirit for Mission. In his talk, he quoted Bishop Kathrine Jefferts Schori: *"Crisis?*

Mission! We are in cardiac crisis in the Church...the heart of this body is mission. Every time we gather, the Spirit offers a pacemaker jolt to pull the rhythm of this heart. The challenge is whether or not...the muscles will respond with a strengthened beat, sending more life out into the world. Can you hear the heartbeat? Mission, Mission, Mission?" Fr. Thekandathu gave various examples of innovators and some principles of innovation.

After Fr. Thekandathu was Br. Swaminathan Valiyavilayil, SVD. He introduced himself and informed us that he has never been a vocation promoter. However, with his limited knowledge but vast experiences, he unselfishly shared his views. He read out his paper in the following outline: 1. Why Brotherhood is dwindling globally mainly in India; 2. Shift of Focus; 3. The Question of Visibility; 4. Lethargy in Vocation Work; 5. Paradigm Shift in Formation; 6. Clericalism; 7. Ignorance; 8. Increasing Number of Nuclear Families; 9. Influence of Modernization and Mass Media; 10. Absence of Long Term Planning; and, 11. Conclusion.

After his sharing, he presented two questions for discussion:

1. It is our duty to work hard and rejuvenate the Brotherhood in our Society. Are we ready to sacrifice a bit and opt for vocation work and lead the Brotherhood formation? Suggest concrete ways and means of creative vocation work.
2. We need not worry much about the present crisis. Trust in God's providence as our founder did. If God's grace is with us, our work would flourish. Is our own spiritual and social lives sufficiently inspire others to join us and if not how to improve them?

At the end of the talk, Fr. Xavier T., SVD appreciated the presentation of Br. Swaminathan Valiyavilayil, SVD which for him was very systematic. At the end of the vote of thanks, Br. Rajesh Soreng, SVD proposed to divide the assembly into four groups for discussions based on Br. Swaminathan's questionnaire.

The following questions were taken up for discussion:

1. Dwindling number of SVD Brotherhood vocation has always been a serious agenda in our previous meetings. Have we ever taken any concrete steps to solve it?

Cont. Br. Soosai

2. How can we make Brothers' ministry more viable and relevant in today's church?
3. The issue of drop outs in +2 and degree levels is alarmingly very high. What is our response to this issue? Are our formators sufficiently-prepared to motivate the students? Or, are we to question the motivation/s of the candidates?
4. The recruitment for Brotherhood vocation is done in INE and INH to some extent. What about other provinces and regions?
5. Brothers are encouraged to change their status by our own confreres. Do you consider it as a healthy approach?



At the end, Br. Rajesh Soreng, SVD invited Br. Kishore Tigga, SVD to propose votes of thanks.

A LASTWORD, FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Confreres,

The SVD BROTHERS bulletin wishes to serve as a Forum on Brother Vocation in the Society of the Divine Word. It is written by the readers. This bulletin is not only for Brothers. It also welcomes contributions from the SVD priests. Please, join us and write for the bulletin!

The initiative for this bulletin was born on 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. We continue counting on your voice. Please write to the following addresses: lanyi.svd@gmail.com or svd_brothersphil@yahoo.com. You may use the following languages: English, Spanish, German, Indonesian and Polish.

In the Divine Word,

Your SVD Brothers in Cebu City

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