



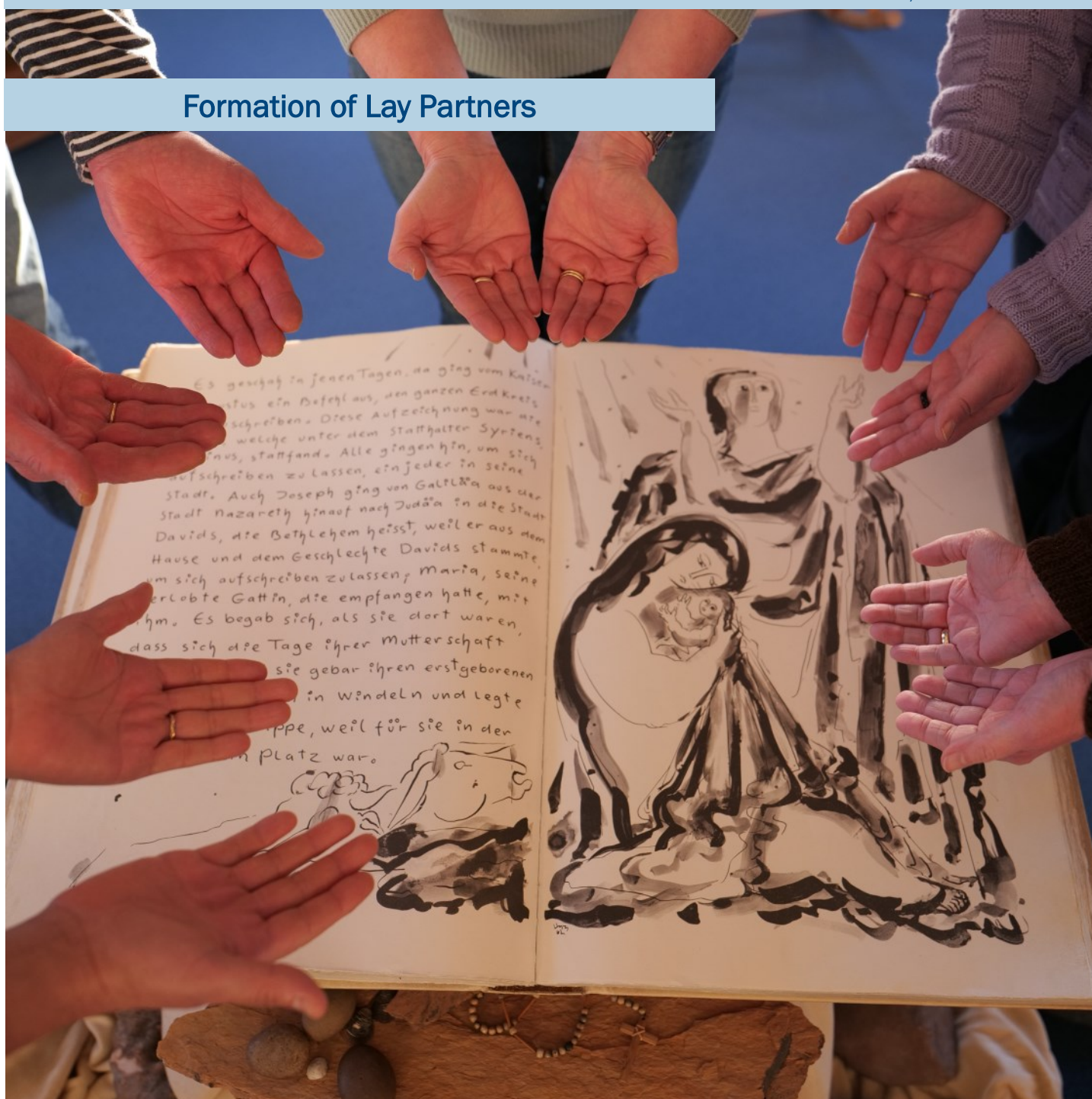
Society of the Divine Word (SVD)

SVD Lay Partners

Newsletter - from Around the World

Issue 14, December 2020

Formation of Lay Partners



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Editorial

Christmas to remember



*Away in a manger
No crib for His bed
The little Lord Jesus
Lay down His sweet head.*

Thus, begins one of my favourite Christmas carols. It talks about beauty in the midst of scarcity. Whatever December may bring, one thing it can't steal is the spirit of Christmas. Christmas time is here, a time to rejoice at the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. It's a time for joy and time for cheer, a time to love and a time to celebrate.

Just as we've adapted to a lot of what's being called "the new normal", we will also adapt to new ways to celebrate Christmas.

On that first Christmas night, matters were far from normal. Bethlehem was overflowing with travellers. The inns were full. There was no place. It was definitely not an ideal time for a woman about to go into labour. Yet, Joseph did not back down. He had to find a place. He made a place where normally parents would think of it as the last place to welcome their child into the world. The last place has today become the primary sign of the love between a husband and wife, and between God and us.

While the COVID-19 crisis reminds us of our shared fragility, it also reveals how everything and everyone is truly connected. Every disaster in life is also an opportunity to turn to God, just like Joseph and Mary did, in the little town of Bethlehem on that first Christmas night. To rest in the hands of God means we are secure, despite the uncertainty of life. It means we are free to love God and others, despite the challenges we face. It means we raise our eyes to Heaven, rather than look down in fear.

Christmas for me is a season of new beginning. A new beginning when all hope is lost and suddenly, God shows up in the situation and changes all things around us for our good.

It's a beautiful day today ... it may be sunny, raining or snowing outside on your side of the world. It's a beautiful day not because of the weather, it is beautiful because I am able to see it and enjoy it.

Wish you blessed Christmas and a grace-filled New Year 2021!

Susan Noronha
(Editor-in-chief)

Formation of Lay Partners

Some Basic Considerations

To be a lay partner of the SVD means to live the spirituality of Arnold Janssen and the founding generation and to participate in the life of the SVD and its missionary work. A lay partner is therefore more than a friend of the SVD. Prayer and Bible study are an integral part of his/her life. His/her whole life is mission-oriented. This also includes commitment to the poor, the disenfranchised and the marginalized, as well as work for peace, justice and the integrity of creation. The SVD's feast days, such as the Founding Day, the Titular Feast and the Feast of the Trinity, as well as the feast days of the saints and blessed of the Arnoldus Family, are a source of strength for the lay partner in his/her work with the SVD.

Whoever wants to take this path needs a good formation. In it he/she gets to know the spirituality of Arnold Janssen and the founding generation. In initial and ongoing formation, experienced guidance from the SVD is needed. Therefore, each lay partner group needs a spiritual director from the SVD. Prayer and Bible study are an integral part of their daily lives. An important companion for daily prayer is the rich prayer treasure of the SVD, published in VADEMECUM. Retreats help to deepen and reflect on what has been experienced and learned.

Since the initial and ongoing formation is very different in the already existing groups, the Generalate this year focused on this topic. The planned lay workshop in Nemi in September



this year was to discuss formation and formation manuals. Since the meeting could not take place due to the pandemic, a video conference will be held with the participants. The participants of the Nemi meeting 2017 will as well exchange information on this topic via video conference. (Field reports will follow in the next issue). In addition, the groups got a guideline for the preparation of a formation manual through the mission secretaries of their provinces. It is clear that initial and ongoing formation is a joint task of members of the SVD and the individual groups.

Sophie Wego

Formation and Collaboration with the SVD Lay Partners in INE Province

Introduction

Formation of lay partner groups is one of the mission priorities of INE province. Since ours is a missionary province we have to create awareness among the laity the possibilities of creating lay partner groups for the better collaboration in the mission of the Church. INE province is still in the initial stages in this venture. At the moment, we have initiated three groups and we are in dialogue with lay people in another three par-

ishes with the intention of starting new lay partner groups. Here I am going to present these three groups.

1. ALMA (Arnold's Lay Members Association)

A humble beginning of reuniting all the alumni of Jyoti Bhavan (common minor seminary for both SVDs and Diocese Sambalpur) was initiated by Fr. Christopher G., SVD in 1988. Later in the year 2008, Fr. Joseph Kujur, SVD and in 2014 Fr. Naveen Pinto, SVD tried to contact all the SVD alumni and initiated them to the SVD lay associate concept. The very purpose of bringing together all the SVD alumni is to provide them with a platform to re-connect, re-commit and re-dedicate oneself with the charism of the Church as a lay person with an official and distinguishable status. Currently, there are about 20 to 25 members who are participating in the meetings of the group.

As the gatherings and meetings became a frequent requirement, the group formed their executive members - President: Patrick Toppo, Vice-President: Noas Tirkey, Secretary: James Samad and Treasurer: Camil Minz. Until 2016, the group identified itself as SVD-Alumni but for an official recognition, the group was named ALMA (Arnold's Lay Members Association).

continued p. 4



In 2017, in view of the Silver Jubilee celebration of Vidya Jyoti Mission School, Pallahara, Sambalpur Diocese, ALMA donated 100 desks and benches to the School. In 2018, they conducted and financed a career guidance camp at Babudihi Intermediate College for tribal children. Members raised funds for golden jubilee celebrations of Jyoti Bhavan. During COVID-19 pandemic, the ALMA members raised funds and distributed dry ration in collaboration with CWS (Community Welfare Society) Rourkela.

ALMA is a lay missionary association collaborating in the mission of the church. Primarily every member helps the church through personal and family prayers, supports the poor, promotes rural tribal children for better education, medical assistance, etc. Now the group is all set to register itself as a charitable society under the Societies Registration Act 1860. We foresee a vibrant and active lay associate group in the near future for the collaboration with the SVDs.

2. SVD Lay Associates at Vidya Jyoti, Lungai

SVD Lay Associate Group at Lungai was formed on 17th May 2018. It was the initiative of some mothers who were inspired by the missionary activities of Mumbai lay group (DDW). Our founder St. Arnold Janssen was keen and open to involve the laity in the missionary undertakings. The group has around 20 active members, mostly women and few men. INE Province has officially recognized the group as part of our missionary outreach. Presently Fr. Frederick Santhumayor, SVD is the spiritual animator of the group. The group is very active and wishes to contribute its share in the mission of SVD.

Activities

- Once in a week, an hour of adoration is conducted where the members pray together for SVD missions and other intentions.
- Once in a month confession is arranged for the members and mission animation is done by the spiritual animator.
- Members visit the sick and suffering in the locality.
- Members make voluntary contributions all through the year and consign the same to the Rector of Vidya Jyoti, SVD Minor Seminary. The amount is defrayed for the education of the economically deserving seminarians.

3. Associates of the Divine Word at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Burla

The Lay Associate of the Divine Word Group was formed on 28th June 2019 at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Burla, Sambalpur through the initiative of the then Parish Priest, Fr. Lancy Rodrigues, SVD. It was decided that for the time being the Parish Priest would be the spiritual director of this group. There are 14 members in this group and following guidelines are set up for its initial formation:

- Regular meeting on first Friday of every month for prayer, adoration, Eucharist and a short meeting.
- Prayer life, simplicity and practice of the Gospel values like reading of the Word of God.
- Growing in St. Arnold Janssen's spirituality, Quarter Hour prayer, Bible sharing, etc.
- Praying and promoting vocations to priesthood and religious life.
- Praying for the members of Lay Associate group.
- Promoting mission awareness through prayer for the missionaries in the world.
- Involving actively in the local parish activities and helping to educate the poor and marginalised in our parish/missions.

We hope that this group would grow in Founder's spirituality and become a vibrant group with zeal for the missions.

Conclusion

The future of the Church's life and our SVD missionary work would primarily depend on the lay partners' involvement in the mission of the Church. So far, we were busy in promoting vocations to priesthood and religious life, now time has come to promote vocations to lay partner groups where lay people can be committed lay missionaries. We intend to provide necessary training to the lay partners so that they grow in St. Arnold Janssen's spirituality and charisms and contribute towards the growth of the mission.

Fr. Luvis Ronald Pereira, SVD
Mission Secretary, INE





Guide to Prepare a FORMATION MANUAL FOR SVD LAY PARTNERS



SVD e-Publications
Generalate, Rome





AFRAM ZONE



Ghana (GHA)

Friends of SVD – Professions and Ordinations

Profession of Perpetual Vows

Four SSps sisters - Dorothy Sedinam Kporyi, Charlotte Dery, Cynthia Addi-Chanagea, and Josephine Essuman, professed their final vows on 22nd August 2020 at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Accra. The theme for the celebration was: "Called ... Immersed in the Life of the Trinity, Missioned to Share in His Work of Transforming the World with Compassion".

Most Rev. Kofi Fianu, SVD, the bishop of the Ho Diocese was the main celebrant for the Holy Mass. Concelebrating with him were the Vicar General of the Accra Archdiocese, Fr. John Kobina Louis and other priests. In attendance were seminarians and novices from the dioceses of the Sisters, family members and well-wishers including lay partners of both the SVD and SSps congregations. It was a beautiful celebration that imbibed Ghanaian culture in the Liturgy.

Profession of First Vows

On 7th July 2020 fourteen SVD seminarians from Ghana, Kenya, Togo, Tanzania and Mozambique professed their first vows at the SVD Novitiate in Nkwatia, Ghana. This solemn ceremony took place at a Eucharistic Celebration officiated by the Provincial Superior of the Ghana Province, Fr. Cyprian

Kuupol, SVD. The *Friends of SVD* made an undisclosed cash donation in support of the formation of the novices.

Priestly Ordination

To God be the Glory! The Province has been blessed with six new priests at the ordination ceremony at the St. Charles Lwanga Catholic Church in Abeka, Accra on Saturday, 24th October 2020. Two of the newly ordained, Fr. Courage Mawuenyegah Eric Nordor, SVD and Fr. Constancio Koh, SVD joined the parishioners of St. Charles Lwanga to celebrate their Thanksgiving Mass on 25 October. The church community was very grateful for the many roles played by the SVD lay partners and parishioners for the successful ordination celebrations amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Matilda Anim-Fofie



Democratic Republic of Congo (CNG)

Fraternité SVD – Situation During the Pandemic



The DRC experienced its first case of COVID-19 on 10th March 2020, followed by the announcement of the State of Health Emergency on 24th March. Since then the churches are closed to the public, no masses, no school, no mission. It is a total confinement.

It was on 21st July, the government announced the end of the State of Health Emergency, because from now on, we will have to live with COVID-19. The population will now have to strictly apply the measures and seek treatment in the event of contamination. Months after closure due to COVID-19, schools have reopened now with preventive measures. DRC has about 11,000 confirmed cases, 300 deaths and nearly 10,000 people have recovered as on end of October 2020.

Family Bonding

This time of confinement for all members of the *Fraternité*, was a time of renewal of family values. It was a time when our group members were instructed to strengthen the family bond; to pray, to share and to live the Word of God together.



It was a very profitable time for many of our children who did not often have the opportunity to stay with their working parents. Yes, COVID-19 certainly crippled the economy and made us weak, but we rediscovered many of those lost family and social values.

SVD Accompaniment

It is fitting to say, that the SVD priests have an innovative inspiration to accompany us during this period. This is the case of Fr. Michel Manga, SVD who now sends the meditation on the Word of God to all the members of the *Fraternité* through daily WhatsApp. Also, Fr. Jean Yanga, SVD shares his homily with us via video message.

In my family, we have a built-in chapel in one of the rooms inside our house. Since the Passover feast, SVD priests have taken turns to celebrate Mass with our family. What a wonder of a family church of God!

Jean Paul Nico Luketo



Kenya (KEN)

Friends of SVD – Ongoing Work During the Pandemic



May the heart of Jesus live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people. We give God all the glory and honour for His sufficient grace that has kept us safe this time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this difficult time, movement to one place to the other was limited because many people locked themselves indoors due to the fear of being affected by the virus. Borders were opened partially with limited time for the movement of transport.

Despite all these difficulties, we did not stop working in our Lord's vineyard. We participated in the Diaconate Ordination of our three brothers, Borice Randrianirina, SVD; John Jerome Asidigbe, SVD and Courage Mawuenyega Eric Nordor, SVD at St. Mary Immaculate Parish, Mihango.



Due to closure of borders, Deacon Borice could not travel to his hometown for his Priestly Ordination. One family from our SVD lay partners' group became his God parents and accompanied him to the ordaining bishop. He was ordained priest on 22nd August 2020 and will be working in our Province.

On the same day, we also participated in the Diaconate of other five brothers, Pamphil Sambaya, SVD; Simond Kwadwo Vire, SVD; Komlan Justin Gbedjeha, SVD; Isséré "Roger" Agre, SVD and Jean Cloud Randriamanana, SVD.

We also joined in the welcoming ceremony of our new spiritual director Fr. Jérôme Olianga Mfute, SVD and bid farewell to Fr. Rethinasamy Amaldoss, SVD.

Unfortunately, we had many tragedies during this pandemic period. We lost one of our members, one member lost her son and one lost her mother. May their souls rest in peace. We also helped our sick members financially by contributing money to ease their hospital bills.

On Mission Sunday we helped in giving out envelopes to the congregation in the church. God's work must continue despite all the challenges. God is always with us!

Dorcas Martha



South Africa (BOT)

SVD Lay Association – New Experiences in an Extraordinary Time



On the 27th March 2020 national lockdown was announced in South Africa for 21 days due to COVID-19 pandemic. We thought it will be a short-term lockdown and life will be back to normal soon but it lasted for several months.

Since October, South Africa is in Level One. That means we are able to move around the country without much restrictions. But the virus is very much active and alive in our midst. Most of the Dioceses in South Africa opened their churches only in October. Even now people are scared to go to churches although 50 percent of the total capacity of the church is allowed. At *Mater Dei Pastoral Centre*, from June, the Sunday Mass was for a small group of people. I was lucky to be part of that group. Some of us were driving 100 kms to the Pastoral Centre for Sunday Mass which was a good experience for me.

On 8th September, the Foundation Day of our Society, we were blessed to have Mass followed by a small celebration.



We were happy to have Br. Andrés Jones Maqueda, SVD from Paraguay who is in South Africa for his OTP experience. He shared with us his experiences of being in South Africa.

With this pandemic life is very slow in all aspects. We are unable to meet as a group. So, no meeting and no major activities this year. On the 10th and 13th October 2020 we gathered in the Sacred Heart Cathedral, Polokwane and at the Garden of Remembrance. We prayed the Holy Rosary to honour of the Blessed Virgin in the month of the Rosary.

Last week of October we had a Spiritual Renewal Retreat led by Fr. Sunny Vattapparayil, SVD on the theme: "Inner Peace". The main lesson learnt from the session is that PEACE begins with me. I must find a way to reconcile with myself. Hard work, perseverance and patience are required and with God's blessings, inner peace can be reached.

Edwina Mbite





ASPAC ZONE



India (INM)

Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW), Mumbai – Keeping in Contact and Work for the Hungry



Prakashan – Introducing our First Issue of Newsletter

On 8th September 2020, SVD Foundation Day, DDW published their first quarterly newsletter, *Prakashan*. This is a new way to connect with our members and to share our stories with others. As a part of our own growth, we're excited about this new venture as it is specifically designed to help others to know us better and to understand the work and mission of the DDW. In this first issue, the editorial team has compiled a number of articles focusing on the beginning of the group and an overview of our different activities.

Motivational and inspirational video talks by SVD fathers associated with DDW, are sent to members every Sunday, since many of our members are old and confined to their homes.



Food Essentials

As the crisis around the COVID-19 pandemic grows, the livelihoods of a large number of families surviving on daily wages continues to remain affected. The collaborative work of the SVDs and SVD lay partners (DDW) providing food essential kits is giving hope to many hungry families.

Hungry People, Living on Streets

"Will you come next Saturday too?" asked a wounded man outside a government COVID hospital as I was giving him a packet of food. We were distributing hot lunch at this hospital-gate. I nodded my head yes, though I was not sure about my answer. Many who come to these government hospitals cannot afford even a daily meal.

Every Saturday, beginning October 2020, we have resumed feeding the hungry people with a meal on the road-sides, at the traffic signals, outside hospitals, etc. We are thankful to God and to our members who are with us in this fight against hunger.

Susan Noronha



PRAKASHAN

Disciples of the Divine Word - SVD Lay Partners, INM

Issue 1 A quarterly publication from the Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW) **September 2020**

The Beginning

In the year 1999, a small group of lay volunteers helped to propagate the programs conducted by Atma-Darshan, a SVD Center for Spirituality and Counseling, Mumbai, India headed by Fr. Gregory Pinto SVD, the then director of Atma-Darshan, together with Fr. Edward D'Mello SVD and thus the seed was sown.

In October 2014, Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW) was recognized as a Lay Associate Group of the Society of the Divine Word, India Mumbai Province (INM).

50 dedicated members coming from varied cultural and linguistic backgrounds committed to the mission of St. Arnold Janssen with Fr. Gregory Pinto, SVD, the Spiritual Director to guide and support, them have shown great enthusiasm and goodwill in reaching out to the needy and the marginalized. The projects are supported from contributions received from members.

Members reach out not only to India Mumbai Province but also to all SVD Provinces and Region in India.

To name a few, sponsoring SVD seminarians for their formation, being involved in different ministries of the local parishes, acting as resource persons assisting Atma Darshan in their programs to collaborating with healthcare and education. DDW members are reaching out to the less privileged addressing social, economic, educational and developmental issues with a special focus on women and children.

May the darkness of sin and night of unbelief vanish before the light of the word and the spirit of grace, and may the heart of JESUS live in the hearts of all. Amen

OFFICE MEMBERS

Fr. Gregory Pinto, SVD - Spiritual Director

Susan Noronha - President Leena Xavier - Vice President

Jacinta Saldanha - Secretary Hazel Mendonca - Treasurer

Quarter Hour Prayer

1. God, eternal truth,
A. We believe in You.
1. God, our strength and salvation,
A. We hope in You.
1. God, infinite goodness,
A. We love You with all our heart.
1. You have sent the Word as Savior of the world,
A. Make us all one in Him.
1. Fill us with the Spirit of Your Son,
A. That we may glorify Your name. Amen.

Editorial Team

Jayash George
Rozalia D'Souza
Susan Noronha
Fr. Gregory Pinto, SVD

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India (INM)

SVD Lay Mission Partners, Pune - Inaugural Meeting



The inaugural meeting of the SVD lay mission partners was held on 4th October 2020 at the Divine Word Seminary, Pune. Fifteen members and six SVD fathers were present for the first meeting. We were overwhelmed by the wonderful welcome at the entrance. It was almost six months that we had come out and socialized with people.

The meeting began at 10 a.m. invoking God's blessings with a prayer led by the spiritual director, Fr. Gregory Arockiam, SVD followed by a hymn to the Holy Spirit and Scripture Reading Jn.1:1-18. Fr. Gregory spoke about St. Arnold Janssen and the three missionary congregations he founded. He also explained the way St. Arnold Janssen promoted lay people at the first Mission Seminary in Steyl, Netherlands.

After a warm welcome by the Rector of the Seminary - Fr. Jesuraj Rayappan, SVD, Leena Xavier, the Vice-President of the Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW) Mumbai, enlightened us on the collaboration of the DDW in the mission of the SVDs in India. Members shared their interest to become SVD lay partners.



Fr. Gregory thanked everyone and concluded the meeting with the Quarter Hour prayer and encouraged the group to say this prayer regularly.

The greatest blessing that one could ask for was the Holy Eucharist. Together as a community we celebrated the Eucharist which was enhanced by the melodious choir by the seminarians. After the spiritual food, the fathers treated us with sumptuous meal. We are indeed glad and grateful to the SVD for extending their welcome to us and inviting us to be a part of their family.

The coming together as a group was spiritually enriching and it laid the foundation for the work to be undertaken by the group in the future, beginning with our own city of Pune.

Fr. Gregory Arockiam, SVD and Mazline Eugene



Indonesia (IDJ)

SOVERDIA – *Ora et labora*: Vows and Harvest in a Vineyard



A Nice Gift – SOVERDIA Tritunggal Mahakudus Tuka

On the 145th anniversary of the SVD, the formation of a new SVD lay partners' group *SOVERDIA Tritunggal Mahakudus Tuka* is a beautiful blessing and a very special gift for the SVD Java Province.

On 8th September 2020, even though it was a difficult time of the pandemic, SOVERDIA of the Blessed Trinity parish was officially inaugurated. Nineteen members made their vows and attended the preparatory stages of the formation to become members of SOVERDIA. The group is moderated by Fr. Laurensius Ketut Supriyanto, SVD. The Chairman is Stefanus Made Dirdayasa and Vice Chairman is Ni Nyoman Astini.

SOVERDIA St. Joseph's Denpasar- Bali

This year's Triduum of Archangels was with recollection, members making their vows and inauguration of the board of members of SOVERDIA St. Joseph's Denpasar for the period 2020–23. The Recollection was guided by the Moderator Soverdia of the Bali Lombok District, Fr. Paskalis Nyoman Widastra, SVD. He talked on the WORD that became human and came into this world to become LIGHT to the world. We too are invited to live in this LIGHT and understand our members better by knowing their difficulties, especially during this pandemic.



On the feast day, around thirty members made their vows during the Holy Mass celebrated by the Rector of SVD Bali Lombok, Fr. J. Madia Adnyana, SVD. This was followed by the inauguration of the committee - Paulina Suharsi as Chairperson, Theresia Metty as Vice Chairperson and Fr. Madia Adnyana, SVD as Moderator.

SOVERDIA in the SVD Vineyard - Bali Lombok District

SOVERDIA of St. Joseph's Denpasar and SOVERDIA of Holy Trinity Tuka, took part in grape harvesting activities at the SVD Pancasari Vineyard, Bedugul - Bali. Members helped in weighing, packing and selling fresh grapes. Some grapes were processed into *Jaboticaba Jam* and some into wine. The SVD and SOVERDIA collaboration not only brought assistance to the SVD vineyards but also brought joy to SOVERDIA members. May this vineyard always be blessed with a bountiful harvest.

Paulina Suharsi

"ora et labora" (Latin) = pray and work
The religious way of life as defined in the rules of St. Benedict.



The Philippines (PHC)

The Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen (LSSAJ) – Mission and Social Engagement



Amidst the great challenges of this pandemic, the Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen, Inc. (LSSAJ) continues to pursue its missions:

1. to attain a deeper and more meaningful spirituality in ourselves, our communities and society at large,
2. pursue initiatives and advocacies that promote good governance, eradicate poverty and protect the environment and
3. promote the contemporary expression of St. Arnold Janssen's charism in mission animation, biblical apostolate, social communications, justice peace and integrity of creation focused on the secular order.

Listening Hearts

With the rise in mental health issues during this pandemic, Daisy Leones is involved with *Kalakbay* and *Listening Hearts*, a psycho-social service under the Diocese of Novaliches that provides emotional support and pastoral counselling for people who are in need and in organizing *Senior Sa Panahon ng COVID-19* addressing the issues of the senior citizens who are neglected and abandoned by the government. Activities include conducting weekly webinars through its *Senior Citi* via Facebook & YouTube, on issues affecting the senior citizens, writing manifesto and petition letters addressed to concerned government agencies.



Anti-Hunger/Pro Farmer Engagement

Chairman Charlie Avila presented: "Anti-Hunger/Pro Farmer Engagement, Possible Roles and Range of Actions for Concrete Involvement and Social Support". Together with LSSAJ Corporate Secretary Mayette Tamondong, he continues with the apostolate of spreading the Gospel through educational-organizational activities of the farmers for both economic and socio-political empowerment.

Arnold Janssen Kalinga Foundation

LSSAJ continues to collaborate with the Arnold Janssen Kalinga Foundation. Engr. Cris Lim, LSSAJ President, has been providing his professional and technical assistance in the renovation of once a hospital building and transformed it to Arnold Janssen Bahay Kalinga in Bagong Silang, Caloocan City, inaugurated and blessed on 16th July 2020. True to its mandate, "Bahay Kalinga was conceived to provide opportunities for those in the peripheries of society, for the homeless seeking for a hope to start a new life".

LSSAJ launched its *Agri Fair Project* in collaboration with the Department of Agriculture and the Sacred Heart Parish providing income for marginalized parishioners.

Pursuing these advocacies in the time of pandemic was truly a great struggle for everyone. Most of the core members are senior citizens and are therefore vulnerable to acquiring the virus. Despite these seemingly insurmountable roadblocks, LSSAJ remained steadfast.

Daisy Leones



The Philippines (PHN)

SVD-PHN Mission Partners – Virtual Meetings and Prayer Sessions



The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically changed our lives. But lockdown or not, there is no stopping the SVD-PHN Mission Partners to thrive where we are called to commune and witness. Despite our limitations, we have managed to find ways to come together, taking advantage of what cyber technology has to offer.

Virtual Workshop

Initiated by the SVD Youth Mission Partners of Cagayan District in partnership with the SVD-PHN Mission Partners, the 1st SVD-PHN Mission Partners - Youth Sector Virtual Workshop hit the airwaves on 16th August 2020 via Zoom with the theme “Let Me Be the Bearer of Your Love”.

In his address, Fr. Provincial Romy Fajardo, SVD exhorted the youth and those present to see God as their companion so they could reach their next goal of becoming true witnesses of the Word, as bearers God's love.

Praying the Rosary with One Heart

Reflecting on the “Mysteries of the Mission”, SVD-PHN Mission Partners with Mission Secretary Fr. Emil Pati, SVD, Biblical Coordinator Fr. Romeo Benitez, SVD, JPIC Coordinator Fr. Cirilo Ortega, SVD and former Mission Secretary Fr. Oscar Alunday, SVD gathered for the Mission Rosary every Wednesday evening during October via Zoom for the intentions of



the mission and vocation promotion. With one heart, we united our prayers and deepened our commitment as prayer warriors.

Celebrating Partnership at the Banquet

Mission Partnership starts and deepens at the Lord's and people's banquet. It heart-warming to note that every Sunday, lay workers of SVD-PHN Provincialate and some mission partners with the SVD community of the Provincial house, start their day with the celebration of the Eucharist. In the evening, the celebration continues with a meal. This is how we remember, give thanks and celebrate as Partners – SVDs and lay.

Mike and Mary Geraldine Paderon



EUROPA ZONE

Germany (GER)

SVD-Partner – A Meeting Full of Premieres at Missionhouse Sankt Augustin



It was a very special meeting from September 11th to 13th September 2020:

- For the first time it was a meeting in COVID-19 times.
- For the first time SVD-Partner met in Missionhouse Sankt Augustin.
- For the first time Provincial Fr. Martin Üffing, SVD and Vice-Provincial Fr. Peter Claver Narh, SVD spoke to the SVD-Partner.
- For the first time Markus Woettki reported on the MaZ-programme.
- For the first time – no, that is not true - the group met Mission Secretary Fr. Xavier Alangaram, SVD for the second time. But even so the meeting was full of premieres - if that is not a good sign!

No matter whether it was about the concept of the MaZ-programme (Woettki), today's understanding of mission (Fr. Üffing) or situation and future perspectives of the German SVD-Province (Fr. Narh), SVD-Partner gave answers to these questions: How can we get involved? How can we support the work? What are our main priorities? The answers and ideas will take shape in the coming weeks and months.



But don't worry - the weekend did not only contain presentations and meetings. The traditional barbecue of the *Missionsprokur* was moved from Wednesday to Saturday evening (especially because of the visit of the SVD-Partner!). It was a mild summer evening, cosy and full of good discussions - and of course COVID-19 compliant.

Highlights were the Holy Masses on Saturday and Sunday. Since many SVD lay groups in the world are not yet able to come together for worship, SVD-Partner set a sign of solidarity. A candle for each continent was brought to the statue of Christ "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened".

Strengthened by prayer, many conversations and being together, everyone went back to work like the International Prayer Bridge for the World Day of the Poor on 15th November 2020.

Maria Wego

MaZ = *Missionar auf Zeit* (temporary missionary)
Programme for young people to live and work abroad for one year.





PANAM ZONE



Panama (CAM)

Misioneros Laicos del Verbo Divino – Group Activities After Easing the Lockdown



In this time of global pandemic, God is continually blessing us.

In the month of September 2020, when the Ministry of Panama Health opened up the lock down and the quarantine time was eased, we experienced the blessing from God. We came together to celebrate the 145th anniversary of the foundation of our congregation, the Society of the Divine Word. After the solemn Eucharistic Celebrations, we had a fellowship meal together.

In October, we received formation training on “Being a Missionary”, by Fr. Jose Cyriac Melukunnel, SVD, identifying ourselves with the mission of the twelve apostles who were the first missionaries together with the Virgin Mary. They had the commitment to pray, to collaborate with the missions, being



obedient and being available for the service, always available to the call of God. We thank God for providing us this training through Fr. Jose Cyriac.

On 17th October 2020, elections were held for the new board of *Misioneros Laicos del Verbo Divino* for a period of three years. The members meet on the third Saturday of every month.

May God bless us all.

Rogelio Rodriguez



Chile (CHI)

ALMA Verbita - Mission in Times of Pandemic



These months of the pandemic have undoubtedly been times of fear, uncertainty and confusion. The COVID-19 has transformed the lives of millions around the world in an unimaginable way. We are all trying to adapt to this new reality in the hope that this can end soon.

In these days of crisis and confinement, the reflection arises that life is short and people are fragile; to get sick and even to die suddenly. We make plans for the future thinking that we are in control of our lives, but, an invisible virus is enough to alter our routines and destroy our plans. We try to make economic, social or cultural differences but COVID-19 reminds us that all of us can get sick, and that we are interconnected and need each other for support.

Every Life is Important

Human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:27) and the image of God is the fundamental basis for the value and dignity of people. The Bible teaches that



God is the giver of life, therefore we must protect and value everyone's life. Sadly, it is the poorest who have suffered in this global pandemic, and we all have a responsibility towards them.

Conscious that love for neighbour is the fundamental proof of our faith, our missionary community has been present in the mission where we helped the locality of Monte, maintaining a "healthy distance". We are supporting them economically so that the fraternal soup kitchen, del Monte, that saw an increase in its number of attendances, will continue to operate and provide daily food rations to many families in the sector.

As a way to stay united and connected in this "social distancing" that forced us to be confined to our homes, our community has decided to meet once a week to pray together and thus strengthen our commitment with Jesus and with ourselves, as a missionary community.

Elena Ortiz



Mexico (MEX)

Misioneros Auxiliares del Verbo Divino (MAVD) - Work and Dreams Continue



Thanks be to God, today in Mexico we have a small respite to dream - in which life can return to be like before, full of hugs, kisses, greetings, smiles and interaction with each other, without fear and without the uncertainty that we might catch COVID-19. Thanks to this we have resumed some activities which free us little by little from the confinement and from this fear of COVID-19.

On September 25th, 26th, and 27th, we held our National Encounter virtually, "*A Distancia Pero Cerca*" ("From a distance but near"). Among the activities conducted were: The Holy Hour, led by Region B and The Missionary Rosary led by Region A. Our Provincial Fr. Juan Weibel, SVD; Sr. Gaby Pichardo SSPS and our Spiritual Adviser Fr. Martin Islas, SVD gave us topics aimed at the new challenges of the domestic church in these times of pandemic. We concluded with our closing Mass in charge of the host group *San Antonio* from Mexico City. Without a doubt we experienced very emotional



moments, that will strengthen us and encourage us to continue to work in building the Kingdom of God.

COVID-19 has arrived, continues and will remain and although the virus is there, lay brothers from all over the world Jesus tells us again and again "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all people." The opportunity now, in this lockdown that still continues, is to revisit the concept of the home, the family and the domestic church (as a space of micro power) in the hands of the family, the woman, to strengthen or empower the role of the laity without breaking with the public space or of worship held in churches, where lay persons share their faith. One space doesn't deny the other.

As committed laity we must affirm, "In case of doubt always stay on the side of the poor".

Fr. Martin Islas and José Manuel Contreras Bautista



United States (USW)

Misioneros Laicos del Verbo Divino (MLVD) - Overcoming Challenges



The COVID-19 pandemic interrupted our lives as we knew them. Our parishes and churches were closed but our community has successfully continued to come together through new and creative ways. For the past 14 years at the community of Queen of Angels in Riverside, CA and for the past 6 years at Our Lady of Lourdes in East Los Angeles, CA we have had weekly classes for the continued formation of those who have been part of the evangelization process which involves a 3-day weekend "Initiation Retreat" where Jesus is proclaimed as Lord and Saviour to members of our community and its outskirts.



After the retreat we follow up with weekly bible classes to build up the communities and to grow our knowledge of the Bible and our faith.

For the first time in so many years our process has been interrupted, but with the use of media and technology we have been able to continue our classes online through the "Zoom" platform. This has been quite a challenge because although almost everyone has a smartphone or laptop available, many lack the experience or knowledge of how to use them. We are currently studying the Scriptures and the Church Fathers which has been enlightening and fruitful in our faith journey.

Mariana Flores

~ Last but not Least ~

Make the Elderly Smile

A Postcard Campaign in Germany

COVID-19 pandemic makes people feel lonely - especially those living in homes for the elderly. To protect them against infection visitors are not allowed to come. This is also true



for German SVD-fathers and SVD-brothers living in "Wendelinusheim", the SVD home for the elderly in Germany. They have spent decades of their life in Asia, Africa and Latin America and are now spending their retirement in Germany. To add a little variety to their everyday life SVD-Partner started a postcard campaign. The elderly SVD-fathers and SVD-brothers are very happy to receive greetings which colour their lives.

Please, send a postcard to make the elderly smile!

Steyler Missionare (SVD)
- Wendelinusheim -
z.Hd. Frau Sandra Kuhn
Missionshausstr. 50
66606 St. Wendel
Germany

Maria Wego



Prayer

By your birth God

By your birth, God,
you have shown your human side,
you have become a brother to us,
forever visible as a child in the manger.

By your birth, God,
you have made a new beginning,
you've accommodated us as far as you can,
forever interwoven into our history.

By your birth, God,
you have joined heaven and earth,
you have come infinitely close,
forever depicted in every human being.

Br. Michael Ertl, SVD

Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year

Susan *Matilda*
Laura *Fabian*
Sophie *Gianini*

Imprint

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Submission deadline for the next issue: 1st March 2021