



Society of the Divine Word (SVD)

SVD Lay Partners

Newsletter - from Around the World

Issue 13, August 2020

Mission in times of COVID-19 pandemic



Inside this issue

Editorial - Un-distancing 2

SPECIAL TOPIC

Mission in times of COVID-19 pandemic

. Changes and Challenges 3

. COVID-19 Experiences - Personal Statements and Reflections 6

GROUP REPORTS FROM ...

AFRAM ZONE

. Kenya (KEN): Friends of SVD - Helping the Needy During Lockdown 11

. Angola (ANG): LVD - COVID-19 Situation 12

. Ghana (GHA): Friends of SVD - Serving Meals 13

ASPAC ZONE

. Indonesia (IDJ): SOVERDIA - Mission in Time of Pandemic 14

. India (INM): DDW - Feed the Hungry - COVID-19 Project 15

. The Philippines (PHC): LSSAJ - Working for the Needy 16

. The Philippines (PHN): SVD-PHN Mission Partners - Continuing Working during Lockdown 17

. Papua New Guinea (PNG): SVD Friends PNG - Overview and Activities 18

EUROPA ZONE

. Germany (GER): SVD-Partner
- Bringing People Together: Digital Prayer Calendar and "Fährhaus" 19

. - Ember Prayer for Vocations to Arnoldus Family 20

. Switzerland (ECP): Freundeskreis der Schweizer Steyler Missionare - COVID-19 Initiative SVD Germany-Austria-Switzerland 20

PANAM ZONE

. Mexico (MEX): MAVD - COVID-19 in Mexico 21

Last but not Least

. Letter from the Generalate Mission Secretary 22

. SVD Mission House: Ishopanthe Ashram, Puri, India (INE) 23

. Save the Date - IV World Day of the Poor: Prayer Bridge 23

. Seven Sorrows of St. Mary 23

. Prayer / Impulse 24

. Imprint 24

Editorial

Un-distancing!

It's all about un-distancing and it's all about saying - I UNDERSTAND.

COVID-19 has swept through the world showing no discrimination, ignoring national borders and infecting people regardless of religion, class or wealth. It has brought about unprecedented fear and uncertainty. Our world feels different than it did just a few months ago.

This is when the humanity woke up. People came forward understanding that we cannot leave others behind. It's about understanding that we need each other, that we need to help each other and we need to connect with each other. We are social beings and rely on one another, and we are in this crisis together.

With most of the countries still under quarantine, schools/universities closed, mass gatherings prohibited including Eucharistic celebrations, I do feel anxious. What gives me hope is the fact that people are taking care of others during this pandemic. Because no matter what, care, compassion and kindness are a part of us. I've experienced people motivating others to seek out ways to feel connected with one another. Humanity is alive.

In my part of the world, Mumbai, India, it was this understanding that made some of us (lay partners and SVD fathers) to quickly group and devise strategies, to reach out to those in need during the lockdown. A well-groomed system of scouting for supplies, storing, packing and working with community social workers to see that the supplies reach to those in real need, was in place. Many generous people came forward to help. We were able to provide food essentials to more than 6000 needy families!

Social distancing is crucial during pandemic. At the same time, how do I un-distance? How do I support people who are living in isolation? Amidst life stories of depression, comfort, solidarity and many more, connecting with our needy brothers and sisters is a calming reminder of God's presence during challenging times. When we whisper words of comfort, draw close to those who are sick and give hope to all who need them, we're un-distancing God and humanity. And, I believe at this very moment as Divine Word Missionaries, this is how we bring alive the Word in our world.

The three titles that Pope Francis has added to the litany of our Mother, "Mother of Mercy, Mother of Hope, Comfort of Migrants", yet again remind us of Mary's great role in un-distancing God and humanity. The feast of the Assumption is the ultimate reminder that God would go to any lengths to un-distance!

Susan Noronha
(Editor-in-chief)

Mission in Times of COVID-19 Pandemic

Changes and Challenges

COVID-19, pandemic, corona virus, lockdown, compulsory masks, hygiene rules, keeping distance ... the most used words in the last months - caused by a pandemic. After the first cases were detected in China in December 2019, the SARS-COV2 virus spread worldwide at an unprecedented speed from January 2020 onwards and has since then dominated everyday life in all countries. The world stood still at the beginning of the year: curfews, contact restrictions. Everything closed: Shops (except the essential ones and pharmacies), schools, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, sports

facilities ... and churches, mosques, synagogues and temples. For us Christians this meant not only no regular services, but especially painfully no Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter liturgy for the parishioners, the highest feast of our faith we could not celebrate together. All these restrictions also changed the work of the SVD lay partners. Although the usual and planned activities could not take place, new ways were found to fulfill the missionary mandate.

I am Elias (JUN) Guevarra of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary Prayer Community, belong to Marriage Encounter Charismatic Community. COVID-19 was detected in our country in early March and immediately the whole country was placed in quarantine and health protocols were followed: wearing of masks, social distancing and prohibition from going out, especially for senior citizens (60 and above) except to buy the essentials: food, and medicine. Since my wife and I are both senior citizens, we resorted to home delivery services for our essentials needs. We paid our bills through bank fund transfers and G-cash. We have been staying home since 8th March 2020.

The quarantine is a bit relaxed now, but we are still afraid to go out. I only go out to get essential necessities and I make sure I wear my face mask. Moreover, strict health protocols are followed by establishments that opened for business last 15th May 2020: temperature check, face masks, limited number of persons in the establishments. Unfortunately, churches are only allowed to admit limited number of people to attend the Holy Mass. Since we cannot go out to attend Mass at our parish church, we attend the daily Mass aired live by EWTN.



Our situation today is much better now, our total confirmed case (as 20th June 2020) is 28,459 confirmed cases, 1,130 deaths and 7,378 recoveries. We have 2 fatalities among our members. Please pray for them.

Despite the quarantine, we continued our spiritual activities: weekly prayer meeting, and nurturing programs via Facebook and Zoom. We had a vigil for the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary yesterday via Zoom from 9.00 PM to 1.00 AM. The Holy Mass was presided by Fr. Paul Gomez, SVD who is in Mindoro (one of the island of Luzon) and he continuous to conduct Holy Masses for the Community during our First Friday General Assemblies. We also have round the daily clock Novena Prayers from 6.00 AM to 12.00 AM, conducted by our 18 Prayer Groups to pray for the end of this pandemic and to pray for our members and other people who requested us to pray for them, especially health front liners.

As far as social amelioration is concerned, our Community and our 18 Prayer Groups have given financial assistance to our financially challenged members. The assistance consisted of food packs and cash. We also continue to give tithes to the parishes where we hold our weekly prayer meetings before the quarantine.

We were not able to conduct the follow-up meeting since the Asia-Pacific Conference due to the pandemic. We are praying that this pandemic will end soon, so we can finalize our plans on how to be active SVD lay partners.

God bless and to God be the Glory!

Elias I. Guevarra, Jr.
The Hearts of Jesus and Mary Prayer Community,
The Philippines (PHC)



The first infection was detected in Zambia on 18th March 2020. On 29th June the statistics are as follows:
Cumulative confirmed cases 1,568 - Recoveries 1,311 -
Cumulative deaths 22 - Active cases 235.

The government rolled out an elaborate programme of action.

- Massive Sensitization.
- The whole population was informed of the symptoms and seriousness of this pandemic. The message through TV, Radio and meetings even in the remotest parts of our country is clear
- Wash hands regularly with soap/ Sanitize
- Stay at home
- Wear masks
- Social distance. 1 metre apart
- The government set up some facilities where all suspected

- cases were to be quarantined/ treated
- Schools, Colleges and Universities were the first to close
- Church services were suspended
- Airports except for one in the Capital city are closed. All passengers are tested at the Airport. Suspected cases are quarantined/treated in designated facilities. Those who show no symptoms are required to, at least for two weeks be under self quarantine and are monitored
- Sports of all kinds were suspended, so were businesses such as Bars
- Business houses and individuals came into full force to support the government efforts by giving huge donations of PPE, Ventilators, Cash and other resources.
- Large scale testing was carried out throughout the country.
- Office work is now being done at home

Although there is no total lockdown, movements are not encouraged. One cannot freely visit family. With the suspension of church services, the lay partners cannot meet. Communication is through our WhatsApp group.

One of the activities of the group, is to visit the sick, this cannot take place. The number of people attending a funeral for example is restricted.

Fortunately, no one has fallen ill nor has there been any death among our group.

On 29th June 2020 after three months, we had our first Mass.

Mildred Sodala
Zambia Mission Lay Partners, Zambia (ZAM)

The first case of virus was confirmed on 25th January 2020 in Australia.

The first action was isolation of all passengers coming from China with self-quarantine for 14 days, followed gradually by all countries. Once community transmission was established a complete lockdown was imposed. People could go out only for essential items. A maximum of two people were allowed inside a car. Heavy fines were imposed for ignoring social distancing rules. Not more than two people at a time were allowed and needed to be 1.5 m apart. Churches and mass gatherings, funerals and weddings were stopped. Schools were open for kids of essential workers, but parents were encouraged to keep children at home. Everyone was working from home except essential workers. No gatherings were allowed inside home.

The lay partners group activities were suspended specially the SVD house in Sydney, houses the retired confreres who are considered the most venerable. We decided in March to temporarily stop our meetings due to these considerations. Our cohort of lay partners being over 55 were all isolating themselves too. Literally the only contact was via email or phone. Personally for me, working from home has become

the new normal. My house was converted into an office. Working hours were reduced for my wife. My son stayed indoors for almost 4 weeks.

Over the last few months, there was very little possible due to the government restriction imposed. We have tried to have Zoom meetings, but the level of participation is poor because not all lay members being internet savvy.

With restrictions easing, we are getting back to normal. However the Bible study initiative after a brief break has continued in an online mode via Zoom. With the COVID situation under control and low rates of transmission, Masses have now begun and restrictions are being lifted in a phased manner.

By God's grace none of our members, neither the SVD confreres have fallen ill nor died due to COVID-19.

Mervyn Rodrigues
SVD Lay Partners, Australia (AUS)

The first infection was detected on 20th March 2020 in Papua New Guinea (PNG).

To help contain the disease our government immediately declared a two weeks lockdown beginning 24th March 2020. Restricting movement of people were put in place where government offices and business houses were told to close for the two weeks with workers told to stay at home. Also citizens were prohibited from travelling from province to province and international travels were banned. After the initial two weeks, a two months of State of Emergency (SOE) was declared with curfew. Masks wearing and handwashing was introduced and social gatherings were banned including church services.

Because of restriction on any form of social gatherings, we could not go for church service for initial two weeks and following two months of the SOE. As for SVD Friends PNG, we could not carry out some of our programs for the year.

The two weeks lockdown and two months of SOE restricted our group from having monthly gatherings for spiritual talks and participating in important SVD sanctioned feast days. Media such as Radio and TV were used to share word of God as it will cover more audience. Use of social media is also good but not many people have access to social media because of the cost of internet is very high.

None of our SVD Friends PNG members were ill. Luckily with God's grace PNG did not have many COVID-19 cases. As a country we only had eight confirmed cases and all recovered in April. On 19th June 2020 we had a new confirmed case and after contact tracing two new cases detected bringing the total cases to 11 for PNG.

Clement Kunandi Victor
SVD Friends, Papua New Guinea (PNG)



India reported the first confirmed case of the coronavirus infection on 30th January 2020 in the state of Kerala.

India has been under lockdown measures since 24th March with approximate 700,000 confirmed cases, 400,000 recovered and 19,000 deaths (as on 6th July 2020).

- The first action was isolation. Restricted movements/activities. Rapid testing and quarantine.
- Hospitals, Stadiums, Trade Centres converted as COVID-19 hospitals and quarantine centres.
- Travel ban, both international and domestic Air, Road, Rail travel.
- Religious places, Schools/universities, hotels/restaurants, shopping malls closed. People go out only for essential items. No public gathering
- Day and night curfew. Restricted movements. Heavy fines on those who challenge laws
- Social distancing, masks compulsory.
- Working from home encouraged.

Though the restricted movements are relaxed a bit, Mumbai with its surge in the number of COVID-19 cases, we are still under lockdown till July end.

Few SVD lay partners (DDW) and SVD fathers, initiated a plan to form a small volunteer group to reach out to the poor who are hit the hardest by this lockdown. With the "Feed the Hungry, COVID-19 Project", we have reached out to more than 6000 families with essential food grains. Our food grain packet has rice, wheat, pulses, cooking oil and some other basic essential items enough for a family of four, for about 15 days. Loading, unloading, packing and distribution of the food grains is done by the confreres, lay partners and few volunteers, adhering to guidelines issued by the government.

In Mumbai, migrants and the daily wage workers are most vulnerable people who are deprived of food. We have also networked with NGOs with the distribution of daily lunch packets to the hungry people.

Since the lockdown, we have suspended most of our activities, except 'Feed the Hungry - COVID-19' Project which is still continuing. Many of our members are over the age of 60 and are not encouraged to go out.

Though none of our members have fallen ill or died of COVID-19, many are lonely and isolated since they live alone. Some are widows and live away from their children. Since visiting them is not possible, we connect with each other with prayer and with regular phone calls. Some of them have lost their loved ones, though not for COVID-19.

Susan Noronha
Disciples of the Divine Word, India (INM)



COVID-19 Experiences

Personal Statements and Reflections



By February 2020, we already knew about COVID-19 pandemic. I was worried about my two teenage daughters who live with me and my husband who is working in Hongkong. At the end of March, the government of Indonesia issued health protocols and closed its borders to foreign visitors and prohibited citizens from leaving the country. Just like the others,

we were also affected; masks, hand sanitizers, hand gloves and vitamins went out of stock and later were sold at 2 times more from the normal price. I started making traditional drink to maintain the body's immune system.

All the activities of SOVERDIA were cancelled because of the pandemic. The three of us engaged ourselves with cooking, making cakes and planting vegetable seeds in our backyard.

Since the churches are closed, we participate in the online Liturgical celebrations and recite the Quarter Hour Prayer at home. We shared groceries, milk, biscuits, masks, hand sanitizers and vitamins with motorcycle/taxi drivers, street peddlers and with those in need. We also collected funds to help SVD Novitiate Batu Malang-East Java and the Parish of St. Mikael-Kranji of West Java.

Thank God, our family and friends of the SOVERDIA community are in good health.

Maria Djatmiko
SOVERDIA, Indonesia (IDJ)

The coronavirus has brought confusion among people. While Kenya reported its first confirmed case of the virus in mid-March, Kenyan President announced the lockdown on June 6. With boundaries closed, airlines grounded and companies shut down, the economy of the country has gone down.

COVID-19 pandemic has brought a lot of fear among people. Many are jobless because of the lockdown. Children do not go to school because lack of finances. No handshake, hugging, cannot comfort family of the deceased and no blessing of the grave. The dead are buried without priest to do the service.

Yes. Lockdown has affected me and my family. My son has lost his job. Now I must take care of him and his family. I speak to my family of the danger of coronavirus and how it kills people; How they should take care of themselves by washing their hands with clean water and soap, use sanitizer to kill germs and use the mask for prevention and protection of spread of coronavirus. They must always keep social distance. If we follow the government guidelines, we shall be safe and God Almighty will protect us from this dangerous disease (Psalm 91).

Since group meetings was not allowed, communication was through Zoom or WhatsApp. Church services were online on the internet. Thanks Fr. Emmanuel Koffigan, SVD and Fr. Honore Karo, SVD for starting the Intercessory Prayer Group and teaching us to pray online. This prayer group has helped me very much. We pray the novenas, read the Scriptures and pray for healing of the sick from coronavirus and

other diseases. Personally, I have helped the needy, especially widows, with liquid soap. Friends of SVD are feeding the poor through M-Pesa.

Thanks be to God, no family member/community member/friend has fallen ill or has died due to COVID-19. May the Holy Triune God live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people in Kenya and in the whole world. Amen.

Magdaline Akomo Aluma
Friends of SVD, Kenya (KEN)

M-Pesa

M stands for mobile and pesa is Swahili for money. It is a mobile phone-based money transfer service, payments and micro-financing service, launched in 2007 by Vodafone Group plc and Safaricom, the largest mobile network operator in Kenya. It has since expanded to Tanzania, Mozambique, DR Congo, Lesotho, Ghana, Egypt, Afghanistan, South Africa, India, Romania, and Albania. M-Pesa allows users to deposit, withdraw, transfer money, pay for goods and services, access credit and savings, all with a mobile device.



This pandemic has brought me closer to God and to trust Him in all situations. My 90-year-old mother is sick and I am concerned about her because I cannot visit her. There was a death of a friend since timely medical help could not be reached because of the lockdown. We will surely have happy days ahead. God is assuring us that after every cloud of darkness there is a ray of hope.

Leena Xavier

Disciples of the Divine Word, India (INM)

I read about the coronavirus pandemic affecting places in the world, but panic struck when the virus hit Mumbai. I braved it for some time but there was fear of being infected with the disease, of being hospitalized and in case of death, to be cremated in isolation.

As I surrendered the situation to God. I realized that I am not the only one suffering. Being a senior citizen, I had people calling me and asking if I needed help. I experienced love and concern. Our church gave me faith, hope and strength with the various liturgical services that were relayed all through the day. I don't know what the future holds for me but I know who holds my future.

Maryanne D'Mello

Disciples of the Divine Word, India (INM)

Working from home has become a blessing, as I spend more time with my family. We spend more time in prayer interceding for others and the world situation. When the lockdown was announced, I was feeling helpless thinking of the people, especially the poorest of the poor. Thanks to Susan Noronha, DDW President, for taking the courageous initiative of "Feed the Hungry - COVID-19 Project". It is a beautiful experience of working together with a deep satisfaction to see that so many poor people are reached out.

Juliana D'Costa

Disciples of the Divine Word, India (INM)



Being a person who is always actively involved in my parish and diocese activities, I felt I was like a prisoner in my own home. As the days passed, my negative attitude changed to a positive one when I began to spend more time in prayer and reflecting on God's Word every day. I soon developed an attitude of gratitude, specially when I prayed the psalms. I began to counsel the youth over the phone and reached out to my friends who needed monetary help. There have been COVID-19 deaths in our parish community and I comfort the families over the phone.

Lorna D'Souza

Disciples of the Divine Word, India (INM)

My husband Joaquim and I start our day with online Eucharistic celebration. Life has become hectic and tiring since we do the household chores by ourselves. Since we are senior citizens, we avoid going out of our home. During the day, we recite the Rosary and take part in the Worship-Word-Witness programme. We helped to distribute food grains to the poor and the needy through the "Feed the Hungry - COVID-19".

Henrietta Monserrate

Disciples of the Divine Word, India (INM)

I have a small Biblical Garden in my balcony and I spend my mornings here, writing down my blessings in a journal. This helps me to accept God's plan. I arrange the Altar in my home, light a candle and keep a pot of microgreens grown by my family. We pray together as a family. During this pandemic, God gave us, especially my teenage son, an opportunity to pack food grains and reach out to the needy, as we are part of "Feed the Hungry COVID-19 Project". I believe, my son will remember this social outreach all his life and will remain grateful to God.

Sandhya Dominic

Disciples of the Divine Word - India (INM)

Watching family members fall ill reminds me of my own mortality, especially due to the fact of my dialysis, and the vulnerable situation I am in. Just to make through another day is a great victory. Watching the plight of the poor on the roadside, one feels moved to do something. In my case it was easy to distribute water bottles to people. I carry bottles of cold water as I cycle my way to the hospital for my dialysis, thrice a week. This pandemic has become a time of grace because one has to rely on the grace of God.

Ralph Pereira
Disciples of the Divine Word, India (INM)

The coronavirus battle is not ours, God is fighting this battle for us. Trusting in God has kept me joyful. The pandemic has also helped me to use my talents. I contributed to our "Feed the Hungry – COVID-19 Project", by contacting the poor and needy people living in my neighbourhood and reaching out to them. This is Jesus' mission which is also my mission.

Hazel Mendonca
Disciples of the Divine Word, India (INM)

I lived with my mum, who was 79 years old. Due to the pandemic, she had to restrict her contact with outside people. It meant her social interactions had now stopped. For many weeks she was confined within the walls of the house. Good things also happened. With Eucharistic celebrations moving online, mum and I could participate in these celebrations together. I was home with her, we had conversations, sharing our joys and worries.

Few weeks ago, my beloved mum passed away peacefully (non-COVID reasons). It has made me to realise that this lockdown turned to be a blessing for me, giving me beautiful moments with her, being there for her in her last few days, holding her hand as she passed away. We loved each other very much and now as I grieve, this lockdown again allows me to grieve with gratitude and solitude.

Anupama Subodhanan
Disciples of the Divine Word, India (INM)

My husband Rogelio and I can say that from March of this year, our life has made a complete turn due to COVID-19 pandemic. Though we cannot participate in the Holy Eucharist, we have increased the time we spend in personal prayer at home. We continue to be nourished by the word of God. We pray to the Lord for our church leaders and for those who frequently request us for our prayers. We continue the work of evangelization through social media, and we tell our brothers and sisters to pass by our house to collect whatever they need for survival.

We feel blessed that the Lord is using us as His instruments, so that His children can experience the love and mercy of a God who walks with us. Individually, we thank the Lord for having strengthened our married life, because we experience the marvellous gift that God has granted us, to have one another and our children. We share the responsibilities at home, experiencing Christ's love in our hearts at every moment.

Here in Panama, at the national level we have six parishes. And all for the glory of the Lord continue working on all three aspects - prayer, virtual evangelization and solidarity with those most in need. Under virtual communication program, rosaries, chaplets, Bible tips for the Year of the Word, and reflections on the Gospel are broadcasted regularly. Saint Jerónimo Parish is helping people faced with problems of unemployment, quarantine and illness. People are donating generously at the collection centres (in almost all the chapels). Bags of food with other essentials are distributed to the deserving poor people, especially the migrants, whose names are not listed on any social welfare list.

May God continue to bless us.

Rubiela Ramírez de Rodríguez
Misioneros Laicos del Verbo Divino, Panama (CAM)



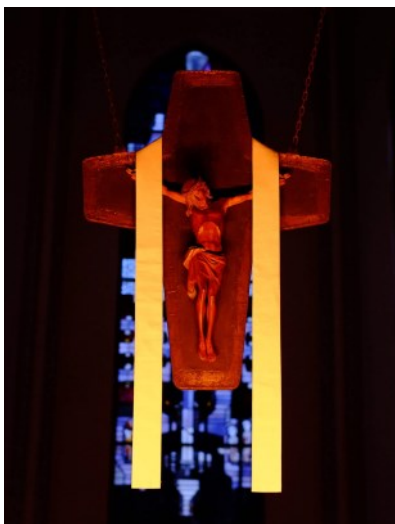
An Amazing God



These times have been truly hard for Spain. Our country, like Italy, a few months ago underestimated the true scale of this plague that has ravaged the entire planet. We did not know how to react on time, that caused more than 28,000 fatalities in a country, that claims to be developed, and has good health resources, one of the best health systems in the world.

Spain was in a state of emergency for three months, decreed by the government. In a state of fear. The speed of the pandemic was such that we drove our system to collapse: our health workers to faint, makeshift hospitals in fairgrounds, morgues erected on ice skating rinks, crowded field hospitals, deserted avenues, empty streets, faces peeking through windows and balconies as the last step of contact with the "outside" world. Many have given their lives to save the lives of others. This disease does not recognize classes in the worst of the confinement nor does it recognize the order of "supposed normality" now. It seems that the peak in Spain has passed, but we should not let our guard down. The virus is still there and there are many countries like the US, Brazil, and UK, that do not seem to understand the gravity of what we are experiencing. And how much we are paying for it.

Thank God, we had no coronavirus cases neither in my family nor in my locality, but infections continue to appear. The number rises slowly, but has not stopped.



"No one is saved alone," Pope Francis told us in a homily that will be difficult to forget, in a Lent that has been more "desert" than ever, and in which God has revealed himself to us in a surprising way. With the churches closed, without being able to receive Holy Communion or confession, without sacraments ... but with the houses turned into temples, into small domestic churches, we have clung to the faith with more strength and conviction. We have returned to speak to friends and family. We have discovered that we have very nice neighbours and we have reached out to each other.

This virus has brought us disastrous things. But it has also made us more human, and has turned us into humble servants of others. The Mission, in capital letters, is no longer in remote and inhospitable areas: it is the neighbour who needs us, the one who cannot open the bar or the business now because she has not endured this three-month hiatus, the old woman who lives alone and has no family nearby, the family who have had to quarantine and cannot leave the house: The call to serve others is drawing our attention. How have we responded to that call, which is from the Risen Jesus himself? Some by doing their duty, by doing their work, others by organizing neighbourhood aid chains, others by praying at home.

He rose from the dead in darkness, wrapped in the unfathomable mystery of the Father who raised Him from the dead ... This pandemic is the darkness of this world that believed it could live away from God, a self-possessed world and that discovered in Lent that it is vulnerable and weak. May the God who resurrected Jesus, light the way for scientists and researchers to soon find an accessible and free vaccine for everyone. And may He give us a willing and generous heart to help others.

Like the leper in the Gospel, let us ask with simplicity and confidence "Lord, if you wish, you can heal me", because Jesus does not disappoint us when we put all our faith and trust in Him. Because, He has not come to condemn anyone, but to save everyone. May we find a way to recognize the saving presence of God in this calamity.

Laura Díez Bilbao
Laicos del Verbo Divino, Spain (ESP)

Humanity Is Alive

Lock down and being confined to the house without any ministry is my first experience as a priest. I decided to use my time fruitfully right from the beginning.

One concern that was always upper most in my mind was, by God's grace I am comfortable inside, what about those who have lost their jobs and the means of livelihood?

My participation in the "Feed the Hungry – COVID-19 Project" addressed this concern of mine to a great extent. This project came to light because of the initiative of Susan Noronha, the President of the Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW) in collaboration with the DDW members and the SVD. The good venture was supported by many donors, making me believe that humanity is alive among us.

Fr. Gregory Pinto, SVD
Spiritual Director, DDW



Learning Experience

During the lockdown in Italy, we in the SVD Generalate house, Rome followed the government instructions regarding COVID-19. We are nearly 75 persons in the house, I remained inside the house, did not go out of the compound for nearly three months, except on three occasions. We have taken a simple apostolate of distribution of food for the homeless who are nearby our house once a week, hence I went with another confrere to distribute the food. During the height of pandemic in Italy, most had fear, anxiety, suspicion and mistrust when they ventured out of the house. But, now, the situation has improved and lockdown is lifted and people move freely at ease.

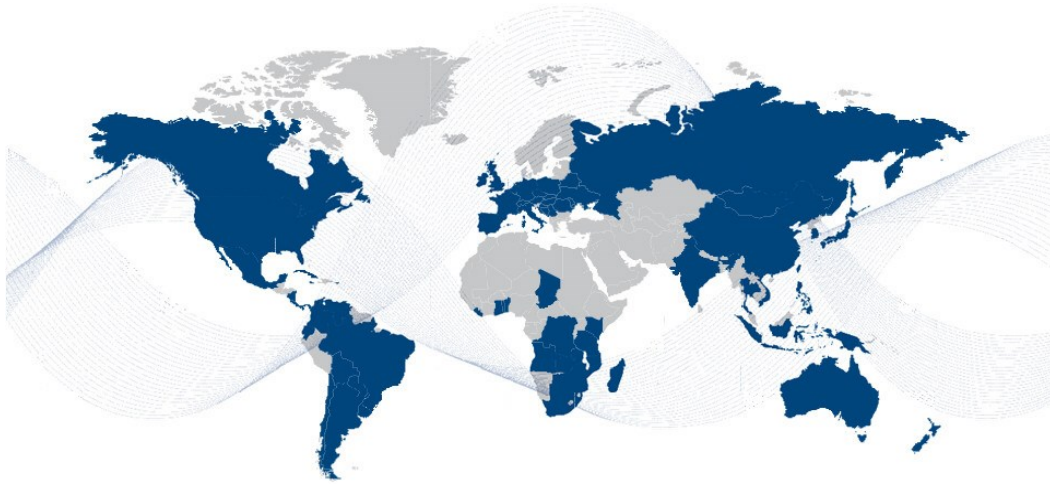


During the pandemic, I reflected about the value of life, community and reaching out to others. I admired the law enforcement authorities, the frontline workers and the government authorities that they have to keep a tab on hourly basis the security of others. Appreciation for others grew because of their sacrifice and commitment. My own spiritual life was deepened, understanding the gift of life from God and how much I have to be dependent on God and others. I realized the value of time, it is precious and gold. This period checked my level of patience with others, their behaviours or thoughts or arguments.

More importantly, this period gave impulses on how to be connected with other provinces and regions in the world. How I can reach out to them, hence I tried to reach out through correspondence, sending prayers and giving some guidance on mission animation. Mission never stops whether there is pandemic or not, it continues.

Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar, SVD
Generalate Mission Secretary, Rome





AFRAM ZONE



Kenya (KEN)

Friends of SVD - Helping the Needy During Lockdown

Friends of SVD - our SVD lay partners here in Kenya, took initiatives to help the vulnerable and needy people in their neighbourhood during the lockdown caused by COVID-19. They contributed money from their little savings to buy different food items like maize flour, sugar, cooking oil, sanitizers, soaps and masks to donate to the poor and needy families to show solidarity with them. They also gave little cash for medicine to those who were really sick and needed treatment and medication. This is a tremendous gesture shown by our lay partners as most of them are also low-income earners. They have their own families and relatives who de-

pend on them for their needs. But they are able to go beyond their family boundaries to help their needy neighbours.

Our lay partners contributed from the little they have, sacrificed their time and energy to visit the needy and vulnerable families and to distribute the food stuff and other health care items. The Province Mission Office together with our confreres in different parishes and leaders of our lay partners coordinated the charitable efforts of our lay partners. May the Divine Word be their light and help in their missionary journey. The charitable efforts of our lay Partners are ongoing and will continue until the coronavirus crisis will be contained by the government authorities.

Fr. Amaladoss Rethinasamy, SVD
Mission Secretary



Angola (ANG)

Associação de Leigos Missionários do Verbo Divino - COVID-19 Situation



Angola is a country which covers about 17,270 km² located in the south of Sahara. About 41% of the population living in the country practice the Catholic faith followed by the protestants who are about 38%.

According to the Ministry of Health, Angola detected its first two positive cases of COVID-19 on 21st March 2020, cases imported from Portugal. In the wake of this reality, the country's authorities took various progressive measures to help control the spread of the virus within the country. The measures include the closure of the airports, mandatory residential and institutional quarantine for all travelers coming from outside the country, and a declaration of a 3-week State of Emergency starting from 25th March. During the period, it was required to maintain only essential services running, to ensure a coercive lockdown of the citizens, improve the sanitation situation in the capital; the compulsory use of face masks in public, regular washing of hands with soap, use of hand sanitizers, 1/3 reduction in number of passengers in public transports, promotion of social distance, prohibition of physical contacts and social gatherings.

In order to tackle the social and epidemiological situation, it became necessary for the Angolan government to make some investments in hospitals and laboratories. The civil society with the assistance of churches, businesses and the entertainment industry, joined the fight by taking some actions in solidarity to help the marginalized. Directly or indirectly, we are all affected by the current situation. Because



about 70% of the active population depends on informal business, and a good number of people as well as others who depend on private sector have lost their means of income.

With the closure of churches, our activities were drastically affected. To keep our groups alive, we developed the means of contacting our members through telephone calls in order to animate them. Thanks be to God that till now we have not recorded any COVID-19 positive case among us.

With the government's declaration of a State of Calamity, we hope to take actions of collective sensitization of communities and look at the possibility of raising some basic necessities which, with the assistance of Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist, we could share to some aged bedridden people suffering from other illnesses.

According to the Inter-ministerial Commission against COVID-19, Angola has so far recorded 291 positive cases with 179 active cases, 97 recoveries, 15 deaths. 217 cases are local transmissions.

[José Miguel Mateus](#)



Ghana (GHA)

Friends of SVD - Serving Meals



The COVID-19 pandemic has plagued almost every country and Ghana is no exception. Ghana recorded its first two cases on 12th March and has since been on the increase. At the time of compiling this report on 1st July 2020, Ghana has recorded almost 18,000 cases with 115 fatalities.

As a control measure, the government of Ghana, took steps to contain the spread of the virus which was having dire consequence on the social, religious and economic lives of the citizens. On 19th March there was a total ban on all public gathering, including schools and churches. This was followed by the closure of our borders and mandatory quarantine for all travellers who entered the country. Christians had to worship through TV broadcast or live streaming on social media. Some churches exposed the Blessed Sacrament and opened their chapels for private prayers.

With the number of cases surging, the government imposed a three-week partial lockdown in the capital, Accra and the second largest city, Kumasi where the cases were high. The lockdown brought serious hardship and suffering for many people, since they are basically daily wage earners. Benevolent groups and churches took up the challenge and reached out to the poor, needy and the vulnerable. Some of them set up spots where hot meals were served daily, while others went to homes and gave out food items. Fr. Andrew Campbell, SVD, who runs a soup kitchen at the Christ Parish in the Archdiocese of Accra, extended it to other parts of the city. At the Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Accra, relief items



were donated to the needy. Where they could not physically reach out to the needy people, money was electronically wired to them.

After three weeks, the partial lockdown was lifted, which was followed by further easing of the restrictions. This included partial opening of schools for final year students and restoration of religious services with the observance of strict safety protocols, such as mandatory use of face mask, social distancing, etc. Maximum number of people for church services was not more than a hundred and the service must not go beyond one hour. Although some churches have started the services, attendance is not encouraging. It is our prayer that people will overcome their fears and be bold enough to come to the church.

With the spread of the virus not showing any decline, we look into the future with some level of apprehension. We hope a vaccine will be found in the shortest possible time so that life can return to normal.

Martin Kumedzro





ASPAC ZONE



Indonesia (IDJ)

SOVERDIA - Mission in Time of Pandemic



The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant changes to human life throughout the world, including IDJ Province. The first infection case in Indonesia was discovered in early March 2020 in Depok, West Java. Since then, it has spread throughout Indonesia. Some parts of the IDJ Province are still in the red zone category.

The rapid spread of the disease made the Indonesian government impose regulations. In the Jakarta, Bekasi and Surabaya regions, the government imposed large scale social restrictions until June, while in East Kalimantan, Malang and Bali regions, restrictions were imposed on community activities. People are required to comply with the public health protocols including wearing a mask, hand wash/sanitizer and social distancing, no group activities including religious worship, follow curfew, temperature check, rapid test and swab test.

The pandemic has had a huge impact on the families of SOVERDIA members and on the SOVERDIA itself. The impact was felt - economically with a reduction in their life income; Spiritually causing a deep longing to attend Holy Mass in the church and; psychologically causing depression and prolonged anxiety. Many of our activities and work programs had to be canceled or postponed, causing disappointments among members.

Even though the government has put in place precautionary measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, this does not stifle our enthusiasm for continuing our activities. In creative

ways, SOVERDIA in Jakarta, Bekasi, Malang and Surabaya has implemented virtual communication between members, participating in various spiritual activities - catechesis, rosary, Bible study and SOVERDIA statutes discussions from their homes. Whereas, SOVERDIA in Bali carries out religious activities with limited participation.

On the other hand, this pandemic has also invited us to further enhance the sense of solidarity, especially with those directly affected by this pandemic. We have distributed basic food to needy communities, take away meal packets to scavengers and migrant workers, masks to the communities around us. We have raised funds for SVD Novitiate in Batu, Malang, for the COVID-19 Disaster Response Team in the Parish, and for Budi Rahayu Hospital in Blitar, East Java. SOVERDIA members also buy merchandise (food, vitamins, masks, face shields, etc.) for those who have no income. Members are actively involved in helping with COVID-19 countermeasures in their respective areas (periodic disinfectant spraying, mask distribution, etc.).

Although this pandemic has many casualties in Indonesia, not a single member of the SOVERDIA in the SVD Indonesia-Java Province was/is sick or died from COVID-19. We have our future in the hands of God.

Paulina Suharsi



India (INM)

Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW) - Feed the Hungry: COVID-19 Project



On 24th March 2020, the Government of India ordered a nationwide lockdown, limiting movement of the entire 1.3 billion population of India as a preventive measure against the coronavirus pandemic. The decision, though necessary, it wasn't inclusive of daily wage laborer, the homeless population, the migrant worker, the slum-dweller, and many more. Unfortunately, the poor and the marginalized sections of the society are always an afterthought.

Within a week, we (SVD fathers and lay partners) initiated a plan to form a small volunteer group to ease the distress of helpless people during the lockdown. Our strategic objective was to reach out to the few of the hundreds of millions of poor hit the hardest by this lockdown in and around Mumbai. This was an extraordinary calling to step up for the vulnerable, and we undoubtedly had a committed team willing to network and collaborate.

Today, we have reached out to more than 6000 families with essential food grains and medical supplies. What began as a simple idea of helping the poor with food grains pressed us to take "aggressive action". Loading, unloading, packing and distribution of the food essentials is done by the SVD fathers and lay partners along with few volunteers, adhering to guidelines issued by the government.

COVID-19 pandemic remains a tough challenge, but it is also a perfectly designed learning experience to all of us. When asked where to look for the much-needed fund, St. Arnold Janssen said jokingly, "There's a lot of money but they're still in the pockets of the people." We know that it only takes one step of faith and God takes care of the rest.

Susan Noronha



The Philippines (PHC)

The Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen (LSSAJ) - Working for the Needy



The COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest challenge the world has faced since World War II. The Philippine government announced lockdown of Metro Manila and later on the entire National Capital Region and declared a state of calamity on 17th March 2020. It implemented various actions including community quarantine, social distancing, handwashing and mandatory facemasks. Mobility for senior citizens were restricted. Commerce and industry were put on hold. Many lost their jobs since most companies shut down their operations. The government provided emergency assistance to affected communities which included food, water and medicines.

Community quarantine and social distancing did not hinder our people in looking for ways to help others. While this pandemic greatly affected LSSAJ's plans and activities for the year 2020, this was an opportunity for the members to pool its resources, and distribute packed food, rice, vegetables, water and face masks, to people who were affected by the lockdown.



Julio Tonquin, who sold grilled chicken for a living, decided to distribute the grilled chicken for free to people who were locked down in his neighborhood. Together with family, carrying his grilling cart (similar to the one used during the first ASPAC SVD Lay Partners' Gathering), they went house to house to distribute cooked food.

LSSAJ provided food and water to the parishioners of the SVD Parish in Dasmarinas City. They produced face masks for distribution to the front-liners in the community. LSSAJ - Cris Lim (President) together with other members, reached out to the hungry orphans who were cared by Religious Missionaries in the mountainous area of Montalban, Rizal, with rice, water and other food items.

LSSAJ is assisting the St. Arnold Janssen Foundation Kalinga Center in refurbishing a building which will temporarily provide shelter to more than 500 street dwellers of Metro Manila. In Mindanao area, LSSAJ GenSan Chapter has joined hands with the Social Justice Committee of the Diocese of Marbel, in dissenting the Anti-Terror Bill and its possible negative impacts in curtailing democracy in the country. Fabian Pagaduan, Chairman of the formation committee is busy in conceptualizing formation programs which can be delivered online.

The battle against this invisible enemy continue to ravage the globe. No one knows when COVID-19 pandemic will end, but our faith in God will see us through as we continue the battle against this pandemic. All we need is hope, strength and our trust in God.

Fortunately, LSSAJ did not have casualties during this pandemic.

Daisy Leones

The Philippines (PHN)

SVD-PHN Mission Partners – Continuing Work during Lockdown



Lockdown but Not Locked and Down

The COVID-19 pandemic stirred us all. Across the globe, we were forced by the circumstances to stay inside our homes to avoid the virus from catching us. Governments had to enforce a lockdown. Lockdown, yes. But not locked and down. While there were limitations, we did not stop from living our lives to the fullest (John 10:10).

How? Let us walk you through how in some ways the SVD-PHN Mission Partners responded in faith, hope and love.

We Gather as One

The lockdown did not stop us from having our 2nd SVD-PHN Mission Partners Quarterly Meeting. Taking advantage of technology, we came together for our 1st Virtual Meeting via Zoom on 9th June with 4 out of 5 districts represented and a SVD friend from Germany joined us. Featured sharers were the youth leaders/coordinators from the 5 parishes of the Cagayan District, our Provincial Superior Fr. Romy Fajardo, SVD, outgoing Mission Secretary Fr. Oscar Alunday, SVD and outgoing Communications Secretary Fr. Dominador Ramos, SVD. We find ways and opportunities to stay in touch and inspire each other.



We Pray as One

While COVID-19 prevented us from praying in our churches, we were never as strong as a domestic church in the confines of our homes. Suddenly, we were also glued together in prayer from across the seas with the aid of technology. There were many initiatives, like the daily Healing Rosary for the Whole World at 8 pm via Zoom by the young people of SVD Parish in Claveria, Cagayan, St. Joseph Parish Youth Ministry. <https://www.facebook.com/SJPYMClaudia/>

Meanwhile, in the Mountain Province, SVD-PHN mission partner Edelberta Peningeo, is making rosaries out of seeds from a grass called Atakey. She writes a prayer about the "Atakey Rosary" in her native language, Kankana-ey:

Adawag mi et Ken Apo Kabunyan
Iliblib mo dakami'y lilitagwan
Ta adi kami kaap-apiktalan
COVID 19 ay enda kanakanan.

This I pray to our God
May He protect His creation
We pray that He spares us from getting infected
From the virus we call COVID-19.

We Move as One

Our family took the challenge to reach out despite the uncertainties and our limitations. The resolve to go the extra mile came from the eldest in the family, the one we call Big Heart. Marc writes in his reflections, "What have I done to make things better?" The family started to reflect more, "What can we do as a family without compromising the basic protocols to stay-at-home, given the growing setbacks surrounding us?" We thought of people in our community who only earned when they had to work, like the tricycle drivers and construction workers. We were able to secure a permit to buy some basic supplies for relief goods from a supermarket. We coordinated with our local officials how the relief goods were distributed and the recipients identified. His reflection continues, "While there is little that we can do, maybe we should ask ourselves what is this little that we can do."

Mike and GeeO Paderon



Papua New Guinea (PNG)

SVD Friends PNG – Overview and Activities



Overview

SVD *Friends PNG* was initiated in 2013, by Fr. Andreas Neansugel, SVD, who was then the Prefect of Divine Word College (DWC) at the Catholic Theological Institute, Port Moresby. SVD *Friends PNG*'s Vision is to be active partners in SVD mission in the Catholic Church. Our main support has been towards SVD seminarians at Catholic Theological Institute. We support and encourage them to continue their desire to become priests.

March 2020 Activities

On 9th March 2020, Fr. Michael Tomaszewski, SVD, Prefect of Divine Word College invited the SVD *Friends PNG* Executives, Clement Kunandi Victor (Chairman) and Alfred Reu (Deputy Chairman) to give talks to SVD seminarians on their recent trips abroad. Clement represented PNG province at the ASPAC First Lay Partners Meeting in Tagaytay City, Philippines in November 2019 and Alfred Reu visited Holy Land as part of a pilgrimage in February 2020, organised by Catholic Bishops Conference of PNG and Solomon Islands. They shared their experiences from these meeting and pilgrimage respectively.

Perpetual Vows of three SVD Seminarians

In our Executive Meeting on 8th March we were advised by Fr. Joseph Mesa, SVD, Rector of DWC that three seminarians

will profess their Perpetual Vows on 23rd May 2020, and their Diaconate Ordination will be in November 2020. We were asked to take part in the Perpetual Vows ceremony. Subsequently, SVD *Friends PNG* Executives met to plan the Perpetual Vows ceremony.

On Saturday, 23rd May although it was during the State of Emergency due to COVID-19, and with easing of some restrictions, some SVD *Friends PNG* were able to witness the Perpetual Vows of Frt. Jerry Kurai, SVD, Frt. Herman Kunow, SVD and Frt. Jeremiah Kaumbal, SVD. Because of government restrictions on mass gathering, only few guests could attend the celebration. With travel restrictions the parents and siblings of the seminarians were not able to witness the Perpetual Vows celebrations.

The main celebrant for the Holy Mass was Fr. Jose Orathinkal, SVD, Provincial Superior, PNG. Secretary of the SVD *Friends PNG* read the First Reading during the Holy Mass. The SVD *Friends PNG* contributed to the occasion by providing some food to share after the ceremony.

Clement Kunandi Victor



EUROPA ZONE

Germany (GER)

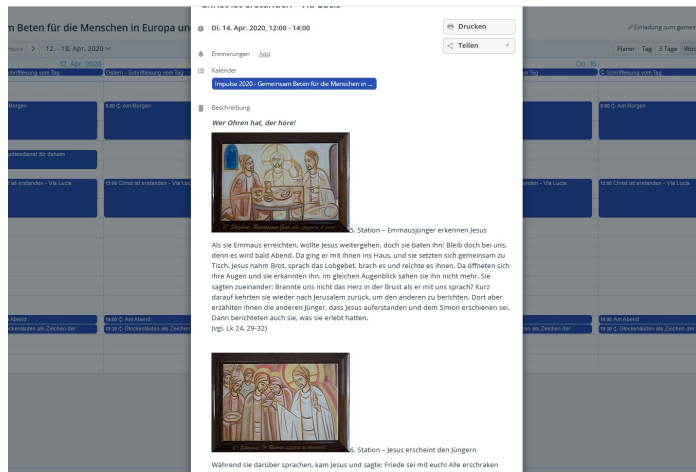
SVD-Partner - Bringing People Together: Digital Prayer Calender and “Fährhaus”



Do not despair, try something new and use the tested. That is how you can describe the answers given by SVD-Partner during COVID-19 pandemic. Because the members are living in different places in Germany the group's work now is an online one.

Digital Prayer Calender

Christian spirituality wants to be lived in community. How to shape this during Corona crisis? SVD-Partner know from the Prayer Bridge on World Day of the Poor that people like to come together in prayer even over great distances. So the Prayer Bridge pointed the way. But this time the answer had to be different. It had to accompany people daily. It had to be given over a long period of time. It had to be done quickly, and it had to be technically practical and financially affordable. The answer was found quickly: the Digital Prayer Calender. Created online with a free calendar program it is online since 16th March. It is constantly evolving and will hopefully soon end with a day of great thanks to God.



“Fährhaus” – Open Video Meeting

Instead of the planned meeting on Pentecost in Sankt Augustin SVD-Partner had a video meeting. It was good not only to talk, but also to see each other. Using this medium a new idea was born: “Fährhaus” (ferry house). It is an online meeting place which is open for everybody. Here people can meet and talk. In addition, one guest is invited and reports interesting facts. The start was made by Fr. Michael Heinz, SVD who informed about the situation in Latin America.

“Fährhaus” is named after the ferry house close to the Mission house St. Michael in Steyl. Here people take a short break before they continue their journey and take the ferry across the river Meuse. This is how spontaneous and casual it should be in the digital “Fährhaus”.

see more www.svd-partner.eu

Maria Wego

Fährhaus

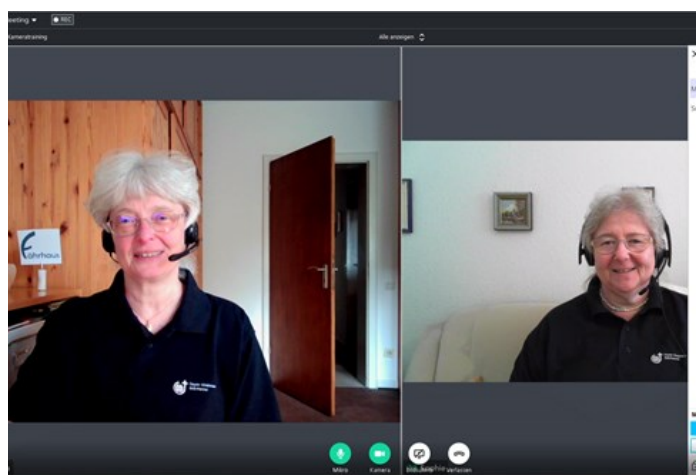
1. Offener Steyler Online-Treff

Samstag, 20. Juni 2020 – 16.00 Uhr bis 17.00 Uhr

Lateinamerika, Adveniat und Corona

Gast: P. Michael Heinz SVD
Hauptgeschäftsführer Adveniat

Steyler Missionen
SVD-Partner



Ember Prayer for Vocations to the Arnoldus Family



SVD-Partner were asked to pray for vocations to the Arnoldus Family last year. Spontaneously they invited to a novena ending on 8th September. Now they have given the request a new place in the calendar, but one with an old tradition: The Ember Days.

For the first time SVD-Partner invited to the Ember Prayer during Lent. The Quarter Hour Prayer is prayed with this intention on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday of each Ember

week. It was important to them that the prayer can be easily integrated into everyday life and at the same time typically SVD. So, the decision was easy to make.

The Ember days (from Latin Quattuor tempora = four times) coincide approximately with the beginning of the four seasons on the northern hemisphere. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Bishops' Conferences determine the exact dates. In Germany the winter Ember days are in the first week of Advent, the spring Ember days in the first week of Lent, the summer Ember days in the week before Pentecost and the autumn Ember days in the first week of October.

SVD-Partner follow the German regulation during Advent and Lent. In summer and autumn, however, they deviate from this. "With the week before the Feast of the Trinity and the first week of September we have chosen weeks in which the Ember days are celebrated in many countries around the world," explains Sophie Wego. With this SVD-Partner point out that they are part of an international community. In addition, the Feast of the Trinity and the Day of Creation, which is celebrated on 1st September are a matter close to the hearts of the Divine Word Missionaries.

Maria Wego

Switzerland (ECP)

Freundeskreis der Schweizer Steyler Missionare - COVID-19 Initiative SVD Germany-Austria-Switzerland

COVID-19 has changed our world. It has affected especially the lives of marginalized families. The Mission Secretaries of Germany, Austria and Switzerland – overflooded by dozens of requests for help from our SVD-missionaries, have started a common COVID-19 initiative. The board of the *Freundeskreis der Schweizer Steyler Missionare* decided to support this initiative. In our letter of Pentecost, we asked our 1,160 members for their support. And we are impressed by their generosity. So, projects in India, Indonesia, East-Timor, The Philippines, Ghana, Togo, Bolivia, Mexico and Nicaragua could already be supported.

Please visit our homepage and for pictures here:

<https://www.steyler-nothilfe.eu/nothilfe/#Bilder>

Philipp Hautle



[PROJEKT](#)
[SPENDEN](#)
[BILDER](#)
[KONTAKT](#)



STEYLER NOTHILFE

Helpen Sie schnell und nachhaltig

Das Corona-Virus trifft auch die Ärmsten

Die ganze Welt ist von den Auswirkungen der Corona-

„Die Krise wird andauern. Wir können gerade den Ärmsten unter den uns anvertrauten Menschen





PANAM ZONE



Mexico (MEX)

Misioneros Auxiliares del Verbo Divino (MAVD) - COVID-19 in Mexico



“And today, more than ever, it is necessary to dream. To dream, together, dreams that will be unrealized in mortal matter, incarnate.”

Everything happened so fast. And when we found out, Coronavirus was already in Mexico. It came from people who arrived here from air travel. Together with the coronavirus, came apprehension and fear.

The virus has no face, it is insidious. It spreads by the poorly washed hand, a touch on the face, a distracted gesture in the hair, with the most common and normal gestures: the open handle, the elevator button; or even in affectionate gestures: handshakes, hugs, kisses, everything that brings us together, comforts and caresses human bodies and hearts.

It violently attacked our most harmless desires: being together, talking, sharing the table and having fun. It killed all pleasure: parties, meetings, events. Suddenly, the faceless enemy if it was not already inside one's body, lodged menacingly in the body of the other.

The scientists, the government and the authorities began to



give us guidelines: to isolate, not to leave the house and to follow strict lockdown. The virus appears so monstrous, so out of place.

Realistically, it's only a minority that can isolate. The poor cannot physically isolate themselves because of their precarious living condition. Also, not forgetting the migrants, the indigenous Afro-Mexicans. The lethality of COVID-19 in indigenous populations has reached 18.8%, while, in the general population of the country, the index is 12% and the world average is 5.4% (UNAM – National Autonomous University of Mexico).

With the pandemic, there is an increase in crime and domestic violence against women. Even before the pandemic these things were not very encouraging. The virus affected the economy, politics, the church and the life of people. We are human beings and that is why we suffer with isolation.

The pandemic helped us to see that the church does not stop. Perhaps, the places of worship were closed, but the church is in us and we are everywhere. It made us rediscover that we are still in solidarity: people singing at the windows, doctors exposing themselves to exhaustion or being contaminated by the virus, gestures of people buying things for people who are most at risk, such as the elderly, etc.

The pandemic is an invitation to rethink life and history. Because until now we have only sowed destruction. It is urgent to invent a sustainable, interlinked, plural and diverse culture, where all voices fit and are linked with respect to mother earth.

The MAVD in Mexico are changing to the new normal, using digital media to continue walking and strengthening work in our base groups.

Fr. Martin Islas, SVD
Spiritual Advisor, MAVD

~ Last but not Least ~

Letter from the Generalate Mission Secretary

Reflections

Dear SVD lay partners,

The world was already changing rapidly due to globalization and digitalization and their effects on the economic, social and political areas were being felt by the people. New trends were emerging quickly even before we had learnt about the new changes themselves. But now the COVID-19 has brought the world to a standstill situation which has affected the daily routine of all people as well as the whole economy. Thus, who is affected – all people without distinction. But who are the most affected – the elderly in Europe, the poor migrants in Asia, the indigenous and marginalized in Latin America, and the poor Afro-Americans in North America. Although the virus does not distinguish the age, sex, creed, class or caste, the trend seems to be that the most vulnerable and the people at peripheries are the ones most affected by this virus.

I have heard that some of the SVD lay partners and their families were/are infected by this virus. There are immense difficulties which are experienced by your families and friends.

This period has taught us many things such as how to look at the life more closely; to look wide the people outside and their difficulties; to show compassion to the homeless; to look at the poor and vulnerable; to understand what is loneliness, depression, fear, and anxiety. Awareness would enable us to know about trust as well as how to understand the value of work, money, employment, co-workers, our families, our children and elderly parents. This time of stress has also challenged us to take care of the sick and the weak, while also encouraging us to strengthen our spirituality and to cherish the value of life.

During this time of the COVID-19 lockdown, we have missed our liturgical celebrations, as well as meetings with friends within the church and outside, especially special celebrations and social gatherings. At the same time, so many have lost jobs and their earnings, thus turning their lives in new directions. One outstanding development at this time has been the growing familiarity of many with using the internet. It enabled many people to keep in touch and to continue our work. It has assisted us to virtually participate in the life of the church and at times facilitated us to have Bible sharing and group meetings.

What I have admired most among the SVD lay partners during this period was their ability to show empathy to vulnerable people, to reach out to the migrants while sharing food with them, going to their homes and distributing food to them. I also admired the manner in which some of them assisted the elderly and prayed for the sick. All these things were done during the lockdown, while taking risks and showing great courage. Someone said, “I cannot remain in my comfortable home when I see the suffering of the poor out-

side in the street”. The surge of compassion in most of the lay partners led to action in many cases. Truly, it could be said that this was not just charity; in fact, this was mission in action. This meant seeing the face of Jesus among the suffering. I have received some reports that most of the lay partners groups got involved in alleviating the pain and suffering of the afflicted during this crisis period. They collected funds for the distribution of food; they contacted the sick families and consoled them; they organized liturgies, they kept up social contact between people to encourage them and they prayed for healing. In many cases they went out together with other partners to meet the needs of the vulnerable people and gave them what they needed for their immediate material relief. They also raised their voices by saying “something has to be done”, and they made sure that their voices were heard, sending the waves of the Holy Spirit to the indifferent, lukewarm and unaffected people.

Mission is bread! Mission is about involvement! Mission is about organizing! Mission is about acting compassionately! Mission is prayer and hearing the voice of Holy Spirit! Mission is about being united with Jesus and doing what he prompts us to do in the local context – I have used these expressions many times in various places. All of these become more meaningful when I get immersed among the people. Our lay partners have been doing all of this during this period and it is my wish that they continue to reflect and reach out to the poor and vulnerable everywhere, especially during this crisis period. May your tribes grow and may you receive abundant blessings.

My special prayers for all the SVD lay partners and their families infected and affected by this virus.



Fr. Stanislaus Lazar, SVD
Generalate Mission Secretary, Rome

SVD Mission house

Ishopanathi Ashram, Puri (India - INE)



Entrance



Courtyard

Ishopanti Ashram, SVD Spirituality Centre, was inaugurated in 2006.



Backside



Statue of Jesus in the courtyard

Save the Date

IV World Day of the Poor - "Stretch out your Hand to the Poor"

International Prayer Bridge

On Sunday 15th November 2020 church celebrates the fourth World Day of the Poor. Again SVD-Partner Germany invite everybody – single person, family, group, parish, monastery – to come together in prayer and build a Prayer Bridge around the world.

If you want to be a part of it send an e-mail to kontakt@svd-partner.eu.

Please, do not forget your name, organisation/parish, place, country.

[Message of Pope Francis: Fourth World Day of the Poor](#)

Seven Sorrows of St. Mary

An Old Tradition with a Contemporary Reference



During my stay in the monastery of Arenberg (Germany) I walked through the so called "Holy Places". This is a Bible garden built up by the parish priest Johann Baptist Kraus in the 19th century. In these times the Bible garden was very popular but nowadays it is nearly forgotten. I walked through the garden all alone, a tourist interested in how faith was expressed in Germany more than 150 years ago. When I reached "St. Mary's Garden" seven little chapels caught my interest. They are dedicated to the "Seven Sorrows of St. Mary". Looking at them more closely I thought at all those mothers and fathers who suffer for their children during the COVID-19 pandemic. May the short seven prayers to Mother Mary from the 19th century be a help for them!

Maria Wego



A Prayer for Mothers and Fathers

Holy Mary, shelter of sinners,
pray for us!

Holy Mary, comforter of the afflicted,
pray for us!

Holy Mary, Mother of Christ,
pray for us!

Holy Mary, helper of Christians,
pray for us!

Holy Mary, Mother of Mercy,
pray for us!

Holy Mary, model of the suffering,
pray for us!

Holy Mary, gate of heaven,
pray for us!



The Prophecy of Simeon



The Flight into Egypt



The Loss of the Child Jesus
in Jerusalem



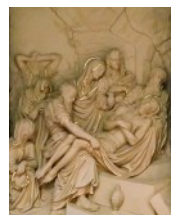
Mary Meets Jesus on the
Way to Calvary



Jesus Dies on the Cross



Mary Holds the Lifeless Body
of Jesus in Her Arms



Jesus is Laid in the Tomb

Imprint

Editorial Team

Susan Noronha (India) [editor-in-chief]

Matilda Anim-Fofie (Ghana)

Laura Inés Díez Bilbao (Spain)

Fabian Pagaduan (The Philippines)

Gianini Sahagun Becerra (Mexico)

Sophie Wego (Germany)

Layout

Sophie Wego

Photos

Br. Heinz Helf, SVD, Maria Wego, Sophie Wego, Steyler Mission,
Photo Mission World, Katholische Kirche Derendorf Pempelfort,
Religiöse Artikel Lourdes

Contact: svdlaicos@gmail.com

Submission deadline for the next issue: 1st November 2020