



Becoming Faithful and Creative Disciples: Mission Animation and the 19th General Chapter

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1 Wounds of the World

■ God created a beautiful world that is wonderful, ever-growing, and magnificent. God shows love, respect, and honor to the whole creation. God made human beings in his image (Gen 1:27-28); this is the masterpiece of God's creation, and he gave them the freedom to develop this world so that the whole creation will reach its fullness and glorify God. But, through the disobedience of human beings and misuse of their freedom, many wounds, destructions, pain, and grief are found in the world today (see 2024 GC 4-18). As Divine Word Missionaries, we have a significant role in healing these wounds and bringing about a transformation. These wounds are choking human beings and creation, and it is our mission to alleviate them.

2 Your Light Must Shine

■ Jesus' emphatic statement of "your light must shine" (Mt 5:16) is related to the last phrase of this sentence: "that they (people) may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." Thus, "your light must shine" is not everyone's personal achievement or boasting one's ego. Still, your life must shine with exemplary accomplishments, actions, and performances that glorify the Father. Thus, people can see and appreciate the Father in heaven. The light is not our light but the light of Christ, who is manifested through the good works. This teaching comes after the sermon regarding the beatitudes (Mt 5:3-12). Therefore, one can become the light of Christ by following the beatitudes. Hence, the mission is clear: live the beatitudes, our missionary activities will shine, and others can notice these achievements, and that can glow as light, and the people will come towards this light, and the darkness will be dispelled.

3 Strength of Faithful Disciples

■ Being faithful disciples as Divine Word Missionaries denotes our identity. Therefore, what characteristics indicate our identity? Over the years, we know that our identity comes from our spirituality – Trinitarian spirituality, Logos spirituality, and Marian spirituality. Although this encompasses a considerable spiritual depth, it points to the core as we say, "Our name is our mission" – the Divine Word (see 2024 GC 37-47). Thus, the Word gives us direction, orientation, strength, power, and strength. This calls for how we could grow with

the Word, the person of Christ, and the Word of God. Indeed, personal and communal spiritual exercises can strengthen our faithfulness. Still, when listening, discerning, and acting according to the promptings of the Word – the voice of the Holy Spirit – we are strengthened, and our identity is manifested.



4. Path of Creative Disciples

■ Creativity is a buzzword in the secular world. And this is becoming more meaningful and attractive in the religious circle, too, because of the ever-changing and challenging context of the world. Innovation in our working style, methods of the ministries, and execution of the ministries in the local context will vary, but this is a way to go forward. People look for new things, approaches, and ways of living. The innovative ministries can be a powerful way to express faith, convey biblical messages, and foster a sense of community and belonging. Using digital technology is one of the powerful ways, but we need to use it responsibly to impact people positively (see 2024 GC 81-84).

5. Mission Animation and 19th General Chapter

In this context, the 19th General Chapter focuses explicitly on what the mission animation can be in the coming years. There are two resolutions and five recommendations related to the mission animation and the mission secretaries can play an active role in these aspects. Let us concentrate on these aspects.

6. Family and Youth Ministry and Mission Animation

Mission animation encompasses animation of all the faithful, orienting them to live their missionary disciples well. In this context, the 19th General Chapter has passed the recommendation (2.2.8) stating,

Be it recommended that PRMs form an animation team for youth and family ministry within three years. ii) PRMs develop a methodology, action plan/programs, and strategies to address the concerns of youth and family ministry in the next three years (cf. SVD C. 109.1 & 109.2) and provide a report at the PRM and Zonal levels.

Mission Secretaries are encouraged to take a proactive approach and consult with the PRM superiors. This collaboration is crucial for forming an effective animation team for youth and family ministry, and for devising strategies to ensure the success of these ministries.

6.1. Family Ministry

Family ministry aims to create a supportive, nurturing environment where families can grow together in faith, love, and service. By addressing the whole family's needs and fostering strong intergenerational connections, churches can help families build a solid foundation in their faith journey. This ministry encompasses a wide range of activities and programs designed to strengthen family bonds, provide spiritual guidance, and address the unique needs of family members at different life stages. Here are some key components that family ministry can be done:

a. Marriage and Parenting Support

- Marriage Enrichment Programs
- Parenting Classes and Seminars
- Counseling Services

b. Intergenerational Activities

- Family Worship Services
- Intergenerational Activities
- Family Outings

c. Educational Programs

- Sunday School and Bible Study
- Faith Resources for Home use
- Vacation Bible School

d. Support Groups and Networks

- Moms' and Dads' Groups
- Grief and Loss Support
- Reaching out to Special Needs Families

e. Service and Outreach Opportunities

- Family Mission Trips
- Community Service Projects

f. Spiritual Formation and Discipleship

- Mentoring Programs
- Prayer Groups and Retreats
- Faith Milestones Celebrations

g. Recreational and Fellowship Activities

- Family Camps and Retreats
- Sports and Recreation Activities
- Holiday Celebrations

6.2. Youth Ministry

The youth ministry aims to heal the wounds of young people and meet the specific needs of young individuals, emphasizing outreach to this group through an effective pastoral strategy that has innovation, faith orientation, and personal healing. Therefore, try to create an animation of the youths in your PRM. By incorporating various programs, youth ministry can create

a dynamic and supportive environment where young people can grow in their faith, develop meaningful relationships, and prepare for a Christian service and leadership life. Two concrete areas we could concentrate on in the future.



i) Youth are mainly found in parishes; therefore, close collaboration with the parish priests is needed to engage with them and engage them in various creative activities to guide, animate, and mold them.

ii) Youth are in our institutions—schools and colleges. Find ways to coordinate with the Education apostolate authorities to listen, form, and reflect together and to show the path to better Christian living.

Here are some of the ministries we could do in our parishes and institutions.

a. Worship and Spiritual Growth

- Youth Worship Services
- Bible Study sessions
- Prayer Meetings and Retreats

b. Fellowship and Community Building

- Forming Youth Groups
- Social Events and Activities
- Youth Camps – summer or holiday camp

c. Service and Outreach

- Community Service Projects
- Trips to Missions to another place/country
- Peer Group Ministry

d. Leadership Development

- Youth Leadership Sessions
- Finding Mentors for the Group or Individuals

e. Educational Programs

- Sunday School and Catechism Classes
- Job Oriented Skills
- Career Support Sessions in the Colleges

f. Personal and Emotional Support

- Counseling Sessions
- Create Safe Spaces
- Pastoral Care

g. Creative and Artistic Expression

- Arts and Music Programs
- Media and Technology
- Talent Showcases and Performances

h. Inclusivity and Diversity

- Welcoming Environment for All
- Cultural Awareness
- Addressing the Special Needs of the Youth

In this context, let us take the suggestion from the Statement of the SVD Lay Partners Workshop, 2024 (see below no. 7.4): *Promote SVD youth lay partners in each PRM*—this is a significant proposal from the youth ministry. One can make an effort to form these groups, too.

7. Journeying with SVD Lay Associates/Partners

Grounded in the core identity of the Society of the Divine Word, we are committed to extending this identity to our lay associates and partners who embody Arnoldus's spirituality and charism. It is our duty to support and empower these lay partners through comprehensive formation, spiritual guidance, and innovative mission strategies. By fostering these partnerships, we are better equipped to navigate the diverse challenges present in our local contexts.



Today, recognizing the role of SVD lay partners is more important than ever. We must actively promote these groups, encouraging them to formalize their commitment as SVD lay associates by establishing clear statutes. This is crucial to our missionary framework, as we view them as co-responsible partners, each contributing their unique gifts and perspectives to our shared mission.

The General Chapter mandates clear resolutions and recommendations for members to address, either individually or collectively. To successfully fulfill these mandates, it is essential to begin by creating a strategic plan that outlines our objectives for the next three years while keeping a long-term vision for the future.

7.1. Official Recognition of SVD Lay Associate Groups

The resolution 1.1.3 says,

The General Chapter resolves that the provinces and regions officially recognize lay associate groups. These groups, which are identified, will become part of the Arnoldus Family in the broader sense. Recognition will be given according to the stipulated criteria:

Part I: Criteria for Official Recognition of Lay Associate Groups by SVD Provinces and Regions.

Part II: Criteria for Collaboration with Lay Associate Groups.

This resolution is again reconfirmed in this Chapter. That shows the significance of the SVD lay associates/partners in our Society.

SVD Lay Associates/Partners

Zones/ Zonas	2018		2024			
	Official SVD Lay Associate Groups	SVD Lay Associate Groups	Officially Recognized SVD Lay Associate Groups	Number of Lay Associates (ap- proximately)	SVD Lay Associate Groups	Number of Lay Associ- ates (approx- imately)
AFRAM	4	44	18	499	18	434
ASPAC	6	56	31	4358	55	2307
EUROPA	7	53	11	1869*	29	16724**
PANAM	3	31	10	427	67	1055
Total	20	184	70	7153	169	20520

* ECP has nearly 1000 lay partners, but a few are active

** GER has nearly 15,000 SVD Friends as volunteers in distributing the magazine and to some extent, they participate in our charism and spirituality, but most of them are elderly and sick. There are nearly 1,500 MaZ members.

In the 2024 survey, we observe that most of the PRMs have lay partner groups, and some have lay associates; that shows over the last six years, the lay associate groups have grown from 20 groups in 2018 to 70 groups in 2024. The numbers in these groups can be deceptive. The highest number of groups in a PRM does not mean the highest number of members; there could be just one group, but there are more members because a province could adopt the same name for all the groups. Thus, in some PRMs, there are a few groups but more members, and in others PRMs, there are more groups but fewer members. Moreover, the counting of the members may need to be revised. There could be more members, but only a few are active. The important aspects are how many are active in the group, what they do in a group, their level of commitment, and so forth.

The underlying responsibility is that each PRM has to promote more groups and strengthen the present groups in the coming years.



7.2. Formulating a Formation Program for the SVD Lay Associates/Partners

The Recommendation 2.2.8 says,

It is recommended that the Generalate formulate a common formation program for the SVD Lay Mission Partners regarding SVD Spirituality, Charisma, Prophetic Dialogue, and Characteristic Dimensions.

This recommendation is for the general administration. However, each PRM has already received the “Guide to Prepare a Formation Manual for SVD Lay Partners,” an E-publication, Rome, 2020, also available on the svdcuria.org website. The

materials for formation are available from the generalate mission secretary; one has to contact him to receive them.

If we aim to strengthen these lay groups, ongoing formation is crucial. We must provide them with both initial and continuous formation so that they are constantly updated on the mission's needs and the evolving thinking. Through this formation, their lives become more meaningful, their commitment deepens, and their collaboration strengthens. This ongoing formation is not just a process, but a journey that we all undertake together, reinforcing our shared commitment to the mission.

7.3. Promotion of SVD Lay Associates/Partners

The Recommendation 2.2.9 says,

The General Chapter recommends:

1. *In each PRM, a confrere, preferably the mission secretary, is responsible for organizing the SVD lay associates/partners and working with them. In coordination with PRM superiors, it is his duty to look for confreres to be their spiritual animators.*
2. *Each PRM organizes annual meetings or assemblies of lay associates/partners, and subzones and zones hold similar events once every three years.*
3. *PRM superiors are responsible for assessing the collaboration between the Society and SVD lay associates/partners over the next three years.*

This recommendation clearly states that the mission secretary has a proactive role to play in promoting the SVD lay associates/partners. It is his responsibility to find spiritual animators for each group in consultation with the PRM superior. In places where these groups are without spiritual animators, or where they are not active, it is our duty to support them with spiritual animators. This proactive approach will not only strengthen the groups but also empower the mission secretary to take charge of their development.

Conducting annual meetings for the lay associates/partners in each PRM will help them support one another and coordinate various programs. Within three years, each PRM needs to evaluate the SVD lay associates/groups. This evaluation involves assessing the level of participation, the impact of their activities, and their alignment with the mission's goals. The PRM should consult the mission secretary on how to conduct this evaluation. This process will help us understand how we have progressed from 2012 to now.

7.4. Significance of the Statement of the SVD Lay Partners

The Statement of the 19th General Chapter says, "The Statement of the SVD Lay Partners' Workshop participants (see the Appendix) is acknowledged, and the Society appreciates them for formulating this Statement. This is valuable and helpful for furthering the collaboration with the lay partners in the mission. The General Administration and each PRM take steps to implement this Statement according to its context. (79). This Statement is found in the booklet *Faithful to the Word*, no.6, 2024 (Appendix 2). The PRMs, the mission secretaries and the mission animators must try to implement this Statement. Find synodal ways to implement it and make it more meaningful; it has a rich orientation and profound desire of the lay partners.

Statement no.4 says, "**Structure:** Each Zone will organize a zonal meeting of lay partners to elect five office bearers for the Zone. This will be done within three years. The next step

would be for all the zone leaders to come together within five years, by Zoom or other means, to elect the international leaders.” Although this is the responsibility of the Zonal coordinator, the mission secretaries can educate the lay associates/partners on the importance of this structure for their development.

8 SVD Lay Missionaries

■ The Recommendation 2.2.10 says,

The General Chapter recommends that each PRM make provisions for sending and accepting lay missionaries within two years and communicate this to the Zonal Coordinator, who disseminates this information to others.



If a PRM is positive about sending and accepting lay missionaries, the mission secretary, together with the province/regional superior, establishes norms for sending or hosting lay missionaries in their province/region. Where necessary, he establishes the norms with the local church administrators. The mission secretaries are entrusted with the task of preparing and promoting the lay missionaries. This includes identifying potential candidates, providing them with the necessary training and support, and coordinating with the local churches where necessary.

Although the Constitutions have clearly mandated lay missionaries to work in the missions (c.III, III.1, III.2), very few provinces now have lay missionaries. There hasn't been much progress in promoting and sending lay missionaries to the country itself or another country. As we encourage SVD lay partners now; it is time to promote, form, and send the SVD lay missionaries to other places/countries. They can be copartners in missions, carrying out missionary activities together with SVDs or in the local church, and showing witness to the local people that there is a way of concrete expression in the commitment to mission as a lay person. We need to take concrete measures to ensure the presence of lay missionaries now. Although the Constitution gives principles, there isn't clarity on the persons responsible for this job. Therefore, the mission secretaries can assume this role to prepare and promote the lay missionaries in their provinces and regions and coordinate with the local churches where necessary.



9 SVD Mission Day/Weekend/Week

■ The recommendation 2.1.4 says,

The General Chapter recommends that every PRM organize an SVD Mission Day, SVD Mission Weekend, or SVD Mission Week annually to celebrate our worldwide mission in every parish/house/institution.

This recommendation is the same as the previous General Chapter except for the slight medication—SVD Mission Day... Thus, the emphasis is on celebrating SVD Mission Day or a weekend or week in every parish/house/institution, and it is not like another feast day celebration.

Zones/Zonas	SVD Day...
AFRAM (12)	12
ASPAC (20)	17
EUROPA (11)	07
PANAM (16)	12
Total (59)	48

As per the survey in 2024, we have seen a significant success with 48 PRMs celebrating SVD Day/Weekend/Week. This not only demonstrates the interest and enthusiasm in this celebration but also strengthens our missionary activities. However, there are some questions about how we celebrate it. According to the mission secretaries' report, many PRMs celebrate on a designated day, and some celebrate at the convenience of each parish/house/institution. Most celebrate on January 15, January 29, or September 8. It needs to be clarified whether the PRM celebrates this Day as SVD Day or SVD Mission Day; to bring clarity, this recommendation is again put forth to the Society. Let us celebrate it meaningfully, creatively involving the lay associates/partners in this celebration. Each PRM can prepare a theme for this celebration, print posters, distribute some materials, and conduct various activities. Each parish/institution can make a collection for a particular mission intention. Consult the book *Celebrating SVD Mission Week*, SVD E-Publications, Rome, 2023, for various themes and activities.

10 Establishing a Structure for Mission Animation and Fundraising

The resolution 1.1.5 says,

The General Chapter has resolved that every province/region should establish a clear structure for mission animation and fundraising. This structure is not about building an office or a physical structure, but rather about establishing an effective animation structure. It includes having a team, a set of procedures, a plan, and lay collaborators to assist in animation. The objective of this structure is to ensure the effective contribution of every province/region to the worldwide mission of the Society. With this structure in place, the mission secretary's three-fold responsibilities can be effectively carried out.

This resolution is being reconfirmed in this Chapter. It's important to note that this is not necessarily about building an office or a physical structure, but rather about establishing an effective animation structure. This includes having a team, a set of procedures, a plan, and lay collaborators to assist in animation. The 2024 survey shows that PRMs have made significant progress in this regard, which is a positive development.

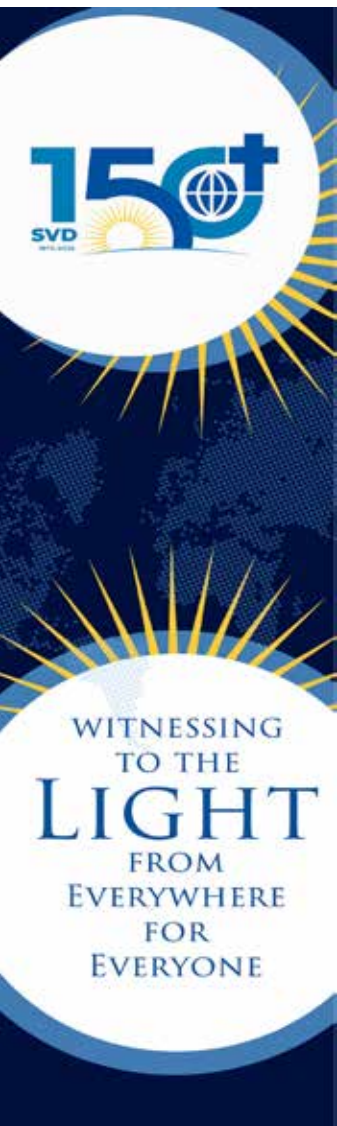
ZONES/ZONAS	Structure...	Collecting-funds	Sharing with Generalate	Primary Duty
AFRAM (12)	05	08	04*	04
ASPAC (20)	14	13	09**	12
EUROPA (11)	09	10	09	07
PANAM (16)	08	12	05***	09
Total (59)	36	43	27	32

* contributed once or more times

** Four contributed regularly to the generalate and the rest give occasionally

*** Three give regularly, and others give occasionally

Other than what is indicated above regarding the funds collected for the mission, many gave to the Generalate funds for specific purposes, like Ukraine, repairing the roof, etc., and that is not included in this list. Since it is a resolution, it is imperative that each province and region try its best to establish this structure and free the mission secretary to do his duties well.



11. 150 years celebration

The Sesquicentennial celebration is not just a significant milestone in our Society's history; it's an opportunity to chart a bold and transformative path for our future. As mission secretaries, you are uniquely positioned to bring this celebration to life in a way that resonates deeply within our communities, and every confrere is encouraged to do mission animation. Your proactive involvement can ensure that this celebration is more than just a historical marker—it becomes a memorable and meaningful event that shapes our future direction.

This is your moment to showcase your creativity and leadership through mission animation work among confreres and laypeople in our parishes. With the invaluable support of SVD lay associates and partners, you have the opportunity to organize a diverse range of religious, social, cultural, and sports activities, infusing the celebration with energy and purpose.

However, this 150th-anniversary celebration should not merely pass by; it must be a catalyst for setting new goals that have a lasting impact on the Church and the lives of the people we serve. We must seize this moment to launch new initiatives: caring for creation, engaging innovatively in JPIC activities, addressing the needs of the poor, supporting broken families, reaching out to lonely individuals, and guiding the youth in their search for faith. We must create spaces for peace and reconciliation, and through dialogue and discernment with our lay partners and the broader community, find ways to make a tangible difference in the lives of youth, families, the elderly, and those who are often overlooked.

Conclusion

The responsibilities outlined above, along with those detailed in the *Handbook for Superiors*, Appendix 3, clearly indicate that mission animation and the importance of how mission secretaries must embrace their role as a primary duty. With 32 provinces and regions having already made substantial progress, it is evident that more can be achieved if every mission secretary fully commits to these endeavors. Reflecting on the chapter's theme, we are called to become creative disciples—this creativity must emerge from our unique contexts, fueled by the right methodology, collaboration, and a synodal approach.

Lay partners' collaboration is not just important—it is imperative. Confreres' participation is essential, and together, we can bring these aspirations to life. Let us draw inspiration from Saints Arnold Janssen and Joseph Freinademetz as we strive to realize these goals.

Mission secretaries, the time is now. Take up this mantle of responsibility, harness the power of collaboration, and lead our Society into a future filled with creativity, compassion, and communion. Let this jubilee event be the launchpad for a renewed commitment to our mission.

1 September 2024