

PHILIPPINES - CENTRAL PROVINCE

Official languages: **English and Filipino (Tagalog)**

Vision Statement

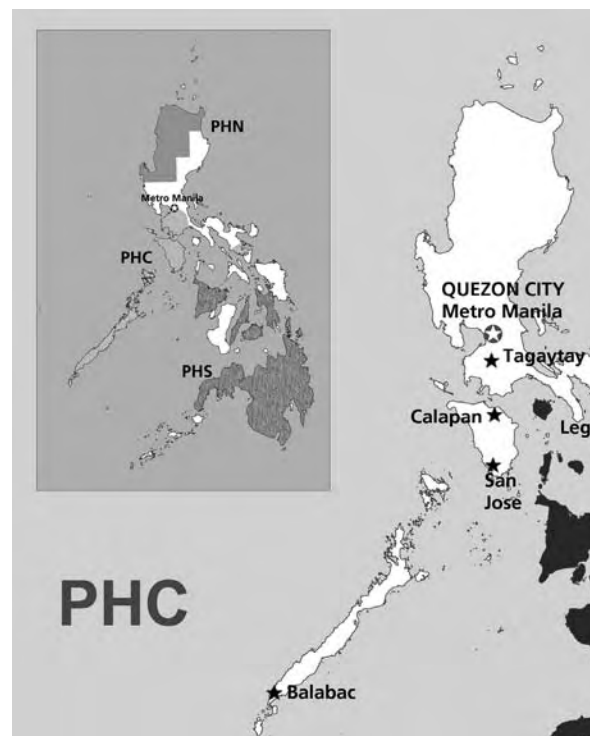
A religious missionary community of priests and brothers inspired by the Holy Triune God, proclaiming the reign of God by sharing intercultural life and mission among ourselves and our dialogue partners following the example of Saints Arnold Janssen and Joseph Freinademetz.

Mission Statement

To witness to God's love, as told in Scriptures, sending us to transform all creation through self-giving and dialogue.

1. Societal Setting

The Philippines is a sovereign island nation of more than 7,100 islands and islets in South East Asia. The country is endowed with abundant natural and mineral resources and one of the richest levels of biodiversity in the world. It is located on the Pacific *Ring of Fire*, which makes it vulnerable to earthquakes and typhoons. In 2013, a strong earthquake struck the islands of Bohol and Cebu causing major damages, followed by Yolanda, the strongest typhoon recorded in human history. Man-made destruction of the environment, through massive deforestation and



irresponsible mining, has also brought untold miseries in the lives of many Filipinos, especially the most vulnerable sectors of society, the poor farmers and fisher folks.

The Philippines has been a Spanish colony for four centuries, half a century under U.S. tutelage, and three years under Japanese occupation. The new government administration is making friendly gestures with other economically and politically influential nations, particularly China and Russia.

The population of the Philippines is 101 million. Contemporary Philippine society conti-

nues to grapple with poverty and the income gap between the rich and the poor despite its rich natural endowment and abundant mineral resources. To improve the quality of education and prepare our graduates to face the many and complex economic, socio-cultural challenges of the 21st century, the government enacted the *Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013*, commonly known as the K-12 program. The literacy rate has significantly increased from 92.6% to 98.3%.

There has been a big shift in the political landscape, when, in 2016, a very unconventional President, known for his use of colorful language, was elected by a popular vote with his crusade to end the threefold menace of drugs, criminality and corruption. There were reports, however, of abuses such as extra judicial killings (EJK) of suspected drug users and drug lords. The alleged abuses have been widely criticized by international human rights groups, the media, and even the Catholic Church. Congress also approved the request of the President to declare martial law on the island of Mindanao to quell insurgency and terrorist attacks. Some of the SVD parishes and mission apostolates are located in this area.

2. Ecclesial Setting

The Philippines has the third largest number of Catholics in the world, next to Brazil and Mexico, and is number one in the Asia-Pacific zone. In the latest 2015 Census, 79.5% of the total population consider themselves Roman

Catholics. The percentage has slightly dropped since the 2010 Census, but Catholics still increased in number. Currently, only two Cardinals are below 80 years of age and in the active ministry, namely, Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle (60) and Orlando Cardinal Quevedo (78). In the Philippines, the ratio of priests to Catholics is approximately 1 to 8,000, and in Manila, the ratio is 1 priest to 20,000 parishioners. The other religions groups are: Islam 6%, Iglesia in Cristo 2.6%, Evangelicals 2.4 %, and Others 9.4%.

The Catholic Church has had a very significant influence on Philippine politics, and continues to do so as prophetic guardian of public morality and committed advocate of the dignity and basic rights of the most deprived sectors of society. The Church's influence mainly depends on its Catholic schools, such as universities, colleges, mission schools diffused nation-wide, its numerous institutions doing charitable services at the grassroots level, catechetical activities and active lay Catholic movements, among others. The increasing proliferation of other religious denominations, including fundamentalist and extreme religious sects, has become a major concern.

In solidarity with the Filipino people, especially the families of victims who endured and suffered loss and devastation caused by super-typhoon Yolanda, Pope Francis came to the Philippines for his first apostolic visit on January 15-19, 2015, with the theme, "Mercy and Compassion". An estimated six million people attended

the concluding Mass at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila, reported by BBC to be “the largest papal gathering in history”.

On March 16, 2021, the Philippines will celebrate the fifth centenary of the coming of Christianity to its shores. The first Mass was celebrated on Limasawa Island (Southern Leyte) of that same year on March 31st (Easter Sunday). In preparation for the year 2021, which will be a year of great jubilee for the Church in the Philippines, the bishops have declared “a nine-year journey for the New Evangelization,” with a different theme for each year, namely: Integral Faith Formation (2013), The Laity (2014), The Poor (2015), The Eucharist and the Family (2016), The Parish as a Communion of Communities (2017), The Clergy and Religious (2018), The Youth (2019), Ecumenism and Inter-Religious Dialogue (2020) and *Missio ad Gentes* [mission to the nations] (2021).

The PHC and the other SVD Provinces continue to participate wholeheartedly in this jubilee celebration. The *Divine Word Institute of Mission Studies* (DWIMS) is expected to actively get involved in preparing for the culminating activities of this faith journey through various missionary programs, focusing on the theme, “*Missio ad Gentes*”. As a frontier missionary congregation, the SVD has been serving the Philippine local churches in various mission ministries, whether in the diocesan seminaries, in the school apostolate, or in the parishes.

3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Parish	57	29.0	28.2	21.8
Education	35	18.0	11.0	12.6
Schools	33	-		
Universities	2	-		
Formation/ SVD Vocation	30	15.0	15.7	16.4
Administration/ Support	12	6.0	10.0	10.1
Other Apostolates	26	13.0	13.9	19.0
JPIC	1	-		
Bible	1	-		
Communication	0	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	23	-		

Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	9	5.0	7.0	3.4
Retired/Sick	18	9.0	13.0	5.8
Others	9	5.0	1.2	1.2

Formation: PHC is home to SVD formation houses that send missionaries around the world. We have the Senior High School and College formation in Christ the King Mission Seminary, the novitiate in Calapan on the island of Mindoro, and the School of Theology at Divine Word Seminary, Tagaytay. Our school of philosophy and theology offer courses not only for SVDs, but also to seminarians from different dioceses, other religious congregations and to lay students. The financial sustainability of these formation houses has become a major concern in recent years. We look forward to the time when receiving countries, especially the economically developed, will generously provide financial assistance and personnel to our seminaries.

Parishes: We serve in parishes of three dioceses within the Metro Manila area (Manila, Cubao, and Caloocan) and four others on the nearby islands of Mindoro, Palawan, and Romblon, which are situated south of Luzon. Our urban parishes in Metro Manila are financially self-reliant, whereas those in the rural areas are still dependent on financial subsidies. Bible apostolate and mission animation are done through the sacraments, retreats, recollections, and catechetical instructions. Justice and peace are made through prison ministry, social action activities, dental and medical missions, among others. Most of the parishes have installed state of the art sound systems and modern media equipment in the parishes to better communicate the Word of God.

Schools: We serve in three colleges, two on the island of Mindoro (Calapan and San Jose) and

one in southern Luzon (Legazpi City). In addition, we also serve two K-12 School of Basic Education, the Divine Word High School on Semirara Island, and a prestigious school for Chinese-Filipinos, St. Jude Catholic School, situated near Malacañang Palace, the official residence of the President of the Philippines. Four Characteristic Dimensions summer camps have been initially conducted in Calapan, and have been ongoing for several years. Youth from nearby parishes have participated as well. Other Divine Word Colleges also offered to sponsor the four Characteristic Dimensions summer camp.

Special Apostolates: We serve in other apostolates, such the FABC Social Communications Office, the CBCP Commission on Biblical Apostolate, the CBCP National Appellate Matrimonial Tribunal, the CBCP National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, and the Radio Veritas Asia. An Indonesian confrere still works at the Nunciature in Manila. Other confreres work among two native cultural minorities: the *Aetas* in Pampanga and the *Mangyans* in Mindoro.

Characteristic Dimensions

Mission Animation: The Mission Office, headed by the Mission Director, and in cooperation with the mission secretaries, coordinates mission animation programs and supervises the collection of funds for missionaries. The mission house, which is located in Christ the King Seminary, provides a place where visiting missionaries, outgoing and returning missionaries can stay and be reenergized. These missionaries are

often invited to give mission talks to the seminarians, the pink sisters (SSpSAP) and the blue sisters (SSpS), and parishes and schools to promote missionary awareness.

Biblical Apostolate: This is integral to our life as SVDs and those of our mission partners. The PHC biblical office has institutionalized the *LBS* (Liturgical Bible Study), a bible study method developed by the Divine Word Biblical Center. A book on the methodology of the *LBS*, “BUSOG”, has been published recently.

Communication: Our media ministry has remained visible, too, as a very effective tool for mission animation and vocation campaigns. Some of our confreres work in the radio and TV ministry as anchors, commentators and producers. Others have been using social media like Facebook and SMS text messaging to proclaim the Word of God. Communication is reaching out, touching, and healing, and all SVDs are called and missioned to preach through word and deed.

JPIC: We are engaged in close networking with government and non-government organizations in the form of community-based projects in order to alleviate poverty. In addition, confreres are engaged in JPIC to provide alternative literacy programs for the school dropout youth and indigenous or Muslim communities, as well as to support advocacies against irresponsible mining, notably in Palawan, Romblon, and Mindoro. St. Arnold Kalinga Center, which is annexed to the SVD provincialate compound in Manila, was initially established as a place for bathing and fee-

ding the poor. It now runs a literacy program (Alternative Learning System) and provides sleeping space for the homeless. Most recently, a “Kalinga Truck” was donated to reach out to those who cannot afford to come to the center.

Priorities among the Congregational Directions

Primary and New Evangelization: Divine Word School of Theology (DWST), through collaboration with the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome and with DWIMS, now offers the Baccalaureate and Master’s Degrees in Mission Studies. DWIMS, in collaboration with the Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas, offers Licentiate and Doctoral degree programs in Missiology. Summer courses are also offered with emphasis on primary and new evangelization in school settings, parish settings and indigenous peoples’ settings. Parish programs, such as faith formation and education for mission, provide creative ways to strengthen our SVD commitment to primary and new evangelization. PHC has decided to integrate this *ad extra* priority with family and youth, and the promotion of the culture of life. Retreats, recollections, seminars and workshops on family and the dignity of life are offered not only in the parishes and schools, but also in special apostolates.

Education and Research: The school apostolate is a top priority of PHC and we serve in three colleges, two Enhanced Basic Education schools, and *Alternative and Indigenous Learning System (ALS/ILS)*. Education and research are integral to our commitment. The pursuit of, passion for, and commitment to excellence is

among the hallmarks of our SVD Education. Every educational institute has a research and quality assurance unit that ensures continuous improvement to provide quality SVD Catholic education and to efficiently deliver services.

JPIC: This includes the promotion of the integrity of creation, social justice, poverty eradication, and protection of the rights of the indigenous peoples. *Vivat Philippines* has been established with the participation of other religious congregations.

Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue: Among the challenges facing the Catholic Church in the Philippines today is the increasing number of non-Catholic religions and sects. How do we effectively engage in prophetic dialogue with our Christian brothers and sisters, with people of other religions, and with those who claim to profess no religion? Our schools and institutes provide a venue for such dialogue.

Collaboration with the SSps and Others

Collaboration with the members of the Arnoldus family has been strengthened since the establishment of the Arnold Janssen Spirituality Center. Regular Bible and faith sharing through the *Kapatiran* gathering has brought the members of our three congregations closer together. Regular joint meetings of the provincial leaders address areas of common concern, such as the protection of human dignity, the promotion of the culture of life, and the campaign against extrajudicial killing and human trafficking, among others. DWIMS as well as the Institute for Religious Studies (IFRS)

and the Association of Major Religious Superiors (AMRSP), offer opportunities for closer collaboration with other religious congregations in the field of research, faculty exchange, summer programs on doing mission, and orientation programs for incoming and outgoing missionaries from different nationalities and cultures.

SVD Lay Association

The province sustains collaborative links with lay missionary associations that identify with our SVD mission charism and spirituality. Following the directives of the 17th SVD General Chapter to include our lay partners and our sisters in the Arnoldus Family in our collaborative efforts, the XVD Workshop and Strategic Planning was held in Baguio on January 5-8, 2017. Our lay partners formally envisioned a closer cooperation with the three SVD provinces in our projects. The province has officially recognized The Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen (LASAJ) which is doing a wonderful work.

4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishop	2	2	2
Clerics	186	182	163
Brothers (final vows)	8	8	9
Brothers (temporal vows)	0	0	1
Scholastics	40	36	45
Novices	13	17	18
Total	249	245	238

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	57.2	55.1	46.5
Nationalities	22	15	13

Spirituality: This is the heart and soul of our life as SVDs. We continue to deepen our spiritual life both on a personal level and as a community. Local communities regularly come together for common prayers, especially the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. We promote the Arnoldus Spirituality not only with our sister congregations, the SSpS and SSpSAP, but also with our lay mission partners. Two SSpSAP convents are located in the PHC, where members of the Arnoldus family gather together for faith sharing.

Community: Local communities continue to foster a warm fraternal atmosphere among their members through common meals and prayers. This atmosphere facilitates the integration and assimilation of foreign students who come to live with us. The provincialate community at Catholic Trade Manila (CTM), Christ the King Mission Seminary (CKMS), and Divine Word Seminary Tagaytay (DWST) have become more internationalized, welcoming not only SVDs but also diocesan priests and religious brothers from different congregations, countries and cultures.

Leadership: Leadership in the service of mission, and as a way of loving and living is another

hallmark of our SVD tradition. One of the themes of the SVD preached retreat was on servant leadership. DWIMS offer a summer course for superiors and administrators. The formation of a good leader already starts in the initial formation stage. Such training is offered starting in the senior high school and at every stage of the formation years, including ongoing formation for those in perpetual vows.

Finance: Financial self-reliance for the province has been a major challenge for the leadership team, especially as regards the financial viability of our formation houses which are mainly located in PHC and are considered cost centers, and in addressing the medical needs of our returning and retired missionaries. There have been an increasing number of elderly missionaries requiring medical care and services. Many countries have benefited from these missionaries. With reduction of financial support from the Generalate, our formation houses seek outside help, especially from the receiving host countries.

Spiritual Renewal

There has been an ongoing effort to evaluate and update the formation program at every stage. A Formation Manual was published. Interculturality and internationality have now been integrated into the formation program. Seminars, as well as community retreats/recollections, offer opportunities for spiritual renewal.