

# REFLECTION GUIDE FOR MUTUAL ENRICHMENT IN SPIRITUALITY



**Materials for the Arnoldus Family**

**SVD-SSpS e-Publications  
Generalate, Rome, 2021**



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The tomb of our Founder Arnold Janssen in Steyl and four candles representing three Congregations he founded and the Mission Partners

## PRESENTATION

The idea of synodality was given much attention in the last two synods of the bishops. The first chapter of the last part of the closing document of the synod on the youth in 2018 carries the title: The missionary synodality of the Church. The synod participants realize that the Church is called to take a relational face that places emphasis on listening, welcoming, dialogue and common discernment in a process that transforms the lives of its members (122). A year later, in the closing document of the synod on the Amazon, we read, “To walk together the Church requires a synodal conversion, synodality of the People of God under the guidance of the Spirit ... With this horizon of communion and participation we seek new ecclesial paths” ... (86).

Being together on the way is a common experience in crises such as the COVID-19 Pandemic. Pope Francis said in his reflection on March 27, “We are together in this.” We are together in facing the suffering, and we are together in looking for ways to respond to it. This is the time for us to make our choices: to walk along or be separated and encapsulated in egoism, clericalism, racism, or nationalism.

We thank God for calling us to participate in God’s mission. We are grateful to our Founder and the Founding Generation for having laid a common ground for our missionary spirituality. Our past generations tried to find ways to help our congregations enrich each other and work together to respond to missionary situations. In recent years, we have come to realize the importance and necessity of inviting our mission partners<sup>1</sup> to walk along with us, sharing our missionary spirituality and responsibility.

We are convinced that working together is only possible if we walk together. Sharing responsibility has to be based on and accompanied by mutual spiritual enrichment. We are walking and working together as sisters and brothers from different cultural backgrounds.

Reconfirming a resolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, the 18<sup>th</sup> General Chapter of the SVD tasks the General Administration to develop a reflection guide for the local communities. This guideline is meant “to promote appreciation of and mutual enrichment by different cultural expressions of spiritualities present among the members of our community” and “for mutual enrichment in spirituality with lay associates to strengthen our collaboration.” The SSpS Congregational Leadership Team also sees the same need. Therefore a joint team was established to prepare the said guidelines. We now present to you this reflection guide, the result of a long process. It involved

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<sup>1</sup> In regard to the laypeople who are partners in our mission, 18<sup>th</sup> SVD General Chapter used the expression “SVD lay partners”, the Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit use the expression “mission partners”. In this booklet, the expression “mission partners” is being used throughout the text.

many of the members of our congregations and our mission partners. We thank the members of the Ad Hoc Committee, namely Peter Dusicka, SVD; Roger Schroeder, SVD; Stanislaus Lazar, SVD; Maria Illich, SSpS; and Leonie Pregunta, SSpS; and all who contributed to this publication.

We recommend that these guidelines be used in our communities and groups. When we meet together as brothers and sisters, may these guidelines strengthen our experience of being together. They are also for the good of people we serve, and the glory of Triune God, the God on the way.

Maria Theresia Hörnemann, SSpS  
Congregational Leader

Paulus Budi Kleden, SVD  
Superior General

## INTRODUCTION

Interculturality is not something new to us, since we have been striving to live as intercultural communities in our missions. We have been intentionally promoting this value to form our communities and in turn to serve the people with this orientation. Valuing the local cultures and being mutually enriched, challenging any cultural expressions that are contrary to gospel values, and evolving a new culture through the interaction between diverse cultures are all important aspects in the process of building intercultural life and doing intercultural mission. In this process, what holds us together? Or what is the underlying current that motivates us to live this interculturality? It is our spirituality. Without spiritual strength, we cannot promote this value. Therefore, our intercultural life and mission could be promoted and strengthened with spiritual expressions from our cultures.

Knowing this significance, the SVD 18<sup>th</sup> general chapter 2018 mandated the general administration to develop “a reflection guide for use in local communities to promote appreciation of and mutual enrichment by different cultural expressions of spiritualities present among the members of our community; [and] programs for mutual enrichment in spirituality with lay associates in order to strengthen our collaboration” (Resolution 1.1.5).

To actualize this resolution as well as to prepare materials for retreats and recollections for the SVDs and SSpS, the general administrations of both congregations established an Ad hoc Committee and called for a workshop on “Interculturality and Spirituality” at Steyl from 25 Jan. to 14 Feb., 2020. There were 26 participants including 3 mission partners and 5 persons from the organizing team. After the talks and discussions, we were divided into two groups, one group worked on the retreat and recollection materials, and other worked on the reflection guide.

Preparing a reflection guide for the whole Arnoldus family is an uphill task. As we value various cultures and their expressions, this richness cannot be captured with a few people. We co-opted more confreres, Sisters and lay people to prepare this guide. All these persons made an effort to present some of the main components that would be helpful by giving some sources, outlines, talks and suggestions to strengthen our spirituality. Spirituality is like blood that gives vitality to our life. Without the flow of blood, there is death; this blood needs to be invigorated to give strength, thus, spirituality needs to be rejuvenated, especially from the local traditions and cultural patterns.

Faith is expressed in the local culture, and faith becomes alive in the cultural traditions and expressions. In an intercultural community, experiencing the various faith expressions could strengthen the intercultural life, but one has to be careful not to indulge in

syncretism. A true intercultural process needs to be followed in the celebration of intercultural life.

Knowing the complexity of cultures and the modern technologies, people can have a wide range of practicing spirituality in devotions, bible/life sharing, recollections, celebration of feasts, etc. This book, “Reflection Guide for Mutual Enrichment in Spirituality: Materials for Arnoldus Family”, offers some variety, but these are guidelines and some examples from local communities; everyone can follow their own creative ways in their communities. This is put forth as a help to pray, mutually enrich spiritual life, mutually build trust, and live together joyfully.

This book has three Chapters: (1) basic framework for understanding interculturality; this is a theoretical part to understand the concepts, theological and biblical foundations and challenges of interculturality; (2) modules for spiritual activities on the community level; this offers a variety of bible/life sharing modules, recollection talks and feast day celebrations; (3) modules for spiritual activities with mission partners; this chapter offers various modules to strengthen our spiritual bond with mission partners. The whole book is written by many confreres, Sisters and mission partners and to write all these materials with innovative suggestions and proposals certainly has taken a lot of energy. They are written with passion to strengthen the Arnoldus family spirituality.

How to use this Reflection Guide? This can be used by an SVD community or SSpS community or mission partners group or this can be used for Arnoldus family members' common activities according to the local situation. Depending on the occasion or the need, people can take one sample or the other and follow the steps as given below or adapt to the local situation. Prayer sessions together with agape are encouraged to build community life. You may also use this with people in local institutions, schools or in parishes according to the situation.

# BASIC FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING INTERCULTURALITY

## 1. Foundations for Interculturality for the Arnoldus Family

The 2008 SSpS General Chapter (GC) and the 2012 SVD GC both had “Interculturality” as their central theme, and this was further developed in the following Chapters of 2014 (SSpS) and 2018 (SVD). Much reflection and many activities around the theme of interculturality were carried out initially by each congregation separately. Later, inter-congregational and international collaborative efforts are represented by a) three-week bilingual workshop on “Interculturality and Initial Formation” in January 2017 in Nemi, and b) publication of a booklet (Spanish and English) of over 160 pages, entitled “The Spirituality of Interculturality: Materials for Retreats and Recollections of the Arnoldus Family,”<sup>1</sup> in the same year.

The growing SSpS-SVD collaboration around interculturality continued through a) joint report on follow-up activities by the formation personnel who participated in the January 2017 Nemi workshop, b) reconfiguration in 2019 of the Resource Committee for Interculturality (RCI) with equal representation of SVD and SSpS (and a co-chairperson from each congregation), c) joint two-week workshop on “Spirituality and Interculturality” in January-February 2020 in Steyl, and d) joint committee to develop an intercultural “Reflection Guide” for both SSpS-SVD communities and mission partners. This Chapter One provides a basic framework and the foundations for implementing the latter project of the “Reflection Guide.”

### 1.1. Definitions

It is important to start with some definitions and clarifications.

*Culture* is not static or uniform, but it is dynamic and diverse. Culture is more than ethnicity. It includes social change, social location (men/women, rich/poor, urban/rural, young/old, etc.), individual and communal circumstances, and ethnicity.

*Internationality* and *multiculturality* signify the mere presence of different nationalities and cultures in the same space, community and/or congregation. Individuals/groups in those contexts strive for toleration.

The *cross-cultural dynamic* is the one-way movement from one culture to another, such as when a missionary strives to enter another culture through language and culture learning

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<sup>1</sup> See the “Other Resources” section of this book for the details of the websites where they are posted.

and to develop cultural sensitivity. Adaptation and accommodation are the goals of this process.

While both of these movements are good and desirable in themselves in many contexts, the full vision of the Reign of God calls for more, especially of religious women and men. **Interculturality represents a further intentional shift to form mutually enriching and challenging relationships and encounters among those who are “other” than ourselves** – whether that is in terms of nationality, ethnicity/“race,” generation, gender, social/economic status, individual/communal circumstances, and lay/ordained vocations.

## 1.2. Cultural Diversity as a Gift

If you want to see God, look at Jesus. In addition, the marvelous mystery of the love of God also continues to be revealed to us through the on-going multiple incarnations of God becoming flesh through the religious expressions and experiences over time of men and women of faith of different backgrounds and cultural contexts. While no human life is a perfect reflection of God’s “face”, each reflection of God’s life and love represents a partial ray of the “face” of God, like light shining through a prism. And just as beams of different colors through a prism come from the same light source, so it is for the faith reflections by people of varied multi-colored cultures. Each cultural reflection of God’s light – as imperfect and partial it may be – offers others a glimpse of who God is calling us to be. However, while combining all the rays through a prism represent the fullness of the light source, the combination of all the individual, cultural, and institutional reflections of God’s life throughout history cannot capture the fullness of God’s light which is an incomprehensible mystery. However, **cultural diversity is a gift which enables us to stretch our grasp of who God is beyond our single, blessed but limited, individual and cultural experience and knowledge.** In this way, we can discover in the words of the African-American ex-slave Sojourner Truth: “Oh God, I did not know you were so big!”

The Second Vatican Council also recognized the gift of diversity. “The seed which is the word of God grows out of good soil watered by divine dew” so the local Churches “borrow from the customs, traditions, wisdom, teaching, arts and sciences of their people everything which could be used to praise the glory of the Creator...” (“Church’s Missionary Activity,” *Ad Gentes* [AG], 22). “God spoke according to the culture proper to each age... [and the Church] can, then, enter into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both itself and the cultures themselves” (“Church in the Modern World,” *Gaudium et Spes* [GS], 58). Just as the universal and local Churches are shaped and enriched by culture, so we as individuals and the Arnoldus Family can be enriched by the gift of cultural diversity among the members of our congregations, mission partners, and the people we serve in mission/ministry.

## 1.3. Theological and Spirituality Foundations of Interculturality

The Mission of God (*missio Dei*) “flows from ‘that fountain of love’ from God the Father. Through him, who is ‘the origin without origin,’ the Son is begotten and the Spirit

proceeds through the Son” (AG 2). That life-giving fountain of the love of the *Trinity* has been poured out and lavished upon all peoples through their particular cultures, experiences, and journeys in faith since the beginning of time. The Church (and every religious congregation) is a sacrament or visible sign pointing toward this grace and presence of God, which extends beyond the Church into the world and all of creation.

In the beginning, “God’s Spirit hovered over the waters” (Gen 1:2) at the time of creation, and humanity was made in God’s image (Gen 1:26). The *Holy Spirit* continued to move through the prophets, holy women and men, wisdom literature, and the entire salvation history of the Israelites for the sake of the nations. The life-giving fountain of God’s love also was flowing and continues to flow within every culture, religion and spirituality, often in ways only known to God. As we know, the *spirituality of the Trinity and the Holy Spirit* is central for the Arnoldus Family.

Furthermore, the *Divine Word (Logos)* “was made flesh” (Jn 1:14) as a part of God’s mission. Through the incarnation, God became human within a particular culture and moment of history. The Spirit was upon Jesus Christ at his baptism and through his life, death and resurrection. The Spirit called the first disciples and continues to call the Church and the Arnoldus Family to be instruments of God’s mission in the flesh. All Christians are to continue the mystery of the *Incarnation* – reflecting the image of God in which we were created from our mothers’ wombs. Each of us should incarnate God’s life and love through our humanity. However, unlike Christ who was perfect, we are imperfect images of God, as individuals (even canonized saints), as communities (religious congregations), as cultures (no “Christian culture”), and as the institution of the Church. We have to continually face the need for conversion from sin through our personal and communal journey in the *Paschal Mystery* – passing through death to new life. In drawing upon the agricultural images of Jesus’ parables, every person, community, and culture possess both the seeds of God’s Word (grace) and weeds (sin) which are contrary to God’s Reign (cf. Mk 4:3-9; Mt 13:36-43; Mk 4:26-29). As members of religious congregations and mission partners, we strive to nurture and be enriched by the seeds within ourselves and others and to also uproot the weeds, on an individual and communal level. We remember that in our faith journeys, the Spirit of God continues to draw us back to our origin in God as a new creation – through our humanity, culture, spirituality, vocational response, and life in the Church.

**Interculturality is theologically and spiritually founded on the invitation to encounter the image and “face” of God in one another.** As the Arnoldus Family, we are called “to promote the appreciation of and mutual enrichment by different cultural expressions of spiritualities present among members of our community... [and the] mutual enrichment in spirituality with lay associates in order to strengthen our collaboration.”<sup>2</sup> And this enrichment and collaboration with mission partners and members of our own religious congregations is for the sake of participating in God’s mission with all people and creation.

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<sup>2</sup> *In Word and Deed*, Documents of the 18<sup>th</sup> General Chapter SVD 2018, No. 6, 2018, Resolution 1.1.5.

## 1.4. Guiding Questions for Reflection (Sections 1.2 and 1.3)

How have you experienced the “face” of God in someone from a different culture or background?

How was this enriching and/or challenging?

## 1.5. Biblical Foundations of Interculturality

The entire Old and New Testaments reflect how people experienced God and expressed their faith and spirituality through their cultural and historical context in every age – call and response of Abraham and Sarah; Passover and Crossing of the Red Sea; trials and blessings in the desert pilgrimage of faith; proclamations of prophets and wisdom literature; worship in the temple and synagogue; religious experience of Simeon and Anna in the temple; call and response of the first disciples; transforming encounters of a tax collector, a Roman centurion, and a Samaritan woman with Jesus; cultural boundary-crossing in Acts of the Apostles; and Christian life and challenges among Paul’s communities. We now choose three particular passages as biblical foundations.

### *God’s treasure in earthen jars*

“It is the same God that said, ‘Let there be light shining out of darkness’, who has shone in our minds to radiate the light of the knowledge of God’s glory, the glory on the face of Christ. We are only the earthenware jars [bodies of clay] that hold this treasure, to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us” (2 Cor 4:6-7). Our earthen/clay jars are shaped by our family, culture, background, religious formation, local Church, mission experience, and personal experience. As noted above, God’s Spirit is at work in this molding and re-shaping. “We are the clay, you are the potter, we are all the work of your hand” (Is 64:8). We all contain that treasure of God’s light and glory. At the same time, earthen vessels have their cracks, blemishes, and faults, so there is an on-going need for conversion into a fuller reflection of God’s image. How can we be enriched by that inner treasure in my jar and that of the other, which reflects the “overwhelming power ... from God” (2 Cor 4:7)?

### *One body and many parts*

“Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because of all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ. In the one Spirit we were all baptized, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as citizens, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink. Nor is the body to be identified with any one of its many parts.... Instead of that, God put all the separate parts into the body on purpose. If all the parts were the same, how could it be a body?” (1 Cor 12:12-13, 18-19).

Each individual and group can make a unique contribution to building up the Body of Christ and participating in God’s mission. Each offers different spiritual expressions and experiences, shaped by culture and other factors. The fullness of the Body of Christ requires the diversity of gifts. It cannot “be identified with any one of its many parts.” It

includes both Jews and Greeks (different ethnicities), slaves and citizens (different social locations), and male and female (Rom 3:28). Diverse cultural spiritualities complement each other in forming one body. “All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ” (Gal 3:27). This is both enriching and challenging.

### *Visitation of Mary and Elizabeth*

“Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeting Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” (Lk 1:39-41). This is a personal encounter of two persons who have each had a deep religious experience of God’s grace. Both infants in their wombs and mothers were touched by the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:15, 35-36) in their personal lives. Mary and Elizabeth were “pregnant” with God’s life. As Elizabeth was touched in her depths (womb) by the divine presence in Mary, so how can we be enriched and touched in the depths of our spiritual being by the stirring of God in another person? Furthermore, both women assented to the movement of God’s Spirit in their lives for the sake of God’s mission, as we are also called to do. Mary said, “I am the handmaid of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me” (Lk 1:38). While Mary and Elizabeth shared a common ethnicity, they had different social locations in terms of age and individual/family circumstances.

## **1.6. Arnoldus Family Foundations for Interculturality**

The foundations for interculturality within the Arnoldus Family tradition are found in our constitutions, founding generation, and charism.

### *Constitutions*

“God’s loving grace has gathered us from peoples and continents into a religious missionary community dedicated to the Divine Word and named after him as Society of the Divine Word.” “As a community of brothers from different nations and languages we become a living symbol of the unity and diversity of the Church” (SVD Prologue).

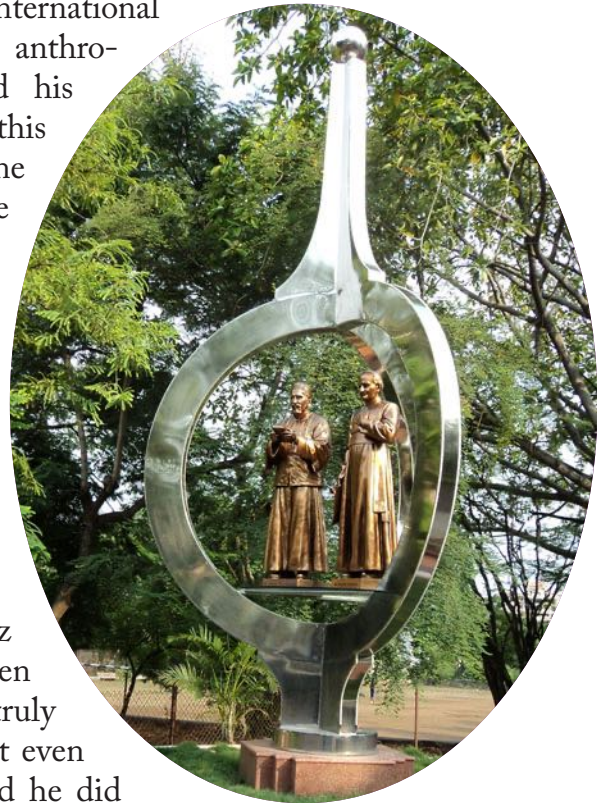
“Christ has called us to this Congregation, a religious missionary community dedicated to the life-giving Spirit. In the power of the Holy Spirit we follow him, praising the Father and bringing the fullness of life to others.” “Living in a religious missionary community of sisters of different nations and languages, we become a living symbol of the unity and diversity in the Church” (SSpS Prologue).

Both constitutions point to the fact that our international composition in itself is a “living symbol of the unity and diversity” in the Church, that one Body of Christ with many parts (1 Cor 12:12-13, 18-19). These selections from the Prologues also highlight the spiritual foundations of the Divine Word and the Holy Spirit for the SVD and SSpS, respectively and for interculturality as understood today, as noted in Section 1.1.3 above.

## ***Founding Generation***

*St. Arnold Janssen* intentionally founded international missionary congregations and endorsed anthropological studies by SVD. He expressed his awareness of the danger of nationalism in this way: “I am naturally averse to any extreme nationalism.... [and we should] choose such forms [of apostolate] as to prevent other nationalities from feeling themselves rejected.”<sup>3</sup>

*St. Josef Freinademetz* is an excellent example of a missionary journey toward interculturality. At the beginning, he could not tolerate the differences he encountered in China. He deplored the differences as sinful pagan superstition and as very bad Chinese character. However, Freinademetz slowly moved towards appreciation and then to what we call interculturality today. He truly loved the Chinese so much, so he said, that even in heaven he wanted to be a Chinese. And he did as much as was possible against the background of the Catholic theology and political situation of those days.



*Mother Theresia Messner*, the first SSpS Superior General, combined the leadership vision of Janssen and the practical implications of Freinademetz in her communication with the Sisters. “If we wish to become missionary sisters we have to adjust to the customs and usages of the foreign peoples.” “Even if our hearts bleed for our loved ones and our country because of the great suffering the war is causing, we must take care in our dealings with people and sisters of other nationalities not to offend their national sensitivity through uncharitable remarks, judgments or sharp criticism.”<sup>4</sup> “Whoever we may be, whether German, Dutch, Austrians, British, Russians, Americans, etc., we, dear Sisters, are all children of the one great family of God...”<sup>5</sup>

## ***Arnoldus Family Charism***

*Wilhelm Schmidt*, SVD, who promoted the study of the cultures and religions of traditional peoples by fellow SVD anthropologists, founded the *Anthropos* journal in 1906 and the Anthropos Institute in 1931. Anthropology studies became part of SVD missionary training, which tended to foster an attitude of respect for and study of other cultures and languages. Our particular focus on interculturality today is built upon this tradition.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold Janssen, SVD, *Letters to the United States of America*, German edition, edited and annotated by Josef Alt, English edition translated by Robert Pung and Peter Spring (Nettetal, Germany: Steyler Verlag, 1998), 43-44, footnote 3.

<sup>4</sup> September 1917 (during World War I).

<sup>5</sup> December 1918 (after armistice).

SVD Superior General Antonio Pernia later identified this as a key component of the Arnoldus Family charism. “This **Anthropos tradition**...is the heritage that we have received from those most identified with the charism of our Society – Arnold Janssen, Joseph Freinademetz and Wilhelm Schmidt – a heritage articulated by Schmidt, but originating from Janssen himself and exemplified in the life of Freinademetz.”<sup>6</sup> Pernia continued: “Our Anthropos tradition is really a way of doing mission which considers an appreciation of people’s cultures as a necessary precondition for genuine evangelization .... whereby the gospel message is not simply parachuted from outside, but enters into dialogue with the culture of the people.... whereby the missionary is ready not just to change people but to be changed himself, or as *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [EN] (15) puts it...whereby the evangelizer not only evangelizes but allows himself or herself to be evangelized.”<sup>7</sup>

This mutual dynamic of intercultural enrichment applies not only to our ministry (*ad extra*) but also to our religious missionary life (*ad intra*). The way we strive to live out interculturality in our community and vowed life, should foster and match how we strive to understand and practice interculturality in our mission commitment. The “Anthropos tradition” within the SSpS charism is reflected for example in their constitution, spirituality, founding generation, recent General Chapters (particularly 2008 and 2014), and joint efforts in interculturality programs (see Section 1.1 above).

### 1.7. Guiding Questions for Reflection (Sections 1.5 and 1.6)

Choose one of the three scripture passages in Section 1.5, and reflect upon how it relates to your experience of living and working with those of a different culture and background.

What idea or image from the Arnoldus Family tradition in Section 1.6 expands and/or clarifies your understanding of interculturality?

### 1.8. Psychological Foundations for Interculturality

Every culture, as a dynamic and integral system, should provide *identity, meaning and order* for the members of that society. While some individuals don’t accept everything in their culture, the general worldview is shared by the majority. This meets the need for distinguishing one’s identity in contrast to other cultures, for providing a set of commonly-held values and principles related to meaning in life, and for providing rules of order in the face of chaos. For example, what is my gender identity, how do I find meaning, and what is the proper behavior for maintaining order as a man or woman in my culture today? Due to this primal cultural bond, people naturally prefer “to be with their own kind” and they fear those who are different. Psychologically, it is unnatural and uncomfortable to cross into other cultural worlds – to leave one’s “comfort zone” of identity, meaning and order. However, interacting with and engaging cultural difference can expand our perspectives, strengthen our positive values, and correct our cultural biases.

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<sup>6</sup> Antonio Pernia, “Expectations,” *Verbum SVD* 45, 1 (2004), 34.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

The Marist priest and social anthropologist Gerald Arbuckle describes the *process of interaction between people of different cultures* in terms of three stages: 1) fascination with and enjoyment of cultural differences, 2) discomfort and tension due to the cultural difference, and 3) movement to overcome these difficulties to reach dialogue and mutual interaction.<sup>8</sup> While a person may have initial interest in other cultures, the first signs of irritation with the differences may prompt a person, psychologically, to take a step back to the first more superficial stage of enjoying the more comfortable aspects of the other culture, such as by sharing ethnic food. While this may be a good temporary step, the challenge of interculturality is to take the risk of engaging the differences by entering stage three.

Another important element of the psychological foundations of interculturality is the *dynamic interplay of personality and culture*. As we know there are different personalities among those of the same culture, and some tensions with those of another culture are due more to personality than culture. Some would say that challenging interactions with people from different backgrounds – in religious life and/or in ministry – is ONLY about personality, and others would say it is ONLY about culture. While the main factor may be personality in some situations and culture in others, personality AND culture are both evident to some degree in all situations.

## 1.9. Guiding Questions for Reflection

What psychological aspect or personality trait makes it challenging for you to truly encounter someone of a different culture or background?

What psychological aspect or personality trait makes it easier for you to truly encounter someone of a different culture or background?

## 2. Challenges for Interculturality

Having described the foundations for interculturality within the Arnoldus Family, we recognize that there are challenges in this gospel-based and counter-cultural process.

### 2.1. Conflicts, Ethnocentrism and Prejudices

First of all, *conflicts* often surface due to misunderstandings, miscommunication, different values and perspectives, ethnocentrism and other prejudices among individuals or groups of different cultural, national, and regional backgrounds. Every culture has a healthy means of *dealing with conflict* within their own cultural worldview and context in order to maintain order and right relationships. However, at the same time, four different conflict resolution styles have been identified among different types of cultures.<sup>9</sup> They are either direct or indirect, either emotionally restrained or expressive. For example, some cultures (i.e. North American and northern European) prefer to be direct and emotionally-

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<sup>8</sup> Gerald Arbuckle, "Multiculturalism, Internationality, and Religious Life," *Review for Religious* 54, 3 (May-June 1995): 330.

<sup>9</sup> Mitchell Hammer, Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory. <https://icsinventory.com/>

restrained – face-to-face, “get to the point,” and avoid emotions. Other cultures (i.e. many traditional Asian cultures) prefer being indirect and also often emotionally restrained – using a “third party” and/or not addressing the point of disagreement or misunderstanding directly. The former tends to give priority to a sense of integrity of the individual, while the latter gives priority to the importance of communal harmony. Other cultures stress the importance of expressing emotions in conflict resolution. Although individuals or groups may manipulate or *mis-use* any of the four patterns, in general a preferred cultural style can work well within its own context. However, it is challenging to deal with conflict in a multicultural context since individuals have different culturally-sanctioned ways of dealing with differences. It is necessary to acknowledge and understand these different patterns and the underlying values.

Furthermore, while having a positive attitude toward and appreciation of one’s culture is very healthy, *ethnocentrism* is the dangerous tendency to use one’s own cultural worldview and values to negatively judge the cultures of others. One can have much knowledge about other cultures, but if one does not have an open mind to understand the worldview and experience of the other, from their perspective, interculturality is not possible. Therefore, it is necessary to a) acknowledge the ethnocentrism and any forms of *prejudice* we naturally have toward the other, and b) seek forgiveness and openness to receive God’s grace to overcome these barriers that prevent us from seeing others as equally blessed brothers and sisters in both the human family and God’s family. Jesus showed us how he challenged and overcame the ethnocentrism of his time and culture, for example through his encounters with the Syrophenician woman (Mk 7:21-39) and the Samaritan woman at the well (Jn 4:1-30), and his use of the Good Samaritan parable (Lk 10:25-37). The early Church demonstrated the same through its decision at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-21). So, we as individuals, communities, religious congregations, and the Church need to continue to be open to the life-long journey of transformation from our ethnocentrism and other prejudices.

## 2.2. Dimensions in Religious Life and Mission

The following areas aspects of religious life pose challenges to interculturality.

*Spirituality:* How does our response to God and our Arnoldus Family spirituality enable us to acknowledge and undergo the transformation needed in our personal and communal lives to live out interculturality in our religious life and mission?

*Community:* How do we overcome our ethnocentrism, nationalism, individualism, and other prejudices and our fear to understand and engage cultural differences in order to more fully live out intercultural living and mission?

*Finance:* How do our life styles, investment policies, development efforts, just distribution of and accountability for finances, decisions for use of resources and choices of mission sites reflect our commitment to intercultural living and mission?

*Leadership:* How do we present our ethnocentrism affecting our systems and choices for choosing leadership? How do we prepare leaders who are culturally sensitive and competent for leading efforts toward fuller interculturality?

*Formation:* How do our initial and on-going formation programs and our choice and training of formation personnel prepare and sustain the SVD and SSpS for intercultural living and mission?

*Mission:* How do we, the members and mission partners of the Arnoldus Family, engage in true mutually-enriching and challenging dynamics in our various ministries?

### **2.3. Guiding Questions for Reflection**

In light of Section 2.1 above, describe one incident where you experienced or witnessed a conflict between persons and/or groups of different cultures. Reflect upon the possible reasons for the conflict and the best way of addressing the situation.

In light of Section 2.2, which of the six areas has been most challenging either for you personally or for your local community or province?

## **3. Joys of Intercultural living and mission**

While striving for interculturality certainly has its challenges, as outlined above, the positive fruits include an experience of God's grace in its rich diversity as the Body of Christ and an invitation to embrace what it means to be fully human in the world today. It provides a broader perspective and worldview for understanding and engaging difference and for being a person of reconciliation and unity. It is a means of being faithful to our Arnoldus Family spirituality, charism, and mission, in the line of Freinademetz, Messner, and many SSpS and SVD before us. In short, intercultural living and mission opens the door for us to experience, witness to, and share the JOY and FULLEST of God's LIFE and MISSION.

### **3.1. Best Practices from Our Communities**

We shall present best practices for interculturality under the same six areas described under Section 2.2 above.

*Spirituality:* The "Materials for Retreats and Recollections of the Arnoldus Family" and the materials found in Chapter Two and Three of this "SVD-SSpS Reflection Guide" provide excellent spirituality resources and best practices for our communities and mission partners, respectively.

*Community, Finance, Leadership, and Formation:* An excellent set of best practices and recommendations for intercultural living in these four areas are listed in the documents of the 18<sup>th</sup> SVD General Chapter under Section 3.3 "Intercultural Living – *Ad Intra.*"

*Mission:* An excellent set of best practices and recommendations in this area is listed in the documents of the 18<sup>th</sup> SVD General Chapter under Section 3.4 "Intercultural

Mission – *Ad Extra*” under the following topics: Putting the last first, Integrity of creation, digital era, and co-responsibility with SVD lay partners.

The 13th and 14th SSpS General Chapters have set congregational directions emphasizing the call to Communion and the relevance of interculturality and interconnectedness both in community life and mission:

- On the 13th Chapter (2008) see Official Communications 215,
- On the 14th Chapter (2014) see Official Communications 227,
- On SSpS Interculturality and Leadership see Official Communications 231,
- On SSpS Interculturality in Formation and Finances see Official Communications 236.

### **3.2. Guiding Questions for Reflection**

- In which of the six areas under 3.1 have you found the most joy and fulfillment in terms of intercultural living and mission? Describe one particular moment or incident.
- Name one “best practice,” big or small, you have experienced for promoting intercultural living and mission.

*Roger Schroeder, SVD*

# MODULES FOR SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY

## 2.1. Intercultural Bible Sharing

### 2.1.1. Guidelines for Bible and Faith/Life Sharing

Having some basic group guidelines for how we will honor one another in our group sharing is important. Such guidelines will give some boundaries to operate within. They help us to value one another and create a safe and healthy space to be more comfortable in sharing deep things of our lives. We recommend that you discuss these guidelines during the first session in order to lay the foundation for a healthy group experience.

**Facilitator:** The group shall have a facilitator, who convenes the group and leads it. This role may alternate between the members of the group in each consecutive session. But it is good to have an overall leader for the group.

**Respect:** Sharing is a “holy ground,” a “sacred space.” “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Mt 18:20). We are encouraged to share from our own hearts, so that we can know others and be known. This takes time and trust. For some, this will come easy. For others, this will be a longer process. We need to respect everyone’s boundaries and pace.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality builds necessary trust in the group. It is not allowed to share these things with people outside the group. What is shared in the group stays in the group.

**Listening:** Let’s value one another during the sharing by really listening to what is being shared. Don’t be thinking about what you’re going to share.

**Focusing on Yourself:** It is easy to talk about the issues of the Church or other people on your team, but for the purposes of sharing one should point the finger back at oneself. Try to use “I” statements rather than “they,” “the Church,” “us,” “we,” etc.

**Sharing:** Sharing is not a time for discussions, theologizing, commenting, advice-giving, asking for clarifications or responding to what has been said.

**Time:** Be sensitive about the amount of time you share. Allow others the space to share as well.

**No “Crosstalk”:** Crosstalk is conversation that leaves others out. Therefore, respect others as they are sharing. No side conversations, no remarks.

**No Fixing:** We are not here to fix each other. Jesus does that part. Don’t try to solve or fix anyone.

**No Rescuing:** When people are sharing something deeply personal, there can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation. Resist the temptation to rescue people.

**Pause:** Allow a pause in the conversation after someone has shared.

**Silence:** Silence helps to create a conducive atmosphere for sharing as well as for listening to oneself, others, and God.

## 2.1.2. Created in the Image and Likeness of God

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: Gen 1:26-28

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- The creation of humankind on the sixth day is the climax of God’s creative work. Human beings are created in the image of God (*imago Dei*), resembling and sharing substantially in his divine nature and partaking in his intelligence, freedom and power.
- The Hebrew term *ādām* does not refer to an exclusive, solitary male figure, but it is a collective term that designates humankind as both *male* and *female*, characterizing their equality and dignity.
- Unlike the ancient near eastern cosmogonies, where human beings are created to be the slaves of gods, in the biblical account God creates humans in his image and bestows upon them his authority to be the stewards of his creation.
- In God’s creative framework, both man and woman are “relational beings” who can relate to God, to one another, and to the creation that they are entrusted with. So, they are “beings-in-communion.”
- We are unique as well as different in terms of our cultures and ethnic backgrounds, but deep down each of us is endowed with the same dignity, being created in God’s image and called to communion.

### Questions

- a. Do I treat the “other” who is created in the image and likeness of God with equality and dignity?
- b. In what ways, do I value the “relational” aspect in my intercultural encounters with people?
- c. How do I understand and appreciate the “uniqueness” and “differences” in my intercultural context?

**4. Second Reading of the Text:** Another member reads the same text aloud.

**5. Prayerful Silence** (for about five minutes): Each listens to God’s personal message.

**6. Sharing of the Word:** Everyone shares his/her personal experience and reflection.

## 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

## 8. Concluding Prayer

*Naveen Rebello, SVD*

### 2.1.3. Self-giving in Interculturality

#### 1. Opening Prayer

#### 2. Reading the Text: Ruth 1:8-19

#### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- A Jewish family migrates from Bethlehem of Judah to Moab on account of the pressures of famine. It was a movement from one culture to another.
- In the land of Moab, the two sons of Elimelech and Naomi marry women of non-Jewish origin – an action frowned upon by Jewish cultural practice (Deut 7:3, 23:3, Ezra 9:2, Neh13:23).
- Naomi decides to leave Moab and go back to her hometown in Judah after the death of her husband and two sons – going back to her roots.
- The bond of interculturality between Naomi and one of her daughters-in-law, Ruth, is expressed when the latter says to the former, “Wherever you go, I will go, wherever you live, I will live. Your people shall be my people and your God will be my God.”
- Ruth’s readiness to give herself entirely to another culture brings to the fore the element of conversion in interculturality.

#### Questions

- a. How willing am I to leave my homeland in favor of another?
- b. To what extent will I let go of myself in the culture of another person?
- c. Am I able to find a home away from home?

#### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

#### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God’s personal message.

#### 6. Sharing of the Word

#### 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

#### 8. Concluding Prayer

*Andrews Aboagye Obeng, SVD*

## 2.1.4. Widening Our Cultural Horizons

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: Mk 7:24-30

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- Jesus departs from Jewish territory and enters the Gentile region of Tyre, where he is approached by a Syro-Phoenician woman in a gentile household. It is an intentional geographical journey that breaks the cultural boundaries of “purity” and “exclusion.”
- Even though Jesus’ initial response to the woman’s request for healing is met with severity, her firm and persistent faith brings about an open and compassionate response at the end. A fine example of expanding one’s cultural horizons!
- The metaphor of small dogs (a diminutive form) and children and their comparison may offend our modern cultural sensibilities, but they underline the element of “belongingness” in ancient households, with each one having a specific role.
- A mother’s love for her child takes her across the accepted socio-religious boundaries. From Jesus’ part, despite one’s religious or social standing, anyone who displays genuine and profound faith in him and his word, not only experiences his healing touch but also becomes a member of God’s people.
- We are invited to widen our cultural horizons by recognizing the goodness in others, by learning from others who are different from us and also allowing ourselves to be surprised by their presence and challenged by their convictions.

### Questions

- a. Do the people from other cultural and religious backgrounds feel “welcome” or “unwelcome” in my personal space?
- b. In times of need and distress, do I look for help from people of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds or do I remain in my familiar nest?
- c. What are the concrete ways by which I can expand my personal and cultural horizons?

### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God’s personal message.

### 6. Sharing of the Word

### 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### 8. Concluding Prayer

*Naveen Rebello, SVD*

## 2.1.5. Across the Generation Gap

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: Lk 1:39-45

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- From the context of chapter 1 of Luke, it is clear that there was a generation gap between Mary, just “betrothed” to Joseph (Lk 1:27), and Elizabeth, “advanced in years” (Lk 1:18). Their living in different parts (Galilee and Judah) may allude to the cultural distance between generations.
- Mary’s “haste” in traveling to her aged relative suggests she did not hesitate to face difficulties in approaching Elizabeth; she does not delay her going across the distance.
- In the Semitic culture, as in many others, greeting is sign of a respect. However, in Mary’s case, it is also an expression of her reverence in front of God’s grace in the life of Elizabeth.
- Elizabeth goes beyond the cultural prioritizing of seniors and immediately recognizes God’s presence in the life of the other, even though she is younger.
- Inner freedom toward our own cultural traditions, and openness for the greatness of the other, make one sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

### Questions

- a. Is my respect for seniors just a burden of the culture to be supported, or is it inspired by the uniqueness of the other?
- b. Am I open to recognize the greatness of the younger ones?
- c. Do I postpone or even reject the challenge to get along with younger/older confreres?

### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God’s personal message.

### 6. Sharing of the Word

### 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### 8. Concluding Prayer

*Marek Vanus, SVD*

## 2.1.6. Love of Neighbor

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: Lk 10:25-37

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- The nature of the offices of the Levite and priest was such that one would have expected them to know the Mosaic Law better and the commandment to love one's neighbor.
- However, a certain socio-cultural and religious mentality had given rise to the view that one's neighbor was one's fellow Jew and not people of other nations.
- Jesus, by this parable, widens the scope of neighbor to include everyone.
- The parable is situated within a historical context of enmity between Jews and Samaritans.
- We are to treat each other as neighbor irrespective of nation, creed or race. Even an enemy in need is a neighbor in need.

#### Questions

- a. Do I write people off simply because of the color of their skin and where they come from?
- b. Am I inclined to help people of my own ethnic group but close my ears to the justified cries of others simply because they do not share in my ethnic affiliation?
- c. To what extent will I be willing to help someone I do not know?

### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God's personal message.

### 6. Sharing of the Word

### 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### 8. Concluding Prayer

*Andrews Aboagye Obeng, SVD*

## 2.1.7. Encounter at the Well

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: Jn 4:1-42

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- The meeting of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well is an “encounter of life” that overcomes cultural, racial and social prejudices by means of dialogue, leading to personal conversion and committed discipleship.
- The gender, cultural and religious barriers (man and woman; Jews and Samaritans; places of worship at Jerusalem and Gerizim) apparently were strong obstacles for an open and genuine dialogue.
- Jesus as a *dialogue partner* and *bridge builder* with respect and concern not only enables the woman to rise above her prejudices but also helps her discover the true identity of her dialogue partner as the Messiah.
- The two key aspects of *rootedness* and *openness* make the Samaritan woman a representative of her community who articulates its external historical and religious concerns as well as expresses its inward authentic faith upon hearing God’s word.
- Jesus “includes” those who are “excluded” from the covenantal way of life, thus “remembering” them with their rightful place as God’s covenant people.

### Questions

- a. What are the socio-cultural barriers that hinder me for an open and genuine dialogue with others?
- b. How much do I value *rootedness* and *openness* in my intercultural life and context?
- c. Following the model of Jesus as a bridge builder, what are the concrete ways by which I can overcome the narrow mindedness and appreciate the cultural goodness of others?

5. **Second Reading of the Text:** Another member reads the same text aloud.

6. **Prayerful Silence** (for about five minutes): Each listens to God’s personal message.

### 7. Sharing of the Word

### 8. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### 9. Concluding Prayer

*Naveen Rebello, SVD*

## **2.1.8. Courage to Meet the Other**

### **1. Opening Prayer**

### **2. Reading the Text:** Acts 10:1-35

### **3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers**

- Peter's visit to Cornelius' house was prepared by two visions, one given to each, and this visit represents an important turning point in Acts; namely, it opens the mission of the primitive Church to people outside Judaism.
- In the Law of Moses, there are strict prescriptions concerning permitted and forbidden foods (Lev 11:1-47). Likewise, it was highly advised to all Jews not to enter the house of a pagan so as not to run the risk of cultic contamination (cf. Lev 7:21), disqualifying themselves from approaching God.
- God sends indications inviting them to look at the situation beyond their own cultural customs, but it is up to Peter to take the decision to step out on the journey (Acts 10:28-29).
- Announcement of the Gospel and listening with an open heart constitute a new unity in diversity within the same faith in Jesus, confirmed by the presence of the Spirit.
- God is close to non-Jews, too. It was a challenge to accept a revelation like this for an observant Jew, as Peter and the others were (Acts 11:3).

### **Questions**

- a. Am I ready to look on situations of diversity differently than what is routine in my culture?
- b. Is my faith something that offers a platform for meeting with others or separation?
- c. Does the word of God challenge me to change some (religious) practice that I may have considered so far unalterable?

### **4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.**

### **5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God's personal message.**

### **6. Sharing of the Word**

### **7. Response to the Word (Action plan)**

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### **8. Concluding Prayer**

*Marek Vanus, SVD*

## 2.1.9. Sharing at the Table of the Lord

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: 1 Cor 10:16-17

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- Paul uses the expression *koinonia* in the blood of Christ and *koinonia* in the body of Christ. The Greek word *koinonia* carries the meaning of a relationship of fellowship and sharing in common. In essence the Eucharist brings us into fellowship with Christ and one another.
- The Church in Corinth was made up of people of diverse backgrounds. As such, this fellowship was not to be limited to any particular group of people.
- Twice in the text, Paul speaks of “one bread.” The emphasis on “one bread” points to a common source. There are no different breads for peoples of different cultures at one Eucharistic table.
- The element of “many” is also noticeable in the text. Christianity is not a club for the few. We are many.
- The eating of the bread and the drinking of wine affirm believers in Christ as one body. This is a core value of interculturality – unity in diversity.

### Questions

- a. As different grains of wheat come together to make one loaf of bread, can I envision myself and others as ingredients in building a formidable Christian community?
- b. Am I able to translate the Eucharistic experience of sharing into my relationship with people of other cultures in my daily activities?
- c. How comfortable am I when food is set before me in another culture? Do I allow my likes and dislikes to dilute my intercultural experience?

### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God’s personal message.

### 6. Sharing of the Word

### 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### 8. Concluding Prayer

*Andrews Aboagye Obeng, SVD*

## 2.1.10. Unity in the Body

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: 1 Cor 12:12-13, 18-19

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- The letter of Paul to the Corinthians comes on the heels of a report he had received from Chloe's family alleging serious divisions in the Christian community (1:11).
- Verse 12 starts with a conjunction introducing an explanation, "for," and therefore connects it to the first eleven verses of chapter 12 which speak about the variety of gifts and the One spirit who gives them.
- Paul grounds his argument on the theological pivot of baptism. By virtue of the one baptism we share, we are of one stock irrespective of our backgrounds.
- Paul employs a chiasmic structure to highlight an essential point in his argument, namely, we are one body with many members:
  - A: For just as the body is one
  - B: and has many members
  - B1: and all of the members of the body
  - A1: though many, are one body
- Paul makes use of the metaphor of the body with its different members to drive home the need for unity and appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit in each other.

### Questions

- a. Are there noticeable divisions in the Christian community I belong to?
- b. Do I appreciate the work of the Holy Spirit in persons who are different from me?
- c. Do I see persons with different gifts and abilities as a blessing and not as a threat?

### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God's personal message.

### 6. Sharing of the Word

### 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### 8. Concluding Prayer

*Andrews Aboagye Obeng, SVD*

## 2.1.11. Christian Love

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: 1 Cor 13:1-13

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- Paul addresses a community that was inclined towards class distinctions. Some claimed to belong to Paul, others to Apollos, and there were those who had idolized Cephas (1 Cor 1:11-13). Additionally, those who had a certain class of gifts felt they were superior to those with less spectacular gifts (1 Cor 12).
- Such unhealthy class distinctions in community living would readily degenerate into abuse and hurts.
- Paul makes it clear that ability and gifts, when exercised without love, are worthless.
- Using a persuasive technique of argument, Paul first describes what love is not before highlighting what love really is. He then concludes by affirming the superiority of love over all other virtues.
- In proposing love to the Corinthian Christian community, Paul unveils the foundation of any lasting intercultural living.

### Questions

- a. Do the gifts I have, or my achievements, make me feel superior to others?
- b. Do I feel I am indispensable in community living and that without me nothing good can happen?
- c. Am I inclined to belittle others in order to look great?

### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God's personal message.

### 6. Sharing of the Word

### 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### 8. Concluding Prayer

*Andrews Aboagye Obeng, SVD*

## 2.1.12. God's Treasure in Earthen Vessels

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: 2 Cor 4:6-7

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- The first six verses distinguish believers as persons who have been transformed by the “light of the Gospel and the glory of Christ.”
- Paul’s description of the Gospel as a treasure has some connection with Jesus’ parable of the Kingdom of heaven as a treasure (Mt 13:44).
- In the Ancient Near East, clay jars were common and temporary. They break every now and then and when they do they are replaced.
- The expression “clay pots” as used in ancient writings is a metaphor descriptive of human weakness.
- God put the treasure of the Gospel in human containers like Paul to show that it is not the jar that makes the treasure important, it is the treasure that makes the jar important.

### Questions

- a. In my missionary activities, do I promote myself and my culture or do I promote the Gospel?
- b. In my interactions with others, do I look beyond their outward appearance and see the values and virtues inside them?
- c. Do I appreciate the work of God in others?

### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God’s personal message.

### 6. Sharing of the Word

### 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### 8. Concluding Prayer

*Andrews Aboagye Obeng, SVD*

## 2.1.13. Trinity, Diversity and Unity

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: 2 Cor 13:11-13

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to the Corinthians ends calmly, after its many storms, with the prospect of ecclesial unity and divine blessing. St. Paul calls for joy and peace in the community.
- The final verse is one of the clearest Trinitarian passages in the New Testament. The Trinity is the perfect relationship of love, a supreme example of unity in diversity. God is a unity, one God, in a diversity of three Divine persons.
- Conflicts and divisions arise when people think that diversity in principle distorts unity.
- Diversity and unity modeled in the Holy Trinity teach us that people do not have to look, behave, think exactly alike in order to live in unity. God does not desire uniformity, but unity.
- God is love. And true love leads to respecting diversity and building unity across national, ethnic, cultural... and social boundaries.

#### Questions:

- a. What is your approach to cultural diversity? Do you see it as a threat or as a gift?
- b. What is your understanding of unity and uniformity?
- c. How does the image of God as Trinity affect the way I relate with God, with self, with others?

### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God's personal message.

### 6. Sharing of the Word

### 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### 8. Concluding Prayer

*Peter Dusicka, SVD*

## 2.1.14. Pulling Down Walls of Hostility

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: Eph 2:11-22

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- The cultural practice of circumcision was used by the Israelites as an important yardstick for distinguishing the people of God (Jews) from the non-people of God (Gentiles). The former considered themselves as insiders and regarded the latter as outsiders with reference to the Covenant of God.
- The division was not just cultural and theological. It also had social consequences. Jews, for example, would not sit at the same table and share a meal with Gentiles.
- The text elaborates the action of Christ in bringing peace and unity between the two. The reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles is presented as part of a bigger picture of God's plan of redeeming humanity from sin and its divisive effect.
- In bringing the two together, one group does not fall under the power of the dominant group. Rather, in Christ, one humanity is established from the two.
- In this text, Christ is seen as a bridge-builder, uniting peoples of different cultures into one humanity.

### Questions

- a. What is my attitude towards 'foreigners' in general?
- b. Are there visible divisions within my community of faith?
- c. Have I been schooled in the ideological thinking that people outside the Catholic Church are doomed?

### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God's personal message.

### 6. Sharing of the Word

### 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

### 8. Concluding Prayer

*Andrews Aboagye Obeng, SVD*

## 2.1.15. The Foundation of Intercultural Harmony

### 1. Opening Prayer

### 2. Reading the Text: Phil 2:1-11

### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- Paul wrote this passage responding to the frictions, disunity and rivalries that plagued this otherwise exemplary Christian community.
- Using the conditional “if” in the sense “assuming that”, Paul affirms that the community members share love, and are joined in the Spirit; they relate to one another with compassion and sympathy.
- Yet, at the same time, they need to make progress in arriving at the stage of being of “one mind” and acting in accord, which are necessary conditions for fruitful functioning of any intercultural group which strives to form a community in a true sense of that word.
- The apostle explicitly names the disruptive factors and attitudes at work among them: selfish ambitions, conceit, and a sense of superiority over others. These are the same disruptive dynamics that plague contemporary religious community and tend to be exacerbated in culturally diverse communities.
- Paul then evokes Christ and his incarnation as a model and motivation to combat disunity.
- Using a magnificent Christological hymn that describes Christ’s mission, Paul singles out four attitudes and responses which would bring unity and cohesion to any community, particularly a multi-cultural one:
- Primary focus on service and willingness to sacrifice for others, which Christ exemplified in an act of “pouring himself out”;
- Obedience to God’s salvific design which entails creation of a universal and inclusive community, which Christ served to the point of self-sacrifice on the cross.

### Questions

- a. What motivates my actions and informs my decisions as a member of a community? Answer in reference to the elements listed by Paul in Phil 2:2-3.
- b. What are the presumptions, prerogatives, judgements and values which form a part of my cultural identity that I am attached to and which I cling to? For what good and positive reason would I be willing and able to “empty myself”?
- c. Am I willing to take seriously and imitate in my life and ministry the fourfold example of Christ described in the hymn? What concrete and practical steps are required?

### 4. Second Reading of the Text: Another member reads the same text aloud.

### 5. Prayerful Silence (for about five minutes): Each listens to God’s personal message.

### 6. Sharing of the Word

## 7. Response to the Word (Action plan)

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

## 8. Concluding Prayer

*Wojciech Szypula, SVD*

### 2.1.16. Beyond Fundamental Distinction

#### 1. Opening Prayer

#### 2. Reading the Text: Gal 3:26-28

#### 3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers

- The starting point for Paul's exposition on the new Christian identity, is an honest acknowledgment of the enslaving and dividing factors common to all humanity: sin for the Gentiles and the law for the Jews (Gal 3:22-25).
- Through Christ sin and the law ceased, and a new uniting force for all humanity emerged – faith in the person of Jesus Christ.
- Those joined to Christ through faith and baptized into him acquire a new identity which surpasses all distinctions and dividing factors.
- Paul names three basic and identity-defining distinctions operating in the society: ethnicity (Jew or Greek), social status (slave or free), gender (male and female). These distinctions served, and still serve, as dividing lines for societies and communities, and provide ready tools and categories for those intent on differentiation and discrimination.
- Aware of that potential, Paul relativized the importance of distinctions and, pointing to a more fundamental identity rooted in belonging to Christ, rendered those distinctions irrelevant. Our individual cultures are important, but they come as second in the order of importance when it comes to the life of faith.
- Through faith in Christ and baptism, individuals from all cultures and walks of life acquire that deeper and supra-cultural identity of God's children, which Paul biblically named as being Abraham's offspring.
- A fruitful and meaningful intercultural living must rest on a reality deeper than any culture, on the common foundation of Christ.
- Cultural diversity must be acknowledged, understood and embraced as means to express that primary faith commitment, but unjust practices and divisions need to be challenged.

#### Questions

- a. What lies at the core of my self-understanding as a Christian and religious – my cultural identity and union with Christ?

- b. To what degree does my culture color my perceptions of fellow community members – do I evaluate them through my cultural lenses or on the grounds of their commitment to Christ?
- c. Do I pay undue attention to the issues of culture and its particular expressions, to the neglect of the more significant matters of faith, love and service?

**4. Second Reading of the Text:** Another member reads the same text aloud.

**5. Prayerful Silence** (for about five minutes): Each listens to God’s personal message.

**6. Sharing of the Word**

**7. Response to the Word (Action plan)**

- Personal: What am I going to do?
- Communal: What are we going to do?

**8. Concluding Prayer**

*Wojciech Szypula, SVD*

## 2.1.17. From Every Nation, Culture and Language

**1. Opening Prayer**

**2. Reading the Text:** Rev 7:9-14

**3. Studying the Text – Intercultural Pointers**

- In contrast to the symbolic number of 144,000 drawn from all tribes of Israel in the preceding verses (7:4-9), here in the text for our Bible sharing we have a description of a huge number of people impossible to count and drawn from every nation, race, tribe and language.
- The universal character of salvation is made explicit in the text.
- There are no second class citizens with reference to the “great multitude.” None is made to stand on the peripheries or margins of the Kingdom of God. They all stand in front of the throne and the lamb. They are all brought very close.
- Their outward white robes signify inner purity and dignity. The color of their robes is a harmonious blend of all the colors of the beauty of light.
- The palm branch is a cultural symbol for victory in the Greco-Roman world. It is also a symbol of God’s saving grace to Israel as expressed in the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:39-43; Neh 8:15).

### Questions

- a. Do I regard my language and cultural expressions as more favored in spirituality than others?
- b. Am I inclined to segregation by deliberately avoiding to sit by certain people in the same pew in church or at the dining table?
- c. Do I feel uncomfortable when people of other cultures enter my safe space?

4. **Second Reading of the Text:** Another member reads the same text aloud.
5. **Prayerful Silence** (for about five minutes): Each listens to God’s personal message.
6. **Sharing of the Word**
7. **Response to the Word (Action plan)**
  - Personal: What am I going to do?
  - Communal: What are we going to do?
8. **Concluding Prayer**

*Andrews Aboagye Obeng, SVD*

## 2.2. Intercultural Faith/Life Sharing

### 2.2.1 Sharing one’s Own Culture with a Symbol

***Objective:** Present the richness of one’s own culture to others and learn to appreciate the cultures of others.*

***Preparation:** Participants of the sharing session will be informed ahead of time to choose one meaningful symbol/object/artifact of their culture and bring it to the meeting.*

*Prepare a room with decorations where the sharing takes place. There should be a candle and a special decorated spot, where participants will place their symbols after their sharing.*

#### A. Song/Music

#### B. Opening Prayer

#### C. Introduction

God likes variety. This fact is clearly seen in his creation. There are thousands of species that are giving glory to God by their very existence. This variety does not apply only to nature, but also to the human family. In the book of Revelation we read about “a great multitude from every nation, race, people and language” standing in front of God’s throne and praising God (Rev 7:9). This gathering is like a giant orchestra, composed of every nation, ethnic group... where each plays a different musical instrument. Every instrument is appreciated and contributes with its specific “nuance” to the beauty of music.

There is also a variety of cultures. Every nation/ethnic group/tribe has its specific culture. Culture is “the holy ground” in which we all have grown up. It is expressed in stories, rituals, songs, language, artifacts, objects and so forth.

Today we will present the richness of our own culture through a symbol that we brought, and at the same time we will try to appreciate other cultures through their symbols. This

sharing via symbols is a kind of communication, which allows us to enrich ourselves, who are from different cultures. Our goals are:

- to communicate with each other on a deeper level
- to appreciate the richness of their respective cultures
- to come closer to each other.

#### **D. Silence**

**E. Sharing:** Everybody is asked to share about the symbol of his/her culture (what it means for him/her, what values it represents).

#### **F. Questions for a Second Shorter Reflection and Sharing**

- a. What are your new insights/learnings from this sharing?
- b. How did you feel enriched by others?
- c. What could you (or as a group) do in the future in order to grow in the appreciation of other cultures?

#### **G. Song**

#### **H. Closing prayer**

*Peter Dusicka, SVD*

### **2.2.2. Sharing the Richness of Cultural Traditions**

***Objective:** To celebrate different expressions of the cultural life of the group to enrich one's life and the community.*

***Preparation:** Cultural symbols and traditional food are brought to the group. All participants come for this sharing with their cultural dress.*

#### **A. Song**

#### **B. Opening Prayer**

##### **Introduction**

Culture serves as a basis for peaceful coexistence. It provides understanding and tolerance. Without culture people are not able to exist in the world. Culture is also about quality of life. It creates trust and better understanding among people. It helps make people happy and satisfied with their lives. Culture is always about people. Today, we enter into the cultural lives of the different groups present here.

##### **Reflection Pointers**

###### ***Other cultures are interesting***

First of all, it's interesting to learn about those who are different from us. There's nothing wrong in doing something different because it's *interesting*. A little extra knowledge

never hurts anyone, and it's probably more useful and edifying than watching another mindless TV show.

### ***Stimulate your mind***

Learning about cultures stimulates the mind, and forces us to think in new ways. Learning about other cultures is an interesting way to challenge our thought processes and expand the way we integrate information. Making it a point to learn more about other cultures, we will find that our propensity to keep learning helps us grow in our mental capacities.

### ***Learning about other cultures fosters understanding***

Many of the problems come up in communities because of the misunderstandings of others. When we learn about another culture and see why others do things in a different way, it's easier to understand them. We can develop sympathy with others. It's harder to justify things like intolerance and war when we understand other persons from their perspective.

### ***Realizing there's more than one way to do something***

It's true that cultural heritage shouldn't be used as an excuse to oppress others. There are times when the traditions of others do need to be discarded. However, it might actually be some of the trappings of our own culture that need shedding.

When we learn about other cultures, we learn that there is more than one approach to life. We also learn that our approach might not always be the best way. Perhaps the cultural heritage of someone else can add another dimension to our life.

Learning about other cultures allows us to move outside our own bubble, find new ways of thinking, and new ways of approaching problems.

### ***Being ready for an increasingly global world***

With technology making the world into a global village, and with the ease of travel between countries, chances are that we will meet someone with a different cultural heritage at some point. Being able to tolerate others, and not to berate them because of their differences, is not only a big part of living in a global community, but it is also the mark of a well-matured person.

Learning about other cultures in our country makes us more open minded. Taking the trouble to learn about other cultures and customs, we will have a richer experience, no matter where we go.

## **C. Sharing**

Each person in the group shares the meaning of the traditional dress and the type of food that each one brought along. Share the values of these items and how it unifies a community/clan.

At the end of the sharing the following reflective questions are asked:

- a. What did you learn from the sharing of others?
- b. What do you appreciate in others' culture?

**D. Thanksgiving Prayer:** At the end of the sharing each one prays in his/her own language, giving thanks to God.

**E. Concluding Prayer**

**F. Song**

**G. Share the Traditional Meal Together**

*Marita Kurian, SSpS*

### **2.2.3. Sharing Experiences of Respect and Listening**

***Objective:** Raise awareness of the necessity to include others through paying respect and attentive listening to people of other cultures.*

**A. Song/Music**

**B. Opening Prayer**

**C. Introduction**

When we reflect on the theme of respecting others we can look at it from two perspectives. We need to earn or gain respect through our competence, character, and virtues like reliability, truthfulness, goodness, compassion, etc. From that perspective, some may gain it, some not. Yet, there is also another, much deeper level of respect, based on human dignity. Human dignity originates from God and is of God because we are all made in God's own image and likeness. This dignity is not based on any human quality, legal mandate, or individual merit or accomplishment. Human dignity is inalienable – that means it is an essential part of every human being. Therefore each human being regardless of age, sex, religion, nation, or cultural background deserves respect, since each one has a value that comes from God.

People are from different cultures, have different colors, have other worldviews and have different ways to approach problems in a society. As a missionary or due to our studies, we may have a scientific approach, very rational in making judgements, and may look at others with our ethnocentric perspective. But, if a person does not respect other men or women in another culture, it might lead into a problem; we may create a wall between people. Thus, respect is a prime value in the life of a missionary.

One of the aspects of respect is attentive listening to a person from another cultural background. This could be manifested through various signs like: paying attention, not interrupting, not making fun of the views of that person, and taking seriously what the other is saying.

Can you recall the following experiences/stories in your life?

- a. You were listened to and others cherished your experience or views while sharing. How did it make you feel at that moment? How would you describe these feelings?
- b. You engaged in a group discussion and you noticed that a certain person was not given a chance to say a word, or was not taken seriously by others. What went through your mind and heart? Did you do something to help this person not to feel belittled? Or, is it your concern at all that every person is given a chance to say something and be respected by others?
- c. You were listening to another person presenting a totally different opinion that you could not agree with. What happened in your mind and heart in that moment? Despite these differences in opinion, were you still able to show proper respect for this person?

#### **D. Silence**

**E. Sharing:** Everybody is welcomed to share something on the aforementioned questions or at least one question.

#### **F. Questions for a Second Shorter Reflection and Sharing**

- a. What are your new insights/learnings/enrichment from this sharing?
- b. What do you take with you?
- c. What could you (or we as a group) do in the future in order to include others through paying respect and listening to them?

#### **G. Closing prayer**

#### **H. Song**

*Peter Dusicka, SVD*

### **2.2.4. Sharing Experiences of Disrespect and Ethnocentrism**

*Objective:* To learn to overcome disrespect and search for ways to overcome ethnocentrism.

*Preparation:* Pictures or sketches of people showing respect and disrespect are displayed, or show an appropriate video.

#### **A. Song**

#### **B. Opening Prayer**

#### **C. Introduction**

##### ***Reflection points on disrespect***

Disrespect is the act of putting someone down, trying to make them feel low, treating someone in an uncivilized manner, showing a person that they are of no value or nothing to you. Disrespectful behavior is what is rude, unpleasant, inappropriate and unprofessional; behavior that causes hurt feelings and distresses, disturbs, and/or offends others; uncivilized behavior that is impolite, not mindful of others and egocentric

activities; discourteous behavior that displays a lack of regard for others. When one is ethnocentric he/she will manifest disrespectful behaviors and attitudes.

### ***Reflection points on ethnocentrism***

This term is made up of the Greek root "ethnos," meaning a people or group, and "centric," meaning the center or middle of something. Thus, it refers to the fact that our outlook or world view is centered on our own way of life. Ethnocentrism leads to the belief that one's own patterns of behavior are the best: the most natural, beautiful, right, or important. Therefore, other people are different and they are perceived as strangers and they are judged as inhuman, unnatural, or wrong.

Ethnocentrism is the view that one's own culture is better than all others; it is the way all people feel about themselves as compared to those from other cultures. There is no one in our society who is not ethnocentric to some degree, no matter how open-minded he or she might claim to be. People will always find some aspect of another culture unnatural, be it religious practices, a way of treating friends or relatives, or simply a food that they cannot manage to accept with a smile. This is not something we should be ashamed of, since it is a natural result of growing up in any society. However, it is something we should constantly keep in mind when we study other cultures, so that we can look at the situation more objectively, take our bias into account, and we don't judge others from our perspectives.

### **D. Silence**

**E. Sharing.** Each person is asked to share a story or an encounter where you were put down by others because of your culture, or a story you behaved in a way that implied your culture is the best. Share your story with these reflective questions:

- How do you feel when someone behaves toward you in a disrespectful way?
- Why do you put others down? What do you think about your cultural behavior in relation to others' cultural behavior?

### **F. Questions for a Second Shorter Reflection and Sharing**

- a. What are your new insights/learnings from this sharing?
- b. How did you feel about this life sharing?
- c. What steps could you (or as a group) take in the future in order to grow from ethnocentrism to interculturality?

### **G. Sign of Peace**

### **H. Closing Prayer**

### **I. Song**

*Marita Kurian, SSpS*

## 2.2.5. Sharing Experiences of Prejudice and Fear

*Objective: To get out of fear, prejudices and unwanted baggage to enjoy true freedom of life.*

### A. Song

### B. Opening Prayer

### C. Introduction

*What is prejudice?*

Prejudice can refer to unfounded or pigeon holed beliefs and it may include "feeling favorable or unfavorable, toward a person or thing, prior to, or not based on, actual experience." Prejudice is "an unreasonable attitude that is unusually resistant to rational influence," Gordon Allport.

*What is fear in the context of prejudice?*

It is social anxiety in the context of situations that involve interaction with other people. You could say social anxiety is the fear and anxiety of being negatively judged and evaluated by other people. It is a pervasive disorder and causes anxiety in most of the areas of a person's life.

**Film:** Let us watch a film dealing with fears and prejudices.

Show the film *Babette's Feast* or any other suitable film. If this film, *Babette's Feast*, is not accessible, read the summary below.

The group is divided into smaller sections and reflects on the following:

- a. Point out some of the beliefs and attitudes of the characters of the film
- b. Share a story or experience you have had similar to this film
- c. What lessons are you learning from this film?
- d. What are your prejudices and fears, and what could you do to overcome them?

**D. Thanksgiving prayer:** Each one could offer a spontaneous thanksgiving prayer

### E. Closing prayer

### F. Song

**Summary of the film is given for those who need it** - Mary Kay Oosdyke, O.P.

Some years back, a Danish film was shown in theaters around the country called "Babette's Feast." The setting of the film is a small village in a remote section of Denmark where the people belong to a strict religious sect. Their life, their food, and their religious practice reflect the austerity of the surrounding land. The leader and founder of the sect is a widower with two daughters, both of whom are attractive and gifted. The story is about their lives and the life of the little community.

The two daughters have suitors from outside of the community but decide to stay and help their father's small and aging flock. After their father dies the two women become the mainstay of the group, serving the community and leading the service of prayer. One daughter has a lovely voice and she leads and inspires the singing. The prayer services are simple and austere, like the daily fare.

When the two women are older, Babette arrives on their doorstep having fled the uprisings in France. Although Babette is obviously a woman of breeding, she asks to be their servant since she has no money and wishes to stay with them. She learns to cook the simple and commonplace food of the village, dried fish and ale-bread soup which even to the viewer is most unappetizing.

As the years go by the villagers grow old and querulous. The two sisters wonder if they will be able to hold the community together. Past incidents, long-repressed and unforgiven are now rising to the surface in old age and threatening the life of the little community. The sisters are concerned and decide to celebrate the anniversary of their father's death in the hope that it may renew the spirit of the community.

While the sisters are planning the memorial for the anniversary of their father's death, Babette, who has been with them for seventeen years now, comes to them and asks them for a favor. She would like to prepare a dinner for the village in honor of their father's anniversary. The sisters protest but Babette reminds them that she has never asked for anything and that she had recently received a sum of money. The sisters reluctantly agree to the dinner and Babette leaves for a few days to procure what she needs for the feast.

She returns with a cartload of crates containing live animals, wine, dishes, and many unfamiliar delicacies. As the preparation for the feast goes on, the sisters grow more apprehensive. Their spartan life seems threatened by Babette's feast. They meet with the elders and discuss their dilemma. They do not wish to hurt Babette who has served them so faithfully, yet they wish to take no pleasure in the senses, preferring to discipline both taste and tongue that it may praise God more purely. They decide they will go to the feast and eat the food but they will not enjoy it or find pleasure in it. They make a pact not to comment on the food or drink. It is to be as nothing to them.

The night for the feast arrives. The spartan dining room is transformed with linen and crystal and silver candlesticks. By a strange coincidence a former suitor of one of the sisters, now a general, returns to visit his aunt who is invited to the feast. He also comes.

The feast begins. First comes one course, then another of fine gourmet foods and an appropriate wine with each course. The fearful little group remembers their pact and encourages one another in their effort to remain untouched by the feast. The general however, constantly comments on the food, utterly amazed by its elegance – only to have the conversation changed immediately. As the meal progresses, faces soften and begin to glow in the candlelight. The wines begin to warm hearts. They begin to see and smell and taste the food, enjoying its life-giving pleasure. Enlivened by good spirit they reach back into their pasts recalling the incidents that divide them. By the time they reach coffee and cognac in the spartan sitting room around a piano with a familiar hymn being sung, reconciliations have occurred. Joy is reborn; life is cherished in one another. By now the general has recognized a unique French dish only available at one of Paris' best restaurants where the chef, renowned for the cuisine, was a woman.

The sisters are sure Babette will leave after the feast because she won all that money and can afford to go home. But Babette informs them that she will remain with them for she has spent all the money on the feast. They had enjoyed the feast as nothing before but are astounded to think that it cost all she had.

*Marita Kurian, SSpS*

## 2.2.6. Sharing Experiences of Entering into Others' Garden

*Objective: Reflect on the experience of mission across cultures and discover the richness of other cultures by entering into them "bare foot."*

### A. Song/music

### B. Opening Prayer

### C. Introduction

We will reflect on two thoughts regarding our intercultural life and mission.

To live in a different country or to minister across cultures is like entering someone else's garden. The task involves listening and reflection, just as "one enters another's garden" not to compare its beauty and variety with one's own but to appreciate another way of gardening. One begins the process by taking off one's shoes. As Moses removed his sandals before the "burning bush" so a missionary/minister begins with a stance of respect before the presence of God among the people and their history, culture and religions. The missionary, as outsider, learns from the people he was missioned to serve, allowing them to begin the process of teaching the missionary about the new garden just entered. While the missionary (outsider) is an "expert" in his own garden, he/she is like a child in the new garden.

- What were challenges and richness of entering into someone else's culture/garden?
- Did you take off your shoes to enter into others' garden? How did the people respond to you while you were in their garden?

Anthropologist G. Arbuckle describes the process of interaction between people of different cultures in three phases. It starts first with fascination and enjoyment of cultural differences; then comes disillusionment and tension due to the difficulties of communication and interaction. The final phase is the movement to overcome these difficulties to reach real dialogue and mutual interaction.

- How was the process of your interaction with people of a different culture? In which phase do you think you are now?

### D. Silence

**E. Sharing:** Everybody is welcomed to share about one of the aforementioned questions.

### F. Questions for a Second Shorter Reflection and Sharing

- a. What are new insights/learnings/enrichment from this sharing?
- b. What do you take with you?
- c. What could you (or as a group) do in the future on the way to becoming more interculturally sensitive persons and integrating differences?

### G. Closing prayer

### H. Song

*Peter Dusicka, SVD*

## 2.2.7. Sharing Experiences of Cultural Shock upon Entering a New Culture

*Objective: Share personal experiences and reactions to crisis, especially when entering a new culture, and reflect on it together to discover the spiritual blessings and God's call in this reality.*

### A. Song

### B. Prayer

### C. Introduction (this works only with persons who do not know Chinese characters):

- Read the following Chinese character (give time to experience one's own emotional and mental reactions)
- What are my feelings and thoughts, reactions, words I want to say? Share these reactions (surprise, shock, curiosity, anger, helplessness, frustration, blaming others...)



**Definition:** Crisis is when I am not able to put something together for myself meaningfully. Something doesn't fit into what I am used to, it is out of "my" normal. It can be a time of great difficulty and suffering, feeling "out of place." Everything new which I cannot put into my meaning-making system brings me into a smaller or bigger crisis.

What can I do to get out of this crisis? (Collect from participants, interaction)

- Enroll in a Chinese language course to build up my mental structures so that they can adjust and interpret these signs (learning)
- Look into a dictionary
- Ask someone for help

**Resolution** (explanation of the Chinese characters):



### Reflecting on Own Experience

- a) *Round:* Looking at my own crisis/culture shock when entering a new country: what were my feelings initially? What were difficult or even shocking experiences for me? What were the challenges, dangers and opportunities in these situations? (give time for personal reflection)

Setting: Sitting in a circle with a small decoration/candle in the center, use an object as talking stick (if someone wants to speak, he/she goes to the middle, picks up the talking stick, when sitting again starts sharing, when finished puts the talking stick back into the center)

- *Sharing*

b) *Round*: Reflection after sharing: What did I hear? What did I learn? What can help me to deal better with my own situations? How is God calling me in this situation?

- *Sharing* (if appropriate use talking stick again)

c) *Round*: Is there a Bible word or phrase which comes to my mind? (give space to say this loudly in a meditative way)

- *Sharing*

### **Optional readings**

**Psalm 23:1-6**: A Psalm of David.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows...

**Jeremiah 29:11**

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

**D. Prayer**: Give space that participants can freely respond in prayer form.

**E. Song**

*Miriam Altenhofen, SSpS*

## **2.2.8. Sharing Experiences of Building Intercultural Bridges**

***Objective**: Discover that everybody has the potential to build bridges and be aware that the bridges we try to build help us to encounter and be enriched by other cultures.*

***Preparation**: Either the preparation team prepares various pieces of wood, stones or pieces of bricks, pictures of different bridges in a room, or asks participants to choose and bring them to the meeting.*

**A. Opening Prayer** (just natural sounds of water flowing, rain forest sounds, some relaxation music, or a song)

**B. Dynamics**

- *Personal level*: Choose a piece of wood, or a stone or piece of brick. Reflect on it, why do you choose that one? Do you identify some element in common between that element and yourself, your personal story, your culture? Spend some moments pondering on it, you could write something down.

- By pairs you can share your thoughts and reflections. (5 minutes)
- By groups of 4 persons, you will contemplate pictures of different types of bridges and choose one. The group asks themselves the reason for the choice. How was that bridge built? How my element could help (or not) to build the bridge? (15-20 minutes)
- Mix the people in different groups, no more than 5 persons each. We reflect on the encounter of different cultures, and how this encounter impacts in our lives as individuals, as communities, as religious communities? Are we ready to build bridges? ( 30 minutes)
- *Sharing in a plenum*: What had the most impact on you? What are the elements needed in order to build a bridge?

**C. Watch the video** clip “The bridge” [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_X\\_AfRk9F9w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_X_AfRk9F9w)

Some points to help in the reflection:

- The importance of being myself, aware of my personal story, wounds, joys, experiences, culture and being happy with it.
- Encounter of cultures: I encounter my own culture; I encounter the other’s culture, both of them are “Holy grounds that I need to enter without shoes.” Welcoming attitude.
- Inculturation/interculturality is important and necessary.
- Silence, listening, asking questions before acting. Communication at different levels.
- Live as “outgoing Church.”
- The audacity of communion, more than only team work.
- Inter generation dynamics in the growth of interculturality.
- Prophecy: Welcome the differences with tenderness and an open mind.

**D. Closing prayer**

Arrange in a circle the pictures from each group, with candles, flowers, etc. A moment of silence, then afterward each participant will say in loud voice the word or the thought that she/he would like to take home from this sharing and place in the circle her/his stone, piece of wood, etc.

**E. Song**

*Carmen Elisa, SSPS*

**2.2.9. Sharing Experiences of Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

*Objective: To understand the meaning of forgiveness and reconciliation and their challenges for building healthy intercultural community.*

**A. Introduction**

Everyday life in an international community is full of joys and surprises, but it also contains certain challenges and the need for constant effort and acceptance of mutual forgiveness. Reflecting upon the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation we can see that

we need them in four areas: in relation to ourselves, in relation to others, in relation to creation, and in relation to God.

Despite all good will and great efforts, we often fail to free ourselves from past trauma. We are in a tangle of emotions, in which fear, anger, guilt, aggression, pain, sadness, and feelings of harm are mixed up. The hurts we experience cause painful wounds that hinder our functioning, prevent us from reopening to sincere relationships with our neighbors, do not allow for optimal development, that is, a healthy and happy life. SSpS constitution 306 says, "Genuine community living calls us to continual conversion."

## **B. Activity**

Invite the participants to a short, personal reflection (think about it and write):

- Whose voice wouldn't I most like to hear on the phone, if the phone rings now?
- With whom wouldn't I want to live in the same room?
- Whom should I forgive?

## **C. Sharing and Prayer**

What have I experienced, learned, how do I feel? What have I discovered? (Sharing for 5 min.)

What do these answers say about me, what am I afraid of, what is troubling me? (Talk about it with Jesus during your personal prayer)

**Forgiveness** is a choice of your will not to allow anyone to control your emotional wellbeing except for God. It is a vertical act between God and you and it has nothing to do with the offender.

The best way to step toward forgiveness is to admit that each of us needs to forgive and to ask for forgiveness. Be honest with the Lord and ask Him to reveal any distorted thinking you may have about forgiveness. That often begins with discovering the difference between what forgiveness is – and what it is not. The cycle of bitterness and revenge continues, often due to an inaccurate view of forgiveness. A number of resources explain what forgiveness is, but there is little that helps a person understand what it is not; and that is often the key.

What forgiveness is not: 5 common misconceptions.

1. Need to be friendly with the person that hurt me again and go back to the old relationship.
2. To forgive is to excuse or ignore the offender's actions.
3. To forgive is to forget.
4. To forgive, I must feel forgiving.
5. Forgiveness means I have to revert to being the victim.

**Group work:** *The participants will work in 5 groups; each group will receive one of the misconceptions and is asked to give one example from their intercultural life experience.*

**D. Performance:** Feel free to share your experience with others.

To close this part, the guide can invite the participants to see the film:

*The Shack* (2017) - Understanding Forgiveness: Papa instructs Mack to forgive his daughter's killer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gjuizikJ2bk> (3.10 min)

“To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you” *Lewis B. Smedes*.

Forgiveness is for our own growth and happiness. When we hold on to hurt, pain, resentment, and anger it harms us far more than it harms the offender. Forgiveness frees us to live in the present. To be reconciled means something else; it indicates an increase in closeness between different sides.

**Reconciliation** is a horizontal act between you and other person (*victim and offender*)

*The Shack* - Reconciling with my father: Mack sees souls in heaven, including that of his abusive father.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_9GTwEOdkY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_9GTwEOdkY) (3.10 min.)

**Personal moment** of reflection on one of the experiences of reconciliation (15 min.)

**Activity**/preparation of the liturgy together (e.g., in the evening)

- Invite the participants to recall the whole process and find/bring a symbol (song, picture, bible passage, poem... etc.) that expresses their own experience during this meeting.
- Invite the participants to create a liturgy that gathers and harmonizes all the aspects and celebrate the joy of forgiveness and reconciliation in the intercultural community.

**Close with the short video** about Corrie Ten Boom: a message on forgiveness.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hH9nwFb87u4> (4.21 min)

Corrie's story shows us that forgiveness is both a human effort and a divine gift. We can compare this difficult process to playing the piano. When we play the piano, the left hand accompanies us and the right hand plays the melody, the same is true of forgiveness – you have to play two hands: one divine and one human. Our effort is necessary, but not the most important, because we play only the accompaniment and God plays the melody and it is He who determines the character of the whole piece.

For More Resources on Forgiveness and Reconciliation, see the

<https://www.svdcuria.org/public/ajsc/index.htm> and <https://www.worldssps.org>

*Krystyna Szweda, SSpS*

## 2.3. Bibliodrama

### Introduction

The Bible, as we know, is the written testimony of the divine Word. The sacred scriptures, written within the context of the relationship between God and His people, are taken by us as our sacred tradition. God has revealed Himself through history and is continuously revealing Himself to us in our present reality. Our life and mission are founded on the Word of God and it is necessary to place ourselves in a persistent search for His revelation. Through the Holy Spirit's constant presence, we never cease meditating upon the Bible and discovering inexhaustible riches in it. One approach to help us explore and connect to the biblical texts is Bibliodrama.

Bibliodrama comes from two Greek words: *biblion*, meaning book, and in this context the Bible; and drama, which means action or process. It describes a method of exploring the biblical texts.

Bibliodrama evolved from a variety of origins – psychodrama, Christian theater, play and theater pedagogy, body works, and feminist theology, to name a few. Despite the great diversity of schools and practical approaches, there are common elements that ground Bibliodrama. These are: (1) translation of biblical texts into action, (2) identification with the available roles or characters, and (3) the intention to deepen the experience of oneself and the Scripture.

Bibliodrama, integrated in this Reflection Guide, envisions developing the culture of life and faith relationship. It invites us to rediscover the importance of the Word of God in our personal and communal journey. The dynamic of interacting with the biblical texts and having a dialogue with them bridges the gap between the **biblical texts** and our **life's context**. The scripts always convey something new. Through a Bibliodrama approach, one can perceive how his/her own experiences link up with those evoked by the text, how it illuminates one's personal life and faith stories, and how to have a new understanding of faith and the Scriptures, thus empowering the spiritual aspect of life.

Some Bibliodrama elements that we introduce here encourage communication among participants by engaging them in a dialogue of perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. They promote learning and healing, with and for others, and mutual help in order to discover and acknowledge God's presence and actions in one's life. These elements require conditions that facilitators and participants must fulfill, and these are, interest in the Bible and openness to deal with one's personal experiences. It is very important that the facilitators must have a good preparation and the participants must have full confidence in the facilitators. Participation in the Bibliodrama entails free will and willingness to engage in the group process. Respect for everyone's opinions and thoughts is the condition to avoid judging or laughing. Everyone freely shares his/her own feelings and others connect themselves to the sharer through attentive listening. The sharing of personal experience is sacred, therefore all must respect confidentiality about what turns up in the group. It is good that these conditions are always mentioned by the facilitator

at the beginning of a meeting. To live the experience fully, each one is invited to trust in the WORD and trust in one's FEELINGS.

Dances are incorporated into the process of Bibliodrama. Bibliodrama dances allow us to discover dance as a community activity. The experience of the Word in conjunction with movement and dance has a healing and redeeming effect. One who dances will try to keep a balance between work and play, between labor and leisure, between pleasure and duty, between spirit, soul and body. The one who dances, searches not only for harmony, but also for balance and composure. (Source: *Talitha Kum* Book)

**General Preparation:** *What to be aware of*

**Space:** As large as possible, according to the number of group members.

**Order:** Chairs in a circle or at the wall.

**Center** of the room can be designed initially according to the theme. It is removed as soon as you start with a Bibliodrama element.

**Requisites:** Sometimes cloths or sheets are placed on the floor.

**Content:** Bible texts from the Old and New Testament. All texts are suitable for interaction, but it may be that in the beginning it is better to turn to lighter texts, and then, with more experience, to those that are more demanding.

**Facilitators:** They have the most important role, because they are to a certain extent leading the group, monitoring what is going on, and guiding from the beginning to the end.

**General preparation:** *This is held at the beginning of the all Bibliodrama elements that follow.*

Begin the session with a moment of silence, a breathing exercise, and listening to the heart's desire. A brief but intense moment of spirituality at the beginning of every meeting will help the participants open their heart to what is in store for them in the Bibliodrama encounter. An invocation "Come, Holy Spirit" facilitates the positioning of the body and spirit to a total surrender to the guidance of the Spirit, creating an attitude of openness and inner freedom. If the Bibliodrama encounter is experienced by a group that is constantly meeting, it is good to live and sustain this initial moment creatively, choosing different ways to raise awareness of the divine presence.

### **Segment 1: Enthronement of the Bible**

**Opening:** All join in a Pilgrim dance starting from outside the session room and going inside. (For Pilgrim dance see link <https://youtu.be/-40ThDPnslc> or other videos on YouTube and practice the movements beforehand. Normally three steps forward, one step backward)

- At the end there are 3 people bringing the candle, flower and Bible.
- Inside the room, the dance continues and the group forms a circle.
- Candle, flower and Bible are placed at the center to highlight the importance of the word of God in our journey in life.

- One reads Jn 14:21-23, pause for a while and another reads the text again. The word of God wants to come in our midst and invites us to follow Jesus.
- Veneration of the word of God. Facilitator invites everyone to venerate the word of God according to his/her own cultural way. Take time to savor the experience.
- **Sharing:** How do we relate to the word of God in our day to day living? Do we take time to read and reflect and let it define our words and actions?
- Close the liturgy with Our Father... Glory be...



*Leoni Pregunta, SSpS*

## Segment 2: Different ways of Reading the Bible

For this Bibliodrama segment you can use the reading of the day or any biblical text suitable for a particular group.

1. Reading the text: The participants are invited to sit down comfortably and to close their eyes and listen attentively. The text can be read out **twice by different people**.
2. Reading the text taking turns: Sitting in a circle, the participants are invited to read, one after the other, in turn, either one verse or several verses, according to each one. It is important to note that we pay attention to the different voices and expressions of each participant.
3. Jewish reading – reading like the Jews in the Synagogue. All walk through the room with the text and read it aloud to themselves. I hear the voice of one person, another person next to me... I notice the different ways of reading, the different voices... after everyone has read the text twice they all take their place again. For this kind of reading, it is important that everyone has the same translation of the text and, if necessary, has a copy of the text in their hands.
4. Whispering the text – two persons sit opposite or near each other, one begins to whisper the whole text into the ear of the other, then exchange roles. I have to listen carefully; it seems like something very trustful what I whisper into the other person's ear...
5. Reading in a choir. The text is read together by the group as a whole.
6. Reading with echo – echoing: The text is read out first. Then someone from the group pronounces a word/phrase aloud and this same word 3 times in a row. Another person from the group repeats the same word/phrase again 3 times. Then a new person again pronounces another word/phrase and repeats it 3 times again before another person repeats the word.

7. Reading the text according to roles – reading it like a dialogue.
8. Reading and stopping at a sound, reflecting on the last word which was read. Each is moving in the room while reading the text. Then a sound signals to stop. All stop to reflect on the last word that was read. Then continue the reading... stop... reflect on the last word. This is repeated up to 3 times and then all finish the reading and sit down.

**Sharing:** After performing each way, the facilitator gives time for sharing. How was the experience of this way of reading? Any discovery, insight, comment?

*Maria Illich, SSpS*

### **Segment 3: Viagesis - A Text Map** - *interpreting the text through being on the way*

Preparation: The facilitator prepares a biblical text and colorful sheets of paper.

1. Opening prayer
2. Choose a biblical text and write the words of the whole text on the sheets of paper: not all the words, only those with meaning.
3. Read the text (ask one participant to read and others listen).
4. Read the text again slowly while the facilitator lays the words on the ground as they are read. The point here is to write the biblical text on individual sheets and place them one after the other on the floor (e.g., in spiral form from the outside to the inside) so that a **READING PATH** of **WORDS** of the biblical text results.
5. Invite the participants to stand up and walk around and visit each word, experience its meaning.
6. After a while, when everyone has paused briefly at all the words, everybody is invited to choose a place, a word, and to stand there, or to sit on the floor or bring a chair to that place. At this place ask yourself, what was it that made you stay here? Why exactly this word? Let memories come back, allow yourself to be moved by experiences, positive and negative, and also to let feelings come back... allow the word to speak to you.
7. The participants are invited to get together in pairs and exchange their experiences. You may share your reflection with someone next to you. "Sharing is to give response to the Word."
8. The text always has the last word: it is read out again.
9. Sharing in plenum – share insights and realizations regarding the Text Map method. How do you feel?

**Closing:** Bibliodrama Dance

*Maria Illich, SSpS*

## Segment 4: Sculpture

This element of Bibliodrama is mainly about giving expression to the word of God through your own body. At the beginning of this exercise, it is helpful for the leader to give a concrete example of how a statue is created in front of the whole group. All the persons that the artist uses and models as "material" for this purpose, allow themselves to be "formed," just as the sculptor develops the statue, without the persons themselves taking a particular posture. The sculptor determines how the statue should look.

This Bibliodrama brings a person into a deeper connection with the word of God and can offer a visible embodiment of the **Word of God**. Basically this is a possible form of *Lectio Divina* on a stage or a lively form of Bible sharing, especially with young people.

1. Opening prayer
2. Suggested biblical text: Jn 20:11-18 (appearance to Mary of Magdala) or other appropriate text.
3. Small groups of about 3-6 people are formed. The groups go to different rooms or corners of a large room.
4. The Bible text is read together in groups. Each small group is tasked to choose 1-2 verses of the text for a "sculpture."
5. Each group chooses a "sculptor." The group may ask: who is willing to take on the task of the sculptor?
6. This person, together with the others, considers how they would like to concretely form the chosen verses into a statue. They exchange ideas, make suggestions, and then the sculptor begins to bring one person after the other into an appropriate position and posture, where head, arms, hands, feet receive the expression of the chosen biblical verses. When the sculpture is finished, the sculptor can also put himself or herself into the overall picture.
7. The small groups meet again in the common room. One small group declares itself ready to begin with its presentation.
8. This group goes into the middle and the sculptor starts to "form" one person after the other. This means that everyone in the group can be used and formed according to the sculptor's imagination, as he/she has practiced in the preparation.
9. When the sculpture is finished, all other participants get up and walk around the sculpture - looking and contemplating - and express what they notice in detail and in the expression of the whole statue, like perceptions, body expression, emotional expression... It is about observation and not yet about interpretation, e.g., I see... I notice that... there is tension, anger, rejection, loving embrace, etc.
10. When the observations are exhausted, the leadership asks the other small groups which verse the small group has chosen and presented. Sometimes the bystanders guess this without picking up the Bible text. If this is not the case, then they may pick up the Bible text and look for a verse that was presented as "sculpture."

11. In the meantime the small group has freed itself from its postures and relaxes, because it is too strenuous to remain in a fixed posture for a long time.
12. When the correct verse has been found by the viewers and the sculptor has given his approval, the small group goes back to the posture of the sculpture and the verse or verses in question are then read aloud by all or one person. This is the end of the sculpture, clapping is done and a new group is invited to present their sculpture, till all groups take their turn.
13. Reflection in the large group, after all presentations:
  - a. What did I discover for myself personally?
  - b. What did we discover in the small group: in choosing and finding the verse, the role of the sculptor, in the way of acting?
  - c. How did the sculptor feel in the role of the advocate of the text?
  - d. What have I gained for my life, my faith?
14. Closing: Bibliodrama Dance

*Maria Illich, SSpS*

### **Segment 5: Word and Gesture**

1. Opening prayer: Provide a moment of silence, a breathing exercise, and listening to the heart's desire. A brief but intense moment of spirituality at the beginning of the meeting will help the participants open their heart to what is in store for them through the Bibliodrama element. An invocation "Come, Holy Spirit" facilitates the positioning of the body and spirit to a total surrender to the guidance of the Spirit, creating an attitude of openness and inner freedom. If the Bibliodrama encounter is experienced by a group that is constantly meeting, it is good to live and sustain this initial moment creatively, choosing different ways to raise awareness of the divine presence.
2. Suggested biblical text – reading of the day
3. Divide the group in two. Read the text alternately by verses
4. Silent reading – each one picks a word which he/she expresses in a gesture
5. All stand forming a circle. One begins, he/she steps forward and says his/her word; then steps back.
6. All step forward and repeat the word, then they step back.
7. The same person steps forward and acts out the word or shows a gesture created from the word; then steps back.
8. All step forward and repeat the gesture, then step backward. The person who is in this moment the presenter pays attention that people really get the meaning of the gesture and repeat it exactly.

9. The whole group steps forward and does both – says the word and does the gesture simultaneously.
10. The facilitator invites to freeze for a while and asks to be aware of what you feel (referring to the activity). This is to give time to internalize the word.
11. Sharing of experience: How was the choice of the word, the experience when you said it and acted it out? Any insights, realizations or comments? What did I discover?

*Leoni Pregunta, SSpS*

### **Segment 6: Biblical Characters**

This method can be used to empathize with biblical persons.

1. Meditative music can be played to get into the right mood. Meanwhile, people walk around the room.
2. The facilitator leads the group imaginatively through the Old and New Testament, introducing some biblical people – only briefly – or leaving everything open. It is an invitation to simply let any biblical character appear inside spontaneously, to stay with them for a moment and then let them go again.
3. After some time everyone is asked to choose a person, either from the Old or the New Testament.
4. Each and every one now looks for a place in the room (if possible use the whole room).
5. Each person now searches in silence for an expression for the person they have chosen. (encouraging people to give space and expression to their body)
6. When everyone has found their biblical person and an expression, everyone can sit down on the floor or grab a chair and the leader begins with an interview.
7. Depending on the size of the group, all those present can be interviewed. The person being interviewed begins by going into the posture he or she has practiced before. Then the interview begins. It may take 2-3 minutes. Example of an interview:
  - Who are you?
  - Where are you?
  - What is moving you right now?
  - What do you feel right now and what is going on with you as this biblical person?
  - What is happening with you in this role?

The interview takes its course according to the statements of the person I am talking to.
8. The interview is ended by the leader by placing his/her hand on the person's back, asking him/her to close his/her eyes (pay attention to what is culturally appropriate here) and tell him/her: "Feel what it is like to be this person (mention the name of the biblical person) and what it means"... (repeat something from the interview).

9. The leader goes to another person and continues with the interview until everyone present has been interviewed.
10. If the group is larger - up to about 15 people - then the exercise can be closed here by leading everyone into the perception/reflection of what has happened again:
  - Stay with yourself and your experience and look at what just happened in those minutes?
  - What did you feel and what would you like to keep with you?
11. If the time and energy of the people allows it, small groups can be formed where similar biblical persons are present and everyone can talk about it:
  - a. How did I come to my biblical person?
  - b. What has this experience about the person shown me?
  - c. What can I learn and want to learn from him/her?
12. Close with a biblical dance or a song.

*Maria Illich, SSpS*

### **Segment 7: The Way of Jesus**

There are various ways of doing this, depending on what you use it for or the liturgical season you are in. The facilitator chooses the respective Stations of the Cross.

Themes on the way of Jesus may vary: Jesus' childhood/Jesus' public life in Galilee/Jesus' last days in Jerusalem – paschal way.

Paschal way of Jesus – Places/Stations: Bethany/Mount of Olives/Via Dolorosa/Golgotha/Tomb/Emmaus/Mount Sion/Jerusalem.

1. The places/stations are written in capital letters on sheets of paper and laid out on the ground in a continuous sequence in equal distance from each other.
2. The leader starts with the first place, e.g., Bethany, gives a short biblical description, refers to Jesus, what he means to him and finally says: this place stands for "hospitality, coming home, friendship, invitation... in my life..." and then moves on to the next place and does the same.
3. After this all the participants of the group are invited to visit all the places in silence, as we already know from the "Viagesis."
4. When everyone has visited the places, the participants are invited to choose a place that "has found me today."
5. Each one will stand or put his/her chair or sit on the floor in the place he/she has chosen.

6. Now follows the questioning of the individual through an interview. Here too, attention is paid to how many people in the group the leader wants to interview in order to keep the time frame in mind. Questions:

- Where are you?
- What has brought you here?
- How do you feel in this place?
- What touches you in this place?

7. After follows sharing in spontaneous small groups with questions like:

- What have I discovered for myself?
- What has touched me?
- What have I been strengthened in?

8. Break 10 - 15 minutes

9. Return to the large group: Flashlight round – what do I want to tell the group about myself?

10. Closing with circle dance.

*Maria Illich, SSpS*

### **Links to some videos with Bibliodrama segments:**

[https://youtu.be/Do-rAl\\_hZPU](https://youtu.be/Do-rAl_hZPU)

<https://youtu.be/mkOTnt8COmI>

<https://youtu.be/2mfFjm3g9Gk>

Pilgrim dance: <https://youtu.be/-40ThDPnslc>

## **2.4. Days of Recollection**

### **2.4.1. Ethnocentrism and Prejudice**

***Objective:** To recognize aspects of ethnocentrism (context of racism) and prejudices in our lives.*

#### ***Preparation***

- *Recollection for liturgical season of Lent and/or Advent.*
- *Intended for religious and lay people.*

#### **Opening prayer**

God of goodness and grace, you invite us to recognize and revere your divine image and likeness in our neighbor. Make us see the reality of racism and deliver us to challenge and uproot it from our society, from our world and from our own hearts. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**To project video:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Gosg1ybxTU> "Chain of Favors"

## Session 1

### Introduction

Ethnocentrism is the pattern that perpetuates itself when people grow up with a sense of superiority, whether conscious or unconscious. The face of racism looks different today than it did in the past. Manifestations of racism are easily condemned, but the sin of racism is often with us in more subtle ways. This day we gather in love for God and for neighbor to examine four patterns of racism in our hearts and in our world systems. We beg you, Lord, both for forgiveness and for conversion as we open our hearts and minds in community prayer.

#### 1.1. Spatial Racism

Spatial racism is the term given to patterns of metropolitan development in which affluent people create racially and economically segregated suburbs or gentrified areas of cities, leaving the economically poor – mainly African-Americans, Hispanics, and some recently arrived immigrants – isolated in run-down areas of older cities or suburbs.

The devastating impact of massive economic disparities between communities and of isolating people geographically according to race, religion, and class is well documented. Spatial racism creates a visible gulf between those who are rich and those who are poor, as well as between those who are white and people of color.

Pray as we reflect on some of the economic inequalities which are the result of this form of racism:

- Lack of decent and affordable housing;
- Lack of adequate staff, teachers, buildings, and provisions for public schools;
- Lack of capital for investment in business and commerce;
- Little or no opportunity for jobs close to home and insufficient public transportation for jobs in the suburbs;
- 59% of the time African-Americans seek to buy a home they face discrimination.

*Silence*

*Response:* We ask for both forgiveness and conversion by opening our hearts and minds in community prayer.

#### 1.2. Institutional Racism

Institutional racism is the term given to patterns of social and racial superiority that continue until there is someone to challenge them. In this pattern of racism, people consciously or unconsciously assume that Caucasian people are superior; they create and maintain institutions that support this assumption. They are privileged people and usually ignore the contributions of other people and cultures. White privileges often remain unnoticed as they have been assimilated and integrated as part of the structure of

the society and embedded in custom, habit and tradition.

Pray as we reflect on some of the injustices resulting from this form of racism:

- Institutions undervalue the presence and contributions of people of color and celebrate only the contributions of whites.
- Indifference to the rates of violence against the lives of blacks, Hispanics, Asians and indigenous people.
- A disproportionate number of economically poor blacks, Hispanics, Asians, and Native American Indians are sentenced to death.
- A 1992 study by Federal Charges Against Firearm Use and Drug Trafficking found that the average sentence for Blacks was 49 times longer than for Whites convicted of the same crimes.
- Health Insurance – the rate of those without health insurance among African-Americans, Hispanics, and Native American Indians is more than 1.5 times the corresponding rate among white Americans.
- In professional circles of politics, business, social groups, and religious entities, representative officers are predominantly white.

*Silence*

*Response:* We ask for both forgiveness and conversion by opening our hearts and minds in community prayer.

### **1.3. Environmental Racism**

Environmental racism is a term given to racism that connects pollution to poverty. Caught in a spiral of poverty and environmental degradation, the poor and powerless carry the burden more directly and suffer disproportionately from the damaging effects of pollution.

Pray as we reflect on some of the injustices resulting from this form of racism:

- 3 out of 5 African-Americans and Latin Americans live in communities where toxic waste has been dumped.
- 46% of the housing units for the economically poor in the United States, mostly people of color, are within a mile of factories that have reported toxic emissions to the US EPA (Environmental Protection Agency).
- African-American children are 5 times more likely to be victims of lead poisoning than Caucasian children.
- Asthma and air pollution are related. African-American populations are concentrated in cities that do not meet EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) standards for air quality. African-Americans and Latinos are more likely to die of asthma than Caucasians.

*Silence*

*Response:* We ask for both forgiveness and conversion by opening our hearts and minds in community prayer.

## 1.4. Individual Racism

Individual racism is the pattern that perpetuates itself when people grow up with a sense of white racial superiority, whether conscious or unconscious. Let us pray as we reflect on the injustices of this form of racism:

- Recent racial hate crimes in our countries.
- Personal moments of racial stereotyping.
- My own attitude towards other cultures – how do I treat others and through which prism do I perceive them?
- When do I automatically grant superiority status to my own cultural group and inferiority status to all those outside my comfort zone?

*Silence*

*Response:* We ask for both forgiveness and conversion by opening our hearts and minds in community prayer.

### **Individual reflection on the Gospel reading Luke 10:25-37 – The Good Samaritan**

He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live” (27-28).

- a. What caught your attention in the text, how does it touch your feelings, your human experience of meeting the other, different from you, your culture, your generation, gender?
- b. What experiences have you had of personal rejection and rejection of others?
- c. Which word in this text challenges you to apply it to your life?
- d. When have you been a Good Samaritan, or have you experienced a Good Samaritan?

After some time of having done personal reflection, we share in small groups the experience of personal reflection, discovering the different areas of cultural ethnocentrism.

## Session 2

WATCH: the story of Cruza Oliveira, a domestic worker in Brazil

<https://www.un.org/es/letsfightracism/oliveira.shtml>

Cruza Oliveira's voice tells the story of more than nine million Brazilian domestic workers, mostly black women, for whom slavery has not yet been relegated to the dark annals of history. The story also deals with the revolutionary impact that unions and social movements have on entrenched and systematic unfair practices.

Born to a family of poor, uneducated rural workers, Oliveira began her life as a domestic worker in Bahia when she was just 10 years old. Unable to cope with school and work at the same time, she had to keep her job and dropped out of school several times.

At work, Oliveira was beaten and insulted every time she made a mistake. They often called her lazy, ridiculous, and even “black,” in the pejorative sense of the word. To the physical and psychological abuse was added the sexual abuse perpetrated by the young men of the house where she worked. As if that were not enough, Oliveira received no remuneration. “I started receiving wages as a domestic worker when I was 21 years old,” she said at a meeting of the Durban Review Conference at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva. “Before that age, the payment was made to me with used clothes and food.” She was not entitled to vacations, nor did she have any of the fundamental rights of workers.

When she was 14, her employers transferred her to work in Sao Paulo without any authorization from her relatives in Bahia. That was the life of Oliveira until one day she heard on the radio about the meetings that domestic workers were having to fight for their rights, so she decided to attend a meeting and thus began her evolution that allowed her to go from being a young woman put down with low self-esteem to become a leader in the fight for the rights of people of African descent, women and domestic workers. “Almost half a million domestic workers in Brazil are children and young people between 5 and 17 years of age who work as slaves and without remuneration,” she said. “Domestic work in my country still carries the legacy of slavery: the lack of application of the relevant laws, moral and physical violence, the lack of recognition of rights compared to other professions, the absence of trade union rights, among others aspects.”

Oliveira is now President of the National Federation of Domestic Workers of Brazil and an activist of the Unified Black Movement and the Women's Movement... Going from indifference towards the merciful encounter... (The parable of the Good Samaritan: Lk 10:25-37)

“Who is my neighbor?” was the question that a doctor of the law asked Jesus, trying to establish the limits of the circle of those to whom he owes a love comparable to the love that he owes to God and to himself. Jesus responds with the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan.

The crucial point of the parable occurs with the introduction of the figure of the Samaritan who, contrary to the attitude of the Levite and the priest, is the only one who sympathizes and acts with a mercy that exceeds all duty. This characterization of the cultural enemy must have been a shock to the audience of Jesus... in fact, the doctor of

the law did not even dare to pronounce, in his response, the name of a group so hated and discriminated against.

Through the parable, Jesus turns the question of the doctor of the law around and thus confronts his social, cultural and religious paradigms, along with the place from which he was looking at reality. Instead of reinforcing religious, cultural and national barriers through an exact definition of the scope of the word “neighbor,” Jesus challenges him to cross the borders of his privileged position and open himself to a new counter-cultural practice in two senses.

First of all, it invites him to “see” those who, in the face of the indifference of those who pass by, are suffering on the margins of our communities, societies and world. What is it that is making them invisible to the system? Furthermore, what kinds of religious rationalizations impeded the merciful response of those temple officials? If the doctor of the law had found the behavior of the priest and the Levite “normal,” it is not out of simple selfishness or meanness. Some biblical scholars believe that the doctor of the law, the priest, and the Levite were convinced that they had done what was expected of them – to preserve their ritual purity and thus fulfill the Law. Instead, other biblical scholars – particularly those of Jewish tradition – claim that the attitude of temple officials shows their fear of involvement.

Secondly, Jesus challenges the doctor of the law to go one step further; it leads him to identify with the “other” and “enemy” who is presented as the example to follow. The key to action is implicit in the story, but it is certainly discovered by the teacher of the law; only compassion and mercy make this double movement, towards the excluded and towards the “other.”

### **Community Reflection Questions**

- a. How can we go beyond our comfort zones to meet and learn about others, listen to their stories and open up to their full humanity?
- b. What types of projects can we identify that bring us closer to different individuals, schools, parishes, small groups, and/or communities to work together on one issue?
- c. What questions can we begin to ask and how can we examine the policies of our local, national and international community to ensure that they do not discriminate against minorities and others who do not enjoy full citizenship?
- d. How can we bring diversity and respect for others in our prayers, our celebrations, religious days, and holidays?

### **Plan of Action**

- Commitment to change my attitudes
- Finding ways to relate with the people to overcome my prejudices
- Join with others to overcome racial discrimination in the working place, worship place and other common places.
- Evolve a strategic action plan to deal with racism together with others.

*Leon Colman Lisandro, Argentina and Carlos Paniagua-Monroy, SVD*

## 2.4.2. Acknowledging and Sharing Spiritual Gifts from Different Cultures

*Objective: To deepen our commitment to intercultural life in mission.*

### Introduction

One of the great joys of living in an intercultural community is that we are all different. We all come from different cultural contexts with unique cultural perspectives and points of view, shaped by our ethnic, generational, national and familial origins; education, religious up-bringing, etc. It is in community that we have been challenged to test our skills, talents and gifts, from preparing and tasting a meal from a country different from ours, to praying together in another language, or in way unfamiliar to us.

Diversity is a gift of God. In the creation story, the author of Genesis explains how diverse were the things God created (Gen 1:1-31). Appreciation of diversity among us, more so to acknowledge diverse gifts in each other or other cultures, does not come to us naturally. We need to dive into ourselves first, to recognize, acknowledge and affirm our personal and cultural gifts so that we are able to recognize and acknowledge the gifts and talents of the other, gifts in the other cultures and traditions. Only then can we celebrate the diversity that exists among us.

Every human being, culture, and tradition is endowed with gifts and talents. Therefore, this reflection needs to begin with oneself. What is in me? What do I bring to this world? What can I share with others, especially in my relationship with others in intercultural communities?

### My Origin

*(Ask the participants to have the photos of their parents if possible)*

We are all well aware that who we are today, to some extent, has been influenced and shaped by our interaction with significant persons in our early years, the environment, as well as social and cultural factors.

We take time to have a personal conversation with our parents. We sit with each of them individually and talk to them, asking them about their family, cultural background, and upbringing. In this very personal encounter with them, we try to know and understand more deeply how they lived and perceived life, what they had most stressed in the family. How did they celebrate life and the important events of the family?

Write down the information received in a story form. Then we ask ourselves: How do the ways we live and perceive life, and the things we do today, have their sources in the experiences of our parents and our cultural context?

### Contemplative Journey

After having gone through the conversation with parents, we are invited to take a contemplative walk, reflecting on the sacred moments we spent with them and the renewed awareness of how we actually draw from our past. Let us take this moment to

do so more intentionally, creatively and wisely, in order to draw out the best from our own heritage. To create an intercultural “me” it is important to know who I really am.

Time for drawing one’s own tree of life using the model given below and sharing in groups of three or four will be of help. Conclude the sharing by writing down the observed similarities and differences in the sharing.

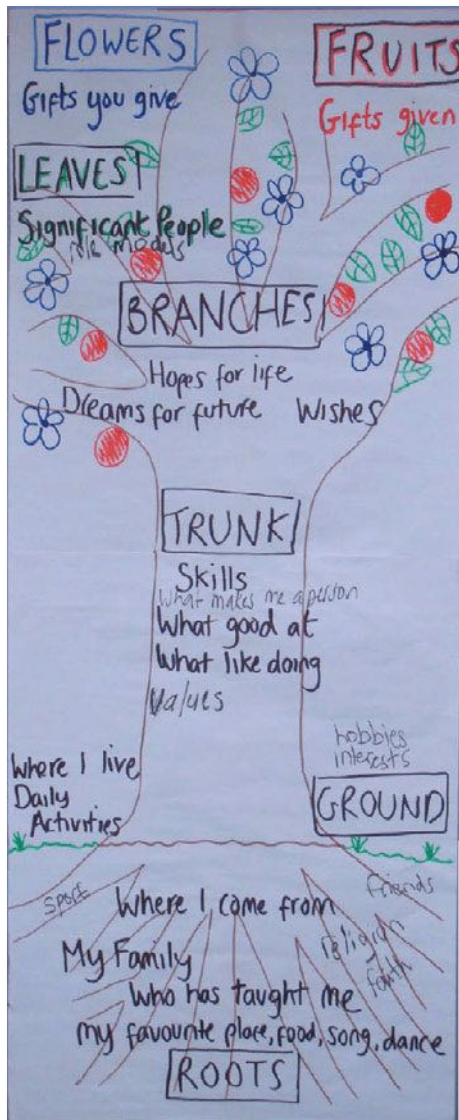


Image taken from the website: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Tree-of-Life-template-to-act-as-a-guide-for-young-people-Image-courtesy-of-Dr-Glenda\\_fig1\\_332866641](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Tree-of-Life-template-to-act-as-a-guide-for-young-people-Image-courtesy-of-Dr-Glenda_fig1_332866641)

In fact, experiences of being with our parents virtually, the meditative walk, drawing our own tree of life and sharing in groups, produce a renewed appreciation of our roots, and especially of our cultures and traditions that our parents inherited and have left us as a legacy. Through these, now we can better understand, appreciate and own our culture with all its goodness and weak aspects. We can appreciate and understand why our parents and significant persons around us thought, behaved and lived the way they lived. We can understand how they perceived the world around them, how they understood commitments and responsibilities, what importance they gave to authority, how they dealt with economic, social, religious and political matters. Lastly, but not the least, how they celebrated similarities and differences, maintaining of course their individuality as persons coming from different backgrounds.

Giftedness is about abilities and talents given by God to an individual, and they are diverse. After having gone through the above dynamic, one feels overwhelmed with what one discovered in oneself, what one discovered in the other(s), isn't it? You came across many similarities and, likewise, I guess you came across differences while you shared in your groups. God made us all different and unique, and this uniqueness is what we need to celebrate, the uniqueness in diversity. We are often afraid of diversity, afraid of the uniqueness of our gifts and abilities; the fear of diversity is rooted in us. What is this fear about? It could be the fear of losing one’s identity, the fear of getting lost in the diverseness that one encounters, the fear of not being recognized, accepted, and loved. It could also be fear of not

being true to one’s own uniqueness. It is a fear or belief that adapting to another culture is like betraying one’s own culture, etc. The late Stephen Covey said, “Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.” The more one accepts and embraces diversity, the more

one becomes confident to enter into others' cultures, to explore them, knowing that we (I) shall be enriched by the people we meet.

To deepen more about this theme, let us now look at our own congregational General Chapter documents and our constitutions.

### **Constitutions and General Chapter Documents of our Congregations**

The General Chapter documents and constitutions of our congregations clearly state how important the diversity of gifts is, those which allow us to live communion among ourselves, and how these help us in our mission. At the 17<sup>th</sup> SVD General Chapter, in his keynote address, Fr. Pernia said, "It was impressive to see how we could live and celebrate interculturally, work and discuss interculturally, and even worship and pray interculturally... Hearing and seeing this at our liturgical celebrations, it was an opportunity to affirm our interculturality as a gift and a heritage, on the one hand, and as a task and a call to mission, on the other hand" (17<sup>th</sup> SVD General Chapter, 2012, p.7).

In the same way, the constitutions affirm that to bring a person to fuller life, it is important to take interest in the life of others. "We show interest in the life and work of each confrere and help and encourage him to bring his life and talents to fuller development" (SVD c. 303).

The SSpS 14<sup>th</sup> General Chapter owned this value saying, "Our interculturality as SSpS is an expression of the Spirit's many faces. We experience both the richness and the struggles of intercultural and intergenerational community living." This General Chapter not only acknowledged the giftedness of our interculturality, but also sincerely recognized the flaws encountered in our actual living together in intercultural communities. It is the task of the Spirit because the diversity of gifts comes from him/her. It is the Spirit that unites us despite the varieties of gifts and talents, backgrounds, cultures and traditions. "The Holy Spirit unites us in sincere sisterly love. In the differences of culture, nationality, personality and age, we experience the richness of his gifts in each one of us. We appreciate, encourage and help one another, share our joys and sorrows, and show interest in each other's life and work..." (SSpS c. 304).

### **Scripture Texts for prayer**

- **1 Cor 12:4-11:** For Paul, the diverse gifts flow directly out of God's grace. Thus people cannot claim them as their own possession or a product of their own innate talents. They always remain divine gifts. Likewise the Spirit works in each Christian not so much for the benefit of any individual but for the benefit of the entire community.
- **Eph 4:7-11:** "Grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift." It is up to us to recognize and own that gift and put it in service for the Kingdom of God. Do you know what your gift is?
- **2 Tim 1:6-7:** "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."
- **Jn 1:14-17:** "Out of His fullness we all have received grace upon grace."

Having this in our background, let us now move into setting directions for our own lives in intercultural community living and doing our mission in the world.

### **Vision and Directions**

**Movie:** *Pay It Forward* – Try to watch this film in YouTube.

**Summary of the movie:** This is the story of a social studies teacher, who gives an assignment to his junior high school class to think of an idea to change the world for the better, then put it into action. When one young student creates a plan for "paying forward favors," he not only affects the life of his struggling single mother, but he sets in motion an unprecedented wave of human kindness which is unfathomable to him. He made a significant difference in the lives of others.

Let us do some introspection ...

Sit quietly and comfortably in a place and relax yourself. If it helps to close your eyes, do so. See yourself sitting in a relaxing way to encounter God, the giver of all gifts. Bring to your imagination the tree of life which you drew, or just look at the drawing... your writings on it... just admire... stay in awe before God for all that he has revealed to you about yourself in this piece of art.

The following questions might be of help to explore further about yourself:

- What are your talents, gifts, skills and strengths?
- What makes you unique?
- What are you good at?
- How do your qualities and talents affect others?
- How do you use these qualities to help or serve others?
- What do family, friends and/or colleagues perceive to be your talents, gifts, skills and strengths?
- What could you use in service of others, your community, in your mission place?

### **Sharing the gifts**

Each one of us is blessed with gifts and special abilities. From a Christian perspective, "giftedness is just that: a gift from God given to individuals for the purpose of serving others and bringing glory to God." We are blessed with the international dimension of our congregations. Internationality can lead to an intercultural way of living, provided we are willing to commit ourselves to listening and dialoguing with others. What we need to do is to make sure that when we look at the other person, we see the differences that exist, but we recall those very differences are gifts and sources of wealth for ourselves and for our entire community.

The first thing that interculturality asks us to do is to recognize the other, with all the values, gifts and abilities. Kofi Annan, Ghanaian diplomat and former UN Secretary General, once said, "We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race. We all share the same basic values."

These values are love, respect, justice, peace, equality and fraternity, etc. Above all, it is a call to see life as a gift and others as a blessing. Instead of spending our time judging each other and fearing our differences, what if we opened our hearts enough to see each other's uniqueness as a quality of beauty? When we open our eyes and start to see the truth of who people are, we receive the gift of recognizing their light and humanity. Variety is good and it is fine to be different.

### **Ritual: Acknowledge, Affirm and Anoint**

In the Old Testament, the Lord instructed Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons by oil being poured on their heads (Ex 40:15). The anointing builds, strengthens and brings life, and gives blessings to everything that God is doing in our lives. "We are the fragrance of Christ" (2 Cor 2:14) says St. Paul in the letter to the Corinthians. By affirming and owning our gifts through anointing, we are called to enhance them in service to others.

Today we need to acknowledge, affirm and own our gifts, own our giftedness of diversity. Invite each participant to choose one gift to offer in service to the other. Let us write it in a piece of paper and place it on the palms of another's hands so that the other person can read it. Keep ready perfumed oil or balsam to begin the ritual. A dynamic way of doing it could begin in this way, like a chain without disruption – I anoint someone, reading aloud the gift of the person and say "May God affirm and anoint you with..." (say aloud the gift) and this person does the same for the other person... until the last person has been anointed.

### **Concluding Prayer**

God of all creation, you have created us all different, endowed us with varieties of gifts and we are your masterpieces. Today we promise, we will never belittle or take for granted the abilities, gifts and the calling you have given us, because you have uniquely created us. We are your masterpieces, work of your divine hands. We promise that we will neither belittle nor take for granted the abilities, gifts and the calling of our sisters and brothers, because they too are your masterpieces; and you have created us all in your image and likeness.

We acknowledge today, that human diversity is an expression of your manifold love for your creation. May we humbly contribute to your design, O Creator, in bringing all people into your divine communion. Amen.

*Emmie Vas, SSpS*

### 2.4.3. Intercultural life – A Call of Every Baptized Person

*Objective: To deepen intercultural life.*

#### *Getting Started*

- *Image or video clip of the central process of baptism: pouring water and proclaiming the words: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."*
- *Ask listeners to recall the story of their own baptism or what they heard about it; the place, circumstances, persons involved...*
- *Question: What does it mean for me personally that I am baptized? How relevant is baptism to my life?*

#### **Baptism of Jesus: "Beloved Son" – Our Baptism: Beloved Daughter / Beloved Son**



Jesus, the one who is guiltless, joins the line of sinners – and is baptized by John in the Jordan. All three synoptic evangelists tell us how Jesus was baptized, heaven opened, the Holy Spirit came down on him in the form of a dove, and a voice from heaven said: "You are my beloved Son; in you I take delight" (Mk 1:10-11).

At that moment, not only was God acknowledging Jesus Christ as His Son, but more importantly, God was acknowledging in Jesus, who "shared the human lot," all humanity as God's beloved children, created in God's image and filled with God's life

and love. As a consequence, all women and men are sisters and brothers, created in God's image, the beloved of God.

#### **Baptism Includes, not Excludes**

Baptism can be understood in two ways:

- In a narrow or exclusive sense, whereby only those baptized by water are the children of God.
- In a broad or inclusive sense, whereby those baptized by water are a sacramental, visible sign and community of the broader truth that all peoples are equally the children of God.

The early Church had to choose between a narrow understanding of what it means to be a disciple of Christ and a child of God or the broader or more embracing understanding.

A dispute arose among the Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians about whether all Gentiles are to be circumcised before baptism. Here circumcision was a practice of Jewish cultural tradition rather than the faith. This dispute is negotiated in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:4-29) in which they are able to go beyond their cultural barriers and accept baptism as an initiation rite to accept faith in Jesus Christ and become Christians.

In this context baptism becomes a moment of grace rising above the cultural divides and what unites all Christians by overcoming their ethnocentrism associated with cultural differences.

Therefore, it is essential for us to overcome or rise above our cultural prejudices and de-humanizing cultural rules and regulations, and accept all peoples as our brothers and sisters. We all share in the circle of God's LIFE.

However, it should be noted that the decision of the Council of Jerusalem was a compromise or "give-and-take." On the issue of food, the Gentile-Christians were to be sensitive to the food regulations of the Jewish-Christians in that they "were to abstain from meat that is offered to idols, from blood, from anything that has been strangled" (Acts 15:29).

Furthermore, Paul later would chastise Peter for going against the decision of the Council for refusing to take meals with Gentile-Christians (Gal 2:12) out of fear of those who insisted on circumcision for all Christians.

These points remind us that dealing with questions of ethnocentrism and interculturality:

- often involves give-and-take compromise,
- taking steps both forward and backward in the follow-up,
- and that this shift and process always takes time.

So the early Church opted for a broad understanding of baptism, in other words, being a Christian was not equated with being Jewish, an Israelite. The love and charity of the early Christian communities was to be directed to all peoples.

Nevertheless, throughout the history of Christianity, the temptation to understand Christianity and the meaning of baptism in a narrow sense has arisen on many occasions. Examples include various forms of Gnosticism, monastic privileges, or considering the indigenous of America and African-Americans unfit for ordination.

The Second Vatican Council was of enormous importance for the Church. Karl Rahner compared the importance of the Second Vatican Council with the Jerusalem Council.

In the Vatican Council, the Church made a transition from a "Christianity of Europe to a fully world religion" and Rahner maintains that such a transition had occurred only once before when the Church made a transition from Jewish Christianity to Gentile Christianity through the decision of the Council of Jerusalem (Rahner 1979, 722-723). While there were some Catholics who were not culturally Western (including eastern rite Catholics), the missionary colonial paradigm of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries combined Christianity with Western culture. For example, some missionaries in Papua New Guinea insisted that wearing blouses was a part of the gospel message.

The Second Vatican Council stated that being baptized as Christian does not require taking on elements of Western culture. God's grace pours out into the world and all creation – upon all peoples, all cultures, all Christians, and the followers of all or no

religion. The understandings of inculturation and the communion of local/particular church developed due to this monumental shift. Again, this affirms the broader and inclusive understanding of baptism as a sacrament of interculturality.

### **Intercultural life...**

#### **Among all the baptized**

The Church as the Body of Christ is made up of all the baptized persons from all over the world... Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and non-Greeks... all form one family. Christ is the head of this body and we are all members forming one family. And our family prayer is the “Our Father.” We are all to be united by one faith, one hope and one love.

#### **In our Arnoldus Family**

Internationality is a characteristic dimension of all three congregations – SVD, SSpS, SSpSAP – where members from different countries belonging to different cultural backgrounds and traditions come together to live and share their lives with each other as sisters and brothers, as children of God. Already at the very beginning of our communities, there were persons from Germany, Luxemburg, and Austria. This is also being promoted among our mission partners.

Through our baptism and religious vows, we see the members of our congregations and our friends and partners as our sisters and brothers. We are enriched and challenged by these intercultural interactions and relationships. In the prologues of our constitutions we read that as a community of brothers and sisters from different nations and languages, we become a living symbol of the unity and diversity of the Church.

#### **Among all Peoples**

Furthermore, our Christian baptism is not entrance into a secret or exclusive “club” or “sect.” God’s Spirit of life and love continues to be lavished on all peoples and all creation. The Second Vatican Council document *Ad Gentes* describes this as a life-giving fountain of God’s love (2). As a Christian, marked by the water of baptism and the Holy Spirit, one is to witness to the truth that God’s love and grace is present among all peoples. This is the basis for interculturality. We are to live in mutually enriching and challenging relationships with all peoples, as our sisters and brothers, and in harmony with all creation.

#### **Baptism as a Sacrament of Interculturality**

The sacrament of baptism is a triple sign:

- of our faith in Jesus Christ,
- of being accepted by God as his beloved child,
- of our covenant with God.

It indicates that

- all humankind is beloved by God, in his plan
- people of every nation are our sisters and brothers.

Therefore, all forms of ethnocentrism contradict the baptismal covenant as seen in the early Church.

### **Baptism is a Sacrament of Interculturality**

We should strive to live our baptism as a sacrament of interculturality in two ways:

- a. In WITNESSING and our ACTIVITIES of our international religious community life as the Body of Christ
- b. Our WITNESSING to and ACTIVITIES of our congregations recognize that God had already been present there before we arrived and that all people and all creation are loved by God. We should be a living symbol of interculturality in the fullest sense of the word - across all borders!

### **Intercultural life - A Lifelong Process of Conversion**

There are three movements in the lifelong process of conversion

- from self-centered to Christ-centered,
- from ethnocentrism to interculturality,
- from consumerism to care for creation.

This process of change is not linear but happens in a spiral.

As the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem made clear, there is often a “give-and-take compromise” in this process, as well as a back and forth. Change and processes take time.

This is also shown by figures from our Founding Generation such as St. Joseph Freinademetz or M. Theresia Messner, the first Superior General of the SSpS: “If we want to become missionary Sisters, we have to adapt to the customs of foreign peoples.”

“... when dealing with people and sisters of other nationalities, we have to be careful so as not to violate their national sensitivity through careless remarks, judgments or harsh criticism.”

“Whoever we may be, whether Germans, Dutch, Austrians, British, Russians, Americans etc., we, dear Sisters, are all children of the one big family of God ...” (December 1918 [after the armistice]).

### **Impulses for Personal Prayer During the Day**

Meditation: Mk 1:9-11 (The Baptism of Jesus)

Possible impulses

- Let God tell you – as at the baptism: "You ... are my beloved daughter (son)" and feel this promise deep within.
- Feel the baptismal grace of being immersed in the community of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, finding your home in it.

Meditation: 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (One Body - Many Members)

Possible impulse

- We are all one in the Body of Christ; we are sisters and brothers.
- Think of people you struggle with, or of people from other cultures or social classes. Can you accept inwardly the connection with these people in the body of Christ?
- How do I give living testimony of baptism as a sacrament of interculturality as a member of the SVD, SSpS, SSpSAP or as a mission partner?

*Prepared by Sr. Stefanie Hall, SSpS based on: Joachim Andrade, SVD; Ronald Pereira, SVD; Roger Schroeder, SVD "Baptism as Sacrament of Interculturality" in: Spirituality of Interculturality. Materials for Retreats and Recollections of the Arnoldus Family, pp. 59-62.*

#### **2.4.4. The Intercultural Journey of St. Joseph Freinademetz**

*"Unless a wheat grain falls into the earth and dies,  
it remains only a single grain,  
but if it dies it yields a rich harvest."  
John 12:24*

#### **Introduction**

Interculturality refers to the sustained interaction of people raised in different cultural backgrounds.... It denotes mutual exchange between cultures (or better: people of different cultures) that can lead to transformation and enrichment of all involved. The focus in interculturalization is on relationship building, deep connections, interactions, mutual gifting, respect and learning from one another.... Interculturalization stands for movement from tolerance of differences to appreciation and celebration of differences in culture. (Lazar/Ueffing in Intercultural Living/Mission)

#### **The Grain: Rooted in his Own Culture**

##### ***Roots***

Bishop Henninghaus of South Shantung, successor of Bishop Anzer and fellow missionary of Joseph Freinademetz, began his biography with the words:

“As the ripe grapes show the quality of the soil and of the vine from which the grapes come, so one’s home area and family usually leave their very particular traits in the character of a person. In them he is rooted, out of them unfolds his life. Their knowledge

often is the key to the understanding of their personality, and therefore writing a person's biography one usually begins with them.”

Now, let's have a look on these roots; his home area and his family.

His earthly life began on Thursday April 15, 1852, when Joseph was born in Oies, a hamlet 1500 meters above sea level and lying on a slope overlooking the Gader Valley in the region of South Tirol. At that time, this part of Tyrol still belonged to the Austrian Empire and therefore he was an Austrian citizen. Later in China, at the occasion of the birthday of the Austrian Emperor, Freinademetz would send a congratulatory message to the Emperor via the Austrian Consul in Peking.

On the very same day, he was brought down to the valley and baptized in the church St. Leonhard of Abtei. Two years later, on July 11, 1854, Joseph or Ujöp as he was called in his native language, was confirmed. Whenever the Bishop or his auxiliary was near, the sacrament of Confirmation took place.

He was the fourth child of Johann Matthias Freinademetz and his wife Anna Maria. A girl and two boys preceded him; nine more children, four of whom died soon after birth, came after him. In the company of these brothers and sisters, Joseph spent his childhood in Oies.

Though his father was not wealthy he was free. They shared in the usual lot: they lived poor and had to work hard. For plowing the fields and for transport, they had a horse. They also had about half a dozen cows but fewer pigs which they slaughtered and sold; perhaps also a few sheep.

Meat seldom appeared on the family table; on Sundays a piece perhaps, and occasionally during the week some with the dumplings; otherwise the usual fare was porridge of barley and oats, plus beans and potatoes. Because of the high altitude and the cold, the thin soil could produce little else.

But the valley and its people were pious. Prayers were said in common – morning prayers, table prayers, and in the evening gathered around the household altar, the daily rosary. Three times a day the church bell rang out the angelus message; on Thursday evenings it reminded all to pray for the dead and the dying; on Friday afternoon at three o'clock it summoned everyone to the recitation of five Our Fathers in memory of our Crucified Lord. Once a month, the entire family received Holy Communion. And week after week during the summer months, the father of the family undertook the arduous climb of almost an hour up the Kreuzkofel, 500 meters higher than Oies, to the pilgrimage chapel of the Holy Cross.

His younger sister, Josefa Freinademetz, relates: “Our parents brought us up with goodness and firmness, in the fear of the Lord. They got up early: in winter time at five in the morning, during summer time still earlier. At six there was morning coffee. When we entered the common room, we blessed ourselves with Holy Water and said: praised be Jesus Christ. Kneeling we said the morning prayer: the Angelus, Our Father, a prayer to the Guardian angel... Before and after table we prayed one Our Father, one Hail

Mary and a Glory be to the Father. At noon we prayed the Angelus; in the evening the rosary. We prayed for the sick and those who had died. The evening rosary was said in front of the picture of Our Lady. Joseph knelt next to our father, without moving. In front of this picture our mother sometimes would pray for hours.

Before we started our work, we would pray. Before and after plowing a field, we said the prayer – Our Father. Our Dad would say: so that the Lord will let the wheat grow. Often he would bless the fields with holy water and told us to do the same, or he brought blessed olive branches to the field.”

Joseph was six years old when he started school. Each morning, very early, he skipped down to the village below; late in the afternoon, he trudged back to Oies. Classes began on 22 November (1858) and went on until Easter. During summer, all the children had to work on the farm. There were nine boys and six girls in the first class; they shared the one schoolroom with three other classes.

What has to be mentioned here is that the teaching was initially done in Ladin.

Regarding language, forming an essential part of what we regard as culture, we can discover already here some intercultural experience. His mother tongue was Ladin, the ancient traditional language which is neither a corrupted Latin nor an Italian dialect but an independent member of the Romance family of languages, like Italian, French and Spanish. This language is spoken up to now by about 20,000 people, mainly in some valleys of South Tirol.

Ladin was used at school during the first two years. But Italian was already introduced to the children in the third year of elementary school, followed by German in the fourth year. Ladin was spoken in everyday life but the priests gave their sermons in Italian. The Austrian empire was a vast area and included peoples from many ethnic backgrounds.

## **The Earth: Being Planted into Another Culture**

### ***Brixen***

Freinademetz's first step of his journey towards interculturality began on the day he walked from Oies to Brixen to go to school. His aim had been to attend the High School and later to enter the seminary. But the language of this High School was German. So, when he arrived in Brixen, he first had to go for two years to the German language primary school because his German was insufficient. He learned German very well and then he was able to go on to High School and the seminary, where German was the language in use. Learning German, having classes in German, adjusting to the Austrian culture was not painful to him.

He had his first difficult experience in 1878 when he met for the first time Fr. Arnold Janssen in Brixen. That meeting was like the clash of two cultures as some biographers make us believe. For Freinademetz, the founder of Steyl was a shattering disappointment – a fact he would never forget. On the one side, Freinademetz, by nature friendly and gracious; on the other, Janssen, the mathematician, aloof and business-like. Great enthusiasm for the missions? Yes, of course. But as always on such occasions, Janssen

was careful not to show that he was especially interested in the new applicant. Or was it simply a matter of the difference between North Germany and South Tyrol, between the Germans and Romanics? They were, it is true, men of totally different temperaments. But they were also men whose faith inspired them to work for the kingdom of God in China. Consequently, since he already had his written release from the Brixen diocese, Freinademetz swallowed his disappointment and stuck to his decision. He would enter Steyl.

### *Steyl*

Therefore, a second step in his intercultural journey was his coming to the newly erected Mission House in Steyl. In his first letter from there, he wrote to his parents about his trip, telling them about the different stages of his journey.

“No sooner was I alone and, like an orphan, abandoned by all the world than I experienced the truth of what a friend once told me: ‘the farther we are from men and the more we are alone, the nearer we are to God.’ A feeling of confident joy came over me and I said to myself: you have left everything for the sake of God; therefore, God will never forsake you. My general feeling about the journey is best expressed in the words my mother used to repeat: ‘Children, thank God you live in Abtei. No one who is not directly called by God himself should ever leave Abtei.’

Freinademetz felt directly called by God and so he stayed and continued his journey, believing in the words with which he ended his letter to his parents about the journey to Steyl: “The One who gave the desire will also give its fulfillment.” These words, expressing his faith in God, sustained him throughout his intercultural journey! God who gave him the missionary vocation would also help him to live it.

Five months later, on February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1879, a few days before the departure ceremony in Steyl, he wrote to Franz Thaler, his friend and benefactor in Sottrù, a small village next to Oies: “...Dear friend, at times I find it hard to live far away from those whom I have loved so much, to leave my native place, which has given me so many friends and joys, and to look for another home where one has to start from the very beginning like a child beginning life anew, where one has to learn new and very difficult languages and get to know people who have completely different interests and customs...”

### *Hong Kong*

The Chinese part of Freinademetz’s journey began in the Apostolic Vicariate of Hong Kong. He was there from August 1879 to April 1880, attached to the mission station of Saikung. From May 1880 to May 1881, he was a traveling missionary – traveling from station to station, not attached to any of them.

It was during this time that he was rudely awakened to the reality that the Chinese had not been waiting for him. He had truly arrived “in a foreign land”. Back home he was highly esteemed and honored as a priest and well accepted as a person. But here people, at most, curiously stared at his European look and behavior. Nobody asked for him; no one seemed to be interested in knowing why he was there. The loneliness began to affect his mind. Everything contrasted harshly with what he had expected.

Externally, Joseph became Chinese. His name became 'Fu Jo-shei Shenfu', simplified to 'Fu Shenfu' – Lucky Priest. His reddish blond hair was shorn except for a crop at the back to which a black pigtail was fastened. The black cassock from Europe gave way to a blue Chinese robe. Cloth shoes replaced the leather ones, but his view of things remained European, Tyrolean.

Visiting the few, scattered Christians and trying to arouse the interest of others for his faith, he was mainly unsuccessful. People came to see an exotic European, not to listen to his message. And worst of all they shouted "Foreign devil!" after him. He had renounced family, friends, home, everything to free the Chinese from the clutches of the devil – and now they were calling him 'devil'!

In his dreams, he wrote, "the new missionary saw himself with the cross in his hand, proclaiming the comforting truths of our religion to an enormous throng of listeners, all of them eager for salvation and they cannot but be converted. It is such a natural, such a convincing and comforting dream. Who could resist it?... But let me tell you how many an attempt at conversion actually turns out... We speak to the people about the world to come, about the last judgment, about heaven and hell, but our listeners, whose attention we believe we have captured, are only staring at our long noses; they laugh at our poor and imperfect Chinese; ... The young missionary feels this most bitterly... He comes from Europe aflame with zeal; he hopes that at nightfall his arms will drop limb and tired at his sides after long hours of preaching and baptizing; that every year a few more pagodas will crumble in ruins before his eyes thus making room for so many more houses of God." But the reality, he writes, is quite different.

Joseph Freinademetz was a man of his times. There was no room in his view for other religions. To be a missionary meant to win souls for the Catholic faith. That did not succeed to the extent he wanted, so he was disappointed and frustrated. Now, what kept him going? It was not any kind of natural love for the Chinese, but his love for God and for Jesus. He wrote:

"Woe to the missionary in China who does not seek his consolation wholly and entirely in the sublimity of his vocation, in the conviction that he both must and will do the will of God. There is no other source."

Upon the request of Steyl, at the end of his two years of missionary work in the Apostolic Vicariate of Hong Kong he wrote a report for a magazine. In this report he summarized his two years in the Apostolic Vicariate of Hong Kong with the words: "*The past two years had been rich in thorns.*"

## **The Transformation: Becoming Intercultural**

### ***Motivation***

In his last sermon to his parishioners at St. Martin, where he served as an assistant priest for two years, (on August 11<sup>th</sup> 1878) he said: "The Divine Good Shepherd in his unfathomable goodness has invited me to go with him into the desert to look for the

sheep that have gone astray. What else can I do but kiss his hand in gratitude and joy and in the words of Sacred Scripture say: Behold I come; and then like Abraham leave my father's house, my homeland and you, dearly beloved, and go to the land the Lord will point out to me...."

On February 18<sup>th</sup>, 1879, a few days before the departure ceremony in Steyl, he wrote to Franz Thaler: "... It is hard to begin such a (new) life after I have been so happy among you Ladins. And I say it to you in all honesty: I would never do this for anything in this world, not even for millions (money). But I am very happy and content that I can do this for the good Lord up there, even if I would encounter death a thousand times. And I know his grace will never abandon me. My only desire is to be able to convert many, very many of our poor brothers. Only for this do I leave my dear father, my dear mother, my brothers and sisters, relatives and friends, among whom you occupy one of the very first places, and my beloved St. Martin."

On March 3<sup>rd</sup> (1879), at the occasion of a farewell celebration in the evening before his departure, he told the students of the Mission House in Steyl: "Seven months ago, I left my mountain home, the leave-taking was hard and painful but here in Steyl I found a second home. Steyl has truly become very dear to me, but now the Lord calls me to go in search of a third homeland across the sea. I will follow his call and bid farewell to everything that still binds me to Europe so that out there in the Far East I may dedicate myself with the whole of my energy to the service to the Most High God. There I hope to see many of you again. Till we meet again in China."

### *South Shantung*

In 1882 Fr. Joseph arrived in Puoli, the first SVD station in South Shantung. From now on we notice a change, a transformation in Fr. Joseph taking place. The tone of his letters becomes different. He is full of optimism and writes: "The seed which the many prayers in Steyl have sown in our dear South Shantung, begins to grow and promises a rich harvest."

In order to get to know the people, he visited the whole region entrusted to him. He then stayed with each family for one or two days. And the result was a tremendous change in his attitude towards the Chinese.

He writes: "Sometimes I observe full amazement of the poor people: with what kind of indescribable sacrifices and labors they collect for themselves the necessary things for making a fire. Once, I stayed with the family of catechumens. In order to prepare the meal for me, they even burned the lid of the cooking kettle because there was nothing else." Here we can see an extremely beautiful way of showing happiness about the visitor who happened to be not a Chinese, but an Austrian."

Living with the people he begins to admire the way of life of the Chinese: "I am often astonished about the education/knowledge of even the simplest farmers. A number of them know the history of their country from 3,000 years ago; even the simple man often quotes passages from Confucius, the holy man as he is always called. Actually, everybody is using all the time a number of meaningful proverbs."

All in all, he writes, “the Chinese have good heads on their shoulders. They are unusually gifted. Even a simple farmer speaks like a doctor [professor]. They have mastered a whole series of social forms. In many worldly matters they are far ahead of Europeans.” These words show that Freinademetz is losing his European superiority feeling – because of getting to know the people by living with them.

Fr. Bornemann, our SVD historian and biographer of Fr. Joseph, writes: At this time “his tone is different than it was in the earlier Freinademetz. He speaks with greater understanding and admiration of the opposition the young Christian communities met with and accepted. Their suffering mirrors the suffering of Jesus Christ. Those who a short while ago had not even heard of Jesus, were now willing to be one with him in suffering and death!”

By now Freinademetz becomes more and more a Chinese himself. He feels that he must adapt himself to and as far as possible, make his own, the mentality of the people of South Shantung.

One day, Joseph and a catechist were beaten and humiliated terribly. Finally, they were left half dead on the road. As soon as their tormentors had left them, he and the catechist looked at each other and had a good, hearty laugh at “our tattered clothing, our swollen and bloody bodies, our faces smeared with dirt and filth.” Being one with his Chinese Catechist in suffering shows Freinademetz had truly been transformed into a Tyrolian Chinese or Chinese Tyrolian. In his journey towards interculturality he had arrived, as much as he could. Therefore, he can write: “I assure you honestly and sincerely that I love China and the Chinese, that I am ready to die a thousand deaths for them.”

## **The Rich Harvest: New Life**

### *Mutual love and respect*

As provincial superior he introduced newly arrived missionaries into missionary work in China. To those who were just beginning to learn the Chinese language he said: “The pagans will be converted only through God’s grace, and let us add to it through our love. **Love is the only foreign language which the pagans understand.** Therefore, do not let arise in you any dislike for the Chinese people and their Chinese way of life. The Chinese feel immediately if a missionary treats them with respect and love. If people say about someone: He does not like us Chinese, then whatever he may do will have no effect.”

Interculturality presumes that the Chinese were also interacting in a positive way with Joseph Freinademetz. His willingness to dedicate himself totally to them, to be as much Chinese as possible and even to die for them, was not without a response. Although he never received any official tribute from Chinese authorities, they showed him their love and affection by embracing what was so dear to him and his deepest motivation for having embraced their culture: many of them became Christians.

For Freinademetz personally the most beautiful experience of the Chinese people's relationship with him were these words which he wrote home to South Tyrol: "Here, too, the Christians love their priest just as they do in Europe, perhaps even more." And how much did the people of St. Martin in South Tyrol love him!

Over the years he changed almost completely in his attitude towards the Chinese. As we have seen, in his first two years he had hardly a good word to say about the Chinese. But as time went on, he had learned and mastered the language and got to know the people on a deep level, he truly fell in love and stayed in love with the Chinese – so much so that he said, that even in heaven he wanted to be a Chinese.

### *A flourishing mission*

When he and Bishop Anzer began in South Shantung, there were 158 Christians. At the time of his death there were 45,000 baptized people and almost as many catechumens. There were churches, small chapels and prayer rooms in 1,100 communities. Freinademetz saw all of this growing gradually. It was not only his work. However, he had participated in almost all of that. In some places he had laid the foundation and always he had tried to deepen and to sanctify the whole missionary operation.

### *An intercultural symbol – Video*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNZHHf708BU>

### **Questions for Personal Reflection**

#### *The grain*

- a. Do I feel rooted in my home culture? In what way?
- b. What do I cherish about this culture and what not?

#### *The earth*

- a. What experiences of being planted into another culture do I have?
- b. How was my experience? Was there something which had to die?

#### *The transformation*

- a. Could I embrace intercultural experience?
- b. Who were my companions in this experience?

#### *The rich harvest*

- a. My intercultural living today. How does it look like?
- b. Where and how do I feel invited to widen my circle?

For Liturgical celebration see at the webpages: <https://www.svdcuria.org/public/ajsc/index.htm> and <https://www.worldssps.org>

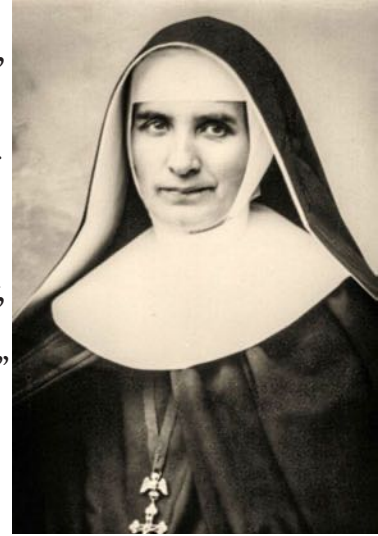
*Michael Ertl, SVD*

## 2.4.5. Interculturality in the Life of Sr. Theresia Messner, SSpS

*Objective: To recognize the life and the example of the first Superior General.*

### Introduction

When I think of Sr. Theresia, Margareta Messner, SSpS, I relate her whole person to the Beatitudes in the Gospels, especially to Mt 8:5. “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” This woman, with the purity and innocence of a child in her heart, often sat in front of the window of her home and said, “Someday, I am going far away... very far away.” And when her mother would ask, “Where do you want to go, dear?” She would reply saying, “I do not yet know, mamma, but I’m going far away.” What could the little child have thought in her very young years? What did “far away” mean for her, as she contemplated the narrow enclosed valley surrounded by high rocky mountains reaching out to the heavens? What thoughts may have crossed her mind when all she saw were the huge mountains outside her little window? Those of us who have visited Antholz-Mittertal, the village where she was born, could probably think that, this was the end of the world, without villages or people living beyond these high mountains. At least, I thought that way, when I visited for the first time Antholz-Mittertal, the hometown of Sr. Theresia. But, for the child “Gretel,” as she was known within the family circle, it was not so. When she looked out of the window, it was as if God opened the big door of her heart and she saw a world which was unknown to her. And she sighed saying, there, “far away” God needs me, there “far away” people need me. What a blissful experience for the child and never ever did she think this would come to reality. Theresia, even as a child, was indeed blessed with such a pure heart that she was able to see life and mission beyond the mountains, and as a religious Sister and superior general, to value the sacredness of the human person beyond the cultural differences and conflicts. We can certainly draw inspiration from her for our life in intercultural communities.



### First Contact with Something New and Strange

Theresia, a simple and humble girl, had not gone far beyond her little village. Her only outings were a kind of pilgrimage to the Marian shrines. The furthest trip she ever undertook by train was to Innichen to visit her uncle, her father’s brother, and at the same time to pay a visit to a Marian shrine. Sr. Sixta says that even after forty years she could still describe her impressions and experiences of the journey.

Yet, another long journey was awaiting her, and this would make a difference in her life. After much searching for advice and prayer, she finally found the right place to dedicate her whole life to the Lord as a Missionary Sister. After receiving the required permission, on January 10, 1891, she left her hometown to reach Steyl, her destined place. It was not easy for her, and yet on her departure day this is what she told her mother, “Dearest

mother and sister, if it were all the same in this world what one did, I would most certainly prefer to stay here with you. But an interior voice keeps telling me to go and I must obey the good God.” It was her final goodbye.

The long and troublesome journey; some by train and the rest by foot, after three days, on 13 January, finally Sr. Theresia arrived at the Steyl entrance. Passing through different villages and towns she already realized that she was in an entirely strange world. After some years she narrates her experience, “Everything was strange and new: the flat countryside and humid climate, the people, the language, the customs, even the food, in short the entire way of life. The language made it especially difficult. Each German-speaking area had its own regional dialect and they could be mutually incomprehensible.” Theresia testified that she suffered attacks of homesickness for many years, and forty years after entering she wrote: “I adjusted and adapted because I was determined to remain in the convent. But in the evenings in my cell I was often overcome by homesickness. I shed bitter tears but then I fell asleep.”

### **Her Basic Principle: “Adaptation”**

Sr. Theresia, the Superior General of the newly founded Congregation had direct responsibility for overseeing the development of the Congregation both internally; within the members and communities, and externally, in the mission places. She took keen interest in every aspect. Often, she was found at her desk, pen in hand. Every letter that arrived from overseas, she saw that a response was given, taking into consideration every question, doubt, request or plan. She was concerned that the details of religious life, as understood in the twentieth century, would be observed wherever the Sisters lived and worked. At the same time she saw the need for modifications to enable the Sisters to adjust to other situations and climates. The word “adaptation” was new to her; she had never read about it or heard about of this term, yet she insisted that the people in mission countries be respected as they were and not obliged to assume European dress or manners. Her basic principle about mission that she conveyed to the Sisters was: “If we wish to become missionary Sisters we have to adjust to the customs and usages of the foreign peoples. In Japan or America things cannot all be as they are here. A person who does not understand that shows that she does not love the people. You must love the people, however; otherwise you cannot convert them.”

We have heard or read so much about inculturation. The two complimentary aspects to inculturation are:

1. We must become inculturated in our own culture and that calls for acquiring a critical view of it. I mean, we need to see and appreciate what is positive in one’s culture as well as see with a critical mind what goes in line with Gospel’s values. Without a proper appreciation, acceptance and owning of one’s own culture, there can be no real growth in our lives. It is a necessary approach to relate and interchange within a diverse cultural setting.
2. The second aspect is “enculturation.” It is the process by which a person assumes the behavior patterns of the culture in which one lives. It is like one was to move into another family and take in the values and customs of that family. One comes with who and what one is, and enters into a whole other world of social relationships,

relationships which give meaning to life, give rise to community, and provide for the necessities of life. It is an on-going and continuous dialogue between the culture out of which one comes and the culture into which one moves.

Sr. Theresia encouraged the Sisters to do likewise when she wrote: “We need to adjust to the customs and usages of the peoples.” A missionary Sister “who does not understand this relationship or this interchange, shows that she does not love the people.”

### **We Are One Congregation, Although Different Nationalities**

The first General Chapter, which lasted from 9 December, 1909 till 13 February, 1910, resulted in Sr. Theresia being elected as the First Superior General of the SSpS Congregation for 12 years. In this Chapter, the Capitulars had asked Sr. Theresia to visit personally the Sisters in the missions. Therefore, she decided to begin her visitation first to United States from 9 March to August, 1912 and then to Asia and Oceania, from 15 April, 1913 to July 1914, the longest journey she ever undertook. As she returned, World War I was declared and there she had to face tensions among the Sisters in the community, and listen to criticism and negative comments passed on, especially on their enemies in the war. In September, 1917, this is what she wrote to the Sisters:

“All of us, dear Sisters, no matter what nation we belong to, are suffering and worrying anxiously about our loved ones at the front or at home and about our beloved mother country. The Lord God himself placed love of our country in our hearts; it is justified, noble and good.

But this love of one’s country, justified as it is, may not go too far; it may not turn into aversion, lack of consideration, bitterness or hate towards those of another nationality. That is contrary to God’s law, which commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves and even not to exclude our enemies from our love; for all people bear God’s image, all are children of the one great family of God, and all are meant to go to heaven one day.

Moreover, dear Sisters, we belong to a Mission Congregation with members from different countries ... Even if our hearts bleed for our loved ones and our country because of the great suffering the war is causing, we must take care in our dealings with people and Sisters of other nationalities not to offend their national sensitivity through uncharitable remarks, judgments or sharp criticism.”

In December 1918, her letter continues, further inviting the Sisters to be charitable towards members of other nationalities and stressed the importance of equality among the Sisters; although from different nationalities, we are of the same Congregation:

“But now, dear Sisters, what must we not do? As I wrote once before, we must absolutely avoid sitting in judgment on the enemies of our own country and pronouncing on right and wrong. ... [It is God’s affair to do that]... Above all, dear Sisters, we must guard against any coldness or lack of charity towards Sisters of other nationalities. Far be it from us to indulge in mutual recriminations regarding possible incorrect attitudes or behavior of one nation towards another. Whoever we may be, whether Germans, Dutch, Austrians, British, Russians, Americans, etc., we, dear Sisters, are all children of the one great family of God, daughters and Sisters of the same Congregation, united through the bonds of holy love.”

## **A Peace-Loving Person**

Sr. Theresia, from her childhood was a peace-loving person. Her sister Gertrude says, "Besides being an intelligent, well-behaved, alert, diligent and talented child, she was a model child. Our teacher and catechist loved her. She was peace-loving and friendly with all the other schoolchildren. Outwardly she was very unassuming and quiet... She was so good that other children sometimes teased her." Living in peace inwardly and outwardly, became a way of life for her, and she encouraged the Sisters through her guidance, letters and messages to develop this attitude in all circumstances.

In her letters to the Sisters in the mission, Sr. Theresia often mentioned about peace, especially about the interior peace. The word "peace" was so important for her. She was a person of peace and radiated peace around her. Some of her sayings would help us best to understand this aspect in her life. She believed that peace is a gift from God, and we need to spread it around us. This could only be done through practice. "We can all practice love, maintain peace and spread joy around us. We can practice love through kindness and gentleness. A compassionate look, a kind word, a loving encouragement, a small little act of love, often radiates much love."

On another occasion she recognized that it is an art to be a peace-loving person. "To maintain peace is an art, an art that we can all learn. The peace-loving people are called as Angels of Peace; an angel of peace never insults or offends; neither shows herself offended or hurt; removes all barriers or causes of discord, discrepancy and surpasses in benevolence."

Inner peace, she says, is impossible to preserve without the practice of virtue and the constant battle against evil inclinations. "This requires a lot of courage, intense prayer, firm will and fiery struggle. The reward for this is already in this world, the inner peace, joy and courage to endure. Let us renounce everything other than God and his love."

In the Christmas circular letter of 1913 that Sr. Theresia wrote to Sisters in China, first and foremost she wished the Sisters love, joy and peace. Then she explained in a detailed way how God, neighbor and the self cannot be separated, rather they are a unity if we truly want to receive the gift of peace: "If we possess the holy love of God, then we will have peace with God, if we practice selfless charity toward our neighbor, we will also have peace with our neighbor; if we faithfully fulfill our duties towards God and our neighbor, we will have a serene conscience and consequently inner peace. From this triple peace will grow the profound joy, that which cannot be taken away by the sufferings and tribulations of life."

## **Woman of Blessing**

Sr. Sixta in her book, *The Power of God in Weak Hands*, says that she had a great love for holy water and used it abundantly. Every evening before she retired to bed for rest, she held a great act of blessing. She thought of all countries and missions, many individual mission stations and Sisters; thinking of all of them she sprinkled holy water in all directions.

Blessing became part of her life. She often, says Sr. Sixta, knelt on the floor in her room and blessed the world again and again in all directions. It was an innermost urge; she just had to do it. In her life she experienced abundant blessings from God, experienced

the power of God in her weak person, as she wrote to the Sisters when she was elected as the Superior General, and now felt that she needed to pass on this power by blessing each one and the world around her.

In the last days of her life, she asked the Sisters to come near her so that she could bless them. “Let the Sisters come, I would like to bless them, but I cannot talk to them anymore.” In her final blessing before she gave up her last breath, this is exactly what she did. As per the request, she raised her hands and blessed in all directions until her hand sank in weariness on the bed. Love for the mission and for every Sister was enkindled in her, and she mumbled, “*Live for God alone.*”

### **Questions for Personal Reflection**

- a. What touches you most as you reflect on the life of Sr. Theresia and intercultural living?
- b. Having gone through the extract or the full text of the letter which she wrote to the Sisters at the height of World War I, what inspirations do you draw for your life in intercultural community living and mission?
- c. What does “adaptation” mean to you? Highlight a few of your joys and difficulties encountered in adjusting to another culture.

### **Scripture Texts to Pray**

- Gen 12:1-9: “I will bless you and make your name great, and you will be a blessing.”
- Lk 6:27-38: “Give and it will be given to you, and you will receive in your sack good measure, pressed down, full and running over.”
- Mt 5:1-11: “The beatitudes.”
- Phil 4:4-9: “The God of peace be with you.”

### **Conclusion**

“In memory of our dear Sr. Theresia, I would like to invite you all to do the ritual to bless the world, to bless our mission places, families, our communities, regions and provinces. The ritual is to bless our congregation and each and every single Sister. In every culture, we have rituals of blessings. Here I invite you to use this ritual of blessing of the indigenous people in Latin America, particularly from Bolivia. The ritual is from the website <https://www.gaia.com/article/four-directions-ceremony>, and the prayer is taken from the book of Joyce Rupp, “Prayer Seeds,” and adapted to the situation. Prepare the place for the ritual and adapt as you wish.

*Emmie Vas, SSpS*

## 2.4.6. Reconciliation and Forgiveness in the Community Hurt by Intercultural Insensitivity

*Objective: Creating an occasion for healing.*

### Introduction

Allow me to begin this recollection day narrating a story, one I read in the book of Eric H. F. Law, *Inclusion: Making room for Grace*. The story is in a dialogue form; a dialogue between two children. Here is the dialogue:

### A Dialogue between Two Children of God

*Child 1:* God loves me.

*Child 2:* God loves me too.

*Child 1:* How can that be?

*Child 2:* Why not?

*Child 1:* Because God loves me.

*Child 2:* That doesn't mean God can't love me.

*Child 1:* Yes, it does.

*Child 2:* Why?

*Child 1:* Because I'm older and God loved me first.

*Child 2:* That's not fair.

*Child 1:* You don't expect God to love me all these years and then suddenly change his mind and love you just because you show up, do you?

*Child 2:* Why can't God love more than one person?

*Child 1:* Of course God can do that. It's just that God can't love you.

*Child 2:* Why?

*Child 1:* Because I don't like you.

*Child 2:* What does that have to do with anything?

*Child 1:* If God loves me and I don't like you, how can God possibly love you?

*Child 2:* You're mean.

*Child 1:* Say all you want, but you won't get God to love you.

*Child 2:* Why?

*Child 1:* Because I told him not to.

*Child 2:* You can't tell God what to do.

*Child 1:* Of course I can. God and I are real buddies.

*Child 2:* I don't think God likes being told what to do.

*Child 1:* You can if he loves you.

*Child 2:* I think you're going to hell.

*Child 1:* What?!

*Child 2:* God says, "Don't judge, lest you be judged."

*Child 1:* Where did you hear that?

*Child 2:* It's in the Bible. Since you judged me, I will tell God to judge you, so you are definitely going to hell.

*Child 1:* You can't do that.

*Child 2:* If you can tell God what to do, so can I.

*Child 1:* But you don't even know God.

*Child 2:* I don't know *your* god, but I know mine.

*Child 1:* Are you saying there are two different gods?

*Child 2:* Yeah, one loves you, and one loves me. And I don't think they get along in heaven.

*Child 1:* That's because my god is better.

*Child 2:* No, my god is nicer.

*Child 1:* My god is stronger

*Child 2:* My god is smarter.

*Child 1:* My god is bigger.

*Child 2:* My god is prettier.

*Child 1:* Wait a minute. This doesn't sound right.

*Child 2:* What doesn't sound right?

*Child 1:* I thought there is only one God.

*Child 2:* Where did you hear that?

*Child 1:* It says so in the Bible.

*Child 2:* Then your god must be a fake.

*Child 1:* No, my god is the real one, and your god must be Satan.

*Child 2:* How dare you insult my god!

*Child 1:* You are going to burn in the eternal fire of hell, Satan-worshiper!

*Child 2:* You are going to be chopped up into a million pieces for insulting my god!

*Child 1:* I hate you.

*Child 2:* I hate you too.

*Child 1:* I'll kill you.

*Child 2:* I'll kill you first because the real god is on my side.

*Child 1:* No, you have Satan on your side; you will definitely die first.

(They fight. Then one kills the other and goes on to argue with another child of God.)  
It is a fictional play. Although it sounds very unreal and we could smile at this simple children's dialogue or brush it aside saying that it is children story, don't we come across something similar in real life? If we examine our lives and observe our discussions, arguments and prejudices, are they not circled around petty little things, which often keep us distancing from one another? Like these two children in this story, we have the tendencies to exclude and hurt others in the name of culture, traditions, nation, language, and creed, and not to mention for color of our skin.

We all come from different cultural viewpoints molded by our ethnic, generational, national and familial origin. As we journey forward, we realize that assumptions, prejudices and preconceptions can cause many misunderstandings, hurt feelings and broken relationships. Therefore, like any person living with and working in an intercultural community, on-going awareness, continuous learning, and letting go of our biased perceptions of other people, different from us, is vital.

Before we go further into the reflection, I would like to pose these following questions:

1. What is life-giving for you about intercultural living?
2. What is strenuous and demanding for you about intercultural living?
3. What challenges have you encountered in intercultural living?
4. What have you learned lately from your experiences of living in intercultural communities?

Reflect on instances when you have been either positively or negatively affected by other people around you.

Let us look at our own General Chapter documents and the constitutions, i.e., what they have to say about reconciliation and forgiveness.

## **Constitutions and General Chapters**

### **SVD**

The SVD constitutions clearly state that confreres coming from different nations, living and working together, becomes an enriching experience when based on deep respect for one another's nationality and culture (c. 303.1). Living together as a community of different nations, tensions are inevitable. Therefore, the call for each confrere is, "to bear with each other's personal weaknesses patiently and with the tensions that result from differences of temperament, age, nationality and culture. We avoid jealousy and aversions, dissensions and all criticism that impairs brotherly love; we refrain from anything that can bring harm to a confrere's good name. We help each other through fraternal correction (Mt 18:15). If dissension arises, we quickly seek to be reconciled" (303.6).

A lengthy explanation has been made in the last SVD General Chapter document on intercultural living. It is worth highlighting a few points here. "As impelled by the love of Christ, to proclaim and bring peace and reconciliation in each place, among every people, and for all cultures, we realize that we, as SVD missionaries, have cultivated some positive elements in our lives, as individuals, communities, and as a Society..." (GC 2018, 14). At the same, the capitulars recognize and affirm the need for continuous renewal and transformation both *ad-intra* and *ad-extra*: "Regardless of what we have achieved individually and communally as the Arnoldus family, we need also to improve, transform and renew certain areas of our lives..." (15).

In the 2018 General Chapter document, the word "renewal" appears 42 times and the word "transformation" 33 times. This shows that renewal and transformation, both personal and community, is a continuous process. "It kindles 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” (29). “Interculturality is part of our DNA” (31). Therefore, we cherish this value and strive to consciously promote the love of Christ and “the concrete situations of the world call us to constant renewal and transformation.”

## SSpS

Article 304 of the SSpS constitutions says that, “The Holy Spirit unites us in sincere sisterly love. In the differences of culture, nationality, personality and age, we experience the richness of his gifts in each of us...” Although we are of one community, living and working for one common mission, tensions, misunderstanding and failures cannot be avoided.” Therefore, “community living calls us to continual conversion...When differences arise, an attitude of faith and humility will help us towards reconciliation, mutual understanding and acceptance. We pray for the grace to be able to forgive and to be forgiven” (306).

The last three SSpS General Chapters have highlighted intercultural living, although with different expressions. But what the Chapters tried to arrive at is that persons of different cultures and nations living together is richness in itself, provided we live with an open heart to receive the gift. “Internationality is part of our identity as SSpS... Our communities of diverse cultures and nationalities are a source of enrichment and a challenge to be attentive to the otherness of persons in their uniqueness. They demand basic personal attitudes and need to be consciously cultivated and promoted... Learning the skills necessary for living in international, multicultural communities is a lifelong process” (2002, 43). “Many of our communities are small, intercultural and international, diversified in structure and apostolate” (52). To be a sign of unity in today's world, our communities need to be rooted in our Trinitarian spirituality, overcoming the difficulties that arise from our living together in culturally diverse communities.

The 13<sup>th</sup> General Chapter spoke about our intercultural and interconnected communities in the service of God's mission. “We are challenged,” say the capitulars, “To move from dominance to mutuality, from adaptation to integration, from intercultural living for its own sake to intercultural witness in and for mission... and thus to be intercultural communities that are places and signs of hope, love and unity in a fragmented world of prejudice, segregation and dominance” (2008).

“Our interculturality as SSpS is an expression of the Spirit's many faces,” says our 14<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. “We experience both the richness and the struggles of intercultural and intergenerational community living... *We open ourselves to continuous transformation as we befriend diversity and the unknown*” (2014).

Having this as background, let us now look at the stages of intercultural sensitivity. Milton Bennett, an American sociologist, describes six stages of development in intercultural sensitivity. He names it a “Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity” (Bennett, 1993). Let's go through them one by one:

**Denial:** In this stage, the person sees one's own culture as the only real one. Therefore one avoids the other cultures through psychological or physical isolation. A person at this stage hardly sees the difference or does not recognize cultural differences.

**Defense:** In this stage, the person not only sees one's own culture as the only good one, but is threatened by cultural difference and tends to be highly critical of other cultures. So much so that there is a barrier created between "us" and "them". The person recognizes some differences with others, but sees them as negative.

**Minimization:** In the third stage of intercultural sensitivity, minimization, the person tries not to stereotype, but rather appreciate differences in other cultures. Nevertheless, one still views many of his/her values as universal and has the tendency to project the cultural experiences onto others. One tends to be blind to many little differences that are in other cultures. The person is unaware of projection of his/her own cultural values; sees own values as superior.

**Acceptance:** The fourth stage, says Bennett, involves a changing perspective, while still maintaining the values. It is the goal of the whole process in the development of cultural sensitivity. The person in this stage reaches a collaborative attitude. He/She shifts perspectives to understand that the same "ordinary" behavior can have different meanings in different cultures.

**Adaptation:** The fifth stage of intercultural sensitivity is adaptation, and this may help the person to function in a bicultural environment. Here, in this stage, a person is able to look at another culture "through different eyes" and intentionally change behavior to function successfully within that culture. He/She can evaluate others' behavior from their frame of reference and can adapt behavior to fit the norms of a different culture.

**Integration:** The sixth stage is a stage of shifting perspectives and frames of reference from one culture to another in a natural way. Some may come to this stage. The main task in this process is to have in-depth knowledge of one's own culture, and of course of the other, and the ability to move in and out easily and naturally from one cultural environment to another. According to Bennett, this is the final stage of intercultural sensitivity. (ref: <https://www.awesomelibrary.org/multiculturaltoolkit-stages.html>)

What do these stages have to do with our theme, "reconciliation, and forgiveness?" Every person goes through these stages that Milton Bennett mentions, either in their own country or in other countries. How many of us are stuck in "denial," "defense," "minimization" stages, or still harboring resentment, ill feeling, or a vengeful attitude for the times we felt judged because of our cultural background, for our skin color, or for our particular languages? How many of us still carry on with negative feelings for the experiences of being belittled, or for the way we dressed, talked or ate something different from the rest of the world?

We are criticized, judged unjustly, we are compared, laughed at; and we in turn have done the same to others. The way forward to settle all of this is to seek forgiveness and offer forgiveness. All of us need to go through this process. It is a gift and a grace from God and we need to ask it from him. Let us now then look into ourselves, look at our

communities past and present. Is there something that needs to be forgiven in me? Is there someone I need to forgive, including myself?

### **Scripture Texts for Prayer**

- Lk 6:27-38: “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”
- Mt 6:7-18: “If you forgive others their wrongs your Father in heaven will also forgive yours.”
- Eph 4:17-32: “Put on a new self according to God.”

Invite participants to also pray and reflect over the articles of our constitutions and pointers from the General Chapter documents.

### **A Journey with the Divine: Beginning Anew**

#### **Personal moment**

Choose a quiet place and with closed eyes try to relax yourself. Breathe in and out normally. Place your left palm gently over your heart and the right palm over it. Continue breathing normally and gently, perceive the gentle movement, the rising and falling of the heart as you breathe in and breathe out. Continue it for a few minutes till you're completely relaxed.

Place yourself now in the presence of God, say a spontaneous prayer or repeat a mantra to experience the presence of God in you and around you.

Gently direct your attention to the center of your heart, allow your heart to tell you or let it pop up spontaneously some real challenges you experienced in community living with diverse persons and ask yourself the following questions with regard to the purpose of each challenge:

- What do I need to understand?
- What do I need to let go of?
- What do I need to open up to?
- What choices do I need to make to change?
- What situations or people do I find difficult to appreciate?

With eyes closed, and in a relaxed meditative state, again focus on your heart and the quality of appreciation or compassion that surrounds it. When you have it, then visualize someone whom you have difficulty seeing as a friend and direct this appreciation towards that person. Stay with the person as long as you need. Do not analyze, just let them come spontaneously to you. Let your heart direct this journey. Continue moving from persons or situations as the time permits you.

After the personal meditation, ask the participants to bring a symbol from nature that reflects the experience they lived. During the Eucharist or shared liturgy give a chance to share the symbol and the experience and end the liturgy by listening to a song, for example, *Words of Life*, Song 4, “Lord, renew my heart...” Fr. Adonis Llamas Narcelles, Jr., SVD.

## Concluding prayer

Creator, open our hearts  
to peace and healing between all people.  
Creator, open our hearts  
to provide and protect for all children of the earth.  
Creator, open our hearts  
to respect for the earth, and all the gifts of the earth.  
Creator, open our hearts  
to end exclusion, violence, and fear among all.  
Thank you for the gifts of this day and every day.

(Native American - Micmac - Alycia Long River, 1995)

*Emmie Vas, SSpS*

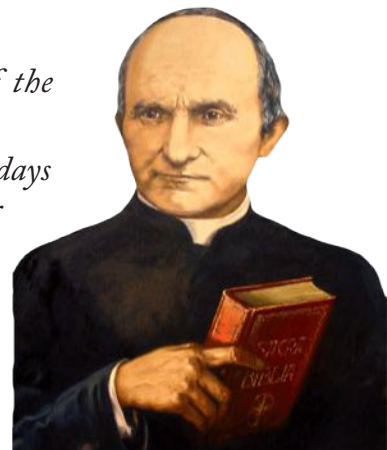
## 2.5. Feast Day Celebrations

### 2.5.1. Feast of St. Arnold Janssen

**Objective:** *To commemorate St. Arnold Janssen's Feast in the community/parish with the collaboration of SVDs, SSpS and mission partners.*

#### **Preparation**

- *Planning Committee - Invite the representatives of the Arnoldus family to discuss and plan the celebration.*
- *Triduum for three days prior to the Feast Day or nine days novena in preparation for the feast. Recital of 'Quarter Hour Prayer'.*
- *Films/documentaries/power point presentations may be made available to the people after the Triduum/novena Masses.*
- *Invite speakers who can talk on the life of the saint and the Trinitarian spirituality of our congregation.*
- *Have stalls in the compound displaying/selling books on the life of our Founder or on the Founding Generation. Display photographs of our missionary life or from the missions where our confreres/Sisters/mission partners work.*
- *Invite for the celebration the benefactors and well-wishers who have helped the Society in some way or the other.*
- *Use this platform to communicate to people about Divine Word missionaries and our work in the missions.*



#### **When and Where**

- *January 15th or on a Sunday before/after January 15th (as per the convenience of the congregation/parish) in the parish/community.*

## A. Eucharistic Celebration (Community or Parish)

- Decoration of the altar/church as per the local culture.
- Give prominence to a visual image of St. Arnold Janssen.
- Enthronement of the Bible at the beginning of the Mass, giving the word of God an important place in our liturgical celebration.
- Invite as homilist a special guest priest who is able to give more insight into the life and mission of St. Arnold Janssen.
- Cultural diversity is a gift. Therefore, enhance the liturgy by the inclusion of cultural symbols; the entrance dance, welcoming the celebrants, and using symbols during the liturgy. (Gospel/Offertory/Doxology).

(e.g., *Aarti* [Indian context], *where light, incense and flowers are offered to God*)

## B. Reflection Pointers – About St. Arnold Janssen

- Founder of the three Mission Congregations: Society of the Divine Word (SVD) in 1875, the Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) in 1889 and the Sister-Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration (SSpSAP) in 1896. Now, the Mission Partners are included as members of the Arnoldus family.
- Saint Arnold Janssen was born into a devoutly Catholic family in Goch, Germany in 1837. Growing up, he was greatly influenced by his father, a man of deep faith who revered the Holy Trinity and the Word of God. These became integral parts of SVD spirituality and our charism, with the latter becoming the name of his missionary society, the Divine Word.
- Entering a minor seminary in Gaesdonck in 1849, he went on to study mathematics and the natural sciences and was ordained in 1861. For twelve years, he taught in a public school. During this time, he became involved in a movement called the Apostleship of Prayer League, and soon became its director. To support its cause, he wrote a small pamphlet, which became quite popular. He left his teaching position in 1873 to focus on the apostleship and to become chaplain of a religious order of women, the Ursuline sisters, in Kempen. After writing several books on prayer, he began publishing a magazine, *The Little Messenger of the Heart of Jesus*, which was also quite successful. He soon discovered two things: there was a market for such printed materials and there was support in his country for a German missionary society.
- Arnold Janssen continued to guide his missionary order for 34 years. At the time of his death in 1909, his society included 1,500 priests, Brothers, missionaries and Adoration Sisters on mission in ten countries.
- In 1879, he sent his first missionaries, Fr. John B. Anzer, SVD, and Fr. Joseph Freinademetz, SVD, to China.
- Arnold Janssen was canonized a Saint of the Church with Joseph Freinademetz by Pope John Paul II in 2003.

- Arnold's love for the mission and his commitment towards missionary activities enthuse the people today.
- His focus on spreading the Gospel throughout the world, especially towards far off nations is commendable.
- His humility to accept his mistakes, his firmness to do the will of God, and his capacity to listen to the other confreres could be imitated today.
- His love for the poor, nature and mission partners show us the way one could act in our missions.

### **C. Some inspirational prayers or words of Saint Arnold Janssen**

- "May the Holy Triune God live in our hearts..."
- "May the heart of Jesus live in our hearts and in the hearts of all."
- "Let us all be one in him" (Quarter Hour Prayer).
- "As two people love each other so deeply the more they are akin in their feelings and senses, so must also the Son of God tenderly love us who in our inner sense are entirely in agreement with him. We possess the same Spirit together."

### **D. Questions for Personal Reflection (After homily)**

- a. Is there anything in the life of Arnold Janssen that touches me?
- b. Have I experienced myself as being blessed by God? How can I be a blessing?

### **E. Celebrative Expression (Agape)**

- Commitment to learn and understand the spirituality of Arnold Janssen and also the importance of intercultural elements in our celebration.
- Distribution of sweets or any other items to the congregation after the liturgical service/Mass.
- Recognizing the touch of unity in diversity, invite special guests for the celebration; poor and marginalized families, physically challenged children/elders, people suffering from HIV, AIDS, Tuberculosis, domestic helpers and the 'invisible faces' who helped to enhance the celebration.
- Celebrate together with a meal or a gathering with games and prizes. Have a quiz competition on the life of St. Arnold Janssen and our Founding Generation with prizes.

### ***Evaluation/Sharing***

**Personal:** Share my experience of the event.

**Communal:** How are we enriched by the celebration? How and what we could do to improve in the future?

*Susan Noronha, Mumbai, India*

## 2.5.2. Feast of St. Joseph Freinademetz

**Objective:** To commemorate Joseph Freinademetz's Feast with the SVDs, SSpS and mission partners.

### Preparation

- Planning Committee – Invite the representatives of the Arnoldus family to discuss and plan the celebration.
- Triduum for three days prior to the feast day or nine days novena in preparation for the feast. Recital of 'Quarter Hour Prayer'.
- Films/documentaries/power point presentations may be made available to the people after the Triduum/novena Masses.
- Invite speakers who can talk on the life of the saint and the Trinitarian spirituality of our congregation.
- Have stalls in the compound displaying/selling books on the life of our Founder or on the Founding Generation. Display photographs of our missionary life or from the missions where our confreres/Sisters/mission partners work.
- Invite for the celebration the benefactors and well-wishers who have helped the Society in some way or the other.
- Use this platform to communicate to people about Divine Word missionaries and our work in the missions.



### When and Where

- Feast on January 29<sup>th</sup> or on a Sunday after January 29<sup>th</sup> (as per the convenience of the congregation/parish) at the parish/community.

### A. Eucharistic Celebration (Community or Parish)

- Decoration of the altar/church as per the local culture.
- Give prominence to a visual image of St. Arnold Janssen and St. Joseph Freinademetz.
- Enthronement of the Bible at the beginning of the Mass, giving the word of God an important place in our liturgical celebration.
- Invite as homilist a special guest priest who is able to give more insight into the life and mission of St. Joseph Freinademetz.
- Cultural diversity is a gift. Therefore, enhance the liturgy by the inclusion of cultural symbols; the entrance dance, welcoming the celebrants, and symbols during the liturgy. (Gospel/Offertory/Doxology) - (e.g., *Aarti* [Indian context], where light, incense and flowers are offered to God).

### B. Reflection Pointers - About St. Joseph Freinademetz

- Joseph Freinademetz was born on April 15, 1852, in Oies, a small hamlet of five houses situated in the Dolomite Alps of northern Italy. The region, known as South Tyrol, was then part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. He was baptized on the day he was born, and he inherited from his family a simple but tenacious faith.

- While Joseph was studying theology in the diocesan seminary of Bressanone (Brixen), he began to think seriously of the foreign missions as a way of life. He was ordained a priest on July 25, 1875, and assigned to the community of Saint Martin very near his own home, where he soon won the hearts of the people.
- Two years after ordination he contacted Fr. Arnold Janssen, the founder of the Society of the Divine Word. With his bishop's permission, Joseph entered the mission house in Steyl, Netherlands, in August 1878.
- On March 2, 1879, he received his mission cross and departed for China with Fr. John Baptist Anzer, another Divine Word Missionary. Five weeks later they arrived in Hong Kong, where they remained for two years, preparing themselves for the next step.
- In 1881 they traveled to their new mission in South Shantung, a province with 12 million inhabitants and only 158 Christians.
- Those were hard years, marked by long, arduous journeys, assaults by bandits, and the difficult work of forming the first Christian communities. As soon as a community was just barely developed an instruction from the Bishop would arrive, telling him to leave everything and start anew.
- Soon Joseph came to appreciate the importance of a committed laity, especially catechists, for first evangelization. He dedicated much energy to their formation and prepared a catechetical manual in Chinese. At the same time, together with Anzer (who had become bishop) he put great effort into the preparation, spiritual formation and ongoing education of Chinese priests and other missionaries. His whole life was marked by an effort to become a Chinese among the Chinese, so much so that he wrote to his family: "I love China and the Chinese. I want to die among them and be laid to rest among them."
- In 1898, Freinademetz was sick with laryngitis and had the beginnings of tuberculosis as a result of his heavy workload and many other hardships. So at the insistence of the bishop and the other priests he was sent for a rest to Japan, with the hope that he could regain his health. He returned to China somewhat recuperated, but not fully cured.
- When the bishop had to travel outside of China in 1907, Freinademetz took on the added burden of the administration of the diocese. During this time there was a severe outbreak of typhus. Freinademetz, like a good shepherd, offered untiring assistance and visited many communities until he himself became infected. He returned to Taikia, the seat of the diocese, where he died on January 28, 1908. He was buried at the twelfth station on the Way of the Cross, and his grave soon became a pilgrimage site for Christians.
- Joseph Freinademetz learned how to discover the greatness and beauty of Chinese culture and to love deeply the people to whom he had been sent. He dedicated his life to proclaiming the gospel message of God's love for all peoples, and to embodying this love in the formation of Chinese Christian communities. He animated these communities to open themselves in solidarity with the surrounding inhabitants. He encouraged many of the Chinese Christians to be missionaries to their own people as catechists, religious, nuns and priests. His life was an expression of his motto: "The language that all people understand is that of love" (Pope John Paul II in his homily on Freinademetz).

- Freinademetz learned the importance of language and culture for evangelization. He learned the Chinese language well, of course with great determination and dedication. He wore the local dress and appeared to be like any other Chinese.
- Along with that he suffered with them as they suffered due to laryngitis. His thinking and relationship with the local people was appreciated by his religious companions.
- In his last sermon to his parishioners in St. Martin he said: “The Divine Good Shepherd in his unfathomable goodness has invited me to go with him into the desert to look for the sheep that have gone astray. What else can I do but kiss his hand in gratitude and joy and in the words of Sacred Scripture say, Behold I come; and then like Abraham leave my father’s house, my homeland and you, dearly beloved, and go to the land the Lord will point out to me...”
- He was canonized with Saint Arnold Janssen as a Saint of the Church by Pope John Paul II in 2003.

### **C. Some inspirational words of Joseph Freinademetz**

- “Love is the only language which all people understand.”
- Joseph Freinademetz overcame his ethnocentrism in order to widen his perspective and enter into table fellowship with a new culture, the Chinese.

### **D. Questions for Personal Reflection (After homily)**

- a. The challenge is moving from being judgmental to being sensitive and appreciative of other cultures’ values. Is it applicable to me?
- b. Have I experienced myself being blessed by God and by other people? How can I be a blessing?
- c. What images and symbols are meaningful to me in Joseph Freinademetz’s life?

### **E. Celebrative Expression (Agape)**

- Commitment to learn and understand the spirituality of Joseph Freinademetz and also the importance of intercultural elements in our celebration.
- Distribution of sweets or any other items to the congregation after the Service/Mass.
- Recognizing the touch of unity in diversity, invite special guests for the celebration; poor and marginalized families, physically challenged children/elders, people suffering from HIV, AIDS, Tuberculosis, domestic helpers and the ‘invisible faces’ who helped to enhance the celebration.
- Celebrate together with a meal or a gathering with games and prizes. Have a quiz competition on the life St. Joseph Freinademetz and our Founding Generation with prizes.

### ***Evaluation/Sharing***

**Personal:** Share my experience of the event.

**Communal:** How are we enriched by the celebration? How and what we could do to improve in the future?

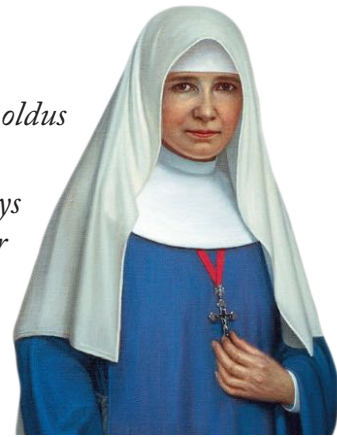
*Susan Noronha, Mumbai, India*

### 2.5.3. Feast of Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk

**Objective:** To commemorate Maria Helena Stollenwerk's Feast with the SSpS, SVDs and mission partners.

#### **Preparation**

- *Planning Committee – Invite the representatives of the Arnoldus family to discuss and plan the celebration.*
- *Triduum for three days prior to the feast day or nine days novena in preparation for the feast. Recital of 'Quarter Hour Prayer', or sing Veni Creator Spiritus (or song to the Holy Spirit).*
- *Films/documentaries/power point presentations may be made available to the people after the Triduum/novena Masses.*
- *Invite speakers who can talk on the life of the Bl. M. Helena, the Trinitarian spirituality of our congregation and dedication to the Holy Spirit.*
- *Have stalls in the compound displaying/selling books and booklets on the life of Bl. M. Helena. Display photographs of our missionary life or from the missions where our Sisters/SVDs/mission partners work. Prepare also material for vocation promotion for all three congregations (if possible).*



#### **When and Where**

- *Feast of Bl. M. Helena Stollenwerk – 28th November in the community/parish.*

#### **A. Eucharistic Celebration (Community or Parish)**

- Give prominence to a visual image of Bl. M. Helena.
- Enthronement of the Bible at the beginning of the Mass, giving the word of God an important place in our liturgical celebration, and also a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
- Invite a special guest as homilist, who is able to give more insight into the life and service of Bl. M. Helena Stollenwerk.
- Cultural diversity is a gift. Therefore, enhance the liturgy by the inclusion of cultural symbols.

#### **B. Reflection Pointers – About Bl. Maria Helena Stollenwerk**

- Helena Stollenwerk was born on November 28, 1852, in the village of Rollesbroich, parish of Simmerath, Cologne archdiocese, near the border of Belgium and the Netherlands. The day after her birth she was baptized and received the name Anna Helena.
- A deep life of faith was the strong foundation of her family, with peace and unity bonding them together in great concern for one another. She narrates the day of her first Holy Communion as one of the happiest moments in her life. As soon as she was able, she dedicated herself to charitable and apostolic activities and also became a member of The Holy Childhood Association (Pontifical Mission Work for children), which had a decisive influence on her future.

- She experienced joy when she felt God's call to be a missionary Sister in China but because the religious orders were being expelled from Germany due to the Kulturkampf, she could not fulfill her dream.
- After exchanging some letters with Fr. Arnold Janssen, the Founder of the Society of the Divine Word, she was admitted as a maid to the Mission House in December 1882, anticipating her future religious life.
- This time of waiting and hard work in the Mission House lasted more than six years. Helena had learned to wait and could see the good in every life situation. She recognized in her deepest being that she must become a missionary Sister and that she could then, even in her home country, become a missionary performing the most insignificant task.
- The move to the little Three Linden Convent increased her hopes and almost fulfilled them, when six women moved again into the former Capuchin monastery and began their religious life. December 8, 1889, is considered the founding day of the Mission Congregation of the Servants of the Holy Spirit. It was on January 17, 1892, after ten years of waiting, that Helena could call herself Sister Maria.
- Although her deepest desire to go to China was not fulfilled, she made the resolution and finally the motto to leave to others the greatness, to persevere in prayer, to burn in love and to do the insignificant work.
- Helena had discovered her personal vocation. In this time of struggle and searching, she understood that she was called to a Missionary Congregation, but that her way would not necessarily take her to China. She would live out her vocation in Steyl. She dedicated herself unreservedly and unconditionally to the building up of the young community, in the spirit of Arnold Janssen, to enable it for mission.
- The year 1896 brought Sister Maria a new trial. A cloistered branch, dedicated to perpetual adoration, was to be founded. She loved the contemplative life; she felt more and more drawn to the contemplative prayer, yet she was not among the first group of Sisters chosen to start. After two years Arnold Janssen asked Sister Maria whether she would transfer to the cloistered branch. Everyone was edified by her humility when she received the habit on December 8, 1898, taking the name Sister Maria Virgo, and began the novitiate with zeal.
- Towards the end of 1899, Mother Maria developed tubercular encephalitis, a sickness she bore with quiet patience. On January 31, 1900, she was allowed to pronounce vows as a cloistered Sister. And on February 3, at 2:30 in the afternoon she died, after days of high fever and severe pains.
- Mother Maria never experienced the joy of going to a mission country but, by work, prayer and submission to the superiors, she helped to give a firm foundation to the Congregation and enabled it to spread the Gospel, the Good News of God's saving love, throughout the world.
- The Congregation was growing and reaching out to all the continents. M. Maria read with great interest all the reports and letters, followed up closely every development and tried to learn from all these for her task as superior. She was concerned about how she could best guide the young Missionary Congregation, encourage and help

the Sisters in the far away missions. This she tried to do with much love, joy and dedication.

- As superior, she guided the Congregation with great prudence, wisdom and humility. She cared for her Sisters with maternal love and gave them a continual example of fidelity to her vocation and authentic missionary zeal. More than words, her example of availability and maturity in daily life contributed to the spiritual and apostolic formation of the Sisters. She wished them to be well-prepared to meet the difficulties of missionary life. She wanted others to have the ability she herself possessed to combine work and contemplation.
- Mother Maria was beatified in Rome on May 7, 1995 by Pope John Paul II.

### **C. Some inspirational words of Helena Stollenwerk**

- "To God the honor, for my neighbor the benefit, for myself the burden."
- "I long to give my love and my whole life to the service of spreading the Gospel."
- "God alone can fill your heart."
- "Have always a complete trust in God because the Holy Spirit will help us in our anxieties and needs, even in the most difficult situation."
- "When we love each other, prayer is easier and all our worries and burdens are easier to carry."
- "Walk with God in simplicity and with childlike trust."

### **D. Questions for Reflection (After homily)**

- a. What am I learning from the life of Bl. Helena Stollenwerk?
- b. Am I open and willing to work and serve people of different personalities, nationalities and cultures with love and humbleness?
- c. What images and symbols are meaningful to me in the life of Bl. Helena?

### **E. Celebrative Expression (Agape)**

- Distribution of sweets, memorial cards or any other items to the congregation after the Service/Mass.
- Recognizing the touch of unity in diversity, invite special guests for the celebration, such as poor and marginalized families.
- Celebrate together with a meal or a gathering with games and prizes. Have a quiz competition on the life Bl. Helena Stollenwerk and our Founding Generation with prizes.

### ***Evaluation/Sharing***

**Personal:** Share my experience of the event.

**Communal:** How are we enriched by the celebration? How and what we could do to improve in the future?

*Jaroslava Starsia, SSPS*

## 2.5.4. Feast of Bl. Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns

**Objective:** *To commemorate Bl. Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns' Feast with the SSpS, SVDs and mission partners.*

### **Preparation**

- *Planning Committee - Invite the representatives of the Arnoldus family to discuss and plan the celebration.*
- *Triduum for three days prior to the Feast Day or nine days novena in preparation for the feast. Recital of 'Quarter Hour Prayer', or sing 'Veni Creator Spiritus' (or song to the Holy Spirit).*
- *Films/documentaries/power point presentations may be made available to the people after the Triduum/novena Masses.*
- *Invite speakers who can talk on the life of the Bl. Josepha, the Trinitarian spirituality of our congregation and dedication to the Holy Spirit.*
- *Have stalls in the compound displaying/selling books and booklets on the life of Bl. Josepha. Display photographs of our missionary life or from the missions where our Sisters/SVDs/mission partners work. Prepare also material for vocation promotion for all three congregations (if possible).*



### **When and Where**

- *Feast of Bl. M. Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns on 20th May in the community/parish.*

### **A. Eucharistic Celebration (Community or Parish)**

- Give prominence to a visual image of Bl. Josepha.
- Enthronement of the Bible at the beginning of the Mass, giving the word of God an important place in our liturgical celebration, and also a symbol of the Holy Spirit.
- Invite a special guest as homilist, who is able to give more insight into the life and service of Bl. Josepha Stenmanns.
- Cultural diversity is a gift. Therefore, enhance the liturgy by the inclusion of cultural symbols; the entrance dance/welcoming the celebrants, cultural costumes, and symbols during the liturgy.

### **B. Reflection Pointers – About Bl. Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns**

- Hendrina Stenmanns was born on May 28, 1852, in the Lower Rhine village of Issum, in the Diocese of Münster, and was baptized on the following day. She was the oldest of seven children and one of her greatest joys as a small child was to help others. Whenever and wherever she could perform an act of charity, she never failed to do so.
- When Hendrina was fourteen years old, she left school in order to help her mother in the household chores and by weaving she wanted to help her parents meet the

family expenses too. The poor and the sick found in her a loving helper and she even accompanied the dying and sat with them during the night hours.

- At the age of nineteen she became a member of the Third Order of St. Francis in Sonsbeck but she was already considering religious life. Her path in search of her desired goal was not easy. The seminaries and convents were closed; religious priests and nuns were expelled due to the "Kulturkampf" in Germany. When her mother died on December 1, 1878, Hendrina promised she would look after her brothers and sister and her father.
- Some years later, after visiting Steyl for the first time, she met Helena Stollenwerk there and sensed that this was her place. She wrote Fr. Arnold Janssen and her request to join other maids was granted. On February 12, 1884, she left her home village for Steyl and began with great zeal, perseverance and a joyful spirit, a journey with many hardships, great poverty and heavy work in the kitchen of the Mission House. Her vocation was so firm that she took everything with serenity and a spirit of sacrifice, obedient to her superiors and fulfilling her duties to the best of her ability.
- She waited six years in Steyl, just like the other maids. In 1888, as they moved to the "Convent of the Three Lindens," Fr. Janssen appointed Hendrina as superior for the small community. Later in 1889, Hendrina and the other five young women moved to the Capuchin Monastery and started their religious-missionary life. Already as a postulant she accompanied other postulants, the first generation of SSpS, with a motherly, simple, kind and friendly manner. December 8, 1889, was the "Foundation Day" of the Sisters' Congregation. With her religious habit Hendrina also received the name Sr. Josepha.
- After making her first religious vows in 1894 and as the number of Sisters increased, she was appointed directress of work and maintenance of the convent. She continued as wellbeing assistant superior and postulant mistress. On September 8, 1901, Sr. Josepha, together with eight other Sisters, made her Final Vows. They were the first Sisters to take Perpetual Vows in the Congregation.
- The increasing number of Sisters and retreat participants led to the building of a new convent. This is now the Mother house – Herz-Jesu-Kloster.
- A severe case of asthma overtook M. Josepha from which she was not to recover. From the middle of December, 1902 her health condition worsened. On January 26, 1903, at her own request, M. Josepha received the Sacrament of the Sick. On the morning of May 20, she asked for Communion. In the afternoon at quarter to two, Mother Josepha died. Three days later she was buried in the Sisters' cemetery beside the other Co-Foundress of the Missionary Sisters, Mother Maria Stollenwerk.
- Mother Josepha was beatified on June 29, 2008. The miracle accepted by the Holy See was the miraculous cure of a man, Vladimir Bender from Brazil. The doctors had given up hope of recovery after having gone through surgery for appendicitis. Through the intercession of M. Josepha he was completely healed.
- Sr. Josepha, as a superior of Missionary Sisters had a motherly heart. Her touching little gestures left an unforgettable impression. Simple, natural, humble, and uncomplicated as she was, she trained the Sisters likewise.

- Mother Josepha showed special love and veneration of the Holy Spirit from whom she often implored light and strength for her tasks. The pains which Mother Josepha endured at each breath during her illness opened up to her a new approach to the Holy Spirit. Out of this experience she left to us her legacy, “The *Veni Sancte Spiritus* should be the breath of every Servant of the Holy Spirit.”
- Her desire was to be the least and to sacrifice for the work of evangelization. By this she meant nothing special besides doing the daily work whatever it is, with growing love. Her missionary zeal became very concrete when during the summer and autumn retreats she opened wide the house to accept as many retreatants as possible, giving many women a chance to deepen their Christian life.
- Mother Josepha had the gift to perceive the capacities, strengths and limitations of the individual Sisters and knew how to listen to them, to accept their opinions, and to appreciate those who had talents for practical work. She acknowledged the aptitudes, talents and achievements of others, but she also knew how to deal with human limitations. She showed understanding and concern whenever she realized that the work or the responsibility was too much or too heavy for a Sister.
- She always enjoyed sending other Sisters to missions, even though she herself could never go. She was most happy to hear that the Sisters overseas were persevering and satisfied in their missionary life. With great joy and interest she would read letters and reports and shared them with the Founder. In her letters, she tried to encourage and support them as a loving mother.

### **C. Some inspirational words of Bl. Josepha**

- "Our task is to open all hearts to the love of God."
- "I desire nothing more than with the grace of God to be the least and to sacrifice myself for the work of evangelization."
- "Let us continuously pray for the Spirit of Love. Then we will be truly happy."
- "God has brought us together so that we may be of one heart and one soul. We would not be true Servants of the Holy Spirit if we did not practice Sisterly love."
- "Live from hour to hour, from day to day and leave the future to the Lord."
- "The more we give, the more the Lord gives in return."

### **D. Questions for Reflection (After homily)**

- a. What am I learning from the life of Bl. Josepha Stenmanns?
- b. Am I open and willing to work and serve people of different personalities, nationalities and cultures with love and humbleness?
- c. What images and symbols are meaningful to me in Bl. Josepha's life?

### **E. Celebrative Expression (Agape)**

- Commitment to learn and understand the Trinitarian spirituality and also the importance of intercultural elements in our celebration.

- Distribution of sweets, memorial cards or any other items to the congregation after the Service/Mass.
- Recognizing the touch of unity in diversity, invite special guests for the celebration; poor and marginalized families, refugees, physically challenged children/elders, people suffering from HIV, AIDS, Tuberculosis, domestic helpers and the 'invisible faces' who helped to enhance the celebration.
- Celebrate together with a meal or a gathering with games and prizes. Have a quiz competition on the life Bl. Josepha Stenmanns and our Founding Generation with prizes.

### ***Evaluation/Sharing***

**Personal:** Share my experience of the event.

**Communal:** How are we enriched by the celebration? How and what we could do to improve in the future?

*Jaroslava Starsia, SSpS*

### **2.5.5. SVD Foundation Day (8 September)**

**Objective:** *To commemorate the Society's Foundation day in the community, school, parish and other SVD institutions with the collaboration of SVD, SSpS and mission partners.*

#### ***Preparation***

- *Planning Committee – Invite the representatives of the Arnoldus family to discuss and plan the celebration.*
- *Films/documentaries/power point presentations about the Society may be made available to the people.*
- *Invite speakers who can talk on the history, mission, charism and spirituality of our congregation. If opportunity permits, invite some "returning missionaries" or missionaries on vacation to share their missionary experience both locally and abroad.*
- *Have stalls in the compound displaying the history of the SVD, mission, charism, spirituality and life of the Founding Generation. Display photographs of our missionary life or from the missions where our confreres/Sisters/mission partners work and books on the life of our Founder or on the Founding Generation.*
- *Invite for the celebration our collaborators, benefactors and well-wishers who have helped the Society in some way or the other.*

#### ***When and Where***

- *September 8 or on a weekend before/after as per convenience of the community in the parishes, schools and places of ministry.*

## **A. Eucharistic Celebration (Community/Parish/School)**

- Give prominence to a visual image of Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Arnold Janssen.
- Enthronement of the Bible at the beginning of the Mass, giving the word of God an important place in our liturgical celebration.
- Invite a homilist who is able to give more insight on the mission, charism and spirituality of our congregation.
- Highlight our congregation's internationality and multicultural living. Therefore, incorporate in the liturgy cultural symbols; e.g., multilingual readings and intercessory prayers, local cultural offertory procession and use of songs composed by our confreres, SSpS, SSpSAP and mission partners.

## **B. Reflection Pointers – Quotations taken from SVD Documents**

- September 8, 1875, St. Michael Mission House was opened in Steyl. The Founder, St. Arnold Janssen, prays that “this new holy place... dedicated to you, the Supreme Lord of the world, may serve to spread your kingdom to the most distant lands.”
- Saint Arnold Janssen was born on November 5, 1837 to a devoutly Catholic family in Goch, Germany. He was greatly influenced by his father, a man of deep faith who revered the Blessed Trinity and the word of God. These became integral parts of SVD spirituality and our charism.
- The foundation of the Society was in a very simple rented inn, but afterwards, the Society grew like a mighty tree reaching out to the whole world.
- St. Arnold was careful in choosing the countries before sending the confreres and he studied the situation of each country and had regular contact with the local bishops. He sent off the missionaries with a special liturgy.
- After the prayers and final blessing, he kissed the feet of the missionaries as they would leave for the new lands to spread the Good News.
- Prologue of the SVD constitution: God's loving grace has gathered us from various peoples and continents into a religious missionary community dedicated to the Divine Word and named after him the Society of the Divine Word.
- Christ continues His mission in His people: to bring the good news to all nations and proclaim the Father's liberating and unifying love. The Holy Spirit repeatedly raises up communities which place themselves at the disposal of the Church to help accomplish its missionary task (c. Prologue).
- Mission Animation: The Divine Word missionary sees the culmination of his commitment realized when the community strives to reach out beyond itself and, in the spirit of evangelization, to pass on to others what it has itself received.
- We do not live our mission spirituality alone... Thus our spirituality embraces more than our devotional prayer life; it permeates and enlivens every aspect of our relationships, with God, other people and all of creation (GC 2006, 15).
- Moved by the Spirit of Jesus, we build our communities interculturally when we experience relationships of trust, openness, co-responsibility, mutuality and fraternity. Striving to live as truly intercultural communities is already a key element of our SVD mission (GC 2018, 27).

- Each SVD missionary who experiences the love of Christ is now impelled by the same love to bear witness to Christ in the world through a commitment to mission that is both renewing and transformative (GC 2018, 29).
- In 2020, the Society has over 6,000 members, having 59 provinces/regions/missions and working in 84 countries around the world.
- Brothers in our Congregation are a blessing. Our Founder St. Arnold saw them as pillars in the Society and they worked hard in establishing many places and being involved in many projects in the missions.

### **C. Inspirational words of the Founder Saint Arnold Janssen and Pioneer SVD Missionary to China Saint Joseph Freinademetz**

- “I do not regard being a missionary as a sacrifice offered to God, but as a grace that God gives to me.” J. Freinademetz.
- “Since love completes everything, it softens what is hard, lightens what is heavy and difficult, all should strive to do all out of love.” A. Janssen.
- “Love is the only language everyone understands.” J. Freinademetz.
- “Those who know they are loved and given grace from God, have all the more reason to be joyful. Joy and thankfulness towards God belong especially to a religious person.” A. Janssen.
- Spirit of joy and contentment: “A religious person is content with God and all his arrangements; he is content with the people and will work everywhere joyfully.” J. Freinademetz.
- “When we have done everything we can. God will do the rest.” A. Janssen.
- “To be a missionary is the finest task in the world.” J. Freinademetz.

### **D. Questions for Personal Reflection (After homily)**

- a. What gives me the “greatest joy” as a religious missionary?
- b. In what ways do I share the Word of God today?

### **E. Celebrative Expression (Agape)**

- Distribution of Society’s commemorative articles such as: SVD logo, Mission Rosary, or card with prayer for missionaries, prayer pamphlets of Sts. Arnold and Joseph, etc.
- Make a simple play about the humble beginnings of the Society and the Founder’s life.
- To highlight the role of the Blessed Mother for our Congregation, it is but fitting to have a series of songs or a simple “Marian Concert” to honor our Mother.
- Have a meal together, especially with poor people in that area.

### ***Evaluation/Sharing***

**Personal:** Share what has touched you most in the celebration.

**Communal:** As the Arnoldus Family, discuss what can be done together to share our charism? Publish on the web or in a newsletter regarding this celebration.

*Dennis Manzana, SVD*

## 2.5.6. SSpS Foundation Day (December 8)

**Objective:** *To commemorate the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Foundation of the SSpS in the community/parish with the collaboration of SVDs, SSpS and mission partners.*

### **Preparation**

- *Planning Committee – Invite the representatives of the Arnoldus family to discuss and plan the celebration highlighting the unique value and role of women in the mission of the Church.*
- *A Novena or Triduum to the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary combined with the story, life and mission of the Missionary Servants of the Holy Spirit in preparation for the feast. Recital of ‘Quarter Hour Prayer’.*
- *Films/documentaries/power point presentations may be made available to the people after the Triduum/novena Masses.*
- *Invite women speakers who can talk on the founding generation of the SSpS and the Trinitarian spirituality of our congregation.*
- *Have stalls in the compound displaying/selling books on the life of our Founding Generation and Intercultural living. Display photographs of our missionary life, especially those in which the members of the Arnoldus family from different cultures and nationalities are seen together.*
- *Pictures of Our Lady or devotions to Mary from different cultures could also be made available as well as pictures where women from different cultures promote life, peace and solidarity.*
- *Use social media platforms such as Facebook or Instagram prior to the celebration to post reflections or quotes on intercultural living, unity in diversity, vocation animation for the Arnoldus Family, devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary in different cultures, women empowerment projects, etc.*

### **When and Where**

- *December 8th or on a Sunday before/after (as per the convenience of the community/parish/groups/institutions).*

### **A. Eucharistic Celebration (Community or Parish)**

- *Decoration of the altar/church as per the local culture highlighting the presence of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Blessed Mothers Maria Helena Stollenwerk and Josepha Stenmanns. Pictures of women and SSpS Missionary Sisters from different cultures, flowers/cultural cloth can be added.*
- *Enthronement of the Bible at the beginning of the Mass, giving the word of God an important place in our liturgical celebration.*
- *Invite, when possible, an SSpS to give more insight into the SSpS Founding Generation and the mission today, especially regarding women’s empowerment at the service of peace, compassion and justice in the world.*
- *Cultural diversity is a gift. Therefore, enhance the liturgy by the inclusion of cultural symbols, the entrance dance, and use of symbols during the liturgy.*

## **B. Reflection Pointers – About the Feast of Mary and the SSpS Foundation**

- On December 8, we celebrate the feast of the Immaculate Conception of Blessed Virgin Mary and the anniversary of the founding day of the Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) that took place on December 8, 1889, in Steyl.
- The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Mary is an occasion to recall the Blessed Virgin Mary's unique role in salvation history and in the life and mission of the Church. It is also an important occasion to appreciate the role of women in the world and in the mission of the Church.
- As part of St. Arnold Janssen's spiritual legacy we, his daughters and sons, keep the devotion to Mary especially as Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit and Mother of the Divine Word.
- Mary's total self-surrender to God's plan, her trust, openness, humility and promptness to leave room for the action of the Holy Spirit is an inspiration for all missionaries. To be Christ's disciples filled with the Spirit of love, we need to listen to the Word of God and bring it to others as Mary did.
- St. Arnold Janssen recognized the important role women play in missionary outreach and was deeply moved by the faithful, selfless service freely offered by a group of young women in the Mission House in Steyl. In response to the Holy Spirit, he decided to found, together with Blessed Maria Helena Stollenwerk and Blessed Josepha Hendrina Stenmanns, the mission congregation of the "Servants of the Holy Spirit," SSpS, on December 8, 1889.
- Like Mary, a humble, small and poor woman of faith who said YES to God's call, the SSpS Mission Congregation began with a trustful, humble, and loving Yes of the Founder and Co-Foundresses. Thus, the SSpS, a religious missionary community called to make the saving love of the Triune God known to all people is a gift for the Church.
- The first women to become members of the Congregation had been working as maids for the SVD mission house prior to that. Some of them had been waiting for many years to see their dream come true. However the preceding, often strenuous, time of uncertainty had shaped them to become their best. As they encouraged each other to persevere in hope and fixed their eyes on a common goal, they were knit together as a community long before they were officially called so.
- The first group of Sisters, who said "Yes" to the Spirit and became the living stones of the foundation of the SSpS Congregation, was diverse in many ways – upbringing, education, regional and cultural background. Some had been working as teachers before (Sr. Michaele, Sr. Gabriele); others did not have any training beyond the basic school years (Sr. Maria, Sr. Josepha – later considered the co-foundresses of the congregation). Some were confident and outgoing, others rather shy and reserved. Through struggles, ever new beginnings, and complete surrender to God's will for the Congregation, they learned to accept each other in their differences and appreciate the gifts that each of them brought to the foundation, without comparing or ranking.

- During the first years of the foundation, the Sisters, in close collaboration with Arnold Janssen, established a formation program that would prepare the eager women for the religious missionary life. Besides ministering to the Mission House of the SVD, the Sisters were trained in manual and intellectual tasks that would equip them for the mission.
- As the first Sisters were sent on mission to countries such as Argentina, China, and Papua New Guinea, the challenges of adjusting to a new environment and culture arose.
- The first General Superior of the Congregation, Mother Theresia Messner, navigated the Congregation through the turmoil of World War I. She put great emphasis on conveying to the Sisters that there should be no offenses, judgement, or lack of charity among the Sisters coming from different countries at war with each other. She also reminded them that all are “children of the one great family of God.”
- Since the foundation of the Congregation in 1889 thousands of women from around the world have responded with “Yes” to God’s call. Under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit every Sister is to be ready to go wherever she is sent to share the good news of God’s inclusive love even if it entails leaving her own country, mother tongue and cultural milieu.
- Coming from different cultural contexts and being sent to different corners of the world, the SSpS Sisters foster universal communion. The SSpS interculturality is an expression of the Spirit’s many faces that strengthen them to embrace the blessings and challenges of living in intercultural and intergenerational communities.
- At present, there are around 3,000 Sisters from 48 nationalities living in 51 countries. Their commitment to life, promotion of human dignity, especially of women, solidarity with people living in situations of poverty and marginalization, care for creation and interreligious dialogue makes real and concrete the vision and dream of the Founding Generation.

### **C. Some inspirational prayers or words of the SSpS Founding Generation**

- “In the convent, one is the eye, another, the hand or foot, etc. The eye as well as hand and foot are necessary for the natural life of the body, and one member serves the other.” Mother Josepha.
- “Be glad when you meet each other.” Mother Maria.
- “God knows our weakness, but he also sees our good intentions.” Mother Maria.
- “You are united in holy love; make every effort that nothing may dim that sincere love.” Mother Maria.
- “No matter what part of the world we are in, let us remain sincerely and firmly united.” Mother Maria.
- “Whoever we may be, whether Germans, Dutch, Austrians, British, Russians, Americans, etc., we, dear Sisters, are all children of the one great family of God, daughters and sisters of the same Congregation, united through the bonds of holy love.” Mother Theresia.

#### **D. Questions for Reflection**

- a. What strikes me about the founding years of the SSpS?
- b. What do I consider as fundamental to create, maintain and develop an intercultural community/parish?
- c. What changes do we need to make to appreciate and promote more the unique role of women in the mission of the Church in today's world?

#### **E. Celebrative Expression**

- To express that “all are children of the one great family of God,” distribute a small sheet of paper for each to write down one God-child-like quality that is prominent in her/his culture and that s/he would like to contribute to the community/parish. If possible, each person can read aloud that particular quality. The sheets are then shown on a poster which can remain exposed for some more days or weeks.
- Invite children to write appreciation messages or prayers to Mother Mary for their mothers and sisters.
- Recognizing the touch of unity in diversity, invite special guests for the celebration; poor and marginalized women, physically challenged children/elders, people suffering from HIV, AIDS, Tuberculosis, a Coronavirus survivor, domestic helpers and the ‘invisible faces’ who helped to enhance the celebration.
- Celebrate together with a meal or a gathering with games and prizes. Have a quiz competition on our Founding Generation with prizes.

#### ***Evaluation/Sharing***

**Personal:** Share my experience of the event.

**Communal:** How are we enriched by the celebration? How and what could we do to improve in the future?

*Maria Cristina Avalos, SSpS  
and Michaela Leifgen, SSpS*

## Chapter Three

# MODULES FOR SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES WITH MISSION PARTNERS

### 3.1. Intercultural Bible Sharing (see above 2.1.2 – 2.1.17)

### 3.2. Intercultural Faith/Life Sharing (see above 2.2.1 – 2.2.9)

### 3.3. Recollection Day for Renewal of the Mission Partners

#### Introduction

One of the famous phrases directed at St. Arnold Janssen is, “He’s either a fool or a saint.” He is Father, Founder and Leader, a great Saint to remember now. Fr. Arnold was a pious fool in the eyes of many of his confreres. A Holy Spirit Sister recalled this anecdote: “Rector Janssen is a saint. He had to take a lot of humiliations and much criticism when he began his foundation. Once he visited a fellow priest who said:



“That crazy Janssen was just here. I gave him 10 DM just to get rid of him.” Fr. Arnold did not only receive donations from generous people; he also had to beg for money and that was not always easy, yet he could succeed in some marvelous way. In later years he would say about the time leading up to the foundation of the mission house: “I felt I was treading a very thorny pathway and if I had not said to myself, ‘God wants you to do it. You are a coward if you do not do it,’ I would have abandoned everything, especially since at that time I felt weak and sickly and was afraid of having to work later in such a state of health.” Fr. Arnold did not give up – for he was convinced: God wanted the mission house!

He founded the Society of the Divine Word and two Sisters’ congregations to continue God’s work in the world. To this mission, he invited mission partners too and they accompanied him in great numbers, lending their hand in many activities.

## Talk

### St. Arnold's Prophetic Boldness

Working, writing, and publishing for the missionary cause, Fr. Arnold became a very bold and audacious man. If you had asked him why he was so courageous, he would have probably said with St. Paul: "The love of Christ urges me on" (cf. 2 Cor 5:14). His prophetic boldness we can discover in a number of things:

#### A. In his Call to the Editors of Catholic Magazines and Newspapers

Fr. Arnold sought to promote his mission magazine in many different ways. In a letter to the editors of Catholic magazines and journals, etc. he gave them blanket permission to reprint articles from the *Little Messenger*, provided credit was given to the original source.

In this letter he also wrote that he would particularly like it if the editors of political magazines would occasionally bring an article from the missions – articles about life in the missions which did not only tickle the passing fancy but were really useful to the readers by giving them religious inspiration and strength.

At the present time "Kulturkampf", he believed, most readers would be grateful for such articles. In addition, he made the case that at present we live in a time where it is most important that we lift us up and strengthen ourselves interiorly and where also for the attainment of this *the Catholic newspaper editors must cooperate as missionaries who get their missionary vocation from God.*

There are many who hardly read anything else but their newspaper and therefore the newspaper should have beside the necessary political news also good religious ones.

At present everybody speaks about religion. Religion – politics has become the main occupation of our chambers (state and imperial parliament). Why then the fearful excuse: We are a political paper and not a religious one?!

And then he said: "We live in a time when *all of us*, everybody in his state, *must become missionaries.* The editors of political papers, because of their far-reaching influence, must not be excluded."

In the face of the upcoming difficulties, inner deepening and strengthening of our faith must be the desire of all. This growth inside our heart is his hidden intention while facing the difficulties. This letter is interesting for various reasons:

First of all, who is the one who writes so boldly to the editors of powerful political Catholic newspapers/magazines? He is just a little, unknown priest of the diocese of Münster who does not hold any official position in his diocese – who calls himself a "private priest!"

Secondly, he writes this in 1874 when the police began to control the Catholic press in a much stricter way than ever before.

Thirdly, and that is most interesting, Fr. Arnold had a very wide missionary concept. At a time when the word missionary was restricted to the priests, Fr. Arnold said that all of us must become missionaries. He called the editors of newspapers, challenging them that at that difficult time of the Church they are called by God and have a God given vocation to be missionaries for the German Catholics by strengthening them, by lifting them up through their newspaper.

What Fr. Arnold displays here I would call prophetic boldness; similar to Jeremiah and his disciples, who in the words of Carlos Mesters asked: “What does God want to teach us through this tragic situation of captivity?” Fr. Arnold asked: What does God want to teach us through this difficult situation of the “Kulturkampf?”

### **B. Fr. Arnold’s Boldness in his Interpretation of the Cultural War**

He saw in the cultural war God’s hint to Catholics in Germany to do something for the foreign mission.

Fr. Arnold wrote in the February 1874 issue of the *Little Messenger*:

“God is most admirable in all his ways. Even with these present difficulties he most certainly has his loving intentions. They come after so many prayers. Therefore, it is impossible for us to consider them as a disaster. It is true, here and there quite significant evils may happen. Overall, however, they will turn into a blessing. First of all, we have to think of Germany; how the present difficulties here will turn into a blessing is still shrouded in darkness. Only the future will tell us. But what is already now clear is the benefit of the present difficulties for the mission countries.”

Not only did he see God’s hand in the cultural war, but he did something even more daring at the time. In June 1874 Fr. Arnold published another article in which he boldly foretold the end of the cultural war and the victory of the Church. He encouraged parents whose sons wanted to become priests, to allow them to study; the reason was that because of the cultural war there would be a lack of priests. Then he writes: “Doubly the lack of priests will be felt at the time *of the final victory of the Church, as we hope for*. Then the harvest will be great and one will feel the lack of workers doubly painfully. Therefore, our request to Christian parents: If you have sons who show an inclination to reach the priesthood, please do not keep your children away from studies because of the present difficulties. There are still schools where some pretty well-meaning teachers work to whom they can entrust their children, though not without vigilance on their side. Furthermore, the present difficult situation does not need to prevent them, but must rather push them, as we just showed. Ordinary studies until sacred ordination under ordinary circumstances take 12 to 14 years. That is a long time, during which many things will change. Therefore, don’t get discouraged and do not shy away from sacrifices!”

### C. Fr. Arnold's Boldness in his Challenge Directed towards Women Religious

But not only priests are driven from their parishes. Fr. Arnold foresaw the time when all the nuns would also be thrown out of their convents – which a year later, in 1875, did happen. Where would they go? So, he wrote two articles about the Apostolate of Women, and in no uncertain words, like a prophet of old, he told the Sisters what to do.

He wrote: In order to contribute something to it [i.e., the benefit of the mission countries] the following lines are written. *Since it is our duty and task to work for the mission countries*, please do not take them amiss. We ask those ones concerned not to look at the person of the writer, but to look at the reasons which are to be brought forward and to examine them seriously in the face of God. The following lines are meant for the superiors and members of the female religious congregations. Over the head of all of them is hanging a threatening danger. We mean the possible exile from the German fatherland. Where would they go to if the danger became reality? Will the mission countries perhaps be able to give a joyful welcome to many of them? Or are they going to stay only at the borders or transfer to the almost European conditions of North America? Naturally, they will be useful everywhere. But one should ask where will there be the greatest use? One should strive to raise the stakes for one's life for God as high as possible. Furthermore, one should not look for the easiest and most comfortable way. In a time where bishops and priests bring such great sacrifices, the religious women should not lag behind them; or is only man capable of heroic courage?

We recommend these thoughts to those who are able to exercise any kind of influence on the decisions of our pious religious female congregations. We know that goodwill finds its limitations at the power of the conditions. But we also know that a lot is possible with goodwill. If what we are afraid of really happens, it will then be our joy to help, as much as possible, and start a collection for the travel costs. If it does not happen, these lines will still remain as an admonition to start mission stations. They are a source of blessing and zeal for a religious congregation.

Fr. Arnold continued the article in the March issue of the *Little Messenger*. At the end he wrote: "We think that our words are of too little weight in order to expect from these thoughts immediately an outwardly visible success. For that the issue itself is too important and too difficult. Still, we hope that here and there they will not be totally in vain as seeds which prepare the eventual success. May others who possess more insight than we and who have a greater name than we, through their word and their reputation work for this issue. With an issue which has a lot of difficulties and which serves the honor of God, it is already something great when people seriously begin to give it a thought. Then people often see that what initially they thought to be impossible in the end can be done anyway."

## **D. Fr. Arnold's Prophetic Boldness in Clearly Stating the Christian Outlook of his Magazine**

Against the background of the cultural war and the strict supervision of the Catholic press by the police, all the bolder seem to me the following words in the second issue of the *Little Messenger*:

“The *Little Messenger* has pretty openly, also outwardly, declared its support for the religious flag. It does not shy away from it. For it is convinced that the religious flag is the flag of the future,” [this is particularly directed against the Liberals – Bismarck's partners in the cultural war]. The *Little Messenger* of the Sacred Heart is a religious paper for Christian readers. Therefore, it has not had any second thoughts to follow in everything, as far as it knows, the views of the Christian religion.”

## **E. The Origin of Fr. Arnold's Boldness**

Where did Fr. Arnold take this boldness from? He himself gives the answer in the second issue of the *Little Messenger*. There he reflects on the *Little Messenger*: it is still a small child which needs help and care. However, like a child gradually grows so the *Little Messenger* hopes to grow into a mature man.

And then he tells us where he took his boldness from. He was actually talking about the expected growth of the *Little Messenger*, but I think that his words also express what gave him his personal boldness. He quotes a German poet who had said: *The human being grows with his growing goals.* (Friedrich Schiller).

These words lead him then to the following statement: “Great is the goal for which we strive. We cannot deny that reflecting on this goal we receive power and strength. Every beginning is difficult, double and threefold the beginning for reaching a holy goal. However, in spite of all the manifold difficulties we feel well protected under the protection of the divine heart of Jesus and our many patrons whose help we have asked for.”

The manifold difficulties caused by the cultural war did not lead Fr. Arnold to despair of the Church; he was not satisfied with decrying it, but they were an inspiration, a call from God to the German Church and to him to do something which had not been done before, like being missionaries in the foreign missions. Thanks to this courageous thinking on his part and to his faith that God is present even in the most adverse situations, like a Kulturkampf, we are here today. If he had spent all his time and energy only on lamenting about the bad situation of the Church, such as the lack of pastoral care in Prussia alone where 1,000 parishes were without priests, we would not be here.

## **Conduct Bible Sharing**

Jn 1:1-18 Prologue

Lk 10:25-37 Good Samaritan

## Renewal of Commitment during the Mass

### PRAYER OF COMMITMENT

Loving Father, I thank and praise you, for calling me to follow you. Thank you, for having chosen me, to be the member of ..... (name of the Mission Partner Group).

Today, I, ..... (name of the person), commit myself before this community, as a member of ..... (name of the Mission Partner Group), guided by the Holy Spirit, animated by the Word of God, nourished by the Arnoldus Spirituality, to live a spirit filled life, to become an empowered missionary of Jesus Christ, by reaching out to all people, especially to the poor, excluded, neglected, elderly, sick and the needy. Animate me and guide me with your Holy Spirit and Divine love, so that I can become a true witness of your love and life. This I pray, through the intercession of St. Arnold Janssen, Amen.

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(Name of the person - signed)

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Spiritual Director

President

Place:

Date:

*Prepared by Lazar Stanislaus, SVD and the talk is by Jürgen Ommerborn, SVD*

## 3.4. Devotions and Adorations Together with Mission Partners

### 3.4.1. Devotion to Mother Mary - A

**Objective:** *With Mary, we follow the footsteps of Jesus.*

**Preparation**

- *Prepare the place of this celebration with proper soft, background music, which is conducive to prayer. Place some signs/symbols: an image of Mary (some small sculpture of local significance), hiking boots, backpack and cane, a Bible and a bottle of cologne.*
- *In a central place, set up a mural poster with the image of a Jesus, inviting us for an encounter (Picture 1).*
- *Provide at the beginning one **personalized card** (a piece of cardboard with the image of Mary Walking, as seen on model image 2, with space for each name) to help motivate them; and a card with a footprint for the offering of one's self (image 3).*
- *It is necessary that someone acts as **animator**, to make the announcements and to indicate the various steps that have to be followed.*
- *Distribute a printed sheet for each participant (with the Gospel passage, community prayer, instructions for each volunteer and the lyrics of the final song, which can be done with a guitar or with this accompaniment <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Jk7-cvGwAE>).*

## A. Introduction

Dear brothers and sisters, welcome to this meeting, to this celebration. The objective of this meeting is: “*With Mary, Following the Footsteps of Jesus*”. Therefore, Mary, Jesus and ourselves are the key words of this celebration.

- **Jesus:** because he is the GOAL that we want to discover here, today and always. Hence, we want to follow his **footsteps**.
- **Mary:** She is our companion on the road, because she knows a lot about Jesus, and surely, she helps us a lot on that journey, in that search, and in what is to follow.
- **Ourselves:** we are not spectators of “something beautiful”; rather, we are the followers who want to participate vividly in that **encounter** with the Master of Nazareth and we follow in his footsteps. Let’s not forget that **Mary** is going to be our guide in this search, on this walk. Hence it is necessary to put our eyes and our hearts into it. So we are going to start this meeting with a few moments of deep silence. Let’s look at the card that has been given to us and let it «speak» to us. We are going to live it in silence and peace (Take a few minutes of silence; it is advisable to have some background music, very soft).

## B. Signs: Instructions

*Now, those in charge present the SIGNS, one by one with their corresponding instruction, and place them on the altar where the image of Jesus will be, inviting the members to meet him, so that they are clearly visible to the entire group.*

**Mary’s Image:** This simple image of Mary wants to express our admiration for her and the security that her presence offers us. We are sure that she followed in the footsteps of Jesus, her son, and her Lord. Surely, it was not an easy path, far from it. Therefore, having that experience she gives us a guarantee.

**Boots, Backpack and Cane:** These different things express what we want to take along, sometimes for a difficult walk; at the same time, we express our sincere and honest desire that we want to be followers of the Master.

**Bible:** We are also constantly looking for and discovering how the first followers of Jesus lived and in this holy book we have what Jesus did and taught, as well as the experiences that his friends lived with him and along with him. We want to take the Bible with us on this walk.

**Bottle of Cologne:** It is the symbol of something pleasant and creates an ambience in many corners of our houses. If we walk “*With Mary, in the footsteps of Jesus*”, our whole life will have a pleasant smell and those who meet us will feel comfortable with our presence. We are convinced of that.

*(Moments of silence with soft music, to interiorize what these symbols mean)*

**Video-Song:** The “Maria” video is projected, which will help to create an atmosphere of listening and welcoming the Word: “María” (Los Ascoy): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHsCjPNt\\_0I&list=RDfHsCjPNt\\_0I&start\\_radio=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHsCjPNt_0I&list=RDfHsCjPNt_0I&start_radio=1)

### C. Moment of the Word

*After the projection, the reader approaches the BIBLE, which is already in the center of the celebration, takes it in his open hands, and carries it in a solemn way showing it to the whole group so that they are ready to listen to the Gospel passage. (I suggest Luke 11:27-28 but of course, if the person in charge sees fit, another reading can be proclaimed. The important thing is to prepare some questions to facilitate the understanding of the text in all its depth and thus draw appropriate conclusions with keys to life.)*

### D. Moment of Prayer. Instruction - Explanation

*We have heard in the Gospel account the proposal of the Master of Nazareth. It is a proposal to enter the «SCHOOL of the WORD.» There Mary has been formed; there, too, Jesus himself grew in the silence of Nazareth, together with Mary and Joseph. And now he himself invites his followers to become disciples of that School. It is a concrete proposal; it is real. From this experience, it is possible to create the new family that Jesus invites us to be. By the way, it is the commitment that we, as a community, are making and today we want to relive it and grow in it. At first, we will pray **personally** and in silence. Let us not be afraid to address her, as a son or daughter who addresses his/her mother. If after a while of personal prayer, some of us want to share with others what we are experiencing... go ahead! (spend a few minutes in silence)*

*Now, let's get ready to **pray in small groups**. We are going to do it by sharing our reflections; don't hurry, but do it from the heart. First, we all pray in the silence of the heart, like Mary. She is our companion on the road in this time of prayer. Her attitudes, her words, her style... we can make them ours. The signs-symbols that are in our midst in this celebration can also help us to carry out our shared prayer. We live it in peace.*

### E. Community Prayer: Mary, Mother of Yes

Mary, Mother of the YES  
you have listened to Jesus,  
and you know the timbre of his voice  
and the beat of his heart.  
Tell us about him  
and tell us your way to follow him  
day by day, in everyday life.

Mary,  
who lived with Jesus in Nazareth;  
imprint in our lives your feelings,  
your docility,  
your silence that listens  
and make the Word flourish in options of true freedom.

Mary, tell us about Jesus,  
so that the freshness of your faith

shines in our eyes  
and warms the heart of whoever finds us,  
as you did when visiting Elizabeth,  
who in her old age  
was happy with you for the gift of life.

Mary, Virgin of the Magnificat,  
help us to bring joy to the world  
and, as in Cana,  
encourage every follower,  
committed to serving their brothers and sisters,  
to do only what Jesus says.

Mary, door of the Kingdom,  
help us to lift up our gaze above. We want to see Jesus,  
talk about him, announce his love to everyone. Amen.

## F. Instruction - Commitment

*It is necessary now for prayer and celebration to end up with a **personal gesture** with which each person expresses their commitment, writing it in the footprint (depending on model image 3). It is advisable to play soft music that accompanies this time.*

“*With Mary, Following the Footsteps of Jesus*” was the proposal of this meeting-celebration. That’s how we wanted to live it. And now the time has come for each one of us to express how we are going to live on our way. It is the moment to live and express **my personal commitment** and it is necessary that we live it in a climate of **prayer**; only from this key factor is it possible to assume a serious and deep commitment, one that is full of joy. It is good and necessary that each of us feels calm and very free. The important thing is the commitment made **from within**. We can do it this way. After a few moments of silence and prayer, whoever freely wishes, gets up, goes to the bottle of cologne and perfumes his face and hands (he can use any of the other signs too). After this gesture, he can express, reading his footprint aloud, the commitment he assumes today to be good perfume before others, assuming personally the proposal of Jesus and in the style that Mary, the mother and believer lived. Then he places the footprint on the ground and along with others who do so, forming a path to the altar.

## G. Dismissal Instruction

Dear brothers and sisters, we are coming to the end of this celebration. “**With Mary, Following the Footsteps of Jesus**” has been the desire expressed from the beginning. It is a way to go, as did Mary, our Mother... and so many people with simple hearts, also around us and in the midst of our world. May the card that we have been given with our name upon it as we entered, and the footprint of our commitment be like **fired up witnesses** on our journey. Let us not forget that the company of Mary can be an immense help to us in our pilgrimage, in the footsteps of Jesus, the Master. We end this meeting with a song that expresses very well what we have lived here today, as a prayer of thanksgiving.

**H. Final Song:** *Santa María del Camino* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Jkw-cvGwAE>)

### *Refreshment*

It is good that when finished, you can share an appetizer or soft drink, or a meal if desired. The best thing is that each participant contributes something and thus increases the sense of abundance. When sharing the little, each one expresses his/her fraternal love.

*Laura Inés Díez, Bilbao, Spain*

Con María, tras las huellas de Jesús



Bienvenido/a a caminar,



### **3.4.2. Devotion to Mother Mary - B**

*Objective: To deepen our spirituality through devotion to Mother Mary.*

#### **A. Song – Marian Hymn**

#### **B. Procession**

Take the icon/statue in a procession at the beginning of the devotion (Use cultural expressions in the procession - dance, music, offering flowers, offering candles, etc.).

#### **C. Opening Prayer**

Blessed Virgin Mary, we come to you as your children to give you honor and to learn from you. Take our prayers into the sanctuary of heaven and enable them to make our peace with God. Holy Mary, help the miserable, strengthen the discouraged, comfort the sorrowful, pray for your people, plead for the clergy, intercede for all families who cry out to God. May all who venerate you feel now your help and protection. Be ready to help us when we pray, and bring back to us the answers to our prayers. Make it your continual concern to pray for the people of God, for you were blessed by God and were made worthy to bear the redeemer of the world, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

**D. Bible Text:** Jn 2:1-12 - Wedding at Cana, virtues of Mother Mary in relationship with other persons

### **E. Reflection**

Cana is a Galilean town five miles northeast of Nazareth. Its population of around 8,500 includes both Muslims and Christians now. “The wedding at Cana” reading tells us about the first miracle of Jesus, turning the water into wine. There are many symbolic meanings in this reading. Let us focus on some of them to have a reflection.

First, the stone water jars, we know from the Bible that the function of these jars for the Jewish people was for ceremonial washings. It means for washing your hands or your feet and it was not for drinking. From this chapter (John 2:1-12), we know that Jesus came to the wedding, had the jars filled with water and then it became wine. The water in the jars originally is for washing, but now, it turns to wine which means it also brings us enthusiasm and joy.

Mother Mary in this story is the expression of faith. After she talks to Jesus, as a mother, she didn’t question him about why he felt it was not yet his time, but she went to tell the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.” If we are full of trust in God, he will bring unlimited joy into our life. In the wedding at Cana, there were six jars of water and each jar held thirty gallons of water. When Jesus told the servants to fill up all the jars, they didn’t ask anything and just did it. Then, they would not be thirsty anymore. Our life is a wedding banquet, and weddings are moments to share our joy and love for one another. Let us fill the jars with water, share our joy and love with others and with the world. Always learn from Mother Mary, pray to her, she will guide us “to do whatever he tells us.”

We can meditate on Mary, on *her motherhood, her prayerfulness, and her willingness to act*. Mary’s motherhood is seen when she pays attention to the needs of the newlyweds at Cana, noticing when they have run out of wine for their guests. This is a sign of “happiness, love, and plenty.” We see that many families today have also run out of “wine” due to loneliness, unemployment, illness, and other difficulties. Youth, women, and the elderly experience difficult family lives and mother is always there to comfort them. Mary, an “attentive and concerned” mother, shuns self-centeredness to realize when others no longer have wine in their lives.

Secondly, Mary exhibits prayerfulness when she approaches Jesus with confidence to make known the newlyweds’ problem to him. A family is a school of prayer where people are reminded that they do not live in isolation but must be concerned about the well-being of loved ones around them. In the family, we are one and we have a neighbor close at hand.

Finally, Mary’s willingness to act is seen as she turns to the servants at the wedding feast and tells them to follow Jesus’ commands. Mary’s words are also directed at us; we should do what Jesus tells us, that is, give our lives in the service of love. All in the family deserve this love; no one is rejected, everyone is worth the same.

**F. Questions for Reflection** (personal or 3 or 4 people share reflections as a group depending on the situation)

- Where do I see in my culture that people feel emptiness?
- Who are the people in my neighborhood who need my help as “mother”? What is my response?
- Who are the families in my area who need the help of the community? How can we help as a community?

**G. Prayers: Mother of the Word**

**Leader:** Mother of the Word and of hope.

**All:** In your heart as Mother you nurtured a hope. In our hearts as people you kept alive a promise. In your fertile womb you cradled the Son of God. And God’s dream for justice and peace for all is found in your ‘Yes’ the mighty response that would bring light and salvation for all people.

**Leader:** Mother of the Word, companion of the poor,

**All:** Look upon our life, our struggles and our hope. May the Spirit regenerate our communities. Help us to be faithful to your Son in our time of history, praising as you did our merciful God. Amen.

**H. Consecration of a Family to the Immaculate Heart of Mary**

Oh Mother Most Pure, we come to you as a family  
and consecrate ourselves to your most Immaculate Heart.  
We come to you as a family  
and place our trust in your powerful intercession.

Oh dearest Mother Mary, teach us as a mother teaches her children,  
for our souls are soiled and our prayers are weak  
because of our sinful hearts.

Here we are, dearest Mother, ready to respond to you  
and follow your way, for your way leads us  
to the heart of your Son, Jesus.

We are ready to be cleansed and purified.

Come then, virgin most pure,  
and embrace us with your motherly mantle.

Make our hearts whiter than snow  
and as pure as a spring of fresh water.

Teach us to pray, so that our prayers may become more beautiful  
than the singing of the birds at the break of dawn.

Dear Mother Mary, we entrust to your Immaculate Heart  
our family and our entire future.

Lead us all to our homeland which is heaven.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us. Amen.

## I. Offering

Each one goes before the icon/statue of Mother Mary and pays homage according to one's own culture. (Offering flowers, bowing, kissing the statue, prostration, etc.)  
(Play a Marian Hymn of the local language and music)

## J. Concluding Prayer

Mother Mary, through your intercession, you brought joy to the family at Cana. We promise to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ, your Son, to proclaim his Good News of God's love for all people, and to work for peace and justice in our world. With faith in your Son, we pray for the Church, for our family and friends, for the poor and abandoned. May we widen our circle of love to others. May all people, through your intercession, attain the joy of eternal life. Amen.

**K. Song: Marian Hymn** (give opportunities to various languages)

*Common sharing (Agape)*

After the prayer, common fellowship with snacks/tea/coffee/meal, etc.; share simple images of Mother Mary as gifts to one another at least once a year.

*Lazar Stanislaus, SVD*

## 3.4.3. Devotion to the Holy Spirit - A

*Objective: To deepen our spirituality through Adoration of the Holy Spirit.*

### *Preparation*

*Place a common symbol to represent the Holy Spirit, e.g., Picture of a dove.*

### *Where and When*

- *Adoration with Arnoldus Family members/mission partners in the church/religious house/formation house/in a room.*
- *Adoration of Holy Spirit in a mission partner's house.*
- *Once in three/six months.*



**A. Song:** Hymn to the Holy Spirit

## B. Opening Prayer

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful,  
and enkindle in them the fire of your love.  
Send forth your Spirit and renew the face of the earth.

### C. Bible Texts

Gen 1:1-4 Holy Spirit promotes growth of life and motivates to build communion.

Jn 16:12-15 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into the whole truth.

### D. Reflection Pointers

- The life-giving fountain of God's love also was flowing and continues to flow within every culture, religion and spirituality, often in ways only known to God.
- Cultural diversity is a gift which enables us to stretch our grasp of who God is and how the Holy Spirit works in various cultures beyond our individual and communitarian culture or beyond our gender consciousness. Our experiences are limited to our cultural experience and knowledge.
- God spoke according to the culture proper to each age and in the Church, God speaks entering into communion with different forms of culture, thereby enriching both the Church and the cultures themselves.
- The Holy Spirit is the agent of mission and we seek her guidance to understand our cultural practices, symbols, emotions, art, dance, music, traditions, passage of life ceremonies, etc.
- Reflect on the aspects of our cultural expressions and practices that unify, give joy and bring fulfillment in oneself and community. At the same time, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to analyze one's culture and others' cultural practices, traditions, ceremonies, etc., where they are contrary to the values of the Gospel.
- Implore the Holy Spirit to discern what are life giving values in our cultures and thank God for these values; at the same time, to change or to overcome the life negating values in our cultures.
- "We can foster our own culture, but without making other nationalities feel rejected"  
*Arnold Janssen.*

### E. Questions for Reflection (either personal or in small groups)

- a. What are the values in our culture that are life giving or that are unifying, giving peace, giving joy to us?
- b. How do I cherish these values in my culture?
- c. What are the vices in our culture? Which are those practices or traditions that need to be changed or given up?

### F. Prayers: Prayer to the Holy Spirit

**Leader:** Oh Holy Spirit,

**All:** We open our hearts to receive you, that we may learn how deeply and invisibly you are present everywhere.

**Leader:** Give us stillness in your presence.

**All:** Calm us within, through the gentleness of your peace.

**Leader:** Strengthen our faith with the awareness of your presence.

**All:** Confirm the hope within us with the knowledge of your strength.

**Leader:** Give us fullness of love through the outpouring of your gifts.

**All:** Holy Spirit, be to us a source of light and strength and courage, so that we may hear your call ever more clearly and follow it ever more generously.

**Leader:** O Great Spirit,

**All:** Whose voice I hear in the winds and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me! I am small and weak. I need your strength and wisdom. Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hands respect the things you have made and my ears sharp to hear your voice.

**Leader:** Make me wise so that I may understand the things you have taught my people. Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock. I seek strength, not to be greater than my brothers and sisters, but to understand myself.

**All:** Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes. So when life fades, as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you to be one with you eternally. Amen.

### **G. Act of Consecration to the Holy Spirit**

On my knees before the great multitude of heavenly witnesses I offer myself, soul and body, to you, Eternal Spirit of God.

I adore the brightness of your purity, the unerring keenness of your justice and the might of your love. You are the Strength and Light of my soul.

In you I live and move and am. I desire never to grieve you by unfaithfulness to grace and I pray with all my heart to be kept from the smallest sin against you.

Mercifully guard my every thought and grant that I may always watch for your light and listen to your voice and follow your gracious inspirations.

I cling to you and give myself to you and ask you by your compassion to watch over me in my weakness.

Holding the pierced feet of Jesus and looking at his five wounds and trusting in his Precious Blood and adoring his opened side and stricken Heart, I implore you, adorable Spirit, helper of my infirmity, so to keep me in your grace that I may never sin against you.

Give me grace, O Holy Ghost, Spirit of the Father and the Son to say to you always and everywhere, "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening." Amen.

**Silence:** (Play the local music with birds singing, water flowing, wind blowing) Ask the members to listen to this voice and appreciate the beauty around us where the Spirit is present.

**H. Video:** (depending upon the place, show the video of presence of the Spirit)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTbJmCTqgkg&list=PLi7jEYVXPCMvQy9FMptYZ2UKXymxvzvIn>

## I. Closing Prayer

Holy Spirit, fulfill in us the work begun by Jesus. Let our prayer on behalf of the whole world be fruitful and unwavering. Hasten the time when each of us will attain a genuine spiritual life. Enliven our work that it may reach all human beings, all who have been redeemed by the Blood of Christ and all his inheritance. Help us to recognize the goodness of other cultures and appreciate their traditions and practices. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord.

### *Common Gathering (Agape)*

After the prayer, share simple religious symbols of the Holy Spirit; common fellowship with snacks/tea/coffee/meal, etc.

*Lazar Stanislaus, SVD*

## 3.4.4. Devotion to the Holy Spirit - B

*Objective: To deepen our holiness through Adoration of the Holy Spirit.*

### *Preparation*

- *Prepare the church/chapel/room for a devotional atmosphere with local cultural expressions, e.g., lights, clothes, artifacts, Scripture verses on God the Holy Spirit (large size) made available in the Church, etc.*
- *Play music of the Holy Spirit hymns.*
- *Where possible each person brings along a symbol which represents the Holy Spirit according to his culture. One of the symbols is a fruit.*
- *Each person also brings his/her personal copy of the word of God.*
- *The following are helpful texts:*

*Holy Water [Water of life – Ps. 87:7; Jn 7:37-39]*

*Lamp / Oil Lamp [The oil also speaks of God's approval – Lk 4:18; Jn 8:12; Acts 10:38; Heb 1:9]*

*Dove [Peace – Mt 3:16-17; 10:16; Jn 1:32]*

### *Where and When*

- *Adoration with Arnoldus Family members/mission partners in the church/room.*
- *Once in a month.*

## A. Hymn: Come, Holy Spirit...

## B. Placing of the Symbols

As participants enter the place of worship, they bring a symbol representing the Holy Spirit and express why they chose this symbol. They place these symbols as an offering in the center around which they are seated, preferably in a circle, for the entire service.

### C. Prayer

#### **God, our Father,**

We glance at your beauty in the rising of the sun,  
on the hill tops as well as at eagle's wings.  
We sense your power in thunder booming,  
Lightning's flash and ocean's roar.  
We offer you our sacrifice of praise.

#### **Jesus, Son of God,**

The teacher who trains us,  
The prophet who stimulates us,  
The healer who touches us,  
The love who will not let us go,  
The one who dies for us,  
We offer you our sacrifice of praise.

#### **God, the Holy Spirit,**

The breath of Life,  
The spirit who empowers us,  
The love who will not let us go,  
The fire who endows us,  
The truth who inspires us,  
The guide who encourages us,  
We offer you our sacrifice of praise.

### D. Song (choose one of them)

- a. *Veni Sancte Spiritus*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmxXwAgkhWQ>
- b. Come Holy Spirit (*Veni Sancte Spiritus*) by John Michael Talbot  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHZ\\_mRvXLZM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BHZ_mRvXLZM)
- c. As we gather in this place today Holy Spirit come and have Your way  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OhxbGm7StSM>
- d. Come Holy Ghost, Creator blest  
And in our souls take up Thy rest  
Come with Thy grace and heavenly aid  
To fill the hearts which Thou hast made.

### E. Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit, and fill us with the fire of your Love. We have surrendered to the best of our ability, and now we want to be filled with your Spirit. We need your power in our lives. Please come, and fill us now. Lord, we believe that when we surrendered to you as Lord, we became one. You are the vine and we are the branches of the vine. All that you are is within us. Our life flows from you. We believe that as we yield and ask, you will release your strength, wisdom, and healing to meet the needs of the hour. Only

in your power, guided by your Spirit, can our lives be fruitful. Holy Spirit, come. Melt us, mold us, fill us, use us. Give us opportunities to use your gifts to reveal your love and mercy. Work in us in a powerful way. We want every purpose God has for our lives to be fulfilled, and we need you, mighty Spirit of God, to bring that purpose to fulfillment. Come, Holy Spirit. Come.

*Leader:* Send forth Your Spirit and they shall be created

*All:* And You shall renew the face of the earth.

### **F. Bible Texts** (Read one of the texts)

Eph 4:7-13 To each one is given according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Gal 5:22-26 The fruits of the Holy Spirit.

2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

### **G. Reflection Pointers**

Pope Francis said: "Holy Spirit, may my heart be open to the Word of God, may my heart be open to good, may my heart be open to the beauty of God, every day."

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "You must be born from above. The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit" (Jn 3:7-8).

Let us ask ourselves whether we feel the presence of the Holy Spirit within our lives. In this passage, Jesus offers an image of how the Holy Spirit works in us. We can hear the blowing wind and know the effects of the wind but we cannot see it. Only when you see a tree swaying, you know that the wind is blowing.

If we allow our lives to be under the power of the Holy Spirit, we do not know where we will be led. The Holy Spirit will lead us in the moment but does not typically reveal our whole future. We must always be content to be led by the daily awesome presence of our loving God, allowing ourselves to be moved here and there. This requires much trust and abandonment.

Let us reflect upon the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives and look for the effects of the Holy Spirit to discern whether we are being truly led by God. Pope Francis said: "Let us listen to the Holy Spirit and may we move forward on this path of love, mercy and forgiveness." May we allow ourselves to be led and moved by the breath of God and anticipate great things in our lives.

### **H. Prayer**

Breathe into me, Holy Spirit, that my thoughts may all be holy. Move in me, Holy Spirit, that my work, too, may be holy. Attract my heart, Holy Spirit, that I may love only what is holy. Strengthen me, Holy Spirit, that I may defend all that is holy. Protect me, Holy Spirit, that I may always be holy (Saint Augustine).

## I. Short Sharing by 2 or 3 People in the Assembly

1. Where do I find the power of the Holy Spirit in my culture?
2. How can I produce the fruits of the Holy Spirit in my life? (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control)
3. How could I/we reach out to others to serve them and/or connect them to the Spirit?

## J. Concluding Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy his consolations, through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

**K:** Hymn to the Holy Spirit

*George Jayesh, Mumbai, India*

## 3.4.5. Adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

**Objective:** *To deepen our spirituality through Adoration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.*

### **Preparation**

- Place a common symbol to represent the Sacred Heart, e.g., Image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.
- Prepare the church/chapel/room for a devotional atmosphere with local cultural expressions, e.g., lights, clothes, artifacts. For local expression/artifacts, in the Ghanaian context, there are a group of symbols known as **ADINKRA SYMBOLS**; each has a meaning.
- The name of the above is **DWENNINMEN**; “rams horns”, a symbol of humility together with strength (The ram will fight fiercely against an adversary, but it also submits humbly to slaughter, emphasizing that even the strong need to be humble. Jesus is meek and humble of heart).
- Use the worship patterns of local culture during the adoration – songs, symbols, flags, display of pictures which show the Sacred Heart, etc.



### **Where and When**

- Adoration with Arnoldus Family members/mission partners in the church/religious house/formation house/mission partner's house.
- Once a month, preferably first Friday of the month.



## **A. Song: Hymn to the Sacred Heart**

*To Jesus Heart all burning* (accessible on the internet)

## **B. Opening Prayer**

Lord Jesus, you have said we should learn from you, for you are meek and humble of heart. We ask that your Sacred Heart may impress upon us so that although we are many from different parts of the world, your Heart may continue to remain a symbol of unity that binds us together. We ask this in your name. Amen.

## **C. Bible Text**

Mt 9:36 – When Jesus saw the crowd, he was moved with pity for them (His compassionate heart, not discriminatory towards people).

## **D. Reflection**

- The universal Church had long practiced devotion to the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ before St. Margaret Mary Alacoque began to have revelations from our Lord concerning devotion to his heart. The revelations to St. Margaret Mary fine tune this ancient practice/devotion. This is affirmed in *Pope Pius XII's encyclical on devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus*: “The Church has always valued, and still does, the devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus so highly that she provides for the spread of it among Christian peoples everywhere and by every means” (*Haurietis Aquas*. May 15, 1956).
- Jesus prayed for his disciples that they all may be one (Jn 17:21). We do not choose where to be born, which country, culture or family. Although we worship God in the form which is familiar to us, this does not make our worship more, or less, important than other cultures different from ours. The Sacred Heart guides our inner thoughts bringing us into harmony.
- Jesus assures us of heaven if we do not discriminate but rather go all out to support and provide for the needy; for it is in serving humanity that we serve him (Mt 25). Our Holy Triune God is the same yesterday, today and forever. Though some aspects of our cultures are modified over time, the word of God has not changed but meets the needs of every generation. Guided by the love from his Heart, our minds are opened to his commands and statutes which are unchangeable but speak to each generation according to their own terms and understanding.
- Cultural diversity can be reflected upon in the context of Rom 12:4-5; though we are many, we are one in Christ. Our cultures differ, which impacts our faith, however this diversity does not divide us, rather we come together in worship using our indigenous songs, prayers and dance to glorify the Holy Triune God.
- The heart, in every culture and setting is considered as a symbol of love. It can also be associated with compassion, empathy, sympathy, endurance and strength, truth and honesty. In matters of health, a heartbeat is indispensable and that sums up how important the heart is!

- The Heart of Jesus knows no borders; loves without limit irrespective of race, ethnicity, creed, etc. “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28).
- The love that emanates from the Sacred Heart shows no partiality; there is neither Jew nor Greek nor Gentile (Gal 3:28). Race, culture, ethnicity is not a prerequisite for salvation. The blood and water which gushed forth from his Sacred Heart, as depicted in the Divine Mercy image, unites us all; unity in diversity.
- In time past some missionaries considered the traditions of the cultures in Africa and Asia as pagan. The Sacred Heart has guided the Church to discern good traditions that enhance worship and make it more meaningful to the people. The inculturation of music, dance, forms of prayer and cultural practices and traditions into worship has made the faith more acceptable to many and has won and continues to win more souls into the vineyard of the Lord.

### **E. Prayers**

L. We thank you, Lord, for our presence here today. Without you, our weak bodies would not have found strength to be in your presence. We prostrate ourselves before you, fill our hearts, minds and body with your love so that our adoration may be sincere and joy-filled.

All: We praise you with our hearts.

L. We thank you as a community of believers for your redeeming Heart has freed us from the bondage of sin and from the various ethnic diversities that seem to divide us in our country.

All: We praise you with our hearts.

L. You have enriched us with many talents and gifts as individuals and groups. We are grateful to you for giving colorful customs, traditions and rituals for bonding ourselves as a family or community.

All: We praise you with our hearts.

L. Lord, you do not take into account our differences but that we are your creatures. Continue to sustain in us your light and revive our drooping spirits. We pray for guidance in our day to day lives, illumine our path when we are lost in the darkness of sin and suffering, when we lose hope revive our hearts and let us abide in your Sacred Heart.

All: Illumine our lives, O Lord.

L. We are gathered together as one family of love. We ask your favor, O Sacred Heart, as people of the same faith, who have placed our hope and trust in your redeeming help. Bless us and our families and the entire Church community. Bless those who are not here but who place their hope and trust in you.

All: Illumine our lives, O Lord.

L. We implore you, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, to enrich our diversity to enhance our worship of the Triune God. May you grant us the grace to discern so that we may guard against the sin of superiority and discrimination against others and that we may have respect for one another as we bring our worship to the Triune God.

All: Illumine our lives, O Lord.

**Silence:** (Play the local music with birds singing, water flowing, wind blowing) Observe some five minutes of silence or ask the members to listen to this voice and appreciate the beauty and the love that comes from the Sacred.

**F. Prostration before the Sacred Heart or Kneeling down in Prayer** (give each one a flower). Each member goes before the Sacred Heart, he/she either prostrates or kneels down and prays silently for a while and offers one flower.

**G. Video:** Depending upon the place, the following are suggestions: a video on the revelations to St. Margaret Mary, a video on humanitarian projects, protection of the rights of the vulnerable, a video on the sacraments, etc.

## H. Closing Prayer

May the darkness of sin and the night of unbelief, vanish before the light of the Word and the spirit of grace. And may the Heart of Jesus live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people. Amen.

### *Common Gathering*

After the prayer, share simple religious symbols of the Sacred Heart; common fellowship with snacks/tea/coffee/meal, etc.

*Matilda Anim-fofie, Ghana*

## 3.5. Sharing Experiences of Vocation and Value System

**Objective:** *To be grateful to God for the gift of vocation/value system.*

### **Preparation**

- *Display on the board the role models: pictures of some persons as well as a few values. Role model in the light of values: Mahatma Gandhi [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309385931\\_A\\_role\\_model\\_in\\_light\\_of\\_values\\_Mahatma\\_Gandhi](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309385931_A_role_model_in_light_of_values_Mahatma_Gandhi) Values and Teachings by Nelson Mandela <https://www.thepontychadhafoundation.org/blog/inspiration/values-and-teachings-by-nelson-mandela-2/>*
- *Pope Francis or the Founder or the Founding generation's picture and write their values.*

### ***Where and When***

- *In the SVD/SSpS house/parish/formation house, this could be organized either as Arnoldus Family members or by SVD/SSpS mission partners alone.*
- *At least once in a year. Each time, 10 members could share their vocations or value system.*

### **The purpose of this Session**

- Vocation is a gift of God, every person receives this gift, either to be a lay Christian or to be a religious Brother or priest or a religious Sister.
- At certain point of time, when a person is open to listen to the Holy Spirit, this gift is shown or revealed; at times, it is not clear or vivid, but through discernment one can find out what gives meaning to one's life.
- Meaning of value system: A person's standards and self-discipline are set, based on the common sense and wisdom of knowing what the proper moral rules and discipline are, and the extent of one's willingness to abide by them.
- The positive values build community, give happiness, create an atmosphere of joy, etc. The twelve most important values of life are: love, patience, kindness, integrity, gratitude, forgiveness, listening, respect, courage, growth, self-giving and vision.
- The negative practices or vices in our cultures divide or create animosity in life. Some of these are: revenge, arrogance, recklessness, disrespect to women, superiority over others, imposing my views, etc.
- Every follower of Christ, by reason of his/her human and Christian vocation, is called to live a meaningful life, whether he/she finds himself/herself in a mono culture or pluri-cultural situation. One has to bring the spirit of the Gospel into any environment in which one lives and works, that of family, social, educational, artistic, economic, or political life. Thus, through our Christian vocation, finding a way to foster intercultural living and mission is our sacred duty.

### **A. Introduction**

This session is arranged to give thanks to God for the gift of vocation or the gift of giving us a value system that we cherish. We will share our vocation story, how the Holy Spirit inspired us and gave us the direction and purpose in life. The lay persons can share what is their value system in their life. Why have I become an SVD/SSpS/mission partner? On what value system have I built my life and in which I find meaning in life?

### **B. Prayer**

Eternal God, from our mothers' wombs you have known and loved all of us. We ask for the courage to live a true Christian life, that your hand may guide our life and that your mercy be extended when we seek our own glory instead of yours. We ask for the wisdom to know your will for us, and like our Blessed Mother Mary, we ask for the strength to continuously say "yes" to your will. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **C. Personal Sharing**

- Each one shares his/her personal vocation as lay or religious. Or each one shares his value system in his/her life.

- Sharing could be like story telling or use a symbol in his/her culture and narrate his/her vocation/value system.

### **Example**

Video: My Vocation Story: From Pilot to Priest, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XG7rNJC\\_6AU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XG7rNJC_6AU)

Video/text: Vocation story: Lt. Governor of Washington State – Cyrus Habib

Video/text: Vocation of a lay person as a lay missionary or lay volunteer

### **D. Questions for Sharing in Groups**

- When have I felt the power of the Spirit to preserve my vocation or value system?
- What are the values and vices that I have appropriated in my life, especially from my cultural atmosphere?
- How have I developed my value system? What are the challenges that I have faced?

### **E. Praying for One Another**

The community prays for each person who has shared and for his/her intentions.

### **F. Concluding Prayer**

Holy God, your knowledge of me exceeds what I grasp or see in any moment; you know me better than I know myself. Now, help me to trust in your mercy, to see myself in the light of your holiness, and grant me the grace that I may live a life knowing your will and doing your will in my life. Help us to keep our hearts clean, and to live so honestly and fearlessly that no outward failure can dishearten us or take away the joy of conscious integrity, be with us and protect and guide us always. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Action Plan**

- Write down the value systems of the individuals and circulate them in the larger community without identifying the names.

*Lazar Stanislaus, SVD*

## **3.6. Eucharistic Celebration with Mission Partners and Confreres in a District**

**Objective:** *To enhance bonding, celebrate Eucharist with mission partners and confreres in the district.*

### **Preparation**

- *Planning Committee - Invite the members of the Arnoldus family (SVD, SSpS and Mission Partners) to discuss and plan the celebration.*
- *Invite speakers who can talk on the life of the Saints Arnold and Joseph and the Trinitarian spirituality of our congregation.*

- *Have stalls in the compound displaying/selling books on the life of our Founder or on the Founding Generation. Display photographs of our missionary life or from the missions where our confreres/Sisters/mission partners work.*
- *Invite the benefactors and well-wishers for the celebration who have helped the Society in some way or the other.*
- *Use this platform to communicate to people about Divine Word missionaries and our work in the missions.*

### **Where and When**

- *September 08, the Foundation Day or any other day best suited for all involved in the planning committee.*
- *At least once a year.*
- *Celebration of the Eucharist in a parish or at a place convenient with infrastructure and other areas for planning such an event.*

### **A. Eucharistic Celebration**

- Solemn Eucharistic celebration as Arnoldus family members.
- Enthronement of the Bible. Garlanding and incensing the Bible and the visual image of St. Arnold Janssen.
- Decorate the altar/hall with welcoming symbols/gestures using your own cultural and ethnic values.
- Talk on the Founder/Founding Generation to bring awareness among the mission partners. Speak on interculturality and the richness of coming together as God's family.
- Homily on collaboration of the mission partners in the Society from the time of St. Arnold Janssen and their role as active co-workers with Divine Word missionaries.

### **B. Reflection Pointers for the Celebration**

#### **a. Table fellowship**

- The "dining room table" is symbolic of table fellowship in the home. Jesus ate in the homes of the tax-collectors, Levi and Zacchaeus. These meals were moments marking the unfolding of God's reign. Jesus told Zacchaeus, "Today salvation has come to this house..." (Lk 19:9). Meals taken together facilitated dialogue, nourished togetherness and built up the body of his disciples, gathering them into a community.
- Preparing a meal implies deciding upon the menu, and then shopping, cooking, preparing the room, setting the table and sometimes welcoming guests. All of these are also opportunities for intercultural sharing.

- Gathering around the “dining room table” is not only a place for physical food, but nourishment on many levels. In terms of interculturality, individuals of different cultures and contexts – generations, genders, nationalities – strive to mutually share the values of the Reign of God with others “at home.” At the Last Supper, the Lord gave the commandment of love and of service, washing the disciples’ feet and giving them the bread of life and the cup of grace and calling them to do likewise.
- With the Eucharist, Jesus rendered his disciples capable of loving one another as he had loved them.

### **b. Collaboration**

- As the Arnoldus Family, we are called to promote the appreciation of and mutual enrichment by different cultural expressions of spiritualities present among members of our community and this mutual enrichment and collaboration with mission partners strengthens our participation in God’s mission to the people around us.
- SVDs/SSpS along with mission partners can make a unique contribution to building up the Body of Christ and participating in God’s mission. Each offers different spiritual expressions and experiences, shaped by culture and other factors.

### *Questions for reflection during the Mass (after homily)*

- a. As you look at the persons gathered around the table, do you recognize there are some things common in all of us, what are they?
- b. Mission is sharing, collaboration and supporting – what could we share, collaborate and support for doing God’s mission?

### **C. Prayer of the Faithful**

God our Father and Mother, we have come together to cherish your love and affection towards us, and now we pray that everyone whom we serve may experience your love and care, let us say together.

*All: Lord, hear our prayer*

For the grace to see every human being as an image of God, regardless of race, language, gender or culture, let us pray to the Lord.

For the wisdom to receive the stories and experiences of those different from ourselves and to respond with respect, let us pray to the Lord.

For healing and justice for all who experience discrimination, violence and oppression, let us pray to the Lord.

For the courage to reach out to all religions and cultures spreading the love of God as one family, let us pray to the Lord.

For solidarity in our society, that we may work together to protect those who are most vulnerable and most in need, let us pray to the Lord.

## D. Concluding Prayer and Hymn

## E. Evaluation/Plan of Action

**Personal:** Share my experience of the event.

**Communal:** How are we enriched by the celebration? How and what could we do to improve this celebration in the future?

*Susan Noronha, Mumbai, India*

## 3.7. Building Community

### 3.7.1. Intercultural Evening in a Parish

**Objective:** *To get to know better the diversity of cultures in the parish through a visit to the neighborhood.*

#### **Preparation**

- *Advertise the activity/Announce in the Mass/ Visit the people in the parish and invite personally.*
- *Gather at the meeting place (welcoming one another through song, shaking hands, friendly embrace).*
- *Ask the participants if they remember any biblical scene where Jesus was walking (Jesus in the womb of Mary – visiting Elizabeth, walking on pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the age of 12, walking with the disciples, on the water, etc.).*
- *Walk together going to the neighborhood. As we reach the designated place, introduce the people living there, the place and the cultural background.*



#### **When and Where**

- *Summertime, also it may be done on Mission Sunday; this can be done in a parish territory.*

## A. Welcome Song

## B. Reflection

All throughout Jesus' life, he keeps on walking, visiting and encountering people. He listens and the people listen to him. Like the early disciples we tell the stories of Jesus with a personal conviction that helps others embrace the stories as their own, whatever their diverse social classes or cultures or religious beliefs. Christian communities were well known for attending to the disabled and sick and showing hospitality to the needy and the stranger. The early followers of Jesus remembered that Jesus ate with Pharisees, tax collectors, the sick, disabled people, and prostitutes, showing remarkable compassion

towards all. The meal table became symbolic of the place where a diverse, redeemed humanity shares in the life of Christ. The spirituality of the early Church was developing to include and understand members of diverse cultural backgrounds.

- What motivates me as a Christian to go out of my way to reach out to another culture?
- As I look into my cultural practices, how do I differ from the other cultures?
- Whom do I exclude and whom do I welcome to journey within the community, to the table where we break bread in Jesus' name?
- Give space for sharing.

### **C. Blessing**

- Aware of the blessings and challenges experienced in intercultural living, we ask the Lord to bless us, to bless all the places we passed by and the people we encountered.

### **D. Closing Prayer**

Creator of all races and ethnicities,  
help us see that a diverse community is the way  
to deepen our lives and to know you more deeply.  
Guide us to see that entering into a vital and just relationship  
with others who are different from us is the way to make ourselves whole.  
Guard us from fear of the other,  
from the fear that our own security is threatened  
if we become truly willing to make a place at the table for all.  
Open us to live out what we profess to believe:  
That our true security is in you and in your call to justice and peace,  
That we are a part of your global family,  
That, because of your Incarnation, the human dignity of everyone is sacred,  
And that we are constantly called to conversion and inclusive community.  
We pray that you help us recognize any forms of racism in our hearts,  
and in our legal systems and social structures.  
Forgive us our sins of exclusion. Heal our souls and spirits.  
Ground us in compassion for all through your grace.  
Help us take the steps you call us to take  
To build a more just community, where difference is respected  
And where we can all join hands and rejoice in the common good.  
Through the mercy of God, we pray.  
Amen. (<https://educationforjustice.org/node/1183>)

### **Evaluation/Plan of Action**

- How have I involved myself in this intercultural activity?
- How can we improve our relationship with the people in the parish?

*Marta Prochera, Poland*

### 3.7.2. A Way to Build Intercultural Community

*Objective: To build intercultural community.*

#### *Means/Methods*

- *Making contacts and inviting people of different cultures for a meeting.*
- *Reaching out to others and getting to know each other.*
- *Prepare the place/venue: pictures of communities composed of different nationalities/cultures – family, children, praying together, mothers, choir and a single person.*



#### **A. Opening Prayer**

#### **B. Introduction**

- Gathering: Invite the participants to choose one picture from the center piece which caught their attention and introduce themselves using the picture or
- Everyone has some time to introduce herself/himself by using symbols, or it may be a story about the names/where they are coming from/maybe sharing the original meaning of their names or places; it may also be something regarding culture or something characteristically unique for me (e.g., add an adjective to your name – laughing Laura, nice Noemi, happy Henry).

#### **C. Reflection**

Building a community is a process that includes openness as members interact with each other and respect each individual's different cultural background and worldview. It aims to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices and to be mutually engaged in intercultural dialogue through being and living together. Growing in diversity involves being uniquely formed and shaped by our environment that is composed of differing races or cultures, but it should not be a hindrance to live in fellowship with one another, sharing common values, interests and goals.

A spiritual understanding of diversity by Melannie Svoboda indicates: “There is great diversity among human beings. Physically we differ from each other in things such as size, body structure, skin color, and facial features. We also differ from one another mentally, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually. One of the greatest challenges of a healthy spirituality is learning to tolerate the differences we find in one another and not to view these differences as threats to ourselves. Moreover, a healthy spirituality should lead us to celebrate our differences and to see them as a reflection of God’s beneficence and creativity.” (from “Traits of a Healthy Spirituality”)

### **D. Story: Ubuntu**

An anthropologist studying the habits and customs of an African tribe found himself surrounded by children most days. So he decided to play a little game with them. He managed to get candy from the nearest town and put it all in a decorated basket at the foot of a tree. Then he called the children and suggested they play the game. When the anthropologist said “now,” the children had to run to the tree and the first one to get there could have all the candy to him/herself. So the children all lined up waiting for the signal. When the anthropologist said “now,” all of the children took each other by the hand and ran together towards the tree. They all arrived at the same time, divided up the candy, sat down and began to happily munch away. The anthropologist went over to them and asked why they had all run together when any one of them could have had the candy all to themselves. The children responded: “Ubuntu. How could any one of us be happy if all the others were sad?” Ubuntu is a philosophy of African tribes that can be summed up as “I am what I am because of who we all are.”

### **E. Questions for discussion**

- a. What is the significance of the story in building community?
- b. How can I relate it to our present situation?
- c. Where in my concrete environment do I see and experience tensions, conflicts and quarrels between different groups of different background? Where and how am I involved? How do these conflicts affect me and us? What is the Spirit saying to me in this situation?
- d. Recall experiences of other people, intercultural families, other communities, and neighborhood examples of intercultural relationships. What can I learn from them?
- e. Give space for sharing.

### **F. Prayer**

Love finds a way, Love finds a way home.  
Nothing, but nothing can restrain its desire  
to be at the heart of everything.  
Into our resentment and our hate,  
into the cancer of our self-neglect, Love finds a way.  
Into our pride and our unbelief,  
into the clots of our constraints, Love finds a way.  
Into our guilt and our shame,  
into the paralysis of our fear, Love finds a way.  
Into our defenses and our knots,  
into the scar tissue of our self-hate, Love finds a way.  
Into our mania and our make-believe,  
down through the tunnels of our escapes, Love finds a way.  
O yes, love finds a way in where love has been locked out, for love is a fire, love is a blade,  
love breaks open our hearts to each other and stays.

**G. Conclude** with *Our Father*, holding hands if appropriate.

**H. Song:** *Bind us together, Lord...*, or dancing with music.

### **I. Sharing food together**

#### **Evaluation/Plan of Action**

- How can I sustain my relationship with God who calls me to build community?
- Put into practice what we discussed on building intercultural community.

*Marta Prochera, Poland*

### **3.7.3. Intercultural Gathering in a Community**

**Objective:** *To share time together for cultural interaction and be mutually enriched by our cultural values and recognize and understand our cultural differences.*

#### **Preparations**

- *Invite the community for an activity.*
- *Prepare the local people for an intercultural activity. Decorate a space with images or symbols of different cultural practices, like a mother singing a lullaby to her child, etc.*

#### **Where and When**

- *Occasionally – e.g., Mother’s Day.*
- *In the village or neighborhood, together with the people.*

### **A. Welcoming song**

**B. Dynamic:** *Ask each one to look at the symbol in the center and allow it to speak to you.*

*Introduction:* The purpose of this gathering is to spend some time together. We may know each other by name, but we can still know more about us by talking about our cultural practices and our upbringing from childhood experience.

### **C. Points for Reflection**

We are born in families of cultures. The rituals and symbols are the vehicles through which we are given the knowledge of the divine and the wisdom of our communities. Our family background plays a very important role in our personality which in turn affects our social and spiritual life. As infants, and later as children, our outlook to life is largely shaped by parents and other family members. Children will see themselves very much as their parents and other relatives have seen them. They will learn to fear the things that their parents fear, to love that which they love, to value whatever they value. The peace or turbulence of a mother while she is carrying her child is transmitted to the child. The feeling of a mother while singing a lullaby to a child in her arms becomes the child’s story. The mother is saying to her child through these “sound messages” that the world is safe and peaceful or that it is dangerous and insecure. We live in a family that belongs to a community; a community that is increasingly becoming intercultural.

A fragment of an article from the BBC – *The universal language of lullabies*:

Four millennia ago, an ancient Babylonian wrote down a lullaby sung by a mother to her child. It may have got the baby to sleep, but its message is far from soothing – and this remains a feature of many lullabies sung around the world today. Night-time has always been associated with darkness and fear and this may go some way to explaining the threatening themes in some lullabies, says Sally Goddard Blythe, author of a number of books on child development, and director of The Institute for Neuro-Physiological Psychology. But all lullabies – even the scary ones – she says, are rooted in “love, tenderness and caring”.

Many lullabies, regardless of the meaning of their words, possess a peaceful hypnotic quality. Others are mournful or dark, like a lament. Some are “telling you the history of the country, or telling you how you should or shouldn’t run your life–kind of like advice columns for babies,” says Zoe Palmer, a musician working on a lullabies project at the Royal London Hospital. Palmer works with new mothers at the hospital, as part of a group of musicians, helping them to learn and share existing lullabies – as well as creating new ones.

Lullabies belong to the instinctive nature of motherhood according to Richard Dumbrill, Archaeomusicologist. Lullabies are found in diverse communities – with parents from China, Bangladesh and India, as well as Italy, Spain, France and Eastern Europe – but Zoe Palmer has found that lullabies are remarkably similar across cultures.

“Wherever you go in the world, women use the same tones, the same way of singing to their babies,” she says. Many lullabies are very basic, she notes, with just a few words repeated again and again (<https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21035103>).

#### **D. Sharing**

1. Recall any lullaby that reminds you of your childhood years and sing it to the group.
2. How does this language shape your own way of thinking and behaving?
3. Are there any cultural practices you can share with the community that transmit love or care to another?
4. How does God’s love transmit through a mother to her child? Share your experience.

#### **E. Psalm 137**

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept  
when we remembered Zion.  
There on the poplars  
we hung our harps,  
for there our captors asked us for songs,  
our tormentors demanded songs of joy;  
they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion!”  
How can we sing the songs of the LORD  
while in a foreign land?  
If I forget you, Jerusalem,  
may my right hand forget its skill.

May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth  
 if I do not remember you,  
 if I do not consider Jerusalem  
 my highest joy.  
 Remember, LORD, what the Edomites did  
 on the day Jerusalem fell.  
 “Tear it down,” they cried,  
 “tear it down to its foundations!”  
 Daughter Babylon, doomed to destruction,  
 happy is the one who repays you  
 according to what you have done to us.  
 Happy is the one who seizes your infants  
 and dashes them against the rocks.

**F. Common Prayer:** Pray for one another, especially for mothers and children.

### G. Song

#### Celebrative Expression (Agape)

- Sharing of food that everybody brings - eating together.
- Singing together one lullaby which we can learn.

*Marta Prochera, Poland*

## 3.8. Pilgrimage

**Objective:** *To be aware of the presence of the Spirit in a holy place, in nature, and in the community; and to feel the oneness with another person in the spiritual journey.*

#### *When and Where*

- *Any pilgrimage center nearby; one can go walking, or one can have a vehicle visiting one pilgrimage center or visiting many churches in the locality.*
- *Depending upon the groups' convenience undertake a pilgrimage to a shrine or Basilica or “Holy mountain.”*
- *Patron Saint Feast Days, feasts of the SSps or SVD foundation days, dates of solemnities or a viable public holiday.*



#### A. Prayer

Merciful Father of Heaven, we place ourselves in your hands to begin this pilgrimage. Deign to protect us constantly, just as you accompanied your people Israel on the desert journey. May we experience that you are truly a God-with-us, a traveling companion.

May your Holy Spirit guide us along the paths of good and help us prepare ourselves spiritually for this visit to the sanctuary of your Son, the Christ of Miracles. Mary, mother of pilgrims, come with us as we walk. Amen.

### **B. Bible Reading**

Gen 12:1-4 Abraham's call

Mt 2:1-11 The Magi following the Star of Bethlehem

Brief reflection on the pilgrimage of the biblical characters to find the promise made in another land, another culture, another language, other concepts of God.

What promises do you hear from the biblical account?

Abraham leaves his father's house, his land; the Magi come from the East to go to Bethlehem, land of Judah. Where does God invite you to go out in search of him?

*Suggestion during the day (walk, bicycle, cars, bus)*

- Pray the Missionary Rosary, asking for intentions for the five continents.
- You could also pray in between the Quarter Hour prayer.
- Sing some Hymns.

### **C. Celebration**

Celebrate the Eucharist after arriving at the place of pilgrimage. It can be according to the liturgical season or according to a specially prepared Mass.

#### *Evaluation/Sharing*

Spend some time in silence or share in the groups on what you learned from this pilgrimage. What did you see when you walked or traveled? Where did you find God in this journey?

Suggestion to continue with the spirit of pilgrimage, see the movie: "The Way" with Martin Sheen or "Eat, Pray and Love" with Julia Roberts.

*Leon Colman Lisandro, Argentina and Carlos Paniagua-Monroy, SVD*

## **3.9. Welcoming New Members to the Mission Partners Group**

*Objective: To welcome new members and make them feel at home in the mission partner group.*

### **A. Opening Hymn**

"Come, Holy Spirit" or any other Holy Spirit Hymn.

### **B. Bible Enthronement**

*A simple but fitting Bible enthronement is encouraged. Preferably, a family or a couple walks the Bible to the altar during the singing of the opening hymn. Use the culture of the place for this enthronement.*

### C. Reading

*The reader raises the Bible before the congregation, then reads the selected passage for the celebration. After the reading, the Bible is left open at the altar.*

*Suggestion for the Readings*

#### **Rom 16:1-19**

I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is [also] a minister of the Church at Cenchreae, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the holy ones, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a benefactor to many and to me as well...

#### **Jn 1:1-18 - Prologue**

### D. Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we believe that it is you who called us together on this joyous day. We celebrate your goodness as we welcome those you have called anew to proclaim more fervently your Word by sharing your mission as mission partners. We celebrate the uniqueness of everyone's contribution through our presence, gifts and talents. As we respond to your call, accompany us in our journey as your disciples. Send forth your Holy Spirit and enkindle in us the fire of your love.

### E. Gesture of Welcome

*Immediately after the opening prayer, the leader signals the congregation gathered to go around and give each other the sign of welcome with a handshake or a hug. The choir sings a song of welcome e.g., "Hevenu Shalom Alechem."*

### F. Leader

"The Holy Spirit repeatedly raises up communities which place themselves at the disposal of the Church to help accomplish its missionary task" (Prologue of SVD Constitutions). St. Arnold Janssen's vision and mission continue to grow through the mission partners.

We are gathered today to welcome those who have boldly and bravely taken the first step to share in Christ's mission of spreading his Word as mission partners. It's going to be a long journey for all of us but it's going to be an exciting one because we have Christ with us and we have our companions sharing the same charism.

We congratulate you for faithfully finishing the Weekend Basic Introduction for mission partners. This is just the beginning. Discovering and learning continue for all of us who are hungry for Christ.

At this point, may I call on \_\_\_\_\_, our mission partner from \_\_\_\_\_ for his/her personal sharing as a mission partner.

**G. Sharing:** *Sharing should not exceed 10 minutes. It is a sharing of one's personal testimony.*

### **Example: Sharing of GeeO and Mike (Philippines)**

**GeeO:** Allow me to start our sharing with a short reflection that was published in Arnoldus Nota in December 2017. I am married to Mike and we have three children.

My relationship with the Arnoldus Family spans back from when I was a small girl having been schooled with the Blue Sisters, then college with Divine Word College of Laoag, then “joining the SVDs” and dedicating my life for the next 6 years as the first fulltime mission partner of the Philippine Northern Province youth apostolate. I’d rested for quite some time to take care of my own family but now that all our three sons are grown-up (21, 19, 17), I am amazed at how God has empowered the whole family to be part of his mission.

**Mike:** Early in 2017, GeeO came home so excited with the news that Father Oscar Alunday, Mission Secretary for PHN informed her that we were candidates to an SVD Workshop in Rome. She explained that the workshop will be more than 2 weeks and that we will have to pay for our expenses – our fare and the registration fee which was at 7,500 Euro each. I was wondering where we will get the resources. I was also concerned that we will be missing work for 3 weeks.

Of which GeeO answered, “O man of little faith!” God surprised us in many ways, he gave us the resource through an unknown friend.

**Mike:** What was God up to? It wasn’t a smooth ride for us while we were growing our family. Life was difficult. And when we say difficulties, our problems were not simple. It came to a point when we lamented, when will our “Job hunting story” ever end? They were huge hiccups – ready to drain and devour my flesh and soul. To mention two of them:

In 2001, we lost our livelihood in a click of a finger. We own and operate a 10-hectare farm that grew prawns for export and milkfish. But in 2001, Typhoon Feria carried all the millions worth of harvestable prawns into the sea. In a click of a finger, the business was reduced to nothing. We were bankrupt and owed suppliers and the bank millions of pesos.

When we recovered from our financial disasters, we did not expect the worst of storms. GeeO was diagnosed with Stage 3 nasopharyngeal carcinoma, Cancer. Our children call it the darkest moment in their life.

I used to ask why. What have we done to deserve this? On our way to GeeO’s 6<sup>th</sup> and last chemo session, she asked me, “Why, Mike?” By God’s grace, I answered, “This is how much God loves us.” Nothing can separate us from the love of God.

Why are we sharing this with you today? What has this to do with the mission partners? Because here is a real story. Each of us has his own story and struggle to share. And yet, by God’s grace, we have chosen to be here, to respond to his invitation to be missionary disciples.

**GeeO:** I used to ask why. What have we done to deserve this? In retrospect, we have so many reasons to thank the Lord for allowing storms to happen in our lives. We thank our God for the pruning he continues to do to us. He has to cut some of our branches so we could bear more fruit; he has ripped us of our arrogance to realize more fully how much we depended on him. He has allowed *us to share in his cross so we can understand more what it means to reach out to others.*

One of the most powerful talks for Mike and me during the Nemi Workshop was the talk of Fr. Budi Kleden, now Superior General, on Mission Spirituality. It has served as our compass as we have responded anew to God's call as mission partners. We'd reflect on this often: "At the heart of our missionary work is our spirituality" (IDW 2000/100).

**Mike:** What was God up to? We were excited but we had our apprehensions. This would mean leaving our children and livelihood for at least 20 days and we will have to shoulder our expenses. "O man of little faith." God does not place us in situations where he is not in charge.

**GeeO:** What was God up to? The two-week workshop was spirit-filled. God spoke to us in many ways - in the dynamism of the encounters with people during sessions, group activities, mealtime, free time and in the silence of prayer and the surroundings.

What is God up to? Long after the dust had settled to the ground, the Workshop continues to linger in a more profound way for me and Mike. Certainly, God is up to something. And as we get excited to roll up our sleeves especially that it's going to be challenging in the next days, weeks, months and years after Nemi and now after the ASPAC mission partners workshop, it is important to anchor ourselves to him who called us first.

We continue to be "works in progress" but we are confident that he will accompany us wherever he leads us. I realized I owe my God everything. Perhaps that's the reason why it is innate of us to say yes to what God is asking of us. In the words of St. Joseph Freinademetz, SVD: "The little thing that we do is nothing compared to what God has done for us."

**Mike:** During the concluding Eucharistic celebration at Nemi, each participant received a cross from Fr. Lazar Stanislaus symbolizing that the bigger part of the journey has just started. It was a powerful and humbling symbol to be sent by an SVD and to send a mission partner. For us laypeople present in the Workshop, we did not expect such humility from the SVDs. Perhaps, this was the best way of expressing what Fr. Heinz Kulüke, then Superior General, meant when he said, "co-responsible" persons in mission. "For us SVDs, mission partners in the words of Pope Benedict, are no mere 'collaborators' but truly 'co-responsible' for making God's presence felt in our world."

**Sharing by Spiritual Animator of Mission Partners:** The importance of mission partner groups – the paths that we follow, the charism we uphold and joy that we cherish.

## **H. Sing or Recite Magnificat**

**I. Leader:** Acknowledges the sharers and the testimonies.

The leader may now call on new members for a short response. Response should only be 2-3 minutes each and focused on how the personal testimony has inspired them.

**Giving of tokens:** New members are called to the front and given simple tokens from the members. These tokens should be of a cultural symbol and explain the symbol to the whole group.

## J. Closing Exhortation and Blessing

Blessing is given by SVD priest if present. If there is no SVD priest present, a leader ends the meeting with a closing exhortation and prayer.

## K. Closing Song: On Arnold Janssen...

### *Celebration - Agape*

- After the welcome, the new member may now undergo the Formation Course for Mission Partners. It could be done on several weekends, during which the new member is highly encouraged to immerse himself in the different activities of the Mission Partners group.
- Have agape together sharing the joys of the people.

*Mary Geraldine Paderon, La Union, Philippines*

## 3.10. Sharing and Planning for Missionary Activities

**Objective:** *To improve the missionary activities by the mission partners in collaboration with the SVD/SSpS.*

### **Preparation**

- *Planning Committee – Mission partners along with SVD/SSpS discuss and plan the missionary activity.*
- *Mission activities in the parish and in tribal areas/villages where the SVDs/SSpS are working.*

### **When and Where**

- *Twice a year.*
- *In the parish or to nearby or distant mission areas, as per the convenience.*



### **Pointers**

- Collaboration of the mission partners with the SVDs/SSpS to promote faith, education, social justice, health care, economic development, etc. in the missions.
- Coordination with the parish priest (if applicable in a parish) or the confrere/Sister/mission secretary to plan a mission activity or a mission visit to a Province/Region/Mission.
- Identify the area of visit: physically challenged children, HIV/AIDS healthcare center, leper colonies, tribal areas where basic humanitarian help is required.
- Visits to the mission areas, stay for a week-end/week/month(s)/year(s) with the SVDs/SSpS and help them in their mission work. Prepare to live with only the basic amenities while in the mission.

- Sharing our stories and experiences to see more clearly who the Lord is calling us to serve and where he is leading us.
- Information about the activities to the Provincial at least once a year.

### **A. Opening Prayer**

As individuals or as groups we enter the process of conversion toward greater communion and friendship with those we serve and respond to the needs of the poor, marginalized and the excluded. In the process, we acknowledge our own poverty and vulnerability and accept the help of others. Seeking the power of the Spirit to guide us, we have gathered here. Let us listen to him.

Play the Song: Where is the Spirit calling me and us from here? ... *Veni Sancte Spiritus* on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmxXwAgkhWQ>

### **B. Prayer for Reflection**

Disturb us, O Lord, when we are too self-satisfied; when our dreams have come true, because they were too small and narrow and limited; when we think we have already reached our goal in a safe harbor, because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, Lord, when with the abundance of things we possess we have lost our thirst for the waters of life; when, having fallen in love with life, we have ceased to dream of eternity and in our efforts to build a new earth, we have allowed our vision of the new Heaven to dim.

Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly, to venture on wilder seas where storms will show your mastery; where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars. In the name of him who has pushed the horizons of our hopes far out and challenged the courageous to follow him, disturb us.

*Original by Francis Drake*

### **C. Read one of the Biblical texts**

- Lk 10:25-37 Good Samaritan story
- Acts 10:11-33 Conversion in faith for table fellowship
- Acts 2:42-47 Life of the first Christian community,
- Acts 4:32-33 The whole community of believers were one in heart and mind...
- Mt 25:31-46 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat...

### **D. Group Discussion**

- Recall the times when I, like the Good Samaritan, crossed borders of race or social class. What moved me to do this?
- Is the theme of abundance present in my relationship with God? Are there particular situations in my life where I can follow the inclusive example of Jesus more fully?
- What motivates me as a Christian to go out of my way to feed the hungry and attend to the sick?
- What part can I play in widening the circle of those who are included?

## E. Plan of Action

- How and what we could do to improve our activities in the missions?
- Plan a concrete action of missionary activities with the group.

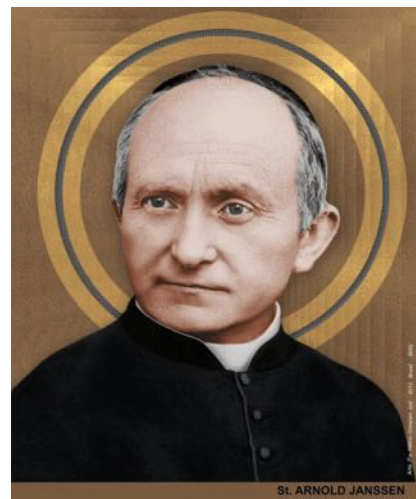
## F. Concluding Prayer

*Susan Noronha, Mumbai, India*

## 3.11. Novena in Honor of Saint Arnold Janssen

### OPENING PRAYER

- L. God, eternal truth,  
A. We believe in you.  
L. God, our strength and salvation,  
A. We hope in you.  
L. God, infinite goodness,  
A. We love you with all our heart.  
L. You have sent the Word as Savior of the world,  
A. Make us all one in him.  
L. Fill us with the Spirit of your Son,  
A. That we may glorify your name. Amen.



### CONCLUDING PRAYER

- L. God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we thank you:  
A. For having called Arnold to follow your Son, the Divine Word, in the task of proclaiming the Good News to all peoples; for the gift of your Spirit that filled him with great love for your Son, and drove him to consecrate himself totally to your kingdom of love, peace and justice; for the missionary witness of Arnold, a man of burning faith, hope and charity.  
L. God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we ask for ourselves:  
A. The missionary concern of Arnold, so that we may go to those who do not know the Good News of Jesus Christ; the burning zeal of Arnold for God's Word to unite the hearts of all people; the hope of Arnold to form in one Spirit a bond of unity with all of creation; the enthusiasm of Arnold to imitate Jesus who gave himself to us in the Eucharist, as a sign of his infinite love for the world; the desire of Arnold when he prayed: "May the darkness of sin and the night of unbelief vanish before the Light of the Word and the Spirit of Grace, and may the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people." Amen.

## FIRST DAY

*Crystallizing St. Arnold Janssen's motto:*

*"May the Triune God live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people"*

**Opening Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

### **Inspiration**

In the history of our Society, we realize that the ardent love of Jesus impelled the Founding Generation, such as St. Arnold Janssen, St. Joseph Freinademetz, Blessed Maria Helena and Blessed Josepha, to proclaim the reign of peace, love and reconciliation in each place, among every people, and for all cultures. St. Arnold Janssen crystallized his fundamental belief in his motto: "May the Triune God live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people." This motto expresses both our fundamental rootedness in an intimate and loving union with the Trinity and our mission of inviting all people from every culture and nation to participate in the life and love of the Triune God. It is the vision of Arnold that we, as members of a missionary congregation, teach people to honor, worship and glorify the Triune God. Our identity and mission are shaped, animated, and empowered by Trinitarian life and love. Trinitarian spirituality is essential and fundamental to our life, mission, renewal and transformation.

### **Hymn**

#### **Psalm 112**

*Antiphon.* May the Triune God live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people.

Happy the man who fears the Lord, \*  
who takes delight in all his commands.  
His sons will be powerful on earth; \*  
the children of the upright are blessed.

Riches and wealth are in his house; \*  
his justice stands firm forever.  
He is a light in the darkness for the upright: \*  
he is generous, merciful and just.

The good man takes pity and lends, \*  
he conducts his affairs with honor.  
The just man will never waver: \*  
he will be remembered for ever.

He has no fear of evil news; \*  
with a firm heart he trusts in the Lord.  
With a steadfast heart he will not fear; \*  
he will see the downfall of his foes.

Open-handed, he gives to the poor; †  
his justice stands firm forever. \*  
His head will be raised in glory.

The wicked man sees and is angry, †  
grinds his teeth and fades away; \*  
the desire of the wicked leads to doom.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be forever. Amen.

*Antiphon.* May the Triune God live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people.

**Scripture: Titus 3:4-5**

But when the kindness and generous love of God our savior appeared, not because of any righteous deeds we had done but because of his mercy, he saved us through the bath of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.

**Silent Reflection**

**Canticle of Mary**

*Ant.* Three mysteries mark this holy day: today the star leads the Magi to the infant Christ; today water is changed into wine for the wedding feast; today Christ wills to be baptized by John in the river Jordan to bring us salvation.

L: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord... (Canticle of Mary)

**Intercessions**

L: Impelled by the boundless love of Jesus, let our response to every petition be:

*R/: Loving God, grant us your grace*

- May we reflect on the love of Christ and on transforming missionary discipleship in our prayers, recollections, retreats and life experiences. R/
- May we persevere in times of difficulties in missionary life and activities. R/
- May we become appreciative and supportive of the good works of our confreres. R/
- May we be open to diversity in thinking and actions and to being challenged to go beyond our 'small worlds.' R/
- May we let ourselves be evangelized by the other, regardless of nationality, religion or culture. R/
- May we stand up for truth and justice; remain close to the people and put the least, who are so important to the Lord, at the center of our love and action. R/
- We may now offer our other petitions. (Pause). R/

L: With one voice let us pray to honor God, our loving Father.

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

## SECOND DAY

*Rooting our identity in the Divine Word like St. Arnold Janssen*

### **Opening Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

For St. Arnold Janssen, discernment was not an option, but a vital need to remain rooted in the Word, do God's will and fulfill his mission. He consecrated himself to the Holy Spirit, spent long hours praying and left us a legacy of prayers and devotions that could accompany his spiritual sons and daughters in their daily lives. Such devotions help us to maintain the continuous connection with the One and Triune God, to root ourselves in his Word and to commit ourselves to his mission. Jesus of Nazareth, confronted by reality, led by the Spirit, and in an intimate dialogue with his Father, sought to discern about the leaven of the Kingdom (Mt 13:33) and the direction of his mission.

### **Hymn**

#### **Psalm 45**

*Ant.* Yours is more than mortal beauty; every word you speak is full of grace.

My heart overflows with noble words. †  
To the king I must speak the song I have made; \*  
my tongue as nimble as the pen of a scribe.

You are the fairest of the children of men †  
and graciousness is poured upon your lips: \*  
because God has blessed you for evermore.

O mighty one, gird your sword upon your thigh; †  
in splendor and state, ride on in triumph \*  
for the cause of truth and goodness and right.

Take aim with your bow in your dread right hand. †  
Your arrows are sharp: peoples fall beneath you. \*  
The foes of the king fall down and lose heart.

Your throne, O God, shall endure forever. †  
A scepter of justice is the scepter of your kingdom. \*  
Your love is for justice; your hatred for evil.

Therefore God, your God, has anointed you †  
with the oil of gladness above other kings: \*  
your robes are fragrant with aloes and myrrh.

From the ivory palace you are greeted with music. †  
The daughters of kings are among your loved ones. \*  
On your right stands the queen in gold of Ophir.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:

as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be forever. Amen.

*Ant.* Yours is more than mortal beauty; every word you speak is full of grace.

### **Reading: 2 Peter 1:3-4**

The divine power of Christ has freely bestowed on us everything necessary for a life of genuine piety, through knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and power. By virtue of them he has bestowed on us the great and precious things he promised, so that through these you who have fled a world corrupted by lust might become sharers of the divine nature.

### **Silent Reflection**

### **Gospel Canticle**

**Ant.** When they saw the star, the Magi were filled with great joy; entering the house, they offered their gifts to the Lord: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

L: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord... (Canticle of Mary)

### **Intercessions**

Let us pray to God that like St. Arnold we may all be attentive in listening to God and generous in responding to his Divine Word. Let us pray,

***R/ Loving God, keep us rooted in your Divine Word.***

- May we become more open to read, interpret and respond creatively to the signs of times in concrete ways in the light of the Word of God and our Arnoldus Spirituality. R/
- May we spend time in personal and communal prayer, spend time in silence, adoration, and intercessory prayer; and celebrate the Eucharist in a well prepared, participatory and worthy manner. R/
- May we cultivate a process of personal and community discernment in the presence of the Lord and make an intentional effort to discover his will. R/
- May we root ourselves deeply and constantly in the Word, which speaks to us through Scripture and creation as well as other religious traditions and people of good will and impels us to transform ourselves and the world. R/
- May we rediscover and renew our commitment to our SVD spiritual heritage so that it may help us to cultivate an intimate relationship with the Word and animate us in our mission. R/
- May we deepen our approach to intercultural life and mission, as well as our theological perspectives, through further reflection and offer it to others, other religious congregations, and the Church as a whole. R/
- We may now offer our other petitions. (Pause). R/

L: With one voice let us pray to honor God, our loving Father.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

## THIRD DAY

*Committing to Christ's Mission like Saint Arnold Janssen*

**Opening Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

### **Inspiration**

Jesus made a primary option in his missionary journey; this option became his mission manifesto; it became a reality in his person. In him was fulfilled what the prophet Isaiah said: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind; to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favor from the Lord" (Lk 4:18-19).

As partners of the Divine Word we assume this primary option of the Incarnate Word. By living this primary option, people will perceive that we have experienced in our own lives the kingdom of God that we proclaim (cf. c. 106). For us as his disciples, this option is programmatic. The renewal that we seek on a personal and communitarian level and as the 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. When Arnold says that "the proclamation of the Gospel is the most sublime expression of love of neighbor," it resonates for us with the program of Jesus and his main interlocutors: the poor, the marginalized, the broken, the captives, the sick, the oppressed, in short those who suffer and have their lives and hopes cut off. Jesus identifies himself with them, to the point of saying: "In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40). The fruitfulness of our missionary life and mission depends on our union with him.

### **Hymn**

#### **Psalm 94**

*Ant.* You cannot serve both God and mammon.

Hear this, all you peoples, \*  
give heed, all who dwell in the world,  
men both high and low, \*  
rich and poor alike!

My lips will speak words of wisdom. \*  
My heart is full of insight.  
I will turn my mind to a parable, \*  
with the harp I will solve my problem.

Why should I fear in evil days\*  
the malice of the foes who surround me,  
men who trust in their wealth, \*  
and boast of the vastness of their riches?

For no man can buy his own ransom, \*  
or pay a price to God for his life.  
The ransom of his soul is beyond him. †  
He cannot buy life without end, \*  
nor avoid coming to the grave.

He knows that wise men and fools must both perish \*  
and must leave their wealth to others.  
Their graves are their homes for ever, †  
their dwelling place from age to age, \*  
though their names spread wide through the land.

In his riches, man lacks wisdom; \*  
he is like the beasts that are destroyed.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be forever. Amen.

*Ant.* You cannot serve both God and mammon.

### **Reading: Ephesians 2:3b-5**

By nature, we deserved God's wrath like the rest. But God is rich in mercy; because of his great love for us he brought us to life with Christ when we were dead in sin. By this favor you were saved.

### **Gospel Canticle**

*Ant.* Christ, you are Light from Light; when you appeared on the earth,  
the wise men offered their gifts to you, alleluia.

L: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord... (Canticle of Mary)

### **Intercessions**

L: As Divine Word Missionaries, united with all Christians in prayer and praise, we entreat the Lord:

*R/Father, hear us.*

- May our regular Bible Sharing deepen and strengthen our vocation and mission. R/
- May we be guided through our spiritual direction and be accompanied by our spiritual director toward the will of God. R/
- May our community be accompanied by individuals who lead us to community sharing and solidarity. R/
- May we have life sharing and retreats with the perspectives of SVD Spirituality, Arnold Janssen and our Founding Generation. R/
- May we make a concrete program in the community to reach out to the poor or less fortunate people, using our time and resources. R/
- May we grow in interdependence and show the willingness to alter personal plans for the sake of the common interest, because a sustained renewal requires participation in a community that shares a common vision. R/

- May we become bridge builders in our divided world, agents of reconciliation and advocates of justice and peace with our collaborators in mission. R/
- We may now offer our other petitions. (Pause). R/

L: With one voice let us pray to honor God, our loving Father.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

## **FOURTH DAY**

*Living out servant leadership and responsible membership like St. Arnold Janssen*

**Opening Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

### **Inspiration**

Our SVD Constitutions and Handbook for Superiors, among other materials, have offered us guidelines on the relations between servant leaders and responsible members (cf. Handbook for Superiors D1 1.0, D3 1.0). Inspired by these documents and being rooted in the Word, we become more supportive, sympathetic and understanding of those in leadership positions. Arnold Janssen emphasized, "Look upon the will of your superiors as the holy will of God and try to comply in all simplicity and sincerity." Responsible membership is to have a positive and healthy appreciation of the work of our confreres in leadership positions. Those in leadership positions embrace and accept the will of God manifested through our religious community. They do so in loving obedience to the One who loves us first.

### **Hymn**

**Canticle:** Colossians 1:12-20

*Ant.* Through him all things were made; he holds all creation together in himself.

Let us give thanks to the Father \*  
for having made you worthy  
to share the lot of the saints in light.

He rescued us \*  
from the power of darkness  
and brought us \*  
into the kingdom of his beloved Son.

Through him we have redemption, \*  
the forgiveness of our sins.  
He is the image of the invisible God, \*  
the first-born of all creatures.  
In him everything in heaven and on earth was created, \*  
things visible and invisible.

All were created through him; \*  
all were created for him.  
He is before all else that is. \*  
In him everything continues in being.

It is he who is head of the body, the Church! \*  
He who is the beginning,  
the first-born of the dead, \*  
so that primacy may be his in everything.

It pleased God to make absolute fullness reside in him \*  
and, by means of him, to reconcile everything in his person,  
both on earth and in the heavens, \*  
making peace through the blood of his cross.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be forever. Amen.

*Ant.* Through him all things were made; he holds all creation together in himself.

### **Reading: Colossians 1:13-15**

God rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us to the kingdom of his beloved Son. Through him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creatures.

### **Gospel Canticle**

*Ant.* What is this sign of which you speak, this sign of a newborn king? We saw a brilliant star in the heavens; its splendor filled the world.  
L: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord... (Canticle of Mary)

### **Intercessions**

Strengthened by God's Word, let us pray:

*R/Lord, show us your compassion.*

- May we value and follow a process of elections of our superiors characterized by a prayerful discernment which transcends ethnic or national loyalties and affinities. R/
- May we assume servant leadership in the spirit of the Constitution and as responsible members to collaborate with our confreres in leadership positions. R/
- May we give more attention to leadership training, especially for our younger confreres and young mission partners. R/
- May we forego our own private agendas in order to serve our communities and institutions as leaders. R/
- We may now offer our other petitions. (Pause). R/

L: With one voice let us pray to honor God, our loving Father.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

### **FIFTH DAY**

*Opening ourselves to the fruits of the Spirit like St. Arnold Janssen*

**Opening Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

#### **Inspiration**

We are invited to be open to the fruits of the Spirit and the signs of the times in our missionary efforts at renewal and transformation. This applies especially to all our initial and ongoing formation programs. Formation is crucial to our being. Here we are invited to experience the love of Christ in our life and growth, our joys and challenges. Discernment in all stages of life is vital for being faithful to the Lord according to our vows as Divine Word Missionaries. In so doing, we continue to respond to the love of Christ, to be rooted in his Word, and to commit ourselves as missionary disciples to the mission of the Divine Word.

#### **Hymn**

##### **Psalm 72**

*Ant.* I have made you the light of all nations to carry my salvation to the ends of the earth.

O God, give your judgment to the king, \*  
to a king's son your justice,  
that he may judge your people in justice \*  
and your poor in right judgment.

May the mountains bring forth peace for the people\*  
and the hills, justice.

May he defend the poor of the people †  
and save the children of the needy \*  
and crush the oppressor.

He shall endure like the sun and the moon \*  
from age to age.

He shall descend like rain on the meadow, \*  
like raindrops on the earth.

In his days justice shall flourish \*  
and peace till the moon fails.

He shall rule from sea to sea, \*  
from the Great River to earth's bounds.  
Before him his enemies shall fall, \*  
his foes lick the dust.

The kings of Tarshish and the sea coasts \*

shall pay him tribute.  
The kings of Sheba and Seba \*  
shall bring him gifts.

Before him all kings shall fall prostrate, \*  
all nations shall serve him.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be forever. Amen.

*Ant.* I have made you the light of all nations to carry my salvation to the ends of the earth.

### **Reading: 1 John 1:5b, 7**

God is light; in him there is no darkness. If we walk in light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all our sin.

### **Silent Reflection**

### **Gospel Canticle**

*Ant.* The people of Saba shall come bringing gold, frankincense and myrrh, alleluia.  
L: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord... (Canticle of Mary)

### **Intercessions**

As Divine Word Missionaries, united in prayer with all of our brothers and sisters, we bless God and invoke his name:

*R/ Lord, show us your compassion.*

- May our vocation promotion team find new approaches and strategies that will help and encourage discerners to realize their calling. R/
- May we be more pro-active in supporting and providing cross-cultural training programs in the initial formation. R/
- May we allow ourselves to be transformed by the experience of cross-cultural programs. R/
- May we provide support and prayers untiringly to our confreres overseas. R/
- May we be molded and formed in perseverance and in motivation to work among the poor and less fortunate ones. R/
- May we participate willingly and actively in ongoing formation programs on renewal, intercultural competence and new mission trends. R/
- We may now offer our other petitions. (Pause). R/

L: With one voice let us pray to honor God, our loving Father.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

## SIXTH DAY

*Caring for the poor and the neglected like Saint Arnold*

**Opening Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

### **Inspiration**

It is in caring for the poor and the neglected that we are actually ministering to the Lord himself. This is very clear in the gospel of Matthew (25:40ff): whatever we do for the least of our brothers and sisters (the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, etc.) we do for the Lord. Indeed, the Word is present in each one of them. A spiritual foundation in the Word impels us to make our missionary commitment to put the last first. The emphasis on missionary service to the poor is not an option since this is where we find the presence of the Word in the world. This mission is non-negotiable. We continue to advocate and work for the poor as emphasized by the previous general chapters. However, we want to stress the situation of the family and young people who need our immediate attention and care (2012 GC 12-13). The realities of the family are becoming more complex. Young people suffer different forms of abuse, the effects of broken homes and relationships, and sometimes rejection by their families and society. Furthermore, we also want to point out the plight of our brothers and sisters who are victims of structural injustices such as ethnocentrism, racial discrimination, religious persecutions, human trafficking and other forms of socio-economic injustice (2012 GC 22-23).

### **Hymn**

#### **Psalm 51**

*Ant.* 1 A humble, contrite heart, O God, you will not spurn.

Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness. \*  
In your compassion blot out my offense.  
O wash me more and more from my guilt \*  
and cleanse me from my sin.

My offenses truly I know them; \*  
my sin is always before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned; \*  
what is evil in your sight I have done.

That you may be justified when you give sentence \*  
and be without reproach when you judge.  
O see, in guilt I was born, \*  
a sinner was I conceived.

Indeed you love truth in the heart; \*  
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom.  
O purify me, then I shall be clean; \*  
O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow.

Make me hear rejoicing and gladness,\*  
that the bones you have crushed may revive.  
From my sins turn away your face\*  
and blot out all my guilt.

A pure heart create for me, O God,\*  
put a steadfast spirit within me.  
Do not cast me away from your presence,\*  
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.

Give me again the joy of your help;\*  
with a spirit of fervor sustain me,  
that I may teach transgressors your ways\*  
and sinners may return to you.

O rescue me, God, my helper,\*  
and my tongue shall ring out your goodness.  
O Lord, open my lips\*  
and my mouth shall declare your praise.

For in sacrifice you take no delight,\*  
burnt offering from me you would refuse,  
my sacrifice, a contrite spirit.\*  
A humbled, contrite heart you will not spurn.

In your goodness, show favor to Zion:\*  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.  
Then you will be pleased with lawful sacrifice,\*  
holocausts offered on your altar.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son,\*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now,\*  
and will be forever. Amen.

*Ant.* A humble, contrite heart, O God, you will not spurn.

**Reading: Lk 4:16-20**

He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down.

**Silent Reflection**

## **Gospel Canticle**

*Ant.* All who once reviled you will come and bow down in worship before your very footsteps.

L: Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel... (Canticle of Zechariah)

## **Intercessions**

We pray now to the Father who has appointed Christ a light to the nations:

**R/ Father, hear our prayer.**

- May we recognize in the stories (realities) of the poor that God never abandons his people and to receive inspiration from the poor for our own life and commitment. R/
- May we join the poor in their struggle for justice, equality and freedom, and adopt a lifestyle that brings us closer to the people in whose pain and sorrow we see the face of Christ. R/
- May we find ways and means of addressing the challenges confronting the family and young people in our respective ministries. R/
- May we promote specialized apostolates such as education and publications. R/
- May we recognize and work for the transformation of the various structural systems of injustice in society which lead to the problems afflicting migrants, refugees, the marginalized and undocumented. R/
- May we get rid of our own outdated structures that cost money without benefitting our mission. R/
- May we collaborate with other NGOs in serving the poor; to plan together with the poor in working out projects. R/
- We may now offer our other petitions. (Pause). R/

L: With one voice let us pray to honor God, our loving Father.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

## **SEVENTH DAY**

*Upholding the integrity of Creation like Saint Arnold Janssen*

**Opening Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

## **Inspiration**

Creation is a sign of God's love for us. Care for the environment is not only part of our mission, it is also part of our heritage. St. Arnold Janssen believed that nature is the temple of God into which God placed us so that it would proclaim to us God's existence. As transforming missionary disciples, stewardship of creation is our responsibility in expressing God's love. This can be manifested in diverse ways—care for creation, sustainable development, eco-justice and so forth. However, creation does not only refer to environment and nature, but it also concerns the care of our bodies. Thus, our lifestyle and the way we care for our bodies must correspond to the way we care for the environment.

## Hymn

### Psalm 92

*Ant.* As morning breaks we sing of your mercy, Lord, and night will find us proclaiming your fidelity.

It is good to give thanks to the Lord, \*  
to make music to your name, O Most High,  
to proclaim your love in the morning \*  
and your truth in the watches of the night,  
on the ten-stringed lyre and the lute, \*  
with the murmuring sound of the harp.

Your deeds, O Lord, have made me glad; \*  
for the work of your hands I shout with joy.  
O Lord, how great are your works! \*  
How deep are your designs!

The foolish man cannot know this \*  
and the fool cannot understand.  
Though the wicked spring up like grass \*  
and all who do evil thrive:  
they are doomed to be eternally destroyed. \*

But you, Lord, are eternally on high.  
See how your enemies perish; \*  
all doers of evil are scattered.  
To me you give the wild-ox's strength; \*  
you anoint me with the purest oil.

My eyes looked in triumph on my foes; \*  
my ears heard gladly of their fall.  
The just will flourish like the palm-tree \*  
and grow like a Lebanon cedar.

Planted in the house of the Lord \*  
they will flourish in the courts of our God,  
still bearing fruit when they are old, \*  
still full of sap, still green,  
to proclaim that the Lord is just; \*  
in him, my rock, there is no wrong.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be forever. Amen.

*Ant.* As morning breaks we sing of your mercy, Lord, and night will find us proclaiming your fidelity.

## **Reading: Romans 1:20**

For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

## **Gospel Canticle**

*Ant.* At Cana in Galilee Jesus worked the first of the signs which revealed his glory.  
L: Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel... (Canticle of Zechariah)

## **Intercessions**

Let us give glory to Christ, the image of God, as we call upon him in faith:

**R/ Christ, Son of God, hear us.**

- May the grace be upon us to make our lifestyle and the way we care for our bodies correspond to the way we care for the environment. R/
- May we pray and care for the environment and formulate a plan of action addressing integrity of creation issues in our communities, institutions and parishes. R/
- May we become more conscious and committed in the implementation of proper waste management in our communities and provinces. R/
- May we join the national and international networks in addressing cases of environmental destruction, and promoting more environmentally friendly policies. R/
- We may now offer our other petitions. (Pause). R/

L: With one voice let us pray to honor God, our loving Father.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

## **EIGHT DAY**

*Serving the people and mission like Saint Arnold through social media*

**Opening Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

## **Inspiration**

By “digital” we refer to both the “digital generation” and “digital technology”. As transforming missionary disciples, we foster a healthy appreciation of the digital age (people and media) as means of continuous renewal and transformation for both the individual confrere and the SVD community. We need to walk with our confreres who utilize digital media and to challenge them to make use of the different forms of social media and different devices/gadgets in the service of community and mission. Social media and devices/gadgets may offer us opportunities for authentic personal and communal growth when they are properly used. They should be at the service of people and mission, and we should not be enslaved by them. The digital era opens up immense possibilities for Primary and New Evangelization and the sharing of our spirituality.

Careful study and collaborative utilization of digital technology can help us in our various ministries to serve the people effectively.

## Hymn

### Psalm 110:1-5, 7

*Ant.* The Father's voice resounded from the heavens: This is my Son in whom I delight, listen to what he says to you.

The Lord's revelation to my Master: †  
"Sit on my right: \*  
your foes I will put beneath your feet."

The Lord will wield from Zion †  
your scepter of power: \*  
rule in the midst of all your foes.

A prince from the day of your birth †  
on the holy mountains; \*  
from the womb before the dawn I begot you.

The Lord has sworn an oath he will not change. †  
"You are a priest forever, \*  
a priest like Melchizedek of old."

The Master standing at your right hand \*  
will shatter kings in the day of his great wrath.

He shall drink from the stream by the wayside \*  
and therefore he shall lift up his head.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be forever. Amen.

*Ant.* The Father's voice resounded from the heavens: This is my Son in whom I delight, listen to what he says to you.

### Reading: Acts 10:37-38

I take it you know what has been reported all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

### Gospel Canticle

*Ant.* Christ Jesus loved us, poured out his blood to wash away our sins, and made us a kingdom and priests for God our Father. To him be glory and honor for ever.

L: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord... (Canticle of Mary)

## **Intercessions**

Our Redeemer desired to be baptized in the Jordan by John; let us make our petition to him:  
*R/ Lord, send forth your Spirit upon us.*

- May we develop strategies and programs for individuals and communities on the responsible use of social media and digital technology. R/
- May we make use of all resources, especially social media, to proclaim the Word in a manner that can lead to the transformation of the world into a more humane and just society according to the values of the Kingdom of God. R/
- May we foster collaboration among our centers of communication worldwide, such as meetings of communication center directors and of these directors with mission directors. R/
- We may now offer our other petitions. (Pause). R/

L: With one voice let us pray to honor God, our loving Father.

## **The Lord's Prayer**

**Concluding Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

## **NINTH DAY**

*Responding to the call of missionary vocation like St. Arnold through co-responsibility with mission partners*

**Opening Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

## **Inspiration**

We believe that as we are called to a missionary vocation, our mission partners are also called to their own specific vocation in the Arnoldus Family. Sharing the charism of our Society, we Divine Word Missionaries and the mission partners continue our mission as co-responsible persons. As Arnoldus Family members SVD, SSpS, SSpSAP and mission partners, all are called to collaborate with one another to transform the world. We are not the owners of our charism. This is a gift given by God. A sign of renewal and transformation is that we develop the capacity to share our SVD charism with others. In this respect, we are all encouraged and challenged to actively invite and welcome lay people to join the mission partners' groups.

## **Hymn**

### **Canticle: Ephesians 1:3-10**

*Ant.* God chose us in his Son to be his adopted children.

Praised be the God and Father \*  
of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
who has bestowed on us in Christ \*  
every spiritual blessing in the heavens.

God chose us in him †  
before the world began \*  
to be holy  
and blameless in his sight.

He predestined us †  
to be his adopted sons through Jesus Christ, \*  
such was his will and pleasure,  
that all might praise the glorious favor \*  
he has bestowed on us in his beloved.

In him and through his blood, we have been redeemed, \*  
and our sins forgiven,  
so immeasurably generous \*  
is God's favor to us.

God has given us the wisdom \*  
to understand fully the mystery,  
the plan he was pleased \*  
to decree in Christ.

A plan to be carried out \*  
in Christ, in the fullness of time,  
to bring all things into one in him, \*  
in the heavens and on earth.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, \*  
and to the Holy Spirit:  
as it was in the beginning, is now, \*  
and will be forever. Amen.

*Ant.* God chose us in his Son to be his adopted children.

### **Reading: Colossians 1:9b-11**

May you attain full knowledge of God's will through perfect wisdom and spiritual insight. Then you will lead a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing to him in every way. You will multiply good works of every sort and grow in the knowledge of God. By the might of his glory you will be endowed with the strength needed to stand fast, even to endure joyfully whatever may come.

### **Gospel Canticle**

*Ant.* My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.

L: My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord... (Canticle of Mary)

### **Intercessions**

God has made an everlasting covenant with his people, and he never ceases to bless them. Grateful for these gifts, we confidently direct our prayer to him:

**R/: Lord, bless your people.**

- May we become more active and dedicated in promoting mission partners and working with them in our mission. R/
- May we take necessary steps to develop formation programs together with mission partners and to involve ourselves in animation of our mission partners. R/
- May we involve more mission partners in promoting intercultural life and mission. R/
- May we be inspired and animated to organize an SVD Day, SVD Weekend or SVD Week annually to celebrate our worldwide mission. R/
- We may now offer our other petitions (Pause). R/

L: With one voice let us pray to honor God, our loving Father.

### The Lord's Prayer

**Concluding Prayer** (Refer to the initial page of this Novena)

*Prepared by the students at Divine Word Theologate, Chicago, IL*



### 3.12. Symbolic Way of the Cross

#### *Opening Thoughts*

Today we are going to walk the *Symbolic Way of the Cross* to relive the final moments of the life of Christ: from the palace of Pilate, a place of condemnation, to a rock-hewn tomb in the garden, a place of silence. In this journey, various symbols will guide us to understand the deeper meaning of our savior's passion and death. In fact, the path to Calvary is strewn with many symbols that the suffering and dying Jesus left behind for his followers to direct them on the inevitable path of discipleship. Every character that Jesus encountered and every animate or inanimate thing that he came across manifests the risky and perilous path that he traversed while climbing the heights of Calvary. To us, his disciples, this *Via Crucis* is an invitation as well as a challenge to choose at least one symbol, then to lift it up and carry it in our daily lives. May we walk in the footsteps of our Master, learn to love God above all things, and spend our lives in the service of our neighbor.

*Let us pray*

Crucified Lord,  
face of every suffering person,  
brother of those who are in pain,  
and friend of those who are distressed and rejected,  
help us accept our life's sufferings,  
give us generosity to help those in pain,  
and grant us serenity and courage to face the sufferings together,  
that we may look forward to the joy of resurrection. Amen.

*Note: Each symbol is carried by a person who stands in front of the faithful for each station of the cross. Then the leader reads the commentary.*

## **FIRST STATION** **Jesus is condemned to death**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*Symbol – Chair*

Our first stop on this journey is at Pilate's headquarters, the seat of ruthless Roman power in Jerusalem. The symbol of a "chair" represents the governing authority and power of a ruler. Power can be used positively to govern people justly as well as negatively to subjugate them. Pontius Pilate, the Roman Procurator of Judea who had the power to release Jesus, succumbs to the threats and pressures of the religious leaders and people at a key moment during the trial and condemns him to a shameful form of execution. To this Roman leader, Jesus had categorically stated, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above" (Jn 19:11).

While Pilate claims to have judicial power over Jesus, springing from human institutions, the true power and authority over Jesus' life and death rests with himself, whose divine authority and charismatic power has its origin in God. He commands true power and authority over Pilate and, ironically, Pilate stands powerless before him. Nevertheless, Jesus voluntarily accepts the condemnation of the cross without any protest, even though being innocent. As we reflect on the unjust trial and condemnation of Jesus, we pray for all those in positions of authority who have the power to make policies and decisions for the wellbeing of their citizens. We earnestly pray for those who abuse their power for selfish gains and interests and make the innocent and righteous suffer. May divine justice prevail over their evil designs and injustice. We pause to reflect.

Our Father....

## **SECOND STATION** **Jesus takes up his Cross**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*Symbol – Hands*

During this pause we reflect on two pairs of hands – burdening hands and saving hands. Our hands can show affection to others or can afflict others, they can write down our thoughts and insights or can write malice or lies about others; they can be used for sign language or for scandalous gestures; they can show a path to lost wayfarers or be used to get someone off from one's paths; they can communicate or can condemn; they can be skillful and constructive or can be lethargic and destructive. Each one decides how to use his or her hands!

The Roman soldiers, following the decree of condemnation and having flogged Jesus, lay the burden of the cross on him. The hands of the soldiers are instrumental in the Passion Narrative to strike Jesus, to flog, to scourge, to strip him of his clothes, to nail him to the piece of wood, to lift him up on the cross, to give him sour wine, to pierce his side, etc. On the other hand, Jesus' has the receiving hands, they are the healing hands, merciful, serving, and feeding hands. At the end of this journey on the cross, the burdened hands will be stretched so that they become saving hands. Those merciful hands of the savior never react, never protest, and never condemn. As we reflect on our hands, we pray for the conversion of those who make arms and weapons of mass destruction, those involved in human slavery and drug trafficking that they may respect the value of human life and give up illegal and inhuman practices and trade. We pause to reflect.  
Hail Mary...

**THIRD STATION**  
**Jesus falls for the first time**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*Symbol – Sand*

With his first fall, Jesus kisses the dust of the earth. The Lord kisses his beautiful creation, our common home. We remember the humbling words that the minister pronounces on Ash Wednesday, when he traces a little ash on our foreheads: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return." With his first fall, Jesus comes close to the fragility of human life that is fleeting and transient. Just like the footsteps on the sand that can be washed away by the tiny waves or the sandcastles that can crumble at the rush of a great tide or the great mountains and pyramids that can turn into sand over the passage of time, so is our ephemeral human existence.

Sand is never revered. It remains under our feet and goes unnoticed. While Jesus falls under the weight of the cross, with his humility ("humus" Latin word for "soil") he embraces the earth and its dust, which is considered worthless. The creator loves his creation, for we humans and our cosmic family have a great value for him. We may be weak and insignificant as per our human considerations and calculations, but in the eyes of our creator we are precious. He loves us immensely even though we fail to protect the dignity of each other and promote the common good of the human family, especially

the most vulnerable among us. As we reflect on the symbol of sand, let us thank God for the gift of the earth and its blessings and ask for the grace to overcome the prejudices against cultures, races, people, women and children who are stripped of their rights and dignity. We pause to reflect.  
Our Father...

#### **FOURTH STATION** **Jesus meets his mother**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.  
*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

##### *Symbol – Light*

Darkness frightens us. How many children and even adults are afraid of it? It often confuses us because in the dark our sense of orientation is lost. We no longer know where we are and so we lose all points of reference. In contrast, light illumines and removes all darkness. It gives us courage and our sense of direction is regained. In fact, in the Genesis account, light is God's first creation ("Let there be light" and there was light; Gen 1:3). On the way to the Promised Land, God guides his people through the desert by means of a luminous cloud (cf. Ex 13:21). In John, Jesus declares, "I am the light of the world" (Jn 8:12) and in Matthew, he tells his disciples, "You are the light of the world" (Mt 5:14). For Cicero, ancient Rome was the "light of the whole world" (*lux orbis terrarum*) in a political sense, but for Jesus, his disciples are the lights that reflect the divine light through righteous deeds.

Mary is a bright light. Due to her faithfulness and obedience to God's word (*fiat*), although she went through dark moments of her life, she never got lost or disoriented. In the encounter between mother and son, we see the meeting between a shining light and the source of light. She brought forth the light of the world and therefore, in her we see a light that does not lose its luminosity and brilliance. Her poignant encounter with the son at an unlikely location is a clear manifestation of her *discipleship of visibility* and challenge to those who prefer to remain in darkness! As we reflect on light, let us pray for all women, especially mothers, so that like Mary they may radiate the divine light in their families amidst the dark storms of life. We pause to reflect.  
Hail Mary...

#### **FIFTH STATION** **Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus carry the Cross**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.  
*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

##### *Symbol – Salt*

Salt is an indispensable ingredient that adds flavor or taste to the food when it is added. It makes the insipid food edible, tasty and truly enjoyable. Besides having healing properties,

it also preserves food from rot and decay. Since ancient times, salt has assumed great economic importance in many cultures and societies, as an old Latin proverb sums up perfectly with a play of words: *nihil est utilius sole et sale* (nothing more useful than sun and salt): it means that sun and salt are beneficial for a healthy and happy life.

Our stop in this fifth station reminds us of one of our primary duties as disciples of Jesus. In the Gospel of Matthew, the identity of disciples is described by the metaphor of salt: “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?” (Mt 5:13). Even as the salt does not exist for itself, nor does the disciple for himself. His life is turned outward in service of others. In Simon of Cyrene, one finds an ideal example of becoming salt for others by being at their service. Though he was not a disciple of Jesus, by carrying the cross he enacts the role of a disciple (cf. Lk 9:23; 14:27). As confreres, being and becoming salt would mean adding flavor to our inter-cultural community life with our gifts and talents that would mutually enrich one another. As we reflect on the symbol of salt, let us pray for all the volunteers, NGOs and networking agencies who work selflessly to alleviate the pain of the suffering in our society. We pause to reflect.

Our Father...

## **SIXTH STATION**

### **Veronica wipes the face of Jesus**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

*Symbol – Book*

The genuine love hidden in our hearts is like a good book, which is always on our shelf but never read, or like a letter, which is written but not posted, or like an email, which is in draft but never sent. We often claim to love our confreres/family members/friends, but fail to express our love or show any gratitude and appreciation to them. Many a time, we become aware of the value of good friends after we have lost them. Love entails risks. Sadly, human egos hinder the timely expression of true love. Not reading a good book is not discovering its treasures!

Our stop in this sixth station is to recall a moment of love expressed to Jesus in his hour of need. Veronica loved the Lord, and so dares to find a way through which she can express her love for him. In return, the Lord allows his image to be imprinted as a seal upon her heart. Even as she spent few moments in the service of the Lord, she dared to risk her life. In the light of Veronica’s love, we may ask: how do we express our love and kindness to our brothers and sisters in need? Are we able to welcome strangers and extend small acts of hospitality? Do we respect and recognize the hard work of our employees? As we reflect on the symbol of a book, let us turn the pages of our lives and recall those people whom we have failed to show any deed of kindness and love in their hour of need. We pause to reflect.

Hail Mary...

## **SEVENTH STATION**

### **Jesus falls for the second time**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

#### *Symbol – Stones*

When Jesus fell to the ground, besides the sand, the other things that he embraced were the stones. The use of stones can be constructive as well as destructive. We can build bridges with stones as well as walls; build houses for our safety as well as make boundaries to keep others outside. Stones are strong, enduring, stable and connected to the ground (cf. Mt 7:24-25; 16:18), however they can be thrown hard at others in condemnation (cf. Jn 8:5).

At his second fall, Jesus takes the support of the stones to get up and continue his journey of the cross. He could have thrown the same stones at his enemies in self-defense. However, he chose love over hatred, forgiveness over anger, compassion over evil. Often, the greatness of people lies in the fact that they build great monuments from the very stones thrown at them. To build our lives with stones thrown at us and refrain from throwing stones at others in judgment is a lifelong struggle. We need courage and empathy. As we reflect on the symbol of the stone, let us pray for those who have suffered and still suffer because of human hard heartedness, indifference and intolerance, exclusion and marginalization. We pause to reflect.

Our Father...

## **EIGHTH STATION**

### **Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

#### *Symbol – Flowers*

Jesus, while carrying the heavy weight of the cross is followed by the women of Jerusalem. Being faithful followers, they radiate the fragrance received from Jesus during his public ministry. Every year, the end of Lenten season almost coincides with the dawn of the spring. With the coming of spring, the earth is reawakened with flower buds, blossoms, wildflowers, green and lush meadows and lawns. Beginning with Easter, we use flowers once again. In fact, flowers play a vital role in human lives. They are used both on happy and painful occasions, whether decorating the altar or adorning the grave. A flower draws people to its beauty and spreads its fragrance. It gives its essence or “pollen” to the bee and becomes its source of nourishment.

Our stop in this eighth station recalls the accompanying presence of women, who were beating their breasts and wailing for Jesus (cf. Lk 23:27). The women always followed and cared for Jesus during his public ministry with their resources (cf. Lk 8:2-3); now

they do so during his final journey to the cross; and they will witness his death too (cf. Lk 23:49). In response, Jesus though bruised and tired, turns to them and warns them about the future events by a prophetic judgment (cf. Lk 23:28-31). As we reflect on the symbolism of the flower, we may ask: how do we treat women in our families and society? Do we recognize that men and women are complementary in the giftedness of their human nature? What are the unique gifts and resources that they bring for evangelization? Is discipleship of equals a reality? Appreciating all they are and all they do, we pray for the religious women who work steadfastly to actualize the reign of God through their apostolates. We pause to reflect.  
Hail Mary...

### **NINTH STATION** **Jesus falls for the third time**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

#### *Symbol – Thorns*

On his third fall, Jesus kisses the shrubs and thorns on the ground. Even though the Passion Stories do not account for any of his falls, the reader can imagine the risky and dangerous path filled with stones, shrubs and thorns that could have caused his eventual fall. During his Roman trial, Jesus was already crowned with a crown of thorns (cf. Jn 19:2). When he came out wearing the crown and the purple robe, he was ironically presented as a king. Even though the crown of thorns on his head is meant to ridicule him, it proclaims loudly his royalty that people fail to recognize. If not in reality, at least symbolically, his opponents accept Jesus as the true king.

At this ninth station, what do these shrubs and thorns tell us? Thorns prick people's feet and hands and cause pain. Perhaps we become like those who are responsible for the fall of others. In our personal and ministerial life, we might see our confreres and laity as our opponents rather than collaborators. Jealousy and prejudice ruin our intercultural life and mission rather than enriching it. Instead of rejoicing at the success of others, we may have celebrated their downfall and failures. As we reflect on thorns, can we resolve to support the people around us rather than bringing them down? We pray for all people of goodwill and generous benefactors, who constantly support us despite their inconveniences. We pause to reflect.

Our Father...

### **TENTH STATION** **Jesus is stripped of his garments**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

### *Symbol – Clothes*

Clothes are one of the basic necessities of life. In the Bible, clothes symbolize human dignity. The disobedient act of our first parents made them realize they were naked, since their sin marked their fall from God's grace (cf. Gen 3:7). The feeling of insecurity before God made them cover themselves with leaves, before they were driven away from the paradise. In fact, the nakedness of the human body in its purest sense is the stainless self that one receives at his birth. Clothes cover the human body, but beneath them, the degradation of the sanctity of that body occurs in many ways, both in one's personal living spaces and in public arenas. Often, failing to clothe in a dignified manner leads to compromise of modesty, forgetting that every person is the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 3:16).

At this tenth station, the stripping of Jesus before his crucifixion reveals how the physical body and the nakedness of an innocent man were laid bare to his enemies and passersby. His clothes become the spoils of the executioners who cast lots for their possession (cf. Lk 23:34; Jn 19:23-24). It is unfortunate that the one who respected and valued all humans equally, one who touched and healed the sickly and suffering bodies, and one who allowed them to touch the hem of his garment, lies helpless deprived of his garments. A few days before, when he entered Jerusalem, the disciples had thrown their cloaks on the colt and people had thrown their clothes on the road to welcome him (cf. Lk 19:35-36). Alas! Now the soldiers dispossess him of his last earthly possessions. As we reflect on the symbol of clothes, let us pray for the conversion of those who trade human bodies for physical pleasures, abuse and monetary interests that they may become aware of the sanctity of the human body and uphold equal dignity and freedom for all. We pause to reflect.

Hail Mary...

## **ELEVENTH STATION** **Jesus is nailed to the Cross**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

### *Symbol – Nails*

The torture of crucifixion begins with nailing. Here the nails do not divide but unite. They become the medium through which the cross and the crucified are bound together. They not only become the source of pain, but also unite Jesus to the cross. Holding him painfully onto the two wooden beams, they make him feel, while lifted, the full weight of his body. The huge nails eventually cause the flow of blood from his body, draining every ounce of his strength. The nails leave the marks of his wounds and those scars become the signs of recognition to Thomas, who refused to believe in the Risen Lord.

At this eleventh station that recalls the brutal act of nailing, we become aware of our human tendencies and sinful ways that drain life from others. Malicious intents and acts

divide families and communities, and cause disunity and fragmentation of the Church at large. In today's world of social media, troll armies destroy the image and dignity of people in order to nail them for every single mistake of their real life, while spewing hatred and offering no room for forgiveness. As we reflect on nails, we pray for the victims of every type of abuse (online or offline), who endure the pain of shame and guilt, and suffer from issues of mental health. We pause to reflect.  
Our Father...

## **TWELFTH STATION** **Jesus dies on the Cross**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

### *Symbol – Bread and Wine*

Giving of gifts is symbolic of love. Throughout history, great lovers have presented to their beloved the most beautiful and expensive gifts they could afford, so that their love remains immortalized. We offer gifts to those we love and those who are important to us. Although we do not count the cost of gifts, there is still some kind of selfishness in our human love. We love others expecting them to love us in return. Despite all goodness, there lies always a fear of infidelity and mistrust. Hence, in gift-giving there is an implicit bargain of love that takes place between people.

At this twelfth station, Jesus offers himself for us. His body is broken for us and his blood is shed for us. Laying down one's life is the greatest sign of love for one's friends (cf. Jn 15:13). Since this sacrificial love is unconditional, it does not expect anything in return. The death on the cross is the supreme example of total and selfless love. The night before his death, by taking bread and wine into his hands during the meal, he left behind a memorial to be celebrated by his disciples: "Do this in memory of me" (cf. Lk 22:19). The grains and grapes are crushed before they are made bread and wine for our use. Every Eucharist that we celebrate with these gifts is a memorial of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ and also an invitation to make our lives sacrificial in service of others. As we reflect on the gifts of bread and wine, we thank God for the gift of Eucharist that nourishes and sustains missionary communities and consecrated life. We pause to reflect.  
Hail Mary...

## **THIRTEENTH STATION** **Jesus is taken down from the Cross**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

### *Symbol – Medal*

At the end of one's study as a mark of recognition, a certificate or diploma is presented to the student to honor his academic accomplishment. The winners in a sports event receive

medals as a sign of their victory or participation. Be it a medal or a certificate, it values the blood, sweat and tears that an athlete or achiever puts into attaining something excellent that seemed impossible initially. Talking about his reward, St. Paul says, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on awaits me the crown of righteousness" (2 Tim 4:7).

At this thirteenth station, we reflect on Jesus' fulfillment of God's mission. From his prophetic manifesto of the kingdom ministry (cf. Lk 4:18-19) until his final words, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit" (Lk 23:46), he labored hard to reveal God's love for people. And now having completed or perfected the divine mission, his reward awaits him. In human terms, the only reward that he receives at this moment is to lay his head on the lap of his beloved mother and rest. It is a moment of pure love and affection between a mother and her child that transcends any human image or sculpture. In the mission of her son, Mary walked by faith and not by sight. So she understands the redemptive meaning of this moment. She who knew the true identity of her son at his conception does not abandon him after his death but rather receives him in her maternal bosom. As we reflect on the symbol of a medal, let us pray for all those who have lost hope in their lives, and for prisoners that they may realize that there is always a second chance to make their life count! We pause to reflect.

Our Father...

## **FOURTEENTH STATION**

### **Jesus is laid in the tomb**

*Leader:* We adore you, O Christ, and bless you.

*All:* Because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world.

#### *Symbol – Seed*

A seed is a mystery unto itself. It contains both beginning and end, life and death. Small in size yet it can grow into a mighty tree. A single seed can be a source of thousands of seeds and grains, even a forest. It can be stored for many years but when sowed, it brings forth life in no time. Apparently, seed is nothing to a naked eye, yet everything to its sower. Knowing the fruitfulness of a solitary seed, Jesus said, "...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (Jn 12:24).

At this fourteenth and final pause, we reflect on Jesus' burial as sowing the seed. The rock-hewn tomb is the new ground where this seed would be placed. While explaining the parable of the sower, he referred to the seed as the Word of God (cf. Mk 4:14) sown in four types of soil. It is lost in three soils but bears fruit in one. Besides the quality of the soil, the parable also underlines the generosity of God, who continues sowing despite the nature of the soil, be it arid, rocky or fertile. Jesus is the life-giving seed who lies buried in the tomb! The hostility of his enemies cannot stop him from sprouting or rising from the dead even though the tomb is sealed and guarded! Jesus, the Eternal Word, can sprout in our human hearts if only we allow the seed of his Word to be sown and take root in us. As we reflect on the symbol of a seed that dies in order to rise, we

pray for missionaries who labor tirelessly to spread the Gospel in different and difficult parts of the world, where it is not preached or insufficiently preached. We pause to reflect. Hail Mary...

*Concluding Thoughts*

With these fourteen stations, our symbolic journey comes to an end. However, the story of Jesus' passion and death does not end life, rather it makes a way to new life. The gloom of suffering and dying will soon turn into the joy of resurrection, where pain will be wiped away and the renewed creation will rejoice. Good Friday is a day of darkness but it is not the last word in the story. The last word is Easter, the triumph of Life, the victory of Good over evil.

*Let us pray*

Lord Jesus, tortured and crucified,  
we pray that these fourteen symbols  
that we have used and meditated on in our journey of the cross  
teach us to respect and value our common home,  
to be kind and merciful to our suffering brothers and sisters,  
and to remain steadfast and faithful in following you  
today and every day of our life.  
Amen.

*Naveen Rebello, SVD*

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