



# SVD BROTHERS

NEWSLETTER

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# BROTHERS..

*Change Challenges into Success*

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# FOREWORD

## SUCCESSFUL BROTHERS?

*Br. Roberto Duarte (SVD Generalate's Coordinator for Brother Formation)*

**O**n the occasion of the different activities celebrating the 50th anniversary of the closing event of the Second Vatican Council, we can say that from that decisive moment until now, we have walked a continuous and progressive path of learning. Despite the losses and reduction in vocations, this learning process has helped us to be ready to understand better that God's idea and plan for renewal goes beyond and is richer than our own plans and ideas for it.



Without the securities from the past, we are better equipped to build the present in a new and creative way. Let us have a look to what we have learned in the past decades:

First of all, we have learned that God call us to be persons of faith; He did not call us to be individuals that are always searching for success. Today, we understand clearly that true renewal comes from the heart and not from external achievements. I believe that if the Congregation does not promote a change at this level, the level of the heart, it will not reach the objectives it has proposed to attain.

“-Be careful- Jesus warned them. -Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod-.” (Mk 8,15). For a long time, the Church claimed to be the yeast of the world but it did so in the self-righteous style of the Pharisees; this way of acting betrayed the novelty of the yeast lived and proposed by Jesus himself; a yeast that caused a lot of scandal among his people: in the fullness of time, the Word of God, the Divine Word, manifested in his full force, but not in the center of power and prosperity, but on the margins and among the poor.

Mary was the first to announce the Gospel. She did it in a simple way: carrying the Lord in her and with her. Mary reminds us that our mission will bear little fruit if we transmit the message only by words. On the contrary, the fruits will be abundant if we carry Jesus in our hearts and make his heart “live in the hearts of all mankind.”

The discipleship, that has as a foundation the faith and trust in Jesus, requires from us to sacrifice our comforts, to take risks and to act with confidence and courage. If we are truly Brothers, we will accomplish Jesus` message by our spirit of fraternal service to others and not by our words and personal ambitions. Service should be the motivation for everything we do. If we have an attitude of self-surrender and a noble interest for the Kingdom, we will be certain that it is the Gospel of Jesus the right motivation that keeps moving forward and not a personal ambition of prestige or success.

Confreres and other people around us can criticize and question our experience of searching only for prestige and personal ambitions. We must allow ourselves that to happen if we really want to grow and correct the path we are pursuing and if we want to take new directions in life. We need to be critical of ourselves and to accept the opinion of others; we must allow others to join us in our journey, that is, in our projects and dreams; otherwise, on many occasions, these dreams and projects become impenetrable zones to others. We can become isolated by creating areas in which there are no criticisms or questions from others.

As Divine Word Missionaries, consecrated for the mission, we are called to follow the example of Jesus, missionary of the Father. In accomplishing the mission given to him by His Father, and in his preaching and actions, Jesus did not search for auto complacency or personal ambitions. He generously dedicated himself to the task commended to him by His Father. Likewise, Jesus sent us to bear fruit in the same way as He did; He does not send us to be attractive, successful or spectacular for personal reasons: “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples”. (John 15, 8).

A story of Charles Péguy can enlighten us: A man went to heaven and an angel, upon examining him, asked: “*Where are your wounds?*” “*Wounds?*” said the man, “*I don’t have any wounds.*” Discouraged, the angel responded: “*Was there nothing for which it was worth fighting?*” Our wounds, those we suffer for others, make us who we are. They identify us.



## THE INVITATION TO EXAMINE MYSELF

*Br. Eugenio Orog, SVD (PHC)*

**W**hat if my mission is challenged whereby others no longer patronize me? What if what used to be meaningful is now meaningless after years and years of honing my talents and abilities? Am I becoming a failure? In answering these questions I might be speculative and hypothetical here.



To be honest, I have not experienced this yet, but others might have. So it can be an invitation to examine oneself: How come that the people no longer let me participate as they used to? Have I updated myself? Have I strained my relationship with them? What do I need to change? How can reinvent myself? From here, I have to move on for after all life is in constant change.

Now that I am 63 years of age – a senior who suffers from diabetes, I constantly ask myself what adjustments do I need to do? Am still capable of responding to the demands and obligations of my present ministry? If not, then I have to be humble by letting go and let younger people do it. I must not get offended or feel bypassed.

Universally, we are always supportive of one who is loving and true. Confreres will support us – as long as we are real. This means that we are not faking nor pretending because of an obsession for popularity and relevancy. After all, religious life is like marriage, till death do us part. So we do not treat a perpetually professed confrere as mere functionary, but as a person worthy of respect, understanding, compassion and love which is our motto in community living.

## FORWARD THESE CONCERNS TO OUR COUNCILS!

*Br. Paul Bongcaras (PHS)*

**I** can resonate with your concerns. Would we be willing to bring the Brothers' reflections to the respective provincial councils with a request for positive responses? Not just filing them in their respective filing cabinets?



## HOW DO I MEASURE SUCCESS?

*Br. Bernie Spitzley, SVD (USC)*

I was intrigued by the topic of this newsletter and the related questions. How do we, as Brothers, measure success?

I believe there are many ways to measure success. For some, it is how many baptisms and marriages are performed each year. For others, it's a question of did you, as a missionary, build a church or not? But God's ways are not man's ways.

Since 2001, I have established four Bible sharing communities in Jamaica—three continue even though I left the area three years ago. So is that a success story?

The first question: Am I challenged by others? Well, every Wednesday, Brother Jacques Gabia, a Divine Word Missionary from the Congo who is fulfilling his Cross-Cultural Training Program, and I go to Bower Bank community, home of the present Bible Sharing group called Bethany.

We begin each session by inviting all in the Bower Bank community of Kingston to join us. Ninety-five percent of the people we invite do not attend, so yes we are challenged. Thus we kick the dust off of our sandals and break open the Scriptures with the five percent who do come, mostly children.

The second question: So how do we respond to this challenge? We believe that not everyone is a faith seeker. Some are just not interested, concerned, intent on learning about the Scriptures. They only want “things.” So we work with those who do come, knowing it is God's mission—not ours.



The third question: Are you supported by your confreres? Yes! Every month, we the Chicago Province members in Jamaica get together. My confreres are very supportive. In fact most of our monthly gatherings deal with our work and ministries and how blessed we are. Are we successful? Only God knows. But with our Bible groups we plant seeds—not building churches. When planting seeds, who knows what can happen?

I do know that two weeks ago as I walked across the Holy Rosary School campus, a young lady called out, “Brother Bernie, do you remember me?”

I had to admit, “Sorry, no.”

Then she replied, “I was in the Mustard Seed community [a group in the country] but now I live here in Kingston.”

“Well, my dear,” I replied, “Come join us for our Bible group on Wednesday and Mass on Sundays.”

“Oh yes,” she exclaimed, “I will!”

Who knows how God's “success story” will end.

(From Kingston/Jamaica)

## **COURAGE, BROTHER!**

*Br. Mukl Lal Ekka, SVD (INE)*

**N**o doubt, today's mission is challenging anywhere. If we are challenged in a right perspective and with a good intention, it does bring the best of ourselves. And if the challenges are negative it harms a lot.

We need to be quick enough to understand the character of challenges and respond accordingly. Our founding Brothers were the pillars of the society and we are proud of them.

The support from our confrères is essential in working relationships. We do come across our members with different attitude, may be a feeling of superiority, self-centeredness and being biased. If so, we need to speak out our mind clearly to the person/s concerned. I express my sympathy and concern for our members who are in difficult situation.

Norman Macleod says:

*"Courage, Brother! Do not stumble,  
Though thy path be dark as night;  
There's a star to guide the humble,  
Trust in God and do the right".*

## **LIFE CHANGES AND SO MUST I**

*Br. Mike Decker, SVD (USC)*

**I**f what I am doing as an SVD Brother is challenged, initially I feel disappointed. However, later I see this as an opportunity to re-evaluate what I am doing to make what I am doing even better.

If the person who is challenging me and what I do, takes the time and effort to do this, then that person thinks enough of me and what I am doing for me to become more successful. Maybe this means that what I am doing can be done in a different way or maybe I need more training or education to be a better SVD Brother. Life changes and so must I.

I am supported by my SVD confreres. What is important is that we are 100% committed to what we are doing and give our 100%. However, who I am as an SVD Brother does not get lowered by my lack of success. My ongoing desire to be a good SVD Brother in my spiritual life and community life is why I always succeed as an SVD Brother.



## MISSION AFTER THE SUPERTYPHOON

Br. Darwin Loro, SVD (PHS)



A person who reflects more often has the capacity to hear one's inner voice whispering positive things. And by listening he is able to spend more time doing what is right and loving what he does no matter how simple it may be. This is an antidote to life's challenges. On the other hand, if discernment becomes a collective effort and is supported by every confrere, our missionary challenges can become easy. Our diversity does not hinder us to become one; united in faith we become the true body of Christ.

The best way to start knowing the people where the Divine Word Missionaries are presently working is to listen to their stories and identifying their needs. One has to immerse himself to the realities and life situations of the people. It is truly important that we make a difference as missionaries by reaching out and learning first before doing something big or small that would have a great impact in the lives of the people we serve.

A positive outcome would surely be achieved if our missionary endeavor is participative and seeks to genuinely include those considered living on the fringe of society. After typhoon Yolanda (international name *Haiyan*) struck our region, I have seen many local and international non-governmental organizations that have a specific time frame for the achievement of their projects and programs for community development; however, we, religious missionaries, have more time with the people since our presence tends to be longer. This should be an opportunity for ongoing commitment to learn from each other while accompanying individuals and the community.

In Tacloban City, the Divine Word Missionaries are actively involved in the education ministry. I see it as an opportunity for us to serve the people of Leyte and Samar since many of our students come from different places in Region 8. Although our confreres may come and go as their term of office ends, the SVD school apostolate remains and is continually evolving. Our goal should not only be focused on the

*Cont. Br. Loro*

success and how good we are but in learning by listening to our mission partners and stakeholders; thus, with dialogue, we become faithful and constantly attuned to God's presence and inspiration.

The people who make a difference in someone's life are not those with the most credentials, the most wealth, or the most recognition, they are the ones that care. How I wish with this attitude all may learn to possess – being at home with our inner selves, our strengths and weaknesses, and to be generous to others with our time, talents and God-given gifts. Therefore, I need to be grounded and be constantly reminded that in order to grow, accepting life's challenges are part and parcel of the journey to self-discovery and fulfillment. With my present supportive SVD community, I am indeed blessed.

### **ONCE, CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS WERE AMONG THE BEST - AND TODAY?**

*Br. Thaddeus Nyanuba, SVD (KEN)*



Once again, our esteemed News Bulletin has offered us the opportunity to reflect on a very critical and dynamic issue of our missionary service in this fast-changing world. That is the relevance of our services and effectiveness of our message of salvation to the modern men and women. According to the scenario and experience of the confreres that give rise to the topic of reflection, we are no more attractive to the modern society as were some years back. This is because we are not only challenged by others in whatever we do today but our competitors seems to be gaining the upper hand. Indeed, if we take a moment and recall

history, catholic institutions such as parishes, schools, hospitals, orphanages and other charitable organizations were among the best in many countries if not all; and the Church was a powerful and appealing voice to the society.

Today, the story is different. There are many individuals, groups and institutions that have similar organizations and involve in similar services like us, and which perhaps are doing far much better than some of our catholic institutions or organizations. For instance, if we take education as a case in point, today there are many quality private schools with excellent academic results in many countries where catholic schools were the envy of most students. So indeed, we are challenged and will continue to be challenged by our competitors in all areas. In my humble opinion, it is necessary that we are challenged and should be challenged by peoples or events. As a matter of fact, if challenges are viewed positively, they can have a positive outcome. Indeed, challenges are opportunities that can promote effectiveness, motivation, creativity and growth. Without competition and challenges, a person or

*Cont. Br. Nyanuba*

an institution is likely to face stagnation, decline and a possible fade out. Therefore, it is not a question of whether we are challenged or not, rather it is a question of whether we are prepared for them and whether we have the appropriate strategies in place to respond to them.

In fact, the comments made by the two confreres was expressed long ago by Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania. Nyerere once observed that, *“Unless we participate actively in the rebellion against social structures and economic organization which condemn people to poverty, humiliation and degradation, the Church will become irrelevant to the people and the Christian religion will degenerate into a set of superstitions accepted by the fearful. Unless the Church its members and its organization express God’s love for the people by involvement and leadership in constructive protest against the present conditions of humankind then it will become identified with injustice and persecution”*.

The credibility of our missionary life and service in this fast changing world demands that we move beyond the merely running of parishes, institutions and workshops among others to involvement in issues that are currently affecting the lives of our people. Consequently, this call for an expansion of our mission horizon which in my simple opinion, is the application of strategic management practice in the framework of our religious missionary services to effectively and efficiently utilize the opportunities and tactically meet the challenges created by these changes.

Certainly when some of us if not most of us hear of the term “Strategic Management”, right away we brush it off and throw it to business field and business people. However, make no mistake,

strategic management is not just about business rather it is about developing the appropriate up-to-day strategies that enable an organization or an institution to be current and relevant in the heart and minds of its cherished target group.

Are we meeting their expectation about us? Our competitors: what are their strategies, strength and weakness? The government: Is the government likely to issue rules and policies that will pose threat to our mission and objectives? And if that happens how do we minimize the impact on our goals and objectives? Is technology and its social media likely to bring change to the society in the near future? In answering these questions we are not only alerting ourselves to take advantage of any opportunity or minimize any threat that might come with these changes but we evaluate the impact of our programs on society.

Just after Ireland massively voted for same sex marriage, Archbishop Diarmuid Martin of Dublin archdiocese was quoted of saying that, “the church needed to do a reality check since it clearly wasn’t reaching young people with its message”. He went further to call the vote “part of a social revolution that required the Church to look at whether it had drifted completely away from young people”. Consequently, the Archbishop wondered if the youth are not left behind by the Church and if there isn’t a gap between the Church teaching and the youth. This kind of experiences make strategic management practice inevitable in the religious missionary life’s fast-changing world. Strategic management practice will not only help realize the gap earlier but more importantly strategic management can enable us to select the appropriate strategies at all times in order to reach out effectively to our people, especially the young people.

## LET US LIVE OUR CHARISMS

*Fr. Norbert Mushoff, SVD (GER)*

Let me answer you in English. It may just be easier for your cooperating confreres, for them to understand also. I worked together with Fr. Carlos Lariosa in Ghana.

We, in Germany, suffer too. We hardly get any vocation anymore in Europe. So we became much of a mission country and continent, needing helpers/confreres from younger churches with more vocations. One consolation in this situation is, though we are internationally diverse, we know and trust one another. So we can assist one another.

Also, we have become more humble as Germans of today. We no longer dominate, as it had been in decades ago. We admire and recognize other nations in our worldwide. Many churches have been blessed with



talents meted out by our merciful Lord and rich charisms given worldwide by his Holy Spirit. Our House Rector is a Filipino, Fr. Roberto Alda!

So thank you for this gift. Our Superior General was until recently, Tony Pernia, another Filipino as you know. His picture hangs on my wall, as he

knew me personally through my JPIC ministry in the Euro-Zone. In turn, we thank you also for our present Fr. General, my fellow countryman Fr. Kulüke, whom you released for our good and the good of all his SVD-church.

So I think prayer and trusting in God's own providence are the two important elements to achieve plentiful fruits in His vineyard. As well as the recognition that His Spirit actually blows where it wills; also through sharing out his charisms through other Christian churches, the Pentecostals e.g.

Let us live out our own charisms and our own personal vocations to the best of our good will and efforts. He will always stand behind us and bless and multiply it, I am convinced.

## USING WHAT GOD GAVE ME

Br. Karolus Boro (PNG)



**A**s a Religious missionary Brother working in the mission; the best use of my life is to serve people of God. To do this you must discover your shape, learn to accept and enjoy it; then develop it to its fullest. And the best way to discover my gift and abilities is to experiment with different areas of service and work as a Religious Brother. I am using my gift and talent God gave me. How I feel if I and my mission are challenged by others? For me, I feel no doubt or fear if the other people challenged me because I do all these to serve the people and God. If I work only to get my popularities; I will feel unhappy and threatening. When I was Praeses at Wirui Community living together with Priests and Brothers with different background characters and nationalities, I was challenged by many confreres. As a leader of a community, you will face many problems.

Through all the hardships and difficulties, I will be patient and trusting in God. We are often challenged to do “great things for God”. Actually, God is more pleased when we do small things for Him out of love and obedience.

I face these challenges with openness in my heart and mind, and willingness to accept any challenges and criticisms. Sometimes, I am tempted to compare my ministry with others and to conform to the expectations of others. We must cultivate our gifts and abilities, keep our hearts aflame, develop our character and personality and broaden our experiences so that we may become effective in our ministry. We are Religious missionaries; we are all a living sign of God’s Kingdom, of love and kindness in His mission. We are the miracles of God in this World.

In my experience working in the mission as a Brother, I get my support and encouragement from my confreres. Without them, I might have left Religious life already. The challenges I experienced strengthened my vocation. We must remember that God will never call a person without providing for Him. He alone will give you the time and the abilities to fulfill your service in the mission. All we have to do is be willing to surrender our life to Him and leave our success and worries to Him. Because God doesn’t call people who are qualified, He qualifies the called.

## SILENCE AND PRAYER AS WAYS OF DIALOGUE

*Br. Karl Wisniewsky (BRS)*

I never measure my vocation of whether becoming a Brother is attractive or not. My inspiration rather was to do something in my existing environment. With this, I have never considered the clerical vocation. I have made efforts to put my talents at the service of the people and to live this out in my encounters in an authentic way.



Now I have already been for 26 years in Brazil and I must say that every year has its own challenges. My solution is to keep distance, and if possible, to share the burden with others.

With advancing age, I no longer take the challenges as hard. Rather, I look more for silence and prayer as ways to dialogue. Here in the Province, I do not experience a direct support. Rather, dialogues with lay people and interested confreres inside and outside the province are very important to me. I must add that this is not always the same, because several confreres have already died here and in the German Province, too.

## SUPPORT IN CHALLENGES

*Br. Stephen Bonsu (GHA)*

The constitution says that whoever joins our Society must be ready to go wherever the superior sends him in order to fulfill our missionary mandate even if this entails leaving his own country, mother tongue and culture. Such readiness is an essential characteristic of our missionary vocation. Confreres always have the right to volunteer for

missionary service in another country or culture.

I had a lot of challenges during the time I was in the missions. Challenges with culture, food, parishioners, Confreres, community members, the tropical weather and so on. For me to carry out my mission in a worthy and effective manner, I made every effort to master the Language of the people and so I

became familiar with their history and culture. I tried my best to respect the customs and behavior of the people among whom I was working with; I tried to ignore every offensive criticism and comparison. I had challenges with the food. I could not imagine myself that I had to eat rice in the morning, in the afternoon and in the evening. I had challenges with some parishioners. There were

*Cont. Br. Bonsu*

some parishioners who just wanted to make troubles, when I tried to support some poor students who could not afford to pay their school fees.

There are some confreres who are always wishing that you get into trouble. When you make much effort to learn the language very well these confreres do not feel happy with you. But when you are failing in your missionary work this is the time they seem happy. Then you will hear the comments from community members like ‘Oh he cannot be a good

missionary and so he must go to his home province’. If you are in the mission and you start facing difficulties, confreres will run away from you. They do not want to come closer to you. They try to influence the situation all the more. Sometimes the stories we hear from outside the community about confreres is not decent. You do not hear good things about confreres living in the same community. Let us try as much as possible to be good to one another. If a confrere is failing in his mission let us support, help and encourage him to come out of the problems he is facing. When I

came back from the missions I heard a confrere saying ‘this is one of the early returnees from the mission’. Confreres who come back from the mission after three to ten years are called early returnees. That should not be the case at all. If a confrere fails in his mission work that does not mean that confrere is useless. He can still fit in to so many places to work.

The charismatic churches are taking many of our parishioners and the faithful away. Let us try as much as possible and make our way of worship lovely to keep our youth.



## ENCOURAGE BROTHERS FOR JPIC!

*Br. John Daton (BOL)*

I find interesting the way Pope Francis and Fr. Heinz Kulüke, SVD are promoting the JPIC issues. According to my own experience, I think the SVD Brothers' contribution to JPIC is minimal. However, I am sure we will have a room for improvement since Justice and Peace issues are quite relevant for all of us. It is a Dimension that allows us to participate in the lives of the people and work with them to overcome situations of injustice. We support, help, encourage the people who are suffering and having a lot of difficulties in their daily lives so that they can improve somehow their conditions.

Every Province/Region/Mission has the presence of SVD Brothers. The Brothers should be given the possibilities to work in areas and activities related to JPIC. We can see and feel with our own hands that there are many problems in our societies today such as poverty, street people, abortion, discrimination, injustice, damage to the environment and



nature. We, as SVDs, have a lot of opportunities to work with the people in order to help solve these problems. SVD Brothers who are getting professional degrees should be ready and willing to do many things in this specific mission of our Congregation. Brothers can also work together with SVD priests in each Province / Region/ Mission.

Two months ago there was an activity in Indonesia in which SVD Brothers, living and working in Ende Province, were

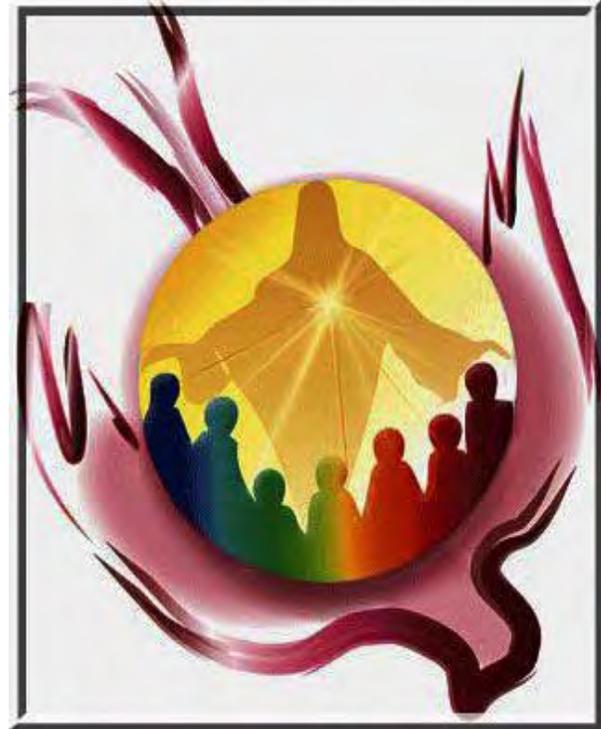
involved in JPIC issues by helping lay people in their preservation of nature. They sent messages telling me about this important project for the Province. Provincial and Regional JPIC coordinators should pay more attention to Brothers and invite them to participate in activities concerning JPIC. It is a good a sign of witnessing to others that we work as a team in the JPIC Dimension. Working alone to help and support those who are in need is very difficult and contrary to Gospel values.

## SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

Br. Alfonso Berger (BRC)

**M**any greetings from Santiago, Chile! I got your last e-mail when I was already doing our *spiritual retreat*, organized by the Religious Conference, here in Chile. Our group of *Jubilees* had a spiritual journey of 8 days in silence, following the Ignacian style. It was a great time, in spite of some 'logistic issues'. For instance, we had some defects lamps we had to walk in darkness. Nothing serious, but it offered us the opportunity to reflect on the need of light in the literal sense, but also in the spiritual way (cf the Psalms cited).

One of our confreres, Fr. Tadeo, had his room somehow experience flood, therefore we needed to clean it because there was no way to stop the liking of water. I got headache due to the gas powered heater, so I got an electric one. Sister Rossina, got some troubles with her throat (faringitis) and after two days of suffering, she discontinued the retreat and went to see the doctor and had some rest.



Despite these problems, we enjoyed the spiritual journey, which also was integrated into the ppt. Finally, with a prayer in 'portuñol' (a mixture of Portuguese and Spanish), since Fr. Tadeo (from BRC), had not enough time to learn Spanish. But, our group understood him well since portuguese language is close to the spanish one. Instead of saying 'Por los siglos de los siglos, amén', he used to say '*por los séculos de los séculos*', which sounded funny to us. (In portuguese, he would say, 'Pelo séculos dos séculos').

Well, as you can see, I wanted to share this with you. I am happy to do this kind of 'sabbatical' year, here in Chile.

## LAST WORD 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 readers who are both SVD Brothers and Priests.

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 join us and write to the following email addresses: ***lanyi.svd@gmail.com*** or ***svd\_brothersphil15@yahoo.com*** using English, Spanish, German, Indonesian, or Polish.

May God always bless us and all our endeavors.

In the Divine Word,

*Your SVD Brothers in Cebu City*



May 27, 2015. Nine (9) junior SVD Brothers renewed their religious vows at the Chapel of the SVD-owned University of San Carlos, Cebu City, together with other SVD Brothers who attended the Philippine SVD Brothers' Gathering. *25% of SVD Brothers in the Philippines are in temporary vows.*