



Societas Verbi Divini (SVD)

SVD Laici



EX GREGE

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Lay Partners Training in Guwahati, India

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Editorial

“I Have Seen the Lord” (John 20:18)

Easter begins not with noise, but with a name spoken in a garden.

“Mary.”

In that moment, Mary Magdalene recognized the Risen Lord. Through tears and trembling hope, she encountered Him and everything changed. Her sorrow became courage. Her grief became a proclamation. She ran to the disciples with the first Easter sermon: “I have seen the Lord.”

Christianity began with a witness

The early believers held on to that witness even when it cost them everything. In Rome, the first Christians faced persecution, suspicion and suffering. Yet they did not deny what they had seen and believed. The Church grew not because it was powerful, but because it was convinced. They had encountered Christ and that was enough.

Generations later, that same conviction travelled across oceans and continents to India and then to the hills and valleys of Northeast India. The missionaries who arrived came with faith, but they also came with vulnerability. They depended on local families who welcomed them into their homes, shared their food, guided them through forests and winding paths and stood by them as companions. The Gospel spread not through buildings first, but through relationships, through trust.

Behind this missionary courage was leadership that believed deeply in the mission. Leaders who trusted that the Word must reach every culture. Leaders who encouraged going beyond comfort, beyond borders, beyond fear. Their faith gave direction; their vision gave courage.

Many of today's lay partners are the children and grandchildren of those first welcoming families. Their parents gave shelter to SVD missionaries, helped them reach distant villages and supported the building of new Christian communities. The mission that began as “theirs” has become “ours.”

During my recent workshop with the SVD Lay Partners of the ING Region in Guwahati, I sensed this living inheritance; in their reflections, their commitment and their desire to continue the mission today. The Resurrection is not a memory here; it is a living movement that began with those who first came and witnessed to, “I have seen the Lord.”

This Easter, like Mary Magdalene, may we too recognize the Lord in the unique ways He may call us, so that we can joyfully share this Good News, “I have seen the Lord.”

Susan Noronha
Editor-in-Chief

Lay Partners Training in Guwahati, India

Reports and Statements



Empowering Lay Partners: Training Bolsters ADW Mission in Northeast India

The India Guwahati (ING) Region of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) wrapped up a highly impactful three-day Lay Partners Training Program at SVD House in Guwahati, held from 29–31 January 2026. This event brought together dedicated lay collaborators, known as the Apostles of the Divine Word (ADW), who form the congregation's vital "fourth pillar" alongside priests, brothers and sisters. These lay partners play a crucial role in extending the SVD's missionary spirit, rooted in the charism of founder St. Arnold Janssen, into everyday life.

Resource persons Susan Noronha and Anupama Subodhanan, seasoned SVD active lay partners from Mumbai and members of the Disciples of Divine Word (DDW), led the sessions with their wealth of experience.

The program kicked off with a joyful inaugural Mass celebrating the feast of St. Joseph Freinademetz, the patron saint of the ING Region. Fr. Jeevan Kennedy, the Regional Superior, presided over the Eucharist, setting a prayerful tone. A total of 27 enthusiastic lay participants hailed from Tripura, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. Following the Mass, Regional Council members and the Mission Secretary warmly welcomed everyone, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose.

The training delved into core topics. The morning kicked off with Susan Noronha and Anupama Subodhanan addressing "Who Can Be an SVD Lay Partner?" They highlighted how ordinary laypeople, inspired by faith and service, can embody the SVD mission of proclaiming the Word of God worldwide. After a short break, they shifted to "Responsibilities of SVD Lay Partners in the Mission," drawing from their decades of hands-on involvement in Mumbai. Through vivid real-life stories – from community outreach to parish animation – they illustrated practical ways lay partners amplify the SVD's global footprint.

The afternoon featured interactive group workshops, where participants tackled two key discussion questions:

1. As lay collaborators, how can we transform our SVD parishes into dynamic mission hubs alive with evangelization and

community engagement?

2. In what ways can SVD lay partners boost their contributions – through local outreach, fundraising drives, or formation initiatives – to better sustain the worldwide Divine Word missions?

The group secretaries shared insightful reports, generating actionable ideas like localized evangelization campaigns and collaborative fundraising events tailored to Northeast India's cultural contexts.

The day progressed with a forward-looking action plan session led by Fr. Regional Superior. He guided participants in strategizing ADW growth across the region, praising their ongoing efforts in parish evangelization and urging them to recruit more collaborators. Fr. Kennedy expressed deep gratitude to the resource persons for their dedication in traveling from Mumbai to impart wisdom. Evening Adoration culminated in a moving induction ceremony for new ADW members, significantly expanding the movement. ADW units from Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya were officially integrated and welcomed into the ING family. The newcomers pledged their commitment to the mission and received symbolic mission crosses, marking their formal entry.

Reflecting on the event, Rikam Tayem, president of ADW Arunachal Pradesh, shared: "Coming together and learning from one another was truly enriching. I eagerly anticipate more such Training of Trainers (TOT) programs in the future."

Aida Mary Sutnga, secretary for ADW Meghalaya, enthused: "I love working with the SVDs – they are genuine missionaries. The sharing from Susan and Anu, along with their profound mission commitment, deeply touched me."

With these fresh additions, the ADW is emerging as a dynamic powerhouse for evangelization, service and mission expansion across Northeast India, strengthening the SVD's presence in one of the country's most vibrant mission frontiers.

Fr. Ivan Dsilva, SVD
Spiritual Director

A Landmark Gathering

The Regional Level SVD Lay Partners Meet was held from 29–31 January 2026 at the ING Regional House in Guwahati and stood as a landmark event for our mission, bringing together dedicated representatives from Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya.

As Regional Superior, I found the workshop to be exceptionally effective and inspiring, serving as a powerful catalyst for lay involvement in our charism. The program was expertly organized by the ING Mission Secretary Fr. Soby Joseph SVD and the Spiritual Director of the ADW group Fr. Ivan Dsilva, SVD, whose meticulous planning ensured a seamless and spiritually enriching experience for all involved.

Inspiring Resource Persons

The success of the meet was greatly supported by the resource persons, Susan Noronha and Anupama Subodhanan from the Mumbai Lay Partners group. Their sessions were profoundly motivating, as they expertly articulated the purpose, activities and long-term vision required to sustain vibrant lay partner groups. By bridging the gap between missionary theory and practical local action, they empowered the participants to see themselves as essential stakeholders in the SVD mission. Their ability to ignite passion within the hearts of the laity was evident throughout the interactive sessions, creating an atmosphere of shared responsibility and renewed zeal.

Formation of New Lay Groups

The most significant outcome of this gathering was the tangible expansion of our lay network. While the established group from Tripura provided a solid foundation of experience, the enthusiasm generated during the workshop led to the historic formation of two brand-new groups: one for Arunachal Pradesh and another for Meghalaya. This growth is a clear indicator of the workshop's impact and the growing desire among the laity to participate more deeply in our missionary endeavors.

Gratitude and Hope

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to the organizers for their hard work, to the resource persons for their masterful guidance and to all the participants for their commitment to our shared vision. We look forward to seeing these new groups flourish and bear fruit across the region.

Fr. A. Jeevan Kennedy, SVD
Regional Superior ING



Lay Partners Training Program Strengthens SVD Lay Mission Partners in Northeast India

The India Guwahati Region successfully conducted a Lay Partners Training Program at the SVD House in Guwahati from 29–31 January 2026. The lay partners, known as the Apostles of the Divine Word (ADW), are recognized as the fourth pillar of the Arnoldus Family.

Ms. Susan Noronha and Ms. Anupama Subodhanan, both from SVD Lay Partners, Mumbai, served as resource persons and led inspiring sessions on lay participation in mission. The training highlighted the vital role of lay partners in carrying forward the charism of St. Arnold Janssen and strengthening the mission of the Divine Word in India.

The workshop began with the Eucharistic Celebration by the Regional Superior, Fr. Jeevan Kennedy. On the last day, after the evening adoration, new members were inducted into the ADW of the India Guwahati Region (ING), marking a significant expansion of the movement. ADW units from Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya were formally welcomed into the family. The new members promised to work for the mission and received their mission cross.

New office bearers were also elected.

For ADW Arunachal Pradesh:
President: Rikam Tayem
Vice President: Arita Pulu
Secretary: Chane Pordung
Vice Secretary: Techy Tajik
Treasurer: Kipa Tasang.

For ADW Meghalaya:
President: Arius Khonglah
Secretary: Aida Mary Sutnga
Treasurer: Vincent Papiyah.

The program reaffirmed the ADW's commitment to empowering lay partners as co-missionaries in the spirit of the Divine Word. With the inclusion of new members, ADW continues to grow as a vibrant force for evangelization and service in Northeast India. The program was well planned by the Regional Council and the Mission Secretary.

Fr. Soby Joseph, SVD
Mission Secretary ING





Walking Together in Mission

A formation workshop for the Apostles of the Divine Word (ADW), SVD Lay Partners India Guwahati Region, recently brought together about thirty participants from different parishes for reflection, sharing and missionary commitment.

The workshop was conducted with the encouragement of Fr. Jeevan Kennedy, Regional Superior and Mission Secretary, Fr. Soby Joseph. The presence and guidance of Fr. Ivan D'Silva, who accompanied the SVD lay partners, helped foster a strong sense of collaboration and family spirit among the participants.

The sessions focused on two themes: “Who are SVD Lay Partners?” and “Responsibilities of Lay Partners in Mission.” Participants reflected on their call as baptized members of the Church who share in the missionary vision of the Divine Word missionaries. The reflections emphasized that ADW members are not merely helpers in parish activities but partners in the mission of proclaiming the Word of God through their daily lives and service.

Through symbols such as the sunrise and the bamboo, participants were reminded of hope, resilience and the importance of growing together in mission. A group discussion further explored ways of transforming parishes into vibrant mission communities and strengthening outreach and formation initiatives.

Looking ahead, the ADW lay partners expressed their desire to deepen formation, encourage youth and family participation and continue supporting the wider Divine Word mission in collaboration with the SVD missionaries.

The workshop created a renewed sense of mission, collaboration and commitment among the ADW lay partners.

Susan Noronha
Workshop Resource Person

Workshop Reflections

The ADW Arunachal Pradesh team gratefully shares the experience of the three-day workshop held from 29–31 January 2026. We sincerely thank Susan and Anu, the SVD Lay Partners who served as resource persons, as well as the organizing and service team for guiding this enriching program.

The workshop highlighted important values such as love, prayer, service to humanity, care for the needy, sharing the message of the Holy Bible and protecting God's creation through initiatives like recycling and tree planting. These reflections strengthened our commitment to the mission of Jesus Christ.

As the ADW Arunachal Pradesh team, we pledge to put these learnings into practice and remain grateful to all participants from the ING Region, priests, brothers, sisters and collaborators who made this workshop meaningful.

ADW Arunachal Pradesh Team

I am deeply grateful to our Mission Secretary, Fr. Soby and our Regional Superior, Fr. Jeevan, Spiritual Director, Fr. Ivan and Fr. Patrick, for the love and care they showed to the lay partners during the training. They treated us like members of their own family and I sincerely thank them for their support.

This training was a very meaningful experience for us. Earlier, we did not have much communication with our brothers and sisters from Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya, but after this Training, our connections have grown stronger. Now we feel a

greater sense of unity and believe that our SVD Society will continue to grow in the future.

I was also very happy to receive the Quarter Hour Prayer card that was shared with us. In our parish, we translated it into Bangla language, printed it on a flex banner and displayed it in the church so that many others could benefit from it.

The sessions were very inspiring. I especially appreciated the example of the bamboo that Susan (resource person) shared during her talk. Just as bamboo grows strong and resilient, our Lay Partners group must also grow strong and united in mission. We are very grateful to Susan and Anu.

This experience has strengthened our faith and encouraged us to work together more closely in the mission of the Divine Word.

Milan Halam
ADW, Tripura



From 29–31 January 2026, the Guwahati Regional House hosted an enriching workshop for the SVD Lay Partners, marked by fellowship, reflection and renewed missionary zeal. Providentially, the programme began on 29 January, the feast of Joseph Freinademetz, whose missionary zeal continues to inspire all who serve in the mission of the Word.

The workshop opened with a solemn Eucharistic celebration presided over by Fr. Jeevan Kennedy, SVD, Regional Superior, together with the Regional Councillors, Fr. Manoj Anthony, Fr. Ivan D'Silva and Fr. Clement Miranda, along with several priests and religious sisters. Their presence highlighted the Church's shared mission.

The sessions were animated by Susan Noronha and Anupama, resource persons from the DDW group in Mumbai. Through their reflections, they invited participants to deepen their understanding of their vocation as Lay Partners, encouraging

them to live the Word in daily life and witness to the Gospel through service and compassion.

Group discussions and the sharing of missionary experiences strengthened participants' sense of fraternity. A particularly meaningful moment occurred when new members from Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya publicly committed themselves as Lay Partners during the Eucharistic celebration.

As the workshop concluded, participants were sent forth with the Gospel words: "You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before others." (Matthew 5:14–16). Renewed in faith and commitment, the Lay Partners returned to their communities to continue witnessing to the Gospel in their families and places of service.

Anjana Bongcher





AFRAM ZONE



Botswana (BOT) – SVD Lay Partners, Maun

A Mission of Love in Dukwi from St. Augustine



Outreach to Refugees in Dukwi, Botswana

On 15 February 2026, the SVD Lay Partners of Maun, Botswana, marked a historic milestone with their first official outreach program. Led by Chairperson Mpho, the team traveled from Maun to the Dukwi Refugee Camp and Village to walk in solidarity with their refugee brothers and sisters.

The mission was blessed by the spiritual support of the dedicated priests of St. Augustine Parish in Maun, whose guidance continues to empower the Lay Partners.

A Mission of Love and Action

The members distributed food hampers, pre-loved clothing, shoes, blankets and other essential items. Each gift was more than material support; it was a sign of solidarity, dignity and love. The smiles and gratitude of the families reminded us that even small acts of kindness can make a real difference. For many families, these donations provided comfort and relief in challenging circumstances.

A Community United

This outreach was made possible through the generosity of donors, volunteers and well-wishers whose donations, service, prayers and encouragement helped make the mission successful. The success of the day was also a result of the hands-on dedication of Dr. and Mrs. Nkasama, Mrs. Mbuka and Sis. Constance, who worked tirelessly to ensure every gift reached a grateful recipient.

We are deeply grateful to the St. Augustine Parish community and all who helped make this mission of compassion possible. Together, we demonstrated that compassion knows no borders.

Looking Ahead

This first outreach program marks only the beginning. We are inspired to continue supporting our refugee brothers and sisters and to strengthen our commitment to service, dignity and shared humanity.

Let us continue to be instruments of hope wherever there is need.

Imelda Tagavilla



South Africa (BOT) – SVD Lay Partners, Malamulele

Different Activities

Meetings and Spiritual Formation

Virtual and physical meetings continue to be held regularly. Our Provincial, Fr. Joseph Vadakkan, SVD, continues to share Sunday Reflections with the Lay Partners, which are also extended to the parishioners. In addition, Daily Reflections are shared by AFRAM SVD missionaries on a rotational basis, led by Fr. Jay De Leon, SVD.

Fellowship with Missionaries

A Christmas Lunch with our SVD missionaries was held. The group has adopted the culture of sharing special meals with our priests during this time, recognizing that Christmas can be a lonely moment for them as they are far from their own people. Lay Partners also accompanied the priests to the funeral of a brother priest in Zimbabwe, showing solidarity and support.

Celebrations

Members celebrated the Feasts of St. Arnold Janssen and St. Joseph Freinademetz and also attended the Blessed Daswa Feast held at Ave Maria Pastoral Centre. During this period, the commissioning of five new members also took place. Lay Partners continue to participate actively in the liturgical responsibilities of the parish according to the annual calendar.

Outreach and Community Support

Plans are in place for fundraising activities to assist the needy in June, particularly by providing warm items for winter and some Christmas goodies. Lay Partners also visit the bereaved, conduct prayers for parishioners' families and friends and assist during funerals. Together with members of the Sacred Heart Sodality, they support a small community in the absence of a priest.

Formation and Networking

A JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation) course will take place in 2026 after Easter, with registration and learning conducted online. Interested parishioners are also welcome to participate. The group also remains in communication with AFRAM Lay Partners to keep the missionary spirit alive.



Thandi Mazibuko



Ghana (GHA) – SVD Lay Partners

Various Programs



General Visitation to the Ghana Province

Fr. Marcelo Cattáneo, SVD and Bro. Michael Ertl, SVD, visited the Ghana Province beginning 14 October 2025 as part of the Society's General Visitation. They conveyed warm greetings from the Superior General and his Councillors to the members of the Province.

During their stay, they visited several districts in Ghana and held fruitful meetings with priests and Lay Partners. The visitation offered a valuable opportunity for dialogue, encouragement and reflection on the missionary apostolate of the Province.

Provincial Assembly and Conclusion of the Visitation

The Provincial Assembly began on 13 November 2025 at the Divine Word Catholic Centre, Nsawam, with the arrival of priests, brothers and selected Lay Partners. The evening included documentaries from various mission areas, followed by fellowship.

On 14 November, the day began with Morning Prayer and Holy Mass, after which districts presented reports highlighting pastoral achievements and challenges. In his concluding remarks, the Provincial Superior, Fr. Cyprian Kuupol, SVD, encouraged members to remain committed and zealous in

advancing the mission of Christ and strengthening the Province.

Arnoldus Family Feast Celebration

The Arnoldus Family Feast was celebrated from 14–15 January 2026 in Nsawam. Priests, brothers and sisters gathered on 14 January for Evening Prayer, supper and fellowship.

On 15 January, Lay Partners joined for Morning Prayer and Holy Mass, presided over by Bishop Kumordzi, SVD. In his homily, he highlighted humility and intercultural integration as essential missionary virtues that bring hope to communities. Jubilarians were honored and presented with papal blessings. The celebration concluded with joyful interaction.

Burial of Bro. Paul Joseph Ayitey, SVD

The Burial Mass for Bro. Paul Joseph Ayitey, SVD, was held on 20 January at St. Joseph Catholic Church, Nsawam. Bishops, priests, religious, lay partners, family members and faithful attended. He was laid to rest at the Catholic Cemetery in Nsawam.

Irene Atignonogo



Kenya (KEN) – Friends of SVD

Missionary Experience Report



Nairobi District

In the Nairobi District, members organized a Lenten pilgrimage walk across seven parishes within the Archdiocese of Nairobi. Three parishes were designated as Door of Hope centres for the Jubilee Year. The pilgrimage included Diwopa SVD Parish, Holy Family Basilica, Consolata Shrine, St. Michael Parish, CFC House, St. John Parish and Resurrection Garden. At each station, participants engaged in prayer and reflection, concluding the pilgrimage with the celebration of Holy Mass. The experience strengthened unity and deepened spiritual commitment during the Lenten season.



Eldoret District

In the Eldoret District, members began their pilgrimage at Chepkanga SVD Parish with the Way of the Cross and a spiritual reflection, then proceeded to Kimumu SVD Parish for further prayer. They also visited a member whose son is terminally ill, expressing pastoral solidarity. The pilgrimage concluded at Langas SVD Parish with the Way of the Cross and Holy Mass.

In conclusion, the Lenten pilgrimages across the three districts strengthened faith, unity and missionary commitment. Through prayer, sacrifice and pastoral outreach, members embodied a spirit of hope and renewal, deepening their witness and dedication to the Church's evangelizing mission.

The shared experience of prayer, pilgrimage, reflection and Eucharistic celebration not only marked the Lenten season but also renewed and inspired members to bring hope to their families, parishes and society.

Ruth Wangui Kagunda



Arusha District

In the Arusha District, the program began at Burka Parish with a formative talk on the Pilgrimage of Hope, followed by a confession session for spiritual reconciliation. The faithful then undertook a pilgrimage walk to Olasiti Parish, where they crossed the Door of Hope, prayed the Way of the Cross and celebrated Holy Mass. The initiative deepened their understanding of the Jubilee theme and encouraged active participation in the Lenten journey.



Mozambique (MOZ) – Leigos Associados a Congregação do Verbo Divino (LACVERDI), Beira

From Oven to Outreach: Building Skills and Solidarity



Confectionery Course (2nd Edition) – Nurturing Skills and Community Spirit

The LACVERDI, Beira, launched the 2nd edition of their Confectionery Course, an initiative combining technical skills, Christian values and community development. The program aims to promote the holistic formation of participants, support family self-sufficiency and foster solidarity and sustainable growth within the community.

The course equips participants with basic and intermediate confectionery skills, including cake production and decoration, while emphasizing hygiene, food safety and an entrepreneurial spirit to help generate income and strengthen community values.

More than 25 young people, men and women from different parishes and religious backgrounds, are participating. The training includes preparing doughs and fillings, decoration techniques, product presentation and basic business management.

Training by LACVERDI

Training is guided by two dedicated Lay Associates, who provide technical instruction, formative guidance and pedagogical support. Even as the course continues, participants are already showing improved skills, self-confidence, cooperation and motivation for entrepreneurship.



Lenten Programs

In line with the Lenten season, the program also included visits to the sick in nearby communities, offering prayer, listening and fellowship. Small gifts, such as fruits, were distributed as tangible expressions of solidarity and Christian charity, connecting skill development with compassionate action.

The 2nd edition of the Confectionery Course demonstrates how practical training can foster personal growth, community engagement and social responsibility. Through this initiative, the LACVERDI, Beira, continues to uphold its commitment to the human, economic and spiritual development of the community, living out the values of Arnoldus spirituality in meaningful ways.

Atanásio Walasse

This group is part of LACVERDI, Maputo. They live in Beira, where the SVD parish is located. In the year 2023, Fr. Fabian, then Regional Superior, officially recognised this group as part of LACVERDI, Maputo. They work independently in Beira following the statutes of LACVERDI, Maputo. – Editor



Zambia (ZAM) – SVD Lay Partners, Kabwe

Good Will Activities

Service and Mission of the SVD Lay Partners in Kabwe

The SVD Lay Partners, Kabwe, are dedicated to goodwill activities that reflect the spirit of humility, service and sharing. Some SVDLP members provided direct assistance to people affected by heavy rains that left several families homeless and without food. One of the lay partners reached out to a woman who became vulnerable after the rains washed away some of her goods. She was provided with foodstuffs and other essential needs, offering her support during a difficult time.

Participation in SVD Celebrations

Members actively participated in the celebrations of the Feast of St. Arnold Janssen and St. Joseph Freinademetz, held on 29 January at the Formation House. The celebration brought together SVD Lay Partners, Sisters, Novices and Priests. After the Eucharistic celebration, the participants shared refreshments in a spirit of fellowship and community.

Encouraging Growth through Outreach

As Lay Partners in Kabwe, members encourage one another to grow through outreach activities. The group therefore held one meeting at an outstation where a few members live. The hosts warmly welcomed everyone and offered snacks, strengthening the spirit of unity and belonging.

Collaboration with the Novitiate

The members also have the opportunity to be involved in the formation process of novices through collaboration with the Divine Word Novitiate. On 14 February 2026, lay partners who had adopted novices received firsthand information about the activities of the novitiate and learned how they could support the formation process.

Conclusion

As SVD Lay Partners of Kabwe, several programs are planned for this year, in line with the SVD principles of preaching the Gospel, promoting intercultural living, serving the needy and advancing justice.

Ndalia Chileshe





ASPAC ZONE



Indonesia (IDE) – SVD Lay Partners, Lembata

Avoid the Disease, Not the Person



HIV/AIDS Awareness

The SVD Lay Partners of Lembata District, in collaboration with the Women and Child Protection Agency (Permata Lembata), the Lembata Journalists' Forum and the St. Yosef Freinademetz Catholic Youth of Waikomo Parish, organized an HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention program for adolescents and young people. The event took place on 29 January 2026 in the courtyard of St. Arnold Janssen Parish Church, Waikomo, as part of the celebration of the Feast of St. Joseph Freinademetz.

Promoting Human Values and Social Responsibility

The program was officially opened by Mr. Ben Making, Rector of the SVD Lay Partners of Lembata District, who encouraged catholic youth to live with dignity and joy and to be agents of change in promoting human values and social responsibility, including care for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Several speakers addressed important issues related to HIV/AIDS awareness. Ms. Maria Loka highlighted the connection between juvenile delinquency, violence against women and children and risky social behavior that can lead to sexually transmitted infections. Ms. Rosa Gawen spoke about various infections such as gonorrhoea, herpes, HPV and vaginitis,

emphasizing the importance of reproductive health education. Ms. Heni Riberu explained that people living with HIV require lifelong treatment to remain healthy and productive and urged the community to eliminate stigma, reminding participants: "Avoid the disease, not the person."

Not a Curse Can be Prevented

Meanwhile, HIV activist Nefri Eken clarified that HIV is not a curse and cannot be transmitted through ordinary social contact, explaining the main modes of transmission.

The program concluded with the lighting of one thousand candles, symbolizing solidarity, hope and compassion for people living with HIV/AIDS and calling on society to end stigma.

Yoseph Yoneta Motong Wuwur



Indonesia (IDE) – Soverdia Nagekeo

Mission Footprints of a Son of Nagekeo in the Land of Mission



The mission of the Church knows no boundaries. From the humble land of Nagekeo, God continues to call His sons to go beyond their homeland and proclaim the Gospel in distant lands. There, in the midst of different cultures and realities, they are sent to bring the light of Christ and the love of God to the people they serve.

Missionary Sharing

During a prayer gathering of Soverdia Nagekeo held at the home of Simon Siga Sale and Dorce Suri, members had the opportunity to listen to the missionary sharing of Fr. Yani Mere, SVD, a native son of Nagekeo from Wudu Parish, currently serving in Argentina.

In his sharing, Fr. Yani spoke about the pastoral realities in his mission area, which are very different from the life of the Church in our place. There are no established structures, such as small Christian communities or mission stations. Much of the pastoral ministry happens through personal encounters, small gatherings and house-to-house visits.

Challenges

The challenges are considerable. Vocations to religious life are rare and only a few couples receive the Sacrament of Marriage, while divorce and broken families are common. Many people also face social problems such as poverty, depression, suicide, crime and drug abuse.

Amid an increasingly secularized world, missionaries remain close to the people through sacramental ministry, catechesis, faith formation, the distribution of Holy Scripture and pastoral activities for children, youth and families.

This sharing reminds us that the mission of the Church is vast and full of challenges. As members of Soverdia, we are invited to accompany and support the missionaries through our prayers, solidarity and active involvement in the life and mission of the Church, so that the Word of God may continue to shine and bring hope to the world.

Elfrin Hurek Making



Indonesia (IDJ) - Soverdia

Formation Programs



Soverdia IDJ continues to organize formation programs at the provincial, district and parish levels. At the Java provincial level, these programs are conducted online to reach and involve members from seven different islands. Meanwhile, formation activities at the district and parish levels are held in person.

All these initiatives aim to help members grow in SVD spirituality and become more committed to their service as SVD Lay Partners.

November

- Soverdia Bali–Lombok held the Catechesis Series III on “The Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Source of Grace and Indulgence for the Souls in Purgatory,” presented by Fr. Gabriel Madja, SVD.
- Soverdia Java Province celebrated Mass for the Souls, especially for deceased Soverdia members. The Mass was presided over by Fr. Emanuel Grasius Purwahartaka, SVD, Moderator of SVD Java Province.
- Soverdia Pademangan, Jakarta, organized Missionary Meet & Greet, sharing missionary experiences with Fr. Egidius Melchides Binsasi, SVD, a missionary serving in Ghana.

December

- Soverdia Bali–Lombok District held a formation session on “Soverdia and the SVD Mission”, presented by Fr. Hermanus Sigit Pawanta, SVD, Director of the SVD Mission Office Indonesia.
- Soverdia Java Province organized an Advent Recollection to prepare spiritually for Christmas, led by Fr. Emanuel Grasius Purwahartaka, SVD.

February

- Soverdia Java Province held Family Recollection on “The Joy of Love in the Family – Learning from *Amoris Laetitia*,” led by Fr. Emanuel Grasius Purwahartaka, SVD.

Soverdia IDJ continues to grow

Praise be to the Most Holy Trinity for His blessings. The SVD Lay Partners in the IDJ Province continue to grow and develop, expanding their presence in parish communities and encouraging greater participation in their mission and service.



- 12 January – Soverdia Surabaya–Malang District confirmed the establishment of a new group in Yogyakarta, Central Java, known as Soverdia Yogyakarta and inaugurated its new members and leadership team.
- 15 January – Soverdia Jakarta District welcomed and inaugurated new members during the Feast of St. Arnold Janssen celebration.
- 29 January – Soverdia Bali–Lombok District confirmed and inaugurated new members during the Feast of St. Joseph Freinademetz celebration.

Celebration of the Feasts

In preparation for the Feasts of St. Arnold Janssen and St. Joseph Freinademetz, Soverdia groups across the IDJ Province organized Triduum and Novena Masses. The celebrations concluded with Thanksgiving Masses, becoming joyful moments of prayer, unity and collaboration between the SVD missionaries and their Lay Partners.

Living the Spirituality of the SVD

Soverdia groups in various parishes of the IDJ Province continue to nurture the spiritual values of the Society of the Divine Word, as handed down by St. Arnold Janssen. Regular devotions include Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (first Thursday) and the Holy Spirit (third Monday). They also pray the Mission Rosary for SVD missionaries around the world and for the growth of new vocations to the Society.

Paulina Suharsi



Indonesia (IDR) - Persaudaraan Misioner Sang Sabda (PMSS)

Anniversary Celebration



33rd Anniversary of the SVD Lay Partners

As 2025 drew to a close and most of the year's programs had been completed, one important event remained: the 33rd anniversary of the SVD Lay Partner group of Ruteng Province. Instead of celebrating with a large gathering, the group decided to mark the occasion through a charitable visit to the "Kasih Ibu Orphanage House."

Visit to the "Kasih Ibu Orphanage House"

On 29 December 2025, about 24 Soverdia members visited the orphanage, bringing gifts such as powder soap, noodles, rice, toothpaste, other necessities and a financial contribution. The home is led by Paulina Wajong, a former member of the CIJ Congregation, a local congregation founded by Mgr. Hendric Luven, SVD. The kids in the orphanage were very happy with our visit.



During the visit, Paulina Wajong shared the story of the orphanage. She explained that she left religious life not because of difficulties with her sisters, but because she felt a deep call to care for children in need. With nothing in hand, she began the mission through prayer and trust in God. With the help of benefactors, beginning with a house given by her brother, she started with five children. Today, the orphanage cares for twenty-five children, many from poor families, who are studying at elementary, high school and university levels.

The visit was a meaningful moment for both the children and the Soverdia members. It reminded everyone that where there is a sincere desire to serve in the name of the Lord, God always opens a way. The group thanked God for Paulina Wajong's loving dedication and prayed that the children may continue to grow in hope and dignity. God bless each one of them.

Fr. Vitalis Hiburdin, SVD

India (ING) - Apostles of the Divine Word (ADW), Arunachal Pradesh

ADW Members Rally to Aid Family Devastated by Raging Fire

A Family Loses their Home

A devastating fire razed the home of Mr. Pacha Yangfo and his wife in Bebo Colony, Seppa, Arunachal Pradesh. The couple had stepped out for an evening walk, only to return and find their house engulfed in flames triggered by an electrical short circuit. The blaze intensified rapidly when it reached a gas cylinder, proving impossible for neighbours to contain despite their frantic efforts to douse it with water. Flammable items like furniture, cooking oil, plastics and wood fuelled the inferno, reducing the entire structure to ashes in just half an hour. Tragically, the family salvaged nothing from the wreckage.

ADW and the Community Rally in Support

Members of the Apostles of Divine Word (ADW) from Seppa Parish sprang into immediate action to support the affected family. Rikam Tayem, Sunita Tayem, Mariam Pordung, Paul

Yangfo, Suka Paffa and Martha Lamgyu organised and coordinated relief efforts. They reached out to the Arunachal Pradesh Catholic Association (APCA) in East Kameng District, whose members generously stepped forward to provide further assistance, demonstrating remarkable community solidarity in the face of loss.

Fr. Ivan D'Silva, SVD



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

Activities Around Members and Beyond

A Silent Encounter: When Christmas Walks Barefoot

On Saturday, 20 December 2025, as our Feed the Hungry team stepped out to distribute food, one image stayed deeply etched in my heart. On a dusty roadside, one small boy carried another, both barefoot, trusting, silent: No cries, no complaints, no demands. In a world filled with noise, that silence spoke louder than any sermon. In that quiet act of love, we met the Child of Bethlehem once again.

What makes Feed the Hungry especially powerful is how silently compassion multiplies. There have been moments when, even as our supplies ran low, generosity overflowed. Strangers pause, notice and help, often without a word. In the stillness of these moments, love spreads. Silence, too, becomes contagious.

Christmas with the Lonely and Poor

We experienced a deeply meaningful Eucharist, followed by an amazing time of singing, dancing, laughter and fellowship with the lonely and poor. The joy and warmth shared, especially with our guests, truly reflected the spirit of Christmas.

Meeting with the SVD Superior General

The members had the special privilege of meeting Fr. Anselmo Ricardo Ribeiro, our Superior General, during his recent visit to Mumbai. The gathering included a warm welcome, brief introductions and an inspiring message from Fr. Anselmo encouraging the members to continue their missionary commitment in collaboration with the SVD missionaries.

We presented him a Stole made by the SVD Lay Partners of the ING Region. It is called *Risa* and is used by the *Darlong* tribe of Tripura State. The meeting concluded with his blessing, a group photograph and fellowship over tea. Later, he celebrated the Holy Eucharist at Sacred Heart Church.

Susan Noronha



India (INM) - Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW), Pune

Meeting with the Superior General



The Disciples of the Divine Word, Pune, welcomed the Superior General, Fr. Anselmo Ricardo Ribeiro, SVD, on 16 February 2026 at Ishvani Kendra, Pune, with 15 members present. The Provincial Superior, Fr. Tomy Thomas, SVD was also present for the meeting. The meeting began with the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the Quarter Hour Prayer, followed by a warm welcome with a shawl, flowers and a memento of the group's logo. Leena Xavier also presented a short video on the group's activities.

In his message, Fr. Anselmo emphasized the importance of active lay participation in mission, encouraging members to be creative and courageous in witnessing Christ, especially through service to the poor and marginalized. He assured the group of his prayers and asked for their continued support in his ministry.

Leena Xavier



The Philippines (PHC) - Lay Mission Partners, Divine Word College, Calapan

The Journey of the SVD Lamp

Opening of the Jubilee Year

The School Year 2025–26 opened with great enthusiasm at the Divine Word College, Calapan, as the community welcomed the journey of the SVD Mission Lamp across the Philippine Central Province. This initiative marked the beginning of the year-long celebration of the 150th Jubilee of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD).

Fr. Ferdinand Antonine Bajao, SVD, the chairperson of the jubilee celebrations, led the effort to ensure that the Mission Lamp reached its destinations throughout the province.

Symbol of Christ the Light

The SVD Mission Lamp symbolizes Christ the Light, to whom missionaries bear witness. For 150 years, the SVD has carried the Lord's light to many parts of the world, persevering through difficulties and challenges to overcome the darkness of sin and unbelief. In this spirit, the Mission Lamp embarked on a missionary journey to unite the communities of the Philippine Central Province under the theme: "One heart, many faces, united as one."

Missionary Journey Across the Province

The Mission Lamp visited SVD schools and parishes across the Central Province, beginning at Christ the King Mission Seminary on 9 September 2025 to mark the opening of the jubilee celebration. At each stop, it rekindled memories of the

struggles and victories of SVD missionaries worldwide. The lamp returned to the seminary on 15 January 2026, concluding the 150th Jubilee celebration, highlighted by the Word Youth Summit, where youth from Arnoldus schools and parishes gathered to celebrate the SVD mission with love, joy and gratitude.

Campus Ministry Initiative

As part of the celebration, the Campus Ministry Office of Divine Word College of Calapan distributed 150 stickers with Bible verses and placed them inside tricycles, a simple yet meaningful way of sharing the Word of God with the wider community.

Shirley Mendoza



The Philippines (PHC) - The Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen, Inc. (LSSAJ)

Celebrating Mission in Synodality



The 150th Jubilee of the SVD and the 3rd Anniversary of the SVD-PHC Lay Mission Partners

The Philippine Central Province (PHC) celebrated a historic moment as it marked the joint commemoration of the 150th Jubilee of the Society of the Divine Word and the 3rd Anniversary of the SVD-PHC Lay Mission Partners (LMP). The event brought together religious missionaries, lay collaborators, alumni and partner communities, an inspiring embodiment of the shared mission envisioned by the founder, St. Arnold Janssen.

A Growing Lay Mission Movement

The SVD-PHC LMP is composed of ten Catholic lay organizations aligned with the vision and mission of the SVD, including:

- Lay Society of St. Arnold Janssen, Inc. (LSSAJ)
- PHIL SVD (XVD) Alumni Association
- Perpetual Rosary Movement (PRM)
- SVD Lay Mission Partners DWIMS Tagaytay (SLMP)
- Hearts of Jesus & Mary Prayer Community (HJM)
- Divine Word College of Calapan 4 CD
- Healing Eucharist Loving Prayer Partners (HELP C)
- Manus Dei
- SVD Friends
- Arnold Janssen Alternative Learning System (ALS) Education

These organizations represent a vibrant and steadily growing sector of lay partners who actively share in the SVD's global missionary work.

Raffle Bonanza: Mission through generosity

Before the main celebration, the SVC-LMP launched the Raffle Bonanza, a fundraising initiative to support Villa Cristo Rey (SVD Retirement Home) and Christ the King Mission Seminary (CKMS), reflecting the lay partners' commitment to caring for missionaries – past, present and future.

Eucharistic Celebration and Commissioning

The celebration began with a solemn Eucharistic Mass presided over by Fr. Mike Layugan, SVD, Provincial Superior of the Philippine Central Province, with several SVD priests concelebrating. After the Mass, the leaders and members of the SVD-PHC Lay Mission Partners (LMP) were commissioned, affirming their role as co-missionaries in the congregation's evangelizing mission.

In his homily, Fr. Layugan emphasized that the lay partners' role in mission is indispensable, especially amid the socio-political and economic challenges in the Philippines and encouraged deeper collaboration in the spirit of synodality.

A Challenge to Live the Founder's Vision

Following the Mass, Fr. Sony de Rivera, SVD led a short recollection, inviting the lay partners to renew their commitment to the vision and mission of St. Arnold Janssen. He emphasized the importance of strong collaboration between religious and lay partners in responding to the needs of the Church and society today.

A Witness to Shared Mission

The celebration also featured the annual homecoming of the PHIL-SVD Alumni Association, bringing together former seminarians and mission friends. Sports activities in basketball and tennis strengthened bonds of friendship, while cultural presentations by DWIMS and the LSSAJ-Dasmariñas Chapter, together with raffle draws and a shared dinner, added joy and a spirit of Filipino hospitality to the day.

In his closing message, Fr. Glenn Gomez, SVD, Rector of Christ the King Mission Seminary, reminded everyone that the jubilee is not only a remembrance of the past 150 years but also a call to continue building the future of the SVD mission together. The celebration highlighted the growing partnership between SVD missionaries and lay collaborators in witnessing to the Word with renewed hope.

Daisy A. Leones



Papua New Guinea (PNG) - SVD Friends PNG

Youth Group's Environmental Initiative in Climate Change



Mangrove Planting

At St. Michael Parish, Alexishafen, Madang, the SVD Lay Partners, Youth Group, has taken a leading role in addressing the growing impacts of climate change through environmental action. Recognizing the increasing threat of coastal erosion, rising sea levels and the loss of marine biodiversity, the group initiated a mangrove planting project aimed at restoring and protecting the shoreline ecosystem.

Beginning of the Project

The project began in March 2025 as part of the parish's environmental awareness program, encouraging young people to take responsibility for the care of creation. Guided by the parish priest Fr. Norbert Koima, SVD and witnessed by the JPIC Coordinator Fr. Vincent Wasaring, SVD, together with collaborators from the Melanesian Institute and other NGOs, the youth learned about the ecological importance of mangroves as natural barriers against sea-level rise and as nurseries for fish and other marine life.

With this knowledge, they organized community clean-ups and prepared nursery sites for mangrove seedlings.



Planting and Community Participation

Over several weeks, the youth planted hundreds of mangrove seedlings along vulnerable coastal areas near the parish. The activity not only helped strengthen the coastline but also fostered teamwork, leadership and environmental stewardship among the participants. The initiative also received support from parish members and nearby villages, creating a shared commitment to protecting the environment.

Continuing Environmental Awareness

Beyond planting, the youth group continues to monitor the growth of the mangroves and promote sustainable practices. They conduct educational sessions on climate adaptation, inspiring others to take similar action. Their efforts have become a model for other parishes in the Madang Diocese, demonstrating how faith-based youth groups can contribute meaningfully to climate resilience.

Through their dedication, the youth of St. Michael Parish show that small community-driven actions can make a lasting difference in addressing climate change and preserving the natural beauty of Alexishafen for future generations.

Compiled by: Christine Los (Goroka MI)



EUROPA ZONE

Germany (GER) – “SVD-Partner”

Active in Different Places in Different Ways

Because the members of “SVD-Partner” live in different parts of Germany, their work is characterised by involvement in their home towns and digital, Germany-wide initiatives. In addition, this year they spoke with the visitators for the first time as part of the general visitation of the German Province of SVD.

Digital Pastoral Care

In addition to the weekly online rosary prayer and monthly online devotions, the “SVD-Partner” once again invited people worldwide to pray on World Day of the Poor in November 2025. As in previous years, they provided texts in German, English, Spanish and French, which can be downloaded from the website (<https://www.svd-partner.eu/welttag-der-armen/>). In December 2025 and February 2026, they also invited people to join in the Ember Prayer* for vocations to the Arnoldus family.

Committed locally and beyond

In addition to serving in the parishes and Catholic institutions in their home towns, donations were also collected for a aid campaign in the flood-stricken areas of Mexico. The campaign was initiated by “SVD-Partner” Rudi and Lourdes Scholz, who brought the humanitarian aid to the people during a stay in Mexico (see report on p. 30).

»SVD-Partner« and German Province

During the visitation of the German Province, Br. Michael Ertl, SVD and Fr. Xavier Thirukudumbam, SVD invited the “SVD-Partner” to Steyl for a meeting on 15 February 2026. The meeting served as an opportunity to get to know each other and exchange ideas about the work in Germany. This exchange was continued at the provincial level at the concluding provincial assembly on 13 March 2026 in Sankt Augustin.

Commitment

On 21 February 2026, all nine members of the “SVD-Partner” solemnly renewed their commitment during Holy Mass in Sankt Augustin. They are thus committing themselves to the SVD for another three years. Until now, the group had made their commitment in Steyl. This year, however, Sankt Augustin was chosen because it is the seat of the German Province and also the formation community. In this way, the bond was to be made clear and at the same time strengthened.

Maria Wego

*More about Ember Prayer see SVDLP Newsletter 27



Hungary (HUN) – Verbita Barátok

Jesus is the Source of Light



“May Jesus Live in the Hearts of People.”

During the Advent season, we participated in a spiritual retreat led by Fr. Gergely. The three-day retreat can be summarized below:

The birth of Jesus Christ, the source of God's light with a great reach, which can spread only when Jesus, the light of the world, is born within us. In this way, we are carriers of God's light, spreading hope and light in our present dark world.

Joyful Celebration

Our brother James, originally from India, responded to the Lord's call and dedicated his life to the service of God. Now he begins his ministry serving God's people, witnessing to the call to receive and share God's love wherever we are.

The celebration was attended by members of the SVD from different parts of the country, along with James's Hungarian SVD friends. Although his family could not be present, they joined the Mass online from their village in India, celebrating in spirit with the newly ordained deacon.



As a special touch, Indian songs were included in the liturgy. During the offertory, two sisters enriched the celebration with Hindi songs, thanksgiving bowls and liturgical dance, beautifully expressing the universality of the Church and the cultural diversity of missionary service.

Memorial Day

SVD fathers and brothers from different parts of the country gathered with active members of the SVD Friends to celebrate the Memorial of St. Arnold Janssen. The commemoration began with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, offering a time for prayer, gratitude and spiritual renewal.

The Holy Mass, enriched with songs of praise and common prayer, expressed the unity of the community and the international spirit of the mission, strengthening the bond between the members of the Society and their lay partners in the service of the Divine Word.

Zsuzsa Seregély





PANAM ZONE



Argentina (ARE) – Misioneros Socios Laicos Amigos del Verbo

Activities



Reflection for the Feast Day of St. Arnold Janssen

“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” (Jn 1:14)

This line from the Prologue of St. John is a mystery to contemplate, adore and live; one that deeply shaped the life of St. Arnold Janssen. During January, he lovingly adored the Child Jesus, seeing in Him the Eternal Word made small so that no one would be afraid to approach God. It was his profound confession of faith in a God who humbles Himself and gives His love without conditions.

Holy Mass in honor of St. Arnold Janssen was celebrated at St. Michael Parish, Pampa del Indio, Chaco.

Youth Camp

At the Youth Camp, held under the theme “Lord, give me a new heart,” young people from different places came together to share their faith. One phrase stood out: “God doesn’t change the circumstances first; He changes the heart.”

This reflection reminded us to place our hearts in God’s hands so that He may give us a new heart, capable of loving, forgiving and beginning again. Though we come from different places,



we are united by our faith in Christ Jesus, a living flame that, when nurtured, becomes a light for others.

Pilgrimage to the Province of Misiones

As part of the 30th anniversary of our Divine Word Parish in Resistencia, Chaco and at the initiative of the SVD Lay Partners together with the parish priest, Fr. Gerardo Ferreira, a pilgrimage was organized to the Province of Misiones.

The purpose of the pilgrimage was to learn more about the roots of the ARE Province. Over four days, 60 members of our community visited the Fátima Spirituality Center, Christ the King Parish in Oberá and St. Albert the Great Parish in Puerto Rico. These days were filled with moments of prayer, fellowship and sharing. We are grateful to the parish priests – Fr. Héctor A., Fr. John R. and Fr. Adam K., as well as to the Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit and to everyone who made this pilgrimage possible.

Aurora Galarza



Brazil (BRA) - Amigos do Verbo na Amazônia (AVA)

Witnessing the Word in the Amazon



A Gathering of Missionary Disciples

On 14–15 February 2026, 34 lay members from the districts of Sr. Dorothy, St. Arnold Janssen and St. Joseph Freinademetz of the Amazon Region, Brazil, gathered for the SVD Lay Partners Assembly.

The first day was dedicated to a Retreat centered on the theme: “We are missionary disciples – loved, inspired and challenged.” It was guided by Fr. Aparecido, SVD, Mission Secretary. On the second day, the participants shared their experiences, challenges and opportunities, seeking mutual inspiration to continue their missionary journey where they serve. This exchange will lead to a common action plan.

Mission Beyond Borders

Together with St. Anthony Parish in Alenquer (Pará), we celebrated Grasielle de Souza Pinto’s departure to Germany for a missionary experience.

Solidarity with the Homeless

On 26 February, the AVA from Holy Trinity Parish, Pará, held a moment of listening, sharing and prayer for people without

housing, taking a community commitment to support those who are homeless.

Visits to the Elderly

On 27 February, the AVA from the Sr. Dorothy District in Placas, Pará, visited elderly people. It was a moment of encounter, closeness, listening and prayer, aimed at strengthening faith and bringing the light of hope to those who need it most.

In Defense of our Rivers

During the indigenous protests at the Cargill terminal in Santarém, Pará, AVA members showed solidarity by organizing the donation of soup for the protesters. The gesture took place during the 34-day occupation that began in January 2026, protesting the dredging of the Tapajós River. More than nourishment, the food symbolized the humanitarian support of civil society for the resistance of traditional peoples against the social and environmental impacts in the Amazon.

Maria França and Fernando e Pedrinho



Paraguay (PAR) – Laicos Verbitas del Paraguay, Asunción

Collaboration and Mission Activities



With joy in our hearts, we share our recent collaboration and mission activities.

Feast of St. Arnold Janssen

We celebrated the feast of St. Arnold Janssen, giving thanks for the life and work of the three congregations he founded and for the grace of lay participation in his missionary work. Each person contributed their charisms, professional skills and talents in service to the community, proclaiming the Good News.

The Solemn Eucharist was presided over by Provincial Fr. Cornelio B. Udjan, with concelebration by SVD priests. The celebration continued as a family, with the whole community sharing a large Karù Guasù (big meal) and enjoying artistic and cultural performances.

Feast of St. Joseph Freinademetz

The parish community paid a tribute of love and respect to the Chinese people and culture during a Solemn Eucharist presided over by Fr. Alfredo Hauron. A video titled “Faithful Love”, highlighting the life and mission of our saint, was then presented. Participants also shared a delicious Chinese dish, Yakisoba, accompanied by rice wine and other beverages.



World Day of the Sick and Inauguration of the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes

The Solemn Eucharist for the inauguration of the Our Lady of Lourdes Grotto, “Health of the Sick,” was presided over by Apostolic Nuncio Mons. Vincenzo Turturro, with concelebrants including Provincial Fr. Cornelio B. Udjan and SVD priests. Special guests were the elderly and sick, the heart of our parish community.

The SVD Lay Partners continue to meet weekly for prayer with the Word and to share mission experiences. The month begins with Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, presenting petitions and praying for the family of Arnold Janssen.

Blanca Garcia



Paraguay (PAR) – Laicos Verbitas del Paraguay

Feasts, Formation and Mission

Feasts of St. Arnold Janssen and St. Joseph Freinademetz

January is a special month for the Arnoldus Family. Two important feasts were celebrated: 15 January, the feast of our founder, St. Arnold Janssen and 29 January, the feast of St. Joseph Freinademetz, the first SVD missionary to China.

To deepen understanding of their lives and mission, two virtual formation sessions were held, led by seminarian Aníbal Díaz. He presented the beginnings, challenges and missionary perseverance of these saints, highlighting their deep trust in God despite many obstacles.

These celebrations and formation gatherings inspire us to continue the missionary path they began.

Formation on the Reflection Guides of the 19th General Chapter

Based on materials from the Generalate, virtual meetings are being held to reflect on the Community Reflection Guides on the Declaration of the 19th General Chapter.

These sessions, led by lay members, provide an opportunity to understand the themes of each guide. Active participation has enriched the discussions with personal reflections and experiences.

Another goal is to share these reflections in different parishes to strengthen the mission of the laity. Lay members from Argentina and Chile have also taken part in these meetings.

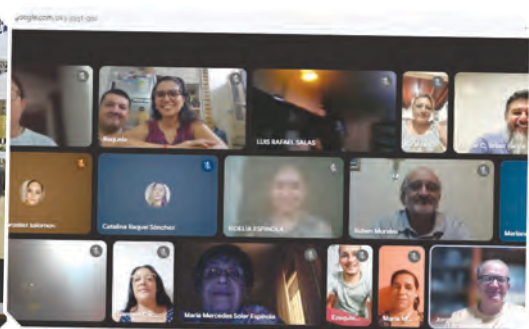


Diverse in Cultures, United in Mission

On 18 January 2026, St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Saltos del Guairá, on the Paraguay–Brazil border, celebrated the SVD Missionary Interculturality Festival under the theme “Diverse in cultures, united in mission.” In this region where Spanish, Guaraní and Portuguese coexist, interculturality is a daily reality.

The community organized an artistic evening showcasing cultural dances and presentations from various countries. The SVD youth also dramatized the life of St. Arnold Janssen, reminding everyone that mission flows from God’s universal love and knows no borders.

Jorge Sienkawiec



❖ From the SVD ❖

Shining in the Light of the Risen Lord



Dear SVD Lay Partners, a joyful Easter to you!

Listening and fasting are the two verbs used by Pope Leo XIV for his Lenten Message this year. These are words that do not directly speak of conversion but lead us

to overcome self-referentiality and open our whole being to communion with those at the margins.

This way, conversion is not about personal gain, but a spiritual process that moves us to reach out to others. Baptism is our mission and the more we understand it, the more meaningful our priesthood, our prophecy and our kingship become. These are three dimensions that constantly urge us to communion, to integrity and to service.

Listening to the unheard voices. Amid noises, distractions and misleading information, our heart and mind always long for a sacred place where we can silence ourselves and detach from the surroundings to allow a deeper listening. The unheard voices of the Spirit, of our beloved ones, of needed or suffering people we know, come at this moment hoping to be attended to. Listening to them somehow places their needs before our own needs and that increases our communion with the real people, which allows us to grow in humanity.

Fasting to be closer to those who hunger. The two most basic human needs are food and water, so they are the fundamental signs of human dignity. Fasting is not just about the lovable practice of depriving oneself of something to make it available for others. Besides that, it is coming back to being in communion with every person whose human dignity is at stake. That is why fasting should become a real and daily attitude, not just nice and temporary gestures, for the simple reason that wherever human dignity is outraged, everybody is affected.

From the Lenten Season, we move to the joyful Paschal Season. Jesus Christ has become the redeemer of our human dignity. This mystery of his life giving for the sake of life in wholeness and in communion with God, encourages us not to give up to the temptation of getting accustomed to certain given situations in our midst. As Jesus's light shone in a unique and transforming way in history, our light must shine in this wounded world. Much is still to be done in terms of growing in communion, integrity and service. A very challenging mission ahead, indeed, for these coming weeks in which we contemplate the multiple effects of Jesus's resurrection in our lives and the whole world.

A blessed Easter Season to all!

Fr. Marcelo Cattáneo, SVD
General Mission Secretary



SVD Lay Mission Partners Meet SVD Superior General in Mumbai

The visit of Fr. Anselmo Ricardo Ribeiro to Mumbai on 12 February 2026 was a meaningful moment of encounter and reflection for the SVD Lay Mission Partners gathered at Atma Darshan Spirituality Centre on the SVD Campus in Andheri. Lay partners from DDW Andheri and Bandra participated in the gathering, which focused on the theme of communion in mission.

During the interaction, the importance of communion among SVD missionaries and Lay Mission Partners was highlighted. Drawing inspiration from the words of Jesus in the Gospel of John – “that they may all be one... so that the world may believe” (John 17:21) – participants reflected that unity itself becomes a powerful witness to the Gospel.

The gathering acknowledged the diversity among the participants in terms of culture, language, vocation and experience. Despite these differences, all share the same commitment to the Divine Word Mission, working together in parish ministry, formation houses and social and community development initiatives in Mumbai.

Fr. Anselmo was warmly welcomed by the Lay Mission Partners, who expressed their joy at meeting the Superior General. As a gesture of appreciation and fellowship, gifts were presented to him as tokens of welcome, symbolizing the partnership between the missionaries and lay collaborators in the mission of the Church.

The meeting also encouraged participants to strengthen relationships through dialogue, mutual respect, humility and collaboration. Communion, it was emphasized, is not based on perfection but on a shared commitment to walk together in mission.

The encounter concluded on a note of gratitude and renewed commitment. The visit of the Superior General left a deep mark on the hearts of all present, strengthening their sense of belonging to the worldwide mission of the Society of the Divine Word and inspiring them to continue serving together in communion and mission.

Fr. Jolly Mudakkampurathu, SVD
Mission Secretary INM

❖ SVDLP Abroad ❖

Meeting with Members of MAVD

On our last trip to Mexico winter 2025 we met the coordinator Juan Manuel Ahuatl of the MAVD of Mexico City and their Spiritual Director Fr. Ignacio Migoya, SVD. Although it was an encounter we were looking for, it happened spontaneously and exactly on the feast day of Saint Arnold Janssen.

Enthusiasm, interest, curiosity, openness, belonging and a positive attitude of expectation and the willingness to listen and exchange on the part of the MAVD and us “SVD-Partners” formed the framework of our meeting and conversation.

We experienced the connection that we Lay Partners have, sharing the common spirituality of the SVD. Based on a common calling and commitment to the “mission” in the world. We are companions.

What we also like and characterize is the interculturality of the Lay Partners.

The encounter with MAVD and us “SVD-Partner” with different cultural influences, values and lifestyles was enriching. The exchange between the various Lay Partners enables deep understanding and mutual learning.



The conversation and exchange with the MAVD was long, precisely because they and we showed great interest and are open to the other cultures.

We are looking forward to an online meeting with the MAVD and to the visit of the Fr. Ignacio Migoya, SVD in Germany.

Lourdes and Rudi Scholz
Lay associates GER

Flood Relief in Mexico

At the beginning of October last year, heavy rains caused flooding in the Pantepec River in northern Veracruz on the Gulf of Mexico, which resulted in severe flooding and extensive damage. The damage to houses and the losses to the countryside are immeasurable. This is a place of poverty and insecurity with a high crime rate. That's why the flood hit the people there particularly hard.

So we planned an aid campaign in October 2025 and carried it out in November 2025.

The relief effort began in Germany with a fundraising campaign. Upon our arrival in Mexico City, we purchased blankets, towels, various cleaning products and hygiene items. We then packed 100 aid bags, each containing a blanket, a large towel and the cleaning and hygiene items. We hired a van and loaded it up. On 29 November, we set off for the area of Northern Veracruz, 400 km away. After a four-hour drive, we reached our destination and, with the help of family and friends, distributed the relief supplies on 30 November.

Experiencing the plight of people is very moving and we were also able to experience a lot of gratitude. For us, helping people in need is a profound experience that changes both us, the helper and the recipient. We listened to the people. Talking to people in need and to the people who also supported and helped this action often combines feelings of deep fulfillment with moments of shock and requires a high degree of empathy.

We experienced poverty, illness and lack of prospects first hand. You develop a deeper connection to the needs of others. Helping is an emotional experience where we also experience a deeper connection to those in need and needs. We ourselves also experienced gratitude when we helped, because this campaign is also an enrichment for us, a motivation, something happens that affects us and change us and strengthens the community.

Lourdes and Rudi Scholz
Lay associates GER



A Visit to Brazil

Jeremiah 29:11 Announces: “For I Know the Plans I have for You, Declares the LORD.”

With God’s blessing and the encouragement of the SVD fathers, I had the grace to make this pilgrimage to Brazil, a dream come true. My joy knew no bounds when the gracious invitation of Fr. Roshan D’Souza, the spiritual son of my friend Leena Xavier, was also extended to me.

Brazil is known for its stunning landscapes, vibrant culture, natural wonders and extensive coastlines with iconic beaches. What captured my heart were the many sites we visited: Christ the Redeemer, an iconic symbol of Rio; Copacabana Beach; Sugarloaf Mountain; the Basilica of Our Lady of Aparecida; the Sanctuary of St. Joseph in Belo Horizonte; the Divine Mercy Church in São Paulo; St. Arnold School; and the Home of the aged SVD fathers.

At present, 14 Indian SVD missionaries in Brazil are making an exemplary mark on the faith life of the country through their missionary activities. Going beyond faith alone, their holistic

ministry respects local culture, enabling them to be true salt and light among the people.

A highlight of the visit was when the SVD confreres gathered for the 150-year celebration at the Basilica of Our Lady of Aparecida. It filled my heart with pride to witness the dedicated service our Indian priests are offering; their commitment is truly inspiring.

Another wonderful surprise awaited us on the journey home: meeting our Superior General, Fr. Anselmo Ribeiro, in Dubai! Just as the women were the first witnesses of the Resurrection, we were blessed to welcome the Superior General even before he reached Mumbai.

“Count Your Blessings” is the song of my heart. My friend, Leena Xavier, will surely agree that God’s grace throughout this journey was truly beautiful.

Stella Leo Rebello
Lay associate INM



In January 2026, I visited Brazil at the invitation of my spiritual son, Fr. Roshan D’Souza, SVD, who has been serving in the Brazil North Province for the past eighteen years. After the passing of his mother in April 2025, I felt it was meaningful to spend some time with him.

Accompanied by Stella Leo Rebello, from DDW Andheri, I spent about twenty days visiting churches and pilgrimage sites, including Christ the Redeemer in Rio de Janeiro, the Basilica of Our Lady of Aparecida in São Paulo, the Divine Mercy Retreat Centre, Our Lady of Fatima Church in Espírito Santo where Fr. Roshan serves, and Convento da Penha in Vila Velha. The warm

hospitality of the SVD confreres made the visit memorable. We had the opportunity to meet Fr. Denzil, SVD, Provincial Superior of the Brazil North Province and St. Arnold School in Belo Horizonte. I thank God and Fr. Roshan for this grace-filled experience in such a beautiful and vibrant country.

Leena Xavier
Lay Associate INM

❖ Experience Reports ❖

Shared Mission in Action

Being an SVD Lay Partner is a beautiful experience of sharing the Arnoldus spirituality and the missionary charism of St. Arnold Janssen with SVD missionaries. The Society recognizes this partnership by inviting lay partners to important gatherings such as the General Chapter, held every six years, encouraging communication and collaboration within the missionary family.

I was fortunate to participate in the 19th General Chapter in Rome (June–July 2024) and to be part of the Papal Audience with Pope Francis. It was a meaningful moment that deepened my appreciation for the mission and the opportunity the Society gives lay partners to journey together with the missionaries.

Our formation continues through programs such as Bible Enthronement and Bible Sharing led by Fr. Marsel Samon, SVD, along with the commissioning of new members at St. Benedict Church. Lay partners also gather for parish meetings, the AFRAM Lay Partners Assembly in the DRC, workshops at Nemi in Rome and regional recollections at the Ave Maria Pastoral Centre led by Fr. Jay De Leon, SVD.

Mission is also lived through outreach and service. Lay partners assist SVD missionaries in visiting nearby communities and supporting refugees at Xipurapura Refugee Camp, where food parcels are distributed to families in need.

Celebrations strengthen our sense of community. As part of the 150-year Jubilee of the SVD, events were held in Giyani (Limpopo) and Leondale (Gauteng), culminating in the main celebration in Francistown, Botswana, on 6 September 2025. Parish life is enriched through activities such as the renewal of choir commitments and simple acts of service, coordinating liturgies, visiting bereaved families and supporting SVD missionaries in moments of loss.

Through these experiences, coordinating AFRAM communications and contributing to the quarterly SVD Laici Newsletter has become a meaningful way of sharing the missionary journey of lay partners across the world.

Thandi Mazibuko
Lay partner BOT



Where the River Leads

“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news...” (Isaiah 52:7)

Some journeys take you not merely from one place to another, but from the familiar into the sacred. My road trip from Tezpur in Assam to Chayangtajo in Arunachal Pradesh was one such journey – 250 kilometers measured not just in distance, but in wonder.

The Land that Rises

Arunachal Pradesh is a rugged land of steep hills, deep gorges and Himalayan ridges. At its heart flows the Kameng River, winding through valleys.

Travelling with Susan Noronha (INM DDW Andheri) and Fr. Clement Miranda, SVD, we set out early from Tezpur. As we crossed into Arunachal Pradesh, the flat plains gave way to winding mountain roads and breathtaking views. Along the way, Fr. Clement pointed out villages where he had celebrated Mass and communities waiting patiently for a chapel. Through his stories, the landscape became not just geography, but a map of ministry.

Chayangtajo: A Town on the Roof of the World

Chayangtajo appears from afar, perched on a hilltop with stunning Himalayan views, home for generations to the Nyishi and Puroik communities.

At Chayangtajo Divine Word School, it was the children who made the visit unforgettable. We played, sang and danced together, their laughter echoing across the hillside. In those moments, I was not a visitor, but simply part of their joy.

Sixteen kilometers below lies Nari Camp, where Fr. Avinash D'Souza, SVD and his team warmly welcomed us and where the same spirit of openness and joy marked our encounter with the children. In the village of Yakli, I experienced heartfelt hospitality; food prepared with care, shared smiles and a generous welcome despite having little.

Mission in the Mountains

To travel here is a wonder; to live and work here as a missionary is something more profound. Fr. Clement Miranda, SVD and Fr. Avinash D'Souza, SVD offered a glimpse of this life, while the children of Chayangtajo and Nari Camp, the villagers of Yakli and the river itself renewed my sense of what truly matters.

Anupama Subodhanan
Lay associate INM



❖ Announcements ❖

To all Passionate Guardians of Creation

Are you passionate about protecting creation and want to learn more? Are you interested in scientific findings, exemplary projects around the world and the perspectives of different religions? Then we have something for you:

JPIC e-learning courses from KAICIID!

KAICIID is a unique intergovernmental organization founded by the Republic of Austria, the Kingdom of Spain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Holy See as a founding Observer. It brings religious leaders, policymakers and experts to the dialogue table to find common solutions to shared problems.

KAICIID offers e-learning courses which are free of charge and last between one and eight weeks, depending on the topic. A working time of 3 hours per week should be planned. The courses are completed with a certificate.

SVD and KAICIID will initially offer courses for SVDLP in ASPAC and AFRAM. Details will be announced shortly by General Mission Secretary Fr. Marcelo Cattáneo, SVD and JPIC Coordinator Fr. Richard Quadros, SVD via the provinces.

Please feel free to ask the Mission Secretary and/or your JPIC Co-ordinator of your province!

Maria Wego
Lay associate GER

❖ JPIC Column ❖



Dear friends,

In autumn, Christian churches celebrate together the 'Season of Creation'. It begins on 1 September, when Orthodox Christian churches start the church year and celebrate Creation Day. The Season of Creation ends with the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi on 4 October.

At a time when the concerns of creation are increasingly being overlooked and consumerism and profit are taking priority, the Season of Creation is more important than ever. Many initiatives were started during this period to raise awareness of what needs to be done for the good of creation. However, it is not only a time for information and discussion, but also for

prayer. Human beings should recognise that God has entrusted them with his creation to protect and care for it, not to exploit it.

In just under five months, it will be that time again: Season of Creation 2026 will begin. So there is still plenty of time to plan activities. No ideas? Off the top of my head, I can think of: setting up litter bins, collecting plastic or cigarette butts, planting trees, building compost bins, sewing cloth bags and exchanging them for plastic bags and also: inviting people to a church service in a meadow or by a river.

Do you have any other ideas? I'm sure you do and I look forward to hearing them.

Jo



Gone from our sight, but never from our hearts.

We will miss you!

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.



Clara Aleksandra Lumban Gaol

† 09.01.2026
Lay partner, IDJ

Gone from our sight, but never from our hearts.

We will miss you!

Rest in Peace



Lord, stay with us
as evening falls
and the day draws to a close.
When darkness falls
in our hearts
and our faces grow sombre
then stay with us.

Lord, do not forsake us
when we become strangers to one another
and can no longer find our way.
When we no longer see
our neighbours
and see only ourselves
then do not forsake us.

Lord, stay with us
when night falls
and darkness spreads
between us.
When no one trusts their friend
anymore
and everyone becomes an enemy to the other
then stay with us.

Lord, do not forsake us
but open our eyes
when we walk with you.
Open our ears
when we hear from you
let our hearts burn
in your presence

**We wish you a blessed
Easter season!**

Susan
Sophie
Lourdes
Matilda
Daisy
Isabel

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