



Society of the Divine Word (SVD)

SVD Lay Partners

Newsletter - from Around the World

Issue 22, August 2023

First India Subzone Lay Partners Workshop



IMPORTANT NOTE: 2nd Laypartner Workshop in Nemi February 2024 - Details p. 21

Inside this Issue

Editorial

SPECIAL TOPIC

First India Subzone SVD Lay Partners Workshop 3

GROUP REPORTS FROM ...

AFRAM ZONE

. South Africa (BOT): SVD Lay Partners Malamulele 8
 . Ghana (GHA): Friends of SVD 9
 . Kenya (KEN): Friends of SVD 10
 . Zambia (ZAM): Kabwe SVD Lay Partners 11

ASPAC ZONE

. Indonesia (IDJ): SOVERDIA 12
 . The Philippines (PHC): LSSAJ 13
 . The Philippines (PHN): SVD-PHN Mission Partners 14
 . India (INM): Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW) 15

EUROPA ZONE

. Germany (GER): SVD-Partner 16

PANAM ZONE

. Argentina (ARE): MSLAV 17
 . Colombia (COL): Socios Laicos SVD 18
 . Chile (CHI): Alma Verbita 19
 . Panama (CAM): MLVD 20

CORRECTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Issue 21: Contribution from IHN 20

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Second International SVD Lay Partners Workshop in Nemi 21
 7th World Day of the Poor – International Prayer Bridge 21

INFORMATION FROM THE SVD

India (INM): SVD Mission Sunday 22

SVD LAY PARTNERS ABROAD

. Germany (GER): Maria Wego 22
 . United States (USC): Len Uhal 23
 . India (INM): Disciples of the Divine Word 24

List of Lay Partners' Videos 26

In Memoriam 27

Prayer 28

Imprint 28

Editorial

The Sound of Violence

“...and no one dared, disturb the sound of silence”. This line from the 1960s American folk-rock song, ‘Sound of Silence’ describes people’s inability to communicate, their inability to have meaningful conversations, and their inability to genuinely love each other. But beyond that, it’s an inability to do anything about it – no one dares disturb the sound of silence. It’s the high-point of urban death and decay.

And now, will we dare disturb the sound of violence? The soundtrack of violence echoes the challenges that many countries are facing today - from the clashes at rallies in France, to the screams of victims in Mexico, to the gunfire and bombing in Ukraine, to the mass shootings in America, to the massacres in Africa, to communal disputes and riots in India. Violence is a disturbing reality. It crosses national borders and cultural distinctions everywhere in the world.

At the same time, there has been a growing un-silence among people in recent years. People are daring to disturb the sound of violence. The March 2023 International Women’s Day in Mexico City attracted thousands of women demanding action from the country’s top administration against gender-based violence, and senseless drug-related killings. As ethnic conflict rages on in Manipur, India; women’s groups are organizing protests amid violence, between the majority Meitei and minority tribal Kuki communities that have claimed more than 160 lives since it first erupted in May 2023. Likewise, numerous groups worldwide are raising their voices against the senseless violence around us. In almost all cases it’s the poor, the minorities, and the powerless who are the victims of this violence.

Jesus’ ministry was characterized by a deep concern for those on the fringes of society and to bring to them the fullness of life. He actively engaged with the outcastes, the sick, the poor, and women, treating them with respect and compassion. To the young man who asked him which commandment he must keep, Jesus quoted “Do not kill...” (Matthew 19:18) as the first in the list of commandments he told him. Jesus’ central message was one of love and empathy. His ultimate sacrifice continues to inspire countless people to embrace life and humanity.

By following Jesus’ example, we, the Divine Word Missionaries, can work towards a world where every voice is heard, every life is valued, and love and empathy prevail over hate, division, and violence. Our voices indeed have the power to create ripples of change. When united, we can become a powerful force against violence. We dare to un-silence ourselves; we dare to disturb the sound of silence and violence.

Susan Noronha
 Editor-in-chief

First India Subzone SVD Lay Partners Workshop

2nd to 6th March 2023 at Ishopanathi Ashram, Puri



Workshop for SVD Lay Partners of India Subzone

The first ever India Subzone level SVD Lay Partners workshop was organized from 2nd to 6th March 2023 at Ishopanathi Ashram, Puri, India by Fr. Luvis Ronald Pereira, the Mission Secretary for SVD India Subzone in collaboration with Fr. Dixon Lawrence D'Souza, the AJS Coordinator of India-East Province (INE). Taking into consideration the forthcoming 19th General Chapter, this workshop revolved around the theme - SVD Lay Partners: Towards Faithful and Creative Discipleship.

Twenty-five participants from nine SVD lay partner groups took part in this workshop -

- Disciples of Light, Lungai, Arnold Lay Member Associates (ALMA), Odisha and Divine Word Lay Associates, Burla from India East Province (INE)
- SVD Fraternity, Chennai and Arnold's Association, Hyderabad from India Hyderabad Province (INH)
- Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW), Andheri, Bandra and Pune from India Mumbai Province (INM)
- Apostles of the Divine Word (ADW), Tripura from India Guwahati Region (ING)

Eucharist and Inauguration

The workshop was graced through the inventiveness and support of Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar, the General Mission Secretary and Fr. Victor Rodrigues, the Provincial Superior of India-East Province (INE). This workshop was flagged off with the Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Victor Rodrigues, who gave a clarion call to be 'Life-Promoters' in mission and was inaugurated by the installation of the Bible and lighting of the lamp by Fr. Victor Rodrigues SVD along with the SVD lay partner representatives from all the PRMs. The second day was graced by Most Rev. John Barwa SVD, the Archbishop of the Catholic Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar who presided over the Eucharistic Celebration and shared about the faith-convictions of the victims of the persecutions at Khandamal and emphatically declared that

the "blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church". Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar celebrated the Eucharist on the third day and offered the lay partners a traditional shawl representing symbolically commissioning them to become faithful and creative disciples in the wounded world.

Workshop and Sessions

Presentations were on the following topics;

- "Lay partners and SVD mission in the light of the 19th General Chapter towards becoming faithful and creative disciples" by Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar, Generalate Mission Secretary
- "Formation of the lay partners, the formation guide and the statutes" by Fr. Jolly Mudakkampurathu, Mission Secretary (INM)
- "Fundraising for mission" by Fr. Richard Vaz, Manager, Arnold's School, Bhubaneswar
- "Life and works of Servant of God Marian Zelazek and lay partners" by Fr. Baptist D'Souza, Director of Karunalaya Leprosy Care Centre & Ishopanathi Ashram, Puri and Fr. Dixon D'Souza, AJS Coordinator (INE)
- "Sharing about the starting, formation, meetings, activities of a new lay partner group, formulation of statutes, the process of getting recognition and the group's functioning by Susan Noronha, President, DDW Mumbai and chief editor of SVD lay partners international newsletter.
- "Arnoldus Family: The three congregations and their mission" by Fr. Dixon D'Souza, Sr. Florentina Xess, SSpS and Sr. Bindhu Mathew, SSpS
- "Arnoldus and lay partners spirituality" by Fr. Gregory Arockiam, Spiritual Director, DDW Pune





Sharing

The participants were split into four groups to debate and express their opinions on two questions:

1. What are the challenges of SVD lay partners?
2. How to collaborate in doing missionary activities with SVDs and among SVD lay partners themselves?

Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar chaired the common assembly where the members presented the fruit of their discussion. Later in the evening, the representatives gave a ten-minute presentation about the origins, growth and activities of respective lay partner groups.

Excursion and Exposure

The third day of the workshop was a day set aside for exposure. In the morning the participants were spellbound to view the architectural wonder of Sun Temple, Konark. On the way back they visited the Immaculate Conception Church, Puri constructed by Servant of God Marian Żelazek. Fr. Baptist D'Souza and Fr. Ronald Pereira accompanied the participants who witnessed the leprosy mission - Karunalaya Leprosy Care Centre (KLCC), begun by Fr. Marian Żelazek. The participants walked through the leper colony, the mercy kitchen, Fr. Marian Memorial, Chapel, Beatrix school, etc. They were touched by the reality of rejection, loneliness, unwantedness and the societal stigma that has stripped the victims of leprosy from their dignity. The prophetic manner in which Karunalaya

Leprosy Care Centre serves to empower these victims through the warmth of acceptance was awe-inspiring and heart-touching.

Gratitude

The India Subzone SVD Lay Partners workshop was a grand success. We are grateful to the governing body of India Subzone for granting us permission to organise this workshop. We are grateful to SVD Generalate for granting permission for Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar to travel to India to participate in this workshop. We appreciate him for his lively and down-to-earth presentations and for his guidance all along the planning and execution of this workshop. We are thankful to Fr. Victor Rodrigues, the Provincial Superior of INE, for his sterling backing catalysed by constant appreciation. We are indebted to the mission secretaries of India-East Province, India-Hyderabad Province and India-Mumbai Province namely Fr. Luvis Ronald Pereira, Fr. Bali Reddy and Fr. Jolly Mudakkamphurathu respectively and Fr. Gregory Arockiam, the Spiritual Director of DDW-Pune for their presence and timely interventions that played role in enriching the workshop. A special note of appreciation for Sr. Florentina Xess SSpS for accompanying the entire group and giving a motherly touch to the workshop. Kudos to Fr. Baptist D'Souza, Fr. Ashley Fernandes and the support staff at Ishopanthe Ashram for extending the best of hospitalities.

Fr. Luvis Ronald Pereira, SVD
Mission Secretary, India Sub-Zone



Feedback from Workshop Participants



From the workshop, I have gained a deeper understanding of St. Arnold's spirituality and mission spirit. In this wounded world, God calls me to bind the wounds of the needy in and through the mission partner of the SVD congregation. The input sessions were very enriching. The life history of Fr. Marian Zelazek inspires me to serve the Lord tirelessly. My heartfelt gratitude to the mission secretary of India Subzone Fr. Luis Ronald Pereira, Generalate Mission Secretary Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar and the team. We thank the community of Ishopanthe Ashram for their wonderful hospitality.

Anjana Bongcher
Apostles of the Divine Word, Ambassa, ING

The mind keeps taking a peep at those four days of an out-of-the-world experience - the serene ambiance, some precious time for prayer and introspection, some serious sessions of knowledge-sharing, outings to catch up with history and an awe-inspiring guided tour that spoke volumes about Fr. Marian Zelazek's multi-pronged service to the lepers ... rounded off with a get-together.

Dominic Roche
SVD Fraternity, Chennai, INH

Excellent workshop with much input for SVD lay missionaries. It's fantastic to see groups working well in different places, sometimes with little assistance and direction. Additionally,



this field trip left us with a stronger impression. To maintain this enthusiasm, this sort of workshop may be held in the future at appropriate times and locations. Both older and younger people may be the workshop's target audiences.

Cosmos Dang
ALMA, INE

Very impressed and thank you to all who helped plan, present and execute this wonderful, meaningful workshop experience. I enjoyed sharing ideas with so many great mission visionaries. This workshop helped me realize the value of being a good SVD lay mission partner, to be able to give an able response to whatever I see. It helped me to understand that vulnerability can become an effective opportunity for the mission of the church.

Munira Milwala
Disciples of Divine Word, Bandra Mumbai, INM



SVD lay partners from all across India came together for a great gathering. Sharing from each group was a learning opportunity and very encouraging. The information provided by the resource persons was well-expressed. The sessions were well organized and comfortable. We should get together once every two years, if possible. We appreciate having all of our SVD priests among us. The culmination was also the fellowship event when people bonded.

Leena Xavier
Disciples of the Divine Word, Pune, INM

Susan Noronha, Andrew D'Souza and I arrived on 3rd March at Ishopanti Ashram, Puri to participate and collaborate in the workshop. "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine ..." All of us have hummed this catchy tune. Jesus wasn't advocating that we always turn on the entrance lights at night. He was referring to allowing the Holy Spirit to radiate with brightness within us. The Eucharist on all three days had a deep impact on us. The sessions were an incredibly rewarding experience as it was a great opportunity to learn, grow and connect with others. Inputs from various subject matter experts with a deep understanding were able to provide all of us with insights and practical suggestions.

Jayesh George
Disciples of Divine Word, Mumbai, INM

Good Initiative of India Subzone Lay Partners Meeting



The Workshop for SVD Lay Partners of India Sub-Zone was held at Ishopanthe Ashram, Puri, from 2nd to 6th March 2023. There are nearly 10 lay partner groups in India. For the first time, the seminar was organized in Puri for the representatives of the lay partners. As many know that India is like a beautiful and valuable basket that contains many treasures of various cultures, traditions, languages, music, literature and so forth. Therefore, this gathering of the lay partners itself is a rich experience. I was happy to know the members of the workshop; I met some of them for the first time and some others already are known to me. I was much edified to know their conviction, beliefs and interest in the mission. Several of them are involved in many missionary activities: reaching out to the poor, encouraging the formees, conducting planning sessions, forming groups, visiting other mission areas, helping other province mission activities, etc. A number of activities that are carried out by the various groups impressed me very much and I am convinced that the groups are in the right direction as partners in mission.

Lay partners are co-responsible people in the mission and in the church. They are missionary disciples who are called to live their gift of baptism fully in the local context. Indian political situation at present is not conducive to the Christians. To involve in missionary activities in some parts of India is risky, hence one has to be prudent and careful. But unity in the group, support and encouragement of one another, good conviction and faith orientation are vital for future participation as lay partners in mission.

I am also very happy to note that every group has a vision and action plan and this is very encouraging. Each group is trying its best to get involved in the mission, there is a good collaboration with the SVD confreres on various projects. Of course, there are many challenges to being active lay partners, but they are trying their best to show witness to faith. I am aware that lay people have jobs, family concerns, health issues, challenges of relationships and so forth, but in spite of all these, real dedication, commitment, love for the mission and joy are seen in these groups.

I wish all of them successful ministries and joyful life; with their participation, God's mission will flourish and we are all partnering with God to make our environment a better place to live.

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

Who is Fr. Marian Żelazek?

Fr. Marian Żelazek, SVD, a Polish Missionary, spent more than fifty years in Puri, India East Province (INE) and cared for thousands of leprosy victims. He founded the Ishopanthe Ashram and Karunalaya* Leprosy Care Centre in Puri. Fr. Marian Żelazek built the Beatrix School and a hostel nearby Karunalaya for children from leprosy-affected families. He died at the age of 88 on 30th April 2006 in the midst of his beloved people. He was declared "Servant of God" on 25 August 2018.

Fr. Marian Żelazek, was twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (in 2001 and 2003) and had won the hearts of millions of people through his dedication and service, particularly to leprosy patients.

Click on the globe to read more on Fr. Marian Żelazek. [🌐](#)

Karunalaya (Hindi) – a house of compassion







AFRAM ZONE



South Africa (BOT): SVD Lay Partners Malamulele

Overview of Our Activities



Moving Forward in God's Mission

SVD Lay Partners from St. Benedict Parish in Malamulele, South Africa, continue to be active as missionaries. The group has recently welcomed new members, two of them being youth. We have grown from eight to twelve in number. We are grateful for God's mercy and kindness upon the group.

Meetings and Activities

Our monthly meetings are held with the support and help of our local Priest and the Provincial Mission Secretary of Botswana. At times we have online meetings with the Mission Secretary.

Some of our members participated in sharing Bible Reflections during the month of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. The group also participate in the Vocation Promotion Workshop at the Parish level. And we visit Pxuxanani Disability Centre, where we continue to identify the needs of the people staying there. Spending time with the community helps us to understand their requirements.

Future plans and Challenges

The group is in preparation for the Commissioning Ceremony of the SVD lay partners during SVD month, September 2023.

We continue to struggle to collect money to help us carry out our mandate of providing assistance to the poor at their centres. As a fundraising initiative, we have not yet been successful in getting our Bible stock to sell.

Thandi Mazibuko



Ghana (GHA): Friends of SVD

Reinstallation of SVD Provincial Superior and Tesano Community



Installation of SVD Provincial Superior

The reinstatement ceremony of the Provincial Superior, Fr. Cyprian Kuupol, SVD was on 1st June 2023. The introductory rite was conducted by Fr. Andrews Obeng, SVD followed by the reading of the appointment letter by Bro. Charles Eshun, SVD. During the homily, Fr. Alphonse Amanor, SVD spoke on "Faith" and encouraged the faithful gathered to focus on the Divine Word and to be humble missionaries.

Agnes Cobbinah, SVD lay partner, congratulated the Provincial and the council and reaffirmed the continuous support of the lay partners. Sr. Mercy Margaret Benson, SSpS, congratulated Fr. Cyprian Kuupol and assured their support. Other goodwill messages were read by the Provincial Secretary, Fr. Abraham Dzibitor SVD.

Fr. Cyprian Kuupol congratulated the newly appointed Vice Provincial, Fr. Stephen Dogodzi SVD and his council members. He expressed his profound gratitude to the former Vice Provincial Fr. Andrews Obeng for his immense contribution to Ghana Province. He acknowledged the contributions of everyone in bringing the good news to the people of God. Speaking further, Fr Kuupol, said that the most important issue that demands immediate attention is working towards self-

reliance. He called on all the confreres for a collective sacrifice to identify and develop self-reliant projects that will help the province to be less dependent on benefactors. He added that above all, their lives should be characterized by prayer.

Tesano Community

The Tesano Community of the Friends of SVD meets every Friday to plan their activities. The meeting begins at 6.00 am with praying the Rosary, the Mysteries of Mission from the Vademecum and concludes with the SVD lay partners' prayers, followed by Holy Mass and Adoration.

During the first half of the year, the group visited their sick members and mourned with the family of one of their deceased members, Bro. Benjamin Eshun. A donation was made to the widow. The group announced its new dress code on 16th June 2023, the Solemnity of the Most Sacred of Jesus. The visit to the SVD Spirituality Center in Tuba in Accra is currently being prepared.

Anselm Obiechefu
Daniel Lamptey



Kenya (KEN): Friends of SVD

Monthly Gatherings, Elections and other Activities



Prayer is one of the most important aspects of our life as followers of Jesus, the Divine Word. Following the spirituality of St. Arnold Janssen, all our groups met in their local Parishes in the Province to pray together and discuss the activities. Prayer strengthens our relationship with God, who has always blessed us and guided us by His Spirit in all our activities and in our life. Here, we make a special mention of the Friends of SVD of Holy Trinity, Morombo Parish, Arusha District in Tanzania.

Elections

In our Province, 2023 was an election year. Our groups had elections in March and April. The provincial mission office team, along with the national leader, had to go from parish to parish to oversee the elections on the dates designated by each parish. Some were re-elected, while others were elected for the first time. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads and guides us.

Other activities

On 14th May, lay partners from Nairobi District organized a meeting on behalf of the other two districts to wish three SVD deacons preparing for their priestly ordination in their respective countries.



On 27th May we visited Gigiri Provincial House in Nairobi, where we were welcomed by Provincial Superior Fr. Tony Amissah SVD and others. We participated in the Holy Eucharist and later Fr. Emmanuel K. Dogble took us through a question and answer session. Those who answered correctly received the Holy Bible. It was a joyful day.

On 1st June 2023, we participated in the Eucharist Celebration of Installation Ceremony of the new Provincial Superior, Fr. William Owire SVD. Members from all our districts participated in this event. We were delighted and humbled to be given the opportunity to acknowledge our former Provincial Fr. Tony Amissah and to congratulate and welcome our new Provincial.

May the Holy Triune God live in the hearts of all.

Grace Akinyi



Zambia (ZAM): Kabwe SVD Lay Partners

Introduction of a New Group in Zambia



Introduction

Kabwe SVD Lay Partners, the second addition to the existing Linda Lay Partners in Lusaka, has twenty-six members. The number has more than doubled from inception. Our drive was the growth of faith and support for the SVD mission in Zambia. In this report, we would like to highlight the activities in which we have been involved as Kabwe SVD lay partners. The group is represented in four parishes: St. Charles Lwanga, Holy Rosary, St. Monica and St. Joseph, the last two are diocesan parishes.

Activities

Despite our diversity, we have a deep sense of belonging and experience mutual support and friendship in everything we do. In the way we organize ourselves, we feel purposeful in working with the Novitiate of Kabwe. Our greatest satisfaction is that the Novice Master and his staff, as well as the Novices, have a sense of belonging to the larger community alongside the Novitiate. Friendliness and social activities aimed at building the SVD community have been one of our main concerns.

Our service extends to the community, identifying needy individuals and offering support through food and clothing. We share common interests and work towards a common goal. We conduct SVD prayers, monthly meetings and fundraising

activities to support the SVD mission. Apart from these activities, we also visited Linda SVD lay partners in Lusaka.

We are involved in organizing liturgies to build our community and proclaim Church teachings. Recently we organized a farewell Mass for Fr. George Clement Angmor SVD, Novice Master and for Br. Ferdi Selan, attended by Zambia Mission Secretary, Fr. Martin Kawana SVD.

Conclusions

As SVD lay partners of Kabwe, we are a missionary group. Every member is committed to the mission in one way or another. We are grateful to our mentor Fr. George Clement Angmor for his untiring guidance to our group.

Ndalia Chileshe





ASPAC ZONE



Indonesia (IDJ): SOVERDIA

New Group and Ongoing Activities



Mission Rosary Indo-Leste

Yet again, the SVD lay partners of the Indo-Leste sub-zone conducted a virtual Mission Rosary comprising the provinces of IDJ, IDT, IDR and TLS. The participation of the Soverdia of Timor Leste (TLS) and SVD lay partners of Papua New Guinea (PNG) made this particular rosary even more significant. We are encouraged by the involvement of every group in the sub-zone. Each group, not only prays weekly onsite missionary rosaries in their particular regions, but also virtually.

New group in Batu, Malang

The SVD lay partner group of Soverdia Holy Spirit of Batu, Malang was formally confirmed by the Provincial, Fr. Gregorius Kaha SVD, on the Feast of Pentecost on 28th May 2023, after a year and a half of preparation under the guidance and supervision of Fr. Agustinus Murtika SVD.

Novenas in May and June

Continuing the traditions of St. Arnold Janssen, Soverdia members from Denpasar, Palangkaraya, Bekasi, Kranji, Teraju and Surabaya are actively involved in the special devotions - novenas to the Holy Spirit, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, etc. Lay partners of Bali Lombok district celebrated the Sacred Heart of Jesus novena Mass from 7th to 16th June.

Blending in routine services in the parish

Soverdia members are now blending with the parishioners in their respective parishes by actively participating in Holy Mass. In April, Soverdia Denpasar, Soverdia Kranji and Soverdia Bekasi were in charge of the choirs for the Good Friday Service, the Divine Mercy Novena Mass and the Last Seven Words Service to reflect on the Lord's Passover, respectively.



Arnold Janssen Family

Members of Soverdia, as members of the Arnold Janssen family, assist SVD and SSpS in their respective areas of experience. The SSpS from Surabaya visited the Soverdia members of the Bali-Lombok area on 5th May and the members also took part in their Profession in Bali on 25th June. On 17th June, Juanda Surabaya Soverdia members celebrated the priestly anniversary of Fr. Lukas Adi Gewa Tiala SVD and on 29th July 2023, Denpasar Bali Soverdia members will commemorate the 45th priestly anniversary of Fr. Guifo Fahik SVD.

Paulina Suharsi



The Philippines (PHC): The Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen (LSSAJ)

Lenten Recollection



Forty-five members of the SVD lay mission partners met at the Laudato Si Ecospirituality Center, Tagaytay City from 25th to 26th March and heeded the call of Jesus “Follow Me”, marking the 2023 Lenten Recollection organized by the Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen, Inc. (LSSAJ).

Mission in a post-COVID world

Fr. Tony Pernia SVD in one of his significant messages said, “The pandemic is a call to a different way of organizing our world and living our lives – that is, with more awareness of our belonging to one another as brothers and sisters in the same human family, with more solidarity with the poor, respect and care for the earth, openness to God’s will and greater recognition of God’s sovereignty”. He explained that *Fratelli Tutti*, a “Call to Fraternity” which shall put an end to the globalization of indifference and the hyperinflation of the individual, by “becoming a person of dialogue” and “dialogue lies at the heart of the SVD spirituality”.

Social Consciousness

Chairman Charlie Avila spoke on “Social Consciousness as the Fruit of Spiritual Awareness”. The pointers for everybody to ponder on: “watch and pray”, “pray and work” and “work and play”. By “play” it means letting go and letting be and, trusting



Him who is “our strength and our salvation”. He further asserted, “This is no longer the age of the clergy, this is the age of the laity. What a responsibility for you and me to realize that we are Church, to know that we are the Christ. If only we have faith, no matter how small, our faith can transform life in all its reality without any disconnect”.

Lent: A Time to Renew – Repent and Believe

President Cris Lim shared his reflections on self-examination, repentance and the renewal of our relationship with one another and with God through prayer, fasting and acts of charity.

“Mindfulness” is a method of establishing a connection with our Creator, explained Mayette Tamondong, LSSAJ Corporate Secretary.

Ed Agbayani talked about his pilgrimage walk from Fatima, Portugal, to Santiago de Compostela, Spain, via the Caminho Nascente.

The Holy Eucharist celebrated by Fr. Tony Pernia and the confessions were the highlights of the Recollection. It was a renewal of the SVD lay partners’ commitment to Arnoldus Spirituality, in a battle cry called “Faith Transforming Life.”

Daisy Leones



The Philippines (PHN): SVD-PHN Mission Partners

Work and Characteristics of SVD-PHN Mission Partners



Meet our SVD-PHN Mission Partners of Holy Child of Prague Parish

One of the most often asked questions when introducing ourselves as lay partners is, “Who is an SVD-PHN Mission Partner?” Or, “What do you do?”

In this issue of the SVD Lay Partners Newsletter, meet our SVD lay mission partners of Holy Child of Prague Parish, Cervantes, Ilocos Sur. They are among what we call “the unsung” SVD lay mission partners, our dedicated and silent mission partners working in the frontiers of our faith and the margins of society, among the least, the last and the abandoned – either as pastoral leaders, community workers, catechists and volunteers.

As co-responsible for the mission, they go to the most remote (accessible only on foot) communities and chapels of the parish. Where the SVDs cannot go because of the immense work to be done, they go. They conduct prayer services with groups and families. They care for the elderly, sick and dying. They organize the enthronement of the Bible in the homes the evening before the next day’s house blessing. Through their presence, they make the Church present in people’s lives. They have generously dedicated their time, talent and treasure to the mission. They are silent workers who have embraced life in the mission as co-responsible in their own “little” way.



TATAK SVD-PHN Mission Partner

The Arnoldus Spirituality has its distinct characteristics. St. Arnold Janssen, by his example, left us a way of life that we are expected to follow and live in our daily lives. The prologue of the SVD Constitutions expresses our “special dedication to the Divine Word and His Mission”.

As SVD lay partners in PHN Province, there is also what we call TATAK SVD-PHN Mission Partner. Or translated, the mark of an SVD-PHN Mission Partner.

Primary to the SVD-PHN Mission Partners' identity is the Bible enthroned in our homes. Please visit <https://youtu.be/DH1plZot09o> to get a glimpse of how we do it in our homes. Please feel free to subscribe as well to our SVD-PHN Mission Partner YouTube Channel. [SVD-PHN Mission Partners - YouTube](#)

It is our prayer that as we enthrone the Word in the center of our homes, He will not only become a fixture but also the Word made flesh in our lives as we live and witness to His example.

Mike and GeeO Paderon



India (INM): Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW), Mumbai

Continuing Work and Special Moments



Renewing our Commitment

The DDW members renewed their commitment as SVD lay partners on 15th January during the Eucharistic Celebration celebrating the feast of St. Arnold Janssen. The prayer was led by Fr. Richard Mathias SVD, Provincial Superior INM, and guided by Fr. Gregory Pinto, SVD, Spiritual Director.

Workshop for SVD Lay Partners of India Subzone

Andrew D'Souza, Jayesh George, and Susan Noronha participated in the workshop for SVD Lay Partners of India Subzone at Ishopanathi Ashram, Puri. The sessions spread over three days were rewarding. It was an opportunity to learn, grow and connect with others.

SVD Lay Partner from Congo joins us for Feed the Hungry

Jean-Paul Nico Luketo (Nico), SVD lay partner from SVD Fraternity, Congo took part in our "Feed the Hungry" program on Saturday 11th March. While on a holiday in India, Nico helped us with packing the food and distributing it. He was overwhelmed with the joy of feeding hundreds of hungry people. Later he joined us for lunch and shared his experiences with us.



Lenten Spiritual Outing

On a weekend in March at Kune Mission, Khandala, was a Lenten spiritual outing for the DDW members. Along with Fr. Tony Menezes, SVD, eighteen members took part in this memorable spiritual journey. The sessions helped heal scars and wounds and break through old attachments and unpleasant memories, leading to renewed inner peace and healing.

A Dream Pilgrimage to Rome, Oies, Steyl, Sankt Augustin

On 19th May, fourteen members arrived in Rome and onward to Oies, Steyl, and Sankt Augustin, experiencing the spirituality, the power of prayer, and the vision of St. Arnold Janssen. We are grateful to the confreres who were a part of our pilgrimage and welcomed us as members of the Arnoldus family. (more under 'SVD Lay Partners Abroad')

Susan Noronha
(Courtesy: Prakashan, DDW Newsletter)





EUROPA ZONE



Germany (GER): SVD-Partner

Pentecost in Steyl



“... and each one heard them speak in his own language.” Well, it wasn't quite like that - there was always translation - but the communication between the Indian and German lay partners was quite Pentecostal. The pilgrimage group of the Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW) from Mumbai accompanied by Generalate Mission Secretary Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar SVD visited Rome, Oies, Goch, Sankt Augustin and over Pentecost - Steyl. At the same time SVD-Partner came to Steyl for their second annual meeting in 2023. Thus nothing stood in the way of the world's first meeting of two lay groups from different continents.

On the first evening, the groups get to know each other, informed about their work and exchanged experiences. SVD-Partner was particularly impressed by DDW's social action “Feed the Hungry”. Every Saturday, DDW with the support of many other helpers distributes 1,500 food parcels to the needy in Mumbai. “Every Saturday,” they emphasise, “even if it is Christmas. People are hungry and need our help.”

Handshakes and hugs

The second evening was all about celebrating. There was a lot of singing, dancing and laughing at the “Farewell Party”. In the SVD spirit, the groups did not keep to themselves but celebrated together with guests and the community of the Mission House St. Michael. On behalf of the DDW, speaker Susan Noronha expressed special thanks to the community of Saint Michael for the warm welcome at the founding place of the Divine Word Missionaries. On Pentecost Monday, the journey continued for the DDW. The “handshakes” of the first evening were followed by many “hugs” as they said goodbye. The new friends want to meet again in the future - certainly via Zoom, but perhaps sometime in Mumbai.

SVD-Partner also used the weekend for a time of reflection and collected ideas for the organisation of meetings and future work.

Maria Wego





PANAM ZONE



Argentina (ARE): Misioneros Socios Laicos Amigos del Verbo

Celebrating Holy Week and Pentecost



Holy Week at Cerro Monje

At Cerro Monje, we joined with the faithful who travelled from different parts of the Province to participate in the Adoration of the Cross. It was a moment of worship and prayer as we stood beside our Blessed Mother in her pain and anguish. Together with Fr. Héctor Maldonado Colín, Fr. Agustín Kitajima und Fr. Bonaventura Dedi, the members of the Misioneros Socios Laicos Amigos del Verbo took part in the Cerro Monje. May our Founder and the founding generation continue to accompany us in this service to the Triune God and our Blessed Mother.

Feast of the Pentecost

In keeping with St. Arnold Janssen's devotion to the Holy Spirit, we as missionaries pray that He continues to guide us in our Evangelising Mission for the 125 years of SVD presence in this country by giving us the Light of the Holy Spirit. The children of IAM Argentina, the Confirmation of the Community of San Gabriel, the friends of Verbo de Fátima, La Morenita, the Villa Cabello Foundation, and the church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary all joined us in celebrating the feast of Pentecost.



"Your light must shine before others" (Mt 5:16)
 "Faithful and creative disciples in a wounded world."

To discuss the Second Community Guide, we gathered in the ARE Province's Posadas, Eldorado, Alto Uruguay, and Chaco districts. Through His son Jesus, our heavenly Father reveals to us who we are — a healing light in a broken world. We are invited to recognize the Light of God inside us and to allow this light to transform us in order to share this light with others, as obedient disciples and as a channel between God and His people.

For each member of the lay partners' groups, it has been very enriching work, making our communities a place of prayer, listening, and dialogue.

Aurora Galarza



Colombia (COL): Socios Laicos SVD

New Lay Partner Group in Colombia



A Path of Hope in the Church

The Mission Secretary of Colombia Province officially inaugurated Socios Laicos SVD in Vigía del Fuerte, Antioquia, during his visits to the Regions in the Province. In order to be officially recognized as SVD Lay Partners by the Provincial and his Council in 2025, the group is now preparing for their Formation. From now, we enthusiastically take part in this formative journey that will help us become connected to the Spirituality, Charism and Mission of the Divine Word. In total, the Province of Colombia forms 11 groups of lay mission partners.

As individuals dedicated to the missionary life of the Parish of Our Lady of Mercy for many years, Fr. Oscar Villa's visit to Vigía del Fuerte was of utmost significance to us. As we listened to the proposal to begin the Formation process, several questions arose and Fr. Oscar Villa answered with clarity and precision. One of the questions: "Do we have to leave the life we live?" Fr. Oscar Villa said, "No! You will continue to be the same, serving as you have been doing for many years", which caused everyone present at the gathering that Sunday to grin.

One heart, many faces

We are still the same, but with the spirituality and charism of the Arnoldus family, that is, we reaffirm the love for the Word of God, reach out to others with a message of peace and allow the Word made Flesh in Jesus to unite us in one heart with many faces and cultures. Here we are ready and willing to continue contributing to the Church the best that we have from our being with its strengths and limitations. We are with the conviction that the Church belongs to all and we are responsible for putting it on the path of the mission.

Fr. Oscar Villa will keep empowering our group members. As SVD lay partners, we too will continue serving the Church in the sacrament preparation process with solidity and dedication, encouraging youth to participate and reaching out to the people and communities with social needs.

John Jairo Chaverra Murillo



Chile (CHI): Alma Verbita

Anniversary Celebrations as well as Formation and Mission Animation



Formation and Mission Animation

The Formation is a constant concern of our community, to form ourselves to serve in the best possible way. Fr. Marcelo Oyarzún gave us a workshop on Mission Animation at the Retreat House in La Florida on 27th May 2023. The second part of the workshop will be at the headquarters of the Pontifical Mission Societies.

In August the Formation will be in Liturgical Animation. We will be accompanied by Fr. Guillermo Rosas, doctor in Sacred Liturgy, Pontifical Liturgical Institute, San Anselmo, Rome.

In October we have an invitation to participate in a meeting with our associates of the PANAM sub-zone in Posada-Misiones, Argentina. Few of us will participate in the meeting, share our experiences and encourage each other in the mission.

Anniversary Celebrations

Celebrating our foundation, we gathered on Saturday 22nd April 2023 to share, celebrate and give thanks for the 11 years of life of ALMA Verbita. We were born on 28th April 2012 and here we are persevering and resilient. The celebration began with the Eucharist and then moved to the table to enjoy a small agape. There were also gifts and much joy.

It has been eleven years of constant commitment, travels to various regions of our nation and sharing with various communities, all in an effort to make a difference in places where there is more spiritual or material need. It is unquestionably crucial to appreciate life and the opportunity God offers us to walk alongside and shine a little light on others.

The work is great and challenging in times of so many changes, where the world seems to run in a hurry. It is in this reality that people often find it difficult to recognize the presence of God. Today our mission is different, it is no longer to go to a distant place only. The mission is here, now and with everyone.

Magaly Morales



PANAMA (CAM): Misioneros Laicos del Verbo Divino (MLVD)

Mission with the Youth in the Mocambo Community



On 25th June 2023, together with the local youth of Medalla Milagrosa Parish in Alcalde Díaz, Panama City, we carried out a mission in the community of Mocambo. We were accompanied by our spiritual guide Fr. Bau Van Nguyen. It was a very fruitful and enriching mission.

The celebration of the Holy Eucharist with the local community members was the culmination of the mission visit. The youth were very much inspired and empowered by this mission trip. There was delicious lunch provided by the community for us and we enjoyed having a meal with them. We are the Divine Word missionaries sent out to the world to be with the people of God and to proclaim His Word. May God continue to bless all the people in the community of Mocambo. And may the heart of Jesus live in our hearts and in the hearts of all people.

Rubiela Ramírez de Rodríguez
Rogelio Rodríguez-Pizza



Corrections and Clarifications

SVDLP Newsletter Issue 21, April 2023, page 14, India (INH): SVD Fraternity - Interaction with the Superior General and Other Activities,

“...servants’ quarters under construction which is being funded by the SVD Fraternity” to read as “...servants’ quarters under construction nearby with contributory funding from SVD Fraternity.”

We apologize for the error.

Susan Noronha
Editor-in-chief

Announcements

February 2024

Second International SVD Lay Partners Workshop in Nemi

Knowing the need of the lay partner groups to build a good relationship with the other groups, to know other nationalities, to deepen Arnoldus spirituality, to know more about the Arnoldus Family missionary activities, etc., we have planned an International SVD Lay Partners Workshop.

Those who are interested in participating in this workshop are requested to contact your respective mission secretary and make arrangements to take part in this important event.

Deadline to submit your name: 30 September 2023.

Place: Nemi, Rome

Dates: 18th February (arrival) to 2nd March (departure) 2024

Participants: 30 members

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



November 2023

Seventh World Day of the Poor – International Prayer Bridge

On Sunday 19th November 2023 Church celebrates the seventh World Day of the Poor. This year's motto "Do not turn away your face from anyone who is poor". Again SVD-Partner Germany invites everybody – single person, family, group, parish, monastery – to come together in prayer and build a Prayer Bridge around the world.

[The message of Pope Francis: Seventh World Day of the Poor](#)

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, or country.



Information from the SVD

India (INM)

SVD Mission Sunday – in collaboration with SVD lay mission partners



SVD Mission Sunday was celebrated from 18th to 19th March at St. Theresa's Parish in Bandra and from 29th to 30th April 2023 at Sacred Heart Parish in Andheri. The celebration in both parishes was a great success with the full support of the SVD lay mission partners from Bandra and Andheri. St. Theresa's and Sacred Heart are SVD Parishes that are benefactors of the missionary work of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD).

In Bandra, Fr. Richard Mathias, SVD Provincial, INM, concelebrated the 7 pm Holy Eucharist on Saturday and Fr. Kuriakose Jolly Mudakkampurath, INM Mission Secretary, preached at all English Masses through the weekend. In Sacred Heart Parish, Andheri, Fr. Raja Reddy SVD launched the Mission Sunday Mass at 7 pm on 29th April.

This year's SVD Mission Sunday's theme was "Mission in a Wounded World" and the proceeds of the mission are to support a 'Village Chapel Project' in Manipur, India Guwahati Region (ING). The painting of the Indian art form painted by Fr. Petrus Baraik SVD was launched, pictures blessed, the art explained and a two-minute visual on the SVD Mission in Manipur was presented.

Should not those who receive much, share in the mission of raising funds for another in need? May you be blessed in your giving!

Fr. Jolly Mudakkampurath SVD
INM Mission Secretary

~ SVD Lay Partners Abroad ~

Germany (GER)

A Visit in Hungary

What does a SVD lay partner do on Holiday? Right. Meet other SVD lay partners. That's what Maria Wego, SVD-Partner Germany, did during a short visit to Hungary's capital Budapest in June. Katalin König invited her to a tour of her hometown Budapest and a visit to a café. Both exchanged information about the work of SVD lay partners in Hungary and Germany and about the work of the SVD in both countries.

From both of them to all SVD lay partners: Best wishes from Budapest!

Maria Wego



United States (USC)

SVD Lay Partners and Religious Vocations



From mid-January to mid-February a colleague and I from Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa, USA, had the opportunity of a lifetime to take a mini-sabbatical to visit SVD missions anywhere in the world. Since Mark had already visited Africa, we chose to visit Asia. With only four weeks, it was hard to narrow down the wide array of countries to visit, but we eventually settled on the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam (with stops in Tokyo to and from Asia).

It's hard to describe in a few words our many, many experiences visiting SVDs in three different countries. From farms and coffee shops run by the SVD to formation houses and universities, we packed many activities into 30 days. We appreciated the opportunity to visit several SSPs and SSPAP convents. We also enjoyed historical and cultural sites in each country, like the Chocolate Hills on the island of Bohol, Philippines; the Cu Chi Tunnels in Saigon, Vietnam; and the colored lakes at Danau Kelimutu National Park in Indonesia. Our treasured moments were just being with SVDs we knew from the past who had visited us in the USA and meeting new SVDs for the first time—provincials, council members, pastors ... brothers and priests who are serving God's people in unique ways. Our conversations at meals and visiting with them at the end of the day with a beverage and a snack really highlighted the trip.

As SVD lay partners working at the SVD Philosophy Formation house in the USA, we were excited to be able to meet other SVD lay partners in Ende, Indonesia. Several lay partners attended a presentation Mark and I offered on the happenings of SVD missions in the USA, focused mostly on fundraising ministry (Mark) and vocation ministry (me).

During the meal after the presentation, we were able to chat with one of the young ladies who is in the SVD lay partners group in Ende (I think she was about 22 years old). She noted that there is a decline in men and women joining religious life in Indonesia. Paraphrasing her answers, she said: Young people in Indonesia don't want to be poor. Young people want to be free and not be told what to do. They want to get married and have a family.

Wow! I could not help but notice how her three reasons parallel the three vows religious men and women profess when they join religious congregations. It made me wonder—How do we as lay people talk about religious life with our young people? Do



we encourage young men and women to consider religious life as a viable and valuable vocation—as a way to love God and serve God's people? What role do we as SVD lay partners, have in helping young men and women learn more about the Arnoldus Family?

We may think that priests, brothers and sisters need to replenish their own ranks. But as a layman who serves in vocation ministry, I believe we "lay folks," those of us in the pews, need to look around and call forth leaders from among our ranks who will serve as Church leaders in the future. As SVD lay partners, let's see what we can do to help the three congregations of the Arnoldus family grow. Do you have some good ideas? Contact me at luhal@dwci.edu.

Len Uhal

Len Uhal is the National Vocation Director for the Divine Word Missionaries at the Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa, USA. He was the lay representative from the PANAM zone for the 18th General Chapter.



India (INM)

A Dream Pilgrimage

As SVD lay partners, we had a dream to visit our Founder's place and experience the power of prayer and his vision for the Arnoldus family. It took months of collective and detailed planning by Susan Noronha (DDW President) and Fr. Stanislaus T. Lazar SVD (Generalate Mission Secretary) and the team to make this dream a reality.

Rome

On 19th May 2023, fourteen SVD Lay Partners (Disciples of the Divine Word - DDW) from Mumbai, India embarked on a journey to Rome. We spent four days in Rome visiting the Vatican, basilicas, countless chapels and churches along the way. We shared a meal with our Superior General, Fr. Budi Kleden and SVD conferrers in the Generalate. Praying in the Basilica in Domitilla Catacombs and the Eucharistic Celebration by Fr. Xavier Thirukudumbam inside this historic site allowed us to understand the faith of early Christians. We also experienced Nemi and its serene beauty, a spiritual connection with our Creator.



Oies

Staying at the humble home of St. Joseph Freinademetz was serene. His simplicity grows on you as you hear narrations of his simple life before he was chosen and sent as a Chinese missionary. In his home, one can experience positive vibrations and again you are reminded, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness hasn't overcome it. Here we experienced community life while cooking, serving, eating and washing the dishes together.

Steyl

From Oies to Steyl it was a long twelve-hour bus ride. Across two days we walked through the length and breadth of this Holy Ground encountering the warmth of the confreres at St. Michael's Mission House. It was interesting to know that although St. Arnold was good at math and planning, he

believed in the need to kneel in prayer. Stories of how he prayed for everything were evident as we visited SSps and SSsAP Motherhouses. As we listened to the narration of our Founder's final days at St. Gregor, our hearts were filled with gloom reminiscing the pain he physically experienced while holding on strongly to the Triune God and connecting with missions across the world.



Meeting SVD-Partner, Germany

For the first time, two SVD lay partner groups from two different countries came together in Steyl to exchange and express the working of the individual groups. Meeting with the members of SVD-Partner, Germany was an enriching and beautiful experience of sharing. This was followed by a social gathering where the members of the lay groups and the confreres spent a fun time together.

The End of the Journey

On the last leg of our journey, we visited Goch, Kevelaer and Sankt Augustin. The *Missionspriesterseminar St. Augustin*, extended their hospitality to us. We were happy to donate to the World Mission through them.

In every SVD community, you find beautiful art that reflects the value of inculturation and the inclusive attitude practiced by our Founder while sending missionaries to foreign soil. We experienced that we "belong" to one family. We are grateful to all the confreres who were a part of our pilgrimage, who provided us deep insight into the Arnoldous spirituality and strengthened our resolve to follow in the footsteps of our Founder – kneeling, serving and believing in the love and mercy of the Triune God.

Anupama Subodhanan
Susan Noronha



Rome. Generalate and Domitilla Catacombe



Oies. Freinademetz Home and Oies parish



Steyl. At the sarcophagus of St. Arnold Janssen and visit at the SSpSAP



Sankt Augustin.

Goch. At the birthplace of St. Arnold Janssen



List of Lay Partners' Videos

Published by SVDMissionTV on YouTube

Since February 2022 SVD lay partners all over the world present themselves and their work in small videoclips published by SVDMissionTV on YouTube. Since issue no. 20

you find the complete list of all existing videos here. In this issue are added the videos from Ecuador and Slovakia.

Click on the globe to start the video.



More in production



In Memoriam

For God so loved the world,
that he gave his one
and only Son,
that whoever believes in him
should not perish,
but have eternal life.



Cicila Yuliana Soetami

† 08.05.2023

SVD Lay Partner, IDJ



Kamis Simarnata

† 29.06.2023

SVD Lay Partner, IDJ



John Benjamin Eshun

† 11.01.2023

SVD Lay Partner, GHA

Gone from our sight, but never from our hearts.

We will miss you!

Rest in Peace



Prayer

Lord, I don't want anything else in my life
if You are there beside me.

Whether You give me happiness
or give me sorrow,
O Lord, everything is the same for me
if You are there beside me.

Looking for pleasure
I moved away from You
and wandered in the desert.

Though there is sun, moon stars and bright day,
drifting away I am dying in darkness
Lord, I don't want anything else in my life
if You are there beside me.

Fr. Marian Želazek, SVD

shared by Jayesh George
Disciples of Divine Word, Mumbai, INM



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