

# Profile of **SVD Parish**



**SVD Publications**  
Generalate - Rome



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## PRESENTATION

As missionaries of the Divine Word, we are at the service of the Church. We are missionaries having our special charisms, directions and orientations to continue God's mission in a given place as per the norms of the Society and Church. Being involved in the life of a parish and being responsible to administer a parish is very important as a missionary congregation. We have our traditions, experiences, success stories and have also learnt a lot from the lay people on how we could work in a parish. More than half of our active members are involved in the pastoral activities, and often a few questions were always asked – How could we run a parish more distinctively as Divine Word Missionaries? What are the characteristics of a parish which is administered by our confreres? How can the SVD parishes become missionary parishes?

Certainly, some provinces have developed a process to address these questions and some confreres are doing well developing our parishes as missionary parishes and giving various aspects of animation to become distinct with our charism and spirituality. We have seen the enthusiasm and the potential of lay people who are involved in various programmes of a parish and helping one another to become a missionary parish with distinctive traits in their activities.

We would like to have a rhythm and motivation for all our provinces/regions/missions (PRM) so that every confrere

who works in a parish can direct his focus and attention in evolving a missionary parish. Thus our duty is not just to maintain a parish or be immersed in a traditional institutional model alone, but to be creative with our SVD charism and spirituality. Our missionary method and work need to become meaningful and fruitful in a distinct way. Thus, we present you a text on the 'Profile of SVD Parish'. The draft of the text was sent to the mission secretaries in every PRM who were asked to study it with the confreres and comment on the text. Most of the provinces have sent their comments and observations and we thank them for their efforts.

The document is written for the whole Society, giving some orientations and motivations as well as showing how our confreres can actively get involved in a parish with active pastoral work as well as taking the whole community towards the realization that everyone is a missionary and together we are called to evangelize, more concretely to witness to the Word of God and to carry out the mission of God in the Church and in society. Together with these and with our SVD charisms and characteristics dimensions, the SVD parishes could be distinct in their approaches and activities.

Thus, the application of this document in a given context depends on the context, the people and the pastoral team. Each parish has to move towards this goal to make it a missionary parish, and this could be done by drawing out an action plan. The pastoral obligations and the SVD four-fold dialogue and four characteristics dimensions will be of great help to realize this orientation. We are aware that situations are different in many countries, but the common objectives of this document are:

- To make the SVD parishes as missionary parishes
- To animate the confreres to have a more integrated approach in pastoral ministry with the distinctive charism and characteristics of our Society
- To inspire the confreres to work with missionary zeal in a parish together with lay people

In the Encyclical Letter *Evangelii Gaudium* we read, “The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community.” (28) As such, we are searching for this flexibility; all the confreres involved in pastoral activities are called to possess missionary creativity and openness to the people. Along with the profile of an SVD parish, it may be good to discern and make a personal commitment to the profile of an SVD parish priest or co-pastor and their responsibilities and demands in the contemporary world. The most important ones are apostolic enthusiasm, being close to the people especially the poor, creative service and SVD spirituality.

One may have various ways of getting involved in a parish or various methods of discharging one’s responsibility. Confreres involved in a parish can have many ways of giving service to a community; it is the task of every province or district or a parish to establish coordinated norms and common ways that confreres work in a parish with SVD charisms and characteristics. Thus it becomes a missionary parish, an outgoing Church and a distinctive SVD Parish.

The suggested questions at the end of this document will be of help to organize more discussions for planning and execution. An evaluation at regular intervals would help

assess how a parish functions and that would help to improve the performances of pastors, parish pastoral teams and all others. The last section is on the best practices, from each zone; two parishes are selected to show that some of our parishes work creatively with lay people and try their best to make them missionary parishes.

This booklet is prepared with the help of many confreres. We take this opportunity to thank all the confreres who are involved in preparing this booklet. A very special word of thanks goes to our Mission Secretary Lazar Thanuzraj Stanislaus for coordinating the initiative and for preparing the booklet in its final form.

May the Triune God bless all our efforts and may the Holy Spirit give power and strength to work as good animators serving the people.

Fraternally in the Divine Word,  
Heinz Kulüke SVD and Leadership Team

## 1. PROFILE OF SVD PARISH

When a Diocese entrusts parishes to the Society of the Divine Word, we are to provide pastoral and spiritual leadership in a true spirit of service. The parishes are entrusted to the Society, not to individual confreres. Depending on the context, some parishes are given ‘permanently’ to the Society and some are given on a contract basis. Some confreres may work with other congregations and diocesan priests too. Although the local ordinary is in charge of parishes and the whole diocese, the parishes taken care by the confreres can be called SVD parishes.

Being appointed a parish priest implies an important responsibility to coordinate the ministry of the parish team of priests, brothers and lay leaders in pastoral, spiritual, social, cultural and economic matters. Confreres are to follow the relevant portions of Canon Law where the responsibilities of parishes, parish priests and assistant priests are articulated (Can. 515-552), and they are called to work together with the lay people in the parish activities.

The formation of a parish community and ministering within a parish depends on the context. It could be German, Ghanaian, Indonesian, etc.; urban/semi-urban or rural parish; quasi-parish or mission station with only a few Catholics and more involvement with the people of other faiths and/or social concerns of the area. In some countries, ‘Parish Unit’

or ‘Parish Area’ is evolving due to local circumstances. In portraying all of them we simply enumerate the following as salient features of the profile of SVD parish.

## **1. Prophetic dialogue**

Our parishes are centers of prophetic dialogue. The various activities are to be an exercise of dialogue with people, “dialogue is an attitude of solidarity, respect and love” (*General Chapter* [GC] 2000 #53). Dialogue presupposes the basic openness and mutual listening and understanding of one another. At the same time, this dialogue is one that is prophetic—to articulate the personal faith convictions and to challenge the evil in society. The prophetic dialogue takes place where “love has been obscured by prejudice, violence and hate” (GC 2000 #54). An important attitude of a pastoral team of the SVD confreres (at times other priests and religious brothers) is to listen to the people and all the ministries in the parish are to be permeated with prophetic dialogue. It is the responsibility of the pastoral team to inspire this attitude and practice in the parishes.

## **2. Fourfold Dialogue Partners**

While the dialogue partners will vary in every context, in order to effectively carry out our missionary task in a significant way, the parish could identify possible dialogue partners according to the context and need, and could choose the preferential dialogue partners. An action plan with agreed dialogue partners should be concrete and effective. The parish could engage the dialogue partners as a way to witness to Christ and to actualize the Reign of God. The dialogue partners are as follows:

### **a. People who have no faith communities and faith seekers**

Relating with people who have no faith communities and joining them to celebrate life can be a welcoming step to create harmony in society. Faith seekers are to be identified and making efforts to relate with them is a challenge in every parish's life.

### **b. Poor and marginalized**

Prophetic dialogue with the poor and marginalized calls for concerted action with planning, execution of the programs and evaluation, and these call for creative missionary activities in every place to alleviate poverty and eradicate injustice. Our approach towards them is not to be donors but partners.

### **c. People of different cultures**

Dialogue with various cultures in a parish calls for intercultural understanding and appreciation and intercultural mission. Prophetic action in each parish needs to be worked out by the parish team to have respect for everyone, to establish peace and oneness in the community.

### **d. Interreligious and Secular Dialogue**

“Interreligious dialogue is a part of the Church’s evangelizing mission” (*Redemptoris Missio* 55). Depending on the context of a parish, parishes could encourage and prepare people to engage more fully and intentionally in dialogue with people of other religions or no religion. A pastoral team has to allot its time and energy to have dialogue of life, dialogue of action, dialogue of discourse and dialogue of prayer. Our parishes can be a place for all seekers of truth where various groups could meet to bring together believers and non-believers. Parishes could establish a group to promote this concern and develop a concrete action plan.

### **3. Characteristic Dimensions**

The missionary profile of our parishes “would include promoting our fourfold prophetic dialogue and characteristic dimensions” (GC 2000 #92). Bible, mission animation, JPIC and communication “are not exclusive to each other but permeate our lives and work. Each of the characteristic dimensions implies a *basic attitude* in our life and service” (GC 2000 #9). All these four are to be incorporated in the various activities and expressions of an SVD parish. We are aware that these are the marks of every SVD ministry. Thus, dynamic and creative ways of expressing these features are to be planned and executed in every parish.

#### **a. Focus of Life with Bible**

Every Christian draws inspiration from the Word of God and it nourishes our life. We are called to preach the Word of God, making known the Good News to others and make them efficacious in the context. “The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission” (RM 42), and the Church is called to bear witness to Christ. The parish ministry has an irreplaceable role of preaching and witnessing to Christ. Our parishes are called to make maximum efforts to fulfill this role through various programs organized in the parish such as Bible sharing, Bible Sunday or Bible Week, seminars and workshops. Besides, they are to collaborate and network with the diocesan and other Biblical commissions.

#### **b. Mission Animation of the People**

Every parish is called to mission and all Christians are given gifts to serve the community (see ICor12:4-30; Rom 12:3-8; Eph 11:4-13). A parish becomes alive when all the people work together to establish the Reign of God, and for this people have to be animated. Promoting active participa-

tion of the laity in the parish and instilling in them mission consciousness of worldwide mission are marks of our parish ministry. Creative steps can pave the way for mission animation in this postmodern world. This can be done by promoting various lay groups and lay missionaries and also conducting programmes such as mission study, seminars, workshops and mission appeals.

### **c. Importance of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation**

Every parish is invited to participate in issues of justice and peace and this is a missionary call of every Christian. This cannot be left to a group of people or trained professionals, but it is a missionary call of every Christian in a parish. Awareness of injustice, gender justice issues and social action oriented programs appropriate to their physical and social context need to be conducted. Every parish could design an action plan to address all the concerns of justice and peace and promote valuable aspects of integrity of creation in their place. The Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si* will be very useful resource in this process.

### **d. Communication as a Way**

Communication at its most profound level is the giving of self in love and consequently a basic attitude which is necessary for us. Reaching out to people and involving them in parish activities is a way to administer our parishes. Today, we could use the media such as print, radio, audio-video, TV and cyberspace to serve our parishes effectively. Organizing programs on the use and dangers of contemporary media in this postmodern world is also a task of the pastoral team.

The pastoral team has a duty and responsibility to promote these characteristic dimensions in various ministries and activities. The PRM coordinators of these characteristics are also responsible for promoting these on a parish level. The

pastoral team and PRM coordinators can work together and plan out an action plan for each of these dimensions according to the local context. A viable mechanism has to be worked out to implement and evaluate all these actions.

#### **4. Interculturality**

Our parishes should be a place for intercultural encounter with genuine mutual dialogue across cultural boundaries. This could begin with the SVD community in the parish living intercultural values both within our community and with the people in the parish. Rather than insisting upon uniformity in a parish, and being content with only an attitude of tolerance within a multicultural community or parish, genuine intercultural living and intercultural mission are to be cultivated in parish structures and ministries. Multicultural expressions and activities slowly should emerge into intercultural understanding and enrichment in parish life.

As Divine Word missionaries, the parish priest and the co-pastors could take responsibility to promote this esteemed value in our parishes. Intercultural living in a parish is a sign of the Reign of God. Intercultural mission activities have to be planned in collaboration and with the active involvement of the people.

#### **5. Vision-Mission Statement**

“As we are involved in various kinds of mission at different times and places, there is a need to formulate specific goals and plans” (GC 2000 #90). Evolving a vision-mission statement for every parish seems to be appropriate for effective work, and this has to be done in consultation and with the involvement of the people. The mission statement should be

followed up with a significant action plan which has a clear indication of who, where, how, for whom and when. Implementation and a proper evaluation mechanism will pave a way for improving our work in the given context.

## **6. Spirituality and Liturgy**

SVD parishes in a diocesan setting are called to be communities of prayerful discernment of God's will. Spirituality rooted in the Word of God and living as witnessing communities gives joy to us and to others. Liturgy is the fountain from which all the Church's power flows (SC 10). Prayer and contemplation unite us with God and with people. Administering sacraments is our pastoral responsibility and let us administer them meaningfully. Taking into consideration the concrete realities of the context, liturgy, prayer and contemplation could touch the hearts of the people and move them to engage themselves into certain action of bringing joy, peace, and communion in the community. In this regard, our parish activities should reflect local and global concerns. All of them need to have prophetic utterance and motivate people for action today.

Creative liturgy with meaningful inculturation and with an intercultural dimension can make our parishes different from others. A constant reflective process can be arranged to promote meaningful liturgy and action. An annual mission or retreat, special prayer sessions and regular prayer vigils are to be the norms of every parish.

## **7. Formation**

Parishes are centres of learning and training. Confreres learn from the pastoral ministries and services to the people, and

the formandi are to be placed for some time during their formation period in the parishes and specially, the overseas training confreres are to be appointed in the parishes for more immersion and learning. Vocation promotion needs to be done in an effective way in the parishes. Formation of lay people in the parish is an essential element in every parish; various programs are to be organized to form the people—children, youth, adults, and leaders.

## **8. Finance and Administration**

We commit ourselves in the service of the Church and we share with the SVD community the contributions received from work or any other sources, because all that we have, is not ours, but belongs to the Congregation in view of its mission (cf. Con. 213). “Through the vow of poverty we commit ourselves to place all that we have at the service of our intercultural life and mission” (GC 2012 #36). This implies that we show financial solidarity, transparency and accountability. On a parish level, a parish priest takes responsibility to share the budgets and financial reports of the parish with the people. Every parish has to develop a mechanism for doing this.

One has the obligation to follow the norms of the diocese and the Congregation (Con. 212.2-4). Having a Finance Committee and lay people participating in various activities regarding finance is an imperative to be followed for evolving a truly participatory Church. As a missionary parish, we must move from being only ‘receivers’ to being ‘contributors’ as well. In this sense, every parish needs to have appropriate plans to reach out to the poor. Further, every parish needs to plan for self-reliance.

“Our provinces and regions continue to work out contracts with local bishops regarding SVD service in parishes. Such contracts should indicate the specifically missionary contribution we hope to give through our work” (GC 2000 #93). The contribution that is given to our confreres in a parish by the Bishop is also to be indicated in the contract. In this contract, it may be proper to place on record the rightful need for vacations, retreats, recollections, district meetings and other meetings in the provinces and regions. For more clarity, each parish needs to have separate accounts for the parish and the SVD community, and also an inventory of what belongs to the parish (diocese) and what belongs to the SVD.

In times of transfer, the outgoing parish priest hands over the responsibility to the incoming priest according to the norms of the diocese and the Congregation. Inventory, archives, financial statements and accounts, properties, canonical books, minutes of Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Committee meetings are among the fundamental items to be handed over to the incoming parish priest.

## **9. Lay Collaboration**

An SVD parish should be characterized by openness to all people and collaboration with lay people. We are called to involve the laity in all the activities of the parish; the collaboration can be achieved through establishing various lay groups and associations, and the pastoral team has to ensure that the lay people become partners in dialogue and mission. Evolving proper structure and functioning of these has to be spelt out by our parishes. Lay collaboration and participation call for participatory leadership. Involving them in the decision making process will ensure that they take more responsibilities. Every PRM makes sure that this becomes a mark of every SVD parish.

## **9.1 Parish Council and Associations**

It is the duty of the parish priest to organize a Parish Pastoral Council in every parish. Through it the priests and brothers can feel the pulse of the parish at the grassroots level. The parish priest conducts the Council meetings in an effective manner so that everyone works for promoting God's mission and especially the integral welfare of the people. According to the context of the place and diocesan norms, it may be proper to establish various associations to take care of various needs in the parish under the guidance of the parish council. Other religious congregations in the local place may be willing to render their service in such associations.

In collaboration with the parish team, the mission secretary or any other person nominated by the province takes responsibility to form independent and mission oriented SVD lay associations in a parish (GC 2012, *Resolution* 1.2.3).

## **10. Arnoldus Spirituality**

In order to promote and live Arnoldus Spirituality in a particular pastoral context, SVD parishes could observe the feast days of St. Arnold Janssen, St. Joseph Freinademetz and the SVD martyrs and if possible, the principal feasts of the Society with local cultural expression. Arnoldus spirituality and the founding generations could be elucidated in the sermons and prayers whenever possible. Working in a parish calls for greater responsibility to spread Arnoldus spirituality appropriately within the cultural contexts.

Together with the lay people, confreres plan out some practical devotions in the parish to promote Arnoldus spirituality. The 'Quarter Hour Prayer' and SVD Novenas could be promoted in the parishes. Placing the statue or portrait of our Saints in

the Church should be a standard practice in our parishes. It is also good to make the people aware of various mission endeavors in other SVD provinces and countries, and to have a separate board regarding the SVD, for displaying statistics and vocational material of SVD, SSpS, SSpSAP and others. However, one must be careful not to cause adverse effects.

## 11. Some Practical Norms

- Learn the local language/s well. Study the culture/s of the people and understand its richness.
- Be available to the people. Parish ministry is not a “part time” job, and it is a call “[to] take on the ‘smell of the sheep’” (*Evangelii Gaudium* [EG] 24)
- Regular family visits could become a characteristic dimension of a pastoral team.
- Find suitable occasions to share meals with individual families and within the entire parish
- Living joyfully in an SVD community, and acknowledging and respecting all the confreres can be a witness of the missionary vocation in our Society.
- Celebrate Mission Sunday in a meaningful way, which includes the concerns of SVD missions. If possible dedicate another day or week for SVD missions.
- Give authentic witness to Christ through our life and preach with conviction.
- Conduct ecumenical and interreligious dialogue activities

## 12. Evolving Missionary Parish

Mission is about God and people, our Christian faith is not something that is for ourselves alone, but one that needs to

be lived out by caring and loving the people among whom we live. Thus, it is not limited only to Catholics but also to all our neighbors (cf Lk 10:25-37). Parishes are called to equip, challenge, and support all members to take part in the church's mission. The task of parishes today is to move from a stance of maintenance to one of mission.

We are called to be Divine Word missionaries, "Wherever we work, we always keep in mind that we are missionaries: we seek to keep alive the universal church's awareness of its missionary responsibility" (Con. 102.2). Every Christian is a missionary by virtue of his/her baptism and all "are always 'missionary disciples'" (EG 120) and parish ministry is one of the best opportunities to keep alive the missionary aspects of the Church. An SVD parish cannot be limited to only pastoral care; it is the heart of the parish work, but new evangelization and missionary activities cannot be separated from fulfilling the mission of the Church (RM 34). An SVD parish should have three aspects: pastoral care, evangelization and missionary activities. Pastoral care is animated by a missionary spirituality, and an attitude of dialogue and collaboration.

The four characteristic dimensions of our Society are ways to reach out to others. An SVD parish could incorporate various programs to realize the missionary nature of the parish. The various missionary aspects consist of witnessing and preaching, liturgy and prayer, justice and integrity of creation, interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, inculturation (interculturalization) and reconciliation. An SVD parish will be distinct to the extent that concrete action plans are made highlighting these aspects and actualizing them with four characteristic dimensions. By building joyful communities and witnessing with effective actions, an SVD parish can become truly a missionary parish.

**Suggested questions for deepening the understanding and for implementation; discussions could be held with confreres, lay people and other religious in a parish.**

1. Vision-Mission Statement – How could you formulate this with the involvement of laity and draw up an action plan (pastoral plan) for the parish?
2. Who are the dialogue partners in your parish and what are the programs that you envision to promote prophetic dialogue with them?
3. How could your parish integrate and promote four characteristic dimensions: Bible, mission animation, JPIC and communications in its activities?
4. How could you promote interculturality in your parish? What are the specific occasions that would mark to improve interculturality?
5. What are the other areas that you see necessary to be developed in your parish and how will you achieve them?
6. What are the attitudes, traits and activities that you would develop to make your parish grow **as a missionary parish**? How could the lay people be motivated, organized and involved in evolving **as the missionary parish**?

## 2. BEST PRACTICES OF THE PARISHES

### 2.1 EUROPE

#### **GER: St. Martin's Church, Aulendorf**

St. Martin's Church in Aulendorf is in upper Swabian, Germany and it was entrusted to the SVDs in the year 1969 for pastoral and missionary activities. Aulendorf has a total number of 10,000 inhabitants consisting of the local Germans, the migrated Russians, East Europeans and a few from other countries. Of late, we have also people from Syria, Afghanistan and other countries as asylum seekers.

The economic situation of Aulendorf is generally good. In the past years it had the highest amount of debt in the state of Baden Württemberg. But now it is improving through new ventures and employment. This parish has around 6,000 Catholic faithful. There are also 2,500 Protestants and the others belong to the Orthodox Church, various religions, sects and atheists. The parish has five Kindergartens through which we render service to the public. A phenomenal 145 Altar boys and girls are the focus of their youth ministry.

The parish work is very systematically and democratically organized. The parish council is elected for a five years period. We have 12 committees for the various fields of work: Administration, Liturgy, Mission, Construction, Kindergarten,

Caritas, Youth, Celebration, Website, Ecumenism, etc. The decisions are made by the parish council with the support of the due committees for the parish in all levels. Through the contribution of Church taxes, it is self-sufficient in terms of finance. The parish administration practices a very responsible and transparent system. The annual financial planning and reports are concrete signs of them.

As Divine Word Missionaries, they give importance to the Word of God. They arrange at regular intervals seminars on faith topics and a series of sermons on various topics. They animate and support prayers groups, groups for Bible sharing, meditation and retreats. They also encourage the popular devotions, since they give more strength and vitality to the daily life of the people. Varieties of pilgrimages are offered; Pilgrimage on Foot, half day Pilgrimage, one day Pilgrimage, 3 days Pilgrimage and a weeklong Pilgrimage. Through the mission stories and experience of the SVD confreres and through concrete projects the parishioners also support the universal church.

The parish greatly practices responsible lay participation in the pastoral parish activities. The lay people are motivated and encouraged through the needed qualified accompaniment in the field of their work. Once in two years all the lay people who take up a work in this parish are invited for a felicitation program. They come together to celebrate Mass and take part in the Agape, in which they are thanked, recognized, and motivated.

This parish also has highly organized services in the area of helping social projects through the Caritas Committee. Helping the homeless, supporting the socially weaker families, working in the Migrants Ministry, Hospice groups, and

arranged Neighborhood Help are some of the driving forces that helps the parishioners to reach out to the needy. As Divine Word missionaries, the confreres in the parish give value to internationality and interculturality; through their appeals for a peaceful society, the community is called to live in peace and unity with people of all nations, religions and cultures.

*Anantham Antony SVD*

### **POL: Our Lady of Sorrows' Church, Nysa**

The biggest parish with a variety of activities which is run in Poland by our confreres is Our Lady of Sorrows Parish in Nysa. It has over eleven thousand parishioners who are mostly Polish. The economic situation of some families is mostly very good, a good number of them are doctors, lawyers, businessmen, etc.; but some face unemployment too. Due to migration (mostly to Germany or Ireland) there are children who grow up without one or two parents. Nevertheless people are very generous in this parish. The historic Church building is well kept. Also the parish priest and his four assistants are supported by the faithful, and it is worth mentioning that for the two last decades at least one of the confreres working in the parish has been non-Polish.

The activities for spiritual growth and faith formation are numerous. They try to celebrate the liturgy in a dignified manner, including giving daily homilies during the Eucharist celebration. There are four-day retreats during the seasons of Advent and Lent. They celebrate special occasions like Mission Week, Parish Festival, St. Arnold's Day, etc., and these are good occasions for evangelization as well. The parish is the seat of the SVD School of New Evangelization. The lay groups help with catechesis of children, youth and

adults on a regular basis. Very often lay people are invited to give witness to their faith. They run special formation programs before receiving the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and marriage. Also the formation is undertaken by a monthly magazine published by the parish and by distributing other catholic magazines. Every year after Christmas, confreres working in the parish visit all parishioners and bless their houses. It takes about one month's time.

Being in a good financial situation, the parish tries to help those in need. They support some poor families and visit sick people regularly. They collect food, clothes and toys for distribution to the needy. To overcome the loneliness, especially among elderly people, the parish has opened a "Cafe for Seniors" and this is well attended. Every year the parish organizes the whole town for a March for Life and Family. Also the confreres inform people about persecution of Christians and pray for peace and unity in the world.

The parish church is an inseparable part of the Holy Cross Mission House, founded and erected by St. Arnold Janssen (third house of SVD). The whole building (altars, stained glass, paintings) tells a lot about SVD spirituality. Due to three convents of the Arnoldus Family located close to each other, Nysa is called Little Steyl. Veneration of the Holy Spirit, worship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, commemorating our saints and martyrs and various meetings with invited missionaries help to promote and share our charisms.

There are 24 lay groups in the parish. They engage in different fields: prayer, liturgy, evangelization, social work, finances, etc. They have their own formation programs and a priest who assists them in each of these groups. For several activities the lay people cooperate together well, especially

arranging the Parish Festival, retreats, Christmas, evangelization activities and JPIC activities. The parish is self-reliant and even supports the Mission House. The Provincial Treasurer is informed about the financial situation of the parish every month. The parish finance committee works closely with the parish priest. At the end of the year parishioners are informed about the economic situation of the parish.

*Andrzej Danilewicz SVD*

## **2.2 PANAM**

### **BRN: Holy Cross Church, Aracaju**

In the Brazil North Province (BRN) there are 85 confreres from 13 nationalities. Of these members, 44 of them work in the parishes. The SVDs administer 22 parishes spread over 8 states. The province has begun its new missions in the north east of Brazil, which is very promising and at the same time very challenging as they encounter new situations and challenges in these places. Among these various parishes in the province, the parish in the capital city of Aracaju in the state of Sergipe is being highlighted here. This parish is dedicated to the Holy Cross. They took up this mission seven years back. In the month of July 2015, in this parish they organized SVD mission week and the nine SVD missionaries along with nearly 45 of the laity participated in this event. Some of the activities during this mission week were visiting the families, celebration of the Eucharist and on the last day, a formation program based on SVD spirituality, charism and dimensions. People were told about our four characteristics dimensions as each of them was explained to the people, showing the richness of these dimensions to carry out our missionary task in a unique manner. This parish has pastoral

activities like prison ministry where the two SVD missionaries visit the prisoners every week on Saturdays and celebrate the Eucharist for them. Also they have a pastoral mission formation program for the children and the adults which is called Infância Missionária.

In the month of September 2015, a Bible course was conducted for the parishioners based on the Gospel of Mark. The parish has Bible sharing groups and they meet every Sunday to share the Word of God and also do some concrete actions as a fruit of this sharing to live this Word of God. To promote vocations every year, an SVD vocation camp is conducted. In the month of December 2015, an SVD vocation camp was organized and eleven youths participated in it. Today most of our vocations come from this region of North East. The parish has various pastoral groups like the pastoral group for the youth, for the children, altar boys and girls, liturgy groups, finance committee, parish council, pastoral visit group, etc. One of the remarkable works in this parish is among the youths, who are most of the time victims of addiction of drugs and alcoholism. As this parish is situated in the suburban area a lot of problems are witnessed among the youth. Through the youth ministry many youths are brought back to the Church. The youth group organizes various activities like cultural programs, celebration of the folkloric feasts and various other activities like dance, music, theatre and so on. Also the youth group during Holy Week dramatizes the passion of Christ in the public places. During the time of Carnival a youth retreat is conducted every year where lots of youths from the parish participate.

By these small measures this parish has made our SVD presence felt among the people and has shown them the missionary spirit of the Society of the Divine Word. The people

do appreciate their missionary work and collaborate in the missionary endeavors.

*Roshan D'Souza SVD*

### **USS: St. Peter's Catholic Church, Pine Bluff, Arkansas**

St. Peter's Catholic Church in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, is one of the parishes that belong to the USA Southern Province. The State of Arkansas is dominated by Protestants, especially Baptists with just a small numbers of Catholics. St. Peter's is a relatively a small parish with about 130 families registered and 120 non-registered members (Hispanics/Latinos), located in a poor area of the city.

St. Peter's is characterized by diverse cultural backgrounds: African-Americans, Anglos, Asians, and the growing number of Hispanics. This diversity marks the uniqueness of the parish. It poses a challenge and an opportunity for the SVD to carry out our "Prophetic Dialogue" under the concept of "One Heart Many Faces." The presence of the SVD since 1928 in this parish, in a certain way, has marked its charism and spirituality. This reality helps us to continue and develop our orientation of Prophetic Dialogue and to implement our four Characteristic Dimensions to strengthen the identity of the parish.

Although the parish is small and at times struggles financially, St. Peter's parishioners are very generous and kind in helping the poor and the needy in the area. Every Saturday, the parish has a "Soup Kitchen." It's a program to feed the poor. A group from the parish and some volunteers from the city would come regularly on Saturdays to prepare food for them. Beside the "Soup Kitchen," they also join the "Neighbor to Neighbor" program to feed those in need on other days, from

Monday to Friday. This program is sponsored not only by the Catholic Church but also by other religions.

In order to give an SVD touch, they always start the “Soup Kitchen” activities with the Quarter Hour Prayer. Knowing that those who would come to be fed are not only Catholics but from different religions and denominations, the parish chose this prayer thinking that it’s suitable for any beliefs. This prayer is also said during daily and Sunday Masses, for every meeting or training/ formation in the parish, and for religious education classes. Something unique indeed!

To reach faith seekers, and those from other religions who want to learn the catholic faith, the parish has created a committee to reach out to them. More particularly these are concretized in the prison service which responds to the spiritual needs of those who are incarcerated in the prisons and jails. This is done in order to carry out the diocese strategies regarding prisons, detention centers and the death penalty and to accomplish the spirituality of the SVD in doing dialogue with different partners. We evangelize them with catholic teachings and services. It’s a wonderful experience to listen to them and share God’s infinite love and mercy through biblical reflection, prayer, and sacraments.

The pastoral plan of the parish is made by the people who are involved in the ministries and other interested persons. They take mainly three viewpoints: diocese, SVD, and parishioners. This perception of an integral approach is helpful to the parish. There are seven committees and various groups such as Catechism for students, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion, Lectors, Altar Servers, Fellowship, Soup Kitchen, Neighbor to Neighbor, and Prison Ministry. These give vitality to the faith formation, spirituality as well as to the social needs of the parish.

They dedicate every first Friday for the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament with the prayer to the Sacred Heart of Jesus among others. To help the parishioners to grow in the SVD spirituality, the parish has placed in its pastoral plan the celebration of the important events of our Society, such as: the feast of Arnold Janssen, Joseph Freinademetz, and the Foundation Day of the SVD. And looking at the diversity of the parish and the charism of the SVD, the parish has adopted the SVD's motto, "One Heart Many Faces," as their own.

*Siprianus Ola Rotok SVD*

## **2.3 ASPAC**

### **INM: Sacred Heart Parish, Andheri, Mumbai**

In Mumbai, our Society administers two parishes, Sacred Heart Parish, Andheri and St. Theresa's Parish, Banda. Both of them do excellent work in pastoral ministry as well as in other ministries, in many creative ways. Here, Sacred Heart Parish is chosen for a best practice, and it has already completed more than 25 years since its establishment. From its beginning, the Society has been taking care of this parish. Every year, the parish chooses a theme around which they organize various programs and activities. A special committee is appointed that takes care of the planning and executing of the programs through the year. The theme for the calendar year 2016 is "Year of Mercy". Besides the theme, they also choose a target group to focus their attention and organize various activities for them. The target group for this year (2016) is children.

### **Parish Pastoral Council (PPC) and Associations:**

The Parish Pastoral Council of the Parish consists of one representative each from the 34 communities of the par-

ish. They meet once a month to plan, execute and evaluate various pastoral activities and the functioning of the parish. There are also in total 34 Parish Bodies, Associations and cells in the parish. All of them, through their regular and active participation, keep the parish vibrant and alive.

**Center for Community Organization (CCO):** The CCO reaches out to all the parishioners, especially the poor and marginalized. It is an organization of the Parish that works in collaboration with and support of various Cells/Associations/Small Christian Communities, especially in matters relating to various social, economic, cultural and civic aspects. In this way, CCO aims to reach out to many needy people, especially in areas of health, education and housing in collaboration with the Community Welfare Fund and St. Vincent de Paul (SVP). The CCO acts as a liaison with the Holy Spirit Hospital to help the poor patients. Through the employment cell, many job placements have taken place, not only for Catholics but also for people of other faiths as well. Regular medical services are organized by the Health Cell of this Parish by ways of camps, regular blood and sugar check-ups, talks by Doctors, etc. All these events take place at the Community Centre, for the benefit of all.

**Small Christian Communities (SCCs):** SCCs are the backbone of the Sacred Heart Parish. They have 34 SCCs in the parish. All of them are active in having regular monthly meetings of animators, visiting the families, organizing annual get-togethers or picnics for the families, etc. The priests have taken responsibility to accompany these groups and each of them is allotted some SCC groups. The priest in-charge, who is called the Spiritual Director, attends all the above mentioned SCC activities regularly. Hence, they have the privilege of being honored as the model parish for the

functioning of Small Christian Communities in the Archdiocese of Bombay.

**Neighborhood Youth Groups (NYGs):** Based on the new youth ministry methodology provided by the Archdiocese, they have created a Neighborhood Youth Group in each the 34 communities. Thus, they reach out to about 500 youth of our parish. One or two representatives are elected from these NYGs to form the Parish Youth Council (PYC) at the parish level. With the help of the Parish Youth Animation Team (PYAT), they have regular meetings and activities both at community and Parish level. The threefold objective of the youth ministry in this parish is Formation, Fellowship and Service. Once again, they have the privilege of being honored as the model parish for the functioning of youth ministry in the Archdiocese of Mumbai.

**Mission Week Celebration:** In collaboration with the Mission Secretary of the Province, they organize Mission Week, focusing on the SVD mission in a particular geographical area. Every day, during the Triduum, a video presentation on a particular SVD mission is made and prayed for. The children of Sunday School make mission greeting cards and book marks which are kept for exhibition and sale. The proceeds are sent for the cause of the missions.

**JPIC Activities:** Fifty per cent of the Community Welfare Fund is made up of a one per cent contribution of the income of the parishioners. The rest is collected through other means. This fund is used to help the educational, housing and medical needs of the poor people of the parish. Every year about \$ 50,000 is distributed to the needy Catholic families of the Parish. SVD Tala Mission Socio-welfare Project, St. Vincent de Paul Cell, Ministry towards Migrants and

Women's Cell are some other projects and initiatives of the people regarding justice and peace.

**Inter-Religious Dialogue:** The Inter-religious Dialogue cell of the parish regularly visits the families and religious centers in the vicinity on their feast days.

**Consecrated Life:** This Parish is blessed with more than 150 religious men and women and many religious institutions, which help the parish in many of its pastoral and spiritual activities. As a way of expressing gratitude to them and to God, the parish celebrates the Day of Consecrated Life in the parish on 2nd February, every year.

**SCC Training Programs:** This parish has regular parish level and deanery level training programs for all the SCC animators of the parish. Two of the Programs which were held in the Parish recently are: Laity Training Program on the Importance of Eucharist and Training of SCC Animators on Leadership Skills.

Every year, the month of January is dedicated to the Society of the Divine Word. During this month the parishioners pray for the SVD mission, celebrate the feasts of Sts. Arnold and Joseph and make a financial contribution towards the mission support of the Society. Through these and various other programs in the parish, this is acclaimed as one of the best parishes in Archdiocese of Mumbai, as was said publically by the Bishops themselves to the people.

*Joaquim Fernandes SVD*

### **PHN: St. Therese Parish, Dagupan City**

The PHN province has a total of twenty parishes in five districts. The parishes are different from each other: ten Moun-

tain and Upland parishes; two coastal parishes; six lowland-rural parishes, one urban and one city parish. The upland parishioners belong to different tribes of indigenous peoples of the Cordillera Mountains and the Cagayan Valley identified into twelve ethnolinguistic groups. The coastal parishioners are grouped into languages, including the Filipino-Chinese who speak both Mandarin and Fookien Chinese. Obviously it is a multilingual, multicultural and pluralistic environment. There are twenty-six confreres working in these parishes and they are from various nationalities.

The Province has determined that its core program is to go all the way with prophetic dialogue and the four characteristic dimensions and its implementation in the next two years for all the districts of the whole province. District coordinators with the local council meet four times a year on characteristic dimensions. Provincial coordinators with the Provincial Council monitor this planning and action plan.

St. Therese Parish in Dagupan City has many elements of an SVD parish. The parish was erected on March 19, 1955. It was intended to serve the three-thousand Chinese living around the area of a total number of 6,000 at that time within the Archdiocese of Lingayen-Dagupan. A school was erected two years later in June 1957 (Divine Word Academy) as the only Catholic School in the town. The Chinese in Dagupan were part of a group of evacuees from mainland China that escaped the persecution of the Chinese cultural revolution. The Catholic Christians who were able to escape brought with them their Catholic faith and loyalty to their ancestors who handed down to them their culture and Christian faith.

From the very start the approach was already **Prophetic Dialogue** on account of their traumatic experiences un-

der an atheistic regime of Communism. Combining the art of communication with a prophetic stance allowed them to reach the Philippines and settle down in Dagupan as faith communities. They kept their cultural ways and heritage in expressing their faith until now, like their honoring their ancestors at Eucharist during their feasts like the celebration of the Lunar New Year. They have been violated as people during the cultural revolution. Today during their annual celebration of the Lunar New Year, the parish organizes an inculturated liturgy in Chinese in coordination with the **Parish Council and Associations**. The parish has developed a strong **Formation Team** that regularly offers formation of lay people in Family Life, Youth Ministry, Biblical Apostolate, Catechetical ministry for the children. The laity are also sent to Biblical and Pastoral Institutes for lay leaders on Spirituality and Liturgy, like an annual Summer Institute called **WABI** (Word Alive Biblical Institute). The parish organization sees that their programs are guided by a well reflected **Vision-Mission Statement**. Their action plans are monitored during the implementation period and evaluations are called for later on. The **Administration of their Finance** is well coordinated according to the Archdiocesan policy. Lay people who have the expertise in finance are elected to the office. The Chinese community is respected for healthy budgeting. The parish is blessed with a good blending of cultures: the Chinese becoming Filipinos and imbibing Filipino ways particularly in intermarriages, educational formation, liturgical celebrations and business ventures.

**Intercultural exchange** is best celebrated in liturgy; Lunar New Year, honoring and praying for their ancestors, etc., and students are appreciated for their academic excellence.

Among the **Characteristic Dimensions, Biblical Apostolate** is highlighted in the life of this parish. This is experienced in the regular Bible Sharing groups in the Basic Ecclesial Communities and outreach to the **poorer and marginalized sector** of the parish. Much is still expected to grow in the parish in the setting up of appropriate programs that will allow prophetic dialogue to continue to be effected in fourfold expressions with dialogue partners that will highlight the Characteristic Dimensions already envisioned in the **Arnoldus Spirituality**. That will help evolve the parishes from a maintenance mode to a missionary stance. This is still to be applied in the parish, to grow in deeper awareness of the Arnoldus Spirituality in order to bloom as a missionary parish under the inspiration of the patron of mission and missionaries, St. Therese of the Child Jesus.

*Alunday Oscar SVD*

## **2.4 AFRAM**

### **BOT - Tzaneen Diocese, South Africa**

In the Tzaneen Diocese, SVDs are taking care of the pastoral responsibilities of three parishes, namely St. Augustine parish, Giyani; St. Benedict Parish, Malamulele; and Good Shepherd Parish, Phalaborwa. These three parishes share many things in common besides being SVD- run parishes. These three parishes form one pastoral unit of the diocese of Tzaneen. The people speak the same local language called Tsonga. SVDs are given full responsibility for the pastoral and social development of this Tsonga language-speaking area. They are rural parishes. The confreres working in these parishes have motivated the parishioners to make their parishes self-reliant within a short period of time. It's a big achieve-

ment on their part. They also raise funds to support the local seminarians of the Tzaneen diocese. The parish in Giyani has been supporting the SVD Seminary in Zambia over the past few years. The people have seen the commitment of our confreres in their pastoral responsibilities, so they cooperate with them in all their projects and programs. The bishop and the clergy in the diocese are very appreciative of all the initiatives of our confreres in these three parishes.

The people have seen a big difference in the SVD-run parishes in the Tzaneen diocese compared to other parishes. They have well-prepared yearly plans for the pastoral activities. Common meetings and workshops of the catechists and other lay groups are organized regularly. These three parishes are not very far from each other so they are well connected to each other. In the past years each parish was celebrating the feast of our founder with their parishioners, but since last year they have decided to have this celebration together. Holy Spirit Sisters working in the same diocese are also invited to this celebration. In 2015, there was a gathering of representatives of all the three parishes with Holy Spirit Sisters to celebrate Mission Sunday. It was also a celebration of the Year of the Consecrated people. Every year in July, a week is dedicated to celebrate SVD Mission and Bible week. The lay people in these three parishes have come to know SVD Missionaries and our charism through our pastoral work and commitment. During the clergy meeting the bishop often makes positive comments about the pastoral plans and missionary commitment of SVD confreres.

Today, the Bible Diary has become a hot cake in South Africa. It was the initiative of James Koottiyaniyil SVD when he was the parish priest of Giyani Parish. In the first few years only a few people in Giyani parish bought them but

very soon the Bible Diary was in big demand in all the SVD parishes and later in the whole diocese. James continues in this ministry of promoting the Bible Diary with the help of our confreres in the Tzaneen diocese. Today people in many of the dioceses in South Africa do buy and make use of Bible Diaries for readings and personal reflection.

These three parishes have also have well-planned and executed JPIC programs and programs for taking care of the HIV/AIDS affected orphans. They are working hand in hand with the government. They also have trained personnel to look after these programs. The commitment of the priests and the lay people for these social upliftment programmes is very much appreciated by the people and agencies. All our confreres have shown great interest in all the social matters of the local communities they serve together with their pastoral ministry.

SVD parishes in the Tzaneen diocese of South Africa are model parishes in pastoral and social programs, and this is explicitly told by the local Ordinary to others. One finds a well-defined program and action plan for every activity in these parishes. Bible, Mission Animation and JPIC characteristics are very much seen in these parishes in the Tzaneen diocese.

*Sunny Vattapparayil SVD*

### **KEN: St. Peter's Parish, Ruai, Nairobi,**

St. Peter's Parish, Ruai is a new parish which was inaugurated in the year 2013. The parish is located in a suburb of Nairobi. The area is growing fast in terms of population as more and more people are coming to the city to look for jobs and are settling down in the areas where they can find a little

space to build their own houses. And that is how one finds a mixture of people from various ethnic groups/tribes coming from all over the country. The three Sunday masses are attended by approximately 350 Christians and in two outstations with little more than 200 Christians. Various activities of the parish, spiritual or social are planned and carried out by the Parish Pastoral Council. They meet every month together with representatives from all the Ecclesial movements/groups.

Small Christian Communities made of 10-15 families play an important role in their faith formation. That is where Christians regularly share the Word of God through their life experiences and challenges, while they try to find ways to assist one another if need be. Each Small Christian Community selects a member to form the parish JPIC committee. They meet regularly to discuss about issues related to JPIC such as eradicating poverty in our society, creating awareness to remain as one nation despite the fact that people come from different ethnic background, protecting our environment, tackling the issue of corruption at all levels in the society, etc. Every Sunday during Lenten season, it has been a common practice that CJPC members prepare a short drama or a small presentation to sensitize our Christians about various challenges they are facing in the society.

At the parish level, the liturgical committee organizes workshops and seminars to know more about the Catholic faith, richness of liturgy, different approaches to familiarize themselves with the Bible, etc. Various ecclesial movements/groups such as Catholic Men/Women Association, Catholic Youth and Pontifical Missionary Childhood have their calendar of events which bring them together and create a forum where they continue the work of evangelization. Among

many activities, one of them is that the members of these groups go for a day of recollection or pilgrimage; they also visit orphanage/prison together with neighboring parishes, and so on.

All the youths from the SVD parishes organize regular events with the presence of our confreres where the SVD charism is shared. For example, every year they come together to spend the whole week, full of activities which make them more and more aware that they are indeed missionaries of the Word and the future of the Church in Kenya as well as in the world. It was a wonderful experience when the youth from Nairobi SVD parishes crossed the border for their first time in life and visited their fellow SVD parish youths in Tanzania in 2014.

*Arata Sato, SVD*



