

Becoming more joyful missionaries

Reflections on the Statement of the 18th
General Chapter 2018



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General Chapter 2018

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REFLECTIONS ON THE STATEMENT OF THE 18TH GENERAL CHAPTER 2018

Presentation

The objective of the 18th General Chapter was “to foster a process of a spiritual rekindling, bringing us back to the Word of God as the source of our life, vocation, and mission and our religious missionary commitment” (2018 GC, Guide). Thus, the Chapter’s theme “The Love of Christ impels us” (2 Cor 5:14): Rooted in the Word, Committed to His Mission” inspired us to embark on the path of renewal and transformation of ourselves and the whole world according to the values of the Kingdom of God and helped us “to rediscover the spiritual foundations that sustain and nourish our personal and community life and give meaning to our mission.” (2018 GC #2)

In order to animate and nourish the process of renewal and transformation after the Chapter, the office of the Coordinator for Spiritual Animation prepared a series of reflections and videos on the 18 GC Statement. The three-year project started in January 2019 and ended in December 2021. Thirty five reflections and

videos covering all 53 paragraphs of the Chapter Statement were prepared, posted on our svdcuria.org website as well as sent out to the members of the Arnoldus Family. Altogether 33 speakers participated in this process, among them one lay partner.

After the project was done, the idea came to collect all the written reflections and put them together in an e-publication for future reference and usage.

Thanking all 34 writers, translators, our svdcuria.org webmaster and all who participated in this project, I am presenting these reflections with a wish that they may continue to inspire us and help us to become transforming missionary disciples, rooted in the Word and committed to Christ's mission.

Rome, January 18, 2022

Fr. Peter Dusicka SVD

1. Discernment, Renewal and Transformation

Dear confreres:

The 18th General Chapter of our Society was not an isolated four-week event celebrated in Nemi with 150 Chapter delegates, invited Brothers, lay people, and staff. What happened before and what follows are essential parts of the Chapter process. The preparation of the Chapter was designed to involve every one of us. In reality, most of you, dear confreres, took the invitation seriously for the spiritual renewal and transformation of mission. Preparing the Chapter documents also included your reflection. You actively participated in the community meetings of your districts and communities to share how to help each other to be deeply rooted in the Word and committed to God's mission, the same mission entrusted to us.

By now the capitulars of your province, region or mission have organized different programs to communicate with you what they have experienced during the Chapter. In the course of the Chapter, there was an extraordinary experience of personal and communal discernment, based on the Word of God. Reflecting on the Word of God made us aware that Our Name is Our Mission.

Now, after the Chapter, the process of renewal and transformation continues. The spirit of discernment and openness experienced during the Chapter will remain to animate us in the coming years. As mentioned in the Chapter statement, the process of renewal and transformation could go through a long, slow, and painful process. It is difficult because this will lead

us to question many of our basic attitudes on a personal and community level.

To help us continue in this way of discernment, renewal, and transformation we want to launch a three-year program of reflection. Based on the excellent Chapter statement we want to provide every month a short guide for reflection. Monthly, a paragraph of the Chapter statement will be presented and reflected upon.

In the name of the General Council, I want to thank Fr. Peter Dusicka, our coordinator for spiritual animation who organizes this project, and Fr. Modeste Munimi, the Generalate Communications Coordinator, and all who are and will be involved in this project.

Dear confreres, I wish that this monthly program of reflection will be an essential tool and guide for us to be more rooted in the Word and committed to God's mission.

Fr. Paulus Budi Kleden, SVD
Superior General

2. The Chapter Prayer

This rich prayer summarizes the experience, the search, and the fruit of the last GC.

It begins with an invocation to the Triune God, the Holy Trinity that invites us to live rooted in the Word, focusing on it our process of renovation.

If we do so, the love of Christ will urge us to renew and transform ourselves, and to go out on our mission as encounter and dialogue, as communion, in a very special way with the last ones, including our wounded Earth that cries out ever more loudly (voices that challenge us).

In this process, Mary, Mother of the Word, inspires us with her attitudes of listening, discernment, and care for life (nucleus of the prayer).

We journey always as a community, as partners, as companions in mission, opening our hearts to all peoples, following the example of our founding generation.

This way, we embrace cultures, being attentive and ready for the manifestation of the Kingdom.

Bro. Roberto Duarte, SVD

Assistant Secretary for Brothers Formation and Education

3. Call to renewal and transformation, Nos. 1-6

Dear Confreres, dear friends:

The 18th General Chapter with its motto: “The love of Christ impels us, rooted in the Word, committed to his mission” calls us to renewal and transformation. This call came actually from our Provinces, Regions, and Missions as a fruit of their reflection on the question: What does God want of us Divine Word missionaries at this point of time?

I would now like to share with you some thoughts on this call.

Call to renewal and transformation is for me a call to growth, a call to the fullness of life, Jesus promised to us. It is a call to become fully alive, a person with a passion for Christ and passion for his people. With St. Paul, it is a call to fan into flame the gift of our vocation, bestowed upon us by God, and with Pope Francis, we may say that it is a call to holiness.

There are two basic questions to be asked in this regard. Our renewal depends on how we, each one of us, answer these two questions:

The first question: Do I want to be transformed; do I want to grow? Do I own this call, this desire of the Chapter? Do I identify myself with this call for renewal?

The second question: Do I want to change something in my environment? Do I want to make my community, my province, the world a better place to live for all, not just for some?

While asking these questions it is good to know that God is the first one who wants our transformation, more than anything else. He is offering us his love and wants that we become visible signs of his loving presence among his people.

The world expects our renewal, too; the people we work with as missionaries, especially the “last ones”. Through the proclamation of the good news in words and deeds, through our love, service, and closeness, we should become beacons of hope for them.

Our SVD international and intercultural communities desire our transformation in order to become communities of brotherly love, of mutual respect, communities giving witness to the Kingdom of God, present among us.

I also strongly believe that this desire for our growth, renewal, and transformation is present deep in our hearts as a seed that wants to be discovered, attended to, in order to transform us from within. If we listen to our heart, we will hear it.

Only if we answer this call to renewal and transformation with our YES, only then are we on the right track.

I am inviting you all to embark on this journey of renewal and transformation. And I am sure that the smile of Jesus will accompany us.

I am also sure, that St. Arnold Janssen, whose feast we have just celebrated, and St. Joseph Freinademetz our first missionary to China, will intercede for us in this noble endeavor.

Fr. Peter Dusicka, SVD
Generalate Coordinator for Spiritual Animation

4. The transforming love of Christ, Nos. 7-8

We talk of transformation when we see changes. And transformation usually comes about through experiences. People who experience love go through a form of inner transformation that produces an aura. This love, this experience, this transformation is seen in the form of an aura – this can be observed and seen in words and actions. For example, before Christianity came to Ghana, it was not common to see marriages among some ethnic groups which could be attributed to some cultural beliefs and norms. Now, this practice has been broken through the transforming Love of Christ – boundaries are broken.

The Holy Triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our model, is the communion of love. The three persons in the trinity love each other. Each of them gives and receives love. This form of love is also expressed and shared outwardly towards all of creation and humanity. God the Father created the world and human beings out of this love. This love of God was fully expressed through the sending of the Son – this can be observed and seen in words and actions.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, Jesus spoke about the love of the Father for the people (Jn 15:9), proclaimed the good news to the poor and oppressed (Lk 4:18-19), showed compassion to the sick and marginalized (Mt 8:1-4, Lk 7:11-17, Lk 8:43-48) and sacrificed his life for the salvation of all – this can be observed and seen in words and actions.

What about us, what about me as an SVD? The theme of the last General Chapter as known to all of us is: The love of Christ impels us.

Am I impelled by the love of Christ?

Do I experience any transformation myself through this love of Christ?

Is there any aura around me because of the love of Christ?

Can this be observed and seen in my words and actions?

The love of Christ impels us. This should be seen and experienced in our words and our actions.

Fr. Peter Claver Narh, SVD
GER, Vice Provincial

5. The transforming Love, Nos. 9-10

Hi, I'm Brother Carlos Ferrada from Chile. And I have been working in the Philippines for five years. And I would like to share with you about the love of Jesus that transforms and the action of the Holy Spirit, and I will do it not from theology or the Bible, but from my own experience since I think it will be more enriching for all of you.

I would like to start by telling you that since I was little, I rejected, I denied the possibility that God existed. Because at that time, when I was seven, I considered the existence of God a myth or a legend. And the truth is neither my religious teachers were very convincing nor my family was as religious as Arnold Janssen's. So, I remember that from a young age I rejected the possibility that God existed. In my childhood and adolescence, therefore, God did not play a significant, important role.

However, an event will happen that will allow my heart to open to the possibility that God exists. And it was from the reason. I entered the law school at the University of Los Andes and there I had two good teachers, one of natural law and the other of introduction to theology. Both of them gave me convincing arguments of God's existence, which allowed my heart to open to the possibility that God exists. And that was an important step in my relationship with God. However, it was only that. A year later I decided to change to the Catholic University. At that time, I was a very ambitious person and wanted to study at the best Chilean university, which is the Pontifical Catholic University. And at that

moment for the first time, I turned to God and asked him to help me in this change. It was the first time that I leaned on God. And it turned out, I could change to the Catholic University. And from there my life continues quietly, very dedicated to studies. I was a good student, perhaps too dedicated to studies, neglecting other important aspects such as family, friends, and other dimensions.

However, an important event that will mark my conversion will occur later. And that is going to be a before and after. Everything will change after this event. What happened? In the penultimate year of my law studies, before the final exams, which for all students are very important, I fell in love and I was not reciprocated. And that experience caused a deluge in me, it was like a shipwreck, I was depressed, I had no head to study. And for the first time, I was not in a position to face those final exams of law. I felt like a castaway. And in that context of despair, I took refuge in God like the shipwrecked person who clings to the table of salvation, and I said to him: God you have to save me from this situation. And so it was, I arrived without much preparation for those final exams, and I experienced absolute tranquility when I took those exams. And I saw that I succeed to pass those exams. And there I could observe the saving power of God, his strength, his omnipotence. And I believed.

This was a very important event because I realized that I was not alone, it did not depend only on my effort, but God is with me. And God helps me. This was the moment of my conversion. And I feel that Jesus spoke to me in this way because it was the way that I was going to understand and perceive his divinity. Jesus spoke to Peter through that miraculous catch. Regarding

Paul, Jesus made him fall off the horse on his way to Damascus, left him blind, and spoke to him. Well, Jesus talked to me in this way. He put me in a complex situation and he rescued me, I felt rescued by him. And everything changed in my life. I can say that the love of Jesus transformed me completely because after this event my priorities and motivations changed completely. I used to be a very ambitious person, I wanted to be the most successful lawyer, multimillionaire, president of the republic, however, after this experience, everything changed. It is as if the spiritual eye were opened and captured every loving detail of God in my life. I started to dedicate more time to my friends, to my family, I became closer to people in need, and I began to attend mass every day. The Eucharist and the Word began to be a necessity in my life.

At this moment the Holy Spirit comes into action. When the spiritual eye opens, I begin to perceive how the Holy Spirit is acting in my life. He leads me to participate in a group of young people who gathered to pray. A Jesuit priest created these groups of lay people. One day a friend, one of my classmates, invited me to participate in one of these Jesuit prayer groups. We used to meet in the house of the person who accompanied us and there we prayed and shared the Word, our experiences of faith, and also we had an enriching fellowship. This is going to be my first community of faith. My vocational discernment started two years after this transforming experience of Jesus. I began to feel that Jesus was calling me to be a priest. It was a persistent idea in me about being a priest, and I did not want to because I had never thought about it, it was never a possibility that I would become

a priest; a religious less, it was never in my plans. Therefore, for a year I struggled to get this idea out of my head, because I did not want to, it was not my plan.

However, some situations confirmed it. I'm going to share a pair with you so you will know. I experienced this process of discernment very silently; I did not share it with other people. I remember that we went to visit my dad's sister in her house in the country. When we arrived, one of my cousins, who was very close to me because we were classmates at law school, tells me that she has to talk urgently with me. And I was wondering what it would be like since we see each other every day at the university. We went to her room, we sat down, and she told me that she had had a dream with me in which I told her that I was entering the seminary. I was frozen to hear it, I denied everything, and I told her how you can think of this. But it was very shocking because it was just what I was discerning at that moment, and I had never shared this with her. That same weekend we visited another aunt, and at the end of that visit, when we were leaving, my aunt said to me: Carlos, I see you as a priest. It was so incredible that it confirmed what I was discerning. But it was not so easy, and it took more than a year to come to the conviction that my fulfillment as a human being, my happiness, will only happen if I say yes to God, accepting his call. I remember that it happened one night, I was in my room when I finally told God that I would be a priest.

However, I did not know where. First, I thought that I would be a Jesuit, as I participated in the Jesuit spirituality group; my grandfather was also very close to the Chilean Jesuit Saint Alberto Hurtado. Here is interesting how the Holy Spirit is acting in my

life, always leading me in ways I never thought, finally I entered the Society of the Divine Word thinking that I am going to be a priest, and I end up being a brother. I was thinking to collaborate in Thailand with children with AIDS and I was finally invited by the Superior General to mission in the Philippines. In the Philippines, I thought about working on the social projects that are being carried out but the Spirit leads me to work in university pastoral work at Holy Name University, in Tagbilaran City. And the most incredible thing happened a few months ago when in an unexpected way I received the invitation to participate in the Second Preparatory Commission of our General Chapter. It was a great experience to have participated in this instance, I was the youngest of all, and the only Brother, among these outstanding confreres. And a few months ago I received the biggest surprise when I returned from a personal retreat. The day I returned to my community after the retreat I received the phone call from an unknown number, it was our General Councilor, Brother Guy Mazola. And he asked me if I accepted to be the new General Assistant for the Brothers Formation and Education. I could not believe it. I was in a state of shock.

And in this way, the Holy Spirit leads me through incredible ways, which I never imagined. I can tell you that it is an adventure, a great adventure, to be led by the Holy Spirit. This is the basis of my desire to communicate to others that God exists, He is with us, and the importance of being led by the Holy Spirit to enter into this intimacy with God. That ultimately is what produces our happiness and the meaning of life.

Bro. Carlos Ferrada, SVD
Assistant Secretary for Brothers Formation and Education

6. The Founder and the Founding Generation, Nr. 11

God had chosen St. Arnold Janssen to be a special person in this world. A person who could bring God's love to people in an extraordinary way. The basic motto of our founder has a lot to do with his family. With the daily bible reading of St. John's prologue, his roots were deeply shaped in the triune God. "May the Triune God live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people". When I first heard of this prayer in the minor seminary my thinking process was not too wide.

But as the years passed in the congregation, getting a more reflective understanding of the theme, our founder had a great vision for the world and the missionary aspect of our society. To make this complex mystery one needs to stay open for the changes of the time. Our founder had that open mindset to see beyond and, of course, to read the signs of the time. In this way, the founder prepared our confreres to go into the world with an open heart but well equipped to understand the situations.

This triune God, one God in three Persons, taught me a beautiful concept that every culture, race, and people have something to contribute to the reign of God. The founding generation understood the vision of Arnold to make this love of the Triune God more visible throughout the world. This understanding of the Triune God is opening the gates wide open for everyone to participate in the endeavor of sharing this Triune love with

everyone. That's why one of the beauties of our congregation is interculturality and internationality.

Of course, just like the Triune God which is a complex mystery and yet more dear to our hearts, this makes us understand that we can go and embrace the other who is from a different culture because it's the love that binds us together. This vision has helped me tremendously in my ministry where people from different cultures and nations come to celebrate the mystery of this Triune God. It has helped to bind people together and to build a relationship with one another.

Fr. Richard Lobo, SVD
NEB, Provincial councilor

7. The Founder and the Will of God, Nr. 12

Dear confreres, paragraph twelve of the final Statement of the 18th General Chapter of the Society of the Divine Word speaks about our ‘father, leader and founder’, Saint Arnold Janssen, in relationship with loving and doing the will of God. The life of Saint Arnold is a good example of an ordinary man who intensely sought to do the will of God. This is because he had a strong belief in the will of God and Divine providence. All these shaped his life and that of the founding generation.

Therefore, in his search for doing the holy will of God, he had many times to sacrifice himself. He once said: “I, too, had a time of harsh struggles when it seemed to me that I would have to let myself be crucified. Added to that came physical ailments and many adversities. Yet it seemed to me that to give up would be to go against God’s holy will. That is why I kept going, went on working towards it. I do not doubt that God wants this work and that he is the true agent who is making use of our weak abilities for this purpose”.

What was true for Saint Arnold Janssen and the Founding generation has to be also true for us missionaries of the Divine Word. We have to keep on following the footsteps of our father, leader, and founder. He trusted in God and asked for guidance; his devotion to the Sacred Heart, devotion to the Holy Spirit, and veneration of Mother Mary were also very helpful.

Moreover, the Trinitarian and Incarnational spirituality, centered on the Word and developed by the Society is to help us to go

back to these roots, to see how the Founding Generation realized the love of God in their lives. So that in our various endeavors, we may seek first the will of God as they did. Few believed in Saint Arnold's convictions, but that did not discourage him since he had his eyes set on God. Let us also do the same and the heart of Jesus will live in the hearts of all people. Amen.

Fr. Georges Mondo, SVD
SVK, JPIC Coordinator

8. Transforming Missionary Discipleship, Nr.13

Disciples, missionaries, transformers. Three terms that challenge us as Divine Word Missionaries to go deeper in the process of renewal and transformation; always having as a source the Word of God. The Word of God is like a force that invites us to discipleship, attentive listening, and contemplating the Word. The Word of God that sends us, impels us to become its bearers on the path where we go sharing our lives and our mission. The Word, which is also, the source of transformation in the measure that we let ourselves be transformed by it, and we transform the reality; with this strength that the same Word inspires.

An image that seems very appropriate here is the image of the caterpillar that enters a silk cocoon, woven by itself, and then as a chrysalis is transformed into something totally new, a butterfly. It is a very unique being, different from all other species. I use this image to visualize us as disciples, trying to enter, immerse and deepen ourselves in the mystery of the incarnation, in the light of the Word of God, and also from the reality in which we would like to be witnesses of the Gospel. We enter, therefore, in this cocoon, not to cut ourselves off, but to immerse ourselves in the mystery of the Word, to contemplate it, and from it to contemplate reality; so that from there, we would go out and offer all we are. Just as the caterpillar stays for some time in the cocoon and later emerges from it as a completely transformed and new being, similarly we too can make a difference in the environment where we are.

Thus, once transformed by the Word, we in turn can become witnesses to this transforming force of the same Gospel wherever we move, wherever we share our lives and mission.

So, in this world that today challenges us to be self-absorbed and not focused, let us, on the contrary, be encouraged to de-center ourselves from ourselves and focus our actions. Let us be, then, contemplatives in action, contemplatives of the Word in order to come out of ourselves and at the same time let this coming out be a focused coming out, a coming out to concrete action. And also in a world that presents us with a lot of offers and things that want to fill our life. This challenges us as missionaries of the Divine Word to opt for a simple lifestyle, trying always to choose what is necessary in life.

Finally, facing a world that presents us with very little clear vision or ways of perceiving reality, this challenges us, Missionaries of the Divine Word, to rejoice, enjoy, and celebrate the diversity of views and perspectives and so transform the world, having allowed ourselves first to be transformed by the same Word.

That caterpillar, which seemed to be only a simple being, is transformed into a unique and unrepeatable being. We Divine Word Missionaries, being transforming missionary disciples, become too, from the power of the Word, these unique beings, who have a special, particular gift to contribute to this world.

Fr. Marcelo Cattáneo, SVD
PANAM Zonal Coordinator

9. Lived experiences, Joys, and Challenges, Nr.14

Every seed needs a fertile environment to shoot up into a plant. And every Divine Word missionary needs a cultural environment to sprout.

Like seeds, we are scattered abroad. We are sown in cultures. We germinate in cultures and bear fruits in cultures.

As Divine Word missionaries, we embrace an incarnational approach to spirituality and mission. ‘The word became flesh and dwelt among us’ (Jn 1:14).

By allowing ourselves to be buried in cultures, our lives are intertwined with the lives of others and in the process, we become living expressions of the Word and outward signs that convey grace.

Intercultural living is not merely a means to do a mission. It is mission in itself. We share our lives with others.

We nourish our faith in our religious communities through prayer. Notably, devotions to the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the Sacred Heart, Mother Mary, and other forms of prayer.

We do not work alone; we work hand in hand with our SSpS sisters, SSpSAP sisters, and also our lay partners.

Rooted in the Word, we sprout out branches that offer shelter to the poor, the sick, the marginalized, those who have nowhere

to lay their heads, and those who long and yearn for good news. We bring hope to them. A proclamation of the Word without sharing in the concrete life situation of the people can be likened to building a beautiful sand castle at the beach. It does not last. Without sharing in the concrete life of the people, we only end up providing answers to questions that are not being asked and solutions to problems that are not there.

In the faces of the people we serve, we find the face of God. As they share their lives with us, we become characters in their stories, and as we share our lives with them, they too become characters in our stories. It is in this context that we can talk of lived experiences, characterized by joys and challenges. Sometimes we laugh out loud and at other times we bury our tear-filled eyes in our pillows. The joy of one is the joy of all and the pain of one is the pain of all. Hand in hand we journey towards the bright light that awaits all of us.

Fr. Andrews Obeng, SVD
GHA, Provincial Councilor

10. Renewal and transformation of our lives and mission, Nr. 15

The main spirit of our 18th General Chapter is the constant renewal and transformation of our life and mission as SVD. As our life given by God and mission granted by Him, specifically through the great missionary mandate that Jesus gave to us (Mat. 28...), we are aware that the transformation of life and mission should be based on the living Word of God, in the love of Christ, in the spirit and truth. In our journey as religious and missionaries of the Divine Word, we have marked many great and good things, many joys in our life and mission individually and communally without ignoring our defeats and mistakes.

Our 18th General Chapter document article 15 mentioned four points and their challenges. Firstly, community life. We live in the community and we have shared responsibility in building up communion, fraternity, and solidarity. In the community, we experience and express our religious life by praying and sharing together, taking care, respecting, and helping each other, supporting and challenging each other to grow up together. Living together in the community that members are coming from different countries and cultures, different characters bring certain challenges but also opportunities to grow up to become a living sign of unity in the divided world today.

Secondly, the spirit of self-giving. We give ourselves to God's mission and the consequence of this self-giving is doing the will of God, seeking the reign of God. In reality, some confreres are

seeking material goods and unwilling to share these with the community and mission. This desire is a scandal in our religious and missionary life that needs to be transformed to be more committed to seeking the reign of God.

Thirdly, the spirit of solidarity with the poor and marginalized people. Putting the last first expresses very strong this spirit of solidarity. To be more committed to the mission of Jesus, we are called to listen attentively to the grievance of suffering people today, looking for peace, justice, truth, and love and to express our concrete solidarity with them.

Fourthly, prayer life and missionary zeal. Our intimacy with God through our personal prayers and reflections, community prayers and reflections, in the Eucharist, we can be deeply rooted in Him who has called and sent us to mission. Doing mission today is dialogue and collaboration. Dialogue with our dialogue partner and collaboration with the people, with the lay partners, and with the Arnold family members.

To improve and renew our lives and mission, I invite us to see and reflect on three steps of our journey as religious and missionaries. We are called by Jesus and we respond to that calling not as angels nor devils but really as human beings in our total being. Recognizing that human beings are limited and weak, we need to improve and renew constantly our lives as religious and missionaries. The first step, our life is like a circle, I am at the center of my life circle and around me, there are many things as my concern; my family, relatives, friends, hobbies, pastoral work, car, drink, cigarettes, etc. And where is Jesus? He is still outside of my circle of life. I know Him; He called me but He is far away.

We move to the second step; I am still in the center of my circle of life and Jesus enters as one around me along with other things. In this step, Jesus comes close to me, I am more open to Jesus but still doing the things with my perspective, as I want to do.

To improve and renew our lives, we go to the third step. In this step, we need to be more open and Jesus enters into the center of our circle of life and this is the internal transformation; coming from inside. In this transforming step, we can see the realities with the eyes of Jesus, listen to the grievance of the world today with the ears of Jesus, understand the situations with the mind of Jesus and do the mission with the heart of Jesus. In this transforming step, we can say as Saint Paul said, “No longer I that live but Jesus lives in me.”

Fr. Gabriel Suban Koten, SVD
ASPAC Zonal Coordinator

11. Impelled by the boundless love of Jesus, Nr. 16

In order to talk about how the boundless love of Jesus impels us, I need to talk in a concrete context. And that context is the ministry that we do here in Centro Ad Gentes, Nemi, with our confreres in Renewal Courses, Formators' Workshops, and Courses for our senior confreres.

For the past 20 years, I have been working principally Ad Intra in initial formation, province leadership, and now SVD course management. I have learned to live my pastoral life Ad Extra vicariously i.e. through the experience of my brothers. In my present role, I am privileged to hear of the joys and challenges that they face in their community and ministry lives in many parts of the world. The reflection and sharing of life experiences can be difficult because I believe there are a significant number of us who persevere in our missionary religious lives while suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome due to the many and varied difficulties we have had to face in the name of the gospel. The perseverance of my brothers under difficult circumstances to preach the reign of God gives me the strength to persevere when my mission is difficult or stressful – impelled by the love of Jesus.

I believe it is part of our role here in Nemi to provide safe spaces for confreres to share these experiences intimately and deeply with their brothers from other cultures and generations. In the sharing, they often find new meaning, even in sadness and tragedy. Some confreres have forgotten how to trust others, and

this small and large group work in the courses allows them to learn this again. And they take this skill back to mission – impelled by the love of Jesus.

All our courses include communal daily prayer and eucharist, days of recollection, and 8-day guided retreats in silence. For about half of my confreres, this is their first experience of a guided retreat. It is an honor and a privilege for us to accompany them in their personal journeys with God. Remarkably, the majority of them finish the retreat with a much clearer sense of what they are called to in their religious missionary lives – impelled by the love of Jesus.

I have listened to my confreres share about experiences of violence, addiction, shame, death, celebration, joy, and life. We listen to each other with deep respect and compassion and respond out of love and hope - the hope of Christians guided by the Spirit and the Word.

In our Ad Intra work, especially here in Nemi, we have learned to really appreciate and even love my confreres. As Heinz Kulüke, previous SVD Superior General, said on many occasions, the world is a better place because of the commitment and zeal of many Divine Word Missionaries. I agree with him 100%.

Fr. Timothy Norton, SVD
Director of Nemi Renewal Courses

12. Three commitments of Nr. 16b

I am Xene Sanchez, SVD, Filipino, working in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). I arrived here when I was 28 years old... that was 36 years ago.

Focusing on the last three commitments made by the 18th General Chapter, I realize that they are in fact encouragements of what I am living as a missionary since I arrived.

Yes, it was my boundless love of Jesus that impelled me to commit myself to Africa. I knew very little of where I was going and my passport was marked “not valid for South Africa”.

My commitment to mission in DRC, powered by my LOVE of God was doubled as my LOVE of the people to whom I was sent was developing deeper as I lived with them. My experience as a “bush-missionary” was a God-given privilege.

I had to get out of my “small world” and lived with the people in the villages 20 days a month. Immersed in their context I appreciated their way of thinking and doing things. Can you imagine why I learned their language so fast? It was because I had to talk to them all the time in a way they could understand. “Language is the straightest path to the heart”. My vocabulary improved as we quarreled, as we argued, as I tried to persuade them in their mother tongue, and as I listened to their point of view. Then I discovered their native songs, conveying words of wisdom, revealing their rich traditions, opening my mind to their mentality. In my favorite song “Inggor” the elders complain about

the behavior of the young generation, forgetting that they were the young, “once”! Entering into their world and joining them, my love for them grew. To crown my mission, we finished editing the Bible in Kikongo, the language I speak.

Secondly, as an evangelizer, I am constantly being evangelized. I’m acquiring the virtue of patience and tolerance which are among the important messages of Jesus. In many senses, Africa becomes a model to the modern world beset by depression, stress, and fear of failure. Here, we have childlike faith in the Lord. Pope Benedict himself considers Africa as the “‘spiritual lung’ for a world increasingly in a crisis of faith and hope”.

Thirdly, the DRC figures in the list among the poorest countries in the world. The Church, ever since, fought for Truth and Justice. The first Congolese Cardinal, Malula was exiled by President Mobutu. Only the Catholic Church gave a credible report on the 2018 elections. I am strengthened by our Chapter’s will therefore to be close to the people and to march with the Church in her drive to uplift the poor and help the needy.

Fr. Xene Sanchez, SVD
CNG, Director Verbum Bible

13. Our Name is our Mission, Nr. 17

The Love of Christ impels us here in East Africa. Where in East Africa? Here in Kenya and Tanzania. We are working in parishes, schools, and formation centers. We are confreres of different nationalities. We are from 23 different nationalities working in Kenya – Tanzania.

Rooted in the Word in East Africa, parish pastoral work is central to us. We work more with small Christian communities, where we have made the Word of God come alive among the people. In almost all the parishes where we are working or about 90 percent of the parishes we are working, there is the word of God enthroned in their sanctuaries. So, we have on the one side of the sanctuary the Bible, and on the other side of the sanctuary we have the tabernacle. We are working in eleven parishes in East Africa (Kenya and Tanzania). Out of these parishes we are working in, five of them are primary evangelization areas. This includes Orkesumet, Simanjiro, Soweto, Kayole, and Yamumbi. These are all primary evangelization areas.

Christ's mission is our mission. Christ came to work with the poor and to give healing to the poor and the needy. We as SVDs here in Kenya – Tanzania, are working with the poorest of the poor in the community. We try as much as possible to give even healing to the poor. In many of our parishes, we have started establishing hospitals or health centers, where we take care of our people physically. We also take care of them spiritually, by feeding them with the Word of God and the Eucharist. In

many of our parishes, especially in the primary evangelization areas, baptism and an initial rite of passage are done. Baptism, first communion, and confirmation are done in those parishes. Furthermore, in many of our parishes, there is where we have the blessing of marriages. Even though the marriage is today looked at with a lot of contempt, in our parishes the sacrament of marriage is blooming. This is also our contribution to the Church at large.

In Kenya – Tanzania, our communities are intercultural. In all our parishes where we are working and in the communities where we live, interculturality is highlighted. As I said earlier, we come from 23 different nationalities and we work in eleven parishes and three formation houses. Four confreres are working in four dimensions of the congregation (four Characteristic Dimensions). We have these nationalities being exhibited and many times we try as much as possible to bring our interculturality into play. Either one person will bring out the song from his nationality and the rest will listen to it, or sometimes we play a movie, in which there are some of the country's characteristics coming out. Interculturality is highlighted in our communities and this can also be seen as a way of ministering to the people, that even if we come from different nationalities, we are living together. They also learn from it the fact that they too have to live together, even if they are from different countries or tribes. That is one thing that is our ministry and we are so proud of as SVDs.

Fr. Tony Amissah, SVD
KEN, Provincial

14. Discerning in Prayer, Nr. 18

Every day of our life brings us many situations and challenges which invite us to decide and respond properly to each of them. Moreover, as Divine Word missionaries, we are called to practice discernment, which means to see everything through God's eyes. It is very important because only with Him can we come to understand His plans for us and our mission.

The 18th General Chapter in its statement in paragraph no. 18 invites us particularly to Discern in Prayer.

God speaks to us through His word in the Scripture, through His Church and her tradition, through other people, situations but also in silence. However, only attentive hearts and minds, the ones that always listen, can hear His voice and discern His invitation. As we were able to hear and discern God's voice when He called us to serve Him as SVDs, we are invited to live daily with an open heart and mind, and in such a way enter into prayer and discernment of what God is calling us to. Prayerful discernment keeps us in touch with God and reality so our mission can be indeed fruitful.

As a missionary in the Philippines Southern Province, while working in a big parish, I came to realize more deeply, how helpful and how necessary it is to discern the will of God in prayer, which brings peaceful and satisfying joy not only to me but also to my neighbors and the whole community.

Many times, as I was hearing confessions or counseling, dealing with complicated situations and great difficulties, I was not able to find the right words to help or encourage others. In youth ministries, it was often very difficult to inspire young people and kindle them for God. Organizing regular formation activities for catechists, lectors, acolytes, and altar servants caused me many headaches. The reason was, that at the beginning of all those activities I didn't discern prayerfully, what was God's will, His plan, His desire in those activities. I prayed for it, but I rarely invited God to "organize" it. Then I realized that I couldn't make it without God. And thanks to those moments, I have started to discern, asking myself: What would Jesus do in this situation? Then slowly I changed my discernment into prayerful discernment, and I asked with open heart and mind: My Lord, Jesus, what would you like me to do in this situation?

And you know, things started to change, some of them more slowly, others faster.

Discerning in prayer can sometimes take a lot of time, energy and effort. However, in the end, it will bring people closer to God. That is our mission.

Through prayerful discernment we can perceive and see everything through God's sight and so we can touch the reality more deeply and effectively. And this way we can become fruitful, happy and satisfied in our mission.

Fr. Stanislav Orečný, SVD
PHS, Student of spiritual theology in Rome

15. Discernment in the life St. Arnold

Janssen, Nr. 19

During my course of Spanish at the Center for teaching foreigners in Mexico, I came across a song based on the poem “Wayfarer” by Antonio Machado. And the phrase that remained stored in my memory was: “The path is made by walking.”

This phrase comes to my mind when I think about the attitude and task of discernment of our Founder St. Arnold Janssen. In his life the attitude of discernment was very closely related to his relationship to the Holy Spirit.

He prayed the hymn “Veni Creator Spiritus” not only once a day. Quite often he invoked the light of the Holy Spirit in order to know and discover which paths he should follow.

Discernment means to know what God wants from us.

Discovering, understanding what God wants from us is not an easy task at all. We can see it from many examples of the Bible and history. Probably we all know it quite well from our own experience. Discerning what God wanted from Arnold Janssen was also not an easy task for him.

The time of struggle which had passed from the moment when he discovered the need for establishing a seminary for foreign missions in Germany until the moment when he discerned that he had to be the initiator of this work - was very long.

The significant thing is that St. Arnold during this time was not only entertaining the idea, passively waiting and doing nothing. On the contrary: he walked his path by searching, asking, talking to different people - and above all - turning to God in prayer.

The path is made by walking.

In our mother house in Steyl, there is a rather little path, yet, very significant. From the room where St. Arnold lived, which is today a chapel (Oratorium), there is a small staircase leading to the upper church of the house. Climbing these stairs one comes to a small door, through which one enters the church – just at the side of the main altar.

This was the path of St. Arnold. Our Founder often went on this path, especially when he wanted to discover what God wanted from him, what God wanted from the Society of the Divine Word, from the Arnoldus Family.

Father Arnold passed this path, entered the church and there he remained in silence with God, listening, praying, discerning...

And this was not just a way of doing things - this was a necessity, something essential. Because he knew well that only in this way - being rooted in the holy triune God and guided by the Holy Spirit - could he fulfill his mission: to discern, know and fulfill God's will.

The path is made by walking.

Fr. Eryk Koppa, SVD
General Councilor

16. The Process of Discipleship and Transformation, Nr. 20

There is a famous episode of a circus clown, who noticed a fire and went to call for help. The conclusion is well known to most of the audience. There is yet another very interesting episode related to the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. This episode is related not to the finding of the Cross of Jesus by St. Helena, but to the return of the Cross from the Persian Empire. The emperor Heraclius wanted to carry the cross on his back as Jesus had done as per the Gospels, but could not even move a step because of the weight and as if someone was holding him down. The Patriarch, then told the emperor, that Jesus carried the Cross on his bare and wounded body. The emperor took off all his royal attire and then he was able to carry – Exalt the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

When you talk of discipleship as a journey towards a total transformation of yourself, you need to keep this episode at the forefront. Transformation first of all is not for my self-esteem. Dying to self and living for Christ or letting him live in you is not a matter of pride, it is very painful. St. Paul himself and other disciples as mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles rejoiced, not when people were converted and baptized, but they rejoiced when they were beaten up at the order of the Sanhedrin or by the ordinary people.

Discipleship as a path to transformation is not a journey to mount Tabor for a glorious transfiguration, but a journey down the

mountain of glory and up the mountain of Calvary. The disciples were transformed in their missionary calling along this path to Calvary – carrying the cross on their bare and wounded bodies.

Supernatural grace is met or received when you are on this path of shame, defeat, personal struggles, and sinfulness. Along the mission path in Russia, the graceful moments have been those moments, when you felt tired and exhausted when you felt you are not needed here – that is exactly when Christ could enter, when you started to fade away, his Light could shine. That was the moment, when not I, but he acted, he forgave, he healed, he smiled.

Such a life, such a call is precious indeed. But to be able to proclaim God's Word - i.e. Jesus, we need to fearlessly and even without shame embrace the failures, falls, rejections, and limits of our life and in our life. Only then will God be able to make us his mouthpiece, then we can like John the Baptist show to the people where Christ is, or indeed, Christ will show himself in us, in a wounded, defeated us.

Fr. Harald Jude Menezes, SVD
URL, Regional Superior

17. Characteristics of a transformed Person, Nr. 21

Pope Francis told Catholic bishops and priests that they should go and meet the people and know them and be like the Shepherd, who leads with the smell of his sheep. It means closeness, it means complicity, it means neighborhood.

We are called to be transformed by the word of God, as St. Paul tells us, to become the good aroma of Christ. To be the good aroma of Christ, we have to know that perfume has to have some qualities.

First of all, it has to smell good. Once we are transformed by the word of Christ, we are called to spread out this aroma of Christ to every person we meet and in any situation we are. We want to be in every situation, that good aroma of Christ that smells good. And the world needs that good smell of the Word of God.

Another quality of a good perfume is attractiveness. We are called to be in a world the 'sacrament' of God's closeness. We are called to attract people by his word, by the love of God. God wants to approach every human being through our hands and our compassionate hearts. We are called to be attractive.

Another quality of a good perfume is that it should remain, it should last. Once we are transformed by the word of God, we are called to transform the reality around us, destroy every wall, build every possible bridge and show by the way we live,

the way we behave ourselves, that we are mediators between God and his people.

We are called to be a good perfume of God in our world. So, let us be as Divine Word Missionaries a good perfume for our time, for our Church, a good perfume of Christ to God.

Fr. José Maria Cardoso, SVD
POR, Provincial

18. Arnold Janssen's Transformation, Nr. 22

The 18th General Chapter was convoked with the following motto as its general theme: The love of Christ impels us: Rooted in the Word, Committed to God's Mission. This general theme guided and led the General Chapter to focus on the need and necessity of spiritual renewal and transformation for us, Divine Word Missionaries. At this point, we are all called to the path of personal conversion and transformation and to commit ourselves once again to the person of Jesus and God's mission. The documents of the General Chapter refer to the words of St. Paul as the ultimate model of personal conversion and transformation: "It is no longer I, but Christ living in me" (Gal 2:20).

I would like to focus on just one aspect of spiritual renewal and transformation. As we all know, if we want to renew and transform our SVD communities in particular and our Society in general, such renewal and transformation should first take place at the personal level. In other words, our communities will only renew and transform themselves if we undergo our conversion and transformation. This is not something new to us, but it is perennially relevant to us.

We also know that the seed of renewal and transformation springs from within; it does not sprout from without. This means that it is we—each one of us—who have to take the initiative to renew ourselves spiritually. And we know and possess all the ways and means to do this—like giving time for personal prayer, reflection on God's Word, and the love of the Eucharist. We don't

have to be reminded of these fundamentals of our religious life. We know their importance and value because they make up the very being of our identity as SVD missionaries and the meaning of our missionary activities.

Personal rootedness in the Lord Jesus is intimately connected with renewal and transformation, and this fact cannot be over-emphasized. When all things are considered, our personal relationship with the Lord is the very foundation of our missionary commitment and our love for the Society. We, therefore, have to go back to this basic component of our religious life. Each of us should look into ourselves and examine how rooted we are personally in the Lord. St. Arnold wrote to a confrere: “I beg you, seek consolation and strength in prayer and meditation. If you keep on giving without receiving, how long can you survive?”

Fr. Raymund Festin, SVD
General Councilor

19. Missio Dei, Nr. 23

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Arnoldus Family.

Our last General Chapter stated that we participate in the Missio Dei, God's mission. And God's mission is a mission of love for the whole of creation. God created everything beautifully. Our mission is to be God's coworkers in preserving the beauty of creation. Now, this mission of ours fits right into our time because, like you, I think most of you know or all of you know, thanks to Greta Thurnberg and the Fridays for Future movement, the man in the street, political leaders, economy leaders all are aware that we have to do something to preserve the beauty of creation, because if we don't, then this will happen what a little decreation story told would happen. I just read a few things, a few lines from this decreation story.

In the beginning, was the earth,
and the earth was beautiful.

But the people living on the earth said,
"Let us build skyscrapers and expressways."

So they paved the earth with concrete and said, "It is good!"

On the second day, the people looked at the rivers and said,
"Let us dump our sewage into the waters."

So they filled the waters with mud and said, "It is good!"

On the fifth day, the people felt the cool breeze and said,
"Let us burn our garbage and let the breeze blow it away."

So they filled the air with carbon and said, "It is good!"

On the sixth day, the people saw other nations on earth and said,

“Let us build missiles in case misunderstandings arise.”

So they filled the land with missile sites and said, “It is good!”

On the seventh day, the earth was quiet and deathly silent,
for the people were no more.

And it was good!

No, it was not good, because in that way people destroyed the beautiful creation and our mission is to prevent this through our working for the integrity of creation and when we do this, when we are God’s collaborators in preserving CREATION with love, then we do more than simply contribute towards the survival of the earth, but then as Arnoldus family we also see to it that creation remains the word of God, creation which owes its existence to the word of God, that it remains the word of God and that the Word of God will guarantee its life for the future.

So, Brothers and Sisters in the Arnoldus Family, let us renew our commitment to the Missio Dei, to the mission of God’s love for all of creation. Let us say together: May the Holy Triune God live in our hearts, in the hearts of all people, and in the heart of all of creation.

Fr. Jürgen Ommerborn, SVD
GER, Arnold Janssen Sekretariat

20. Mary, Mother of the Word, Nr. 24

“I am the handmaid of the Lord be it done unto me according to your word.”

Mary in her “Fiat” shows us that she attentively listened to the Word of God and by doing so allows the word of God to be alive in her and to the world. She was open to the Word of God and brought the Word to us. As religious missionaries of the Divine Word, we too are invited to continuously listen and respond to the Word of God that everything we do is in accordance with His divine will.

How do we open ourselves to the word of God and assimilate His living Word in our life that it is seen in our daily living?

I remember the time during my initial years in formation as a seminarian in Tagaytay, I was struggling with the question “How can I hear God that I may truly know him and live my life according to his will.” Sharing this nagging question with my spiritual director, then Fr. Eilers, he encouraged me to develop my personal prayer time before the Blessed Sacrament. To be present before the Lord reflecting upon a scripture passage or just sit quietly before Him. He described it like sitting under the sun, that whatever I do the rays of the sun will have their effect on me, it will transform me. Since then, I tried to be faithful to my daily personal prayer time that he coined “daily date with the Lord.”

And though at times I find myself falling asleep in the prayer room, I kept this precious time for God. It was through this daily date with Jesus that I grew more to know his love for me and allowed his love to permeate in me. I saw how his word was alive in the love I had experienced in my family and continue to experience it in my daily life. Since then, till now, more than 18 years here in Taiwan, I try to be faithful to my daily date with Him. For it is through His Word of love spoken to me in the silence of prayer and meditation, that continues to sustain me in mission. Just like Mary, mother of the Word, I also try to be a faithful instrument of His Word to the people.

Nowadays, amid many voices and sounds, offering us many options and competing for our attention, from cell phone, computer, TV, tablet, and other social media devices, we can choose to be like Mary, who disposed herself to God who longs to speak to us, spending quite moments with Him in prayer, attentively listening to Him by setting aside some time for reading the Holy Scripture daily, actively participating in bible sharing and listening to other people's faith stories, so that in listening we may be able to courageously respond to His plan revealed through his Word spoken and shared. Uniting our will to His, as faithful servants let us also manifest our fiat to God in the words of Mary our Mother, "May it be done to me according to your Word."

Fr. Denis Manzana, SVD
SIN, Provincial Councilor

21. Commitment to our SVD spiritual heritage, Nr. 25

The second part of the Chapter Statement entitled “Rooted in the Word - discernment” ends with some concrete proposals. We sometimes complain about documents saying that they do not inspire us much, that they contribute little, that we are tired of reading them. Perhaps these concrete proposals will help us to implement in our lives what the chapter statement tells us: to allow ourselves to be inspired by this statement.

What is the purpose of it? To be even more rooted in what we are: “socii”, companions of the Divine Word. We are members of the Society of the Divine Word - Societas Verbi Divini. The General Chapter said: “Our name is our mission.” As a group, we are the Society of the Word. But individually, are we companions of the Word? Do we follow him? Do we listen to him?

These concrete proposals of the Chapter statement tell us that we can listen to the Word in different areas. Of course, through the Word of God - the Bible. But not only. The voice of the Word also resonates among the people of God, the Church; the Word resounds in creation and realities of the world. We have to listen constantly to the Word in order to be his companions.

For example. The celebration of Easter in my parish of Saint Olga in Moscow was very difficult. We celebrated the feast without the participation of the faithful. We also asked God for his prophetic spirit, in order that we might discern the meaning of this situation for us. And one of the simple answers came from

reality. People told us that they greatly appreciate every sign through which we show that we care for them. They wanted to listen to us even through the internet. Perhaps this is a small testimony of what it is to listen to the Word in different areas.

These concrete proposals also invite us to deepen our charism, to reinforce, to rediscover the spiritual heritage that we have. And a good way to rediscover this heritage is to go back to the sources together with Saint Arnold. We go to the Bible, to the Word of God, but we go there together with Arnold. For example, when we ask: What does Arnold's devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus mean for us today? Saint Gregory, one of the patrons of our congregation, would answer: "In the words of God seek the Heart of God."

If we respond to the Word in this way, we are going to develop a new quality in the Church, we are going to offer our word to the spiritual heritage of our world of today. No one is going to do it in our place. It is our responsibility. Let ourselves be inspired by this task.

Fr. Dariusz Pielak, SVD
URL, Biblical Apostolate Coordinator

22. Option for The Poor, Nr. 26

A few years ago, I was invited to direct a two-day retreat with a charismatic group in one of the suburbs of Sevilla. It is a residential area that can be described as one of the richest parts of the city. After Mass on Sunday to mark the end of the retreat, an elderly lady caught up with me and said: Father, I would like to continue the chat I had earlier on with you. Then came the inevitable questions: where do you live? where is your parish? Su Eminencia, I said, Virgen del Carmen. She exclaimed, the expression on her face tells it all: “Oh you live in a dangerous suburb.” That was after taking me through the history of the district. Su Eminencia, according to the latest EU index on poverty, is among the seven poorest districts in the European Union, and one of the two in the city of Sevilla.

Later, on my way back home, pondering about my chat with the lady, I asked myself the question: Would Jesus have preferred to live in Sevilla if He should come there now? The answer was obvious to me. Jesus primarily will opt for Su Eminencia again, where the majority of the residents are migrants from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and a large number of gypsy families. The dangerous and poor barrio according to the lady would be the preferred place for Jesus. I am sure Jesus would open a big kitchen where he would feed the hungry every day as we are doing now at CASA DE TODOS (Home for all) in the parish. After nourishing them with the Word of God, as He did at the foot of the mountain in Galilee where he fed the thousands

who were without food, with a few loaves of bread and just a handful of fish.

Those marginalized by the world seem to be invisible to the world; nobody talks about them, and neither do they speak about themselves. They cannot denounce their situation because they are 'paperless', with no resident permits. They work clandestinely and live in inhuman conditions, in apartments that most times do not have running water. Jesus, for sure, would still opt for the same program which is the program of all the prophets of all time, a mission to those favored by God, as described in Luke 4:16-21 which says that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; and to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

The 18th General Chapter document of our Congregation, number 26 states, categorically: "The renewal that we seek on a personal and communitarian level and as a Society of the Divine Word will only take place as we are rooted in Jesus and in his primary option, which is the common ground for everything we do." It is explicitly clear that our vocation is a call for the option for the poor. Primarily, therefore the "option for the poor" must not be seen only as an outward attitude or document slogan of the Society. Rather it must be the core underlining inner attitude of our spiritual life as we opt to be the followers of Christ to live his mission which is our mission. A missionary of the new millennium must be fired by the desire to be Christ-like in his

fundamental option of life and in line with the tradition of the Church, love for the poor.

Our spirituality, therefore, must be a spirituality of the Beatitudes, poverty of spirit, of hunger and thirst for justice, the meekness of heart, merciful and peace makers, (Mt 1,1-12). As the adage goes, “You cannot give what you do not have”. Logically speaking we can only give what we have. “Those who are oppressed by poverty, excluded from our society must be the subject of our preferential love” (Catechism of the Church, no. 2444). That is the only way we can be relevant today as missionaries. But this must be done with the attitudes of the Good Samaritan, which are intelligence, compassion, and commitment so as not to fall under the old ruse of paternalistic welfare. That is the only way the kingdom desired by God and preached by Jesus can be made a reality.

In the concluding remarks of his article entitled “Being a Christian in Europe: “Possibilities for the condition” (a trimestral booklet called Cuaderno CJ no. 218) Victor Codina says, “the Church must open its door to the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized, those for whom the Church was founded... the Church must purify itself from the past by asking for forgiveness for its sins... for abandoning its core principles for which it was founded by Jesus Christ of Nazareth”.

The call by Pope Francis, in his Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, to build a poor Church for the poor, a Church that is reaching out in service, a Church that cares for the earth and announces to all the joy of the Gospel will remain a utopia if we

do not make the option for the poor, the engine that drives us as missionaries of the Divine Word.

Fr. Marcel Kakrabah-Quarshie, SVD
ESP, JPIC Coordinator

23. Intercultural Missionaries, Nos. 27-30

Each of us is a precious gift from God to the world. The providence made us flourish in a social setting in relation to our sisters and brothers as members of a family, a neighborhood, a city, a region, a country, and the world. This is where the issue of culture comes in. Culture humanizes us and organizes our human nature. It shapes us so much that we go beyond our familiar environment and participate in a broader social context.

Looking through the eyes of faith, we see the interconnection of humans in society reflecting the mystery of the Triune God who is love. “Each SVD missionary who experiences the love of Christ is impelled by the same love to bear witness to Christ in the world through a commitment to mission that is both renewing and transformative... This call to continuous renewal and transformation kindles a new fire in our quest for meaningful and respectful intercultural living and intercultural mission and prompts a serious examination of our ways and means of achieving our mission goals” (see *In Word and Deed*, # 29).

For us SVD, interculturality is not and should not be regarded as the simple act of putting together members of different nations and cultures, but as the occasion for the enrichment and a personal maturation as well as for a better and more evangelical development of our common missionary/religious vocation.

“A distinguishing feature of our community life is that confreres from different nations live and work together. This becomes a

mutually enriching experience when based on a deep respect for one another's nationality and culture" (Const. 303.1).

As SVD, our interculturality is made possible by our identity in the Church. It is not based on any national, ethnic, or tribal identity. Interculturality is part of our heritage; it is an essential element of our SVD charism, a distinctive feature of who we are. Our lifestyle is not guided by the norms of any culture or nation, but by our Congregation's charism preserved in our Constitutions. Thus, I do not represent any country or any culture in the Congregation. However, I joined the SVD with a model of thought and practice as shaped by my culture, which can strengthen or limit my freedom to live my consecration. Unity in diversity is the necessary life lesson that we learn to live together in harmony as Intercultural Missionaries.

But intercultural living is a challenge, a big challenge. Confronting cultural differences, misunderstandings, tensions, and relational difficulties can arise. Intercultural communities can become like the Tower of Babel, which is the image of incomunicability: no individual or group understands the other because each life is locked in itself, in the assertion of one's interests. It follows that the plan to build something together becomes impossible.

At the opposite to the Tower of Babel, the Pentecost event should inspire us in being intercultural missionaries. Pentecost is the miracle of unity and mutual understanding, even though every group speaks their language, thus keeping their own identity with the differences that it entails. Pentecost is the conviction that

the Lord wants to create new humanity through the integration and complementarity of the different. Pentecost stands for unity amidst diversity, for openness, renewal, and enthusiasm, for a profound experience of God's transforming love. As members of an international and intercultural congregation, this is what we are called for.

What is your attitude towards diversity? How do you deal with the one who is culturally different from you?

Bro. Guy Mazola, SVD
General Councilor

24. Intercultural Living, Nos. 31-32

If we ask people the question, “Who are the SVD’s?” we often hear the answer: “They are missionaries who come from various parts of the world, who live and work together, are very happy and walk among the people.”

They live and work together with joy, even though they are from different parts of the world.

This community’s theme might go unnoticed if it were not for the recent experience of confinement that has forced us to live more intensely inside our homes. We felt again the joy of being able to pray together, share our gifts in the house services, and share a little more of our dreams or projects. But we also got tired of the routine and the living together close to the other’s limits and oneself.

For us, Divine Word Missionaries, community life is already a mission and is a shared responsibility of all members. The community must be created with awareness and nurtured as a space for renewal and transformation. But this only happens when we discover it as a spiritual environment.

In the same way that we build our inner spiritual environment, we must do so in our communities. That’s because our spirituality is communitarian, like life itself in God.

The seeds of renewal and transformation need fertile soil to grow. It will always be challenging to witness the joys of the Gospel and the Kingdom in a renewed way if the environment in

which we live does not do so. Our community of life and mission is a witness to what we are.

We must always and increasingly choose fraternity, creating a safe space where forgiveness and reconciliation can happen. New times require new attitudes. I believe it is time for a new agreement or covenant for the good of our communities. In other words, we must, once again, decide to live well in the community. It includes the acceptance of the consequences of this choice.

It is possible to generate friendship between us. Dialogue, reciprocal learning, and teamwork are necessary elements for our coexistence and food for the bond that unites us, that is, the love of brothers. Our particular mark is interculturality, which is part of our response to God's call for the mission.

Our community is not only a proclaimer of the Gospel but also a receiver. To receive the Good News of the Lord is to welcome joy, the gift of the Holy Spirit. That joy will be full to the extent that we live to love, expressed as charity, friendship, and brotherhood.

At the end of all this, our community can be transformed into a space of consolation, where wounds are also healed.

If during this period of uncertainty and confinement we stayed at home, living in our SVD community, or if we were in another place and wanted to return to our community, both are good signs that we continue to build spaces of life and renewal that are part of our missionary testimony.

People are surprised to see us together since we come from so many different parts of the world. People are happy to see

our capacity to create fraternity, and people know if we are living well. May our testimony always be edifying for the people with whom we are sent to live.

Fr. Anselmo Ribeiro, SVD
General Councilor

25. Bridge builders, Nr. 33

Personally, I admire the construction of bridges. They fascinate with their capacity to connect despite difficult conditions. Thanks to the bridges, the abysses are arched across, the opposite riverbanks are linked and also communication is facilitated. The bridge builders do a good job.

Our last General Chapter's Statement in nr. 33 offers several suggestions for our commitment concerning living in our communities. And "to become bridge builders" is the key to our interaction with others. Building bridges not of wood, nor iron, but with words.

I would say, we need principally three types of words that would help us in being bridge builders. First, "basic" words, words of our daily human communication. Pope Francis is used to repeat quite often that we use in our daily communication words like "thanks", "sorry", "please". This is the basis. Second, more "solid" words, words of human interaction, words of exchange that help us to know each other more profoundly: words of mutual sharing, words of one's own life experiences, capacity to talk but also to listen to the difficulties of others and their struggles. Talk and listen to. And trying to comprehend. Third and final, we need "sacred words", the words of the Scripture that we pray together, reflect, and read together – in the form of bible sharing, or *Lectio Divina*, or during the retreat... Because the words of Scripture are "a lamp on our paths" (Ps 119:105), that will enlighten and will help us to build from our communi-

ties places warm and hospitable, both for the confreres and for occasional visitors.

I recall my experiences from the communities around the world where I felt at home. Those were communities where people were not absorbed only by their “own business”, but were ready to “lose” their time to talk to each other and talk to the newcomers. And I learned those were communities where confreres had the commitment to meet together regularly around the shared table of the meal and the shared table of the word of God.

When speaking to the young people gathered during the last World Youth Day in Panama – in January 2019 – Pope Francis exhorted them to become bridge builders, not the builders of walls; by the way, an idea that he repeats often. He said the following: “The devil, the father of lies, always prefers divided people, at odds with each other. He is the master of the division. He is afraid of people who learn to work together.” Then he addressed the present young people and he said: “You want to be bridge builders. What do you want to be?” Their answer was: “Builders of bridges”. Now, what would be my personal answer to this question; What do I want to be in my community?

P. Marek Vaňuš, SVD
Generalate Biblical Apostolate Coordinator

26. Finance, Nos. 34-35

Salve!

My name is Dante Salces-Barril. I am currently residing here in our Collegio del Verbo Divino in Rome while doing my studies. But before coming here I was the Provincial Treasurer of the Philippine Central Province.

And I remember in my first week, how one of the personnel informed me that we needed money but we didn't have enough money. I was shocked! Because I thought we were rich and I was the treasurer and not the treasure hunter scouring for treasure.

Before accepting the assignment, I was scared. Now, one week into the job, I was close to a nervous breakdown. In my delirious dreams, I heard my name read in our Ordo of the Departed and confreres whispered: "Oh! He was the person who brought PHC to bankruptcy".

Yesterday, I checked and PHC is very much okay. Various expressions of missionary creativity are in full display. This experience reminded me of Missio Dei. Mission is God's and this includes not only the Biblical Apostolate, Mission Animation, Communication, and JPIC but also our finances.

St. Arnold would insist that our real capital is trust in the Lord and the support of the faithful. This succinctly captures the spirit of the Founder's audacious trust in the Lord of the harvest. He would even say in his Foundation Day homily that if nothing

comes out of what has been started, we strike our breasts and confess that we are not worthy of the grace.

Indeed, before the term *Missio Dei* was coined in the 1930s, the Founder was already living it. He was deeply aware that he and his missionary brothers and sisters are workers in the richest vineyard. However, we are not ordinary workers of the vineyard as we are sons in the Son. Heirs of the vineyard. So that Arnolds's audacity is rooted in the experience of family.

When I was treasurer, I treasured those moments when subsidies arrived and I had to write to Provincials and Treasurers whose names I could not even pronounce, but I always recognized the three letters after their "unpronounceable" names. The familiar SVD. It never failed to warm my heart. It emphasizes that we are one family. So, I pray that we emphasize and we strengthen our family-ness in our finances. So, we try to become good stewards of the gifts so that we become better contributors to our missionary family. Not self-sufficient and independent from each other but contributors to our missionary family. So that we all become adequate and equipped for every good work in the vineyard of the Lord.

Thank you very much and God bless us all.

Fr. Dante Salces Barril, SVD
PHC, Student of Biblical theology in Rome

27. Servant Leadership, Nos. 36-37

My first participation in a General Chapter was in 2012. At one point, we were tasked to describe the characteristics of a good superior. In small groups and zonal meetings, we elaborated and developed a long list of qualities and skills that a superior should have. The list of qualities was so long and broad. It was clear that no one could fulfill all those qualities.

However, I was surprised to see that the final Chapter document summed up a superior's qualities in a short statement: "Leadership is for us a commitment to serve." The 18th General Chapter took up this statement by talking about "servant leadership and responsible membership." The Chapter wanted to involve all Congregation members in promoting a dynamic relationship of mutual collaboration for exercising leadership.

Jesus spoke about model servant leadership: "Anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (cf. Mt 20:27-28). As for "responsible membership," we could resort to Paul's image of the "body of Christ." Here he speaks about the Christian community: Each member with his gifts is necessary to the other members for the good of the whole (cf. 1 Cor 12:12-21).

Paragraph 37 of the Chapter document recommends some concrete attitudes to which we need to commit ourselves for becoming servant leaders and responsible members. Some examples are: transcending ethnic and national loyalties when

electing our superiors, engaging in the process of prayerful discernment, or foregoing our private agendas.

In this process, trust is a necessary attitude. Trust allows the leader to welcome initiatives and contributions from the members of the community. Trust allows the members to support their leaders and participate willingly in our common mission. In a letter to Nicolas Blum, Arnold Janssen wrote: “When you see the failings of the confreres, bear in mind that they also have good qualities and are worthy of your trust.”

Pope Francis addressing the members of the 18th General Chapter, highlighted the words “trust” and “brothers.” Trust in God because He is the source of our vocation; trust in our brothers in the community because we walk together the path of life and mission with them. I believe that mutual trust is the sacred ground where we can nurture ourselves and learn to be servant leaders and responsible members.

Fr. José Antunes da Silva, SVD
Vice Superior General

28. Initial and Ongoing Formation, Nos. 38-39

Dear Confreres, I am pleased to share with you a short reflection on formation and ongoing formation.

Formation is a gradual journey into the person of Jesus, through the experience of the unconditional love of the Father and the grace of the Spirit. In this gradual process of the journey, we assist our formees to be open to the fruits of the Spirit and read the signs of the times. The objective of initial and ongoing formation is to ever grow into a total commitment to God and service to humankind. The theme of the 18th General Chapter is an invitation for every member of the Society and all those who aspire to be one, to endure and continue formation – ongoing formation by being rooted in the Word and committed to His Mission.

Regular discernment, appropriate response, and constant renewal are the key components of formation and ongoing formation programs. Formation is integral, inclusive, and calls us all to live a web of relationships. Pope Francis through his recent encyclical, invites us to embrace each other and establish social friendship and fraternal love, which is our missionary task and responsibility.

Definitely, formation is our priority and how do we engage ourselves to train our young seminarians to become effective religious missionaries during this time of ‘New normal’?

We can no longer hold on to those old-fashioned, outdated and traditional methods of formation and vocation promotion. We need to be aggressive and at the same time innovative and creative in promoting vocations to our Society, using modern communication means. We form our formees in such a way that they can face the challenges of the time.

Our formees are to learn to be available to others – to be altruistic, to be creative and innovative, to be grateful for everything, to have positive attitudes to accept challenges and never to lose hope in life. We are to have concrete programs to train our formees in these areas of human formation.

While we form them, we insist on intercultural life, inclusivism, and universalism in our way of life and mission.

We form committed religious missionaries with conviction, an aptitude with a positive attitude, solidarity with human values, freedom with moral responsibility, pastoral engagement with a spiritual foundation, and creative ministries with an innovative mind.

Our prayer is that the love of Christ impels us to be rooted in the Word and committed to His Mission in our vocational journey.

Fr. Pushpa Anbu Augustine, SVD
Generalate Secretary for Formation and Education

29. Intercultural Mission, Nos. 40-41

Hello Friends,

I would like to share with you my reflections on our “Intercultural Mission”, described in The Document of the 18th General Chapter, particularly in paragraphs 40 and 41. It says, “Intercultural mission is our way of giving witness to the unity and diversity of the Kingdom of God,” as Saint Freinademetz did in China.

We take pride in saying that “Interculturality is in the DNA of the Society.” It is gratifying to observe that in the Church and among the religious congregations, we are identified, appreciated, and looked up to as experts in interculturality. But what is so special about the interculturality of the SVDs?

Our communities are indeed increasingly intercultural. They are vibrant in witnessing the unity and diversity of the Kingdom of God. During my visits and visitations of the PRMs, I was edified to see confreres and communities zealously promoting intercultural mission.

Engaged in pastoral, biblical, social, educational, dialogical, migrant, indigenous, ecological, and communication ministries, our confreres are making visible progress in building human communities. But there are also challenges that are to be adequately addressed.

The intercultural mission is an integral mission that envelopes both ad intra and ad extra aspects. Affirmed in our last General Chapter, and confirmed by Pope Francis, fostering ‘communion

ad intra' is the most effective way of witnessing the intercultural mission ad extra. In the global context of increasing racial, xenophobic, nationalistic, fundamentalist, parochial, casteist, and tribalist tendencies, we need to guard against such tendencies creeping into our communities.

Radical changes are taking place in the demographic composition and membership of religious congregations. These changes have triggered twofold significant movements in the nature and component of the religious missionary communities.

First, traditionally monocultural communities are forced to assume a multicultural outlook and eventually choose to become intercultural. Second, due to compulsions arising out of the cultural challenges, the congregations begin to invest in competence-building measures with the objective to enhance the quality of commitment of its members. Both movements lead to a favorable end, which is a deliberate option for intercultural commitment.

Like finance-management or time-management, 'Differences-Management' that deals with healthy management of our cultural-personality differences in our community dynamics will lead to renewal and transformation in our intercultural commitment as envisaged by the General Chapter-2018.

If ethnocentrism is an attitude, then our understanding of interculturality should move beyond measures of competence building to the formation of an intercultural attitude in our confreres. Let us continue to nurture this hallowed treasure.

Fr. Xavier Thirukudumbam, SVD
Generalate Admonitor

30. Putting the last first, Nos. 42-43

Hello. I am Reynaldo Rodrigo Román Díaz. I am Mexican and I am currently working in the Italian Province, where I am the JPIC coordinator.

In our intercultural mission *ad extra*, the XVIII General Chapter exhorts us that in our missionary work we focus on putting the last first. It is in caring for the poor and abandoned that we are truly serving the Lord Jesus. As a Divine Word Missionary, it is all clear to me that by doing work with the little ones, we do it with the Lord.

I remember some years ago when I was working in Costa Rica when a Nicaraguan migrant family knocked on the door of the parish asking for food. When I spoke to them, they told me that they had walked all day to reach our parish to ask for refuge. When I saw them, I was so surprised because I saw the tired children and the exhausted mother and above all how they were hungry and needed to rest. I wondered what I should do so that these people could have a better life. That is why I began to consider working with refugees and marginalized people who represent the least in society. Missionaries of the Divine Word teach us that working with the least in our mission is part of our mission. When I was in Costa Rica, I started working with refugees and migrants to find both physical and legal structures for them to have a more dignified life. Working with organizations that could help them and above all that could teach us about the Divine Word, especially me who did not know what human mobility means.

Here in Italy, I work at Caritas Vicenza, where we are a team of people who work in the office for refugees and migrants. My job is to accompany refugees seeking asylum in Italy. Above all, to make the process of integration into Italian society. It is interesting to know their stories, to know their sacrifices, but above all those types of marginalization that they have suffered such as human trafficking and different interracial conflicts that they have in their countries of origin. My job is mainly to be the bridge of the two cultures; African cultures and Italian western culture. For me, it means putting the last first, because migrants at this moment are in society the most marginalized group, even in this time of the COVID pandemic. They are the people who suffer the most because they have to mobilize due to socioeconomic problems. The XVIII General Chapter teaches us that we have to be present in the last. In this case of human mobility, we can carry out our mission. Not only accompanying them spiritually but knowing that they can carry out a more dignified job and work legally in the country. Thanks.

Fr. Reynaldo Rodrigo Román Díaz, SVD
ITA, JPIC Coordinator

31. For an Integral Ecology, Nos. 44-45

To speak of integral ecology is to recognize that everything is interconnected. We live in a Kairos time with dreams and hopes, with the Church on the move. But we also live in a time of crisis and conflict, where life is threatened in the Amazon region.

Indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, and traditional communities are exploited by the capitalist system that steals the riches of their territories. They are killing the dreams of BIEN VIVIR. In Tupi Guarani we speak of “Ñande Rekoha” (the mother-earth). The cry coming from the forest is: “We want to live”.

According to scientific studies, the environment suffers from five major actions of illegal exploitation by large companies with the support of the Brazilian government: 1. illegal mining; 2. destruction of forests and illegal logging; 3. agro-industrial activities with the use of pesticides; 4. abusive exploitation of medicinal plants; 5. government omission of supervision and social security of the peoples;

The Synod of the Amazon affirms that “the Church commits itself to be an ally of the Amazonian peoples in denouncing attacks on the life of the indigenous communities, the projects that affect the environment, the lack of demarcation of their territories, as well as the economic model of predatory and ecocidal development.” (Nr. 46).

“Integral ecology is not one path among many that the Church can choose for the future in this territory, it is the only possible

path because there is no other viable route for saving the region.” (Nr. 67). Ecological conversion is urgently needed in order to avoid ecological sin (cf. Nr. 82).

“One of the most glorious pages of the Amazon has been written by the martyrs... This Synod admires and recognizes those who struggle, at great risk to their own lives, to defend the existence of this territory.” (Nr. 16).

In the face of so much violence and now with the deaths due to the pandemic and the evident omissions on the part of the governments, we as SVD’s have to:

1. Pray and unite in the struggle in defense of the life of the peoples and their territories;
2. Practice solidarity and charity with the poor where we work as missionaries;
3. Implement concrete recycling initiatives and adopt a healthy lifestyle;
4. Make an effort to consume ecological and organic food;
5. Not to buy products from companies that do not respect the environment;
6. Support initiatives of organic production cooperatives, valuing.

I invite everyone to participate and to strengthen the local JPIC and the VIVAT International Network, together with other entities and social movements in our common home, Earth, for LIVING FULLY.

Fr. José Boeing, SVD,
Coordinator VIVAT Brazil

32. Digital Era, Nos. 46-47

The new information and communication technologies are part of our daily, family, and community life. But... Are they good or bad? It is difficult to answer this question categorically because they are resources that offer us many opportunities and, at the same time, pose some risks. Everything depends on the use, or abuse, that is made of them.

The Second Vatican Council's decree on the means of social communication (*Inter Mirifica*) recognizes the benefits of the media at our disposal and encourages us to own them and use them for good and to proclaim the Word of God to the great masses of people.

Arnold Janssen was aware that the media should be used to promote his missionary ideas. He once said, "The pastor of souls has to use all the means that the signs of the times dictate."

In his message for this year's World Communications Day, Pope Francis admitted that the new technologies, with their innumerable social expressions, can multiply the ability to recount and share facts and events.

Paragraph 46 of the 18th General Chapter document speaks of the immense possibilities offered by the new technologies for the first and new evangelization and for sharing our spirituality.

When put to good use, digital media become positive tools in our daily lives as religious and missionaries. And it makes us all responsible as users and consumers.

It is evident that the new communication and information technologies bring us closer and closer, but at the same time they distance us from each other.

Experience shows that instead of promoting community life, the new technologies sometimes favor isolation and individualism. Some of us spend many hours looking at our cell phones, even when we have someone in front of us. We neglect close relationships and take care of virtual relationships. It is true that new technologies offer us many opportunities, but they can also create virtual simulations, illusions, fantasies and fictions that distract us and take us away from our vocation and mission and from community life.

As Divine Word Missionaries, our engagement with the new information and communication technologies calls us to step out of ourselves, out of our narcissism to encounter the other - who is of a different culture, creed, or socio-economic situation than our own. Communicating in this context is the action of putting something in common whether in a virtual or physical space; human communication, whatever the medium, must establish real and true links between people.

Are we aware of the time we spend on social networks and cell phones?

Do the new technologies bring us closer or distance us from each other?

Fr. Modeste Munimi, SVD,
Generalate Coordinator for Communications

33. Co-Responsibility with SVD Lay Partners, Nos. 48-49

Men and women, tax collectors and fishermen, young and old, the all-inclusive team of Jesus when he began his mission.

When Arnold Janssen formed the Society of the Divine Word, there were men and women, missionaries and contemplatives, thinkers and doers, all in their unique ways taking responsibility to continue the mission of Jesus.

One thing that stood out in Arnold's approach was the importance he gave to lay people in mission. He even thought of starting a congregation for lay people. Though this sounds routine in our time, in Arnold's time it was very UNIQUE and PROPHETIC.

Over the years, SVDs and lay partners have succeeded in thinking and acting together. We share our SVD Charism and Spirituality with others - to witness to the Divine Word in our world. In this CO-RESPONSIBILITY, we realize we are not the owners of our charism. Our charism is a gift, whose giftedness is realized in sharing it with others.

Now I bring to you stories from our four zones, which spell out this CO-RESPONSIBILITY.

AFRAM Zone

In addition to the common activities, Friends of SVD, Ghana Province, promote and network with other lay partner groups

in the province. Currently, there are nine recognized groups in the Ghana Province.

ASPAC Zone

Disciples of the Divine Word, India Mumbai Province, the group I belong to: along with the SVDs we reached out to more than 8000 poor families with family grocery kits and hot lunch during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our Feed the Hungry project is ongoing.

EUROPA Zone

Every year, on the World Day of the Poor, SVD-Partner, Germany Province invites everybody to come together in prayer, to build a Prayer Bridge, connecting people around the world, through prayer.

PANAM Zone

Rubiela and Rogelio, SVD lay partners from Misioneros Laicos del Verbo Divino, Panama, Central American Region, continue the work of evangelization through social media. During the pandemic, they invited underprivileged people to pass by their houses to take items for survival.

In an interconnected world today, where ironically the divisions and polarizations are only increasing, this CO-RESPONSIBILITY has an important mission: To RECONCILE, to REACH-OUT, to HEAL, and to TRANSFORM

The world is still churning from the rampant coronavirus. May this CO-RESPONSIBILITY we have taken as SVDs and lay mission

partners for our planet, confirm and strengthen our commitment,
to bring the light and life of the Divine Word into our world.

Mrs. Susan Noronha, SVD Lay Partner
INM Mumbai

34. Formation of the SVD Lay Partners, Nos. 50-51

Dear Friends,

Indeed, joy overwhelms me by seeing the various lay partner groups which have emerged in the last few years and their active involvement in missionary activities - dynamic and animated groups all over the world.

Just being a Catholic is not sufficient; one needs to have some preparation to be a lay partner. Being aware of the richness of lay partners is helpful but being a member is upright. A desire to be an SVD lay partner is good but not sufficient; being part of a lay group in your province/region/mission is wonderful but it is not cherishing the fullness; joining with others in prayer is great but more could be done. What is it? That is formation. Formation of the lay partners helps me to understand why I am an SVD lay partner and why I get involved with the charism of the Arnoldus Family. Formation gives a basic foundation of being a lay partner.

Formation is the process of reflecting on experiences that invite and challenge one to continue the journey towards becoming a member of the Arnoldus Family. The Spirit allows one to see this formative journey as a dialogue with God and with St. Arnold Janssen. Sensitivity to the ongoing experiences of one's pilgrim journey contributes to the understanding of the current human context and to recognizing the action of the Spirit in the world.

Formation is for mission, it is transformative, it is for an individual and also to strengthen a group or community; it deepens

our faith, knowledge of the Bible, and importantly to cherish the spirituality and charisms of the Arnoldus Family. Formation helps to be united with Christ, the Society of the Divine Word and the Church, and to respond to local and global needs.

Formation is integrative. Thus, it contains spiritual, doctrinal, and human formation; social conscience, Christian values, and the skills necessary for the lay faithful's apostolic activities.

Therefore, first, promote lay partners and take the necessary steps to have formation programs systematically arranged with the above characteristics. Membership in a group gives strength, vitality, and energy. Other than having formal classes, seminars, and workshops, immersion experiences in missionary activities and reflection and sharing on these experiences are helpful.

Bible sharing or faith sharing with the group members, having prayer sessions, and Eucharistic celebrations are important. The significant aspects of formation include: preparing a formation manual, fixing a period for initial formation, setting membership rules, arranging apostolic activities, and continuing with ongoing formation.

Create synergy among the members and the SVD confreres. Build relationships with lay partners and confreres. Certainly, one will appreciate the amazing work of the Spirit in this effort. A few groups have already initiated the formation programs, let all of us promote the formation of lay partners.

Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar, SVD
Generalate Mission Secretary

35. Becoming more joyful missionaries, Nos. 52 -53

“The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus.” Dear confreres, dear friends. The words I have just quoted cannot be found in the booklet, containing the Documents of the 18th General Chapter. These words are the very first words of Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* on the proclamation of the gospel in today’s world.

Yet, when we look at the last sentences of the Chapter Statement, we find a similar statement: “This calls us to share in the paschal mystery of Jesus, directing us to renew and transform ourselves and others, thus becoming more joyful missionaries.”

The result of our renewal and transformation shall become visible in our lives, especially through our JOY.

Let us have a look at the official logo of the 18th General Chapter, which was carefully chosen. What do we see there? Five persons of different colors, representing all continents, joyfully raising their hands up, embracing the whole world. We may not feel so enthusiastic all the time. We may even become suspicious of people, who try always to be so passionate. Especially now, during the time of the Covid 19 Pandemic, when we need to deal with many who have lost not only their job but also their beloved ones. In these delicate situations, a more sensitive approach is needed.

Yet, joy could still be there. Joy is the fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit, who lives in us and guides us, when we are open to him and follow his lead.

The Chapter Statement leads us to joy through three concrete steps.

The first one is the experience of God's love, which was revealed to us in its fullness in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word. We let ourselves be embraced by it. And it is exactly this love of Christ that impels us to move forward in our mission.

The second step is our rootedness in the Word of God. Pope Francis exhorted members of the General Chapter: "If you are anchored in the Word of God, rooted in it, if you assume it as the foundation of your lives and let the Word burn in your hearts (Lk 24:32); this Word will transform them – your hearts - and will make each one of you a real missionary."

The third step is our commitment to mission. When we step out of our comfort zones, when we reach out to the needy, the Holy Spirit will fill our hearts with joy. We will never learn to swim if we do not jump into the water. We will never experience joy if we do not commit ourselves to mission.

Dear confreres, dear friends, this is the last video in the cycle of videos on spiritual animation based on the 18th General Chapter Statement. The idea was to transmit the spirit of the Chapter, to keep the fire burning. I thank sincerely all those who participated in it. The project ends, but not our renewal. Why not? Because

the Love of Christ impels us to be rooted in the Word and committed to his mission.

Fr. Peter Dusicka, SVD
Generalate Coordinator for Spiritual Animation

