

ROME COMMUNITIES AND NEMI

The three SVD communities in Rome form a unique jurisdiction in the Society. It is neither a province nor a region nor a mission. Although located in Italy, it is not part of the Italian Province. It is under the direct authority of the superior general.

I. Collegio del Verbo Divino / Casa Generalizia SVD

Vision Statement

Living a symbol of the unity and the richness of the Church and to give testimony to the Kingdom of God through fraternal sharing and various services.

Mission Statement

The Collegio del Verbo Divino is a community of religious missionary priests and brothers of different cultures, languages, and nations with diverse reasons and objectives for being in Rome... We strive to live together as a community that responds to the challenges of intercultural and multicultural living, further compounded by the diversity of responsibilities and commitments we are embracing...

We create platforms for cultural exchange and interchange of the vast range of knowledge and experiences of the members of the community...

As a community enriched by the talents of its members and the availability of facilities, we offer pastoral, social-charitable and other services to the immediate civil and ecclesiastical communities in Rome that include parish and migrant communities, refugees and those who are in need, in line with our charism and possibilities.

We provide a place to receive our SVD confreres and their guests, and open to them the possibility to experience our day to day community living.

The members of the *Collegio* form an international and intercultural community composed of 65 confreres coming from 19 different nationalities and 34 PRMs of the Society. We can identify three distinct sub-communities within the large community:

1. The generalate community is composed by the Superior General and Councilors; officials: procurator general, treasurer general, secretary general and general secretaries/coordinators residing at the *Collegio*; confreres working for the generalate (language secretaries, registrar, archivist/s, *Catalogus*, those working in publications, computer, and finance); the Centro Freinademetz and the Catacombs of Domitilla. Currently there are 28 confreres who belong to this community. They come from 14 different nationalities and 20 PRMs of the Society.

The Centro Freinademetz, located on the ground floor of the St. Raphael building at the entrance to the *Collegio*, was inaugurated in 2007 and is responsible to the generalate. Its

mission consists of gathering Chinese language books and journals for use by researchers; providing academic and non-academic assistance and training to Chinese ecclesiastical personnel; gathering and sharing information and/or documentation on China and Christianity in China; and networking with other entities concerned with Christianity in China, especially in Rome. It has published 7 issues of the *Catholic Translation Journal*, translating articles written in Western languages into Chinese. It is currently working on producing a ten-volume *Encyclopedia of the Catholic Church in Chinese*.

The generalate took over the administration of the
Catacombs of Domitilla in 2009 as a form of missionary service. In the first century the granddaughter of the Emperor Vespasian, Flavia Domitilla, became a Christian and established a cemetery on her property, which grew to become the first catacombs of Rome in 120 AD. The early Christians wanted to be buried closer to the tombs of the martyrs, and they believed in the resurrection. For this purpose, they dug into the depths, and over the next five centuries, Rome's largest underground graves came to exist, thus there are many catacombs in Rome. It is a journey through history. The transition from the pagan to the Christian tradition is visible very beautifully.

In the Catacombs of Domitilla, the frescoes and documents carved in stones are well preserved. For this reason, many people come to visit the catacomb. When the people come to visit the catacomb, there is something special that they

experience. It is not possible to explain the catacomb without speaking of the faith of the Christian communities in the first centuries and about resurrection. Some special images of this catacomb are “good shepherd”, “the anchor with the two fishes”, “the dove with the oil branch in the beak”, etc.

As a testimony to the faith of the early Christian communities, it serves as a simple form of evangelization for the pilgrims who come for a guided tour and to visit the small museum which was opened in 2017. This museum has documents of many catacombs in Rome, pictures and a documentary. There are currently three confreres living in small rooms above the catacombs, caring for this sacred space and inviting visitors to reflect on their faith through this historical site.

**to give testimony
to the Kingdom
of God**

2. The students' community is composed of confreres coming from the different PRMs for their higher studies in Rome. Currently we have 25 students from 11 nationalities and 17 PRMs (10 from AFRAM, 11 from ASPAC, 1 from EUROPE, and 3 from PANAM).

3. The ordinary/local community is composed of confreres appointed to manage the house (administration and maintenance), engaged in various commitments outside the house, and permanent residents. Thirteen confreres belong to this community. They are from 9 nationalities and come from 9 PRMs.

The vision and mission statement is implemented in the ordinary activities of the community as well as in special events such as the opening and closing of the academic year, the special dates of the Congregation, the important liturgical celebrations of the church, the meetings of the three SVD communities in Rome, and the welcome and hospitality given to the confreres and sisters of the Servants of the Spirit who participate in the different courses in Nemi. In addition, the community welcomes guests who are confreres, relatives and friends of the confreres, bishops, priests, religious and lay people who come to Rome for different reasons and who find in the Collegio a hospitable community.

A community handbook and the elaboration of a concrete plan of activities are being formulated, to help us to live more intensely the richness of internationality and interculturality. We are challenged to respect the identity of each group within the large community without creating divisions; to live in unity despite the diversity of objectives, functions and mission that each community has. Another challenge is the openness and closeness to the Italian reality; there is little contact with the people and their reality. A great resource we have in facing these challenges is the intellectual wealth of the student confreres; they can contribute from their diverse fields to reflect on the life and mission of the Congregation.

II. Collegio San Pietro

The *Collegio San Pietro*, founded in 1946, welcomes diocesan priests from the so-called "mis-

sion countries". With this Collegio, *Propaganda fide* - with support from the SVD - provides a fundamental service to the local Churches. Those who are pursuing licentiate or doctorate degrees while staying at the Collegio are priests assigned to key positions in their dioceses: rectors and professors in seminaries; episcopal vicars, formators of the clergy and laity. About 10% of the alumni of the Collegio have been named bishops, with several cardinals among them. Ecclesial authorities in many dioceses, especially in Africa and Asia, know the Society of the Divine Word through the *Collegio San Pietro*. The Collegio currently has 176 diocesan priests, representing 45 countries and 160 dioceses: 94 from Africa, 75 from Asia, 6 from Latin America, and one from Oceania. In June 2017, 57 priests finished their studies, and 65 new ones arrived.

Multiculturalism is the air breathed in this house. It is the perspective from which we organize community life, to form intercultural men of God. Here in everyday life we experience the closeness, union and friendship between different people. Those who finish and leave the Collegio state: "I have found friends", "I have felt at home", "I have had an experience of the universal Church". To celebrate our diversity, we have weekly inculturated liturgies organized by countries, which feeds the spirituality that values and celebrates interculturality.

We are four SVDs: rector, vice-rector, spiritual director and treasurer. The mission of the SVD in this house is to form priests. The bishops send their best priests to Rome for higher studies,

those who have good humane values and spirituality. However, clericalism, ambition, and narcissism can sometimes be present. We are challenged to form priests who are passionate for Christ, his style of life, the Kingdom, and universal human fraternity. In so doing, we imbue the priests with aspects of our SVD charism, our Characteristic Dimensions, and our intercultural mission of prophetic dialogue.

III. Centro Ad Gentes

There are six members in the community of *Centro Ad Gentes*, serving in various capacities. The diversity of nationalities and mission experiences of the team expresses something of the international experience and hospitality we hope people experience during their stay in the *Centro Ad Gentes*. The Statutes of the Center help to regulate the administration of the services provided and the role each member plays in it.

The Nemi International Center was constructed in the 1960s under the guidance of Fr. John Schütte SVD, Superior General, for the formation and renewal of Divine Word Missionaries from around the world. Pope John XXIII inaugurated the Center on August 23rd 1962. In 1965 the Center hosted the preparatory commission that formulated the conciliar document *Ad Gentes*, in which Fr. Schütte played a vital role. Originally the Center was focused on renewal courses for SVD members, but later it opened up also to receive some diocesan clergy and religious. Other activities followed, such as

Dei Verbum Courses, Formation Courses and SSpS/SVD renewal in different languages.

The XVI General Chapter (2006) called for an expanded use of the Center, opening it to groups of the local clergy, other religious orders and the laity. Extensive renovation of its facilities was required to conform to civil regulations and to provide a marketing advantage. Proceeds of the sale of part of the land were to partly finance the cost of the renovation. At the conclusion of the renovation in 2010, the Center was renamed ***Centro Ad Gentes*** by the General Council to express its missionary purpose and to maintain the historical connection to the Council document drafted on its premises. At present, the *Centro Ad Gentes* has been developing successfully as originally planned.

The *Centro's* beautiful location and climate makes it an ideal place for gatherings, retreats, prayer, and contemplation. The facilities in the structure include: 86 suite rooms; an Aula Magna with seating for 141 plus 4 translation cabins and equipment; one aula for 45 persons with 2 translation cabins and equipment; 3 auldas for 60 persons each; 5 small meeting rooms; a recreation room; a church for 300 people and 5 chapels, one of them being only for adoration; 4 dining halls; a gym for indoor sports and a library with resources on spirituality, Bible, missiology/anthropology, religious life, trends in theology and Church/SVD/SSPS documents. The community has a section with 8 self-contained rooms, a living room and small kitchenette.

During 2017, thousands of people used the facilities of CAG in activities such as private and common retreats, formation/renewal courses, general chapters, workshops, various meetings, children and youth activities, etc. The groups came from various female and male religious congregations, the Roman colleges and parishes, lay movements, and others.