



SVD LAY PARTNERS

and

characteristic dimensions



SVD PUBLICATIONS
GENERALATE - ROME
2018





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ABBREVIATIONS

AD	<i>Ad Gentes</i> : Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church
Con	Constitutions of the Society of the Divine Word
CP	<i>Communio et Progressi</i> : The Means of Social Communication
DV	<i>Dei Verbum</i> : Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation
VD	<i>Verbum Domini</i> : Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church
EG	<i>Evangelii Gaudium</i> : The Joy of the Gospel
EN	<i>Evangelii Nuntiandi</i> : Evangelization in the Modern World
GS	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> : The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> : The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
LS	<i>Laudato Si</i> : On Care for our Common Home
RM	<i>Redemptoris Missio</i> : Mission of the Redeemer



P RESENTATION

Every Christian by virtue of baptism is a missionary. He/she is invited to share the love of God with others. This sharing of love could be in many ways. Primarily one has to be passionate about sharing his love, to commit oneself to reach out to others and more importantly, to live a life united with the love of God. Today, we see that many lay people are energized, motivated and committed to do God's mission. Today, mission can continue only with lay people's collaboration and participation. How can lay people and the Society of the Divine Word collaborate for doing effective mission? What are the traits that the lay people could adopt to be partners in the charism of the Society?

As Divine Word missionaries, to deepen our self-understanding we recognize mainly four essential aspects as "characteristic dimensions" of our Society. These are Biblical Apostolate, Mission Animation, Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) and Communication. The SVD General Chapter 2000 states,

"Our characteristic dimensions invite us to deepen our experience of the Divine Word in multiple ways. We get to know the Biblical Word whose story is told in scriptures. We proclaim the Animating Word who calls everyone to share in mission. We commit ourselves to the Prophetic Word who announces peace, justice and the transformation of all creation. We share the Communicating Word who seeks only to be poured out in self-giving love." (74)

The characteristic dimensions are the mark of every SVD; everyone is called to do his missionary activities with these dimensions, thus these are not meant only for specialists. Every ministry should integrate these dimensions in its expression and activities and that puts the SVD stamp on that ministry. Each of these dimensions implies a basic attitude is a God centred life, for Mission Animation it is to involve others, for JPIC it is to commit ourselves to the transformation of society and the world and for Communication it is to reach out to others in dialogue (SVD General Chapter 2006, 9).

There are large numbers of lay people associated with the Society and a good number of them share the spirituality of the Society, having special devotion to St. Arnold Janssen, St. Joseph Freinademetz and the founding generations. The Society recognizes a large number of benefactors, co-workers, volunteers, lay missionaries and well-wishers. Now, a good number of SVD lay partner groups have emerged, formally committing themselves to cherishing Arnoldus spirituality and participating in the mission of the Church, either supporting the SVD missions and missionaries or taking their own initiatives in doing mission. Let us thank God for the noble commitment of many lay partners.

Hence, we invite all the SVD lay partner groups to imbibe the four characteristic dimensions in their missionary journey and that would provide a fundamental understanding of mission in the mutual collaboration between lay partners and the SVD. We hope that these characteristic dimensions will become the mark of all the SVD lay partners.

The materials that are presented are for the lay groups to read, to discuss and to share among themselves. In this way everyone could grow, not only familiarizing themselves with these dimensions but carrying out the missionary task with these dimensions. Every group is invited to find suitable times to use this booklet at regular intervals.

This booklet is prepared by the Generalate coordinators. We thank Marek Vanus SVD (Biblical Coordinator), Stanislaus T. Lazar SVD (Mission Secretary), Daisuke Narui SVD (JPIC Coordinator) and Modeste Munimi SVD (Communication Coordinator) for taking initiative in preparing this booklet. We also thank the translators and other confreres who are involved in this publication.

May the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all.

Fraternally in the Divine Word,
Heinz Kulüke SVD and Leadership Team



BIBLICAL APOSTOLATE



Father, you have sent your Word made flesh to dwell among us and make known to us the truth about your love for us. We thank you for his words that teach us to open ourselves for the needy, to care for the neglected, and to be merciful to those who have offended us. We realize that his project of a community of brothers and sisters urges us to strive more faithfully to follow his footsteps. Help us, through your Holy Spirit, to be attentive to the words of Scripture, and especially those of the Gospels, and lead us to become true disciples of your Son, Jesus Christ. We make our prayer in his name, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

When the Apostle Paul gives advice to his co-worker Timothy about how to proceed in the mission entrusted to him in the community of Ephesus, he exhorts him: “Proclaim the word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient; convince, reprimand, encourage through all patience and teaching” (2Tim 4:2). Paul himself valued very much spreading the Good News among all; he exclaimed his need to preach the Gospel: “Woe to me if I do not preach it!” (1Cor 9:16) And when reflecting on his mission in Miletus, in front of the representatives of the communities in Asia Minor, he expresses his desire to complete the ministry he received from Jesus, “to bear witness to the gospel of God’s grace” (Acts 20:24).

With a similar zeal the Founder of the Divine Word missionaries, Arnold Janssen, was eager to spread the Word of God, understood both as the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ and as the words of Scripture. He considered it

very important that the religious congregation he founded would bear the name *Societas Verbi Divini*, Society of the Divine Word. He had to defend it against the suggestions made by the Roman Curia to change it to “adorers” of the Divine Word. We can find in his own family the roots of his reverence for the Word of God. His father Gerhard had a special devotion to the Prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18). He even knew it by heart, and during the winter months (October to April) in the evenings he used to pray it with the whole family. This must have influenced Arnold who dedicated his whole life to making “the Word who became flesh (Jn 1:14)” known and embraced by all.



In the footsteps of our Founder, “we see our special dedication to the Divine Word and his mission expressed in our name. His life is our life, his mission our mission.... Wherever the Church sends us, we are to proclaim the Gospel so that all peoples may walk in the way of salvation, freed from the darkness of sin by the light of the Word and the Spirit of grace” (Prologue of SVD Constitutions). “As co-workers of Christ

we seek inspiration in the word of God. By reading the Scriptures we open our hearts to the promptings of the Holy Spirit who helps us grasp the word, make it our own and announce it to the world” (Con. 407). In the SVD General Chapter 2000, the biblical apostolate was defined as one of our four characteristic dimensions, anchored in the experience of the Divine Word.

Today, when the value of the human word has dwindled so much, we consider listening to the Word of God, living it and proclaiming to others as our challenge. It brings life and has the inner power to edify relationships in families and communities, teaching us to respect each other.



brainstorming

- Where does God speak to us?
- What are the ways to listen to the Word of God?
- How can the Word of God be announced by “lay persons”?



objective: To realize the importance of the Word of God for the life of Christians

time: 15-20 minutes

process: Make groups of four or five persons. First, everybody makes his/her own list of situations linked to

the Word of God, where he/she experiences an encounter with the Word of God (e.g., at the Eucharist, when reading the Bible personally, etc.). Everyone tries to list as many as one can remember. After 2-3 minutes the group comes together, and each person shares his/her list. Observe the situations that were commonly listed, and then those singular ones not noticed by others. Discuss about the various ways one can encounter the Word of God in life.

REALITIES

The approach to the Bible in the life of lay persons may vary from place to place. In these days, it is popular to pick up a Bible quote as an inspiration for the day. This practice might be enjoyable, and give a taste of the Word of God, but it presents the risk of opening the Bible just occasionally or according to one's desire. The real challenge is to root one's whole life in the Word of God.

There are SVD parishes—particularly in Latin America and Africa—where lay people meet regularly in small groups to read the Bible together. They choose to go through it from its very beginning and read it continuously. They set forth as a small community listening to the Word of God, accompanied by the unseen presence of the Risen Christ, and discovering the plan of God even in the difficult and obscure moments of their lives (cf. Lk 24:13-35).

In collaboration with SVDs many parishes all over the world organize a Bible course. For a weekend or even the whole week they invite some resource persons and meet them every evening. This enables the people to go deeper into understanding the Scriptures (cf. Acts 8:26-39). They choose a theme related to their situation, as it appears in various places in the Bible, or focus on one certain figure of the biblical world, or simply study one particular book of the Bible.

A particular initiative has been observed in Russia. Families linked to an SVD parish decided to venerate with a small liturgy an icon of *Mater Verbi* (Mother of the Word). The icon is passed each day to another family, and each venerates it with a liturgy. The icon thus becomes “itinerant” and unites them spiritually. Also a group of lay associates in Germany found, despite their physical distance, their way of being joined. They committed themselves to pray every Monday the Prologue of John along with a Quarter Hour prayer. These elements link them both to the Founder, Arnold Janssen, whose family used to read the Prologue regularly, and to one another.

Yet another active involvement in the biblical apostolate is of small groups of people - “biblical teams” - in our parishes in Ecuador who not only meet together for reading and praying the Scripture, but also go out to other places to form others. They received basic biblical formation, and now they travel during the “biblical week” to the stations (*comunidades*) to teach the local people.





conversations

- * *What importance does the Word of God play in your life?*
- * *What are the possibilities of living the dimension of biblical apostolate in your context?*
- * *How could you contribute to organizing a group that regularly reads the Scripture?*
- * *Try to think about a plan of further Bible Study for your parish.*
- * *What kind of “outreach” might be done in your context to bring the Word of God to those who are not so familiar with it?*



word of god (suggested text)

John	1:1-18	(Incarnated Word)
Isaiah	55:8-11	(Efficiency of the Word of God)
Psalms	1	(Two ways)
Luke	24:13-35	(On the way to Emmaus)
Acts	8:26-39	(Philip’s evangelization)

questions for sharing on the word of god

- *What is the message of the text for you?*
- *What does it challenge you to do, and what needs to be changed in your life?*
- *To what kind of mission in the proclamation of the Word does it invite you?*



REFLECTION

“The existence of the Bible, as a book for the people, is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced. Every attempt to belittle it is a crime against humanity” (Immanuel Kant).

“We realize that in dealing with the Word of God, the Bible, we are talking about the very heart of the Society of the Divine Word.... The biblical apostolate forms an integral part of our heritage left to us by Blessed Arnold, and as Divine Word Missionaries we ought to make it a permanent trademark of our mission work” (SVD General Chapter, 1988).

The biblical apostolate in our Society encompasses basically two movements linked to the Word of God and its abiding in the hearts of people. First, this apostolate comprises the interiorizing of the Word of God in our own lives and, second, its announcement to people so that it might reach their hearts and allow them to be nourished by the same Word. Thus, a virtual triangle arises: there is the Word of God with whom we build our life (interiorization) and then we share with the others its message (proclamation), so that they themselves live a vivid relationship with this Word. “To evangelize we ourselves need to be evangelized first... Living by the Word is both foundation for, and essential dimension of, proclamation” (SVD document *Listen, My People*, III. 6).

Regarding the aspect of interiorization of the Word of God, we might remember the following. “The reading of the Bible is to be done in a prayerful setting which is conducive for openness to God. In the context of the liturgy, the saving presence of Christ is proclaimed under both Word and Sacrament. The reading of the Bible must help people to discover the true content of God’s Word to them. God’s Word is never to become an ideological or political tool.” (*Listen, My People*, III. 4) “Our task is to interpret our own life in faith and to read and interpret Scripture from this angle.... When our interpretation is detached from life, it will inevitably lead to a kind of sclerosis: the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” (2 Cor 3:6) (Gijs Bouwman, SVD)

For the aspect of proclamation, the 15th General Chapter expressed it with the term “prophetic dialogue”, an attitude of solidarity, respect, and love (cf. GS 3) in doing our mission with faith-seekers, the marginalized, and people of different cultures and religious traditions. “As we engage in dialogue with people who have no faith community and with faith-seekers, we feel personally called to a continual passing over from unbelief to deeper faith. At the same time, we feel called to cultivate a faith-filled community life more firmly rooted in Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God” (SVD General Chapter 2000, 57). “Attentive to the Word and Spirit of God and together with the poor and marginalized, we face the realities of oppression in our Church and in our world as we work for greater freedom” (SVD General Chapter 2000, 60).

“The Bible grows more beautiful, as we grow in our understanding of it” (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe).

THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

The Second Vatican Council opened the Scriptures for all the faithful. Its dogmatic constitution on Divine revelation, *Dei Verbum*, urged: “Easy access to sacred Scripture should be provided for all the Christian faithful” (DV 22). Chapter 6 of *Dei Verbum* is called the “Magna Carta” of the biblical apostolate in the Church.

The pontificate of Pope John Paul II was characterized by its biblical elements. One of the most important moments was the introduction of a key document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993). This document serves not only the experts, but is relevant for Bible study groups, too. The fourth part of it, “The Interpretation of the Bible in the Life of the Church,” deals with the “actualization” or practical application of the inspired Word of God in the life of the Church (methods and limits, inculturation and the practical use of the Bible in the liturgy, *Lectio Divina*, pastoral ministry, and ecumenism).

The greatest “biblical” achievement of Pope Benedict XVI was his convocation of the 12th Ordinary Synod of Bishops on “The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church” (October 5 to 26, 2008). The Synod called for a particular pastoral commitment emphasizing the centrality of the Word of God in the life of the Church. It called for a renewal of people’s faith in the Word of God. Following the post-synodal exhortation, *Verbum Domini* (2010) states: “In order to achieve the goal set by the Synod, namely, an increased emphasis on the Bible’s pastoral activity, all Christians and catechists in particular, need to receive suitable training. Attention needs to be paid to the biblical apostolate, which is a very valuable means to that end, as the Church’s experience has shown” (VD 75). It recommends the biblical apostolate “not alongside other forms of pastoral work, but as a means of letting the Bible inspire all pastoral work” (VD 73; cf. DV 24).

“There is a close relationship between the testimony of Scripture and the witness of the lives given by believers. Christian witness communicates the word attested in the Scriptures. The Scriptures explain the witness which Christians are called to give by their lives” (VD 97).

“The poor are the first ones entitled to hear the proclamation of the Gospel; they need not only bread but also words of life. We need to recognize and appreciate the fact that the poor are themselves agents of evangelization” (VD 107).

Pope Francis reaffirms the teaching of his predecessors. In his post-synodal exhortation (*Evangelii Gaudium*) on the new evangelization, he wishes “to encourage the Christian faithful to embark upon a new chapter of evangelization marked by this joy [the one coming from encounter with Christ], while pointing out new paths for the Church’s journey in years to come” (EG 1). Chapter 3 tackles the Scriptures challenging Christians to evangelize anew, i.e., to proclaim the Word of God in the contemporary setting, especially in the pastoral task of preaching.



celebration of the word of God

A group can arrange a celebration of the Word of God – as a model, one may take Bible Service in Honor of the Divine Word in Vademecum SVD, 401.2. Or if feasible a group can also have a Eucharistic celebration.



commitment

- * After a moment of silent reflection each member of the group writes down what might be his/her personal commitment(s) regarding the biblical apostolate.
- * If appropriate and individually agreed, some of the commitments might be shared aloud.
- * The sheet with the commitment(s) should be kept by each member in a proper place to be evaluated regularly.

Some examples:

- In order to deepen my relationship with the Word of God I commit myself to...
- I commit myself to dedicate daily/weekly this time to read the Scripture....
- I commit myself to participate in a biblical course... [when and where]
- I commit myself to organize a biblical group in the parish with this aim...
- I commit myself to share the Word of God with others in this way...



- L. Mother of the Word and of hope.*
- A. In your heart as Mother you nurtured a hope. In our hearts as people you kept alive a promise. In your fertile womb you cradled the Son of Love.*
And God's dream for justice and peace for all found in your 'Yes' the mighty response that would become light and salvation for all people.
- L. Mother of the Word, companion of the poor,*
- A. Look upon our life, our struggles and our hope.*
May the Spirit regenerate our communities.
Help us to be faithful to your Son in our time in history, praising as you did our Merciful God. Amen.



song

Choose an appropriate Marian Hymn to conclude the session



MISSION ANIMATION

Father of all, you sent your Son to carry out your mission of redeeming the world. Many still have not heard his message of truth and love. Let the light of your Gospel of love so shine in the world that it may be transformed into a worthy home for all your children of every race and country. Bless all the lay groups who are engaged in mission animation throughout the world that their work may bear fruit. Together with them, may we too share in the missionary work of the whole Church. Enlighten our minds to be bearers of Good News and to be doers of the Word. Amen.



We focus on the role of the laity in missionary animation. The Church invites us to be joyful announcers of the Good News, announcing the resurrection of the Lord, living with hope and spreading joy to everyone. This missionary task concerns us all. Let us be open and generous in allowing ourselves to be challenged, enlightened and accompanied by the Lord of Life.

Wherever the Society of the Divine Word works, we seek to keep alive the responsibility of each local Church for the universal mission of the Church (see Con. 102.2). The Church by her very nature is missionary (*Ad Gentes* [AG] 2); Pope John Paul invited the Church “to renew her missionary commitment” (*Redemptoris Missio* [RM] 2). Thus, every Christian is a missionary and we are all called to show witness to our faith in word and deed.

We are all missionaries; we are sent on mission by God. Mission is God's mission, *Missio Dei*, not our mission. It is going out on a journey to spread the Kingdom of God and establish the Kingdom of God. This is the mission of every Christian.

St. Arnold Janssen was deeply involved in a wide variety of activities to encourage a greater awareness of, and commitment to, world mission. One of his main purposes in starting a magazine, *Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart*, was to promote the missionary cause, especially among the laity.

The basic attitude in mission animation is to involve others, to animate them with our enthusiasm for the journey to the Kingdom (SVD General Chapter 2006, 9). Involving everyone in a parish/institution is important, because everyone has a mission to share the Gospel of joy and to lead others to the Kingdom.

Pope Francis says, "A Church which 'goes forth' is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity



does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world." (EG 46) "Let us go forth, then, let us go forth to offer everyone the life of Jesus Christ. Here I repeat for the entire Church (priests, religious and laity)... I prefer a Church

which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security." (EG 49)

Today we are called in a special way to respond to the missionary challenge of an increasingly multicultural world. And in this context, a principal goal of mission should be the promotion of a truly intercultural Church. A truly intercultural Church is one which is characterized by three things: namely, the Church as a home for people of different cultures, the Church as an instrument of intercultural dialogue, and the Church as a sign of the all-inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God. (Antonio Pernia SVD)



brainstorming

- What do you understand by mission animation?
- What ideas do you have about the expression “committed lay person”?
- What is the meaning of the phrase: “Church which goes forth” and “Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty”?



dynamics

objective: Analysis of how each lay person could grow as a missionary

time: 15-20 minutes

process: The whole group is divided into small groups which then discuss about what tasks each individual or an association has undertaken as a missionary.

Discuss what you could do in the coming months to share the joy of the Gospel.

Write on a sheet the expectations. For example: “The Vincent de Paul Society could be kind to...”; “The Charismatic group could pray for the sick and visit the hospital on every Saturday at...”; “We need to form a group for...”, etc.

REALITIES

In general, people are committed, have faith and participate in Church activities. But the active participation of people in the Church and outside the Church to witness to their faith is diminishing. There are many reasons for this decline. But at the same time, some understand their missionary vocation as lay persons as active participation and involve themselves in many activities. Their commitment, sacrifice and generosity are tremendous, and one wonders where they get their energy and strength.

In Portugal, there are two SVD lay partner groups: *SVD Friends* in most of the parishes where the SVDs work, and *Diálogos*. They have their vision and mission statement as well as a systematic plan of action. People with rich experience and commitment are members of these groups, which have done much to help the missions: prayers, social outreach programmes, and financial help.



Auxiliary Missionaries of the Divine Word (MAVD, Mexico) has many activities. Their formation includes basic studies of spirituality and of mission which are complemented with activities in diverse areas such as Bible, Com-

munication, Peace & Justice and Integrity of Creation.

In the parish of Kikwit in D.R. Congo, the *Friends of SVD* are numerous and are very active. In the city of Kenge, the Friends of SVD too are very active. Each week there are different activities: Biblical sharing, Prayer, Mass, meeting and some social work.

The Disciples of Divine Word (DDW) group in Mumbai has regular animation programs. Some members contribute their time and talents in projects of the Janseva Society, Tala (indigenous people mission), and share their expertise by visiting the Self Help Groups regularly. Some of their members help financially to take care of the needs of HIV-infected children of Asha Jyothi, Hyderabad. They visit Asha Jyothi at least twice in a year, and they bring the poor indigenous children to Mumbai for a broadening experience.

Lay Missionaries of the Divine Word (MLVD), is an Evangelization team in Riverside, California and it has grown as an established movement, recognized by both the SVD Congregation and the Diocese of San Bernardino. It is a non-profit organization in the State of California with approximately 60 members, many of whom have consecrated a year of their life for the sake of the mission, and all are personally committed to the proclamation of the Gospel. Mission work includes Bible study and Adult Faith formation classes, Childhood Missionaries, Christian Evangelization retreats, prison ministry, and the KAIROS Catholic Store. This store is where this lay group's volunteers serve seven days a week and they provide assistance in the spiritual journey of many who come to KAIROS in search of God and not just for the religious articles sold in this store.





conversations

- * *How do you give witness to your faith in your life?*
- * *What type of formation is needed to be aware that each Christian is a missionary?*
- * *How can you promote mission consciousness among others in your parish/institution?*
- * *What are the possibilities existing in your location to reach out to others: e.g. faith sharing, creating a network to do various ministries, to collect funds for missions, etc.?*
- * *How can you strengthen an SVD Lay Partner group in your location? How can you start a new SVD Lay Partner group in your locality?*



word of God *(suggested text)*

Luke 4:16-20	(Vision of mission)
Mathew 5:13-16	(Light and Salt)
Mathew 28:16-20	(Mission outreach)
Luke 10:25-37	(Good Samaritan story)
Acts 17:22-34	(Cross-cultural Evangelism)

questions for sharing on the word of God

- *What is the meaning of mission in this text?*
- *What is the personal message of this text for you and for your family?*
- *What is the implication of this text for this group/community/association? How do you want to actualize the meaning of this text?*

REFLECTIONS

From the very beginning the Father has been calling all creation into being through the Word. This animating Word whom we proclaim continues to invite and enable collaboration in God's mission. The local churches have a duty to respond to the needs of the world that surrounds them, and to respond to the needs of brothers and sisters all over the world. Everything was made through the Divine Word, and so we are dedicated to the transformation of the world.

Participation in God's mission requires a deep discernment of how God is at work in the world today; all need to read the "signs of the time". All of us need to listen to the Spirit to know the will of the Triune God and what the Spirit wants us to do now.

Mission animation calls us to trust the Church and all the members of the Church, because the mission of Jesus has a Church. Thus, the members discern their mission in their local place, and this will open up a larger picture of one's life-style, thinking pattern, and what one does.

The mission *has us*, all the people. "If mission precedes the church, and constitutes it as such, there will be no 'passive' Christians. Baptism will be understood as the main 'ordination', giving every Christian the privilege and the duty to minister through a life lived in witness of the gospel in the world. Mission will be understood as part of Christian life." (Steve Bevans, SVD)

Realizing the Reign of God is our mission, yet we know this "is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do something, and to do it very well" (Archbishop Oscar Romero). The local church is called to turn to the world to give witness to the Good News through its presence, its service, its joy and hope.

Pope Benedict said, “It is necessary to understand the need to translate the Word we have heard into gestures of love, because this is the only way to make the Gospel proclamation credible...to give a clear and common witness to a life according to the Word of God, demonstrated by Jesus, is therefore an indispensable criterion to verify the mission of the Church.” (Homily, Oct 26, 2008)

“Against the growing culture of death, we join all men and women of goodwill and pledge to promote a culture of life. We oppose all threats to human life including unjust economic structures, genocide, capital punishment and torture, abortion and euthanasia, and we strongly support efforts to protect lives where they are most at risk.” (SVD General Chapter 2012, 1.3)

“Across the world, we are witnessing transformations in the family structure due to migration and broader cultural changes. Domestic violence, especially again women and children, and the often precarious situation of the elderly are of particular concern.” (SVD General Chapter 2012, 1.4)
We need to respond to these situations.

The deepest and best understanding of our call to mission is expressed in the term “dialogue”, more specifically, “prophetic dialogue”. The groups of people with whom we can enter into dialogue are: people who have no faith community or religious affiliation, people who are poor and marginalized, people of different cultures, and people of different faith traditions and secular ideologies. (SVD General Chapter 2000, 3.2)

Helping the needy, feeding the hungry, taking care of the sick, sharing our resources with those who lack them, and showing solidarity with those who need financial sustenance are values that come from the Gospel. We could share our resources with those who need financial assistance. Creative ways of collecting money and making it available to the poor are also missionary activities.

THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

The Second Vatican Council emphasized in a special way how the missionary task, that of broadening the boundaries of faith, belongs to every baptized person and all Christian communities; since “the people of God live in communities, especially in dioceses and parishes, and become somehow visible in them, it is up to these to witness Christ before the nations.” (AG 37)

The mission of the Church is a single but complex reality, and it develops in a variety of ways according to the context. “The witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission...witness is *the very life of the missionary, of the Christian family, and of the ecclesial community*, which reveal a new way of living.” (RM 42)

“The Christian faithful, having different gifts (cf. Rom. 12:6), according to each one’s opportunity, ability, charisms and ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10), must all cooperate in spreading the Gospel. Hence all alike, those who sow and those who reap (cf. Jn 4:37), those who plant and those who irrigate, must be one (cf. 1 Cor. 3:8), so that ‘in a free and orderly fashion cooperating toward the same end,’ they may spend their forces harmoniously for the building up of the Church.” (AG 28)

Pope Francis said, “Real mission is made up of ‘attraction to Christ,’ concrete worship and charity, which is service to Jesus present in the least of our brothers (and sisters)”. (07 October 2016) “The Church is at the service of the mission, and that it is not the Church who makes the mission, but the mission that makes the Church...the mission is not a tool, but rather a starting point and aim.” (03 December 2015)

“The Church is at the service of the Reign of God” (*Redemptoris Missio* 18). The Church has two tasks: to promote values of the Reign of God—peace, justice, freedom fellowship, etc., and to have dialogue with cultures and religions. (RM 17)

“While it is quite true that the essential vocation and mission of the lay faithful is to strive that earthly realities and all human activity may be transformed by the Gospel, none of us can think we are exempt from concern for the poor and for social justice.” (EG 201) “Our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast, is the basis of our concern for the integral development of society’s most neglected members.” (EG 186)

“For the Church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a cultural, sociological, political or philosophical one. God shows the poor ‘his first mercy’. This divine preference has consequences for the faith life of all Christians, since we are called to have ‘this mind... which was in Jesus Christ’ (Phil 2:5).” (EG 198)

Pope Francis highlighted the need “to live in this universal dimension, responding to the mandate of Jesus: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19). This is something enriching for each particular Church, each community, because sending missionaries is never a loss, but a gain. I appeal to all those who feel this calling to respond generously to the Holy Spirit, according to your state in life, and not to be afraid to be generous with the Lord.” (Mission Sunday Message 2013)

Pope Francis emphasized: “Faith is God’s gift and not the result of proselytizing; rather it grows thanks to the faith and charity of evangelizers who witness to Christ. As they travel through the streets of the world, the disciples of Jesus need to have a love without limits, the same measure of love that our Lord has for all people. We proclaim the most beautiful and greatest gifts that he has given us: his life and his love.” (Mission Sunday Message 2016)



- * *How can a lay person become an evangelizer?*
- * *What are the avenues through which you could engage in a ministry in your parish/institution?*
- * *Spell out how you and your friends could help the poor and needy in your locality or in a mission?*
- * *How could you form a group to promote dialogue with the poor, cultures and religions?*
- * *How could you join with SVD missionaries to promote missionary activities and the charism of the Society? And how could the SVD missionaries join with you in doing mission?*



celebration of the word of God / eucharist

According to your local situation and practice, a group can arrange a celebration of the Word of God. If possible, a group can also have a Eucharistic celebration.





commitment

- After a moment of silence, ask each one to write on a sheet of paper, what are the commitments that they would like to make regarding mission animation.
- According to the situation, some commitments could be read out (give them freedom to read or not to read).
- Ask them to keep this commitment in a prominent place to often remind them of it.

Some examples

I commit myself to live my faith by.....

I commit myself to preach the Word of God to.....(children, adults, families, faith seekers)

I commit myself to join a group.....

I commit myself to continue the charism of SVD mission through.....

I commit myself to be a missionary for a period of.....(months, years) in.....(parish, mission station, region, country)

I commit myself to give a donation of money.....to the poor in the missions once in a....(month/year).

I commit myself to promote mission animation in our parish/ neighborhood/working place.





Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Son Jesus and for the gift of faith to us. We thank you for all the persons who participated in the sharing. Bless all missionaries that their work may bear fruit. Give us courage and strength to live our faith, and to spread the message of your love through our words and deeds. Bless all of us that we may continue your mission. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



Select any appropriate hymn to conclude the session.





JUSTICE, PEACE AND INTEGRITY OF CREATION



Father, we thank you for the gift of your creation. All things are created as good things, as they reflect your goodness. All things inter-relate in harmony, as they show the love and communion of the Holy Trinity. We ask you to send your Spirit upon us, to guide us, and to witness your love for your creation. Be with us so that we, as your son Jesus did, can accompany the most marginalized people. Make us the salt of the earth, and the light of the world to spread Gospel values in our society. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

When Jesus started his mission, he quoted Isaiah 61:1-2. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.” (Lk 4:18-19) This is the mission statement of Jesus, and as we see from the Gospels, Jesus was always faithful to this mission, in both word and deed.

Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) is a characteristic dimension of the life and mission of the Divine Word Missionaries. From the beginning of the congregation, St. Arnold Janssen responded with deeds to the social needs of poverty and religious persecution brought about by the Industrial Revolution and Kulturkampf.

How is your local situation? What do you think of the current and ongoing international events? In our globalized world, social issues look too enormous and too complicated, but they are always somehow connected to your local situation. Saint Teresa of Calcutta said “What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family.”

So as members of the Arnoldus Family, let us start recognizing local social issues as a part of our life and mission. Let us share our concern and take a step forward together. In the following sessions, we use the “See, Judge, and Act” method to identify, analyze and react to a particular local social issue. “See” would be dynamics and realities. “Judge” would be conversation, Word of God, the teaching of the Church and reflection. “Act” would be the celebration of the Word of God/Eucharist and commitment.



brainstorming

- What comes to your mind when you hear the term “Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation”?
- What do you understand as the Church’s reason for caring about JPIC?
- What do you understand about the meaning of “construction of the Kingdom of God”? How does JPIC play a role in the construction of God’s kingdom?



dynamics

objective: To identify and analyze the pressing JPIC issues in your local area, and seek a way of reaction/response.

process: Break up into small groups and identify one particular social concern in your local area. Discuss the following: a) Who are directly/indirectly related/affected by this social concern, and what is happening to them? b) What are the people feeling and eventually doing? c) What do you feel and how do you respond?

REALITIES

Here are some examples of JPIC actions and commitments around the world by SVD animated communities.

In the North-eastern part of South Africa, there is an SVD parish in the city of Giyani. The SVD established an organization called St. Augustine Home Based Care Project in the parish which offers an extension of health care services by visiting the homes of chronically ill patients. This is done in collaboration with the local government. They provide service in fourteen villages comprised of nearly seven hundred fifty households. This project also supports the local clinics by distributing medicines to HIV/AIDS patients at the center. This program is monitored by a trained nurse. The parish also established a JPIC committee to promote respect for women, fight against corruption, and to save electricity in the parish.



St. Joseph Parish in Jakarta, Indonesia decided to become a “green parish” after participating in a workshop on JPIC. They stopped decorating the Church with freshly cut flowers and started placing potted plants. Instead of cut flowers, the parish asks each bridal couple to offer potted plants at the wedding celebration. The potted flower plants offerings are displayed in the churchyard or they are used as a decorative piece on



the altar on Sundays or Solemnity and Feast days. Their parish is now famous for beautiful plants which contribute to creating a better environment and prayerful atmosphere in the Church. Parishioners formed groups to promote this movement in their houses and among neighborhoods, not just within the Christian community but with the Muslim families as well.

During the refugee crisis in 2015, an SVD parish in Vienna, Austria, responded to the needs of people. The refugees came by train, stopped in Vienna and stayed one night at the station before they proceeded to Germany. The parish donated tents and started hosting around 60 refugees every night in their parish halls. The parishioners, together with SVD confreres, formed some volunteer groups who prepared the beds, distributed clothes, served hot meals, provided basic medical services, and gave places for baths.

In Santiago, Chile, there is a group of Catholics who serve indigenous people called the “Mapuche”. They gather not only for pastoral work for the Mapuche people, but more importantly they organize seminars

in parishes and schools to help people understand the Mapuche culture and history. They also continue to dialogue with the Catholic Church authorities. The SVD has been accompanying and supporting this activity.





conversations

Why do such situations exist? Consider economic, political, social, historical and cultural factors.

- * Economic factors: Who gets the benefit?*
- * Political factors: Who decides?*
- * Social factors: Who is left out?*
- * Historical factors: What past circumstances are related?*
- * Cultural factors: How does culture influence the issue?*



word of god *(suggested text)*

Luke 10:25-37	(Good Samaritan)
Ephesians 2:14-17	(Break down the dividing wall)
1 Col. 12:12-27	(One body, many parts)
Mark 2:14-17	(No one excluded)
Romans 14:17-19	(The Kingdom of God - justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit)

questions for sharing on the word of god

- *What struck you most?*
- *Did you find any “Gospel value” which relates to the issue you chose?*
- *How do you interpret the issue in relation to the Gospel value?*

REFLECTION

If we read the Gospels from beginning to end, we may be able to imagine the whole personality of Jesus. His character, approach, tendency, hope and even his presence tell us how much he committed himself to showing the love of God to the most deprived and marginalized people. He expressed how much he needed the disciples to work on this together; how much he hoped to break down the walls, and to arrive at a more inclusive society. What we want to be and to do is to be like him and to follow his path.

The SVD Constitutions give us a particular JPIC foundation. “The poor have a privileged place in the gospel. In a world deeply scarred by injustice and inhuman living conditions, our faith calls us to recognize the presence of Christ in the poor and the oppressed. We thus commit ourselves to fostering unity and justice and to overcoming egoism and the abuse of power. We consider it our duty to promote justice according to the gospel in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.” (112)

Pope Francis often says that he likes a Church that is poor and for the poor. The poor “have much to teach us. Not only do they share in the *Sensus Fidei*, but in their difficulties, they know the suffering Christ. We need to let ourselves be evangelized by them.” (EG 198)

JPIC is often described as a “right relationship with God, others, and creation”. “The human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that he or she enters into relationships, going out of themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that Trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created. Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of that global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity.” (*Laudato Si'* [LS] 240)

“As followers of the Divine Word, we are called to proclaim the love of God, love of neighbor and even love of enemies. We work for justice and peace and the progress of peoples.” (SVD General Chapter, 2012, 1.8)

THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

Justice: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church’s mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.” (*Justice in the World*, 1971)

Peace: “Yet peace is but an empty word if it does not rest upon that order which Our hope prevailed upon Us to set forth in outline in this encyclical. It is an order that is founded on truth, built up on justice, nurtured and animated by charity, and brought into effect under the auspices of freedom.” (*Pacem in Terris*, 167)

“Active nonviolence is a way of showing that unity is truly more powerful and more fruitful than conflict. Everything in the world is inter-connected. Differences can cause frictions, but let us face them constructively and non-violently.” (Pope Francis’ Message for World Day of Peace, 2017)

Environment: “What kind of world do we want to leave to those who come after us, to children who are now growing up?” (LS 160)

“I urgently appeal . . . for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affects us all.” (LS 14)

Economy: “In the economic and social realms, too, the dignity and complete vocation of the human person and the welfare of society as a whole are to be respected and promoted. For men are the source, the center, and the purpose of all economic and social life.” (GS 63)

Equality of human dignity: “Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God’s design.” (CCC, no. 1935)

Migration: “Every human being has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the confines of his own country. When there are just reasons in favor of it, he must be permitted to migrate to other countries and to take up residence there. The fact that he is a citizen of a particular state does not deprive him of membership in the human family, nor of citizenship in the universal society, the common, world-wide fellowship of men.” (John Paul II, addressed to the *New World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Immigrants*, 1985)

Charity: “Charity will never be true charity unless it takes justice into account Let no one attempt with small gifts of charity to exempt themselves from the great duties imposed by justice.” (*Divini Redemptoris*, 49)

“You are not making a gift of your possessions to the poor person. You are handing over to him what is his. For what has been given in common for the use of all, you have arrogated to yourself. The world is given to all, and not only to the rich.” (Saint Ambrose)



conversations

- *What insight does the teaching of the Church give to the issue you chose?*
- *What has been said by the local Church on the issue?*



celebration of the word of God / eucharist

As followers of Jesus, we have a unique way of working on social issues. Our work should be impelled by the love of Jesus, and guided by the Holy Spirit. In this sense, prayer is an important and integral part of Catholic JPIC. You are invited to celebrate, in solidarity with the people who are affected by the issue which you identified, either a liturgy of the Word or a Eucharist.



commitment

You have identified the issue, analyzed the situation, reflected on the points of view from the social side and from that of the faith. Now, what action needs to be taken to change the situation? How can you address the causes? Each one or the group writes down his or her commitment on a sheet of paper and presents the points to the group.



A Prayer to Share Vision and Mission (inspired by Archbishop Oscar Romero)

- L. *We come before you Lord accompanied by Saints Arnold and Joseph sharing the vision entrusted to us.*
- A. *We know what we are about, planting seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted in the hearts of the people of our communities. We know we cannot do everything and we feel liberated in accepting that fact.*
We hear your call, Lord, to do something and to do it as well as we can. We are workers, not master builders, ministers and not messiahs. We are prophets for a future not our own, not seeing the results. We ask, with Saints Arnold and Joseph that we too might have hearts that know no bounds.
We lift our hearts to you in prayer with Jesus, in solidarity with all those in need at this time.
Amen.



song

Select any appropriate hymn to conclude the session.



C O M M U N I C A T I O N

To the Spirit-Communicator

(Fr. Walter Moschetti)

Holy Spirit, make effective the marvel of communication in us, so that we may be deeply united with your divine life. May we become the living image of Christ and sanctify our life in the perfect light of the Father.



a

Holy Spirit, make effective the marvel of communication in the Church, so that as a community we may be one in faith and love. Strengthen the bonds of unity in the People of God so that it may grow as a community in respect and mutual dialogue.

Holy Spirit, make effective the marvel of communication in the world, so that having overcome the barriers that separate us and having removed the walls of division, evil may be overcome by goodness and hatred by love. Amen.

Communication, be it verbal or nonverbal, is present in every moment of our lives; in our encounter with other persons (inter/intrapersonal communication), in the community (group communication), in our contact with large audiences (mass-communication), and in our relationship with God.

At its deepest level, communication is the surrender of self in love and, consequently, a required basic attitude in whoever aspires to be a Divine Word Missionary (Con. 115). “As members of the Society of the Divine Word, we consider it our duty to proclaim the Word of God to all...” (Con. 102) The objectives of the SVD communication ministry are to spread the Word of God (Bible Apostolate), create a greater missionary awareness among nations (Missionary Animation), and to promote social concerns (Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation).

Arnold Janssen, spurred on by his missionary zeal, was a real communicator of his time. Through person to person communication, he attracted and inspired others towards the missionary ideal. He also availed of the mass media and the communication system of his time, the printing press. Through the magazine, *The Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, Arnold promoted his missionary ideas, inspired other companions for the cause, and raised funds for his foundation. He used to say, “The pastor of souls has to make use of all the means indicated by the signs of the times.”

Arnold Janssen saw very clearly that communication cannot be limited to media communication alone. He expressed this in many ways: his contact with the first Divine Word Missionaries and with those who would later be the co-founders of the Congregations of Sisters; his constant contact by letter with missionaries he had sent to various countries; his “Open Door” program (where travelling Brothers would dedicate their vacation-time to enrolling subscribers for the magazine); and the promotion of Anthropology, Ethnology, and Linguistics for the service of the missionary cause. All of this highlights the importance he gave to communication on an interpersonal, group and intercultural level.

In our Society, the ministry of Communication is an essential dimension of our mission, motivating the youth not to be mere consumers, but



to produce and transmit information, to give the community the opportunity to express their opinions and to suggest changes. Good communication and ethics should reflect the expectations of the people to promote change for the common good.

Our Society derives its name from the Word of God as an expression of the dialogues in God himself and between God and humanity, just as it is presented in the Prologue of St. John’s Gospel. By being a Divine Word

Missionary, every member of the Society is called to communicate (Con. 102). This commitment invites us to leave our self-centeredness, and to be open to encountering those whose culture, creed or socioeconomic situation differs from ours.

We are challenged by our missionary commitment to live in communion. Our understanding of communication, as one of the characteristic dimensions of our life and mission, broadens our vision of communication. It is not something purely instrumental and centered on the media, but is rather a personal disposition and human process of socialization and communion. Our search is for communion through dialogue. The horizon of this dialogue is a network of persons in the process of deepening interpersonal relationships.

sharing in the group

- In your opinion, what is the scope of communication?
- What are the present-day difficulties for communication?
- How can you strengthen your relationship with others using interpersonal communication?



dynamics

dialogue through drawings

materials: Flipchart and felt pens.

time: Calculate 10 to 15 minutes for work in pairs, and the same

amount of reflection.

watchword: Each one selects a marker color. Once chosen, he or she looks for someone with a different color. In a comfortable place, they sit side by side at a flip-chart. They hold their color marker in the hand with which they do not usually write. In silence, without dialogue or planning, they begin to draw together while not dividing the paper.

Here they will feel quite anxious because internally they are pushed by the demands for perfection, with the sense that they just cannot do so. However, as the time goes by, they gain confidence and can even enjoy the process.

Participants need to be guided to pay attention to the process of drawing and the emotions that appear while interacting with their partner. They may alternate, one could draw first and then the other. They may both draw at the same time or use the other person's hand if this is acceptable. This technique is necessary for the topic of communication and creativity, since it supposes awareness of the sentiments arising in the interaction and the possibilities of generating creativity in an artistic work.

Having finished the experience, there is a sharing of the expectations that surfaced during the work. Then there follows an analysis of the type of relation experienced by the group members during the process of drawing, and in what manner the creativity of each participant was modified.

another dynamic: Let each participant examine his or her manner of communication, dialogue, speaking, writing in social media or the social networks, etc. The following questions could be used to share one's reflection.

- Do you use adequate and opportune words in your conversations?
- How do you express yourself in relating with others?
With positive energy?
- Do you measure your words to avoid offending others?
- How could you improve your communication skills?

(Other communication dynamics could be adapted according to the size or age of a group.)

REALITIES

The ministry of communication is part of our apostolic work. Both traditional and modern communication tools are useful in fostering our pastoral work, interpersonal relationships, and group interactions, especially in grassroots Christian communities and small pastoral groups. Most of our provinces, regions, and missions have a communication coordinator who is responsible for the promotion of the communication apostolate.

In addition, in some provinces or regions, we have communication centers and publishing houses, such as: Editorial Verbo Divino, Spain; Sat Prakashan Sanchar Kendra, India; Arnold Institute of Media Studies, India; St. Arnold Vikas Sanchar, India; Kairos Communication Center, Ireland; Moyens de Communication Sociale, Congo; Steyl Medien, Germany; Verbo Filmes, Brazil; Wordnet Productions, USA, etc. Many confreres, together with the laity, work in these centers, and these are platforms of communication to spread and share the Word of God, to awaken the missionary conscience of local Christian communities, and to promote the cause of justice, peace and the integrity of creation.



Most provinces, regions, and missions also have web pages, radio and television programs, magazines and social networks, in which they report their missionary activities and those of the congregation. For some years, the provinces of Germany and Central Europe have been working on a joint project of the Stadt Gottes magazine. Many parishes use parish bulletins, short films, PowerPoint presentations, social networks, etc., for catechetical work and mission awareness programs, as well as for informing the parish community.



conversations

- * *How can the lay partners involve themselves in communication ministry to actualize the charism of the Society?*
- * *What kind of collaboration could you offer in your environment to work with the communication structures of the Divine Word?*
- * *How could you use communication tools to form or inform yourself, and train others in religious education?*



word of god *(suggested text)*

Jer. 36: 2-4; 27-32	(Provide yourself with a scroll and write)
Proverbs 15:1-4	(A kind answer soothes anger)
John 1:1-14	(And the Word was made flesh)
John 7:40-46	(No one ever spoke like this man)
James 1:19-23	(Be doers of the Word)

questions for sharing the word of god

- What strikes you most in this text?
- What is the text telling you about communication of the love of God?
- How could you take up the challenge of being a lay person who communicates the love of God?
- What are the contributing factors that make the Good News very attractive?

REFLECTION

In the Gospel of John 7:40-53, we read: “At that time some of the multitudes who had heard him said, this is truly the Prophet.” Others said, “This is the Messiah.... No one ever spoke like this man.”

Jesus was a great speaker and an excellent communicator. His listeners marveled at the way he was speaking. His words captivated them. His way of saying things was attractive, and he connected well with those who had an open heart to receive his message. In his discourses and preaching, Jesus uses direct and appropriate language, loaded with symbols and examples proper to the daily life of those where he grew up and lived. He makes use of local situations to direct his message to his audience, and he establishes a good connection with his dialogue partners.

If we consider Jesus as a model in our way of communicating a message, what should Christian communication be? What should be the right profile of this communication? A Christian communicator must first be a lover of Christ, his/her reference, and model as a communicator. In that sense, the first responsibility of a Christian communicator, of each member of the Church, is to communicate the truth of the Gospel with clarity and precision. The message we convey is the message of love, mercy, unity, forgiveness, hope, justice, and peace, etc.

We also express this truth of the Gospel, on the one hand, with our life. We are invited to be, first and foremost, witnesses of the Gospel. That is, to turn our communication into life and toward the values which are missing in society today. On the other hand, we should not fear using the media available to us, the mass media (radio, the press, and television) and the social media to communicate the truth of the Gospel. However, instead of adapting our message to suit the medium, we must use the medium to present the message in the clearest, most accurate and complete way possible.

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel” (Mk 16:15). The media and the new technologies of information and communication offer

us many possibilities to transmit the Word of God. They are means of evangelization, even more so for the new evangelization. Our Founding Father, Arnold Janssen, was able to use the convenient medium of communication of his time, the press, through the magazine *The Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*. This was his medium to promote his missionary ideas. Our communication, as missionaries of the Word and as laity of the Divine Word, covers a broad range of activities that include the use of various media. Now, we must not lose sight of the fact that the media is to support or channel the right message and should not distort the message or the truth, or substitute it. There comes the importance of also evangelizing the media.

Pope Francis, in the message for the 2017 World Communication Day, says, “I would like to encourage everyone to engage in constructive forms of communication that reject prejudice towards others and foster a culture of encounter, helping all of us to view the world around us with realism and trust....to contribute to the search for an open and creative style of communication that never seeks to glamourize evil but instead to concentrate on solutions and to inspire a positive and responsible approach on the part of its recipients. I ask everyone to offer the people of our time storylines that are at heart “good news”.

questions for group sharing

- How can you use the media to spread the Word of God, to awaken missionary awareness and to promote justice, peace and the integrity of creation?
- What kind of message do you transmit on the social network?
- What news do you post on social networks? Are they bad or good?
- How could you inform the public, private and ecclesial media of your environment?
- How can we promote religious ethics in the media?

COMMUNICATION IN THE CHURCH

The mission of the Church is to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The mass media afford the Church an excellent instrument for spreading the Gospel and religious values. They also promote dialogue as well as ecumenical and interreligious cooperation. Thus they have a role in defending the solid principles that are indispensable for constructing a society which respects the dignity of the human person and the common good.

The Vatican II decree on the Media of Social Communications (*Inter Mirifica*, 1963) signaled a huge change. New ways were opened up to communicate with ease ideas and news promoting and strengthening the Kingdom of God in a way that was broader and more effective. This document highlights communication as an instrument to possess and utilize wide-reaching communication media to proclaim the Word of God to great masses of people.

In *Ad Gentes* (1965), the decree of Vatican II, to talk about the Church is to talk about mission. Communication is an essential dimension of mission. Mission originates in the Trinity-“God in Communion”-who initiates communication with us so that we may come to know him, enter into a relationship with him to live as his children, and be instruments and messengers of his love. Thus understood, the mission of the Church is to continue the process of communication of God with us.

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications published a pastoral instruction, *Communio et Progressio* (1971). In this document, the Church does not limit itself to seeing communications as a marvelous instrument for proclaiming the Word of God, but also elaborates on what we could call an understanding of the community “of communications”. Taking as a basic departure point and model the central mystery of eternal communion between Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the unity and fraternity of all are the main objectives of all communication. (CP 8)

The Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) stresses the importance of the use of communications in the various stages of evangelization. It also says, “Our century is characterized by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation, catechesis or the further deepening of faith cannot do without these means.” (EN 45)

As explicitly requested by *Inter Mirifica* of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI put in motion the writing of an annual message for the World Day of Social Communications. Every year since then, this day is celebrated with a message from the Pope underlining the importance of using the communications media for evangelization in the Church, while also encouraging their responsible use for the betterment of the human condition.

Communication is not just an option for the Church. It is a mission. Ever since the time of our Founder, Arnold Janssen, Divine Word Missionaries are fully conscious of seeing communication as essential to their mission. The same holds true for the lay partners of the Divine Word Missionaries.

sharing in the groups

- *How do you avail of the internet and social websites? How could you use them to communicate the Good News to people?*
- *How should we make the best use of our communications media to promote social concerns in society?*
- *How could you share your experiences of faith with others in social networks?*
- *How can we make the best use of traditional and modern communication technologies, to promote interpersonal relationships as well as the interaction of groups in our parishes, basic Christian communities and smaller pastoral groups?*



celebration of the word of god / eucharist

The Eucharist can be celebrated in such a way that it can truly be a moment of personal-individual dialogue with God and a community encounter of the participants.



commitment

In any opportunity that we have to communicate with others, we must start with the principles of dialogue, sincerity, truthfulness, and fraternity. These principles help us build bridges between peoples, to respect every person, no matter what their background, status, religion or beliefs are.

I commit myself to be a true witness of love, mercy, forgiveness, and hope in the media and in my way of communicating with others.

I commit to spreading the Word of God through.....

I commit to using the social media for.....

I undertake to work with the communication center as.....



song

Select any appropriate hymn to conclude the session.



The Communicator's Invocation

Lord, make me an instrument of communication.
Where so many hurl bombs of destruction
May I be the bearer of a word of a union!
Where so many seek to be served
May I radiate the joy of serving!
Where so many close their fist to strike and hurt
May I open my heart and arms to welcome and embrace!
Where so many idolize technology
May I know how to humanize the people!
Where life has lost its meaning
May I be the bearer of the meaning of life!
Where so many ask me for a fish
May I know how to teach them to fish!
Where so many ask me for bread
May I know how to teach them to sow!
Where so many enslave others in their quest for power
May I know how to set people free for communion!
Where so many suffer from loneliness in the multitudes
May I be instrumental in bringing them to meet people!
Where so many people see nothing more than this earth
May I know how to raise my eyes to heaven!
Amen.

(Attilio I. Hartmann, sj)

