

## On the Pulse of the Mission in EUROPA Today

### *Reflections after the General Visitations to EUROPA Zone*

WORD FROM THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

In his speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg in November 2014, Pope Francis, describing the situation of contemporary Europe, compared it to a tired, aging grandmother who is no longer fertile or vibrant. The Pope may have been prompted to a similar utterance by a trend expanded over the decades. Consequently, the great Christian ideals that once inspired Europe have lost their power of attraction in Europe itself considerably.

Europe has been experiencing great social, religious, and cultural changes for many years. The trends observed mainly in the second half of the last century in the countries of Western Europe intensified and, from the end of the 1990s, were also noticeable in the countries of so-called Eastern Europe. There is a growing religious indifference, a kind of practical agnosticism, in a significant part of the European society. It manifests itself in that many European citizens have grown up with a Christian heritage. For many of them today, God seems distant or unnecessary. Especially among the young population, faith has become irrelevant. The Church as an institution and the consecrated life as a way of life and fulfillment of one's vocation seem unfamiliar or even alien. The image of the Church as an institution of moral authority has been further damaged by scandals of sexual crimes and abuses committed by the clergy.

The aging population, the crisis of families with few children (if any), the internal migration processes in Europe, and waves of migration from outside make Europe more multicultural and multireligious.

#### **The Love of Christ Impels Us**

In this background, the process of renewal and transformation called for by the XVIII General Chap-

ter began much earlier in many Provinces in the European area, implementing the so-called Roscommon Consensus (1990) considering "missionary situations in Europe." It identified the context of the work and life of the SVDs in Europe in a new light: European provinces have changed from sending provinces to receiving provinces. However, its implementation progresses in some contexts slowly, and the witness of interculturality lacks its boldness. In particular, preparing young confreres coming from other continents to Europe needed to comprehend adequately the faith tradition of the "old continent" and, at the same time, the need to infuse new life into it. On the other hand, the native confreres from European provinces should change the mentality and be generous to share

the responsibility of leadership with the generation of younger non-Europeans who have already become an integral part of the provinces.

A confrere, speaking about the current situation in Europe, pointed out that the phenomenon of the



*District of Munich during the General Visitation 2020*

confreres returning from the missions to their home provinces represents a missionary challenge. They now face reality different from what they witnessed when they left Europe. "Those who return to Europe must once again strip themselves of everything they have acquired to return to the arid land that was once a fertile Europe. Those who have left their warm countries encounter the coldness of the northern hemisphere, but also the indifference of a secularized society." The challenge is to overcome the "traditional" patterns of the past. It is of utmost importance to learn how to witness to those who still seek nourishment in the Gospel and the sacraments and among the growing number of religiously indifferent people.

## Rooted In the Word: Discernment

The last General Chapter reminds us that the process of discernment is not an option but our vital need. (18GC, #19). Since the Roscommon Consensus, the process of discernment and the quest for adequate responses to the signs of the times continued throughout the zone and in the individual provinces. In the recent past, this process has brought about decisions on merging some provinces, opening new missions in the European countries such as Albania, Norway, and Latvia, while leaving others like Moldova (and Romania).

It is essential and valuable that in the process of discernment, the energy is spent not so much on finding ways to maintain the status quo but on giving creative answers to the new challenges encountered. It is not always an easy process because it requires us to take courageous and difficult decisions to close certain activities, houses, or institutions. Moreover, we are sometimes emotionally attached to them since they constitute part of our personal history.

However, the process of discernment is always about discovering the will of God and not about pursuing our preferences. The process of discernment is also bearing fruit with new initiatives especially concerning ministries with young people and families, and among the groups of migrants that represent space of creative encounters in faith dialogue as well as space of service, both in the spirit of the Gospel and in line with the vision of our last General Chapter 2018 (18GC, #42). The PRs in Europe could enrich others by sharing experiences in addressing the issues of migrants and refugees, even to think of initiating common projects to respond to this growing challenge.

In the last decades, more and more confreres are involved in parish ministry. Of course, parishes provide the possibility for confreres, especially for those coming from outside Europe, to get in touch and learn about the people and their culture. And yet, in many countries in Europe, the parish is undergoing a restructuring process. We need to look for find alternatives to the parish, such as creating small centers of mission animation with the participation of the four characteristic dimensions.

## Committed to His Mission: Witnessing to Renewal and Transformation

Up to now, the mission of our Congregation in most European countries has been focused on missionary animation, financial support to the missions, and the formation and sending of young missionaries outside Europe. Although there has been a decline in vocations and paucity in the initial formation pro-

cess in many provinces, the mission of our Congregation in Europe has not ended.

Despite the lack of local vocations, some provinces continue the process of initial formation by inviting confreres from outside of Europe. Therefore, inviting young confreres to do OTP in the provinces of Europe is a suitable way to help these confreres become more familiar with the realities of life and prepare them for fruitful work in the future.

On the other side, caring and making provisions for adequate attention for our elderly confreres returning to their home province is also an actual mission carried out in most European provinces. However, looking at the present situation, it will require further efforts and collaboration.

In our mission ad extra, missionary animation and collaboration with lay people who share our spirituality and interest in the missions are very well developed. It is a sign of blessing, particularly in the countries marked by a decrease in vocations. It provides

the continuation of material support for the missions. It keeps the missionary fire burning in the hearts of people. The strong presence of SVDs in the parishes in Europe – a typical trait of our mission in Europe – offers an occasion to abet our missionary spirituality, as well as our characteristic dimensions there. Besides, the zone needs a center of academic reflection on the mission as it has a tradition in some provinces.

## Bearers of Hope and Courage

Speaking to the politicians in the European Parliament, Pope Francis compared Europe to an aging grandmother. He approached its parliamentarians as a shepherd with a message of hope and courage. Hope is based on trust in God, who transforms darkness into light, and death into life; courage is based on trust in a human being endowed with transcendent dignity.

Even though the pandemic has had a serious impact on many of the activities in Europe and other parts of the world, it has awakened creative responses. As missionaries of the Divine Word and the heirs of Father Arnold, this is what we are called to: start new things with confidence where old ones cease to be effective; being bearers of hope and courage, of the light of the Word and the Spirit of grace.

**Fr. Paulus Budi Kleden and the Leadership Team**

**In Europe,  
we are called  
to start new things  
with confidence where  
old ones cease  
to be effective.**

## Generalate News

## GENERAL VISITATIONS

The following are the scheduled General Visitations:

**1-21 February**  
General Visitors

**Chicago Province (USC)**  
Fr. Eryk Koppa SVD  
Bro. Carlos Ferrada Montero SVD  
Fr. Peter Dusicka SVD

**1-21 February**  
General Visitor

**USA-Southern Province (USS)**  
Bro. Guy Mazola

**1-21 February**  
General Visitor

**USA-Western Province**  
Fr. Xavier Thirukudumbam SVD

**1-21 February**  
General Visitor

**Colombia (COL)**  
Fr. Navil D'Silva SVD

**1-21 February**  
General Visitor

**Ecuador (ECU)**  
Fr. Modeste Munimi SVD

## Caucus: Planning Sessions



From January 13 until January 19, 2022, the General Council, headed by Superior General Paulus Budi Kleden, along with the Zonal Coordinator of Europe and PANAM and the officials of the Generalate, met in Collegio del Verbo Divino for the Caucus (Planning Sessions). Unfortunately, the Zonal Coordinators of ASPAC, AFRAM, and the Formation Secretary joined the planning session online due to the Pandemic. General Councilor Anselmo Ribeiro also joined the session from his home country, Brazil.

For the first time in Rome, Brother Douglas Simonetti SVD, the Generalate Assistant Secretary for Brothers' Formation and Education, and Fr. Navil D'Silva, the Zonal Coordinator of PANAM.

The planning session started with an input given by Fr. Steve Bevans (USC). Then, the different Generalate officers, secretaries, and coordinators presented their reports, including programs and animation activities.

A particular time was devoted to the coming 19th General Chapter wherein the theme of the Chapter,

and other pertinent matters were put into discussion and planning. Other discussion matters were the first assignments and the evaluation of the Zonal structure.

Feast of Arnold Janssen  
in Collegio del Verbo Divino

*Fr. Bevans delivering the talk.*

The celebration of the Feast of our Founder started with a talk of Fr. Steve Bevans SVD. The SVDs from the three Roman communities and Parrocchia San Benedetto-Rome were in attendance. Fr. Steve presented the theme: Love Gives Everything! The Trinity as Ground of Mission, Interculturality, Inculturation, and JPIC. Fr. Bevans pointed out that the theme is a wonderful way of expressing the inexpressible reality of our Triune God and our participation in God's life of mission! Fr. Steve's presentation captured the participants' interest. It was indeed a significant moment to appreciate the legacy of our Founder on his Feast Day.

The celebration of the Holy Eucharist was presided



over by Archbishop Michael Blume SVD, Papal Nuncio to Hungary. During the homily, the Archbishop, in flawless Italian, shared about the missionary legacy of the Founder. He pointed out how this mission is very much incarnated in the apostolate and commitment of the SVD in Hungary. At the altar, he was accompanied by Father Paulus Budi Kleden SVD.

The celebration culminated with agape characterized by the friendly and fraternal atmosphere of camaraderie among confreres.

## 15th SSpS General Chapter



*The new Congregational leadership team.*

Sr. Miriam Altenhofen SSpS was elected as the new Congregational Leader of the Congregation of the Sister Servants of the Holy Spirit. She will replace Sr. Maria Theresia Hörnemann SSpS, who led the Congregation for two terms. The other members of the Congregational Leadership Team (CLT) are Sr. Mikaelin (Indonesia), Sr. Jana Paula (Slovakia), Sr. Tressa (India), Sr. Mariana (Argentina), and Sr. Kreti (Chile).

In her first message as Congregational Leader, Sr. Miriam said, "Our Congregation is worldwide and very diverse in the different parts of the globe. But wherever we are, we try to serve, especially those at the margins whose voices are not heard. Maybe God wants to enter and speak to us from these margins." These very words confirm and attest to the challenge expressed in the theme of the Chapter, Immersed in the life of the Spirit, Transforming the world with compassion."

Fr. Superior General, Paulus Budi Kleden, presided over the opening Mass of the 15th General Chapter. He also celebrated the solemn Holy Eucharist at the end of the Chapter. In addition, the members of the General Council joined the Arnoldus Family Day during the Chapter and shared essential facts about the SVD.

## The historic visit of

## Mother General Magdalena of the SSpSAP

According to sources (hopefully reliable), the last visit of a Mother General of the SSpSAP to Collegio del Verbo Divino was the occasion of the Family



*Mother Magdalena with confreres.*

Feast Day held on October 7, 2003. Following the canonization of Arnold Janssen and Joseph Freinademetz, Mother General Mary Cecilia joined the rest of the Arnoldus Family to a festive lunch in the Collegio del Verbo Divino.

Mother Maria Magdalena, the current SSpSAP Mother General, acceded to the invitation of Father Budi Kleden to visit the Collegio. She addressed the SSpS Sisters during their General Chapter. It was a long wait of a little more than eighteen years for another Mother General to grace the Collegio on January 18, 2022, with a visit.

Mother Magdalena joined the community for Vespers and an evening meal. She also graciously accepted an interview for Arnoldus Nota. She spent some time with the Superior General, his council, and the participants of the Caucus. A conversation and sharing followed. Thank you, Sister, for honoring us with your visit.

## CBF in Rome

The CBF (c-b-f.org) is a platform created in the Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council in 1969 to bring the Word of God to the communities of the Catholic Church. Since the beginning of the Federation, the Congregation of the Divine Word has been closely involved in its structuring and development. At present, our SVD institutions affiliated with the CBF represent about 12% of its total membership.

Several of our confreres, mainly from the German Province (Fr. Christian Reusch, Br. Bruno Rehm, Fr. Robert Schmitz), have been responsible for the finances of the Federation. In addition, many of our confreres have served as coordinators at various levels of the regional coordination of the Federation. Two SVDs have been elected to serve as General Secretary - Fr. Ludger Feldkämper, from 1984 to 2000, and the present writer, from 2014 to the present; my term expires in December 2025.

The CBF was founded in Rome in 1969. However, in 1972, at the initiative of Fr. Christian Reusch SVD, its headquarters were moved to Stuttgart in Germany to facilitate its collaboration with the German Catholic agencies that financed the Federation and its projects. In 2018, already under my administration, the decision was made to move the headquarters back to Rome, to



Fr. Stefanów with Wilton Cardinal Gregory of Washington D.C.

facilitate cooperation with the Vatican and the Bishops' Conferences worldwide.

Because of the Pandemic, this relocation process was prolonged in time. To closely follow the last phase of the move to Rome, I moved to the Collegio del Verbo Divino in March of last year, where I have my residence and very comfortable conditions to carry out my work. However, the office and my assistant are still physically in Germany. Thanks to the internet we can carry on our work without any problems.

We hope that soon we will be able to have an official office in Rome and finish the transfer process. At

the moment, all our attention is focused on preparing the 10th Plenary Assembly, which will take place from April 21-27 in Mar del Plata, Argentina.

--- Jan Stefanów SVD

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just a click away**



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### **Mother General Magdalena SSpSAP:**



**Our spirituality plays a vital role in our responsibility  
to transform the world with compassion**

*Arnoldus Nota had the singular opportunity to talk with Mother General Magdalena during her Collegio del Verbo Divino visit. The Editor of Arnoldus Nota conversed with the Mother General of the Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration amicably. She also expressed her willingness to share the highlights of this conversation.*

**The theme of the SSpS General Chapter is "Immersed in the Life of the Trinity, Transforming the World with Compassion. "How to live the Trinity, what, O Holy Spirit do you wish to offer to the world through us. Taking into account the theme of the Chapter, what was your message to the SSpS Capitulars?"**

I told them that I was very impressed when I learned about the theme, and I was thinking of Pope Francis. I told them Pope Francis would surely like it, and Mother Helena came to mind also. Indeed, she would have

appreciated the theme. This theme was close to her before she wanted to go to China. I congratulated the Sisters on this spirit-filled theme. This is a theme that the world needs today and is very actual.

**Considering your charism as Perpetual Adoration Sisters, how do you immerse yourself into the Trinity, how do you live the Trinity?**

There are two aspects to bear in mind. First, I think of adoration. We adore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Blessed Sacrament. That is a part of our daily life. We also live in a community. The Trinity is an example of community, so we try to live up to that. And when we are challenged as a community, we always try to remember again and again to love one another, forgive, and try to be united.

**Perhaps one would be very curious to ask Sisters like you, living a contemplative life, how you trans-**

## form the world with compassion?

This is undoubtedly through our prayer. Prayer is not separated and apart from the world. We take the whole world into our prayer and bring it before Him. I think that is the kind of transformation. We don't see, and we don't know what God is doing and will do. But I believe in the power of prayer.

We are also in contact with many people. They are writing us letters and sharing about their problems and their difficulties. They are asking for prayers, and we answer those letters. We assure them of our prayers. Of course, we also give straightforward advice, but that is not the most important thing. People want to know, hear, and read that the Sisters are praying for them.

People come to our convent. They ring the bell and ask that our Sisters talk to them. So our Sisters go to the reception room and personally listen to them, their problems, their suffering. We try to show compassion by listening to them, and they receive consolation from our promise to pray for them.

Our spirituality plays an essential role in our responsibility to transform the world with compassion. My relation to people mirrors my connection to God as I relate to God. When I am close to God, when I love Him and am willing to give my life to Him, it means I can influence the world. I do not know how but the Lord knows how to do that.

## The SSpSAp Congregation has changed in these 125 years. You singled out its international character with richness, joys, and challenges. Can you elaborate more on this?

We are a very international community. It is enriching. We can learn from one another. When we have celebrations, we can make the day pleasant. But it is also a challenge because sometimes we do not understand each other. We do not know enough their cultural background.

It is a challenge to be open. But things can be done in another way. In Germany, we have ways of doing things, but we need to be available to other forms and manners. The different cultures have to be open to learning. It is a challenge in daily life, in common prayers, in shared meals. Respect and listening to one another are essential.

## You said our Congregation would not be conceivable, and we could not fulfill our ministry without our Steyl family. Can you speak more on this?

The Steyl family is our roots. The Divine Word Missionaries came first, then the SSPs Mission Sisters and we. Father Arnold founded us to be a kind of prayer support for the two missionary congregations. This is one aspect. The other aspect is that we always get the help of the SVDs and the SSPs. We could not do with-

out them. Our Foundations are always near an SVD or SSpS Foundation, so we are not alone. We need a family.

We can promote this family spirit. Our strongest bond with the two missionary congregations, SSpS and SVD, is our prayer. But you are also praying for us. Sharing experiences happen already, but we can do more during General Chapters. We want to know what is going on when you go on a new mission. We have a challenge now of closing houses, and you also have experienced. We can dialogue and share those and other practical things in daily life. We always need to live that spirit of being one family. To think about it and not separate from the family.

During the time of COVID-19, our Sisters in Poland were infected. And the SVDs cook for them. They also brought the food every day, and they shopped for the Sisters. Something wonderful. Also, when we have questions, we know whom to ask.

## Do the lay partners find a special place in the Congregation? What have you been doing?

We have a league of adorers in all our communities. They want to live our spirituality and our daily life. They also help in the adoration when we do not have enough sisters. We also try to give some formation like conferences and recollection days. The lay partners also offer services. They ask us if we need anything, especially if we go somewhere. They are willing to drive us. They feel that they belong to the Steyl family.



## What is your message to your SVD Brothers, to those experiencing challenges or dryness in their spiritual life?

Not to give up when we experience dryness in our relationship with God. What am I looking for in my relationship with God? Am I looking for consolation, or do I look for the Lord? God allows that dryness for one to grow in faith and love. It is vital to have a time for prayer every day. Also, when there is much work, that is the time you pray more that you do not lose connection with God. You always remember why I am doing this; it is not just for me. It is for Him. Have a daily schedule and try to be faithful in prayer.

Sister Magdalena apologized for her limited English. I would have wanted to tell her that language is not a barrier when one speaks right from the heart, which was indeed the spirit of the conversation. Mother General embodies our Pink Sister's support and concern. The most she could promise on their behalf is, "You will always be in our prayers."



## General Visitation

*Fr. José Antunes da Silva SVD: General Visitation to the Irish and British Province (IBP):*

## Strengthening the SVD presence in England and Ireland



*Participants of the provincial assembly.*



*SVD community in England with the Provincial.*

The Irish and British Province Visitation took place on November 8-30, 2021. The Visitation showed me that there are many good reasons to continue and strengthen the SVD presence in England and Ireland, especially among the migrants, the poor, the unbelievers, the faith-seekers, and the lay partners.

**England.** The first community of Divine Word Missionaries in the United Kingdom was established in the 1930s when St. Richard's minor seminary was opened in Hadzor. Afterward, other SVD communities were founded in Wales and Scotland. In 1967, seven missionary congregations in England combined to open the Missionary Institute based on Mill Hill, Totteridge. In 1975, the Society purchased a house at Teignmouth Road in London for the SVD students. Over the years, the number of seminarians decreased dramatically for missionary institutes. Today, our house remains the residence of some confreres who are retired or are engaged in higher studies.

The SVD administers two parishes in England: Our Lady of Sorrows and St. Bridget of Sweden, in Isleworth, and St. Mary-on-the-Quay, in Bristol. The parish in Isleworth is a multicultural congregation with many parishioners from India and several African countries. The parish is in the city center in Bristol, close to the university and the business area. The Mass is at 12:15 PM (Monday to Friday). The time of the Mass facilitates the participation of office workers and students.

**Ireland.** The SVD presence in Ireland began in 1939 when a group of German priests and brothers came from England and bought Donamon Castle in Roscommon county. The primary purpose of this new community was to recruit young men who felt the call to become missionaries as priests or brothers. In the mid-sixties, new buildings for the seminary students were built in Donamon and in Maynooth to accommodate more seminarians. However, when vocations began to dwindle in the eighties, both seminaries were closed and were later used for different purposes. In 1999, the SVD provinces of Great Britain (GBR) and Ireland (IRE) merged to form the Irish and British province (IBP).

In Ireland, we have four houses and a parish (St. Philip the Apostle) in Mountview. The houses in Dublin, Maynooth, and Donamon Castle accommodate retired or semi-retired confreres who spent most of their lives in overseas missions. They are still active in the community or outside, collaborating in nearby parishes, holding leadership positions, etc. They are a blessing to our communities and an inspiration for young generations.

In the past, Maynooth was exclusively a formation house for the theological formation of our seminarians. Today, the house provides accommodation for students of the language school and students at the university in Maynooth. Moreover, with a long and vibrant history in its commitment to the media apostolate, Kairos also has its headquarters in Maynooth.

The Donamon Castle is one of the oldest inhabited buildings in Ireland. From the first generation of confreres and many Catholics, it remains the symbol of the SVD in Ireland. It continues to sustain the province from its mission appeals and donations financially.

**Roscommon Consensus.** In 1990, the Divine Word Missionaries from Europe, meeting in Ireland, approved what has come to be known as the Roscommon Consensus. During that meeting, they recognized that the European continent was also a mission territory. In Europe, many missionary situations need the missionary service of the Congregation. Since then, dozens of SVD missionaries, born in other continents, have been at the service of the Church in Europe. Many examples of their missionary witness and pastoral services are across the continent from Lisbon to Moscow or from London to Budapest.

Today, the building where the consensus was formulated is empty and unoccupied, a silent witness to a glorious past. But it was there that the provincials, aware of the new social and religious context of Europe, launched an appeal for the Congregation to assign missionaries who could dedicate their lives to evangelization on this continent. And what was just a short statement in the minutes of the assembly became, in the following years, the engine to change the face of SVD communities and its mission across Europe.

**Bro. Guy Mazona SVD/Fr. Marek Vanus SVD: General Visitation to the Poland Province (POL):**

## The province is blessed with many dedicated confreres



*The visitors with the provincial council.*



*SVDs and lay workers in Pieniezno.*

The visitation took place from November 9 to 30, 2021. There were 204 confreres in perpetual vows and 2 in temporary vows (1 scholastic and one brother). The average age was about 58. At present, there are no postulants nor novices in the province. The province includes the Mission Seminary in Pieniężno, 13 mission houses, 13 parishes, two districts (Zakopane and Ukraine), and two missions (Latvia and Norway).

The religious background is different in each of the four countries that belong to the POL province. While in Poland, almost 86% of 38.2 million inhabitants are Catholics, in neighboring Ukraine, only 1% of 41.3 million inhabitants identify themselves as Roman-Catholics (there are 9% of Greek-Catholics and more than 70% of Orthodox). Latvia is a small country with 1.9 million people; the Catholics represent 25%. As for Norway, 76% of 5.4 million inhabitants recognize themselves as Christians, including 4% Catholics.

### Strengths of the province

POL is one of the SVD provinces that has been contributing to the SVD worldwide mission in terms of personnel. Two hundred forty-nine (249) Polish confreres work outside POL.

Mission Animation is one of the well-organized areas in the province. Each house has a mission office that animates people spiritually and raises funds for the mission in general and the province in particular. The province, through different communities, produces thousands of printed materials for mission purposes. 70% of the province's income comes from the work of mission offices: mass stipends and various contributions from the benefactors.

A lay partners group is wholeheartedly committed to our mission work. They prepare monthly shipments of magazines and other mission materials to donors and friends of the mission. These people do a very tedious job preparing and send about two tons of mission materials every month.

"Centrum Migranta" in Warsaw is a tangible project in realizing one of the priorities chosen by the province. Over the years, it has been rendering valuable help to the migrants, particularly those standing on the edge of legal status. However, with various groups of

migrants, the present situation has brought new challenges. Therefore, the Centrum needs to reach out to these groups beyond the mere pastoral aspect.

"Droga" (road in English) Family Aid Association is an apostolate that brings confreres closer to the marginalized. The association undertakes activities targeted at children, young people, and families who are in danger of social exclusion and substance dependence and who need support and assistance and therapeutic and preventive influence. It has initiated and continued to develop various forms of support: therapeutic work among addicts, working with families burdened with violence and addictions, helping the poor and people from the social margin, supporting children from low-income families, among others.

### Challenges

The drastic decrease in vocations in the province in the last two decades arouses concerns. This situation calls for tenacious teamwork in vocation promotion. Furthermore, the province needs to find new ways of doing formation, considering the new context of the Church in Europe.

Most of the buildings are now underutilized. They are the heritage of the strenuous efforts of the confreres of previous generations and were once fully occupied. The maintenance of these buildings is becoming more and more costly. Some of them require renovations. A comprehensive review of their use and finding a clear plan for their future represent a challenge for the province.

Missions in Ukraine, Latvia, and Norway are promising missions, though not easy due to the economic and climatical background. Reinforcing the present communities with more personnel can improve their development and effectiveness.

The province has more other strengths and challenges. However, it is blessed with many dedicated confreres who offered a welcoming, hospital, and fraternal atmosphere during the visitation. We were honored to witness their religious and missionary determination. We thus share the experience of our common faith (cf. Rom 1:12) and learn from them the colorful mosaic of manifestation of God's grace.



*Fr. Anselmo Ribeiro: General Visitation to the Netherlands-Belgium Province (NEB):*

## Remaining open to the future that is under construction



*The members of NEB province.*



*The community in Teteringen.*

At each new general visitation, I always have the impression that this is the most challenging reality I have ever encountered. During my days in the Netherlands-Belgium, it was no different. But from that time, it is worth noting that this is a province with a chapter in its recent history very well known in the SVD. They had decided to prepare themselves to reach the end with dignity. But, with the Roscommon consensus, celebrated by the European zone in 1990, with the same dignity and decision, the province opened itself to receive new missionaries.

Since the visit to NEB, the first thing I have learned is that renewal and transformation do not happen in an isolated moment of history but in a constant process that prepares, opens minds, and encourages us to move forward. The process of renewal and transformation does not have a founder or a person in charge, but people who open themselves in listening and discernment. And, in the end, everything happens amid agreements and disagreements, doubts and uncertainty.

The *ad intra* reality in NEB is marked by the two large communities: Teteringen and the District of St. Jan. The visit took place in the middle of the pandemic's pause between one new variant and another. But the effects of the protective measures were still being observed. It left the community of the older confreres a bit more distant from the daily life of the younger ones in the parishes and other mission fields.

The configuration of the community in the mission house in Teteringen is still in transformation. The house where the confreres live is not ours. The community is open to other religious communities, with different charisms and spiritualities, but who live in communion and celebrate life which has its value until its final moment.

The district of St. Jan pulsates with parish activities and social works. The situation allows the missionaries coming from many countries to contact the local Church, native or migrant families and to be confronted with the social reality that appreciates the issues of

human rights and is indifferent to the religious and ecclesial.

The decisions made by the province in the past teach us all that it takes very little to live and do a mission. NEB owns only the sacred ground where the confreres are buried. The province has no other property, even in Belgium. One can live from one's daily work or from pensions acquired also from one's work. The present reality leads most of the confreres to a serious decision to either learn the local language or to enter as deeply as possible into the culture. Without that, it is almost impossible to remain in the mission to contribute to the self-support of all.

The plans made in the present also teach us that ideas and dreams are not enough, but commitments and a lot of effort to move forward as a community of life and mission. A process of mutual listening and restructuring of communities and services without great recognition is necessary. It is known that all the efforts put into the mission have only guaranteed them to reach the present moment. The future of the mission in the Netherlands-Belgium still needs new actions.

Finally, the context in which our confreres find themselves favors them to live the common spirituality, along the lines of kenosis. Some once left the Netherlands and Belgium as important countries who sent missionaries to distant lands. The others are these young people coming from former colonial and mission lands. Now they both share the challenge of emptying themselves of their experiences of success or confidence, to live almost in missionary deprivation, in a fertile field of secularism.

At the same time, this emptying leaves them equally ready to receive new missionaries, new mission fields, new ideas, and collaborations. With the action of the Spirit of God, the NEB province maintains its fidelity. It remains open to the future that is under construction.

## Thoughts and Reflections

Father/Doctor Jozef Kasimierz Gwozdz SVD:

## What fascinates me most in the life and ministry of Bishop Jorge Novak SVD

*I believe that Bishop Novak will be my spiritual father for the rest of my life.*



*The life and work of Father Bishop Jorge Novak deserve to be known.*

On October 21, 2021, Fr. Jozef Kasimierz Gwozdz SVD successfully defended his doctoral thesis at the Institute of Spirituality of the Pontifical Gregorian University entitled: **Bishop Jorge Novak SVD, A Contemplative in Action. Priestly Identity and Spirituality, Pastoral and Missionary Praxis.** The candidate presented Monsignor Novak as a contemplative in action. Arnoldus Nota spoke with the doctoral candidate, and he revealed his affinity and appreciation for Monsignor Novak.

**In writing your doctoral dissertation, you have immersed yourself in the life and times of this outstanding bishop. What aspect of Jorge Novak's life impressed you the most and why?**

The subject of my work concerns the sacrament of Holy Orders and the identity and spirituality associated with it. So, the aspect studied and the one that impressed me most about Jorge Novak was the beauty of his priestly ministry and the witness he gave of his configuration to Christ and as a minister sent by Him for a mission. The example of his priestly life and teaching showed me that the priest is called and sent to live what he is and what he does, his consecration, and his mission. Father Bishop Jorge Novak lived it in a good way. This experience has allowed me to call him "contemplative in action" in my dissertation.

In my opinion, his ministry shows the originality of this expression proper to him because he lived in a historical context and very demanding specific events. Yet, he did it with love, communion, and trust in God and, consequently, with a total dedication to the apostolic mission. I think that this ministerial "unity" that he lived was, is, and will be fundamental, essential, and at the same time innovative in every era—even today.

When a priest recognizes, experiences a personal encounter, and contemplates the presence of God in his ministry, this experience becomes decisive in his pastoral and missionary action. It bears unexpected fruit under challenging conditions and sometimes challenging times because God acts through him. We can observe this in the lives of many saints. And that is

also what fascinates me most in the life and ministry of Father Bishop Jorge Novak.

**You mentioned during your doctoral defense that as you got to know Bishop Novak better, you experienced a spiritual affinity and closeness to him. Have you undergone any transformation in your religious missionary vocation and as a member of the SVD? Can you mention them and why?**

On the wall of my room, I had a big picture of Jorge Novak. Every day at the beginning of my work, I would say a prayer, asking for his help and intercession before God. I was brought closer to him after researching and reading the documents he wrote, the expressions he used, and analyzing his ways of thinking and acting. In a certain sense, he is the spiritual father who has accompanied me during my doctorate. I believe that he will be my spiritual father for the rest of my life.

I did not experience any remarkable transformation, but in my priestly and missionary vocation, his example, and witness earnestly invited me to mature and deepen what I should be and do. The most important thing is the search for how to be in practice "contemplative in action." Why? Because it changes everything. It is a gift and a task that, well received and assumed, transforms the whole missionary life. Christ himself makes his presence and acts through the ministerial priesthood in mission. In Novak's life, this is very evident.

**You have had the opportunity to meet people (relatives, confreres, priests of the diocese, etc.) who knew Bishop Novak during his lifetime. What stands out most about the bishop in their memories? Have you noticed a common thread that unites everything you have heard from them? What is it?**

I visited Argentina only once for a short time. It surprised me that all those I interviewed spoke of two realities: First of Novak's inner reality, his way of praying, meditating, trusting in God. They emphasized his intimate relationship with God present in the Word of God and the sacraments and his extraordinary devo-

tion to the Holy Spirit contemplated in history and his episcopal ministry. Many people also highlighted his Marian spirituality.

The second reality mentioned by many was his pastoral action, carried out in four famous pastoral axes: Mission, human rights, the poor, and ecumenism. In this way, a Jorge Novak “contemplative in action” immediately appeared in my project.

In my opinion, the common thread in the life and ministry of Father Bishop Jorge is priestly spirituality lived as a unity of life, that is, harmony and balance between interior life and pastoral action, not a dualism between contemplation and action. What unites these dimensions is the following of Jesus through the way of love. In the life and ministry of Father Bishop Jorge, love is the summit and center of everything.

**If you are asked, why do you think Bishop Novak should be beatified, what would you answer? What do you think is the vital feature in the bishop’s life and times that is worth considering for his beatification?**

My answer is: “Because he was a holy man.” Surely the postulators who do a detailed investigation will give many reasons. I can only share what is related to the subject of my dissertation, that is, the priesthood he received as a gift and task in the sacrament of Holy Orders. He was a Bishop who received this gift and fulfilled the duty exemplary and in the image of Christ the Priest, Prophet, and King. He taught, sanctified, and governed his people as alter Christus.

Like his master, the Good Shepherd, he guided the flock entrusted to him, loving, teaching, and protecting it, always ready to give his life for his sheep. His life was not lacking in situations of grave danger, and he was

always prepared for martyrdom. He gave his life in a long journey as a servant shepherd, contemplating the face of Christ in the different dimensions of concrete reality. One of the essential features of his contemplative experience is the complete and open proclamation of contemplation amid the world, in its history, in the dignity of every human being, and suffering and pain.

**Not only have you learned more about the bishop, but you have also opened yourself to be inspired and motivated by his life and mission. How do you share this with others so that it is not lost? Do you see yourself as an essential channel for learning more about the bishop? Are there concrete steps, plans, and actions you are thinking about and willing to take?**

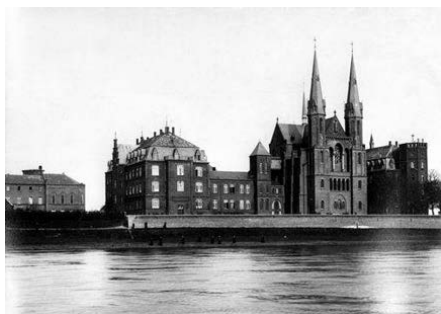
Of course, the life and work of Father Bishop Jorge Novak deserve to be known. I believe that thanks to my research at the Curia Generalizia and the Divine Word College in Rome, now almost everyone knows who Novak was. Also, in a way, he had returned to the Pontifical Gregorian University after 63 years when he defended his doctorate.

I would like to make the publication accessible to more people by taking advantage of my research. To this end, I am already in communication with Editorial Guadalupe in Buenos Aires. I want to present his life and ministry as a positive example for the ongoing formation of priests and missionaries, thus underlining the importance of identity and contemplation in our priestly and missionary ministry.

In January, God willing, I will return to my mission in Central America. I will probably work in the area of priestly spirituality. So, prayerfully, God will show me the way forward.

## The Founder’s dealing with the Roman Curia

### Part Two: Soliciting the Papal approval of the Rule (1899-1905)



Fr. Arnold presented the Rule (1899-1905) for Papal approval.



Fr. Andrzej Miotk SVD  
Generalate SVD Historian

The second article in the series focuses on Fr. Arnold’s relations to the Curia Romana regarding the Papal approval of the Rule (1899-1905). This period included dealing with two Prefects of the Propaganda Fide, Cardi-

nals Ledochowski, and Gotti, whereby the relation to the first was more complicated.

Cardinal Mieczyslaw Halka-Ledochowski, of Polish and Austrian descendants, came from the



noble Ledochowski family. The family endowed the Church with one Jesuit General, Wladimir Ledóchowski (1915-1942), and two foundresses of religious orders: St. Ursula and Bl. Maria Teresia. As a trained diplomat, Ledochowski was appointed the Archbishop of Gnesen-Posen. His opposition to Kulturkampf led to his imprisonment (1874-76), during which Pope Pius IX made him a cardinal (1875).

Card. Ledochowski was appointed as Prefect of Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (SCPF) from 1892 until 1902. Pope Leo XIII appreciated him for his administrative skills, wise zeal, and practical sense. Despite difficulties in relating to Fr. Arnold, Card. Ledochowski held the Founder in esteem. After reading the Founder's report, the Prefect assured him: "If you continue with your zeal to promote such a state, then there is no doubt you will be adding a mighty aid to the Catholic missions" (December 1892). Accordingly, the Prefect proposed the mission in German Papua Guinea in 1895.

But after the III SVD General Chapter of 1897-1898, there followed long and difficult negotiations regarding the new SVD Rule, presented by Fr. Arnold for Papal approval. At that time, Ledochowski's disposition towards the Society was already negatively influenced by the case of Arnold Janssen's brother, John, asking for papal permission to present the Holy Spirit in human form. It was further complicated by the Founder's confrontation with the authoritarian leadership and other excesses of bishop Anzer. Consequently, Fr. Arnold admitted that his brother ruined things with Cardinal Ledochowski. Moreover, the Cardinal believed that Arnold was encroaching upon the rights of the Vicar Apostolic Anzer, while the contrary was the case.

Although Fr. Arnold showed the proper respect and obedience towards the Roman authorities, he was quite open. When necessary, he gave his view clear. For example, in a letter to Fr. Blume on April 18, 1899, he wrote: "Gotti, Jacobini and Vanutelli are particularly prominent among the candidates for papal election; all three are excellent people. Jacobini is asked a lot for advice by the minutantes (officials) of Propaganda Fide; on the other hand, he is very cautious about Ledochowski and Ciasca. The latter is generally seen in Rome as a learned and an abrupt man and not very lovable, to whom no one goes and does not necessarily have to".

Ledochowski's disposal towards the Society seems to explain the General Chapter's decision to present our Rule for the approval to the Congregation for Religious and Bishops. But Fr. Arnold proposed, in case of difficulties, to consider submitting the Rule to the Propaganda Fide. On the advice of Msgr. Montel, the helpful and experienced Dean of the Sacred Roman Rota, presented the Rule to this Congregation. In 1899 the Founder noted, "Ledochowski gave me a warm wel-

come. The reception by Secretary Ciasca was rather odd. But both gentlemen showed much interest in the Society". Afterward, Fr. Arnold reported: "Last Sunday on May 5, 1899, he [Cardinal Ledochowski] was not exactly friendly, and neither was his private secretary Meschinsky. Indeed, Meschinsky was a great supporter of Bp. Anzer and was influenced by Ledochowski and Ciasca.

On May 29, 1899, Card. Ledochowski handed over the SVD Rule and the other documents to the Commission's President for the Scrutiny of Constitutions, Card. Camillo Mazzella. The Rule of 1898 presented for approval in Rome was rejected as too long, too ascetical, and too devotional. Despite the Founder's insistence to consider the Rule again, Card. Ledochowski understood that the Rule could not be approved, and he also denied its publication.

Card. Ledochowski defended Bp. Anzer claimed that the charges against him were unfounded. The Founder did not accept this statement unchallenged since the accusers were liars and slanderers. He was ready to present the charges according to facts. Fr. Arnold Janssen, in dealing with Propaganda, stated clearly his viewpoint: "We (...) comply with the wishes of the Holy See and Your Eminence with all due respect, provided the welfare of our Society, and its missionaries do not counsel otherwise (...). We are not looking for ecclesiastical honors".

In 1902 Ledochowski died and was succeeded by a long-standing consultant of SCPF, Girolamo Maria Gotti, OCD. Card. Gotti became the Prefect of SCPF (1902-1916). He rendered outstanding services to the Catholic missions through his untiring and wise work. Gotti was profoundly pious and learned Carmelite. He came from a low-income family in Genoa. He was the primary opponent of Card. Rampolla, at the conclave of 1903, eventually elected Pius X. It was said that except Ledochowski, Gotti was very favorably disposed to our Society and had always spoken in our favor. Bishop Fischer of Cologne ensured the Founder his good disposition towards SVDs as he knew Steyl from its beginning. The Founder once said, "He is for us. Instead, Card. Gotti characterized Fr. Arnold as anima Candida (candid/pure soul). The latter "worked hard in the vineyard of the Lord and is surely in heaven" (Remembering AJ, 367).

Concerning the approval of our Rule, Card. Gotti insisted on shortening its ascetical and dogmatic statements. Overall, it took six years when Pius X approved the drastically revised Rule on May 2, 1905. Despite that, as the Founder read it, he was deeply disappointed. For the Founder, it was like plunging a sword in his heart. Arnold decided immediately to go to Rome and personally requested a revision of the parts of the Rule in question.

The Founder found there only a cold and frosty reception from Card. Gotti on May 25, 1905. He reported: "From his rather disturbing behavior both when I came in, and throughout the whole audience, I had the impression that he had gotten some unfavorable letters about me, influenced, possibly, by the complaints from Vienna. Mainly, his own confrere Fr. Koesters, via nuncio in Vienna, Granito di Belmonte, accused the Founder of accumulation of offices and autocratic style of government (Alt, *Journey in Faith*, 763). Blum commented: "Fr. Superior General told me today he had been deeply hurt by the cold and frosty manner of Cardinal Gotti ... and the icy manner of Nuncio Belmonte in Vienna in May 1906."

Then, Arnold Janssen decided to appeal directly to the Pope by writing a draft letter and asking Card. Gotti to review it to see if he should forward it or not. (Alt, *SVD in Rome*, 301-302). The meeting with Pius X on June 5, 1905, was a source of great encouragement in the tiresome discussions. The Constitution was approved. "My final audience with Cardinal Gotti made me very happy. He received me warmly and took his leave in the same manner. [...] I asked both him and soon afterward the Secretary Mgr. [Luigi] Veccia, whether they had any admonitions to give. Both replied in the negative." He accepted this expression of gratitude with a smile and a knowing nod of his head ... He had received me very kindly, and we parted with affection and mutual love ... He walked with me through a series of rooms. I begged him to bless the Society and me and then, ex-

pressing my thanks. I left" (July 6, 1905).

Thus, Fr. Arnold won a decisive victory. The nuncio commented on the Pope's decision: "The Holy Father, Pius X, has said that he would not oppose a saint and Father Arnold Janssen is a saint." Finally, as conveyed by Fr. Friedrich, "the Propaganda gave its confidence to the Founder. His Eminence spoke with genuine esteem of the Missionary Institute of Steyl, which Father Janssen had founded. The Cardinal asked me to convey his sincere greetings to the Superior General and to thank him for all the sacrifices he had made in the interests of missionary work. Then His Eminence gave me a pearl rosary on a silver chain as a token of his goodwill and confidence." (Fr. Friedrich, *Remembering AJ*, 296).

The Founder's tiresome negotiations in Rome reveal his inner motivations and spirit in the steadfast pursuit of consolidation of the foundation in a humble, noble, and transparent way. Finally, since 1888, he could find accommodation and respite in his College in Rome. The Founder left this entry in the guest book (p. 334), of the Collegio S. Maria dell'Anima. He wrote: "March 20, 1881, Arnold Janssen, Rector of the mission house in Steyl Laudate Dominum omnes gentes; laudate Eum omnes populi. Unfortunately, he mistakenly put the date March 20 instead of February 20, but "praise the Lord, all nations; praise him, all peoples" (Psalm 117:1) was his deepest desire and guiding spirit that helped him bear many hardships and sacrifices for the Society he founded.

## AFRAM NEWS

### Togo-Benin Province

## SVD Week with a focus on stewardship



*Our confreres joining the SVD Week.*



*Participants from parish communities.*

For the past four years, the Togo-Benin Province has been organizing a whole week of activities to celebrate Saint Arnold Janssen and the missionary work in Togo-Benin and the rest of the world. Entitled "The SVD's Week," this yearly event in all the parish communities of the province took place from January 9-15, 2022. The event involved the participation of all the coordinators of the SVD characteristic dimensions. It became an opportunity for vocation promotion, mission animation, bible sharing, and awareness on the various issues related to JPIC, among others.

This year's celebration was around the theme: "We cannot be silent about what we have seen and heard" (Ac 4, 20). It is a call to become a witness of the living God as Saint Arnold Janssen did by founding missionary congregations and sending missionaries to evangelize Togo-Benin. The missionary mandate is not the sole responsibility of the SVD but also that of the lay faithful. They can become partners of the SVD in the mission.

In this mission journey, everybody can contribute. Therefore, we focused on the stewardship of the lay

partners in the mission of the SVD worldwide and how we can be part of it in this part of the world. It is good to note that we currently have two lay partner groups: the Friends of the SVD and The Associates of the SVD.

As the word became flesh to free us from the slavery of all kinds, this year's celebration also focused on the youth. They are the future of the Church by giving them the needed tools to come out of poverty and thus contribute fully to the development of the Church. So, the SVD decided, together with some experts in the field

### Kenya-Tanzania Province (KEN):

#### A historical week of firsts



Fr. Pamphil Colman Kibee Sambaya SVD was ordained to the priesthood.

On January 13, 2021, the Divine Word Missionaries, Kenya – Tanzania Province, made history. Twenty-one years after establishing the first mission in Tanzania. Fr. Pamphil Colman Kibee Sambaya, SVD, born in Leto village, Userri-Rombo in the Diocese of Moshi Kilimanjaro Province, was ordained to the priesthood.

The ordination was presided by His Grace Isaac Amani, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Arusha. During the same ceremony, four diocesan deacons were ordained. A two-day Provincial Assembly preceded the ordination at the archbishop's house in Arusha. Confreres working in Nairobi and Eldoret districts in Kenya traveled to join Arusha, Tanzania. On the first day of the Assembly, the confreres visited the site in Njiro, where the construction of Joseph Freinademetz Philosophy house is ongoing.

After the ordination, there was a Thanksgiving mass at Fr. Pamphil's home parish in Rombo. Later that evening, six young men were admitted in Postulancy. Frt. Rex Andrew renewed his Vows in the SVD parish at Kwa Mrombo.

The activities culminated on January 14 with a meeting of the Provincial Council and the Parish Pastoral Council from the five parishes run by the SVD in the Diocese. This was to, first of all, thank the Parish Leaders for their tremendous support to the confreres working in their respective parishes. In addition, there were inputs for those in attendance: Spirituality of the congregation given by Fr. Lawrence Muthee SVD, Identity

of entrepreneurship, to accompany the youth who have some business projects till they fully realize them.

At the close of the event, an appeal for funds to support the SVD mission worldwide was made. Parishioners and people of goodwill participated in the celebration. They were so happy for all the work of the SVD in the province that one of them confessed: "the SVD has helped me deepen my faith."

--- Fr. Martin Kotchoffa, SVD

of the Congregation by Fr. Peddy Castelino SVD, and Support by the Parishes to the Confreres working provided by Fr. William Owire SVD.

It was a historical week full of many firsts: The first Provincial Assembly in Arusha District, the first SVD Tanzania Priest, and the first meeting between the Provincial Council and the Parish Pastoral Councils. We thank God for the success of all the events, which will remain a monument in the Arusha SVD district and the province.

--- KEN Website

### Congo Province (CNG):

#### Bishop Gaspard Mudiso SVD: Defined by his love of the Word of God



Bishop Gaspard Mudiso SVD.

Congolese Bishop emeritus Gaspard Mudiso SVD celebrated his 80th birthday last December 23, 2021. Bishop Mudiso's missionary journey is very much defined by his love of the Word of God. It is the source of his missionary enthusiasm. Marcus Fradrich wrote an article, and he pointed out that Mudiso's love of the Word of God awakened his spirit for the Divine Word Missionaries and shaped his work as a missionary.

Marcus writes:

In 1970, Gaspard Mudiso and his confreres Dieter Skweres and Werner Bach founded the Bible Center "Centre d'Apostolat Biblique, which still exists today. Together, they tried to bring people closer to the Bible. For example, they produced a brochure called 'Ta parole, ma lumière,' taken from the Bible verse 'Your word, my light' (Psalm 118).

Gaspard Mudiso has been, among other things, an exegesis lecturer in Kinshasa, a member of the provincial council in Congo, and one of the General Councilors. On December 13, 1997, he was appointed coadjutor Bishop of Kenge. On June 1, 1999, he succeeded the Bishop of Kenge.

In 2008, as president of the Commission for the Biblical Apostolate, Mudiso promulgated the September Bible Month in the Church of Congo. As a result, all over the country, small groups met once or twice a week and read the Bible. After the reading, they talked



and shared what they had read. There is also a Bible quiz in which there is a symbolic prize to be won in many places.

Mudiso says, "It's incredible what richness there is in the Scriptures." Even in his old age, the "Book of Books" fascinates Mudiso anew every day. "Anyone who says he has the Bible is not telling the truth," says Mudiso. "I read it every day. Just recently, I was systematically reading through the Gospel of Mark again. I have already published a lot about it earlier, and yet I have discovered something new again. It is unbelievable what a Scripture contains."

What his confreres appreciate about Mudiso is that, even as a Bishop, he has remained a simple and unpretentious religious. At the same time, he remains a "figurehead" for the biblical work of the Province of Congo (CNG). Undoubtedly, he is a passionate advocate for his Church in Africa.

--- Marcus Fradrich

### Accra (GHA):

## Blessing and Commissioning of the Arnold Janssen Spirituality Center



*The newly blessed Arnold Janssen Spirituality Center.*

The Arnold Janssen Spirituality Center (AJSC) in Accra- Ghana, has opened a new chapter in its history by constructing a 48-bedroom self-contained residential facility with offices and a chapel. The Apostolic Nuncio blessed the building to Ghana, Most Rev. Henryk Jagodzinski, and commissioned by the SVD Provincial Superior, Fr. Cyprian Kuupol, SVD. The event took place on January 15, 2022, during the feast day celebration of St. Arnold Janssen.

Present at the ceremony were Most Rev. John Bonaventure Kwofie, CSSp the Metropolitan Archbishop of Accra, Most Rev. Emmanuel Fianu, SVD, bishop of Ho diocese, Most Rev. Gabriel Edoe Kumordji, SVD, bishop of Keta-Akatsi diocese, as well as SVD confreres, SSpS sisters and lay partners.

In recounting the story of the AJSC, the director of the Center, Fr. Andrews Obeng SVD, said, "The AJSC we see today is a visible expression of the faith, hope,

and love of the people of God. Indeed, many hands and hearts have touched this Center, and interesting experiences have been made." The construction of the Center was made possible by the immense support of institutions and individuals from within and outside the province.

The Arnold Janssen Spirituality Center is a facility owned and administered by the Divine Word Missionaries – Ghana Province. The Center exists to promote Spirituality and Interculturality. It has an international outlook and has been strategically structured to serve AFRAM and the SVD worldwide spirituality and Interculturality activities.

The Center offers a serene and eco-friendly environment. Some of the services offered at the Center include spiritual direction, retreat, training programs, workshops, counseling, clinical psychology, and psychotherapy. The Center is also open for pastoral care.

A one-month residential international training program for retreat directors commenced immediately after the blessing and commissioning ceremony. Eighteen priests, religious and lay partners are participating in this course.

--- The AJSC Team  
(Ghana Province)

### Kenya-Tanzania Province (KEN):

## Bro. Karl Schaarschmidt SVD: We live in a difficult time, but we do not give up hope



*Brother Karl with John Cardinal Njue, Archbishop of Nairobi.*

Bro. Karl Schaarschmidt SVD, our German confrere, working in Kenya-Tanzania Province, traditionally sends his Christmas greetings to relatives and friends. He also uses this medium to give them an update on his missionary activities and projects. Here is an excerpt of what he shared.

A year has passed again: It has brought many not only joy but also much suffering and pain due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, it also hit me, and I was in the hospital for four weeks. However, I survived it without after-effects and continued working as before.

We take care of about 100 sponsorships with German sponsor parents. Unfortunately, I have to do all the correspondence myself because of the language. Another group, children and family help, is integrated with our office and supported by the initiative of a Kenyan woman in Germany.

We try to give all our sponsored children good school education. But unfortunately, the schools were closed for a long time due to the pandemic. The Ministry of Education is now trying to make up for a lost time by including three shortened school years in two years. This, of course, causes hardship for many. Many students and parents are stressed. Vacations are being shortened, and children do not have enough time to rest and relax. Out of stress, students have already set fire to 16 schools. Parents, too, are finding it difficult to afford the closely spaced school fees.

The government has increased VAT, gasoline and diesel have become more expensive, and as a result, the cost of living in Kenya has increased. Due to the aftermath of the coronavirus, many have lost their jobs, and low-income families can barely make a living and find themselves in dire straits. I receive up to 50 calls for help daily and requests for help with hospital bills, hunger, house rent, school fees, and emergencies.



*Brother Karl in one of the projects.*

As a religious community, we are always needing new missionaries to carry the mission forward into the future. For many years, Europe has sent missionaries worldwide and to Africa. Now the wheel has turned, and African missionaries are going to Europe because of the lack of religious vocations there. Here in Africa, we are fortunate that many young people still choose a religious vocation, and we need to expand our training places. The Divine Word Missionaries are building a new formation seminary in Tanzania.

Here in Kenya, we also feel the effects of climate change very strongly. In the west of the country, there were heavy downpours, floods, and landslides. Here in the east, there was drought. In the district of our first mission Garba Tulla, all the way up to Ethiopia, many goats, sheep, cattle, and camels are dying because of lack of water and no grass. Giraffes and other wild animals are also affected and dying. Thank God we had rain this week and hope to get more rain now in the short rainy season, from October to December. Otherwise, it does not look good for the growth of corn and beans, and many will starve.

We live in a difficult time, but we do not give up hope, even with the many limitations.

--- Bro. Karl Schaarschmidt SVD

## ASPAC NEWS

### Philippines-Southern Province

## SVD-Task Force's outreach to those affected by typhoon



*Distributing relief to those affected.*

Last December 16, 2021, Typhoon RAI (Odette) hit the southern parts of Mindanao (especially Surigao), then Leyte, Bohol, and the whole south of Cebu Island, including Cebu City. The government has declared a state of emergency for these areas. Our community houses in Cebu and Bohol are partially damaged.

Fr. Roger Bagao, SVD, the PHS Provincial Superior, reported that all our confreres are safe. All are busy



*SVD-PHS Task Force Odette with Fr. Bagao SVD.*

with the operation cleanup and helping their neighbors' mission partners and collaborators who lost their houses and damaged properties. The homes of the families of our confreres in Surigao, Bohol, and Cebu were also destroyed. Some of them were only partially damaged, but some collapsed.

Days following the onslaught of the typhoon, people no longer had access to clean drinking water. So, the SVDs and collaborators put up the WE FILL Wa-



ter station, providing fresh potable water. In addition, food packages were distributed as part of the "Food for Work" program as immediate aid. People then are lured into helping with the extensive cleanup work.

The material damage is enormous. According to Fr. Heinz Kulüke SVD, all our project areas in Cebu and other islands are severely affected. The huts on the garbage mountains (Cebu, Talisay, Mandaue, Mactan) are, to a large extent, destroyed. The same applies to the shacks in other slums and the fishing and small farming villages.

SVD-PHS Task Force Odette is the coordinating unit of the SVD Southern Province and its collaborating institutions - the University of San Carlos and DYRF Station. They provide relief items to the most affected areas of Typhoon Odette. The task force has groups operating in Bohol, Surigao, Samar, and Dumaguete for the relief operations.

They distributed rice and cans of sardines to the more or less 900 devastated families in three interior barangays of Argao, Cebu. Fr. Roger Bag-ao, SVD,

headed the distribution of relief goods. On January 7, 2022, the SVD-PHS Task Force Odette had their relief operation at the Santo Tomas de Villanueva Parish of Matutinao, Badian.

The SVD PHS Task Force distributed relief goods to 667 families in Candaguit, Sibonga. At least 6,670 kilos of rice were given to the beneficiaries. This initiative was in collaboration with the local government unit. Seven hundred fifty families of three barangays in Argao also received relief goods in partnership with the Sto. Tomas de Villanueva Parish in Talaga, Argao. The beneficiaries received at least 7,500 kilos of rice and at least 3,750 cans of sardines. The relief drive was participated by six SVDs, nine USC employees, a Senior High School student, and two DYRF staff.

The Superior General is asking for our prayers and solidarity for those affected by the typhoon and our confreres, working tirelessly to bring relief and hope to those who most need them.

--- Reports from PHS Province and  
Fr. Heinz Kulüke SVD

#### Ambassa (ING):

#### Oiso Bani Society distributed blankets

On December 19, 2021, the Oisho Bani Society (OBS) of Ambassa, a registered NGO of SVD in collaboration with the Catholic Church, Ambassa, distributed blankets, bedsheets, and shawls to one hundred poor people in the winter season. The governing board members of the registered Society bought these items in the wholesale market in Agartala. However, the winter this year had started earlier than other years. Therefore, the NGO foresaw that those poor people would not purchase these blankets because of the cash crunch.

A list of beneficiaries was provided by the leaders of the villages of Dumjakhrai para and Tangboul para. In these two villages, the OBS society leaders distributed the blankets. Fr. Ivan D'Silva SVD, the treasurer of the Society and the parish priest, addressed the beneficiaries about cleanliness and hygiene. He said, "As the new variant Omicron is fast spreading, all have to be cautious about masks and sanitization to protect you." The leaders of the villages thanked the OBS Society for reaching out to them.

--- Fr. Ivan D'Silva SVD

#### Indonesia-Ruteng Province (IDR):

#### Lay partners' recollection and visit to an orphanage

The Mission Secretary of Ruteng Province (IDR), Fr. Vitalis Hiburdin SVD, organized a recollection for our lay partners with the family of our missionaries from Manggarai. The Advent Recollection



was held in SVD Ruteng central house on December 11, 2021. Fr. Paulus Tolo, SVD, the IDR Provincial, preached with the theme: At the side of Jordan River—a new SVD Mission. He reminded our lay partners to join the Mission Secretary in supporting the SVD mission through fundraising. The lay partners are called to live the spirituality of the Founder.

Responding to the program to visit the orphanage house, around thirty lay partners, on December 18, visited the Wae Pecah Orphanage house. A mass was celebrated by Fr. Hidurbin, followed by a Christmas party. The kids in the orphanage presented some dances and songs. Currently, 42 kids in the orphanage come from different places and family backgrounds. At the end of the Christmas party, we distributed rice, noodles, bath soap, toothpaste, clothes, powdered soap, and money as our Christmas gifts.

Wae Pecah Orphanage was established by the late Fr. Kale Bale, SVD. The late Fr. Gudi Hilarius, SVD, continued the orphanage, and now Fr. Modho Yakobus, SVD, is the director. According to Fr. Modho, the main problem of the orphanage are those grown-ups who have completed high school. Some of them, unable to find jobs, return to the orphanage and live with other kids.

--- Fr. Vitalis Hiburdin SVD



**Mangaon (INM):****Sarva Vikas Deep received an award**

Glad to share the good news from Mangaon Mission, how our face value has increased, and our presence is making a difference in people's lives. On the platinum jubilee of India's Independence and the birth centenary of the tribal leader, Birsa Munda, Sarva Vikas Deep was awarded 'Janjati Gaurav Saptah Puraskar' as one of the best organizations in empowering the tribals in Raigad, Maharashtra.

The award was given away by Raigad Collector Dr. Mahendra IAS, in the presence of the Chief Executive Officer of Raigad Zilla Parishad and other officials and NGOs. We look forward to actualizing the Kingdom of God and continuing to do good for the well-being of others through our missionary endeavors.

--- INM Newsletter

**Pune (INM):****Ishvani Kendra organizes formation course**

Sixteen sisters and four priests belonging to 13 religious congregations and a diocese participated in the Formators Course organized by Ishvani Kendra from November 21 until December 18, 2021. It was a time of grace and empowerment for the formators as they learned and reflected together with the resource persons

Some of the topics presented by an array of speakers were problems and pathways, intercultural awareness, integral transformation, personality assessment, spiritual direction, discernment, disciplining the formandi for a mission, the challenges of the digital era, new evangelization, etc. They also worked together in groups to develop a vision of formation in the light of the inputs. It was also a time when all of them felt at home and refreshed in the calm atmosphere of Ishvani Kendra.

--- INM Newsletter

**Dagupan City (PHN):****Installation of Altar Servers at St. Therese Parish**

*The solemn and joyous installation of the altar servers.*

On December 5, 2021, the parish of St. Therese, Dagupan City, welcomed forty-two newly commissioned Altar Servers. The event was held at the 8:00 AM Mass presided by the Parish Priest, Fr. Pablo G.

Garay Jr., SVD. The solemn and joyous installation of the altar servers was witnessed by their proud parents, guardians, and parishioners. In addition, the necessary protocols and social distancing to keep everyone safe was observed.

After the sermon, the investiture took place. The to-be-Altar Servers pronounced their vows and promises. In unison, the altar servers recited, "...Our presence signifies that we desire to commit ourselves to serve Jesus at the Eucharistic Table, in serving the community through the Holy Catholic Church, and by living out our baptismal promises through good examples to our fellow men,"

After a few months of preparation during the pandemic, everyone has been waiting for this moment. Before they were commissioned, they had undergone training and practices under Fr. Thomas Aquino N. Wele, SVD. The altar servers underwent catechism and formation. A new faith was instilled in them as they served the Church as they were installed. Congratulation, and may they fulfill their mission in the loving service of God. --- Fr. Thom Wele SVD and the youth

**India East Province (INE):****The twin events of the final profession and diaconate ordination**

*The newly ordained deacons.*

Last January 2, 2022, the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, Frt. Rajesh Nandeti SVD, Frt. Pradeep Mohata SVD, and Frt. Shann Joseph Fernandes SVD professed their final commitment to the Lord to live chastity, poverty, and obedience for life. Rev. Fr. Petrus Kullu SVD, the Provincial Superior, was the principal celebrant. In his homily, he emphasized the importance of a God experience, which will help us walk towards an unknown journey like the three wise men.

On January 3, 2022, Most Rev. John Barwa, SVD, the archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, ordained these three fratres as Deacons and appreciated them for cooperating with the plan of God and setting apart their life for the mission of God during these difficult times.

The twin events were celebrated at Divya Jyoti Seminary, Sason, with vigor and enthusiasm. The presence of the SVD confreres, priests, and religious from the vicinity, the parents and relatives of the candidates, the faithful, benefactors, and well-wishers from Sambalpur Parish was a source of blessing and joy. *INE Newsletter*

**Indonesia Java Province (IDJ):****“Be specific, don’t just be generic”  
-call to self-reliance**

“Be specific, don’t just be generic,” said Dr. Chybrilus Harinowo in his presentation on financial self-reliance as a Church/Congregation. The topic was given during the “ongoing formation U-10” and “Re-entry” programs. The formation event was held on November 24-25, 2021. The speaker is a renowned economist in Indonesia. He acknowledged that the Covid-19 has tremendously hit all parts of our lives. The Church/Congregation has no exception.

Even the Church/Congregation has to dig deep into available resources and, to some extent, sacrifice them to prioritize the sustainability of the mission endeavor. It will take some time to recover; however, financial self-reliance becomes a must! He outlined some strategic steps to achieve such a state. First, being a priest/religious is an extraordinary grace that should be lived to the fullest. We should make ourselves approachable so that the people would always support us. People are still generous.

Second, we must develop a competitive advantage. There are many available resources to reveal our inner competencies so that we have more bargaining value. Fourth, be specific in our service! Third, a bank account should be implemented because most people use the e-banking system without carrying much cash. Fourth, we must strengthen lay groups as part of our mission support system and cultivate a partnership with them!

--- Fr. A. Eko Julianoro SVD  
Mission Secretary

**Ledalero (IDE):****Celebrating the Feast of St. Arnold Janssen**

Fr. Ferdinandus Sebho SVD presided over the Eucharist on the Feast of St. Arnold Janssen in Ledalero. The community of St. Paul Major Seminary was in attendance. In his sermon, Fr. Fredy emphasized that St. Arnold Janssen is a figure of faith and an inspiration to many people. “Arnold Janssen was not only a

genius; he was also a figure of faith. Arnold Janssen is not a great orator and yet speaks convincingly. He is a man a great prayer,” said Father Fredy.

The sons and daughters of Arnoldus carry out three things. “First, glorify God through every word and deed Second, observe the vows; and Third, willing to suffer for the happiness of many people.”

At the end of his sermon, Fr. Fredy emphasized the urgency of every member of the Society to gain spiritual strength and holiness from St. Arnold Janssen and his attachment to the Word. During this mass, 39 candidates who had just returned from the Pastoral Orientation Year and OTP (Overseas Training Program) were officially accepted to start the Novitiate.

--- Frt. Kris Ibu SVD

**Indonesia Java Province****The birth of “Paguyuban Soverdia”**

Lay partner group in Meliau Parish.

The feast of St. Arnold Janssen on January 15, 2022, witnessed the birth of “Paguyuban Soverdia,” our lay partner group, in some parishes. Beginning with the Meliau Parish, the group’s inauguration was followed by the Jeruju Parish of West Kalimantan District. Meanwhile, under the guidance of Fr. Agustinus Murtika SVD, the Praeses of Domus Arnoldus Batu, Soverdia was officially inaugurated in the ceremony of the Formation House Community.

It is truly a tremendous blessing for us to see the enthusiasm of our confreres and the lay people to be involved in our mission. The hard work of our confreres to reach, gather, motivate and develop the laypeople is commendable. Our confreres and their lay partners have guided the groups through seminars, recollection, and short retreats to live the spirituality of the Founding generation a. We hope that our new lay partners will increasingly discover the uniqueness of their existence as partners of the Arnoldus family in God’s mission. Congratulations!

--- Fr. A. Eko Julianoro SVD  
Mission Secretary



Chiayi (SIN):

## Celebrating the 100th birthday of Fr. Joseph Liu Wei-he SVD



Fr. Joseph Liu Wei-he SVD.

On November 11, 2021, in Chiayi Mission House, Taiwan, the Provincial Superior of the China Province, Fr. John Chang Ri-Liang SVD, led a select community and friends to celebrate the 100th birthday of our beloved confrere Fr. Joseph Liu Wei-he. Fr. Liu was in fine form for the day and concelebrated the eucharist alongside the Provincial.

Fr. Liu not only gave a short talk thanking everyone but also performed his “greatest hit,” a song he composed in honor of St. Joseph Freinademetz, expressing the missionary spirit of the life of our confrere and saint in China, who ministered in Fr. Liu’s home village and baptized his grandfather and other family members.

In his homily, the Provincial gave a brief overview of the life of Fr. Liu. He began in his home village of Wawuhe in Shandong in China, then to the Philippines, and finally to Taiwan. He served in several parishes in Taiwan until he finally retired to the Chiayi Mission House, working daily in the garden until his 90’s. Fr. Provincial also outlined the unique charisms of Fr. Liu, his commitment to an orderly life, his love of the history of the SVD, and his extraordinary memory for people, places, and events; indeed, a living archive. His ability to connect with people was evidenced by the lasting bonds of friendship he formed in the parishes he worked.

Following the Eucharist, Fr. Liu ceremoniously cut the first slice of his three-tier birthday cake. Friends and confreres joined him. After blowing out the candles with an enthusiasm that belied his age. In keeping with Chinese custom, all present lined up to offer personal congratulations to Fr. Liu. Finally, the gathering turned their attention to the celebratory buffet provided by the community while toasting long life and good health to Fr. Liu.

--- SIN Newsletter

Victoria (AUS):

## Ordination of five SVDs

Five young Divine Word Missionaries have been ordained to the priesthood. If international borders remain open, they will soon leave for their mis-



sionary assignments in countries across the globe. Duc Le from Vietnam, Edward Teye from Ghana, Hai Nguyen from Vietnam, and Francois Andrianihantana and Marius Razafimandimby, both from Madagascar, were ordained on Saturday, November 27, by Bishop Terence Curtin, Auxiliary Bishop of Melbourne, at the Our Lady of La Vang Shrine in Keysborough, Victoria.

The ordination ceremony showcased the multiculturalism for which the SVD is known, with a choir comprised of the Vietnamese community and friends of the SVD. In addition, the offertory was presented by members of the Tongan community, and the Gospel was presented and enthroned by members of the Ghanaian community.

The newly ordained then spoke thanksgiving in their language to those present and those participating from their home countries. Fr. Francois then thanked those who had been part of their journey to priesthood, punctuated by an enthusiastic round of African drumming from Edward. Finally, he thanked Bishop Curtin, the Arnoldus family worldwide, including Provincial, Fr. Asaeli Rass SVD, their formators, and all SVD members of the AUS Province.

The young missionaries will take up their assignments as international borders reopen. They have been assigned to Edward - Zimbabwe Region; Hai - Colombia; Francois - Australia; Marius - Netherlands-Belgium; Duc - USA Chicago Province (Canada).

--- AUS Website

India Central Province (INC):

## Live in Seminar: For better Community living and communion with God

At St. Arnold's Seva Sadan Indore, the India Central Province (INC) organized a seminar in two groups on January 17-19 and 21-23, 2022. The first group consists of the confreres those above 55 years, and the second group was the below 55 years. Fr. MC Abraham CSC, a well-known psychologist in India, both groups were animated.



The Provincial Chapter 2021 recommended a live seminar for fostering a better relationship among the different age groups. Keeping in the recommendation, the Provincial administration organized six days of Live in Seminar in two groups. This seminar aims to personal, Mental, psychological enhancement for better community living.

MC Abraham, the animator, led the group in looking for new possibilities for happy Community living. We need to move beyond the conventional boundaries and see ourselves expand our horizons. This seminar helped the confreres go beyond the personal, ethnic, linguistic, conceptual boundaries and realize oneself where he is and move to the higher level of consciousness.

--- Fr. Anthony Swamy SVD

Communication Coordinator, India Sub-Zone

### Bhopal (INC):

#### Celebrating the Word of God Sunday

The Word of God Sunday was celebrated in Divya Vani-Center for Biblical Pastoral Ministry in Bhopal (on January 23, 2022, together with the Universal Church. Fr. Arockiasamy Savarirayan SVD, the director of Divya Vani and Biblical Coordinator of INC, conducted three sessions for the youth of St. Anthony's Church Dwarka Nagar in the Archdiocese of Bhopal.

The first session was a training on how to enthrone



Fr. Rayan with the youth of St. Anthony.

the Holy Bible in every family and fall in love with the Word of God and, above all, make the Sacred Scriptures one's life companion. The second session dealt with three Biblical personalities: the Rich Fool (Luke 12:16-21), the healing of the woman with the hemorrhage (Mark 5:25-34), and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32).

Fr. Rayan tried to reach out to the youth that their thinking today will shape their future tomorrow. The third session was a systematic presentation of the Synod on the Synodality and the role of youth in the Church of today. The seminar was aptly concluded with the Holy Mass with an exhortation to make the Word of God the Centre of one's life and a companion in one's life pilgrimage.

--- Fr. Anthony Swamy SVD

Communication Coordinator, India Sub-Zone

### EUROPA NEWS

#### Kleosin (POL):

## The SVD presence in Kleosin: Our name is our mission



The Mission House in Kleosin.

*Komunikaty SVD, the Mission Animation Magazine of POL, traces the presence of the SVD in Kleosin belonging to the Archdiocese of Białystok. The contribution of the SVD ranges from parish work, mission animation, preaching retreats, among others. In addition, involvement in the Family Welfare Association DROGA is essential. In Kleosin, our name is our mission.*

The history of the Society of the Divine Word in the Archdiocese of Białystok began in June 1957. It was when Father Stefan Tarasiuk SVD came to Białystok. He was born in Tryczówka, Rzepniki in the region of Białystok.



SVDs celebrating mass at the chapel of Mission House.

After many difficulties, St. Casimir's Mission House in Kleosin was built between 1983-1988 by Father Jerzy Sergel SVD. In 1989-1991 the house became the SVD postulancy. After moving the postulancy to Górna Grupa, the facility in Kleosin began to function as a missionary retreat house.

In 2002 Archbishop Wojciech Ziemba, the Metropolitan of Białystok offered to the SVD the newly established parish of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in Kleosin. Father Janusz Walerowski SVD became the first administrator (from August 2002) and then the first parish priest (October 2002). After his sudden death on

January 6, 2013, Fr. Franciszek Martyna SVD assumed the pastor's office and continues to serve to this day.

In the parish of St. Therese of the Child Jesus in Kleosin, the SVDs run a typical parish ministry. One confrere is engaged in family ministry and marriage counseling. Three confreres are involved in the Family Welfare Association DROGA, where they are engaged in therapeutic work with addicts. They also work with families burdened by violence and addictions. They help the poor and those on the margins of society and support children from low-income families.

Fr Andrzej Zalewski SVD leads the pastoral care for religious and national minorities. He has been appointed administrator of the Holy Trinity Greek Catholic Parish in Białystok. In addition, several confreres are involved in the pastoral care of the sacrament of reconciliation and the spiritual direction of lay people, priests, and nuns from various congregations.

The SVDs are also involved in retreat ministry. They offer permanent and periodic retreats and recollections

for parishes, religious congregations, church movements, and retreats for priests of the Archdiocese of Białystok.

On an ad hoc basis, the missionaries support diocesan parishes with personnel problems. They regularly engage in caring for and leading lay groups, including Friends of the Mission, Vineyard, Group of St. Pio, Neocatechumenate, Oasis, Domestic Church, and Youth Volunteers in the DROGA Association. The premises of the Mission House are regularly made available to AA and Al-Anon groups.

Missionary animation in its broadest sense is one of the critical elements of the Mission House in Kleosin. In addition, the SVD publishes books about evangelization and mission two to three times a year. For several years, a Missionary Calendar has been published. For the last two years, it had a circulation of 70 thousand.

--- *Komunikaty SVD*

### Roma Ostiense (ITA):

#### The parish celebrates the figure of Saint Arnold Janssen



Monsignor Michael August Blume, SVD with Frs. Vivian and Juraj.

San Benedetto Parish in Roma Ostiense, administered by the Divine Word Missionaries of the Italian Province, celebrated the Feast of Saint Arnold Janssen solemnly. A Triduum Novena preceded the solemn event during the evening mass. SVD priests preached the main aspects of the Saint's life and spirituality.

On Saturday, January 15, during the evening Eucharistic Adoration "Light in the Night," the participants were able to meditate through some texts on the themes dear to the Founder, his devotions, and his charism.

The culmination of the festivities was the Solemn Eucharistic Celebration, held on Sunday, January 16, 2022, at 11:30 am. It was presided over by His Excellency Monsignor Michael August Blume, SVD, the Apostolic Nuncio in Hungary, with other SVDs celebrating.

In his homily, the archbishop reflected on the Word of God and the figure of St. Arnold. His example reminds us that "placing ourselves before the Lord in adoration of the Eucharist purifies our intentions. It leads

us to greater freedom, purified from human tendencies that can lead us to our satisfaction and not to God. The saints know this fact well." The SVD Indians enriched the liturgy. They performed an evocative song during the offertory gifts. The Catechism children animated it.

After a little more than a year of Divine Word Missionaries' presence in San Benedetto, the parishioners are learning to know and appreciate more and more their missionary charism centered on the Divine Word. A parishioner describes such experience, "We sing together, we pray together, we enrich each other, and it is, and we give color to our community. Our cultural differences are rich. They are culture, an opportunity for growth. And all of us, with our histories, ages, origins, and different languages, all eat the same bread. We pray to the same Triune God to come and take up residence in our hearts." --- *Parrocchia San Benedetto website*

### Slovakia Province (SVK):

#### Fr. Tomáš Gerboc, SVD, Doctorate in Church history



Shortly before Christmas last year, Fr. Tomáš Gerboc, SVD, published his doctoral thesis, which he had defended at the Faculty of Theology of the Trnavská Univerzita in Trnava (Slovakia), on June 25, 2021. The doctoral thesis title is: "The Society of the Divine Word in Czechoslovakia during the communist regime of 1948-1968".

This period of the history



of the SVD in former Czechoslovakia was mainly preserved in the memoirs of our elderly confreres and the archives of the State secret police. Now, the witness of heroic faith of many of our confreres has come to light. Because of their fidelity to their missionary vocation, some of our confreres were persecuted, jailed, or sent to labor camps.

We congratulate Fr. Tomáš for this great work, which is in line with the saying: "Who does not value his past, has no right to a future." His doctoral dissertation helps us to understand our past better. It also inspires us to be faithful and creative in the proclamation of the Gospel in today's challenging times.--- Fr. Pavol Krutak SVD

### Hamburg (GER):

#### Moving on to another parish

On the 1st Sunday of Advent, Fr. Niko Koban SVD and Fr. Jacques Kamba SVD jointly took over the direction of St. Vicelin, a conglomeration of four former independent parishes, in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein in Northern Germany. The parish is located in a rural area that also attracts local tourism. Catholics are in the Diaspora, a small minority among predominantly Lutheran Protestants.

The center of the parish and the priests' residence is in the town of Eutin. Previously the two confreres lived in the SVD community in Hamburg and worked in Hamburg-South's rural area in the archdiocese of Hamburg. The new parish also belongs to the Hamburg diocese.

The significant task for the two priests will be to shape the four former independent parishes merged only a few years ago into a united and vibrant community. This is not unknown to them since they faced a similar situation at their previous place of work.

Their inauguration did not occur in the Catholic parish church in Eutin due to lack of space. Instead, it was held in the Protestant church of St. Michaelis. "We are here to support the local church," Fr. Kamba said. "The experience in a big city wasn't bad, but still it has always been my dream to one day also work in the rural area," he added.--- *Steyler Aktuell, December 2021*

### Prague, Czech Republic (SVK):

#### The grace from God has been coming even to the "smallest" of us

Before Christmas, the Christian Community of Indonesia in Prague, in cooperation with the Embassy of Indonesia, carried out a Christmas outreach program in some places in the Czech Republic. On December 12, 2021, the Indonesian community extended help to the homeless people in Prague. They distributed food and handed winter clothes. They also shared to the homeless bible verses written in cards.



*Recipients of this gesture of charity.*

On December 15, 2021, Fr. Karol Tefa SVD organized an outreach program in Kolin, about 70 km from Prague. The event took place in the Center for Charity and the Center for People with Special Needs. These two centers form part of our pastoral care and mission in the parish of St. Bartholomew, Kolin.

The Ambassador of Indonesia in Prague and a couple of diplomats joined the outreach event. Fr. Jan Halama, SVD, the parish priest of St. Bartholomew, was pleased and honestly grateful for their generosity, involvement, and their readiness to share and do this act of solidarity. Moreover, people are genuinely in need in this pandemic situation, and lending a hand is exceptional.

In addition, there was also some entertainment in the center for Charity. The people sang Christmas in the Czech language, English, and Bahasa Indonesia. The people in the Center for Charity and the Center for People with Special Needs in Kolin were grateful to those who visited them and shared the joy of Christmas. For instance, the Center for People with Special Needs people were so appreciative and touched by this philanthropic act. So many of them, for example, are abandoned or forgotten.

For those who were recipients of this gesture of charity and love, it is not just about what they received. It is about love and how to share love. John 1:16 states, "grace in place of grace that we have all received from his fullness" to the "smallest" of us.

--- Fr. Karol Tefa, SVD

### St. Gabriel, Austria (ECP):

#### Sermon Series

#### "In Dialogue with the Word of God"

The Divine Word Missionaries in St. Gabriel want to reach the people via social media and YouTube. The sermon series entitled "In Dialogue with the Word of God" was aired for the first time on January 23, 2022, with a sermon by Father Michael Kreuzer SVD on the Third Sunday, Cycle C. The date has been chosen deliberately: On this day, the Church also celebrated the "Sunday of the Word of God" introduced by Pope Francis.

The sermons are based on the Bible passages of Sundays and holidays. They will be available on the You-





Tube channel "Steyler Missionare St. Gabriel" as early as Friday or on the eve of a holiday. This will allow listeners to tune in to the celebration of the liturgy in advance. "The reading or Gospel to which we refer in each case will be read aloud in the original. It is important to us to bring the Word of God directly to people's ears," explains Father Franz Helm SVD.

The sermon videos supplement the spiritual impulses that the Steyl missionaries already offer on the Internet. On the website [www.steyler.at](http://www.steyler.at) those interested can find the "Bible Word" - reflections on Bible passages by Father Ralf Huning SVD. Under the title "The Suggestion," Father Karl Jansen SVD provides sermon impulses and liturgical building blocks for services and Mass celebrations every Sunday and feast day.

Making the Word of God accessible for life

In the first videos of the sermon series, Father Michael Kreuzer SVD, Father Franz Helm SVD, and Father Josef Denkmayr SVD have their say. Michael Kreuzer is a biblical scholar and Bible coordinator of the Central European Province of the Steyl Missionaries. He answers questions about the Bible in the Steyl monthly magazine "Leben Jetzt." Franz Helm, as a missiologist, brings in the aspects of the universal Church and likes to confront the significant challenges of today, such as the pandemic, climate change, and migration, with the message of the Bible.

Josef Denkmayr is currently parochial vicar in Wiener Neudorf. He is mainly concerned with translating the Word of God into people's everyday lives. "We want to expand the circle to include other confreres in the future and thus show the different approaches with which the Steyl missionaries open up the Word of God for life," emphasizes Father Helm.

[www.steyler.at](http://www.steyler.at) (Austria)

**Dueñas (ESP):**

### The arrival of the Bible Exposition

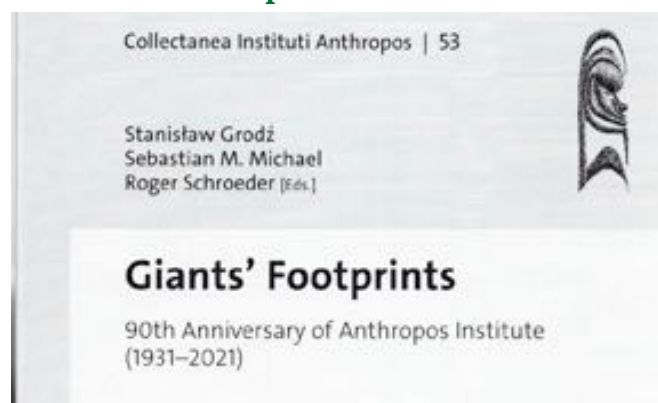
The community of Dueñas SVD had as a gift at the end of the year the arrival of the Bible Exhibit. In a leisurely tour, we can find many novelties, clues, biblical quotations, great questions, some answers, beautiful images, and more love to approach the God who speaks to us and listens to us. It is the great letter written to humanity, and to those of us who try to follow his plan, his kingdom here and now.

The aim of this exhibition is to offer the Bible to the men and women of today in a visual, simple and clear way, so that they may discover that God continues to speak with human words (cf. Dei Verbum 12) and that he waits for us to enter into his loving and liberating dialogue.

--- ESP Website

**St. Augustin (GER):**

### The Anthropos Tradition in focus



Anthropological research and formation belong to the important intellectual and missionary SVD heritage. Ninety years ago, the Anthropos Institute was established around the then already successful journal *Anthropos*.

On Friday, January 14, a volume dedicated to this history compiled by a fair dozen SVD researchers belonging to the Institute (<http://www.anthropos.eu>) together with several "external" anthropologists was launched by the publisher and the Institute. Interested friends of the Institute from Argentina, Uruguay, the USA, Germany and Switzerland to India and Japan tuned into the digital event. The editors presented the 360-page volume: Stanisław Grodź SVD, the Director of the Institute (GER), Sebastian M. Michael SVD (INM), and Roger Schroeder SVD, the Coordinator of AI International (USC).

The toast remained in the virtual, but the book is utterly real and underpins the typical SVD perspective on mission.

<http://www.anthropos.eu/anthropos/publications/collectanea/books/53-collectanea.php>

Stanisław Grodź, Sebastian M. Michael, Roger Schroeder (Eds.), *Giants' Footprints. 90th Anniversary of Anthropos Institute (1931-2021)*. *Collectanea Instituti Anthropos 53*, Baden-Baden: Academia Verlag 2021 (ISBN 9783985720149)

--- Christian Tauchner SVD

## PANAM NEWS

Mexico City (MEX):

## Celebrating Christmas with the Purhépecha artisans in the CDMX



The Purhépecha artisans are indigenous people from Michoacán, Mexico.

The Purhépecha artisans are indigenous people from the northwestern region of Michoacán, Mexico. They are mainly located in the area of Cherán and Pátzcuaro. They have migrated to Mexico City in search of better economic, educational, labor, and health opportunities. However, in their permanence in the city, they have not overcome poverty and social exclusion conditions.

Since 2020, the JPIC Team of MEX has provided scholarly attention to the children to favor their personal and social development. As a result, the children advance in achieving the competencies of each educational stage. Unfortunately, however, the project could not continue due to the adverse consequences of the



On December 24, a Eucharist was celebrated with the indigenous group.

COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the JPIC collaborators have contacted their partners to reactivate the projects. In addition, they made visits, distributed food, and completed surveys and project studies.

On December 24, a Eucharist was celebrated with the indigenous group participated in by the collaborators, lawyers, and teachers. After that, the adults received food baskets, and the children received Christmas gifts. The event was also the right platform to share their faith traditions. The JPIC Team also informed indigenous people about future educational, legal, and health projects.

--- Fr. John Kennedy SVD  
JPIC Coordinator

Panama City (CAM):

## A new parish for the pastoral care of the Chinese community in Panama.



The handover of the parish presided over by Monsignor José Domingo Ulloa, Archbishop of Panama.

The handover of the Parish of San Miguel Arcángel Calidonia, in Panama City, to the Divine Word Missionaries was carried out in a simple act in the middle of a Eucharist, presided by Monsignor José Domingo Ulloa, Archbishop of Panama. The event was held on December 22, 2021, with SVDs working in the

parishes of Panama together with the lay missionaries of the Divine Word.

At various points during the celebration, the archbishop thanked the congregation of the Divine Word Missionaries for having accepted this new mission. The archbishop also singled out the pastoral work the SVDs will be doing for the Chinese community in Panama.

The Parish of San Miguel in Calidonia is a historical heritage. The Parish started 135 years ago. The Church still retains the beautiful and old style of architecture. Inside the Church are religious paintings. Fr. Luis A. Vergara SVD and Fr. Antonio Li SVD will be in charge of this new mission. They will also attend the communities of Taboga and the Otoque Islands. In addition, there will be a unique ministry in the chapel of St. John Paul II located in Albroom Mall. This will be the pastoral care of the Chinese community living in Panama City.

--- Fr. Jesu David Selvasekar SVD  
Regional Superior



**Argentina East Province (ARE):****Irish Ambassador visits Homes of the Guillermo Hayes Foundation**

The Ambassador of Ireland, Jacqueline O'Halloran, who arrived in Misiones with the entourage of European diplomats, visited the Homes of the Guillermo Hayes Foundation on December 1. The Ambassador shared that Fr. Hayes always had a lot of contact with the embassy and our support program, cooperation from Ireland. The relationship between the Foundation and Ireland has existed since the beginning of the work of Fr. Hayes.

For the Ambassador, the relationship between the institutions is substantial. "But we are eager to listen to the needs and see how we can continue to help. The Irish government has projects for this type of initiative. There are many fronts in the world with people like Father Guillermo. He came and saw the need to create a Home for disabled people, so we have programs to assist foundations that have these ties", she said.

The Ambassador was accompanied by members of the Board of Directors of the Homes of the Guillermo Hayes Foundation and the Provincial Superior of ARE, Fr. Héctor Maldonado. They toured the three Homes and the Bible Garden, where they visited the tomb of Father Guillermo. (Source: Meridiano 55)

**Rahue Alto Norte (CHI):****Dedication of the Church of the Holy Spirit**

After 14 years of work and effort, the parish community dedicated to the Holy Spirit in Rahue Alto Norte celebrated with joy the consecration of their parish headquarters on Sunday, December 26, on the day of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph.

After starting the Holy Mass in the front of the new temple, the bishop of the Diocese of Osorno, Jorge Concha Cayuqueo, after knocking three times with his crosier, opened the main door. This act gave way to the community's entrance. First, there was the procession of the acolytes, the deacons, the priests, and the bishop to the presbytery. Then, the Eucharistic celebration continued next to the Altar.

On occasion, Monsignor Jorge blessed the water sprinkled on the walls and the assembly present. Then, he gave the keys to the temple to the parish priest, Fr. Adam Lugowski SVD. After that, the celebration continued with the Liturgy of the Word. After the homily, the walls, the Tabernacle, and the Altar were incensed. The rite of consecration followed with more rituals.

Also present for the occasion were Father Provincial Yuventus Yohanes Kota SVD, Fr. Graziano Bertrami Rizzi SVD, the parochial vicar Fr. Aures da Silva SVD, among others.

*Communications Diocese of Osorno*

**Jujuy (ARS):****A day of integration and community bonding**

As jóvenes Verbitas (youth group) of Jujuy (JOVERJUY), we met on November 20, 2021, in the Virgen de Guadalupe Chapel, San Cayetano Parish, city of Palpalá, to participate in a District Olympics. The parishes participating include San Francisco Solano, Ntra. Sra. de Loreto and the host parish, San Cayetano. First, we had breakfast, and later, in an atmosphere of prayer, we entrusted our day to God.

The different youth groups were divided into five teams, according to the colors of the continents: Asia, America, Africa, Oceania, and Europe. Each team prepared an ice breaker song with its respective choreography using the different parts of the body. The teams played the first round of Soccer and Volleyball. At noon we shared a community lunch among the three parishes. We had our recreational space, in which we continued getting to know each other.

We played the last round of soccer and volleyball to end the day. These games served as moments of integration and strengthening teamwork and community spirit. Fr. Juan Stach SVD concluded the activity with a prayer. The JOVERJUY would like to thank their parish priests, religious and adult laypeople who helped them with the event's organization.

--- Rafa Urbano

*Youth Coordinator Jujuy District*

**Quepe (CHI):****Centennial Celebration of the Parish of Quepe**

*Centennial Celebration of the Parish of Quepe.*

With a Eucharist presided by the Bishop of Villarrica, Monsignor Francisco Javier Stegmeier, the parish community Sacred Heart of Jesus of Quepe administered by the Divine Word Missionaries culminated the activities surrounding the centenary celebration of its existence. Members of the local Church attended the event - from the parish and rural communities - SVD priests, including the Provincial Superior, Fr. Yuventus Kota SVD, and some confreres who served in Quepe.

The centennial activities began on December 27, 2020. There were various pastoral, social, and recre-



ational programs during this period. Several activities were carried out following health protocols, such as the Christmas parade and many visits to rural communities. In addition, we delivered pilgrim altars with the help of various groups of the Parish. There were monthly workshops, social action of the youth in rural communities, and fraternal aid.

The parish priest, Fr. Agustin Naru SVD, explained that in 1921 the land for the parish headquarters was

purchased. After the land was purchased, the first wooden chapel was founded. Therefore, we celebrate the centenary from the beginning of the community. Fr. Agustin said,

“During 100 years, many generations have passed. Many people, our parents, grandparents, and so many others have struggled, collaborated, manifested their faith, their love for God and their neighbor in this parish”.

--- CHI Website

## OUR DEPARTED

### SVD

Name	Province	+ Date-Death	Age	Vows	Year of Orders
Fr. Konkol, Edward	POL	12.12.2021	62	41	36
Bro. Staudinger, Max	NEB	16.12.2021	95	70	**
Fr. Bumba Kamudiongo, Guillaume	CNG	17.12.2021	51	28	19
Fr. Strassmann, Albin	ECP	18.12.2021	68	40	32
Fr. Batungbacal, Francisco Iñigo	BRN	01.01.2022	77	50	47
Fr. Lacaron, Eleuterio	PHC	04.01.2022	85	62	56
Fr. Repelewicz, Józef	PNG	10.01.2022	91	71	29
Fr. Mpila Mumbayungu, Achille	CNG	10.01.2022	57	30	21
Fr. Nelluvely, Thomas	INM	10.01.2022	90	67	62
Fr. Suo, Paulin	SIN	18.01.2022	99	73	67
Fr. Gauer, Erich	CHI	20.01.2022	90	55	57
Fr. Maloney, Peter	IBP	22.01.2022	97	73	69
Fr. Ōhashi, Yoshio Martino	JPN	28.01.2022	90	62	57

### SSpS

Sister: Rel. Name and Family Name	Prov/Reg	Date-Death	Age	Yrs. in Vows
Sr. Jositi, Maria Wea	FLE	14.12.2021	92	59
Sr. Hilaris, Stephanie Alber	GER	16.12.2021	88	64
Sr. Wilfredis, Caridad Jacob	PHN	17.12.2021	84	58
Sr. Wilhelmina, Petronella Dorssers	GER	18.12.2021	100	73
Sr. Hiltruda, Anna Stegmann	GER	23.12.2021	89	60
Sr. Anita, Anita Maria Maldaner	BRS	27.12.2021	81	57
Sr. Emeria, Luisa Schunk	ARN	05.01.2022	95	72
Sr. María Rosa Bussón	ARM	13.01.2022	64	36
Sr. Wilfride, Cäcilia Hutter	OES	15.01.2022	99	71
Sr. Sigfride, Anna Mayer	GER	18.01.2022	88	60
Sr. Marta Maria de Mello	BRS	19.01.2022	75	53

### SSpSAP

Name	Convent	Date of Death	Age	Years in Vows
Sr. Mary Josephine, Marilou Mindo	Aklan, Philippines	05.I.2022	67	28
Sr. Mary Consilia, Martha Rötger	Bad Driburg, Germany	16.I.2022	85	57

## OBITUARIES

**Fr. Erich Gauer (CHI)****20.01.2022; 32 66 67 70 65**

**E**rich Gauer was born on March 1, 1932 in Baden, Austria. He entered the seminary in St. Gabriel on September 3, 1958. He began his novitiate in St. Gabriel on October 31, 1966. He professed his first vows in St. Gabriel on November 1, 1967. He professed his perpetual vows in Santiago, Chile, on November 1, 1970. He was ordained a priest in St. Gabriel on December 18, 1965.

He was assigned to Chile, where he worked since 1968, first in different parishes in the center and south of the country and then in the north. First, he was parochial vicar of San Vicente de Paul, in La Florida, Santiago, for four years, in charge of the chapel of Villa O'Higgins, today Santa Cruz Parish. Then he was parish priest of N.Sra. de Lourdes, Osorno for another four years; parish priest of Quilaco, diocese of Los Angeles; parish priest of Puerto Dominguez, in Araucania, also for four years.

In 1988 the provincial superior sent him to Huara, Diocese of Iquique. This is the first step for the service of the SVD in that area. He worked there until the year 2021.

Fr. Gauer, from Huara, served Pisagua and several localities in the province of Tarapacá. He always said that he wanted to die in the north of Chile and be buried in the cemetery of Huara. He already had a tomb with his name and date of birth. Only the date of death was missing.

In October 2021, he suffered a fall. He had to undergo surgery on the femur of one of his legs at the beginning of November at the Iquique Hospital. He was discharged and was received at the Episcopal House, where he was recovering. He had to be transferred to Santiago, where the doctors suggested amputating his leg because he had gangrene. He survived the operation but contracted pneumonia, which caused his death on January 20, 2022.

Fr. Erich was a great missionary with a passionate witness for the Word Incarnate, especially in the most humble way, and standing out for his humility, simplicity, wisdom, austerity, and prudence.

**Fr. Eleuterio Lacaron (PHC)****04-01-2022; 37-58-60-66-66**

**E**leuterio Lacaron or Fr. Terry, as he was fondly called, was born in Cebu City on April 18, 1937. He was the youngest among eight siblings. After finishing high school in Cebu City, he entered the seminary in Quezon City on June 1, 1955. He began his novitiate in

Quezon City on June 29, 1958. He professed his first vows in Quezon City on June 5, 1960. He professed his perpetual vows in Tagaytay on May 19, 1966. He was ordained a priest in Tagaytay on December 7, 1966.

His first assignment was at the Divine Word College of San Jose in Occidental Mindoro, where he served as the Grade School and High School Director from 1967 to 1982. In 1983 he obtained his Master of Arts in Education at the University of San Carlos in Cebu City.

From 1973 to 1982, he was the President of the Divine Word College of Calapan in Oriental Mindoro. After that, he moved to the SVD Community of Catholic Trade Manila while pursuing his Doctorate in Education at the University of Santo Tomas from 1982 to 1985. At the same time, he was assigned as the Vice-Rector of the community.

From 1985 to 1989, he was assigned at the Divine Word College of Legazpi City, Albay, as the President. In 1989 he requested and was granted a Sabbatical year. He joined the SVD Renewal Course in Nemi, Italy. He had a short Spirituality course and pastoral exposure in the United States.

Returning to the Philippines in 1990, he was given the post of President at the Divine Word College of San Jose (DWCSJ). While occupying this post, from 1994 to 1995, he also acted as concurrent President of the Divine Word College of Calapan. During his term as DWCSJ President, the Divine Word School of Semirara Island was established in 2003 upon the invitation of Mr. Victor Consunji, then the President of the Semirara Mining Corporation. DWCSJ would directly supervise this school in its early years.

In 2005, Fr. Terry relinquished his post as President of DWCSJ and accepted the position of Dean of the Graduate School. In 2007, Fr. Terry moved to the SVD retirement home of Villa Cristo Rey in Quezon City. He was kept busy with numerous requests for masses outside during his retirement years.

He was rushed to the UST hospital in the early hours of January 4, 2022. However, he was not accepted because the hospital was fully occupied. He was then brought to Lourdes Hospital. Unfortunately, he was declared dead on arrival due to cardiac arrest at 4:33 AM.

Looking back at the priestly ministry of Fr. Terry, one can see his dedication to the educational apostolate of the SVD. His contributions to the growth of this apostolate in the Philippine Central Province cannot be quantified. Despite his responsibilities as a school administrator, especially in San Jose, he was always available to help out in the nearby parishes during weekends.

The holy scriptures say, "Our life span is seventy years or eighty for those who are strong...". Fr. Terry was gifted with 85 years of life to fulfill his earthly mission. May he now enjoy his eternal rewards in the Kingdom.

**Fr. Francisco Iñigo Batungbacal (BRN)**  
**01-01-2022; 45-70-72-75-75**



Francisco Iñigo Batungbacal was born on June 1, 1945, in Pulilan, Philippines. He attended elementary school in his hometown (1952-1958) and completed secondary school in Bulacan (1958-1962). Later, in 1966, he joined the Major Seminary of San Carlos, Makati, where he took the habits and studied Philosophy until 1968, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree. He entered the novitiate in 1970 and professed his first vows on June 2, 1972. Then, between 1972 and 1975, he studied Theology at the Divine Word Seminary in Tagaytay and professed his perpetual vows on May 31, 1975. A few months later, on September 5 of that same year, he was ordained a priest.

Fr. Francisco arrived in Brazil on September 7, 1976. After learning Portuguese, he was sent to the Antônio Carlos Community (MG). Then, he was appointed parish vicar at São Sebastião parish, in Barra Mansa (RJ), where he worked until 1980. Then, he returned to Antônio Carlos, where he stayed until 1982. Then, between 1982-1985, he was appointed pastor at São Sebastião parish, in Três Rios (RJ). Finally, he was appointed pastor at São Sebastião parish, in Barra Mansa (RJ), in 1985, exercising his missionary mandate until 1991. Afterward, he was appointed pastor at the Divino Espírito Santo parish in Santa Leopoldina (ES), where he stayed until 1995.

In 1995 he was elected provincial councilor and appointed formator at the Philosophy community in Contagem (MG). In 2004 he was appointed formator at the Propaedeutic community in Barbacena (MG), transferring the formation community that same year to Juiz de Fora (MG). In 2006 Fr. Francisco was appointed parish vicar at the Santa Isabel parish (ES). He remained until 2009, when he was appointed pastor at the Sant'Ana, parish in Marechal Floriano (ES). Between 2011-2013 he was also the district superior of the Espírito Santo District (ES).

In 2015, he was appointed parish vicar at the Nossa Senhora da Conceição parish in Cruzes (PE). He carried out his missionary work until 2017. The following year, he received the appointment of parish vicar at the Verbo Divino parish in Brasília (DF), where he stayed until 2019. After that, he was transferred to the Verbo Divino Community in Juiz de Fora (MG) for his retirement. Shortly after that, he was diagnosed with prostate cancer which caused his death on January 1, 2022.

Fr. Francisco leaves us a beautiful legacy of missionary service in our province and the memory of a cordial and straightforward person. Rest in Peace, Fr. Francisco!

**Fr. Albin Strassmann (ECP)**  
**18-12-2021; 53-80-81-88-89**



Albin Strassmann was born on February 1, 1953 in Neuenhof, Aargau, Switzerland. After elementary school, he attended the SVD-run Marienburg High School in Rheineck for four years (1966-1970). An apprenticeship followed it as a structural draftsman. After that, he studied to become an architect, which he completed in 1977.

After working for a few years in an architect's office in Zurich, he decided to join the SVD in Marienburg in March 1966. He began his novitiate in St. Gabriel on October 26, 1980. In St. Gabriel, he professed his first vows on October 27, 1981. He professed his perpetual vows in St. Gabriel on September 29, 1988. On May 27, 1989, Albin was ordained a priest by Bishop Anton Pain Ratu, SVD of Atambua, Indonesia. He received his mission appointment for Bolivia. He served as a vicar in three different parishes, focusing on youth ministry and the formation of catechists.

His return to Switzerland in 1995 marked the beginning of his 19-year assignment as mission secretary of the Swiss SVD Mission Office in Maria Hilf, Steinhäusen (1995-2001 and 2007-2020). He earned diplomas in "Development Cooperation" and "Leadership Development" during this time. In the Mission Office, he set up a donations database, introduced an external audit of accounts, created the website of the Swiss SVD, including the Mission Office).

He also collaborated on the guidelines for mission secretaries in the SVD. The last years were marked above all by deepening the cooperation among the mission offices in Germany and Austria. Albin tirelessly put his technical and legal knowledge into developing a standard, transnational donation database and the renewal of the homepage of the SVD Missionaries in German-speaking countries.

In addition to his work in the Mission Office, he was parish administrator successively in two parishes from 2001 to 2004. Then he worked as a priest with parish responsibility in parishes Littau until 2009 and in Ruswil from 2010 to 2018. As a priest, he strove to translate prayers and texts into today's world and be close to people's everyday lives.

Shaping community life was an essential concern for Albin. He was Vice-Rector at the Maria Hilf Mission House in Steinhäusen (1995 to 2001) and a member of the Provincial Council (2001 to 2010). Albin also made his comprehensive knowledge available to various organizations, including as president of the board of "Inter team" and the Lenten Campaign board.

With a lot of willpower and self-discipline, he faced health challenges. In summer 2021, his condition worsened. In October, he was diagnosed with cancer that



was slowly draining his life forces. On December 18, 2021, at the Franziskus Home of the Menzingen Sisters, Albin passed away peacefully to enter the excellent knowledge of God and be completely absorbed in His love.

The Resurrection Service was held on December 28, 2021, in the Don Bosco Church Steinhausen. Afterward, the urn burial took place at the Erli cemetery in Steinhausen.

### **Bro. Max Staudinger (NEB)**

**16-12-2021; 26-49-51-57-\*\***



On April 26, 1926, Max Staudinger was born in Regensburg, Germany. He began his novitiate in St. Wendel on October 16, 1949. He pronounced his first vows on September 8, 1951. After that, he worked in the SVD magazine distribution office and the bookstore. In October 1956, he was sent to Estella, Spain, to work in the publishing house. He pronounced his final vows on September 8, 1957.

From December 1966 to June 1968, he worked in Nemi, Italy, in the local treasurer's office. Then he was transferred to Nagoya, Japan, where he was provincial treasurer. In 1972, the 10th General Chapter elected him to the General Council. He was the first Brother to hold this position. Re-elected in 1977, he served in it until 1982. Afterward, he worked as an assistant to the general treasurer till 1984. Then his life took a contemplative turn.

In Rome, he met Fr. Peter Mertes SVD and discussed his plan for a contemplative missionary community. He received permission to join Peter Mertes. To prepare for it, he spent a year with the Camaldolese monks in Frascati, Italy, who followed a Carthusian way of life. In 1986 he joined Peter Mertes in Belgium. In 1987 we opened the community in the SVD house in Montenu, Belgium, together with some School Sisters.

In 2013 he moved to Teteringen, the retirement home of the NEB province. Bro. Max showed what it is like to grow old in a beautiful way, despite all the pain he has suffered lately. He impressed everyone as a brave, kind person. About two weeks before his death Bro. Max decided to stay at home rather than undergo an intervention that would prolong his life a little. With that, everything was arranged to live as comfortably as possible until the end.

In the last days, he received palliative care, which eased the pain somewhat. Periodically confreres came to visit and pray with him. Finally, on the morning of December 16, he died peacefully. Bro. Max had gone through the entire procedure to donate his body to science. The Utrecht Medical Center picked up his body on the same day. But before that, the whole community gathered for a simple goodbye since there would be no

funeral. Nevertheless, on December 23, a Eucharistic celebration was held to remember Bro. Max solemnly.

Bro. Max chose the words to conclude his life story: "I am like a green olive tree that stands in the house of God. I trust in the love of God forever and ever." (Ps 52.10)

### **Fr. Johann Hager (ECP)**

**09-12-2021; 34-55-57-62-63**



On July 16, 1934, Johann Hager was born on July 16, 1934, in Neukirchen an der Vöckla, diocese of Linz, Austria. He entered the seminary in St. Rupert on September 25, 1947. He began his novitiate in St. Gabriel on September 8, 1955. He professed his first vows in St. Gabriel on September 8, 1957. He declared his perpetual vows in St. Gabriel on May 1, 1962. He was ordained a priest in St. Gabriel on April 6, 1963.

He was assigned to the Austrian Province. He first worked for two years as an assistant priest in the SVD parish in Vienna. With great enthusiasm, he dedicated himself to youth work. As a result, he imparted formative experiences that shaped their lives to young people. He would have liked to stay, but as a boarding school educator, he was needed in St. Rupert. He studied pedagogy and pastoral psychology in Rome and Innsbruck to acquire the necessary skills. He earned a teaching degree in religion in Salzburg.

Fr. Hager practically spent his whole working life in St. Rupert: as an educator in the boarding school for 15 years, Rector for six years, local treasurer for 19 years, and 30 years as a religion teacher at the SVD missionary private high school. His résumé was: "It is beautiful to use all one's life force for a great task!" On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his religious vows in 2017, it was said, "Without Fr. Hager, St. Rupert would no longer exist." He created slide shows about the different school years, hosted the spring concert with great wit, and enjoyed taking mountain tours in his spare time.

It is incredible how many other areas Fr. Hager was active from St. Rupert as home base. He was a highly esteemed preacher for recollections. He worked for many years in marriage preparation and directed the Cursillo movement. He accompanied countless pilgrimages and trips and thus communicated the Christian faith to many people joyfully and profoundly. For 16 years, he was in charge of the "Question and Answer" section of the SVD magazine "Stadt Gottes." He was also responsible for vocation promotion for 12 years, a member of the provincial council, and delegate of the Austrian Province at the General Chapter. He still served as acting parish priest and was sought after for pastoral supply work in his old age.

Fr. Hager spent his retirement in the SVD Freinademetz-Home at St. Gabriel. The farewell from St.

Rupert was difficult for him. But he gradually settled in at St. Gabriel and was grateful for the care and the daily Eucharist. He seemed cheerful and content, even though he was increasingly confined to bed. His passing into eternity was like the slow extinguishing of light. He died peacefully on December 9, 2021

Confreres, family, and friends of Fr. Hans Hager thanked God for the life of the confrere in the Eucharistic celebration on December 21 in the Holy Spirit Church of St. Gabriel. They then accompanied him to the local SVD cemetery.

## APPOINTMENTS AND TRANSFERS

### Transfers

16.12.2021	Fr. Geoghegan, Alan Nasraya	IDE/IBP for retirement
16.12.2021	Fr. Sila, Marianus	IDE/IDT for retirement
17.12.2021	Fr. Roz, Stanislaw Marek	KEN/USW
21.12.2021	Fr. Cabral, Henry	SIN/PHC
10.01.2022	Fr. Hoang, Tuan Khoi	ECU/USC as formator in the same zone
24.01.2022	Bro. Calzón, Hno. Andrés Lorenzo	BOL/ESP
25.01.2022	Fr. Santos, Jose Rizal	JPN/PHS

### Don't miss this Webinar SVD-SSpS Generalates, Rome

**February 17, 2022 Thursday**

Time: 15:00 – 17:00 Rome Time

**Theme: Passion for Mission: Social Justice**

#### Speakers:

**Dr. Peter C. Phan**

Georgetown University Department of Theology and Religious Studies and a faculty fellow at the Berkley Center, USA

#### Eco-Justice: Sharing Experience

**Petronella Maria Boonen, SSpS**

Center for Human Rights and Popular Education in Sao Paulo, Brazil

#### Social Action: Sharing Experience

**Richard Quadros, SVD**

Director of Sarva Vikas Deep, Mangaon, Mumbai

This is open to all the members of the Congregations  
Simultaneous translation in English and Spanish

#### Kindly register at this link

SVD - <https://forms.gle/g3tcbJLHKVppP3UX7>

SSpS - <https://forms.gle/d47Kh76PEwc73a4h8>

**Register before February 12, 2022.**

