



SVD

BROTHERS

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Nationalism AND SVD

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Confreres,

Peace!

Since this Bulletin is written by its readers, we requested our confreres to respond to the following questions:

- How SVD members work for true human identity and integration of the less privileged people like migrants?*
- How SVD members deal with the nationalism issues (Ad intra and Ad extra) in their respective PRMs? By Ad Intra we mean nationalism among the SVD members; and by Ad Extra, we mean nationalism towards other people.*

As always with SVD BROTHERS Bulletin, this introduction and the questions above have been approved by the SVD Generalate. We requested contributions in English, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia, German, and Polish.

Our sincerest gratitude to you for your insights and for spending time answering the questions. We are hoping to hear again from you in our coming issues.

May God continue to bless you and your ministries.

*Br. Bela Lanyi, SVD
and Your SVD Brothers in Cebu/Philippines*



FOREWORD

GOING BEYOND OUR COMFORT ZONES

Br. Carlos Ferrada

General Assistant for Brother's Formation and Education

The theme that is proposed to us in this issue of the SVD Brothers Bulletin should address us deeply, since it touches the very essence of our missionary vocation. The majority of us have left everything to start a new existence in another nation, in another culture, and language. We share this experience of interculturality with the millions of refugees of our time, but there are two fundamental differences that distance us from them: First, we, SVDs, are not forced to cross the borders of our countries to seek a more dignified life in other nations. We do this because we believe that our obligation is to proclaim the Word of God to all people; first and preferably, in those places where the gospel has not yet been preached or insufficiently preached, and where the local Church cannot stand on its own.

In fulfillment of our missionary service, whoever joins our congregation must be willing to go where his superior sends him, although this destination requires him to renounce his homeland, language, and cultural environment. This availability constitutes an essential characteristic of our missionary vocation (Const 102). The second difference is that we have the certainty of finding, in the mission place to which we are sent, a comfortable room, language course, work, food, pocket money, and all the securities that a large congregation can offer its members.



The refugees of our time in Central and South America, in Middle East, in Africa and Asia constitute a huge challenge both for the countries that receive them and for our confreres who work there. We cannot be indifferent to the suffering cry of so many people, our brothers and sisters who find themselves in such a desperate situation. Pope Francis urges us to be good Samaritans, to leave our security and comfort, to give a helping hand to the suffering brother. He said: *"That every parish, every religious community, every monastery, every sanctuary in Europe will welcome a family starting with my diocese of Rome"*.

Cont Br. Ferrada,

At the end of January, I, together with Fr. Anbu Pushpa, the newly appointed General Secretary for Formation and Education, visited St. Gabriel community. At that time the confreres were very upset with the Austrian government, as this was forcing them to transfer the refugees living in the left wing of the house. Our confreres, SSpS, and laity organized a peaceful demonstration on the front of the imposing church. We participated in this act of solidarity with the refugees, and with great joy we observed that many neighbors joined the initiative. What can we do to help brothers from different nations and cultures who knock on our doors tired, hungry, persecuted, and desperate? Some of them come from our countries of origin.

With regard to the problem of nationalism "*ad intra*", I think that living internationality will always be a challenge, and to be able to have a positive and enriching experience requires a lot of courage, an attitude of openness to what is different, and a heart devoid of cultural prejudice. From my experience, I can share that I have noticed a different attitude towards foreigners on the part of the Filipino confreres depending on whether they have had missionary experiences in other countries or if they have never left their country. The confreres of the first group are generally more open and welcoming to foreigners than those of the second group. That is why I consider it is fundamental to expose our formandi to internationality since they join the congregation. Hopefully, there would be internationality in all formation houses. The OTP is an excellent opportunity for our confreres in temporary vows to leave their countries and experience interculturality-internationality for two or three years. From the Generalate, we have spoken in the formation commission that the OTP should not be something optional, but rather obligatory, unless there are good reasons not to do this experience. There is also the possibility that the formandi study in other provinces, which implies a longer stay in the host country, and the possibility of deepening the study of its culture and language. Notwithstanding the above, in some PRMs we are observing certain resistance on the part of our young confreres to leave their homeland, family, and culture. I was struck by the fact that when we reviewed the applications for the first missionary destinations we found that several confreres put the three provinces of their country as options, that is, they closed themselves completely to the possibility of offering their missionary service in another country. Another visible phenomenon is that many young confreres, after a short time abroad, want to return to their country of origin. I wonder what is failing in the formation of these young people, since as we said before whoever joins our Congregation must be willing to go where the Superior sends him, even if this destination requires him to renounce his homeland, language, and cultural environment. This availability constitutes an essential characteristic of our missionary vocation (Const 102). I would ask the formators to put more emphasis on this aspect, and that generous availability for the universal mission be taken into account as an important criterion for discerning whether or not the young people have an SVD missionary religious vocation. Father Heinz Kulüke told me some time ago that we are already quite numerous, so it is more important to focus on the quality of our students than on their quantity. If the formandi do not develop an attitude of openness and appreciation towards other nations and cultures during their formation, it seems to me that their place is outside the congregation.

TO CROSS BORDERS

Br. Alfonso Berger (BRN)



From left to right: Br. Alfonso (Argentinian); Frt. Miguel (Mexican); Br. Francisco (Polish) and Frt. Iverson (Brazilian). This picture was taken on January 14, 2019 in Aracaju/SE.

SVD Face. I would like to start this article with this picture, because it is very expressive. In fact, it represents the cultural profile of many of our SVD communities at this time – i.e., confreres from different countries and cultures living and working together in a certain community, at the service of the mission.

Obviously, this kind of communities also have their own problems with regard to human relations, precisely because we have a diverse religious and missionary formation. Nevertheless, I think there are several positive elements to consider – the testimony we give to the people with whom we live. It manifests that it is possible to live and work together in the SVD mission. Moreover, by integrating different experiences and complementary ideas on the pastoral, education, or training, we are learning from each other and the mission is enriched. Another positive aspect is solidarity – both in human and financial resources... in the mission work ‘ad gentes’ and ‘inter gentes’.

SVD work with migrants. Maybe it is timely to remember that our founder, St. Arnold Janssen, precisely sent many missionaries to Latin America to accompany the German immigrants in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile. Over time, this specific work diminished and afterward added other interlocutors, such as Japanese immigrants in Brazil in the first half of the 20th century. As we know, in the last 30 years, the SVD slowly began the ministry of accompaniment to “Latino” immigrants in Europe and United States, and recently, also to Africans, Asians, and people from Eastern Europe who arrive to Central and Western Europe.

Cont. Br. Berger

We currently have two very strong migratory waves in Latin America. The first one involves migrants from Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, etc.), which go through Mexico to get to the United States. The other, a very big one, leaves Venezuela in the direction of neighboring countries (Brazil and Colombia, mainly). Personally, I have not been involved in a missionary project with immigrants, but I really appreciate the dedicated work that many of our confreres are doing. In fact, during the general visits that I made in some countries (Spain, Portugal, and Austria), between the years 2002 and 2008, I could see several confreres devoting their time and energy to this ministry. I also remember that some of our Filipino confreres joined the Jesuit refugees project in Africa (JRS). I think it was a learning experience and, at the same time, a collaboration with other institutions for the good of the mission in the world.

Facing discrimination. One of the ways to face the challenge that racial discrimination represents among confreres and the people is strongly believing in the *Trinitarian spirituality*. Yes, for me it has always been a safe reference. Since God is one but Triune at the same time, there is truly unity in diversity. Seeing the world (nature and people) from that prism helps us to recognize the presence of God in the diversity of cultures, languages, and races.

Another way used to overcome discrimination is organizing intercultural workshops at the provincial or interprovincial level. I have read the publication of the Generalate (2017) entitled, '*Stories of our Life and intercultural mission*'. I have recommended its reading on several occasions since it deals with narratives of some concrete missionary experiences in other cultures. I think that the study of a second language in the SVD helps us to value the confreres of different countries. In this sense, the cross-cultural training program (*PFT/OTP*) is a very valuable opportunity to cross borders, appreciate life from another perspective and share our experiences there.

I think we still have a long way to go to overcome certain discriminatory attitudes that emerge again and again in our congregation. However, if I look at the road already traveled, I thank God because we are a family of "diverse faces", an instrument of God to favor a greater fraternity in the world that we have to live.



INTERCULTURAL LIFE and MISSION

Br. Juan Daton (BOL)



The work with and among refugees is very important nowadays. For three years we, as a Region, have been talking about this topic. However, we have not taken yet any concrete action so far. This is due to the shortage of personnel available. As a Region, we choose Family and Youth ministry as our priority. That's why we don't work with refugees and migrants. There is a confrere working with less fortunate, but not with refugees. For example, Br. Andes Lorenzo has been working long time at CINCA center, a shelter for homeless people who live on the street and don't have any protection against the cold weather. CINCA is located in El Alto City, 10 kms. away from La Paz City, the capital of Bolivia. Another example of confrere working with less fortunate people is Br. Josi Mar. He is working at FASSIF, a center for people with disabilities in San Ignacio de Velasco City. The same Brazilian Brother is helping in our boarding houses; their names are Saint Joseph (for men) and Guadalupe (for women). The young fellows living there are studying in some of the schools existing in the city. All of them are poor and in need of financial support. Again, they are neither refugees nor migrants.

Now, let me discuss some issues related to nationalism ad intra and ad extra. We have tried to overcome interpersonal and intercultural limitations. It is a very difficult issue in our congregation. We have come from different nations with different languages and cultures. This aspect is a precious treasure that identifies us as ONE HEART AND MANY FACES missionaries. I believe that all of us hold in our hearts the theme of the canonization of St. Arnold and Joseph. Our saints were well-experienced missionaries who knew how to live interculturality in their communities. Our founder, being a German, was moved by God to found the Mission House in the little village of Steyl, Netherlands; and from there, he was able to spread the Good News to the whole world.

St. Joseph Freinademetz was missionary in South Shangtun, China. He was a great missionary who overcame his own cultural limitations to open to a new and totally different culture. He lived like a Chinese, spoke like a Chinese, dressed like a Chinese, acted like a Chinese, played like a Chinese,

Cont. Br. Daton,

prayed like a Chinese, and worked like a Chinese. He faced many problems, but he always kept his faith in God; and the Lord helped him to continue his mission preaching the Gospel. His bread was tears and his followers were the least privileged people. St. Joseph Freinademetz, even facing a very dangerous political situation, preferred to stay with the people entrusted to him instead of seeking security. He did it because he believed in God as the source of love and happiness. He never went back to his own country and remained in China for 30 years. This was the project to which God invited St. Joseph, and he listened this call in his inner being and gave a positive answer becoming a Chinese disciple.

Our mission doesn't have any limits, it means that it is a mission that overcomes any cultural limitations. It is a worldwide mission! In this perspective, we need to overcome our cultural differences and consider ourselves as one body no matter the variety of our cultures. We need to value and understand our differences if we want to experience interculturality in our communities and give a good example to the rest of the world.

THE NEW RED SEA

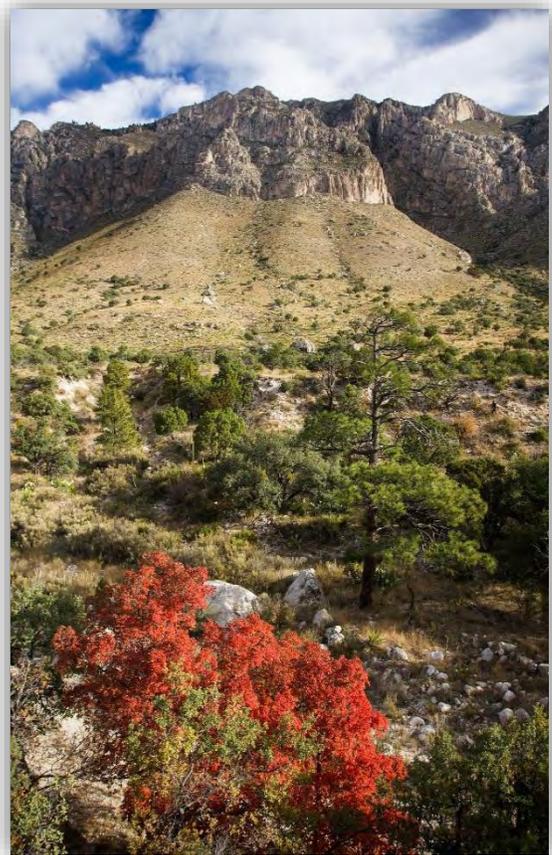
Br. Roberto Duarte (ECU)

“Root us in yourself and send us to the world as communion craftsmen.”

(From the final prayer of the XVIII General Chapter)

There are many clamors with which the whole humanity envelops and beats us in our days. “The clamor of the earth and of the poor” (LS 49) becomes anguish and despair in many corners of our punished planet. From our American lands, the migratory mass (similar to Israelite people that flee from social and economic slavery of the pharaoh) becomes a red sea that does not open its waters for freedom and life. It seems that the doors are closed and the walls are raised.

As SVDs, since the beginning of our missionary project, we have committed ourselves to work for the dignity of the most distant and forgotten; we have put “the last ones in the first place”. Today, this clamor has become gigantic and overwhelming. Many times, we have perceived our impotence before the cries of indignity, death, and despair, because our evangelizing methods are anachronistic and weakened.



Cont. Br. Duarte

In Panam Zone, we have given a significant missionary impulse to respond to the distressing situation of migrants, especially in the Central American region in the north and Venezuela in the south. We cannot remain indifferent to the human tide that enters our countries every day, either in a transit situation or to settle down looking for better life chances. This new reality has led us to work with other congregations and institutions, such as Caritas, SJR and others, to give the right answer in areas such as feeding, health, dwelling, and documentation.

Suddenly, this reality of migrant “invasion” has brought out our solidarity and fraternal profile; but, on the other hand, the so-called nationalisms and racist discriminatory attitudes and suspicions before the different and foreign appear: “The migrants are criminals”, “They come to take away our work”, etc. Sadly, these attitudes are even encouraged by governments.

“The Christian ideal will always invite us to overcome suspicion, permanent distrust, fear of being invaded, the defensive attitudes imposed on us by the current world ...” “Meanwhile, the Gospel always invites us to take the risk of encountering the face of the other, with his physical presence that interpolates with his pain and his claims, with his joy spreads in a constant body to body” (EG 88).

From the pope’s perspective, I rescued two recurrent attitudes towards the reality of the foreigner and poor migrant; and what a coincidence for they are also part of our intercultural community context – i.e., defensive attitudes due to our fears before those who come to take our safety and get us out of what we already know; and the invitation to take risk of the encounter, which is lacking so much in our communities... a real encounter that is deep and humanizing, beyond brief exchanges, and functional and elusive to which we have become accustomed.

At a time, when the powerful of this world seek to safeguard interests, creating barriers and walls, we missionaries are called to become bridge-builders in our divided world, agents of reconciliation and defenders of justice and peace” (XVIII CG #33). Obviously, this laboratory of communion must be forged within our communities and be a possible sample of what we want for all, especially for the less privileged like the poor migrants. It is possible and real a commitment to welcome them in many of our SVD presences in USA, Mexico, Brazil, Ecuador, just to name a few.

To end, let us join the prayer of Cardinal Tagle, President of Caritas International:

*“Have mercy on me, Almighty God.
When I am scared and alone, be my refuge.
Far from my homeland I feel lost.
My heart is shaken by the longing of the family that leaves behind.
Oh God, listen to their cries and come to their aid!
Calm the storms of anxiety and doubts within me.
Walk in front of me, guide my steps, among the unknown.
May the kindness and compassion of these people comfort me
with the certainty that You are there to receive me.”*

THE MONEY BEHIND NATIONAL CONFLICTS

Br. Bela Lanyi (PHS)



Elderly confreres of our Philippine provinces state that our educational institutions have much more troubles with trade unions, the independent organizations of teachers and employees of these schools, than other orders. (It is rather common for religious orders in the Philippines to lead even big educational institutions.)

Once, I asked these elderly confreres what the reason behind might be. "The teachers and instructors got used to a very generous treatment in times when American and German confreres led the schools," they said. "Once their numbers sunk, local confreres occupied leadership positions. They had the academic and moral qualifications but NOT the money and NOT the benefactors. Thus, the transition was not well-executed in SVD; and the employees thought they were exploited. The real reason was just lacking benefactors, not an abuse. Thus, when leadership from a foreign group of confreres goes over to locals, there are tensions; and these tensions can spoil many attitudes even decades after it happened."

Thus, many so-called "national conflicts" in SVD carry monetary character. Some groups are better equipped with finances. This might cause tensions, even during their presence. In particular, locals would feel that they cannot get more responsible positions because "they would not be able to care for the financial background". Once confreres with weaker financial background will be tasked, superiors should care for a correct transition period. Basically, confreres with better access to money should avoid the fear that others would "waste" what they have collected from the benefactors. They should rather educate and form others to financial responsibility. In this case, money will not divide the community but will strengthen it.

THIS IS OUR FUTURE!

Br. Stefan Würth (GEN)

In our cities, like in any parts of the world, many different groups of people live. Many of them are aliens, traveling and fleeing in search for work, security, peace, money, and supply. Our assignments as SVD missionaries working in such cities bring us automatically in contact with these people. Often, we can only help a little for many different reasons. But our presence among them helps us to understand them better, to get to know them, and to go new ways together.

We, SVD missionaries of today, are a recognized international multicultural community! We come from many countries and cultures as we try to live, pray, and work together. As stated in the General Chapter paper (1.3 missionary discipleship): "Rather, they must radiate and prove the joy of faith through words and deeds as authentic disciples of Jesus." And further down in the text, Joseph Freinademetz is quoted as saying: "the language that all human beings truly understand is that of love". Especially small communities are complex and represent us to the outside in a very simple way: in togetherness, in exchange, in encounters.

Here in Hamburg, we are now a community of six members (5 priests and a Brother) with different tasks. But all of them have to do with people – pastoral work in the parishes where we have today more and more migrants, in addition to the poor and needy with a not easy future, caring for migrant groups, working with people living on the margins of society, and pastoral care in prison and among refugees. We ourselves come from different countries: Asia, Africa and Europe - we live quasi ad intra and ad extra. Together, we try to find our way into a good future and learn to understand and respect each other again and again; and that radiates outwards. The Archbishop of Hamburg, Stefan Hesse, visited our community last year and said that we live together internationally. He wished that we live meaningfully among the local clergy of the Archdiocese. In the Council of Orders, I notice more and more that even the others are also "colorful and mixed". This is our future. Now, the challenge is still to find out how we can help so many people in the long term. That will determine the way in the next years!



THEY ARE OUR BROTHERS and SISTERS

Br. Brian McLauchlin (USC)



In the Chicago Province (USC), we have the Joint Immigration Venture (JIV). It is a collaborative effort of the SVD, SSpS, and SSpSAP on the issue of immigration. As a team, members of JIV try to bring dignity and justice to migrants through advocacy, education, prayer, and action on behalf of migrants. This year, JIV is celebrating its 10th year of collaboration between the three congregations by doing a series of presentations and input sessions at various SVD and SSpS venues. The purpose of these sessions is to raise awareness on the issues that migrants face and how we can advocate on behalf of their dignity and rights as members of God's family.

Immigration has been a highly contentious issue in the USA for several years now, but under our current political leadership, it has become particularly polarized. With heated discussions and debate over a border wall, our political leaders, as well as many US citizens, lose sight of the fact that migrants are our brothers and sisters. Through advocacy, education, prayer, and action, we can focus on the dignity and rights of the migrants among us.

FROM A READER

Dear Bela and Editors,

I just finished reading your latest issue on the topic of clericalism in the SVD. I thoroughly enjoyed reading all the articles but, in a special way, those of the Americans with whom I have worked over many years.

We have certainly come a long way since I first became associated with the SVDs in 1946. As a seminarian, I was never comfortable with the "separation" between priests and brothers that was imposed by our religious leaders at the time. It was "breaking the rules" if one spent too much time with the Brothers and one could be scolded for it.



Celebrating of my 86th birthday at the Melbourne Community.

But my own experience was that the Superiors I had at Techny did not always apply the rule strictly, allowing me as a seminarian to work for a summer in the bakery with Br. Archangelus who was truly my superior, mentor, and spiritual guide. After I returned from Rome, I was appointed Director of the Laymen's Retreat Movement – about which I knew nothing. The Superiors wisely put me under the guidance of Br. James Ryan.

As I read the articles, I was doing a lot of reminiscing and remembering the life-long friendships that I and my classmates made with the Brothers at East Troy, Epworth, and Techny, and how richly we have been gifted by those friendships.

I have now moved into our Retirement Home in Sydney and so probably will have even more time for such pleasant reminiscing.

Sincerely yours,

Fr. Larry Nemer (AUS)

LAST WORD FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Confreres,

Peace!

Thank you for reading and contributing to this issue. We are requesting for your ideas and recommendations regarding the theme of the next (June 2019) issue. The guide questions will reach you on April 30, 2019.

For the meantime, you can write comments on the present issue. We will be very happy to publish your insights. Moreover, we would deeply appreciate it if you could also attach some photos of you as you send us your articles.

Please, do send your comments and suggestions to one of these email addresses: lanyi.svd@gmail.com or svd_brothersphil15@yahoo.com. You can write in any of the following languages: English, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia, German, and Polish.

May God always bless us and all our endeavors.

In the Divine Word,

Your SVD Brothers in Cebu City