

# A Brief Report of the National Assembly of SVD Brothers in India

The 7<sup>th</sup> 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. The 7<sup>th</sup> National Assembly of SVD Brothers in India began at Arnold Bhavan, Hyderabad with a con-celebrated Holy Eucharist at 7.00 am on August 23, 2013. The main celebrant was Most Rev. Jaya Rao Polimera, the Bishop of Eluru Diocese, Andhra Pradesh Fr. A. Jesu SVD, the Provincial Superior of INH Province and Fr. Bali Reddy SVD, the Director of DWSSS, Habisguda concelebrated the mass. The theme of the Convention was "The SVD Brothers' Mission and Today's Challenges". Most Rev. Jaya Rao Polimera challenged the Brothers to use the gift of life for love and service.

After the breakfast, the Brothers, General Mission Secretary, Provincials and Regional, gathered at the Hall of Arnold Bhavan, INH Provincial House. The first session began with the lighting the traditional lamp. The National Coordinator of Brothers, Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD welcomed the dignitaries to light the traditional lamp to inaugurate the Seventh National Assembly. He called the names as follows: Most Rev. Jaya Rao Polimera, Fr. Stanislaus Lazar SVD, the General Mission Secretary, Fr. Nicholas Martis SVD, the Chairman Formation Board India, Br. Sylvester Minj SVD, the senior most Brother and Br. Vijay Kumar Jalda, the youngest Brother to the light the lamp.





After lighting the lamp, Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD proposed Br. Raju Soosai SVD and Fr. Manoj Kumar Lakra SVD as the Secretaries and Br. Emmanuel Bilung SVD and Br. Muktilal Ekka SVD as the members of the Drafting Committee. Fr. A. Jesu SVD, the INH Provincial Superior in his welcome address extended a warm welcome to all the participants. After the welcome address, Fr. A. Jesu SVD welcomed Most Rev. Jaya Rao Polimera to honour with a shawl and Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD presented a bunch of flowers. He welcomed and introduced Fr. Paul Vattatara SVD and honoured him with a shawl and Br. Ravichandran SVD presented a bunch of flowers. At last he warmly welcomed all other Provincials and Regional and the Brothers to this assembly. After this, Fr. Telesphore Bilung SVD, the Chairperson of Interprovincial Forum addressed the assembly. In his address, he said that 'it is time to be together. Though we have been working in different ministries, we have come together to share our mission and life. He has noticed from the 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 always ready to carry on what the elder generations have handed over. One thing happens in each assembly as that is our elders brothers in the spirit of community have passed on to the youngsters. This may happen today. We need to know our Identity as who we are? We need to work out the purpose that why are we? What are we to do today? It is indeed the need of the time to redefine our life in the Congregation. If we do not do we become irrelevant as we are experiencing'. Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD thanked Fr. Telesphore Bilung SVD for his challenging to the Brothers about their identity and mission and he invited Fr. Stanislaus Lazar SVD to address the gathering. In his address, Fr. Stanislaus Lazar SVD said 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.

After the coffee break, the resource person of the first day of the Assembly was Most Rev. Jaya Rao Polimera. He was introduced by Br. Francis Sanmanasanathan SVD who described him as having command over various languages, musician, youth director, selflessly rendered his service to the people, good servant and we are privileged to listen to him. Br. Francis Sanmanasanathan SVD chaired the session.

Most Rev. Jaya Rao Polimera began his keynote address by citing Canon Law 611, 661 and civil law. He quoted Art. 21 of the Indian Constitution - right to life and personal liberty. Our real genuine passion to humanity. Purity in heart & clarity in thought. When there is absence of these, there comes burden, rejection and unhappiness in life. Past is History,



Future is mystery and present is to live It can happen when we do not have the character of Christ. We should have the personality of Christ – meaning like Christ. We should leave behind everything and work for one – that is for Christ. He dealt very many topics such as how to hit the target or goal, values to uphold, how to become such a comprehensive personality. Being Prophet, Ora et laboura, (Prayer and work). Br Muktilal Ekka SVD thanked Most Rev. Jaya Rao by expressing his sentiments starting from the Eucharist and for his powerpoint presentation.

The third session of the day started at 5 pm after the Tea. The next speaker was Br. Varghese Thekandathu SG, the Director, Montfort Social Institute, Hyderabad. He was introduced by Fr. A. Jesu SVD, the Provincial of INH with a long list of assignments and portfolios. Br. Varghese Thekandathu SG began his talk on INNOVATION – A Call of the Spirit For Mission. He quoted Bishop Kathrine Jefferts Schori, 76th General Convention of the Episcopal Church, Opening Eucharist, July 8, 2009 'Crisis? Mission! The heartbeat of Religious Life "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?" He gave various examples of innovators and some principles of innovation. At the end of his talk, Br. Jacob V SVD, thanked Br. Varghese Thekandathu SG for his presentation of innovative ideas.



On the second day, August 24, 2013, the participants gathered at Hall, Arnold Bhavan at 6.30 a.m. for Morning Prayer. The Morning Prayer was conducted by Br. A. Vincent SVD and Br. George Kindo SVD. It was followed by the Eucharistic Celebration presided over by Rev. Fr. Telesphore Bilung SVD, the Provincial Superior of INE, Fr. Xavier T. SVD, the Formation Secretary, India and Fr. Augustine P. A. SVD, the Regional Superior of ING, concelebrated the Mass. Fr. Telesphore Bilung SVD, in his introduction to the Mass and homily recaptured the previous day assembly input sessions and stressed the importance of working out the action plan in the second and the final day. He also stressed the primacy and core values of our mission as Brothers.



The first session on the second day at 8.30 am, the speaker was Br. Swaminathan Sathiyaseelan SVD. Br. Bipin Kishore Surin SVD introduced Br. Swaminathan SVD as a well experienced person to share his experience as a Brother. Br. Swaminathan SVD introduced himself and accepted that he was never been a vocation promoter and also with his limited knowledge and vast experiences, he shared his views. He requested all brothers to accept this as his personal views. Bro. Swaminathan SVD read out his paper in the following headlines. 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. 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 will flourish. Is our own spiritual and social life sufficiently inspiring 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 Brother Swaminathan SVD which was very systematic way. Br. Varghese Ilayapillai SVD proposed vote of thanks by enumerating Br. Swaminathan's qualities as person who speaks a lot. His personal experiences can be source of inspiration to all of us and promises that be put in practice. 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. Each group was asked to elect a secretary who will report the common forum. And the groups dispersed to various places allotted to them.

The session at 10.35 am was the presentation of the reports from the group. Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD requested Br. Benjamin Kerketta SVD to chair the session. Secretaries from various groups presented the reports in the common plenum. Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD invited the Brother in-charge of the formation programme to present the report. All the formators presented their short reports about the formation programme and activities. After this Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD asked Br. Raju Soosai SVD to present the life and appointments of SVD Brothers in India.

After a short break, Br. Rajesh invited Br. Jacob V. SVD to chair the important session. The following agenda were taken up for discussion.

## **Agenda for the discussion**

1. Dwindling number of SVD Brother Vocation has always been a serious agenda in our previous meetings. Have we ever taken any concrete steps to solve it?
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 insufficiently prepared to motivate the students? Or have we to question the motivation of students?
4. The recruitment for Brother Vocation is done in INE and INH to some extent. What about other Provinces and Region?
5. Brothers are encouraged to change their status by our own confreres. Do you consider it as a healthy approach?

Participants participated by asking various questions regarding the questions especially the last assembly recommendations and statements which could not be traced by the National Coordinator, Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD. The session ended by a small prayer by Br. Jacob V. SVD. Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD informed the floor about the change of the time which will be at 3 pm. With that morning session came to an end.

The last session of the Assembly began at 3 in the afternoon. Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD invited Fr. Xavier T. SVD, the Formation Secretary to chair the session. Fr. Xavier T. SVD began his session in a humours way. He appreciated the presentation of Br. S. Swaminathan SVD. Fr. Xavier expressed that

he was very much edified by the reflected paper presentation of Bro. Swaminathan SVD. He also said that one in every ten SVD member there is one Brother in India. So the Brotherhood has better bright future ahead. There is no compromise with regard to hard work. He spoke his experiences and observation as the Formation Secretary by placing three challenges such as 1. Challenge of visibility: in our work place, church etc. 2. Vocation Promotion. 3. Formation. There was interaction with the Formation Secretary after his talk. Br. Raju Soosai SVD read out the statement prepared by the draft committee, namely, Br. Emmanuel Bilung SVD and Br. Muktilal Ekka SVD.

## **The first draft of drafting committee which presented to the floor:**

As Divine Word Missionaries we must give priority to contemplative life. We must try to become reflector of Christ through our model and example life to the people.

### **Action Plan:**

01. It is the duty of every confrere to promote vocation to Brotherhood.
02. As far as possible we need to become model and visibility through our apostolates, by preaching retreats, recollections and seminars.
03. At least two brothers could be appointed in Brother Formation Houses.
04. Candidates must be well accompanied and taken care of by the formators in all the stages.
05. Brothers' innovative activities must be highlighted
06. Financial resources could be properly channelized for the vocation promotion.
07. Junior brothers must be guided and encouraged to choose their professional training according to their ability, interest and need of the Society.
08. Each one must strive to do his best in the area they are specialized.

Responding to the above statement, Fr. Nicholas Martis SVD asked for which method to be followed for the Action Plan. Fr. Paul SVD suggested little more clarity in our Action Plans. Fr. Stanislaus Lazar SVD suggested that there should be first challenges should be prioritized and challenges of visibility should be brought out. Br. Jacob SVD suggested that more visibility of our activities than formation vocation and vocation promoters. Fr. A. Jesu SVD suggested that visibilities should be done through newsletters and more innovative ways and suggested that it should be time bound. Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD said that our action plans should be evaluated every year. Fr. Xavier T. SVD suggested that these action plans should be published in all the province newsletters. Br. Vincent SVD proposed to bring out a booklet on the 7<sup>th</sup> National Assembly of SVD Brothers in India including all the inputs. And the floor approved it. Thus, the Assembly gave the above suggestions to modify the statements and it was left to the drafting committee taking help from the Formation Secretary.



Final session was chaired by Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD. Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD appreciated the presence of all the General Mission Secretary, Provincials and Regional and he invited Fr. Nicholas Martis to express his views on the two days of assembly. After thanking Fr. Nicholas Martis, Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD invited Fr. Augustine P.A. SVD to express his sentiments. He thanked Fr. Augustine for his words of appreciation and invited Fr. C. Paul SVD to express his sentiments about the assembly.

At the end, Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD invited Br. Kishore Tigga SVD to propose vote of thanks. In his vote of thanks, Br. Kishore Tigga SVD thanked the following, starting with the Almighty God for bringing us together from different parts of our



country. He thanked the Generalate for giving permission to conduct this assembly and financing it. He thanked specially Most Rev. Jaya Rao Polimera for his keynote address and his presentation. He thanked the General Mission Secretary his valuable presence and encouraging words. He thanked Fr. Telesphore Bilung SVD, the Chairman of the Interprovincial forum for his presence and encouraging words. In a special way, he thanked Fr. A. Jesu SVD, the Provincial Superior INH for his warm welcome and host of this assembly. He thanked the provincials and Regional superior for patiently listening through the assembly. He thanked the secretaries of the assembly, namely, Br. Raju Soosai SVD and Fr. Manoj Kumar Lakra SVD. He thanked the draft committee, namely, Br. Emmanuel Bilung SVD, Br. Muktilal Ekka SVD and Br. Bipin Kishore Surin SVD, and in a special way, he thanked the Rector of Arnold Bhavan, Fr. Anand Nagothu SVD and Provincial Secretary, Fr. Suresh Madavaram SVD, and the team for all the facilities and delicious meals during this assembly. He thanked Br. Ravichandran SVD the Director of Brother Formation House, Alwal and his team for conducting meaningful liturgy on the first day. At last and not the least, he thanked Br. Rajesh Soreng SVD the National Coordinator for arranging this assembly and bringing Brothers together. At last he thanked all the participants for their presence.

Prepared by

Br. Raju Soosai SVD.

Reporting Secretary

7<sup>th</sup> National Assembly of SVD Brothers in India.



The Final Draft of the Drafting Committee is as follows:

# The Seventh National Assembly of SVD Brothers in India

**August 23 – 24, 2013, Arnold Bhavan, Hyderabad**

We, 30 Brothers of the Society of the Divine Word in India along with 4 Provincials, the Regional, General Mission Secretary and the National Formation Secretary, gathered for the 7<sup>th</sup> National Assembly of Indian SVD Brothers held at Arnold Bhavan, Hyderabad from August 23 to 24, 2013, deliberated on the theme, "Mission and Today's Challenges", present the following statement:

Having understood the significance of Vocation to Brotherhood as a special gift in the Church and in the Society of the Divine Word and the sharing the concern over the declining of vocations to Brotherhood, we renew our resolve to give priority to our prayer life and become visible signs of the Reign of God through our commitment to Religious Missionary life. We strive to become reflectors of Christ through our exemplary life. In this regard, we propose to undertake the following priorities and Action Plans for the next triennium, 2013 to 2016.

1. Making visible the efficacious presence of Brothers.
2. Vigorous promotion of vocation to Brotherhood.
3. Revitalising the Brotherhood formation programme.

## Action Plans:

1. Making visible the efficacious presence of Brothers.
  - A. Highlighting the contributions of Brothers through electronic and print media.
  - B. Brothers assuming roles in pastoral and evangelical ministries and activities.
  - C. Leading a life that is inspirational and exemplary to the people, particularly to the youth.
  - D. Constituting communities of Brothers and witnessing to the values of the Kingdom.
2. Vigorous promotion of vocation to Brotherhood.
  - A. Every Brother confrere will assist the Vocation Promoter in vocation drive through his active involvement in recruiting vocation to Brotherhood from his village, parish, from his kith and kins, and places of his ministry.
  - B. We will strive to become models and visible signs through our commitment to our apostolates, especially in preaching retreats, proclamation of the Word of God, recollections and seminars, and making ourselves known to the youth.
  - C. We shall utilize the limited financial resources effectively for the cause of vocation promotion.
  - D. We will adapt innovative ways of attracting vocations to Brotherhood.
  - E. We shall focus on Family and Youth ministry to promote vocations.
  - F. We shall effectively involve our temporary professed Brothers and candidates to Brotherhood in the task of recruiting of vocations to Brotherhood.
  - G. Wherever needed, especially when there is non-availability of Brothers for vocation promotion, we shall avail the assistance of clerical confreres in the promotion of vocation to Brotherhood.

### 3. Revitalizing the Brotherhood formation programme.

- A. We staff our formation houses with trained formators. We would show generosity and willingness to get trained and work as Brother formators.
- B. We work as a team consisting of at least two Brothers in our Brother Formation houses.
- C. We would accompany our formees during their formative journey and guide them in the time of difficulties and discernment. We shall make this as our priority and make ourselves totally available for this task.
- D. We guide our junior brothers by example and encourage them to choose their professional training according to their ability, interest and the need of the Society.
- E. Every one of us strives to do our best and become inspirational for the youth in our own area of work and specialization.

With the approval of the higher authorities in the Society we would implement the above mentioned Action Plan and evaluate our performance in this regard at the end of the triennium. The National Brother Formation Coordinator will oversee the implementation and evaluation of the Action Plan. The report of the evaluation shall be presented at the eighth Brothers' National Assembly.

#### Drafting Committee

Br. Emmanuel Bilung SVD  
Br. Mutilal Ekka SVD  
Fr. Xavier T. SVD

