



Society of the Divine Word (SVD)

SVD Lay Partners

Newsletter - from Around the World

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First ASPAC Zonal Meeting, 2019



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Editorial

Table Fellowship

It was during the Spirituality and Interculturality Workshop at Steyl that I found the oft-used phrase 'Table Fellowship' very appealing. The phrase remained with me like a sweet hangover when I returned to India. As I was pondering what to write for this editorial, the hangover took the better of me.

The table is a powerful place that is mentioned frequently in Scripture. Tables are places of human connection. Sharing a meal around a table builds bridges and heals broken relationships. We are fully alive when a meal is shared with the other. Jesus spent a lot of time at tables eating with all kinds of people: those among the elite such as the pharisees, and those on the peripheries or the excluded such as the sinners and tax collectors. His last meal was a fellowship meal with the disciples. Typically, even after the resurrection, he broke bread with the disciples at Emmaus and cooked breakfast for Peter and his companions on the banks of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus' table fellowship was indeed boundary breaking. In a religious and cultural environment where exclusion was common, he dared to go against traditional and popular customs of eating and fellowship. His eating with Levi is both an act of inclusiveness as well as discipleship.

On September 08, 2019 our SVD Lay Partners group in Mumbai, India launched a new project – Feed the Hungry. It involved cooking food and taking it to the hungry people around us; those insignificant, excluded people ignored by our society and pushed to the peripheries. As a leader of this group, I was anxious. Many unanswered questions were running in my mind. What if...? Will it be...?

Since then, we've been reaching out to the homeless and hungry people in many areas in Mumbai. Often, we engage in this 'Table Fellowship', a fellowship of inclusiveness. We not only eat with them, but also pray, laugh, cry, share and become human. We're not just feeding them with food, we are also feeding them love and kindness. In just a few months, our little efforts have taken shape in many ways – from cooking hot meals to connecting members, from feeding the hungry to sharing our life stories, from receiving donations to strengthening our spiritual bonds - a surge of unity and acceptance through in fellowship!

The table is a place of blessing. Whom can you invite to your table? Whose table are you willing to join?

It's Easter! May the resurrection bring many blessings to you and to your loved ones!

Susan Noronha
Editor-in-chief

First ASPAC SVD Lay Partners Workshop

Tagaytay (The Philippines), November 2019



An Overview

At the First ASPAC SVD Lay Partners Workshop held in Tagaytay City, Philippines, along with the delegates, SVD confreres too participated in this meeting. Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar, SVD - Generalate Mission Secretary was present to give presentations as well as to guide the members. There were members of the Divine Word Institute of Mission Studies (DWIMS) faculty and the Provincials of PHC and PHS Provinces. Fr. Antonio Pernia, SVD - Former Superior General moderated the gathering very efficiently, enlisting the objectives of this meeting and how to achieve them.

Fr. Michael Layugan, SVD, Rector of DWST welcomed the delegates and being a Church Historian, talked about St. Arnold Janssen's initial plan of organizing an Institute of Lay Persons. 18th General Chapter has officially recognized SVD Lay Partners as members of the Arnoldus Family.

Various important topics were dealt with during the workshop. At the end of each presentation, there were comments, questions and reflections. A film was shown on the life of St. Joseph Freinademetz SVD, narrating his and his lay missionaries' sacrifices and works in the China mission. The audience was inspired and moved by his life as shown in the award-winning film produced by Fr. Joseph Tan and SVD Friends in Macau (SIN province).

The delegates from the PRMs presented their respective organizations and activities. Much learning from each other's experiences was shared. One day immersion was organized and we visited the Parish of Jesus Nazareno, Dasmariñas Cavite, the LSSAJ and SVD collaborative social projects and Alternative Learning System centers, and also went to the Taal Lake nearby to see the scenic beauty.

Daily Masses were celebrated with Liturgical cultural prayers and songs. To reinforce the family of St. Arnold Janssen, breakfast and snacks were served on various days and times at the nearby institutions, Divine Word Seminary Tagaytay,

Holy Spirit Convent, and SSpSAP Convent. Interactions and bonding among the Arnoldus Family members SVD, SSpS, SSpSAP and Lay Partners were enhanced.

At the end of the workshop Fr. Antonio Pernia presented the Synthesis on the collaboration between SVD and Lay Partners; the report on the organizational, province, and zone action plans were deliberated and resolved. Foremost among learnings and plans after the Workshop, going forward to their respective provinces were:

- › Undertaking and preparing Formation Manuals prioritizing and deepening Arnoldus Spirituality, SVD Charism, Role of Laity in the World, missionary activities especially among the poor and marginalized.
- › Promoting collaboration programs with SVD and SSpS, wherever possible.
- › Planning and executing mission outreach programs.
- › Communication exchanges via SVD Lay Partners need to be strengthened through International Newsletter, WhatsApp, etc.

The delegates experienced the Cultural Night on the last day where they donned their countries' costumes and presented songs and dances. Much fun camaraderie and bonding were ensued. Although some of the groups were at the initial stage, all were invigorated to do something positive for the people in collaboration with the SVD; this aspect of collaboration was understood by deepening Arnoldus Spirituality and knowing SVD Charism.

We are grateful to many people who made this event successful by offering gifts, giving lifts, accompanying the delegates, etc. but more specially we are grateful to Fr. Truc Phan, SVD - ASPAC Zonal Area Coordinator for Mission Secretaries and Fr. Glenn Paul Gomez, SVD, PHC Mission Secretary for their committed work in organizing this workshop.

Excerpts from the Report of First Asia Pacific Workshop of SVD Lay Partners



Inspired by St. Arnold Janssen's dream and desire to have "an institute of secular cooperators to help the mission" from the very beginning, alongside the SVD, SSpS and SSpSAP, driven by the several SVD General Chapters as early as 1884 – 1886 that often addressed the mission of the laity in light of the SVD commitment, and following the 1st International Workshop for SVD Lay Partners in Nemi, Rome in October 2017, the 1st Asia Pacific SVD Lay Partners Workshop was realized on 18 – 25 November 2019 at the Divine Word Institute of Mission Studies, Tagaytay City, Philippines.

The Workshop was attended by 37 Lay Partners from 8 countries, namely: Australia, China, East Timor, India, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and the Philippines representing 13 Provinces and Regions: Australia Province (AUS), China Province (SIN), India - Mumbai Province (INM), India - Central Province (INC), Indonesia - Ende Province (IDE), Indonesia - Timor Province (IDT), Indonesia - Java Province (IDJ), Timor Leste Region (TLS), Papua New Guinea Province (PNG), Philippines - Northern Province (PHN), Philippines - Central Province (PHC) and Philippines - Southern Province (PHS). Fr. John Seland, SVD from Japan Province (JPN) and Fr. Joseph Leitao Tan, SVD from China Province attended as observers.

Present were ASPAC's Zonal Coordinator for Asia Pacific Zone Fr. Gabriel Kote, SVD, Fr. Samuel Agcaracar, SVD of the Divine Word Institute of Mission Studies (DWIMS) who was ASPAC-DWIMS Coordinator and the different Mission Secretaries – General Mission Secretary Fr. Stanilsaus T. Lazar, SVD (Generalate, Rome), Fr. Truc Phan, SVD (AUS - ASPAC Zonal Coordinator for Mission), Fr. Hubertus Tenga, SVD (IDE), Fr. John Gualbert Salu, SVD (IDT), Fr. Oscar Alunday, SVD (PHN), who was the daily animator of the Workshop, Fr. Glenn Paul Gomez, SVD (PHC), who was the Workshop's Overall Coordinator being the host Province) and Fr. Franlou Bardon, SVD (PHS). Two Provincial Superiors - Fr. Eduardo Rocha, SVD of PHS and Fr. Jerome Marquez, SVD graced some days of the gathering by their presence. Noteworthy was the presence of former Superior General Fr. Antonio Pernia, SVD who served as Moderator during the whole duration of the Workshop. Fr. Pernia was General Superior when for the first time in the history of the SVD, four SVD Lay Partners from the four zones participated in the 2012 General Chapter.

The Workshop sessions began on the 19th with the Bible Enthronement and a Eucharistic Celebration capped the 1st day with General Mission Secretary Fr. Lazar as main celebrant and homilist. Fr. Antonio Pernia, in his introduction speech,





reaffirmed the SVD commitment *with lay mission partners, an unfulfilled dream in the life of our founder St. Arnold Janssen.*

Representatives from the different SVD Provinces were given time to share in the plenum about the groups. Small-group discussions were intended to elicit more response and reflections from the participants in view of their role as lay partners and their relationship with the Arnoldus Family and the SVD in particular. To the participants delight, a truly empowering and heartwarming Immersion Experience was hosted by the Parish of Poong Nazareno in Dasmariñas, Cavite under Fr. Teofilo Perey, SVD and in partnership with the Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen (LSSAJ). A short visit and interaction were made at the SVD – ALS (Assisted Learning System) at the Seminary Compound in Tagaytay and a trip overlooking the picturesque Taal Lake and Volcano over a traditional afternoon Filipino snacks of *puto bumbong* and *kakanin*.

A blessed and historic moment was when the four pillars of the Arnoldus Family – SVD, SSpS, SSpSAP, SVD Lay Partners and a lay associate of SSpS, came together during breakfast at the Pink Sisters Convent after a morning Mass on 23rd November, 2019. The highlight of each day was the celebration of the Eucharist with the theologians of Divine Word Seminary leading in the singing and with the uniqueness of each country's tradition and language enriching the daily liturgy.

puto bumbong

Puto bumbong is a Filipino purple rice cake steamed in bamboo tubes. It is traditionally sold during the Christmas season.

The name is derived from Tagalog puto (steamed rice cakes) and bumbong or bombong ("bamboo tube")

kakanin

Sweet munchies or sometimes desserts made from rice, sweet rice or root vegetables that are slow cooked and usually made with coconut or coconut milk.

An Intercultural Night featuring the songs and dances from each country adorned with traditional attires ended the Workshop. During the concluding Mass, as we celebrated the Feast of Christ the King, it was another blessed and historic moment to have lighted the 4th candle, representing the 4th pillar of the Arnoldus Family - the Lay Partners. Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar, SVD lit the candle together with the family from Australia and the light was passed on to all those present.

We came together in the spirit of the 2018 General Chapter's theme "The Love of Christ Impels Us", as captured in the Workshop's official logo (made and designed by Edicio de la Torre, member of LSSAJ). We went home celebrating our oneness and unitedness despite our diverse cultures and background. We spoke one language - the language of love. Emboldened with the spirit captured by the theme during St. Arnold Janssen's and Joseph Freinademetz' canonization "One Heart, Many Faces", we set foot on a new journey challenged to move from being multicultural to intercultural.

Mary Geraldine Paderon and Angela S. Gomo



First Asia Pacific Workshop of SVD Lay Partners



This inaugural Workshop was indeed an outstanding success and St. Arnold Janssen would have been very pleased with the outcomes as it was his vision from the beginning of the order to collaborate with Lay Partners in mission work. The main focus throughout was on embracing Arnoldus Spirituality and Charism.

The attendance was very encouraging from each of the 11 Provinces and Regions (8 countries represented), comprising 37 lay partners which did not include the various Mission Secretaries and Committee organisers/observers also present. The speakers were excellent giving informative and insightful content to the Workshop participants. Topics included the following:

- General Chapter and Lay Partners (Fr. Stanislaus Lazar, SVD, General Mission Secretary, Rome)
- The Laity and New Evangelization (Fr. Edgar Javier, SVD – DWIMS Director)
- Arnoldus Family (Sr. Angel Libron, SSpS)
- Arnoldus Spirituality (Fr. Wilfredo Saniel, SVD)
- Formation Manual & Structure of lay partner groups (Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar, SVD & Fabian Pagaduan)
- Interculturality (Fr. Samuel Agcaracar, SVD, DWIMS Professor)

In addition to the talks, there were also group presentations where everyone had the opportunity to share their experiences of Lay Partner Groups – looking at the strengths, the weaknesses and the joys - all agreed that they learnt such a lot during this workshop and in particular everyone seemed moved by the pervading sense of spirituality during the group discussions.

The workshop was especially blessed to have Fr. Antonio Pernia, SVD (former Superior General) who skilfully moderated the workshop each day. Leveraging off the content of the talks and the group discussions, Fr. Pernia presented a Synthesis which brought together the key outcomes of the Workshop and from which Provinces were asked to compile an action plan. Fr. Pernia's Synthesis provided the following outline for the Lay Partner groups to use to put in place their action plans:

Organization:

- Clarify the vision by deciding on a name, the statute; write a manual and work out the funding structure.
- Look to continually strengthen the group by recruiting/involving others, especially families and youth.
- Link with others – focus on collaboration/communication via mediums such as Facebook/websites.
- Hold meetings or workshops at Provincial/Interprovincial or sub zonal levels.
- Ensure regular meetings with Provincial Council/Mission Secretary.

Formation:

- Produce Formation Manuals/Modules with specific emphasis on Arnoldus Spirituality.
- Conduct regular formation sessions (for e.g. Hold recollections/retreats/bible studies...).

Mission:

- Keep in mind that Mission is a continual process.
- Strengthen/regularize the commitment to 'live' Mission.
- Be on the alert to expand Lay Partner involvement through taking on initiatives as they occur.
- Review activities on an annual basis culminating in an annual report.

Then once these action plans are in place, the final step envisaged is for collaboration at the sub-zonal level to come up with an action plan for the combined Lay Partner Groups within that one sub zone.

An event during this workshop that was particularly momentous was the coming together of the entire Arnoldus Family when a visit was made to the SSpS and SSpSAP located nearby. For the first time the four branches came together. Sr. Libron expressed it well in her talk that the entire family have "Complementarity & Collaboration" in areas such as spirituality, mission animation and vocation animation and therefore the Lay Partners are a welcome addition to the family serving only to strengthen the focus on living a life of Mission. The final Mass saw the lighting of the 4th candle in honour of Lay Partners now being the 4th pillar of the Arnoldus family. Other highlights were the Intercultural Night as well as the daily Eucharist celebrations.

In conclusion, the aims and objectives of the inaugural SVD Lay Partners Gathering were achieved above and beyond expectations and participants enjoyed great hospitality from the DWIMS Community as well the many organisers. It was very evident throughout the final ceremonies how much people had embraced Arnoldus Spirituality as there were lots of hugs accompanied by tears that the workshop had come to an end. These tears however, also give us confidence that the SVD Lay Partner Groups will continue strongly and thereby fulfil St. Arnold's vision of SVD and the laity working side by side in God's mission work.

Fr. Truc Quoc Phan, SVD
AUS Mission Secretary/

ASPAC Zonal Area Coordinator for Mission Secretaries





AFRAM ZONE



Zambia (ZAM)

Zambia Mission Lay Partners – A Visitor from the Generalate

The day, Tuesday, August 27, 2019, had finally arrived. The parishioners of the Holy Family Parish, Linda, on the outskirts of the capital city of Zambia, Lusaka, were very excited to receive the Visitor from the SVD Generalate, Rome. As for the newly formed SVD Lay Partners, the visit was extra special. We were the first lay group that Br. Guy Mazola Mido, SVD, the General Visitor, was going to meet. To illustrate this heightened interest, one of our founding members, who was transferred to another town some four months earlier, travelled back to Lusaka to be a part of the welcoming group.

The day started with early morning Mass celebrated by two Priests. The expectation was that Br. Guy would probably join the Celebrants and the Altar Servers on the Altar, but no, he was seated with us in the congregation.

The Church was filled to capacity. The singing, accompanied by the beating of drums and guitars was done by the Catholic Women's Organization. The *Holy Childhood* in their angelic

voices did not wish to be outdone. Their highlight was a beautiful performance at the end of the Mass. Standing in front of the congregation, each child had to say a line or so about vocations. Some children forgot their lines (much to the amusement of the audience) but expertly their leader, who must have been well drilled, came to their rescue. In each case she brilliantly completed the forgotten lines.

After Mass, it was time for introductions and photos. There were smiles all over.

After breakfast, the Lay Partners had a very fruitful and interactive meeting with Br. Guy Mazola. He encouraged that we, being the first group of Lay Partners in Zambia, should strive to understand our pivotal role.

Mildred Sodala



Democratic Republic of Congo (CNG)

Fraternité SVD - Parish visit by National Coordination Team



To promote Fraternité SVD, members of the National Coordination Team of SVD Lay Partners in Congo, have started to visit Parishes since February 8, 2020. These visits will continue until May 31, 2020. Beginning with the Lay Partners' cell at the 8th Street, Kinshasa, we will visit all others lay groups from Saint Armand, Saint Felix, Notre Dame d'Afrique, before traveling to the Provinces - to Kenge, Ngondi, Tumikia, Kikwit, Bandundu Ville and Bagata.

It is important to note here that the structure of the Fraternité SVD in Congo, is made up of cells at the Parish level, with coordination at the District and National level.

The purpose of this pastoral tour is to strengthen the bond of groups of Fraternité SVD, listen to members, clarify certain opinions and explain the significance of our commitment as Lay Partners in the Arnoldus family.

This commitment begins with the training of the members. New members who join are invited to undergo an initial training of at least three months (six week-ends).



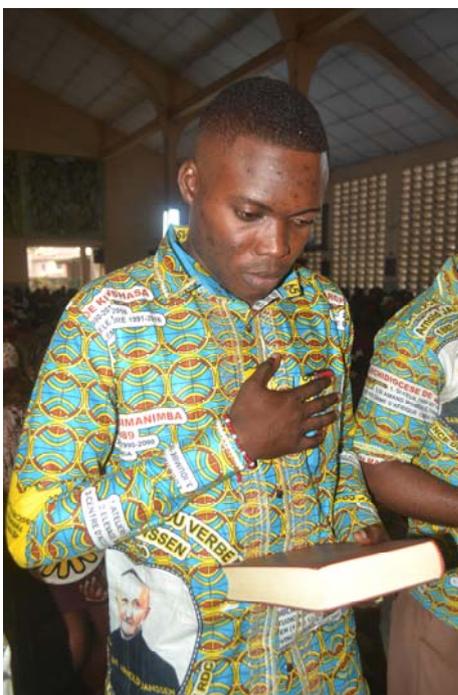
29 members from the Kinshasa District who attended the training in March, made their commitment in June during a Eucharistic Celebration in the Parish of Notre Dame d'Afrique, in the presence of Provincial Superior/his delegate.

A second training session for this year will start in the second half of March. It will focus on our spirituality including:

- a) A common spiritual vision that inspires and unites the group by working towards the common goal
- b) The means by which this vision is celebrated and socialized by the group
- c) A certain way of life and behavior springing from and appropriate to the Vision, so that we live as a community in and for the mission.

This is our way of sharing the divine life, i.e. to become like Christ, just as Arnold Janssen points out, "Missionaries are ambassadors of divine love".

Jean Paul Nico Luketo



Ghana (GHA)

Friends of SVD - Inauguration of New Lay Partners' Groups



St. Charles Lwanga Parish

The *Friends of SVD* of St. Charles Lwanga Parish, Abeka, Accra, was inaugurated on Sunday, November 17, 2019 with 15 members. Harriet Akorli Dzikunoo, President, gave a brief history about the formation of the group. The group began about six years ago. Sophia Senafu Dogbey, the then leader of the group tried her best to see it launched, but, unfortunately, she passed away two years ago. Fr. Andrew Quaye-Foli, SVD, Fr. Peter and Fr. Stephen Dogodzi, SVD motivated the group. The Mass was celebrated by Fr. Augustine Pushpa Ambu, SVD (General Secretary for Formation), Fr. George Angmor, SVD (Provincial Superior) and Fr. Andrew Quaye-Foli, SVD (Parish Priest).

St. Arnold Janssen House

On the feast day of St. Arnold Janssen, a new group of 25 members was instituted as *Friends of SVD*, at St. Arnold Janssen House, Tesano, Accra. Mission Secretary, Fr. Stephen Dogodzi, SVD in his homily entreated members to fully embrace the spirituality and the characteristic dimensions of the SVDs, in order to enrich our walk with God



through the mission of Christ. Daniel Lamptey, President of the group, expressed gratitude to the SVD fathers, brothers and Harriet Akorli Dzikunoo for their immense support.

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church

Lay Partners of the Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, New Aplaku, Accra celebrated the feast days of Saints Arnold Jansen and Joseph Freinademetz. During the Holy Mass on the Feast of St. Arnold Jansen, Fr. Stephen Dogodzi, SVD, the Acting Parish Priest, gave a talk on the prayer life of St. Arnold Jansen and urged Lay partners to emulate his example.

A triduum was organized to celebrate the feast of St. Joseph Freinademetz. The feast Mass was concelebrated by Fathers Dogodzi, Setsoafia and Marion. In his homily Fr. Dogodzi, spoke about the missionary works of St. Joseph Freinademetz in China. The newly elected office bearers were inducted into office during the Mass. There was a family feast after the Mass.

Harriet Akorli Dzikunoo and Martin Kumedzro





ASPAC ZONE



India (INM)

Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW) - Activities



ASPAC First Zonal Workshop for Lay Partners in the Philippines

Leena Xavier, Vice President (DDW) was chosen by INM Province to participate in the ASPAC Workshop in November in the Philippines. She has returned with more passion and commitment towards the mission of Christ and shared her experience at the meeting.

Advent Recollection

Recollection for all DDW members was on December 01, 2019 at Atma Darshan by Fr. Gregory Pinto, SVD and Fr. Tony Menezes, SVD. It was a personal Jesus experience. Being converted - transformed by the Word of God.

Christmas Party

Like every year, we celebrated Christmas with the old, lonely and homebound people. The celebration began with a Holy Mass celebrated by Fr. Donald D'Souza, SVD. During the Offertory, the Christmas Tree was decorated with colourful decorations by the guests, representing prayers and petitions. The Mass was followed by games, prizes and delicious lunch.



Renewal of Commitment

On January 15, 2020, Feast of St. Arnold Janssen, the members renewed their commitment as SVD Lay Partners during the Mass at St. Theresa's Church, Bandra, in the presence of Fr. Richard Mathias, SVD, Provincial Superior (INM).

Collaboration with SVD and SSpS - Feed the Hungry

Every Saturday our members go out on the roads of Mumbai with lunch packets, cooked and carefully packed by them to feed the poor and the homeless. Atma-Darshan (SVD Centre for Spirituality and Counselling) has joined us in this project and provides food packets for the distribution every week. In collaboration with the SSpS, at their Community Health Centre of the Holy Spirit Hospital, some members distribute lunch packets every Friday to the patients suffering from mal nutrition, tuberculosis, HIV, etc.

Our mission of Feed the Hungry Project is not only to provide nutritious hot meals, but also to empower and encourage hope and positive living among our guests.

Susan Noronha



India (INH)

Arnold's Association (AA) – An Overview



It all began in the year 2012 by Fr. Lazar Gnanaprakasam, SVD having a meeting with a few like-minded Ex-SVDs, living in Telugu speaking states and starting an Ex-SVD's Association. This was followed with meetings and working strategies, to plan a vision and mission for the Association. Calling ourselves 'Arnold's Association' we began with 100 members who were once a part of the SVD in different stages like; apostolic school, integration course, college studies, novitiate/philosophy/theology, and some final professed members including priests.

We set '**Solidarity, Spirituality and Serviceability** (Unity, Holiness & Works of mercy) as our motto. Our vision is; inspired by St Arnold Janssen and his followers (SVDs) we shall associate ourselves as collaborators of the SVDs and their mission in the Telugu speaking States. We shall search, select and implement activities those will help improve the quality of life of the people around us.

To achieve our vision, our mandates;

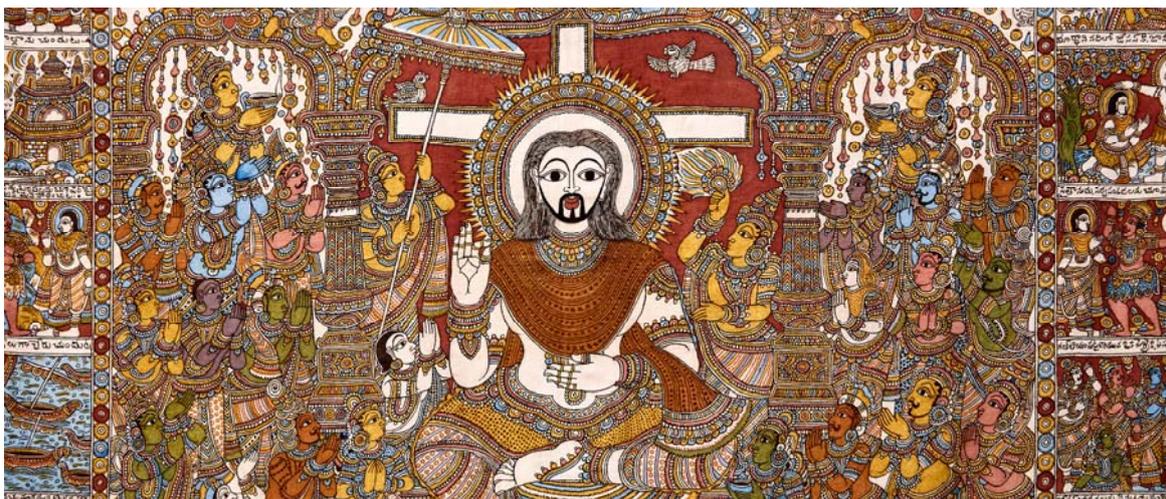
- › Expand AA network - to know each one's family and help one another in need.
- › Visit SVD formation houses, SVD/SSpS schools, missions and parishes.
- › Promote vocations for SVDs and SSpS. Sponsor studies for seminarians and children.

- › Collaborate with the SVDs in their mission work
- › Reach out to elderly, widows, HIV patients, street children.
- › Care and protect our environment for our future generation.
- › Create awareness on Catholic tradition, customs and practices

We were privileged to meet and present our plans to our former Superior General, Fr. Heinz Kulüke, SVD, in the presence of Fr. Joseph Antony, SVD (Provincial), during his visit to INH Province on November 01, 2014.

Though we began with 100 members, currently, the active members are around 30. Every Christmas, along with our families we spend a day together celebrating Christmas. We have visited neighbouring SVD missions, clinics and orphanages run by our SVDs and have provided them medical equipment, blankets, bed sheets and notebooks. During summer holidays, we conduct camps in the missions and conduct personality development workshops and personal grooming skills to students.

Michael Peria



Indonesia (IDJ)

SOVERDIA - First SVD Lay Partner Gathering: Special Report



The First SOVERDIA gathering was held on February 15-16, 2020 at Graha Wacana SVD Ledug, Pasuruan, East Java, in the cool climate but with warmth mingling. This meeting was attended by all the SOVERDIA groups of IDJ Province.

The meeting began with the opening Mass celebrated by the Provincial Superior, IDJ, Fr. Yoseph Jaga Dawan, SVD. He encouraged SOVERDIA as a partner in the SVD mission work, and emphasized that this first meeting was beneficial for SOVERDIA's future, especially in terms of building networks at the international level.

Fr. Hendrikus Meko, SVD (Superior Delegate Indo-Leste sub-zone) discussed on "Deepening the Statute of SOVERDIA" and emphasized that members must learn and understand the Statutes. In this session it was also agreed that the Statutes must be complemented by, "Manual Instructions" to facilitate members in implementing its contents.

Fr. Antonius Sarto Mitakda, SVD (SOVERDIA IDJ Moderator) deliberated on "SOVERDIA IDJ: Towards Independence". He asserted that the decision to form SOVERDIA was a "bold & strong conclusion". There was trust and encouragement to live the SVD spirituality more seriously and stronger as a lay missionary, and not just a supporter.



Paulina Suharsi and Agus Subagyo who represented SOVERDIA IDJ at the 1st ASPAC Workshop of SVD Lay Partners, Philippines, shared their experience from the workshop. This was followed by reports and sharing by each SOVERDIA group. There was "Get-together Night" too. Participants wore traditional clothes and performed cultural songs/dances.

Day 2 activities were morning worship, group discussions and commitments for the next three years. This was followed by the election of the IDJ SOVERDIA Board. Paulina Suharsi was elected as Chair Person, Indera Sembiring as Deputy Chair, Jacky Toda as Secretary and Agus Subagyo as Treasurer for the 2020-2023 term. Dionisius Suprihandono and Felisitas Puspawati (a couple) from Jakarta District, will represent SOVERDIA IDJ at the 2nd SVD Lay Partners Workshop, Nemi in September 2020. The meeting concluded with the Holy Mass.

This meeting was an experience to understand about SOVERDIA and its future mission activities in sharing the Word of God with those who are weak and powerless. The participants experienced unity and fellowship of SOVERDIA throughout the IDJ Province.

Paulina Suharsi



The Philippines (PHC)

The Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen (LSSAJ) - Social Justice Education



Nowadays, there is non-stop worsening of social injustices and political enslavement all around us. We live in a world where faith in God and the daily conduct of secular life have unfortunately become de-linked. Realizing the major impact of the current socio-political and economic situation in the Philippines and inspired by St. Arnold Janssen, the LSSAJ has taken in itself to promote and embark the continuous and massive social justice education throughout the country.

From January 29 to 31, twenty-two persons from different places, background and ages converged at the Sacred Heart Novitiate in Novaliches, Quezon City. They discussed the Christian Social Teaching (CTS) in relation to the current upheaval in the Philippines. They categorically committed to oppose and reject all the injustices, through prayerful faith and hopeful works of justice and charity. The three-days seminar was conducted and facilitated by Charlie Avila, the newly elected Chairman of the Board of LSSAJ.

The trainers' program was followed with the participation of the members of LSSAJ in the "Walk for Life", organized every year by the Council of the Laity of the Philippines, in collaboration with the Episcopal Commission on the Laity of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). It aims to demonstrate solidarity in upholding the dignity of life, from conception to natural death. Prayers were offered "for



protection against the COVID-19". Thousands took to the streets across the Philippines to voice concerns over threats to life, drug-related killings, attacks on places of worship and a proposal to revive capital punishment.

The Philippines experienced a natural calamity when Taal Volcano, on January 12, 2020, 43 years after its previous eruption, spewing ash up to 9 miles, forcing large scale evacuations. The LSSAJ extended support by donating medicines, food, clothing, hygiene kits, water supply and beddings for the victims / evacuees.

In pursuit of the poverty alleviation advocacy of the LSSAJ, and in collaboration with the *Arnold Janssen Catholic Mission Foundation - Alternative Learning System*, TESDA, and the Philippines Society of Plumbing Engineers, LSSAJ conducted 2 batches (25 trainees) of Plumbing Training Program. They passed the NC II certification and are now employed and empowered.

Daisy Leones



The Philippines (PHC)

Knowledge – Introducing a New Group

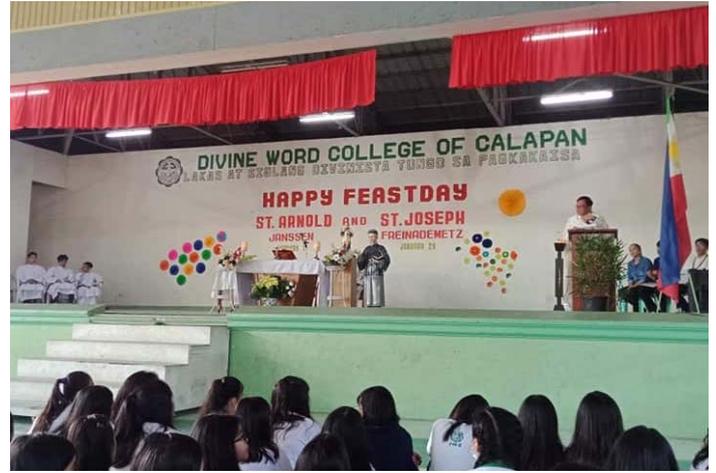


Our SVD Lay Partners group name is *Knowledge* and together with the staff of the Divine Word College of Calapan, we are evolving as SVD lay partner group.

Divine Word College of Calapan, Janssen Campus (College Department)

St. Arnold Janssen and St. Joseph Freinademetz' feasts days were celebrated at the Divine Word College of Calapan, Oriental Mindoro on January 29, 2020 with a concelebrated Mass led by college president Fr. Crispin A. Cordero, SVD.

The celebration highlighted the National Bible month at Divine Word College of Calapan (Janssen Campus). The Mass was attended by the DWCC's students, faculty, employees and SVD lay partners in Mindoro. After the Mass, inspirational talk was given by Fr. Jojo Letada, SVD missionary. Fr. Jojo emphasized three words that have profound meaning in one's life: care, forgive, and grateful. He said that the true happiness cannot be found anywhere, but in God. From 1 pm to 3 pm SVD/Bible Quiz Bee was conducted for students from different organizations/departments and from Witness to the Word classes.



Divine Word College, Freinademetz Campus (Basic Education Department)

On the same day, a second Mass was celebrated at DWCC Basic Education campus, celebrating the Feast of St. Joseph Freinademetz. This Mass was presided by the School Chaplain, Fr. Renato Malbog, SVD.

The celebration gave highlight to this year's theme "Ecumenical and Inter-religious". The Holy Mass was attended by the DWCC basic education students, faculty, employees, stakeholders and SVD lay partners. The school and religious education teachers organized different activities for the students. The Junior High School students participated in the Bible Quiz Bee contest and the Elementary School pupils and parents participated in the Bible Dance Drama program.

Prof. Shirley Mendoza, PhD



The Philippines (PHN)

SVD-PHN Mission Partners – First Workshop



In August 2019, SVD Philippines celebrated 110 years since the 1st two SVD missionaries - Fr. Ludwig Beckert and Fr. Johannes Scheiermann – arrived up north, in the mountains of Abra in Cagutongan, now the town of San Isidro. It is significant to mention that right from the very beginning, lay partners were involved in the mission. The existing Chapel, when the two SVD missionaries arrived, was built by Capitan Marcelo Valeros and the local town folks. Through the years, this partnership has evolved to be stronger and more evident, particularly in the 2012 and 2018 General Chapters and the 1st International Workshop for SVD Lay Partners in 2017 in Nemi, Rome.

We call ourselves, the SVD-PHN Mission Partners. We are recognized SVD lay groups in the Philippine Northern Province and all SVD mission partners in different SVD settings where there is partnership and collaboration.

The 1st SVD PHN Lay Partners Workshop

As a prelude to the 1st Asia-Pacific SVD Lay Partners Meeting in Tagaytay in November 2019, 13 lay mission partners from four districts of PHN gathered along with four SVD priests, for

the 1st SVD – PHN Lay Partners Workshop on August 3-4, 2019 at the SVD Compound in San Fernando, La Union.

Lighting of the 4th Candle

On May 27, 2017, the 4th candle was lit before the tomb of St. Arnold Janssen at St. Michael's in Steyl, The Netherlands, by representatives of SVD and SSpS Lay Partners from German Province. Following the 1st SVD Lay Partners Workshop in Nemi, SVD-PHN couple representatives Mike and GeeO Paderon, lit the 4th candle in their home with SVD-PHN Mission Secretary Fr. Oscar Alunday, SVD. On August 03, 2019, the 4th candle representing the Lay Partners was formally lit during the 1st SVD-PHN Mission Partners Workshop, at the SVD Compound in San Fernando, La Union.

Mary Geraldine Paderon



Australia (AUS)

SVD Lay Partners – Overview of the Last Months Activities



Novenas and Feast Day Celebration

January is an important month in the calendar of SVD Lay Partners, Australia. For the first time, a triduum to St. Arnold Janssen and novena to St. Joseph Freinademetz was conducted, led by SVD Lay Partners. The novena prayers were recited daily, 15 minutes before the morning Mass. On January 19th a celebration for our saints was held at St. Arnold Janssen Chapel. Recently appointed Provincial, Fr. Asaeli Rass, SVD celebrated the Eucharist with Fr. Truc Phan (Mission Secretary) and confreres. Fr. Rass recalled on "answering God's call". The congregation was introduced to the faith, zeal and mission of our saints. As a part of the celebration, the SVD Lay Partners organised the screening of the musical on St. Joseph Freinademetz' life and mission in China.

Helping the Bushfire Victims

Australia's start to 2020 was very harsh, the whole country was gripped in the midst of raging fires. The destruction and damage to nature, human life and animals was beyond comprehension. Though none of the SVD parishes were directly affected by the bushfires, we were part of wider communities



which were hard-hit. The SVD Lay Partners contributed to the nation-wide bushfire appeal by the St. Vincent de Paul Society by organising a sausage sizzle and art-n-craft sale. The event was very successful with massive outpouring of assistance and funds for the cause.

New Appointments

Fr. Viet Nguyen, SVD takes over as Mission Secretary while Br. Martin De Porres, SVD is appointed as SVD Lay Partner Coordinator for Australia Province.

Leadership Workshop

It was a joyous occasion when the SVD Lay Partners were invited to report their ASPAC experience at the Province Leadership Workshop Sydney from 11 to 14 February 2020. President, Mervyn Rodrigues and Ramila Furtado presented the initiatives of the group. It was an enriching opportunity for the confreres to understand the role of SVD Lay Partners. We were invited by many SVD confreres to form new ally groups elsewhere within the Province.

Mervyn Rodrigues



EUROPA ZONE

Switzerland (ECP)

Freundeskreis der Schweizer Steyler Missionare - 100 Years SVD in Switzerland



On January 12, 2020, the *Freundeskreis Steyler Missionare Schweiz* held their Annual General body Meeting in Steinhausen. This is the very first place the first SVD Community in Switzerland was started 100 years ago (in 1920), in the Mission House *Maria Hilf*. The AGM took place for the first time in Steinhausen, the first Steyler branch in Switzerland.

Holy Mass was celebrated in Steinhausen by Fr. Matthias Helms, SVD and Fr. Stephan Dähler, SVD, the Provincial Superior. In the festive sermon, Philipp Hautle, board member of the *Freundeskreis* and former diocesan catechist in St. Gallen, spoke about building a bridge between the Mission of Christ and our mission today. "Set your hearts on his kingdom first, and on God's saving justice!" (Mt 6:33) is announced already in Christ's baptism: "it is fitting that we should do all that uprightness demands" (Mt 3:15). The most important mission of humanity today is, to find justice and peace in our globalized world, and to preserve our earth from destroying exploitation. We are called to engage in this global mission in

the Spirit of Christ. That needs power, ideas, openness and patience. To get these, Holy Scripture reminds us to pray constantly. St. Arnold Janssen gave us a help in his Quarter Hour Prayer.

The Organist of Steinhausen, Martin Völlinger, composed the prayer for the SVD-anniversary and a quartet to sing it twice for us.

After a fine meal, a hundred of SVD-Friends together with nearly all SVD-Priests and SVD-Brothers of Switzerland, held the General Assembly. Later, we walked to the SVD-House, chatting, exchanging memories and enjoying the magnificent view of the Lake of Zug and the Alps.

Philipp Hautle



Slovakia (SLO)

Misijná rodina SVD – Introducing themselves

The first group of SVD lay partners, *Misijná rodina SVD*, was founded in the month of May 2015 at St. Michal's Parish in the village of Valaská Bela (central part of Slovakia). It was initiated by the parishioners themselves, after a week-long popular mission retreat in their Parish led by SVD priests. Gradually, other groups of *Misijná rodina SVD* were started in the parishes and churches closely connected to SVD missionaries, namely St. Arnold Janssen Church in Bratislava, St. Martin's parish in Terchová, SVD parish in Nitra, Sacred Heart Church in Vidiná, Catholic Parish in Čimhová and in Veľký Slivník.

The lay missionaries in Slovakia want to convey the missionary idea to people and to participate in the mission of the Society of Divine Word through spiritual, practical and financial assistance. They play an important role in promoting interest in foreign missions within their parishes, assisting the poor, caring for the sick and marginalized people and organizing activities to support projects in missions. Members have at least one particular SVD missionary to pray for.

Each group adapts its activities to the needs of the individual parish in different areas of Slovakia. Members meet once a month regularly: i.e. to pray, form and plan activities. In addition, spiritual renewals for families, and other supportive activities are organized to deepen relationships within groups. Anyone who feels close to the mission of the Society of Divine Word can become a member of the *Misijná rodina SVD*.

The SVD community in Bratislava is known for its traditional mission fair during the pre-Christmas period. Its main objec-

tive is to raise money to support the missions overseas by inviting participation of local parishioners. It is a unique opportunity to support missions while experiencing a pleasant family atmosphere.

In the future, we would like to focus on deepening our mutual relations and getting to know more closely the SVD lay missionaries in Slovakia. Priority is given to regular activities and also to focus on people in the communities and their needs, within and around our churches and mission houses.

Margaréta Bencelová



Germany (GER)

SVD-Partner - Novena for People in War and Misery



From 21 November 1944 onwards, many people lived in the cellars of the mission house St. Michael and the mission sisters' house in Steyl. Waiting for peace they suffered because

the Germans were still ruling in Steyl and the allies shot from the other bank of the river Meuse. Many of the Dutch people wrote diaries which have been published in the book „100 Days in the Cellars of the Monasteries in Steyl“ (available in Dutch and German.) The parish priests asked the people to pray a novena between 28 January 1945 and 5 February 1945.

Inspired by this novena SVD-Partner have published a novena in 2018 inviting everybody to pray whenever it is felt necessary. The novena includes quotes of the diaries, different prayers and of course readings of the gospel and deal with the corporal works of mercy.

Now the novena was translated into English and Spanish. You can download the files on www.svd-partner.eu/gebet/novene.

Maria Wego



PANAM ZONE



Mexico (MEX)

Misioneros Auxiliares del Verbo Divino (MAVD) - Towards New Challenges



With great sadness and dismay, we, the *Misioneros Auxiliares del Verbo Divino (MAVD)* in Mexico said goodbye to our Spiritual Advisor, Fr. Gustavo Villavicencio, SVD, who passed away to be with the Lord, on January 3, 2020. Fr. Gustavo was a man of God, an invincible warrior, who always demonstrated his faith in the face of adversity. May God keep him by His side, and may he continue to guide us spiritually from heaven. May Fr. Gustavo Villavicencio rest in peace.

On January 1 and 2, the meeting of MAVD 2019 Coordinators was held in *Huejutla Hidalgo*, with the participation of the coordinating committees of all base groups in Mexico. Fr. Sonny Wangge, SVD, Vice Provincial Mexico-Cuba, attended the meeting. In an ambience of prayer, meditation and fellowship, we listened, analysed and resolved important issues in our journey as missionaries. In consensus with the majority of members, we accepted the challenges to face the new tasks planned for the year 2020.



On February 16, 2020, Fr. Martin Resendez Islas, SVD was assigned as the new Spiritual Adviser of MAVD, for the period 2020-2022. We look forward to a new enthusiasm in our journey with Fr. Martin. We are sure, together we will achieve great success. Welcome Fr. Martin.

For the Holy Week Mission 2020, we are preparing to proclaim the Gospel. We are also preparing dental medical teams to serve communities of *Huejutla Hidalgo*, *Salto de Agua - Chiapas*, *San Juan Yae - Oaxaca* and *Yagavila - Oaxaca*.

Today, more than ever, we are sure that God needs the lay people to continue building the Kingdom of God. I encourage my lay friends from all over the world, the best is yet to come. God Bless us today and always!!!

José Manuel Contreras Bautista



~ Last but not Least ~

Workshop on Spirituality and Interculturality

Report about a three-weeks course in Steyl

The SVD-SSpS joint workshop on Spirituality and Interculturality (in English and Spanish) was held in Steyl from January 26 to February 15, 2020. The 22 SVD and SSpS participants, 3 Lay Partners (1 SVD and 2 SSpS), and 4 translators represented 18 countries of birth and 22 countries of work. Our Superior General, Fr. Budi Kleden and the SSpS Congregational Leader Sr. Maria Theresia welcomed the participants and spoke on the objectives for the workshop.

The organizing team comprised of three SVDs - Peter Dusicka (SLO), Tim Norton (Nemi), Roger Schroeder (USC)—and three SSpS - Adriana Milmanda (Argentina), Leoni Pregunta (Steyl), and Emmie Vaz (Mexico). General Councilors, Fr. José da Silva Antunes, SVD and Sr. Maria Cristina Ávalos, SSpS also attended the workshop. Some of the goals of the program were; to integrate and contextualize spirituality and interculturality, to enable the participants to become competent as resource persons, to produce materials for spirituality and interculturality, to strengthen collaboration between SVD/SSpS/Lay Partners, and to contribute in developing a vision for the future of spiritual animation.

The three-week program was in 3 phases:

Phase 1 (10 days):

Laying Foundations for Interculturality and Spirituality (Head),

Phase 2 (4 days):

Retreat on Spirituality of Interculturality (Head & Heart) during which the participants were spiritual directors and companions for each other. This gave them an opportunity to experience spirituality and interculturality in practice.

Phase 3 (5 days):

Developing Spirituality and Interculturality Material (Head, Heart, Hands) during which majority of the participants worked on developing retreat and recollection materials/modules. The smaller group, including the lay partners, were preparing reflection guides for local SVD, SSpS and Lay Partners.



Visits were organized to, Issum - the birth place of Blessed Josefa Hendrina Stenmanns, Kevelaer - a Marian shrine where St. Arnold often went on a pilgrimage, and Goch - the birthplace of St. Arnold Janssen. The participants had the opportunity to visit the houses of SSpS and SSpSAP and to interact with the sisters.

I was chosen by the General Council as a participant for this workshop from ASPAC Zone. Unfortunately, Martin Kumedzro (SVD Lay Partner from Ghana) could not attend this workshop due to visa issues. The other two Lay participants were from the SSpS. The presence of the four candles and the four legs at the tomb of St. Arnold Janssen indicates the strong presence of Lay Partners as Arnoldus family members, rooted in the Word and committed to continue the spirit of the Founding Generation. Living, learning and praying in Steyl for three weeks, I was able to experience the family spirit of St. Arnold Janssen with my fellow participants. The workshop opened fresh pages to learn something new, develop new ideas and to share with new enthusiasm. I could sense an aura all around, emanating deep joy and serenity.

Susan Noronha
SVD Lay Partner, INM



From you to us

From Australia reached us the following email



I am an 87-year-old priest now living in the SVD Retirement Home in Marsfield, a northern suburb of Sydney.

Thank you so much for your fascinating Newsletter. I read it from beginning to end and it stirred up some happy memories. I had been, before retirement, a seminary lecturer for 60 years! I did 30 years of teaching in the United States, 6 years in London (U.K), and 24 years in Australia. But I had the good fortune to also give talks & workshops in the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, India, Ireland, Kenya and Ethiopia. I guess that is why I enjoyed the reports coming from the many different countries.

Your meetings and activities truly inspired and invigorated me. I look forward to your next Newsletter.

Larry

Larry Nemer, SVD
Divine Word Missionaries
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Australia
Phone: 61 (0)2 9868 9029

Just a Tip

“Teamup” Calendar

If you want to share events and/or dates of your group digitally you can create a calendar with teamup.com. You can choose the language, insert your logo, share dates, use it with your cellphone and ... it's free. You would like to see an

example? Look at the email from March, 24 (Prayer Calendar) or at the SVD-Partner's website: [SVD-Partner Termine](https://www.svd-partner.eu/svdlp-slsvd/). Here you will find a manual too: <https://www.svd-partner.eu/svdlp-slsvd/>

SVD Missionhouses

St. Michael, Steyl (Netherlands)



Lower Church



St. Michael



Upper Church



Missionhouse



Missionhouse and church

Consolation in times of Corona crisis

Prayer and intercession

In difficult times, encouragement and help is more important than otherwise. Especially now in the uncertain time of the pandemic, when an unknown disease threatens us, we need the help of God and the saints.

In the choir windows of the Upper Church in Steyl, the patrons of the continents are depicted and below them the request for their intercession. May they stand by us with God's help.



Living God,
friend of life,
you created this world
and entrusts it to us,
so that we may enjoy it and honor you.
In this hour we thank you
for everything you have done,
for what we have received from you
in our life again and again.

In full confidence,
that you will not leave us alone
even when life is difficult
and confronts us with great demands
we ask you:

Be near us in this time,
in which many people are scared,
are worried about their health,
fear for the lives of those afflicted
and look ahead with uncertainty.

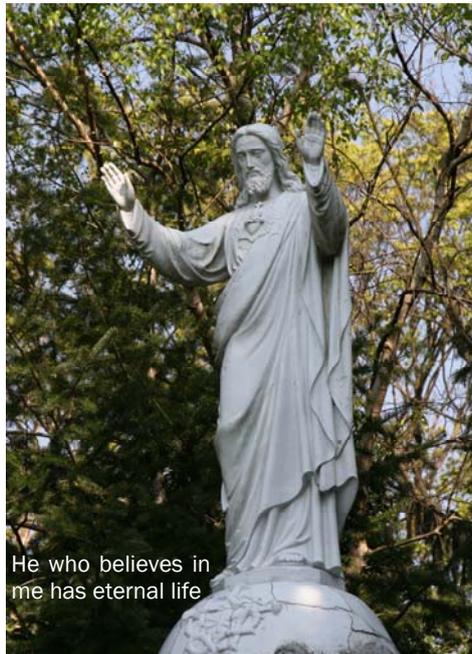
Bless those women and men,
who care for the welfare of their fellow man
in these days and weeks:
the leaders of society and politics,
the doctors and nursing staff
and all those who work hard
that community life
can continue to succeed.

Oh, dear God,
at this moment we recommend
the dead, especially those,
who have been victims of war and terror,
of hunger, disease and all forms of misery.
Take them into your loving presence
and let them be joyfull with you.

We ask you for this
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives with you and the Holy Spirit
and gives life for eternity.
Amen.

Fr. Norbert Cuypers, SVD

In Memoriam



John Augustine Thengumpallil

* 02.10.1956
+ 09.04.2020

SVD Lay Partner INM (Kerala)

Participated in the First International Lay Partners Workshop, Nemi, Rome in October 2017.

Fr. Gustavo Villavicencio, SVD

+ 03.01.2020

Spiritual of *Misioneros Auxiliares del Verbo Divino* (MAVD), Mexico

Fr. Federico Llamas, SVD

+ 11.04.2020

For 40 years missionary in Panama and there close working with *Misioneros Laicos del Verbo Divino*.

Gone from our sight, but never from our hearts...

We will miss you
John Thengumpallil, Fr. Gustavo and Fr. Federico

Rest in Peace



Impulse

Easter in unusual times

Happy Easter

Easter, the feast of joy

Easter, the day of light
after the darkness of suffering and death

At present life seems to be one single Good Friday, only suffering and death. But as Christians we know that Good Friday and Holy Saturday are followed by Easter. It does not stop at suffering and death - life wins. And so, even after these days and weeks of suffering, life will begin again, will be full of joy again.

Let us preserve the joy of Easter and draw from it our strength and confidence for the future.

Sophie Wego



Imprint

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