



svd brothers
FORUM

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our CALL to be **POOR**

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(SVD Brothers Forum Supervisor)

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SVD BROTHERS FORUM is a digital forum written by its readers. On behalf of its Publisher, Fr. Rogelio Bag-ao, SVD-PHS Provincial Superior, we asked the member of the Arnoldus Family to reply to the questions below. Our theme is the following: VOW OF POVERTY

- 1. How does my lifestyle manifest the vow of poverty?*
- 2. How does poverty fit into my relationship with Christ?*
- 3. How does the vow of poverty support my missionary freedom?*

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FOREWORD

Br. Darwin Loro

(SVD Brothers Forum Supervisor)

St. Arnold Janssen set an example for Divine Word Missionaries to follow. He was the epitome of a true missionary. He was willing to sacrifice to help others. His untiring love for the mission moved people to work all over the world in building God's Kingdom. Arnold followed Jesus, who modeled what it meant to walk as He walked.



The religious missionary vocation is not free from worldly allurements. Embracing Religious Life is a calling that needs constant discernment. The vow of poverty requires simplicity of lifestyle and commitment to follow the will of God. The people who have chosen to live simply are those that have found their treasure unknown to many. A great deal of time is needed in soul searching. It can lead to a fulfilling life, genuine freedom, and a joyful heart.

Pope Francis' prayer intention for September revolves around environmentally sustainable lifestyle. Let us adhere to the call to take action. Let us "reflect more on how we eat, consume, travel, or the way we use water, energy, plastics, and many other material goods that is often harmful to the environment." There is no doubt that it is possible to live simply and choose to change for the good of all and for generations to come.

As Divine Word Missionaries, let us be reminded of Jesus who aptly said, "If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples" (Jn 8:31). Let us set the example and heed God's call right now.

Happy 146th Founding Anniversary of the Society of the Divine Word!
"May the heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all."



Image Credit: Br. Mark Paglicawan

WE ARE NOT REALLY POOR!

Fr. William Burt (AUS)

Thank you for invitation to respond to your questions re religious poverty. Rather than answer those questions directly, I would like to make some comments.

When talking about the vow of poverty, it's important to be honest, and in touch with real life.

It is a sign of privilege when a member of a religious congregation says they want to live in poverty. Because in reality, that person knows that they will never be in physical need. They will always be cared for.

In most places where we SVDs work, we are the richest people materially-speaking. We might opt to live simply, but we are fooling ourselves if we think we are poor. We will always get the best medical care available, and we will get a bed in a hospital. We will never go hungry. It's likely that we will have opportunities for expensive studies and travel.

Personally, I believe it would make more sense for us to take a vow of simplicity, which would be expressed by a life-style that is as simple as possible, which reflects a commitment to being undemanding and a commitment to live according to JPIC principles.

The three questions you have put to us, your SVD confreres, are valid.... But I wonder if it would be more valuable if they were put, in a language that could be understood, to ordinary, truly poor people?



THE USEFUL POVERTY

Fr. Xene A. Sanchez (CNG)

How does the vow of poverty support my missionary freedom?

Brother Pirmin Haag was a trained mechanic. With his skill he could have earned a fortune. But he joined the Divine Word Missionaries and chose the Democratic Republic of Congo. He could have worked in the capital Kinshasa and earned much money for the Province. An honest, efficient and good professional were much needed there. But he had chosen to work in a mission 350 kilometers from the capital and opened a shop where clients were much less and most are poor. The Mission House is called Ngondi.

He was already there when I arrived in the 80s until he died and was buried in the same place only a few years ago.

Why? From logistical and financial point of view he could have worked in a more strategic location and gained a lot of money.

Only those who love the vow of poverty and live it may understand. I learned that when he was young he used to visit all the parishes and mission stations to repair everything that broke down: vehicles, electric generators, water pumps, pipelines - imagine what a relief he gives to a missionary hundreds of kilometers away from "civilization". And much more people from the parish would rejoice of his coming and flock to him with broken bicycles, instruments which needed welding, kettles with holes, etc. While Jesus used to welcome people who sought healing, he was overcrowded with those who needed repairs.





Once on the way to our Mission I felt something wrong with my jeep. I got scared getting stuck up. I prayed fervently that I could at least reach Ngondi... there I understood why Bro. Pirmin has opted to stay in that far away Mission of Ngondi. I still remember so many big broken down vehicles along the roads, some bringing merchandize which could spoil. Their salvation was Bro. Pirmin who could repair them. His machine shop can even shape spare parts to help them. Our Mission was a haven of travelers who are on the road for days because of bad roads, bringing goods for the benefit of poor villagers very far away from Kinshasa, the capital. On Mondays there is a phenomenon, people from far away villages who come to the shop with their old batteries to be charged! Brother knew how to charge scores of them at the same time. These will provide light to the people and play music for celebrations.

To show you how talented he was, he constructed a dam that provided electricity to run the machine and carpentry shops, the retreat-guest house and community. Then he collected the metal left-overs and used them to construct classrooms and playgrounds for children. He had lots of benefactors but he lived very simple life. I could not tell you how much he helped confreres with their projects because he was very discreet. I had benefited wheelbarrows, spades, machetes and agricultural materials. "The more you give, the more you receive" – the secret of poverty.

But most of all, in our Mission Ngondi, we sense the real presence of God! Brother Pirmin with Brother Herman Helm were our spiritual twin engines generating contagious nearness to the Lord and authentic prayer life.



LIVE WITH THEM!

Br. Franciskus Ballo, (IDE)

I come from a simple family where I was taught the value of responsibility. This led me to live the vow of poverty with love and passion in the spirit of His calling.

So far, I fully live out my vow of poverty. Simple lifestyle (dress and attitude), not demanding much if there are shortages, reporting and recording my income (monthly allowance and gift from families and friends/benefactors) faithfully and responsibly. Pushed by the motivation “following Christ to be his servant for the poor”, I have a heart for defending the rights of the poor and marginalized in simple steps.

I don't easily blame our confreres who committed mistakes. I visit the sick confreres and converse with them. “Living and feeling” with the people, who are poor, is seen as a part of God's involvement in my missionary life. By doing this, I feel happy and inspired to become poor like Christ who was poor.

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“Our life of poverty acquires its deeper meaning and value when it leads us to the poverty of spirit.....

Poverty as lived by Christ demands of us solidarity with the poor and oppressed.” (Cons. 208-209). This kind of life becomes the foundation of my evangelical poverty of Christ.

One thing that becomes my weakness and failure in living out this vow of poverty is the lack of wisdom and planning. In our Constitution 212.8, the main failings against evangelical poverty are stated. These points needed my attention and actions in order to avoid selfishness. Through this reflection, I wish to change my life and faithfully follow Christ who is poor and dedicate my life for mission.

IN SUPPORT FOR MISSIONARY FREEDOM

Paulino “Br. Paul” Bongcaras y Matheu, (PHS)

I am happy and grateful when I recall my formation and active missionary years in the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) because my needs for contribution and connection were met.



1. One Year Postulancy and Two Years in Novitiate

Let me share my happy one-year postulancy and two-year novitiate in the spirit of my having joined the brotherhood in the SVD inspired by Matthew 25:40 and the simple lifestyle of the down-to-earth St. Francis of Assisi. (Matthew 25:40 (NIV): “The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”)

I remember my having submitted all that I had to my saintly and ideal Postulant Director Fr. Walter Joyce and Novice Master Fr. Vicente Braganza. I have survived “always asking for a specific amount” whenever I went out for studies and outreach activities in the slums, jails, and other poor areas in Metro Manila in the late 60s.

2. Nine Years as a Brother in Temporary Vows

I was happy and grateful for my nine years as a Brother in Temporary Vows, even with just a few pesos as monthly allowance when I served as a guidance counsellor and teacher at the University of San Carlos and director of the Cebu Children’s Community Kitchen (the first home for street children in Cebu City). There were many other involvements related to helping the poorest meet their needs for education and others.

It was the same way of life when I was one of the three pioneer missionaries in Siargao Island in Mindanao, as a teacher and planning assistant to the president at Divine Word University of Tacloban, as assistant to the executive director of DWEA (Divine Word Educational Association), and as planning officer and teacher at Divine Word College of Laoag, all in the 70s.



3. Brother in Perpetual Vows since June 1977

The application of my vowed life as a perpetually professed Religious Missionary Brother has continuously been enriched in the context of the different mission stations and situations where I was assigned. My being poor in spirit and the practical use of resources in the Philippines and other countries has repeatedly been purified by my regular acquaintance with the poorest – the least, the last, and the lost.

I was humbled when I saw the barefooted Papua New Guineans in shorts and G-strings at my first landing in Papua New Guinea in 1977. I shamefully removed my Barong Tagalog (Philippine formal attire) at the tarmac because I felt out of place.

When I surrendered my unused money to Brother Treasurer Steve Pardy, he said,

“Keep it...use it for your mission...you are the only one doing this here.” When I saw many SVDs running trade stores to support their missionary activities and when I heard the SVD Visitor from Rome say, “SVDs in Papua New Guinea are rugged individuals,” I musically tuned my lifestyle in order to survive. I then bought many musical instruments and organized around 15 music bands in PNG.

I was always a teacher from the elementary to university levels in Papua New Guinea, in both private and government Institutions. To support my many other ministries with children, youth and adults, I used the many donations and salaries received from government and private agencies. Some money was shared with other SVD missionaries in need of financial support.

All that I have been doing in relation to reaching out to the poor began 51 years ago when Fr. Magdaleno Fabiosa baptized me as one of the “friends of the poor and the marginalized.” In applying my vow of poverty and the SVD constitution to “follow the intention of the donor,” all that I have are fairly being used to support the mission of “an outreach ministry for the poorest” – the least, the last, and the lost. They are the children and families living on the sidewalks and dumpsites, the victims and survivors of prostitution and human trafficking, the recovering drug addicts and other forms of addiction, PLHIVs or persons living of HIV, prisoners (now called PDLs or persons deprived of liberty) and others.

MISSIONARY STABILITY

Br. Stephen Bonsu (GHA)



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1. How does my lifestyle manifest the vow of poverty?

The vow of poverty means holding all things in common within a religious community. In other words, we as individuals do not own one single thing. Everything I have, including the shirt on my back, belongs to the community. My lifestyle manifests the vow of poverty when an individual professed the vow of poverty, he willingly renounces his personal possessions and engage in communal sharing of resources. In the same line, my life rebukes acceptance of personal gain such as profit from labour. In other words, my life embraces a life of material destitution and simplicity of lifestyle. Also, my lifestyle is defined by detachment of worldly possessions and earthly pleasures. My lifestyle prevents from safeguarding the abuses of wealth and property. The vow of poverty usually will not mean living in destitution, although there are some religious men and women who see living that way as the best way to follow Christ and be in solidarity with the poor. Living simply and not having personal property, but holding everything in common, are bases of the vow of poverty.

2. How does poverty fit into my relationship with Christ?

Mark 10:28-30 gives the idea of being imitators of Jesus Christ. From this perspective, the vow of poverty fits into the relationship with Christ by caring for the poor and the needy. By doing so, my life imitates Christ who lives the life of poverty. The vows of poverty deepens my faith in Christ and love for His word. This vow enables me to focus on the entire being of God and His people. A religious vow of poverty is meant to be a witness, not a legal obligation. And the vow of poverty is a sign that I choose to live with less for the good of others, which can be a witness against the consumerism of society. It is not something I impose on others; it's a witness.

3. How does the vow of poverty support my missionary freedom?

The vow of poverty supports my missionary freedom by enabling me to create missionary stability in the worship and service of God and His people. Thus I am free to focus on relationship and service of missionary life. It helps me to go wherever I am needed. This availability for mission enhances my trust, and abandonment in following the footsteps and the lifestyle of Jesus. It enables me to be responsible steward of the goods of the earth. I can't rely on an endowment to support me. I can have endowments to support the formation of the young and care for the sick and to support an apostolate, but for my personal life I can only live off alms and just remuneration for my work.

As a member of SVD I made the spiritual exercises and has responded to the invitation of Christ to be his companion and to follow him in his ways. And it's Christ compassionate for the poor, Christ living poorly, simply, giving what he has to the poor. As a member of SVD I made the spiritual exercises and has responded to the invitation of Christ to be his companion and to follow him in his ways. And it's Christ compassionate for the poor, Christ living poorly, simply, giving what he has to the poor.



Image Credit: Br. Mark Paglicawan

GRATEFUL WITH WHAT I RECEIVE

Br. Carlos Ferrada, (GEN)

When I decided to join the SVD I gave up my legal profession and the chance to earn good money for myself. I wanted to follow Jesus of Nazareth in a radical way. For this reason, in my formation I made a couple of decisions to reinforce my commitment that I keep till now in the Generalate in Rome, the first was never to ask for money from family and friends, and the second, to always be happy with all kinds of food and facilities that the Society offered me. I learned to be grateful and happy with God's Providence, always trusting in him as provider of all that I could need. During the formation time, I always handled small money, but I felt rich for all that I received.



Image Credit: Freepik.com

I did not have a cellphone, neither I had a nice and fancy clothe. The formation house in Cordoba Argentina was in a very poor neighborhood, it was a small house, and we had to share the small rooms and one bathroom. We used to ride the bicycle to go to the Institute of Theology, the route was not short and very dangerous.

At the moment that I decided to be a religious Brother, I was conscious that I will not receive mass stipends nor mass intentions. When I arrived to the Southern Philippines (PHS is a very generous province with its members), I could feel the consequences of my decision. I received my monthly allowance (there are other kind of allowances that we receive from the province once a year: cloth, birthday, vacation, Christmas gift, annual retreat), which at that time was US50, and I had to manage myself with that small money. I noticed the difference with my priestly confreres. Father Florante Camacho used to call those who were money lovers the death squad. Confreres that kept busy celebrating masses everywhere and not submitting to the communities their stipends. Later you can see these confreres having a very lavish lifestyle, buying very expensive gadgets and travelling all around.

I receive everything from the SVD and send back to the community whatever money I could receive. And because I trust Providence, I have never saved money for my home vacations or other purposes. What I have I share with others, especially with those who cannot return it to you later. And I've never regretted doing it. The vow of poverty helps me to trust in the Divine Providence and always be happy and grateful with what I receive: good and abundant food, pocket money, facilities, encounters, experiences, trips, etc. Dear God has always been very generous with me, I cannot complain.



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BROTHERS AND MASS STIPENDS

Br. Bela Lanyi (PHS)

All the sixteen confreres here in the St. Michael SVD Community of Cebu City, except for a retired confrere, are employed by a school. Through external Holy Masses, our priest confreres earn stipends. However, they put their stipend in envelopes and then, they cast these envelopes in the community support box. Amounts found in the box will be then divided in seventeen parts among the confreres assigned to this community.

With the seventeenth part, we support guest speaker missionaries. Through the envelopes, honesty can be easily checked and proven. In this way, the Brothers also receive money from the stipends which the Fathers earned—since with the Brothers' outside services hardly any earning might be connected.

Our weekly medical checkup in this community also serves the vow of poverty.

So that we can care for our health better. I can hardly forget the painful feeling of an SVD Brother who conducted a very simple lifestyle but then he caught an „expensive” sickness. Healthy lifestyle also belongs to practices of the vow of poverty.

IDENTITY AND ROLE OF BROTHERS IN THE SVD MISSION

Br. Stephen Domelevo, (GHA)

When the role of the ministerial priesthood is over-emphasized, the other vocation naturally gets sidelined. For instance: The youth will say that Brothers don't celebrate mass. So what you do, I can also do it as a lay person...

Because of the way the Church is structured, clerics enjoy more visibility. The Brothers have no clearly-defined place in the hierarchical pyramid. It appears to many that there is no specific role for brothers in the Church. If the youth will see the brothers involved in Church activities and at the end move together as one community sharing everything together: prayer, meditation and Bible sharing; they will come to realize that their lifestyle is different from other professionals.

I would like to suggest at this point that the formation of young men who approach us to become brothers must be looked at critically. Sending them to study religious education will not at the end help the congregation if they do not have their own profession to demonstrate to the People of God. The professional studies must come before the religious education (Those who have professional training before joining the Society...)

LIFE EXPERIENCE

My own experience teaches me that when I entered the SVD Novitiate at Nkwatia- Kwahu in 1979, because of my professional training in Accounting and Management before and also doing one year religious



education course in Kenya, I was immediately assigned to SVD formation house in Tamale as the house treasurer until 1991. When there was a need to employ a professional manager for the Catholic Book Centre, I was appointed manager from 1991- 1999.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

After attending the Dei Verbum Bible course in Nemi, I have been involved in the Biblical Apostolate in some Churches and with some specific groups in the Archdiocese of Accra: example Catholic Charismatic Renewal and St. Paul Parish in Kpehe in Accra till date.

I was Brother Formation director and also Vocation Director for some years, I represented the SVD Brothers in Africa during a meeting in Brazil and also in Congo. I also participated in the meeting on Prophetic Dialogue organized by the Society in Rome. Brothers should be able to function as priestly, prophetic, and kingly witnesses to Christ in the world,

and the task to be a leaven for the Gospel can rightly be called part of our natural state as well as part of our task in the world as recommended by writings of the Council Fathers in Lumen Gentium.

Based on the reflections of the Second Vatican Council: A person effectively witnessing for Christ in the world, is no less a facilitator than a person serving within the walls of a faith community. Brothers are called to serve in an ordinary manner and with spiritual witness to what everybody does in a normal manner. Our identity therefore remains religious. Our Name is our Mission.

I TRY TO BE IN DEPENDENCY

Br. Albert Erasimy (IDE)

Actually, I would submit this question about the vow of poverty rather to a committee of the Generalate. But I am also very glad that you brought up this topic. I only want to comment on the first point. As best I can, I still behave as I learned in the novitiate a few decades ago: I try to be in a dependency where I have to ask so that a wish of mine be fulfilled. I also try to make no extra requests. I also do my best to conscientiously carry out the work entrusted to me.

MY CASH BOOK

Br. Gabriel Wangak (IDE)

This topic is closely related to the things that we possess, such as clothes, books, money, vehicles, etc. The SVD Constitutions speak about poverty, in particular about financial matters, but in practice it is problematical. If a confrere breaks his vow of poverty, his transgression isn't as harshly treated as that of someone who breaks his vows of chastity.

Below are several points regarding the vow of poverty that I regard as important.

1. Since my days in formation until the present, I have always maintained a personal cash book, even though I have never been asked by a superior to give a financial report.
2. I do not have a personal car. I use a motorbike owned by the Society.
3. I have made a written statement advising that a bank account in my name is the property of the Society, for mission work.
4. I am happy living with what I have. I don't feel restricted. I am free to go wherever I am asked to go, confident that my needs will always be met.



INTERNALLY, WE ARE POOR

Br. Eugenio Orog, (PHC)



I am 70 years old as of this writing and sick with diabetes. Thanks for the supportiveness of the Society through medicines and hospitalization. Thus I can still work as spiritual director of seminarians. Many years ago, as a formator, I had to process a candidate with this mindset: "We have a roof on our head, clothes on our body, and regular food at the table, how can we profess the vow of poverty?" So some people would prefer to call this vow as detachment. At least closer to the radical mandate of Jesus to the rich young man: Go and sell all that you have give that money to the poor". (Mk 10:21)

Externally we may be that poor, but internally we are. And this can be very demanding behaviorally. For we possess nothing and nothing should be possessing us. From this Christian context it is not an obligation in justice, an ascetical challenge or a philosophical ideal.

It is the root of community life among the people who have become a "family" not by blood, or ethnicity or any other ties except those of faith and love. In consequence our life becomes a witness to: (a) simplicity and (b) generous sharing.

Simplicity is that people are more important than material things. We remove what is superfluous and focus what is essential and necessary. No hoarding. No need to be always upbeat like a fashionable cellphone. Never mind if its "Jurassic" as long it can be used for contacting. This is what matters most. Keeping always in mind that rendering an excellent service in a simple lifestyle must always be an ideal.

A generous sharing of material possessions is the self - giving to others. During the time of our Founder in our Motherhouse (Steyl) some residents gave up room and beds in favor of the excess retreatants. And they slept then at the attic.

As a Brothers we don't have that much donors of money or material goods. But we have time and talent for others. As we focus more on the needs of others and less on ourselves we permeate in our community that apostolic availability.

Missionary freedom suffers because we cannot distinguish need from want. Moreover, we tend to compare ourselves to others. I believe while vow of poverty is a communal discipline the living out of it is personal. No comparing please! This can only be possible when we are rooted in Jesus-the Divine Word.



Image Credit: Freepik.com

POVERTY IS FASCINATING

Br. Franz Schneider, (GER)

I want to share my thoughts. Whether you put it in the "forum" or not, that's up to you. The topic for today's forum prompts me to first read the Constitutions on the Vow of Poverty. I took it from my bookshelf, opened it and was surprised at what was in there: how I should behave and how we should use it.

These days I noticed an article in our Catholic media with the title: "Future of the monasteries". This article is about young applicants and their expectations.

Obedience is considered a problem, as celibacy as well. But poverty, on the other hand, is considered fascinating and worth emulating. Simple lifestyle, simple life, environmentally conscious living, sustainability, these are current issues today. When listing up these things, it is also about my personal attitude, but also about the community in which I live. Leave your car behind, take your bike or walk. Turn the penny around twice before spending it. Be careful when buying new clothes. We're fine, far too well. There are poorer people than us and they have to live even simpler. What do we have on the table? Sometimes it literally bends. This is how our "poor life" corresponds, or at least it should be, today's trend: modesty, sustainability, responsibility for the next generation.

POOR FOR CHRIST

Br. Noel Tecson (PHS)

Relationship with Christ and Commitment

The religious vows in general, and the vow of poverty in particular, fitted very well with my relationship with Christ. Taking the religious vows in 1977, after two years of novitiate, had me, with intent, lived a life of relationship with Christ. The vows, as instruments of God's grace, guided me to live a life focused on Christ. Christ became the focus of my life as I tried to internalize the vows through my prayers, relations, and lifestyle. Prior to this, my relationship with Christ was based on a faith constructed by the stories and the religious practices of my Catholic parents. Those stories were filled with magical and powerful images of God. My faith relationship with Christ was one of dependence and fear of God. The relationship was a father and child relationship. The focus was building character and good conduct. When I took my first vows in 1977, Christ was a God who has invited me to a relationship of commitment to Him and to His Mission. The images of magic and power were scarcely present, if any. The images involved were one of commitment. This was what made the taking of the vows a "fit" to a relationship with Christ: That the public pronouncement of the vows was enabled by my commitment to Christ.

That commitment, borne of faith and prayerful discernment, enabled me to take the vows which in turn sustained my committed relationship with Him. Because of the fit between the two, I lived through the challenges and joys of a vowed life.

My Experiences and Thoughts on the Vow of Poverty

The vow of poverty reminds me of the many ways I had tried to be and to live poor. One can be poor in terms of knowledge, money, time, personal availability and or service to others. One memory I had in relation to the vow of poverty was when I told my mother in 1977 not to send me any more monthly allowance as I was already receiving a monthly allowance (P125?) from the society.





Image Credit: Freepik.com

This bit of memory amuses me in so far as it revealed some sense, however limited or literal it may be, of my understanding of the vow of poverty then. Over time many things had changed. At times I would have money that's more than what I needed and it had turned into an opportunity to give or share. There was a couple of years when I would give half of my monthly SVD allowance to my parents. Giving and sharing talents, time, knowledge as well as little money had also found many other opportunities for me as I grew older physically and spiritually.

A sobering moment of encounter with poverty happened in my recent work at a rehabilitation facility in Cebu City. Losing rationality in thinking and feeling to chemical dependence or to mental illness is an extreme form of poverty. Add to that the givens of losing work, losing family, and losing a normal life of being in the world as consequences. That encounter recalled for me an academic question on sanity and humanity: When a person loses his sanity, is he still human? For it was once said that what makes us human is our being rational. As I went through my practice in that facility, I took solace on the faith and hope that recovery offers through human care, faith, and science.

Upon reflections, I realized that to be poor for the sake of being poor is just mere deprivation. My vowed life is a commitment not to poverty but to being poor for the sake of Christ and His Kingdom. Being poor in Christ reminds me thus of the Scripture texts in which Jesus said something about having no bread, no bag, no extra tunic for the journey (Mark 6:9); you will always have the poor with you (Matthew 6:11), if you love those that love you back what good is it? (Luke 6:32) and; whatever you do to the least of these My brethren you are doing it to Me (Matthew 25:40). The fulfillment of the Kingdom of God does not depend on the availability of material things as much as on the trust and dependability I put in Christ.



Image Credit: Br. Mark Paglicawan

WHEN THE POOR ENTER MY LIFE

Br. Jose Amaro, (ESP)

I think that it is only possible to live the vow of poverty when I establish and cultivate relationships of proximity and solidarity with the poor. To be poor is not to refrain from having goods and things but it is to share them with the poor, so that things have a meaning and are useful. This is the way I live and express my vow of poverty. To say it in another way: every time I allow the poor to enter into my life and I try that my life has a meaning in their lives; when I communicate with them and I care for them and I give a little bit of myself to them, I become one of them; when I call them by their name and I bring them to my conversations and preoccupations; when I speak to them and I pay attention to

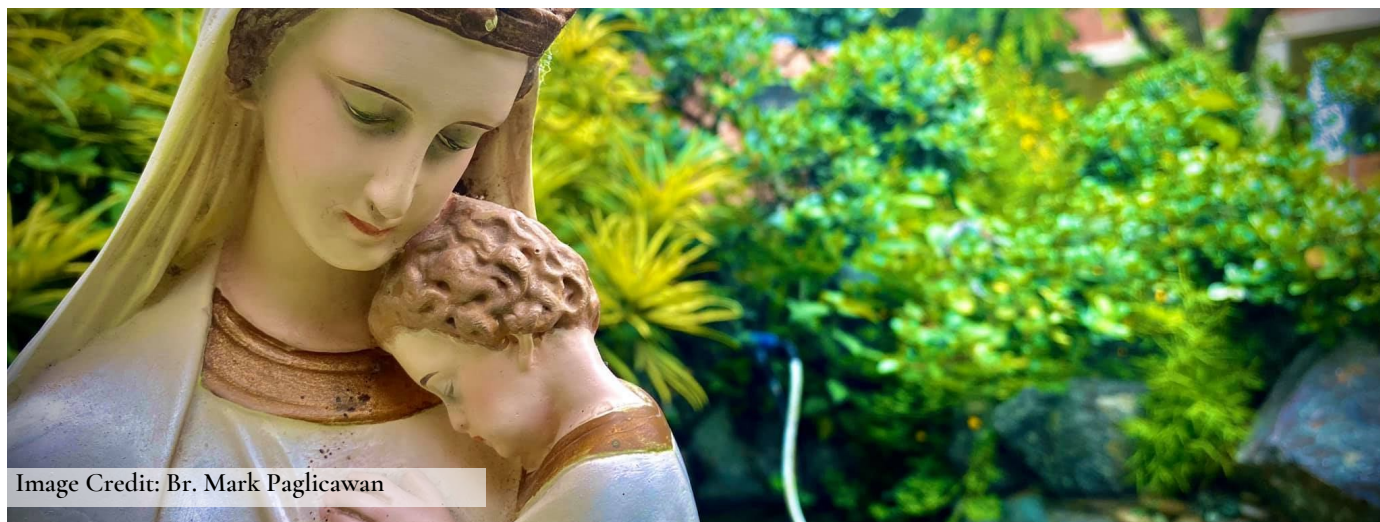
them, I am living and expressing my vow of poverty. To profess the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience it is not so difficult; what is challenging is to live them in daily life in a consistent manner. We have approached the vow of poverty from different points of view and lived it in different manners throughout the ages. Nowadays I ask myself: Is there a vow of poverty because there are poor? Or the vow of poverty justifies by itself?

I can only understand it because there are poor in our society. I think it has been understood and approached in a very theoretical manner but in my opinion the vow of poverty can only be understood and appreciated

from a concrete attitude of detachment from things and a sober way of living, the sharing with others and the renunciation to power. Power and poverty cannot match. If I get attached to goods and do not share them with the others in need, I am not living the vow of poverty. As religious I try to combine both, sharing and power in active voice. But my vow demands much more: that I share my time, my knowledge, my affection, and faith with others.

TAKE SPIRITUAL VALUES!

Br. Juan Daton, (BOL)



Christ was a poor person. He had nothing. He was born in a poor manger and his holy Mother Mary let him sleep in a simple cradle. His life lasted 33 years. It wasn't much, not less. He went out to preach without money, without food, without a car, without a laptop and without a cell phone. He didn't have a fancy kennel to bow his head except for a night's sleep. He had nothing modern about his life. He lived in an age without technology. What he had were the 12 disciples who accompanied him day and night, on foot going out to preach the Good News in Galilee and around him. He ate and drank what he had. Such was the life of Jesus. Thus he was poor in material sense but rich in spiritual sense because God's Holy Spirit is upon Him. Luckily, I was born when there was already a radio, wooden boats, helicopters, light airplanes, black and white television. Mail existed to send letters and parcels. There were already clothes, pants and simple houses to sleep in. In my childhood, I saw several European missionaries coming to visit my community on foot. They celebrated the sacraments with my community. They came bringing sweets to give to the children, and medicines for the sick. They were rich people from Europe, but they showed me a simple religious and missionary life so rich, so sweet in my experience, in my path and my religious life. I come from a simple family. My parents are farmers. My dad, he went to work abroad for several years to be able to bring hot bread for the family. During the years, without a father, my mother had to be a father and a mother at the same time. For us, sons and daughters. Since I was a child, my parents taught us to be good people. Be brave and proud of what we have. They taught me to repair, to pray, to go to church and participate in the neighborhood when there were prayers. I learned to live with what there is. Suffering is a passion of my life because Christ is the head of my religious life. He is an infinite example. He is my leader who leads me to drop everything material. Christ teaches me to take the spiritual, the most important thing in my life.

There are too many people who worry about being hour and hour in front of a computer, they worry so much about money, they worry about buying new cars of new brands, they worry about traveling all over the world. They worry about being richer people within the congregation. They care to show us that they come from the richest countries in the world. They care about showing us that they work with the richest people in the world. They worry about showing us their academic qualifications, manipulating that they had to study hidden in their room between four walls. They worry about what they eat and drink soon. But Christ himself did not care about anything: not about cars, not about money, not about a luxurious house, etc. The vow of poverty leads me to reflect that religious life is a richer life without worrying about the secular things of the world. I go to work taking public transport. The question: What does Jesus want from me? What do I do so that Christ's vow of poverty penetrates my depth? I am a free person to express my vow of poverty. The vow of poverty does not create in me a person rich in material sense but rich in spiritual sense. Being present in prayer, the Eucharist, and in retreat and other spiritual exercises leads me to participate in the poverty of Christ himself. To cross my desert world, to live simple, to be transparent in the use of the goods of the congregation and the community. The vow of poverty leads me to be free seeing and helping others in different ways. I put my grain of sand for the people most in need because I am supportive not so that others see me that I am a person of abundance.

I SHARE MY EARNED MONEY

Fr. Adam Wolowicz (URL)

The first thoughts that arise in me after reading this question are the following.

a) I share my earned money with my community. At the same time, I hand them over to someone (the treasurer, supervisor, council) who may not act with them exactly as I would have done myself. Recently, one parish priest from a diocesan parish, where I occasionally helped, asked me to whom he should transfer money for my service: here and now to me, or to my superior. Of course, he probably meant well, but he surprised me a bit, because I believe that the vow of poverty was made by me, and not by the aforementioned priest. So I can give this money to the community, but I can also keep it, against the vow of poverty, and hide it for myself. Leaving me aside from donating this money, it would have deprived me a bit of this particular opportunity to practice my vow of poverty, that is, to give this money completely freely to my community.

b) I am asking for something or an opportunity. This asking is at the same time acknowledging the lack of that thing or possibility.

c) I pay attention to the reduction of expenses, especially where spending more money would be mainly a sign of being rich and would be a desire to confirm your privileged material position to yourself and others.

Having struggled for several months with the inability to physically stay in the area of the Ural Region, of which I am a member, due to the pandemic and the lack of a visa, despite the great hospitality of my confreres in POL, I took very personally the words of Jesus from Luke 9:58: "Foxes have burrows and birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head."

SLEEPING ON THE BOAT...

Br. Blasius Kindo (BRA)

1. How does my lifestyle manifest the vow of poverty?

I live in Regional House (BRA) with three main functions: Regional treasurer, Rector of the Provincial House and Communication Coordinator. In addition to these responsibilities, I am a student of journalism. Despite so many responsibilities, I find myself in a very simple lifestyle, away from my family and my loved ones for a long time, in this way I manifest the vows of poverty. The Regional house offers many facilities. Even then, I have to dedicate a lot in the service such as taking care of the confreres in the hospital, let the food and lodging intact, waiting in queue at the bank, notary, supermarket, going to the fair etc. Without hesitation; pick up the hoe, brush cutter, sickle etc. to dig, clean and plant. Treat the employees with humility and affection. This work requires a lot of sacrifice, patience, and effort. However, my willingness to serve people at any time of the day satisfies me and expresses my vows of poverty. I do not regret for this.



2. How does poverty fit into my relationship with Christ?

The responsibility is great, but solving in a simple and humble way certainly fits my relationship with Jesus. Jesus said to his disciples, "Foxes have their burrows, and the birds of the heavens have their nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to recline his head." (Mt 8:18-22). Being a missionary in the Amazon is a vow of poverty. Several times, I had to sleep on the boat, in the parish hall in a hammock, on the table and on the floor when I visited the communities to the interior places. I accepted food with grateful heart from what the people offered. In the provincial house attend the people promptly at any time means donation and sacrifice. Jesus welcomes the poor and marginalized of society. Looking at the actions performed by the vows of poverty, I say that my relationship fits with Jesus.

3. How does the vow of poverty support my missionary freedom?

The vow of poverty helps me be available in any mission situation. It helps me get off my family, friends and friends. The places where I worked grew a strong friendship with the faithful; but the vow of poverty reminded me of detachment to move on. In addition to detachment from people and families, detachment from work and being available for another job where the Amazon region is in need.



Image Credit: Br. Mark Paglicawan

VOCATIONS OF POVERTY AS A GIFT

Br. Tomas Morus Runesi, (INR)

Talking about the vows of poverty, the first question that arises is "what kind of poverty is lived?" This question challenges the awareness of the will to own goods and accumulate wealth. This question also wants to emphasize that the vow of poverty is not a concept formulated by chance, nor is it a law that is firmly held so that those who violate poverty must be sued. Nor is it a substance that is described dogmatically, analyzed and so on. On the other hand, the vow of poverty is a gift that comes from God. This gift cannot be touched. It is an inner disposition and complete dependence on God. Because the poor life has been lived by God himself while he was with humans in the world. Because it was initiated by God, the vow of poverty is the path to a world of majesty and abundance that cannot be eaten by time, by moths —it is beyond time! Abundance is God's own Kingdom which is available to all where God wills them to be with Him.

For me, the vow of poverty is an ideal life that God intended for me to be able to share with others who are in need. To be with the needy, to be able to experience the lives of those who are poor and marginal. By taking a vow of poverty, I can pay attention to those in need without thinking about the accumulated wealth. Thus, I became poor because I followed Him who left His divinity, His riches, His majesty and even lost Himself. I dare to make a vow because I want to give myself, empty myself to be a place for everyone who is loved and who loves me. Making this vow of poverty, I can give myself and can approach the poor through my concerns such as praying for the poor, helping the poor, feeding people with mental disorders (ODGJ), sharing time, energy, thoughts and initiative to be able to help them.

The vow of poverty has its fruits, namely: being able to live together in community, showing simplicity of life, showing oneself as a useful person for the service of many people, being able to give real testimony to the poor and oppressed that life depends on God and the poor in front of God, then they will have the Kingdom of Heaven. Within the framework of community life, I view poverty as a part of myself. Sense of belonging is the principle in the community life that I live. I feel I belong to what is in the community. Everything that is given to me I will use according to the need. Maintain goods entrusted by the Province such as vehicles for academic purposes. In college life, I share my shortcomings so that it makes my friends happy, especially friends who are financially in need, especially those who live in boarding houses with all their limitations. When you see their smile, is a happiness in itself.



Image Credit: Br. Mark Paglicawan



REPORT OF A MEETING AND READERS' LETTERS

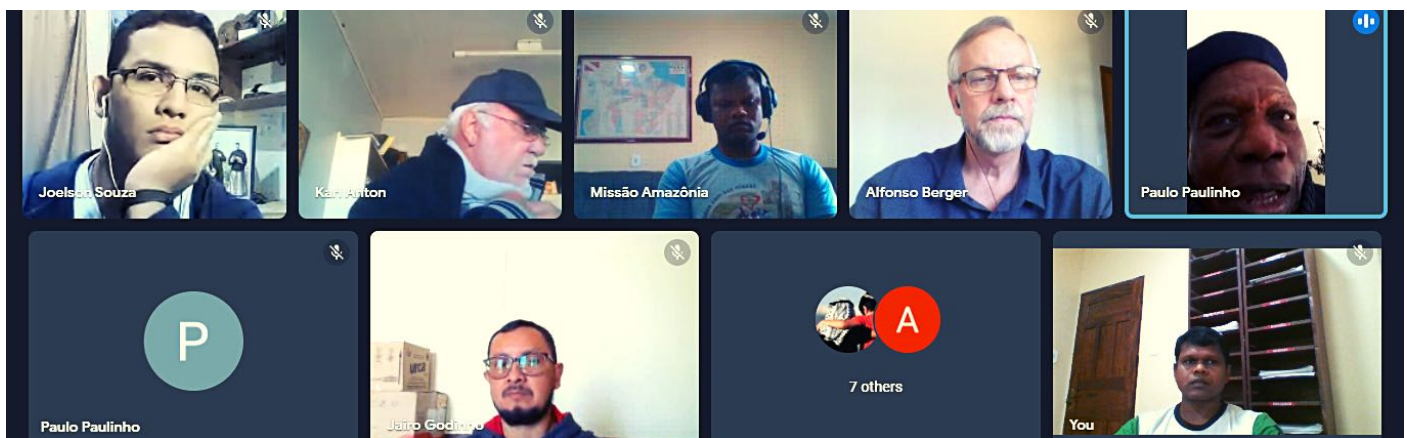
XIX SUBZONAL BROTHERS ASSEMBLY – BRAZIL

Br. Blasius Kindo (BRA)

The Brazil-Subzonal SVD Brothers' assembly took place online, from July 29 to 31 in 2021 in the morning. Approximately twenty confreres participated in the meeting. The assembly began at 9 a.m. with prayer and ended at noon every day. On the first day, provincials and regional of Brazil-Subzonal attended the assembly. After the opening prayer, Fr. João Batista thanked all the Brothers for their work and wished for a good assembly. Pe. Leonardo Gade, Regional of Brazil Amazon Region (BRA), also expressed his words of thanks and said that the Brothers are contributing many things in the region. After the pronouncement of the Provincials and Regional, Bro. Nelson made a brief retrospective of the last meeting that took place in 2019 in Suzano, São Paulo.



After the retrospective, the meeting continued with sharing the life of the brothers. The moment was very useful to know each other, despite the distances and setbacks. The second day began with prayer guided by BRN brothers; we reflected on the prayer 'Our Father in heaven'. Then began the study of the document "Fratelli tutti and relations" which was guided by Ir. Stella Maris Martins, SSPS and Sr. Juliana, SSPS. The sisters brought reflections on interpersonal relationships and self-knowledge with the questions: Who am I? Where am I? Where am I going? During the lecture, several questions and clarifications arose so that the dynamics of the meeting could flow well. Father Ademar, the propaedeutic trainer collaborated in the reflections and clarifications of the study. Brothers Olavo, Paulinho and Alfonso also collaborated in the reflection. The study helped to reflect our existence and responsibility in the mission places. The second day ended with a prayer and thanks to the sisters.



The subjects for the third day were: PFT Training Program, Specialization and Study, Vocation, Brothers Bulletin, Coordinators-Subzone-Province, Trainers and election of the new Subzonal Coordinators of the Brothers for the next three years. After the initial prayer, Fr. Ademar reported the situation of the Clerical and Brothers candidate. He also suggested changing some things in f Brothers' Formation. He expressed his concerns about the religious vocation in Brazil. After the formation subjects, the Brothers elected Brother's Coordinators to the Subzone Brazil. Brother Jairo Godinho was elected as first coordinator, and Brother George Kindo the vice, and Brother Olavo secretary. They scheduled for the next Subzonal Assembly for Brothers, for April 4, 2023, in Curitiba. The Brothers who participated showed joy and satisfaction. Someone said, "It was one of the best assemblies ever held for brother".

REFLECTION ON SVD BROTHERS 2021/2 ISSUE

Br. Franz Schneider (GER)

Yes, I read the last issue. I'll just write down what thoughts came to me. Why do Brothers run away and become clerics within the SVD? How come that others are academically trained, studied theology and despite this, they do not want to get ordained? They remain a Brother who is a layman. Let me look back to the origin of the Brotherhood in the earlier history of the SVD. The Brothers practically assisted the clergy, as the sisters. They did not need any academic training, they were recruited from simple folks. If applicants had a high school diploma, they often persuaded to study theology and become a priests. If they didn't graduate from high school and wanted to be a missionary, they went to the Brothers.

In fact, some confreres admit they did not want to become clerics. After the ordination they continued to study, they had to do or did not need to do pastoral work. They studied subjects which had no relations to pastoral and missionary work.

Their academic education enabled them to study at universities and to do any job like architecture, science, administration, teaching, music, education, etc. They were then often only liturgical actors on weekends, since they were sent on the weekends to neighboring parishes to say Mass. Who of the Consecrated remained for the actual pastoral work and the proclamation of faith? Only few were really capable and suitable. De facto that they did not need to be ordained a priest for their work. They could have become lay Brothers within the SVD. I mean, something is going wrong here in the SVD. For the Holy See and the Church laws, we are after all a clerical community. Here, in our Retirement House, we have elderly Fathers who no longer celebrate. But not because they are too old or too weak. Some "cannot" bless even rosaries any more. In this respect, I consider the SVD for overclericalized.

And now I'm getting back to the beginning where I asked what motivates some Brothers to switch to the Fathers. Or remain Brothers even though they could study theology? Do some of them want to climb higher up the clergy because they then arrive better with the people or they feel "upgraded"? There are still those who hold their noses too high just because they are clerics. Therefore we should get away from the title "Father". Maybe, we should just use our regular name.

But that doesn't leave me with the question answered how to get to more Brothers for the SVD? To tell the truth, at least in our community, here we all are equal.

It was very interesting for me to read all the posts and see that we have different backgrounds and cultures. To some authors I would have wanted to send an answer. Couldn't you maybe have a few pages for letters to the editor? I wish that you continue the "Forum". Greetings from old Germany!

FROM THE EDITORS: WE ARE VERY OPEN TO PUBLISH LETTERS TO THE EDITORS!

Dear Confreres,

Peace!

Thank you for reading and contributing to this issue. The next issue will be published in December 2021. The guide questions will reach you on October 31, 2021.

For the meantime, you can write comments on the present issue and/or suggest topics for the coming issues. We will be very happy to publish your insights. Moreover, we would deeply appreciate it if you could also attach some photos of you as you send us your articles.

*Please, do send your comments and suggestions to this email addresses:
blanyi@usc.edu.ph*

You can write in any of the following languages: English, Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia, German, and Polish.

In the Divine Word,

Your SVD Brothers Forum Publisher and Editors