



FAITHFUL TO THE WORD

No. 6 - September 2024

# DOCUMENTS OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER SVD 2024



SVD Publications  
Generalate - Rome, 2024



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## PRESENTATION

Dear Confreres,

We celebrated our 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter with the theme: “*Your Light Must Shine Before Others*” (Mt 5:16): *Faithful and Creative Disciples in a Wounded World* at the *Ad Gentes* Center, Nemi, from June 16 to July 14, 2024. With the presence of 120 Chapter members, lay observers, SSpS Sisters, and a number of confreres who were at the service of the Chapter, we confirmed our ability to live interculturally and witness the fraternity. The 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter fulfilled its task of reviewing, evaluating, and proposing new priorities for the Society. In addition, the reflections and choices made by the members of the Chapter were articulated as commitments in the final Statement of the General Chapter.

The interactions, discussions and celebrations during the four weeks of the Chapter was a testament to our unity and collaboration. It deepened the theme of the Chapter with the Working Paper, which was the consolidation of the reflections of the Provinces, Regions, and Missions (PRM), as well as the specific contribution of our formation houses and SVD lay partners in the mission.

This booklet presents the final Statement of the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter. This Statement is the result of work in basic groups and sub-groups according to the areas of interest of the Chapter members, analyses of the reality of our four Zones, and the consensus of the Plenary Assembly.

### **Be Part of the Wounds Today**

During the Chapter, we dealt with the various wounds present in the world; we didn’t just list their pain, but rather we felt included among all those affected by social and cultural injustices, economic and political systems that cause inequality and discrimination, the environmental crisis and its harmful consequences for life, and those suffering from a lack of meaning and hope.

While we stand in solidarity with those wounded, we must also confront the reality that we can inflict wounds on others. The pain and brokenness within the Church and our society urgently call us to embark on a journey of renewal and conversion. We believe this is the path along which the Holy Spirit guides us in our religious and missionary endeavors. Despite the many wounds in the world, the Church, and our Society, we are called to press forward with the power of Christ to bring healing and restoration.

### **Our Identity**

The 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter deepens our identity as people called and sent by Jesus. Therefore, rooted in the Divine Word, we find in this identity the meaning of our existence, the direction and strength of our mission, and the personal fulfillment and joy of making Him known and present among all people in various cultures. The Chapter's Statement is an invitation and a commitment to shine the Light of Christ through our life and mission. We are called to be missionaries of hope.

### **Becoming Faithful and Creative Disciples**

To become faithful disciples, we need to deepen our Trinitarian and missionary spirituality and pay special attention to our formation process, from vocation promotion to ongoing formation. Being a faithful disciple is a gift and task. It is a joyful and responsible vocation. Healing the wounds and bringing light to the world, portraying the Light of Christ express the commitment of a faithful disciple. As Divine Word Missionaries, we are specially called at this time in history to be creative disciples. This exhorts us to be active, vigilant, innovative, hardworking, searching for new answers, finding new paths, and so forth.

We engage in mission with a paradigm of prophetic dialogue. This should guide, motivate, and become part of our missionary life. The engagement in mission is marked by our four characteristic dimensions: Biblical Apostolate, Mission Animation, JPIC, and Communication. Creative discipleship takes into account our Society's focus and the paths that we have adopted in the previous chapters.

### **Our Responsibility**

The commitments outlined in this Statement are not mere formalities; they are the fruit of careful study, reflection, and approval by the Capitu-

lars. Now, each PRM shares the responsibility to ensure that these commitments become ingrained in the lives of every member, guiding us to faithfully live them out in a tangible way, according to our circumstances.

In addition to the Statement, the Capitulars passed several resolutions and recommendations. They have made many constitutional amendments which need our attention. We are responsible for bringing these to life within our respective fields of responsibility. We all must collaborate to implement them with diligence and integrity.

It is also significant that this final Statement of the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter comes at the momentous occasion of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Foundation of our Society. This milestone reminds us of our rich history and the enduring legacy of our missions. Each community and district engaged in the Chapter's preparatory process is now entrusted with implementing these commitments, further enriching our history with our present actions. By living out these commitments, we become faithful witnesses to the Light, embodying the mission of being "missionaries from everywhere, sent for everyone."

The General Chapter took place within the broader context of the synodal process being promoted by the Holy Father for the whole Church. As a religious community, the methodologies of reflection and discernment should be second nature and deeply embedded in our lives. Strengthening our practice of walking together, leaving no one outside the circle, will reinforce our missionary priorities and choices.

Let us invoke the Holy Spirit, the "Father of our Society," to deepen our understanding of our religious-missionary vocation. May He empower us to remain faithful to the Lord, the Eternal Word of the Father, and inspire us to be creative in our missionary responses to the challenges of our time. May Mary, who bore witness to the Light of her Son, guide us on the path of fidelity so that our Light may shine brightly before others.

Fraternally in the Divine Word,

Fr. Anselmo Ricardo Ribeiro, SVD  
Superior General  
Rome: September 3, 2024





## **GUIDE FOR THE STATEMENT OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER 2024**

The Statement of the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter 2024 is the outcome of a collective discernment by the Society on the way we should tread in the coming years. This is the fruit of a long journey of reflection within our communities in the PRMs and, later on, various levels in our administration (/in our General Chapter). We have discussed the concerns of society at large and what God is saying to us today as a Society -- to become faithful and creative disciples. This Statement is intended to guide and motivate our missionary activities so that we become bearers of the light of Christ to all those we encounter in our mission.

### **Objective**

Taking into consideration the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Foundation of the Society, the objective of 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter was “to enhance our growth in authentic discipleship by strengthening our identity, and being creative in our ways of proclamation and witnessing to Christ in a wounded world.” We asked ourselves at this point in history, what is our future? Which direction do we need to take? Which are the ministries that we need to strengthen and how? Finally, the General Chapter has suggested the answers as outlined in this Statement.

### **How to achieve the objective**

Each PRM can adopt various methods to implement this Statement in a concrete way. But the most important aspects are: (i) To disseminate this Statement to all the confreres, including the formandi in the formation houses and SVD lay associates/partners. (ii) That every confrere studies this document and finds ways on how the commitments can be implemented. (iii) To find ways to ensure that this Statement is discussed in the local communities/districts and to take note of which are the commitments that need immediate planning and execution. This does not mean others are not important, the others need to be taken later according to the

available resources and context. (iv) To find methodology to implement the resolutions and recommendations of this General Chapter with faithfulness and dedication.

### **Use of this Statement**

The Statement of the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter is rather comprehensive. The first part deals with woundedness in the world. The communities, districts or PRM assemblies can discuss how we can get in touch with these wounds today? How do these wounds affect our lives and missionary activities? Once we are aware of and be part of these wounds, our response will not be the same, it moves us into concrete action. The second part deals with how we can be the light to the world, portraying the light of Christ. In a similar way, each PRM finds some time to reflect on this issue in the communities, districts and PRM assemblies. The best practices of these illuminations as well as the highlights of our Founding generations' impact on the Church and the celebrations in the PRMs could be disseminated. The third part deals with how faithful and creative discipleship can be actualized, this is highlighted with commitments. Each PRM has to be aware of them and own these commitments. This is not only for few individuals, but for the whole Society. The communities and districts can have common discussions and see how these can be implemented with the proper timeframe.

### **Reporting**

Over the years, we notice that reporting has become routine and every PRM does it. The question is how have we permeated society and transformed it with our activities? We visualize that the reports should help us to evaluate internally our performance; have we raised our levels of performance in the missions over the years? Hence, proper evaluation has to be done in relation to the use of this Statement, how impactful are we in the community and the Church? This needs our constant attention. Therefore, each PRM should make a concrete action plan for the next year on this Statement, especially to elaborate an action plan for the commitments that are enlisted. The recommendations and resolutions need to be taken according to their merit in each PRM.

We encourage all the members to study this Statement and implement it according to the context. After proper evaluation, each community/house/parish should give its reports every year to the PRM superior. That should have certain parameters: What we have achieved, what we have failed to achieve and what are our future plans. Each PRM should also

report on the progress of this Statement's implementation as well as the recommendations and resolutions of the General Chapter in their Zonal Assemblies with these parameters.

The theme of the Chapter is wonderful, rich in meaning, powerful and comprehensive for a mission journey. It is so apt for our congregation at this point in history. We can say proudly that we are moving forward carrying the light of Christ after 150 years of the Foundation of the Society when we implement this Statement in its fullness. Certainly, it is not easy for us, the Statement has various ramifications, orientations, directions, action plans and so forth. But let us be faithful disciples. Success comes when we are creative in our ministries and that comes with listening, discerning and executing with other confreres, the lay associates/partners and other lay collaborators in mission.







## **PART I**

### **STATEMENT OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER**

**“YOUR LIGHT  
MUST SHINE BEFORE OTHERS” (MT 5:16):  
FAITHFUL AND CREATIVE DISCIPLES  
IN A WOUNDED WORLD**



## INTRODUCTION

1. The 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter revolves around the theme, “Your Light Must Shine Before Others (Mt 5:16): Faithful and Creative Disciples in a Wounded World.” The Statement of this General Chapter was based on the working paper which the second preparatory commission had drafted prior to the Chapter, consolidating the reports of the PRMs and the SVD lay partners. It therefore serves as a guide to help us dialogue, discern, and set out our action plans for the coming years, ensuring that we are aligned with God’s mission and prepared to implement our commitments with dedication.
2. The first part addresses the various wounds that afflict the world, the Church, and our Society. The second part of this document reflects on these realities through the light of Christ, emphasizing our call to be bearers of his light to a wounded world. Finally, the third part outlines our priorities as Divine Word Missionaries today, focusing on how we can be faithful, creative, and effective disciples in reading the signs of the times and responding to their challenges.

### **1. EMBRACING A WOUNDED WORLD AND OUR OWN WOUNDEDNESS**

3. The wounds that people experience impel us, the Divine Word missionaries, to empathize with them, soothe the pain of their suffering, and heal their woundedness. By embracing our own wounds as SVDs, we become sensitive to the woundedness of others. Encountering these wounds challenges our faith, but they make us wounded healers as well, in our duty of bringing relief and healing to those



who are deeply scarred. Thus, we become more compassionate toward them.

### **1.1. Social and Cultural Wounds**

4. The scars of socio-cultural prejudices and conflicts that are manifested in systemic inequalities between the rich and the poor, racial discrimination, and cultural clashes mark our society. Religious fundamentalism, ethnocentrism, and terrorism make our efforts of promoting intercultural integration and religious dialogue more difficult, especially in our mission areas where Christians are a minority. Indifference towards faith and organized religions in advanced societies also poses a challenge to our missionary undertakings.
  5. The reality of human trafficking in its varied forms is an example of modern slavery. Abuse of women and children continues to inflict harm on the family and society at large. The breakdown of traditional family structures and values has brought about instances of isolation and a lack of moral, psychological, and spiritual support to many, especially among the youth.
  6. While the advances in communication facilitate interconnectivity among people, making our world a global village, they also furnish us with an excess of information that makes it difficult to decipher what is true from what is false. The inappropriate and irresponsible use of the internet, social media platforms, and artificial intelligence (AI) has adverse consequences for our personal lives and our interactions with people. Popular media and globalized culture have contributed to the marginalization and extermination of indigenous languages, customs, and practices. Moreover, spiritual emptiness brought about by secularization and consumerism prompts people to look for alternatives that are often harmful to them.
- ❖ Gal 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

## 1.2. Economic and Political Wounds

7. The global community faces significant economic inequalities because of unjust international economic structures and policies. The exploitation of natural resources by multinational corporations violates the rights of indigenous communities and, in some cases, forces them to leave their ancestral domain. In our mission areas, we have seen how corruption and political instability hamper economic progress. Some governments cannot even provide the basic needs and social services such as health and education to their citizens.
8. There are extremist groups that create an atmosphere of hostility, hatred, and antagonism, compelling those who are marginalized to leave their homelands and migrate to other countries. On the one hand, asylum seekers and refugees who attempt to enter other countries go through indescribable hardships and deprivations. On the other hand, the migration of people has almost always created an atmosphere of suspicion and division among the citizens of a receiving country. Furthermore, the influx of migrants puts a strain on the economy of the country.
  - ❖ Am 2:6-7: “This is what the Lord says: “For three sins of Israel, even for four, I will not relent. They sell the innocent for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as on the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed.”

## 1.3. Physical and Psychological Wounds

9. Substance abuse and alcoholism often lead to acts of violence. Other forms of addiction, like online gambling and pornography, have ruined personal and communal relationships.
10. People who experience trauma from violence and losing loved ones also suffer from mental health problems that impact their daily lives. Moreover, many of our brothers and sisters suffer in silence because of their physical disability.

- ❖ Mt 11:28: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

#### **1.4. Environmental Wounds**

11. Our common home suffers from exploitation and neglect brought about by industrialization and commercialization, often leading to environmental catastrophe. Uncontrolled deforestation, flagrant exploitation of the world’s limited natural resources, and excessive use of chemicals in agriculture give rise to health problems, environmental disasters, and climate catastrophe (*Laudato Si’* [LS] 20-26).
12. Food security is at stake because of prolonged droughts and floods. The scarcity of water resources for human and animal consumption has become a matter of existential concern for many people (*LS* 27-31).
  - ❖ Gen 2:15: “The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

#### **1.5. Wounds in the Church Today**

13. The Church as an institution is grappling with internal problems arising from the moral shortcomings of some of her members. Secularism and the loss of credibility among clerics and religious because of many scandals such as financial mismanagement and corruption, abuse of power, and sexual misconduct have occasioned the departure of a great number of Catholic faithful from the Church. In some places, the institutional Church is perceived as detached from the reality of the people. The dwindling number of vocations to the priesthood and religious life, especially in Europe and the Americas, has serious consequences for our pastoral engagements, ministries, and apostolates.
14. Clericalism promotes an unhealthy fixation on authority. The abuse of power and authority distorts the true essence of the priesthood. Clericalism also impedes the laity’s valuable contribution and participation in the Church’s life and mission.

15. Conflicts arising from different ideological groups within the Church create a very unhealthy atmosphere resulting in misunderstanding and division among the faithful and Church leaders.

- ❖ Mt 18:6: “If anyone causes one of these little ones, those who believe in me, to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.”

## **1.6. Our Own Woundedness as SVDs**

16. Within our Society, we empathize with confreres who are going through turbulent times because of personal problems and unjust criticisms or accusations by others. We also acknowledge that some confreres have inflicted harm on others. Moreover, some confreres feel isolated and abandoned in their mission assignments. Many confreres work under most difficult conditions, and their work is often unrecognized and unappreciated. There are sometimes divisions among confreres when, in the process of electing leaders, certain influential groups determine the outcome of elections.

17. Our Society is wounded by financial mismanagement due to irresponsible investments and the lack of transparency and accountability in handling the Society’s material goods and resources. The craving for worldly goods and the tendency toward an easy and comfortable life have crept into the lifestyles of some confreres, making them insensitive to the pain and suffering of others.

18. There is a growing disconnect between the initial formation of our candidates and the mission reality. Entering the priestly and religious life seems to be less attractive to young people today. Brother vocations are dwindling in our Society. Some of our formation houses have very few candidates.

- ❖ Eph 4:2-3: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bound of peace.”





## 2. YOUR LIGHT MUST SHINE

19. The prologue of John’s Gospel is central to Arnold’s missionary spirituality. Our Founder believed with firm conviction that Christ, the Incarnate Word, is the light of the world: “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world” (Jn 1:9). This image of the light enlightening humanity has been passed on to the Arnoldus Family as articulated in the often-prayed invocation: “May the darkness of sin and the night of unbelief vanish before the Light of the Word and the Spirit of Grace.”

### 2.1. *Missio Dei* and *Missio Lucis*

20. “Let there be light” (Gen 1:3) is the first *dabar Elohim* (word of God) to the world. It unveils the identity and mission of the Divine Word – God’s light sent to a chaotic situation steeped in darkness (Gen 1:2). This Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14). In sharing in the life of the Incarnate Word, we also share in his mission. His life is our life; His mission is our mission. The light is the Word of God (Ps 119:105; 2 Pt 1:19), the source of life and our light.

21. St. Arnold once said, “Just as sunlight when it shines through falling rain is refracted in the seven beautiful colors of the rainbow, so shines the love of the Holy Spirit in a seven-fold way in the hearts of the saints and gives that special beauty which delights the eyes of a person” (*Precious is the Life Given for Mission*, 2010, 37). The light of Christ in us is the expression of the love of God poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). This is our anchor of hope in the turbulent moments of the changing scenes of life.

22. Our missionary activity springs from the *Missio Dei*. We see ourselves as collaborators in a mission that existed before us and will continue after us. The metaphor of “light” defines our identity in Christ (“You are the light of the world” Mt 5:14) and our mission with him (“Your light must shine before others” Mt 5:16). A disciple’s identity as “light” refers back to Jesus, whose life and mission are introduced as a “great light” for the nations (in Mt 4:16, fulfilling Is 9:1).

23. *Missio Lucis*, in the Johannine Prologue: “The light shines in the darkness...” (Jn 1:5), is a symbolism of light and darkness that invites us to make a decision. We are challenged to choose to be on the side of Christ, who is the Light, or to remain in the darkness of sin and evil. By choosing Christ, we become children of Light (Jn 12:36). *Missio Lucis* embodies openness to and doing the will of God – honesty, compassion, reconciliation, and the pursuit of justice and peace wherever we live and work.
24. As Mother Mary gave witness to the light of her Son, our mission of bearing witness to the light is a spark of God’s mission to dispel darkness with the light of the Word. Just as the moon gets its light from the sun, we draw our light from Jesus. Ignited by the light of Christ, we are prepared to encounter the darkness and do not run away from it. The unfolding vocation narrative of each confrere and SVD lay partner is God’s answer to someone’s prayer. We live no longer for ourselves but for Him who is the Light.
25. We recall with a sense of purpose the exhortation of the last General Chapter: “As Divine Word Missionaries, we are inspired and compelled to commit ourselves to carry out the work of the *Missio Dei*, to become transforming missionary disciples of Christ in each place, among every people, and for all cultures.” (2018 GC 13). We are encouraged to take the required steps to bring about the change that light effects. In doing so, we are open to being transformed by the realities of a wounded world.

## **2.2. Our History and Our Founding Generation**

26. The theme of light connects us to our history as a religious congregation. St. Arnold’s vision of the light of the world has its genesis in the historical reality of the *Kulturkampf*, a time of darkness and struggle. As the Society of the Divine Word grew over time, her members witnessed God’s love through periods of war, conflict, persecution, and martyrdom.
27. St. Joseph Freinademetz was conscious of the fact that the desire to see a transformation in our world must start with us. He wrote, “The



main thing still remains to be done: the transformation of the inner man (and woman) .... That is not the work of a day nor even of a year; neither does it take place without many a painful operation.” (Fritz Bornemann, *As Wine Poured Out*, 1984, 56-57). As Eph 5:8 says, “At one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”

28. We honor the rich heritage of the spirituality and the amazing witness and numerous sacrifices of many of our SVD missionaries, the SSps sisters, the SSpsSAP sisters, and lay collaborators who let their light shine even in the farthest corners of the world. We look with grateful hearts at the faithfulness, commitment, and sacrifices of the pioneer missionaries who portrayed an example of selfless missionary life and service. We count ourselves blessed to belong to such a wonderful community of missionary religious disciples working on six continents and growing in closeness to God and people.
29. As we reflect on the lives of St. Arnold Janssen, St. Joseph Freinademetz, our SVD martyrs, and all those in the history of our Society who have witnessed faithfully to the *Missio Lucis* for the past 150 years, we are filled with gratitude for the light they have projected on our journey. Embracing the spirit of the 2018 General Chapter, we pursue a path of visible transformation that affects our way of life and mission and directs us to be more focused on contemporary and future concerns. Such a move involves risks, and yet inspired by the courage of our founding generation, we are willing in our turn to become bright lights.

### **2.3. Signs of Hope Today**

30. We, the Divine Word Missionaries, are living witnesses of God’s will to choose vulnerable people, empower and transform them into signposts of hope for other vulnerable people. In a world overshadowed by suffering and turmoil, we are called “to be the hope for every culture.” (Pope Francis). Across different situations of conflict, poverty, and injustice, we stand in solidarity with the downtrodden, offering a spark of light amid the darkness. We can be likened to a damaged candle that still shines. We are aware of our wounds, and



yet we continue to give light. Our journey alongside those grimacing in pain holds profound significance. Our faithfulness as SVDs in an unpredictable world is a symbol of light to others. Amid our own struggles, our perseverance sheds light on those who despair.

31. Recalling and celebrating the light kindled in our hearts at baptism, we bring the light of Christ wherever we find ourselves. In our families and religious communities, we have become a lighthouse inspiring hope. Through acts of compassion, we reaffirm our dedication to share in the lives of the poor, migrants, indigenous people, refugees, faith seekers, and those on the margins and boundaries of society. We are working to build a human society characterized by justice and equity. By lighting our communities with love for one another, we become a city set on a hill.
32. In responding to the cries emerging from the dungeons or cells created by unjust socio-economic and political systems in our world, with good works we fulfill our destiny. We “recognize the rays of this light in the religious traditions and convictions of peoples. In sincere dialogue, we bear witness to the fact that the true light has become man and has come into the world in Jesus of Nazareth. At the same time, we will be enriched by other people’s religious experience and search for truth.” (c. 114). In our own lives and those we dialogue with, we attest, “The joy of the gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his invitation of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness, and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew.” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 1).
33. We are bearers of light and at the same time seekers of the light of Christ shining in people, cultures, and all creation where we work. Our missionary attitude enables us to recognize the darkness in our hearts and to be honest about our vows and commitments. Aware of our shadows in the bright light of truth, we dialogue with one another with a heart of mercy. We show the face of mercy which is “the fundamental law that dwells in the heart of every person who looks sincerely into the eyes of his brothers and sisters on the path of life.” (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 2). We acknowledge the sparks of initial success in intercultural living.

34. We acknowledge the innumerable challenges that confront our world, and yet we choose not to be held hostage by them and sink into despair. Standing before the light of Christ, we see many signs of hope, such as our willingness to put the Word of God at the center of our missionary activities and to be actively engaged in the synodal process of listening to those on the margins and sharing life with those on the fringes of society.
  
35. Additional signs of hope are the internationality and interculturality of our Society, the growing strength of our lay partners, the increasing number of vocations in some of our PRMs, and our willingness to offer the gift of our presence and solidarity to those who suffer. Indeed, “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” (2 Cor 3:18).



### 3. BECOMING FAITHFUL AND CREATIVE DISCIPLES

36. As members of the Society of the Divine Word, we emphasize becoming disciples who are both faithful and creative. Our vision is to focus particularly on some ministries where people experience woundedness.

#### 3.1. Becoming Faithful Disciples

##### 3.1.1. Identity: Our Name is Our Mission

37. Our name encapsulates our mission, as is beautifully stated in the Statement of the 2018 General Chapter: “Our Name is Our Mission.” (2018 GC 17, 53). Our identity is derived from the words “Divine Word”; thus, we are identified with the Word. Our uniqueness comes from the person of Jesus, the Divine Word, who has called and sent us on a mission. Rooted in the person of the Divine Word, we find in him the meaning of our existence, the direction and strength of our mission, and the personal fulfillment and joy of making the Divine Word known and present among all peoples in different contexts. Our identity impels us to preach and witness to this Word. Spreading and actualizing the word of God among all people is our delight and satisfaction.
38. Our SVD identity is fundamentally missionary, so every confrere “must be ready to go wherever the superior sends him” (c.102), carrying the light of Christ and witnessing to the word of God.
39. We are deeply rooted in the Society’s **religious identity** and its historical heritage, which highlight our role as a response to global challenges such as secularization and globalization. These challenges are often manifested in economic, social, and religious wounds, necessitating a renewed and authentic missionary light by living out our vows of consecrated chastity, evangelical poverty, and apostolic obedience.
40. Our identity is also manifested through our international and **inter-cultural living** in our communities. These characteristics underline the richness of diversity among confreres coming from different national-

ities and cultures. This diversity is seen as a living symbol of the unity and diversity within the Church, enhancing our capacity to engage with various cultures and communities effectively (cf. c. 104 and c. 303.1).

41. The promotion of synodality and **intercultural mission** is our religious missionary duty and obligation. Through the lived experiences of our members and our inclusive missionary work, we exemplify how embracing diversity and fostering intercultural understanding are not merely goals but an ongoing journey that enhances the collective human experience and responds dynamically to the complex challenges of the postmodern world. We are continuously encouraged to study and promote research in the areas of anthropology, culture, religion, and mission approaches (2012 GC 14).
42. The broader impact of intercultural living and mission community extends beyond the confines of our Society through the following:
  - i. Taking initiatives to foster a sense of belongingness and a common identity;
  - ii. Creating spaces where diverse voices are heard, valued, and respected;
  - iii. Celebrating intercultural diversity;
  - iv. Honoring the tapestry of human experiences and supporting marginalized groups;
  - v. Contributing to healing and reconciliation;
  - vi. Addressing injustices and paving the way for a more equitable future;
  - vii. Placing the needs of others before one's own interests as central to intercultural spirituality.

### **3.1.2. Missionary Spirituality**

43. The spiritual life of Divine Word missionaries is profoundly rooted in the **Trinitarian spirituality** and the religious experience of our founder, St. Arnold Janssen. The Divine Word is the living fountain that sustains our missionary spirituality. "Discovering the Word is



an exercise that animates our life” (2018 GC 53). We are also “inspired and empowered by the Holy Spirit, who is the principal agent of mission” (2018 GC 9).

44. Every SVD is encouraged to deepen his spirituality through spiritual exercises such as devotions, *lectio divina*, bible sharing, meditation, biblical retreats, and active participation in the sacraments, especially the sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation. These practices are not only personal, but they are also designed to foster a communal encounter with the Word, facilitating a close, contemplative, and continuous search for God’s will. The emphasis on the word of God serves as the light for our missionary commitment to our evangelical vows, ensuring a life that is fundamentally aligned with divine directives.
45. The missionary spirituality impels us to find the Light and shine in the realities of the world. Reflecting on the word of God amid these realities enthuses the missionaries to go out into the world to heal the wounded. Thus, it is spirituality that moves a person to empathize with another, to act concretely, and to show solidarity with others.
46. Our deep rootedness in our spirituality should lead us to the process of reconciliation with our own wounds and shortcomings, with others, and with the world. Pope Francis has exhorted us to be peace makers and ambassadors of reconciliation in a wounded world.
47. ***As Divine Word Missionaries, we commit ourselves to the following:***
  - a. To strive to rediscover and foster our SVD devotions, inculcating the SVD dimensions;
  - b. To promote and cultivate a contemplative mindset to strike a balance of missionary engagement and religious practices;
  - c. To live a life of simplicity and authenticity born out of spirituality and contemplation and be a witnessing message to the

wounded world; and bring communion, hope and healing to the poor and marginalized.

### **3.1.3. Vocation Animation and Formation**

48. The formation programs of our Society are deeply integrated within the core mission of becoming faithful and creative disciples. We need to address the human, intellectual, spiritual, pastoral, and missionary development of our candidates. This formation is characterized by a comprehensive approach that balances academic and professional training with spiritual and human formation.

#### **Vocation Animation**

49. Our missionary religious life and mission is lived in our Society, as a brother or priest. In tune with the modern trends, we are to adopt new methods and practices of vocation animation and the accompaniment of the candidates of different age groups, cultural, family and religious backgrounds (*SVD Ratio Formationis Generalis*, 121).
50. *As the Society, we commit ourselves to the following:*
- a. To make all members of the Society aware that vocation animation is not only the task of vocation promoters or the vocation promotion team;
  - b. To create a new mentality and culture to develop the awareness and attitude which enjoin us to animate the SVD brother-vocation at all levels and contexts;
  - c. To create systematic programs involving all confreres for religious missionary vocation promotion, giving special attention to brother vocation promotion.

#### **Initial Formation**

51. According to our Constitutions that are reaffirmed in various SVD documents, especially in the *SVD Ratio Formationis Generalis* (2024), formation is fundamentally mission-centric. The essence

of SVD formation is to prepare both formators and formandi, so that they can respond faithfully and creatively to the fast-changing, wounded, and secularized world. This formation should be rooted in a deep relationship with the Incarnate Word and a deep understanding of the mission context. Formation should emphasize that we are religious and missionary. Thus, we need to motivate our candidates to be religious missionaries in the initial formation.

52. The intellectual dimension of our commitment to the Divine Word is achieved through conscientious biblical studies, beginning with the initial formation, laying the groundwork for a lifetime of engagement with Scripture. Our formation teams are responsible for ensuring that our seminarians receive adequate biblical formation.
53. In the context of today, initial formation calls attention to the following aspects:
  - i. The recognition of our woundedness during the formation process;
  - ii. Adequate preparation of the *formandi*, so that they can face the wounds of the world today;
  - iii. The inclusion of programs such as Clinical Pastoral Education, pastoral placements in schools, training for intercultural competency, financial accountability, and congregational financial self-sufficiency in formation;
  - iv. Education and training in digital technology and finding ways to be creative in our mission;
  - v. Adequate training and preparation along the lines of the four characteristic dimensions and other ministries.
54. ***As the Society, we commit ourselves to the following:***
  - a. To encourage *shared responsibility* among all confreres and become role models in formation;
  - b. To include specific aspects, such as early professional preparation for missionary engagements, training in cultural analysis for cross-cultural ministry, and integral human formation in the formation programs;



- c. To disseminate, implement, and evaluate the *Ratio Formationis Generalis* within three years by PRMs;
- d. To give a special attention to the members in temporary vows of their motivation and reasons for belonging to a religious missionary life;

### **Ongoing Formation**

55. Constitutions 503 and 504.1 emphasize the importance of considering the missionary goal of the Society and its international character in academic and professional training. The formation programs need to be designed to be pluriform, acknowledging the enriching quality of the Society's internationality, fostering an openness to cultural and religious values. Thus, ongoing formation has to be part of our missionary life. For the ongoing formation's goals and objectives, see *Ratio Formationis Generalis*, Chapter VI. (See *Vita Consecrata*, 69).
56. Intellectual biblical formation is an indispensable element of ongoing formation. This continuous learning unfolds through biblical research and studies, biblical workshops and seminars, and so on.
57. ***As the Society, we commit ourselves to the following:***
  - a. To grow in servant leadership, particularly ethical leadership as a priority;
  - b. To undergo training in the digital world, ecological, youth, and family ministries;
  - c. To encourage the SVD brothers to faithfully and actively participate in ongoing formation, to be involved in activities oriented towards brother-vocation and updating of their professional training (c. 515 ff);
  - d. To encourage every SVD brother to root himself in the diverse social situations in which the apostolic work of the Society is being undertaken.

## 3.2. Becoming Creative Disciples

### 3.2.1. Creativity in our Missionary Outreach

58. The PRMs noted that our Society has made some efforts to embrace a dynamic and creative approach to its missionary activities, focusing on integrating culture, education, and innovative methodologies to effectively communicate and embody God’s mission. We uphold creativity, as embodied in our Constitutions, in which we are encouraged to “foster a sense of personal initiative and responsibility in carrying out our missionary task. Ever open to the signs of the times, the demands of the apostolate, and with the agreement of the responsible superiors, we are ready to strike out in new directions when this promise to be more fruitful for our missionary work (c. 119.1).”
59. Our approach to mission is influenced by the dynamics of **creativity, culture, and education**. The educational institutions are called upon to create opportunities and to train the people to be ingenious. The various specialized SVD institutions are urged to find ways to train the formandi and the confreres to be creative.
60. By weaving these elements together, we foster the following: (i) An atmosphere that encourages innovation and develops missionary strategies that are effective and culturally and contextually relevant. (ii) An approach that ensures that the message of the Gospel is conveyed in ways which resonate deeply with diverse communities, especially in addressing woundedness in society.

### 3.2.2. On the Biblical Apostolate

61. The life of an authentic Divine Word Missionary unfolds in union with the Divine Word on a profoundly personal level, shaping our very being and approach to mission. Our identity and commitment to the Word find tangible expression in the biblical apostolate. This apostolate represents a committed and systematic effort to make the Bible known and loved by everyone. By prioritizing biblical apostolate, we affirm that our name truly defines our mission.

62. Biblical apostolate is an intrinsic characteristic of every SVD confrere, regardless of their specific ministry. It is not an exclusive responsibility of selected individuals such as biblical apostolate coordinators or PRM leadership. Everyone should incorporate a systematic, organized, sustainable, and accountable approach to biblical ministry. Such a structured approach ensures that our commitment to the biblical apostolate is not left to chance or individual initiatives but becomes a central, coordinated effort across our Society.
63. Biblical apostolate should involve regular *Dei Verbum* courses, ongoing biblical education in parishes, exchange and sharing of biblical research and materials, effective use of social media in biblical apostolate, Bibliodrama, Scripture-based retreat ministry, formation of Scripture centered basic communities, and so on.
64. To further strengthen our commitment to biblical apostolate, each PRM is encouraged to have a full-time biblical apostolate coordinator. This dedicated position underscores the importance we place on this ministry and provides the necessary leadership and resources to make it effective (cf. *Nuntius* XII, p. 711).
65. ***As Divine Word Missionaries, we commit ourselves to the following:***
  - a. To integrate biblical apostolate into our apostolate, whether engaged in parish work, social communication, education, social justice, or any other ministry;
  - b. To have biblical formation for the lay partners' groups, to celebrate Bible week/month and to organize Bible study groups.

### **3.2.3. Finances**

66. We recognize the importance of sound and responsible financial management at personal and PRM level. As we face challenges such as declining donations, it becomes crucial to adopt strategies that ensure our self-sufficiency and effective management of resources. It is essential to implement financial policies and targets designed to

promote transparency, accountability and long-term planning (see 2012 GC 37).

**67. *As Divine Word Missionaries, we commit ourselves to the following:***

Self-Reliance Goals

- a. To utilize the resources of each PRM properly according to our norms;
- b. To ensure each PRM evaluates existing properties such that they are utilized efficiently;

Financial Policies

- c. To form financial boards or committees with professional members in each PRM;
- d. To conduct studies for sustainable finance and establish financial policies that include financial transparency, internal auditing, accountability, pension schemes, medical insurance;
- e. To conduct an actuarial review to evaluate assets, structures, buildings, and finance for future planning;
- f. To ensure continuity and provide training in financial management and SVD norms;
- g. To ensure funds for unforeseen future legal expenses;

Project Management

- h. To appoint project managers to oversee all PRM projects, ensuring they are done according to project cycle management (from planning to evaluation);
- i. To create guidelines for project sustainability;

Retirement Funds

- j. To establish and clarify retirement funds, ensuring they belong to a province or community, not individuals;
- k. To send future analysis of retirement plans of the PRM to the Generalate.

### 3.2.4. Creative Socio-ecological Response and Eco-spirituality

68. As a Society, we aspire to develop a comprehensive ecological strategy, drawing insights from *Laudato Si'*, *Querida Amazonia*, *Fratelli Tutti*, and *Laudate Deum*. This strategy can emphasize the integration of eco-spirituality, eco-justice, eco-friendly lifestyles, and **prophetic advocacy** to advance our mission of environmental stewardship and sustainability.
69. By promoting **eco-spirituality**, we are encouraged to develop a deeper spiritual appreciation for nature among our members and communities and to foster a profound respect for the earth as our common home. In doing so, we heal the wounds caused by our irresponsible actions.
70. Our ecological response entails our advocacy for **eco-justice**. This advocacy for eco-justice is not only a duty to protect the environment but it is also an integral part of our broader commitment to social justice. This approach aligns with our mission to ensure that environmental efforts also support the most vulnerable and marginalized communities, especially those who are forced to migrate, internally displaced, refugees and indigenous people who are often affected by environmental degradation.
71. Our prophetic response should involve creative ways by supporting the advocacies of VIVAT International, civic groups, Non-government Organizations (NGOs), and other groups with the same goals and orientations.
72. A change of lifestyle is seen as a critical daily expression of ecological commitment and is integral to the Society's mission of living out the Gospel in contemporary contexts. The challenge is how the above concepts, eco-spirituality, eco-justice, ecological lifestyle and prophetic voice are integrated in the life and mission of every missionary.

73. *As Divine Word missionaries, in our pursuit of ecological sustainability, we commit ourselves to the following:*

- a. To implement the seven objectives of *Laudato Si'* Action Platform;
- b. To emphasize the adoption of **eco-friendly lifestyle** within our communities;
- c. To reduce waste, the use of plastic and hazardous products, to promote recycling, and the use of renewable resources;
- d. To develop eco-friendly infrastructures and to engage in tree planting activities.

### 3.2.5. Youth and Family Ministries

74. The Society of the Divine Word recognizes significant challenges faced by wounded families in the areas we serve, highlighting the urgent need to improve the youth and family ministries (see 2012 GC 12, 13). This initiative requires a strategic pastoral approach aligned with both modern societal needs and the Society's broader mission. These ministries are devoted to espousing inclusivity, engaging actively in the community, providing spiritual nourishment, and offering comprehensive support for the youth and the family. These efforts underscore our commitment to these ministries to build strong Christian communities that are culturally sensitive and responsive.
75. The aim of the family ministry is to promote the integral development of families. The **family ministry** of the SVD can focus on offering psychological and spiritual support, including counseling services to enable families to grow in faith and love. This support provides guidance and hope, helping families cope with the complexities of the wounds of postmodern life. This ministry aims to nurture the holistic development of families. Pope Francis calls for the accompaniment, engagement, and fostering of the vocational missions of the **youth**, stressing the importance of listening to and actively involving them in ecclesial life (see *Christus Vivit*, 242ff).

76. The schools and universities play an important role in this youth ministry. Furthermore, youth ministry must take into account social networking and the digital online platforms as avenues where young people meet. Our ministry also involves the importance of listening, accompanying, and forming them.
77. *As Divine Word Missionaries, we commit ourselves to the following:*
- a. To recognize the wounds of the youth and families and find ways and means of addressing them, having concrete programs in our institutions/houses/parishes.

### **3.2.6. SVD Lay Associates/Partners as Collaborators**

78. The SVD lay associates/partners are members of the Arnoldus Family (2018 GC 49). The fundamental identity of SVD lay associates/partners is knowing and living the Arnoldus spirituality and being aware of the charism of the Society, and involvement in the mission of our Society. We illuminate our missionary efforts through participative engagements with them, bringing inclusivity, empowerment, and mutual participation in evangelization. This partnership approach not only taps the unique capacities of lay associates/partners but it also enhances the overall missionary work, cultivating vibrant and culturally attuned communities within the Church in a synodal way.
79. The challenge for all the PRMs is how to **give formation to the lay partners** and **promote them** as co-responsible persons in our mission. As missionaries of synodality, the more we have a systematic program and structure, the better for both the SVDs and the lay partners to show the light of Christ in this wounded world.
80. The Statement of the SVD Lay Partners' Workshop participants (see the Appendix) is acknowledged, and the Society appreciates them for formulating this Statement. This is valuable and helpful for furthering the collaboration with the lay partners in mission. The General Administration and each PRM take steps to implement this Statement according to its context.

81. *As Divine Word Missionaries we commit ourselves to the following:*
- a. To promote an inclusive collaboration and cooperation with SVD lay partners;
  - b. To consider lay individuals not merely participants but co-responsible partners ;
  - c. To respect and integrate various cultural sensitivities of SVD lay associates/partners, respecting their social and ecclesial contexts, their uniqueness, in order to have concrete collaborative actions;
  - d. To promote social and ecological concerns and the related ministries among lay associates/partners;
  - e. To ensure that they shine as light, portraying the light of Christ across diverse cultural groups.

### **3.2.7. Responsible Use of Digital Media and Artificial Intelligence**

82. We acknowledge the significant transformative power of **digital technology** including Artificial Intelligence in contemporary society. By enhancing digital literacy among our members and fostering collaboration across communication centers, we need to aim to produce high-quality digital content that resonates with a global audience. This strategic integration will ensure that digital tools are used effectively to amplify the impact of our missionary efforts and reach many people.
83. The responsible use of **digital media** will be a cornerstone of our digital engagement in the Society. The *SVD Communication Policy* (2023) stresses the importance of the ethical use of digital tools. The policy details structured programs and accountability measures to ensure all digital engagements align with the Society's values (Art. 11).
84. Structured programs and accountability measures need to be established to ensure that all digital engagements adhere to ethical standards. These standards help in maintaining the integrity of our



religious and missionary work, ensuring that digital tools are used in a manner that aligns with our Society's values and objectives (2018 GC 46).

85. *As the Society, we commit ourselves to the following:*

- a. To find ways to ensure that all conferees are trained in using digital media for effective evangelization;
- b. To balance technological advancement with ethical considerations, ensuring that Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are used to enhance, rather than replace human interactions and to maintain the dignity and professionalism expected in all our communications.

## CONCLUSION

86. We acknowledge the various wounds affecting society, including social, cultural, economic, political, physical, psychological, environmental, and internal wounds of the Church. This Statement reaffirms our commitment as Divine Word Missionaries to be witnesses of the light of Christ in a wounded world. This commitment emphasizes our mission to illuminate the dark realities of society through empathy, healing, and active testimony of faith. We highlight the importance of addressing these wounds with compassion and concrete actions, promoting justice, peace, and reconciliation. As missionaries, we are called to face the challenges without fleeing, living as witnesses to God's light.
87. Creativity and innovation are essential for contemporary mission work. As the Society, we are exhorted to adopt new methodologies and be creative in our approach, integrating education, culture, and modern technologies to effectively communicate the message of the Gospel. Youth and family ministries, eco-spirituality and ecological justice are key aspects; promoting sustainable lifestyles, a deep spiritual appreciation for nature, and commitment to ecological concerns are to be as non-negotiable aspects in our missionary journey. SVD Lay partners are seen as co-responsible partners in the mission, and greater cooperation and inclusion in all missionary activities are promoted.
88. The importance of an integral formation that encompasses human, intellectual, spiritual, pastoral, and missionary aspects is highlighted. Responsible financial management and ethical use of digital technologies are also key priorities. We commit ourselves to our mission through our SVD spirituality which is rooted in the word of God and Trinity. Let "our name" become tangible, concrete, healing and transforming in this ever changing and challenging world.





## **PART II**

### **OTHER DECISIONS OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER**





## **1. RESOLUTIONS**

### **1.1. Reconfirmed or Revised Resolutions from the 18<sup>th</sup> General Chapter**

#### **1.1.1 Human Trafficking**

That the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter empowers the Generalate coordinator for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), along with VIVAT International, to devise ways and means to educate our members about human trafficking and seek ways to collaborate with others to rid the world of this terrible scourge.

#### **1.1.2. Financial Self-Reliance as a Society Priority**

The General Chapter resolves that financial self-reliance of provinces and regions of the Society continue to be a priority concern of the Generalate and the entire Society and that, in this context, the incoming Generalate administration pursues the intent and content of Circular Letter P04/2007. An updated “Action Plan and Evaluation” as mandated in the circular letter is to be submitted annually by all subsidy-receiving PRs along with their budgets.

#### **1.1.3. Official Recognition of SVD Lay Associate Groups**

The General Chapter resolves that the provinces and regions give official recognition to lay associate groups. These groups so recognized will become part of the Arnoldus Family in the broader sense. Recognition will be given according to the stipulated criteria:

*Part I: Criteria for Official Recognition of Lay Associate Groups by SVD Provinces and Regions*

- a. The principal orientation of the group is the missionary charism and spirituality of St. Arnold Janssen and the founding generation.
- b. There should be statutes written and approved by the lay associate group. These statutes should include the following points:

- Commitment to mission based on the spirituality of St. Arnold Janssen and the founding generation.
  - Provisions for formation of the members of the group in the spirituality and charism of St. Arnold Janssen.
  - Administrative independence of the lay associate group from the SVD.
  - Financial independence of the lay associate group from the SVD.
  - Clear guidelines for financial accountability within the lay associate group.
- c. The provincial (regional) superior with the consent of his council has the authority to give official recognition to a lay associate group. There will be a process for revoking official recognition if serious problems arise. Consideration should be taken regarding the right to use SVD, Arnoldus, Arnold Janssen, Arnoldus Family, and similar words in the name of the group if recognition is revoked.
- d. Joint recognition of lay associate groups with the SSpS or SSpSAP, or both congregations, is a possibility, if the respective local and congregational leadership is in favor of such an arrangement.
- e. A copy of the statutes of all officially recognized lay associate groups will be sent to the Superior General.

### *Part II: Criteria for Collaboration with Lay Associate Groups*

- a. The principal mission of the laity is working toward a more just secular order. In keeping with their dignity as full members of the Church and of the Arnoldus Family, officially recognized lay associate groups will take the initiative in their own activities.
- b. In response to a request, and in consultation with the lay associate group, the provincial or regional superior can appoint conferes as spiritual directors, advisors, liaison, etc.
- c. Where possible, SVD facilities can be made available for meetings and other activities of lay associate groups.



- d. Common activities, such as bible sharing, prayers for the mission, mission awareness days, vocation promotion, celebrations, retreats, mission projects, local mission outreach, workshops and seminars, formation of lay missionaries, can be planned together, either periodically or in terms of long-range collaboration.
- e. Where possible, lay associate groups can be invited to participate in the initial and ongoing formation of confreres in the province or region (Recommendation 3.3.2, 16<sup>th</sup> General Chapter).
- f. Where appropriate, representatives from lay associate groups can be invited to participate in provincial and regional assemblies and chapters, in line with our Statutes for Chapters (Recommendation 3.3.2, 16<sup>th</sup> General Chapter).
- g. Lay associate groups are to be financially self-reliant. By exception and on a limited basis, SVD mission funds can be made available for special mission projects, with the consent of the provincial/regional council and in line with our norms.

#### **1.1.4. Establishing a Finance Committee in each PRM**

The General Chapter resolves that a Finance Committee be created in and by every Province / Region / Mission within the next three years to advise the PRM Administration in the fields of finance, investments and management.

#### **1.1.5. Establishing a Structure for Mission Animation and Fundraising**

The General Chapter resolves that every province/region set up its own structure for mission animation and fundraising with the objective being their contribution to the worldwide mission of the Society. With this structure, the mission secretary's three-fold responsibilities are to be his primary duties.

## **1.2. New Resolutions from the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter 2024**

### **1.2.1 Date of the Assumption of Office for the New General Administration**

The General Chapter resolves that Sunday, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2024, be the effective date for the assumption of Office for the new General Administration and the Start of the new *sexennium* 2024-2030.

### **1.2.2. Implementation of the statement “Our Name is our Mission.”**

Be it resolved that each PRM develops a plan to implement the statement: “Our Name is our Mission” in a concrete, systematic, organized, sustainable, and accountable way.

### **1.2.3. Review and Evaluation of the Financial Operations/Performances of the Formation Houses**

The General Chapter resolves that the General Council undertake a review and evaluation of the financial operations/performances of the big and growing formation houses in ASPAC and AFRAM, for the purpose of recommending and implementing innovative strategies, policies and systems that will synergize global SVD efforts in support of formation, also in the area of sharing personnel and finance.

### **1.2.4. Contribution for Formation Houses**

Be it resolved that, in the spirit of solidarity, each PRM strives to seek ways to contribute towards General Distribution annually for our key formation houses, which need the support.

### **1.2.5. Last Will and Living Will**

Be it resolved that the implementation of the directives of the society concerning the confreres’ last will (testament) and living will be completed within two years in each PRM.

## **Constitutional Amendments**

*(The Constitutions with \* mark need the approval from the Vatican, approval is being awaited)*

### **1.2.6. Amendment of c. 112**

Be it resolved that Constitution 112 be amended by adding to the abuse of power also the abuse of authority.

Thus, Constitution should read:

112. The poor have a privileged place in the gospel. In a world deeply scarred by injustice and inhuman living conditions, our faith calls us to recognize the presence of Christ in the poor and the oppressed. We thus commit ourselves to fostering unity and justice and to overcoming egoism and the abuse of power and the abuse of authority. We consider it our duty to promote justice according to the gospel in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed.

### **1.2.7. Amendment of c. 112.2**

Be it resolved that Constitution 112.2 be amended by adding to our struggles the environmental degradation.

Thus, Constitution should read:

112.2 Our struggle is not only against famine, ignorance, the denial of human rights and environmental degradation but especially against the sinfulness of the human heart which is at the root of the oppressive structures and systems that cause these evils.

### **1.2.8. Amendment of c. 112.4**

Be it resolved that Constitution 112.4 be amended by adding the integrity of creation to the causes of justice and peace that are to be promoted and raised awareness for.

Thus, Constitution should read:

112.4 In all provinces the commitment to the poor must be promoted and an appropriate awareness of the cause of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation aroused and intensified. The generalate should coordinate and foster these efforts.

### **1.2.9. Amendment of c. 120.3**

Be it resolved that Constitution 120.3 be amended by adding the environmental to the social-political conditions for which we take a prudent and responsible position.

Thus, Constitution should read:

120.3 We do not hesitate to take a prudent and responsible position concerning social-political and environmental conditions. This position should accord with the gospel teaching, the directives of the Holy See and local hierarchy, and be taken in harmony with the community.

### **1.2.10. Amendment of c. 205**

Be it resolved that Constitution 205 be amended by adding an extra directory (205.4) so that all confreres be aware that adoption is forbidden to those who are obligated to the consecrated chastity and celibacy.

Thus, Constitution should read:

205.4 Adoption falls under those conditions which are not appropriate for religious, from the viewpoint of both the moral and economic obligations which it creates. Moreover, it is contrary to the consecrated chastity and celibacy which presuppose freedom from family obligations in order to pursue total dedications to God and service to mankind. For this reason, therefore, adoption is forbidden to those who are obligated to the consecrated chastity and celibacy (see can. 285, §§1-2).

### **1.2.11. Amendment of c. 212**

Be it resolved that Constitution 212 be amended by adding an extra directory (212.9) so that all confreres be aware that any suspicion and/or accusation of a possible financial abuse and mismanagement will be appropriately addressed and investigated and, if proven true, that proper canonical measures will be taken and imposed on those who violated the vow of poverty and the financial policy.

Thus, Constitution should read:

212.9 All members must be educated and aware that any suspicion and/or accusation of a possible financial abuse and mismanagement will be appropriately addressed and investigated and, if proven true, that proper canonical measures will be taken and imposed on a confrere violating the vow of poverty and the financial policy (see can. 1376, §§1-2).

### **1.2.12. Amendment of c. 502**

Be it resolved that Constitution 502 be amended by adding the care of creation as a goal for formation.

Thus, Constitution should read:

502 Missionary service and religious life form a unity in our Society: the missionary mandate determines the form of our religious life, and the spirit of the evangelical counsels permeates our whole missionary work. This one vocation holds good for both the individual and the community. It demands a radical commitment to the missionary task.

In order that this vocation can develop fully, formation must be integral, rooted in one's own culture, community-forming, directed towards apostolic service and open to the needs of the world and the care of creation. Moreover, attention is to be paid in all aspects of formation to the basic spirituality given to our Society by Saint Arnold Janssen.

### **1.2.13. Amendment of c. 507**

Be it resolved that Constitution 507 be amended by replacing the word “world” with “creation” in the following sentence: “(...) one aim of our formation is to cultivate a listening ear for God’s voice in the world (...)”.

Thus, Constitution should read:

507 As religious missionaries we are conscious of our obligation to the world and its needs. Therefore, one aim of our formation is to cultivate a listening ear for God’s voice in his creation, its history and happenings, and to respond to it in a Christian way. Attentiveness to the signs of the times is part of our vocation. It is to be practiced during the period of basic formation and throughout one’s life.

### **1.2.14. Amendment of c. 507**

Be it resolved that Constitution 507 be amended by adding an extra directory (507.4), stating that the care of creation is part of our mission and heritage, and that there is a need to develop an ecological understanding and effective commitment during the period of basic formation and throughout one’s life.

Thus, Constitution should read:

507.4 Creation is a sign of God’s love for us. Caring for it is not only part of our mission, but also of our heritage. St. Arnold Janssen believed that nature is the temple of God into which God placed us so that it would proclaim to us God’s existence.

The progressive deterioration of the environment due to human actions demands a greater ecological understanding and an effective commitment to defending nature, ecosystems, water sources, and native peoples.

### **1.2.15. Amendment of c. 602**

Be it resolved that Constitution 602 be amended by adding an extra directory (602.1) so that all confreres, who are in a position of authority or an office, be aware of canonical measures in case of abusing their position.

Thus, the Constitution should read:

602.1 Canonical measures must be imposed on a confrere who, established in some position of dignity, or who, in order to commit a crime, has abused a position of authority or an office (see can. 1326, §1, 2°).

### **1.2.16. Amendment of c. 611.9**

Be it resolved that Constitution 611.9 be amended by adding another serious reason of removing a confrere from office, that is, acts committed or omitted by negligence in cases of abuse of minors or vulnerable adults.

Thus, Constitution should read:

611.9 When there is question of removing a confrere from office for serious reasons, the appropriate council mentioned in c. 618.7, 619.9a, 619.9i, 619.10c and 630.3g should weigh the matter well. Some such serious reasons are: proven inability to perform the duties of one's office; a clear lack of the religious and missionary spirit; acts committed or omitted by negligence in cases of abuse of minors or vulnerable adults; every other serious personal failing or some external circumstance, as a result of which grave harm threatens the community. Before being removed the confrere concerned should be given an opportunity of defending himself. In addition, he enjoys the right of recourse to higher authorities. If the final decision favors removal, it shall be carried out with firmness and kindness.

### **1.2.17. Amendment of c. 612.1 & c. 612.2**

Be it resolved that Constitution 612.1 and 612.2 be amended by adding the possibility for the superior to convoke his councilors for a meeting using the computerized and telematic means in an emergency to obtain their consultative vote.

Thus, Constitution 612.1 and 612.2 should read:

612.1 Whenever the constitutions or directory require the advice of the councilors to be taken, the superior must ask their opinion (con-



sultative vote) in order to act validly, but he is not bound by it. He should not, however, make light of their considered advice.

In an emergency situation, the superior can convoke his councilors for a meeting in order to obtain their opinion (consultative vote) using computerized and telematic means (can. 127, §1).

When the consent of the council is required (deliberative vote), a superior cannot act validly without it.

In cases where a collegial vote is required, or the superior wants it (insofar as this is possible), the superior and his councilors vote jointly and decide by a majority.

To be licit, for elections, appointments, admissions and dismissals, the deliberative or collegial vote must always be taken by secret ballot. A councilor may demand a secret ballot in other matters besides those just mentioned.

612.2 \* Where a collegial or a deliberative vote is called for, the councilors must be assembled and deliberate as a body. Only in cases of a consultative vote may a superior abstain from calling the council and instead ask each councilor individually.

\*When the requirement of the physical presence of the entire council for a collegial or a deliberative vote, as prescribed by can. 166, §1, is prevented due to grave and serious reasons, the superior, for individual cases, can also convoke his councilors for a meeting in order to obtain their vote, either deliberative or collegial, using computerized and telematic means. However, permission for these individual cases must always be asked for from and given by higher hierarchical authority. Moreover, in the use of computerized and telematic means, confidentiality and, in the case of required secrecy, both must be ensured (see. can. 127).

### **1.2.18. Amendment of c. 618**

Be it resolved that Constitution 618 be amended by adding an extra directory (618.2) concerning what has to be followed if a brother is elected the superior general.

Thus, Constitution should read:

618.2 \*If a brother is elected the superior general, his election must be confirmed in writing by the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

### **1.2.19. Amendment of c. 619.5**

Be it resolved that Constitution 619.5 be amended by adding what has to be followed if a brother is elected the vice-superior general.

Thus, Constitution should read:

619.5 \*The vice-general must have been in perpetual vows for at least ten years. He takes the place of the superior general whenever the latter is impeded in the exercise of his office and should, therefore, be present at the generalate if this situation arises. Thus, if a brother is elected the vice-general, his election must also be confirmed in writing by the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

### **1.2.20. Amendment of c. 627**

Be it resolved that Constitution 627 be amended by clarifying who of the provincial superiors and when he has the competence over a confrere being newly assigned to a province or transferred from one province to another.

Thus, Constitution should read:

627 The province consists of several local communities within a given geographical area, united into a larger community to realize more effectively the goals of the Society. All confreres normally belong to a province (see c. 629.1).

- 627.1 The first assignment of a confrere to a province takes effect for juridical purposes only when he arrives at his new province, saving what is stated in c. 611.3. Until then, he will be under the jurisdiction of the provincial superior of the province to which he has belonged.
- 627.2 The transfer of a confrere from one province to another takes effect for juridical purposes from the date stipulated in the letter of the superior general. In case that the confrere still stays for some time in his old province, the superior delegatus will be in charge of him.

### **1.2.21. Amendment of c. 629**

Be it resolved that Constitution 629 be amended by adding an extra directory (629.3\*) concerning the competence of the superior general to appoint a brother to the office of the provincial superior.

Thus, Constitution should read:

629.3\* The Superior General, acting with the consent of his council, can name a brother as the provincial superior after having received written permission from the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

### **1.2.22. Amendment of c. 630**

Be it resolved that Constitution 630 be amended by adding an extra directory (630.1\*) concerning the competence of the superior general to appoint a brother to the office of the vice-provincial superior.

Thus, Constitution should read:

630.1\* The superior general, acting with the consent of his council, can name a brother as the vice-provincial superior after having received written permission from the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

### **1.2.23. Amendment of c. 636**

Be it resolved that Constitution 636 be amended by adding an extra directory (636.8\*) concerning the competence of the superior general to appoint a brother to the office of the local superior.

Thus, Constitution should read:

636.8\* The superior general, with the consent of his council, can appoint a brother as a superior of a local community.

### **1.2.24. Amendment of c. 637**

Be it resolved that Constitution 637 be amended by adding an extra directory (637.1\*) concerning the competence of the superior general to appoint a brother to the office of the vice-superior of a local community.

Thus, the Constitution should read:

637.1\* The superior general, with the consent of his council, can also appoint a brother as a vice-superior of a local community.

### **1.2.25. Amendment of c. 645**

Be it resolved that Constitution 645 be amended by adding the care of the integrity of creation as a requirement in the administration and use of means entrusted to us.

Thus, Constitution should read:

645 In the administration and use of means entrusted to us, we must observe poverty, simplicity, justice, and care for the integrity of creation. This holds true, especially for extraordinary administration, that is, for acquiring, alienating, and mortgaging property, as well as for building, investing, and assuming debts.

### **1.2.26. Amendment of c. 715**

Be it resolved that Constitution 715 be amended by changing the length of voluntary exclaustation from three (3) to five (5) years.

Thus, Constitution should read:

715 For a serious reason the superior general with the consent of his council can grant an indult of exlaustration for up to five years to a confrere in perpetual vows. In the case of a cleric the consent of the local ordinary in whose diocese he will reside is also required. Only the Holy See can prolong the indult of exlaustration beyond five years or grant it initially for a longer period (see can 686 §1).

### **1.2.27. Amendment of c. 720**

Be it resolved that Constitution 720 be amended by adding an extra ground (letter c) for the automatic dismissal, that is, an unlawful absence of a confrere from the religious house for at least twelve (12) uninterrupted months, whose whereabouts are unknown and, in whose case, a normal process for his dismissal cannot be followed.

Thus, Constitution should read:

720 The following members are automatically dismissed from the Society (see can 694):

- a) one who publicly falls away from the faith;
- b) one who gets married or attempts to get married even if only civilly;
- c) one who has been unlawfully absent from the religious house for at least twelve (12) uninterrupted months, whose whereabouts are unknown and, in whose case, a normal process for his dismissal cannot be followed.

In the first two cases the major superior and his council should immediately collect the corresponding proof and issue a declaration of the fact to establish the dismissal juridically.

In the third case, major superior is called to assemble all the facts of the case and to issue the declaration of the fact. However, in order for the dismissal to be implemented and legally valid, the declaration of the fact must be confirmed by the Holy See.

### **1.2.28. Amendment of c. 722**

Be it resolved that Constitution 722 be amended by adding an extra ground (letter h), concerning the repeated grave failings against poverty, financial mismanagement so that all confreres be aware that proper canonical measures will be taken and imposed on those who violated the vow of poverty and the financial policy.

Thus, Constitution should read:

722 h) other reasons of similar gravity that can be determined by proper law, e.g., repeated grave failings against poverty, financial mismanagement (see can. 1376 and 1377).

### **1.2.29. Amendment of c. 726**

Be it resolved that Constitution 726 be amended by adopting the new legislation concerning the effectiveness of the decree of dismissal as well as the length period for an appeal against the decree of dismissal.

Thus, Constitution should read:

726 The decree of dismissal is to be sent to the dismissed confrere and it takes effect from the time that it is communicated to him. To be valid, however, the decree must indicate the right which the dismissed confrere possesses to make recourse to the competent authority within thirty days from receiving notification. If the confrere exercises his right of recourse, the decree of dismissal is suspended (see can. 700).







## **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2.1. Reconfirmed or Revised Recommendations from the 18<sup>th</sup> General Chapter**

#### **2.1.1. Migrants and Refugee Apostolate**

Be it recommended that the Generalate encourages provinces, regions, and missions to appoint more confreres for the migrant and refugee apostolate.

#### **2.1.2. Lay Participation**

The General Chapter recommends that the Society promote, where possible and when opportune, the participation of the laity in our assemblies and chapters on the provincial/regional, zonal or general levels (in line with our Statutes for Chapters), our initial and ongoing formation, and our administration.

#### **2.1.3. Formation/Inter-zonal cooperation**

Be it recommended that the general administration encourage the participation of selected formators of one zone in the formation gatherings of the other zones, in view of mutually enriching the formation programs in the different zones. Formators are also encouraged to have short-term experiences in other formation houses within or outside of their zone to expand their vision of formation.

#### **2.1.4. SVD Mission Day/Weekend/Week**

The General Chapter recommends that every PRM organize an SVD Mission Day or SVD Mission Weekend or SVD Mission Week annually to celebrate our worldwide mission in every parish/house/institution.

#### **2.1.5. Raising Funds for PRM Needs**

The General Chapter recommends that every PRM strengthen the network of benefactors for its ad intra needs. The raising of funds for the PRM should be separated from the raising of funds for the SVD mission worldwide.

### **2.1.6. Daily Prayers for SVD Leadership**

Be it recommended that conferees pray daily for the Superior General and his Council, as well as for their respective PRM leader, especially during the Eucharist in an appropriate way.

## **2.2. New Recommendations from 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter 2024**

### **2.2.1. Celebration of the Sunday of the Word of God**

Be it recommended that the Sunday of the Word of God be celebrated in a special way in the SVD communities, institutions, and parishes.

### **2.2.2. Education as a Priority and General Coordinator for Education**

Be it recommended that Education be one of the Priorities of our missionary apostolates. The General Administration takes appropriate steps in the next *sexennium* to strengthen and foster this Priority with a General Coordinator for Education who develops the needed structural and orientational tools.

### **2.2.3. Promoting and Strengthening Vivat International**

Be it recommended that promoting and strengthening VIVAT International as an essential tool of our prophetic voice in our respective PRMs be done to advocate on the issues affecting the wounded people in our care.

### **2.2.4. Research Program/Team at the Generalate**

The General Chapter recommends that having a research program/team which is able to guide the Generalate administration and other decision-making processes, provide data-driven insights to support strategic planning and decision-making processes within the congregation.

### **2.2.5. Programs for the Common Formation of Formators**

Be it recommended that programs for the common formation of formators be established at the zonal level.

### **2.2.6. Dei Verbum Course in the Zones and Subzones**

Be it recommended that *Dei Verbum* Courses be developed and conducted in Zones and Subzones under the guidance of the Zonal Leadership and in cooperation with the Generalate Biblical Apostolate Coordinator.

### **2.2.7. Youth and Family Ministry**

Be it recommended that i) PRMs form an animation team for youth and family ministry within three years. ii) That PRMs develop a methodology, action plan/programs, and strategies to address the concerns on youth and family ministry in the next three years (cf. SVD C. 109.1 & 109.2) and provide a report at the PRM and Zonal levels.

### **2.2.8. Formulating a Formation program for the SVD Lay Associates/Partners**

Be it recommended that a common formation program for the SVD Lay Mission Partners be formulated by the Generalate with regards to SVD Spirituality, Charism, Prophetic Dialogue, and Characteristic Dimensions.

### **2.2.9. Promotion of SVD Lay Associates/Partners**

The General Chapter recommends:

- i) that in each PRM a confrere, preferably the mission secretary, be the one responsible for the organization of the SVD lay associates/partners and in working with them, and that it be his duty in coordination with PRM superiors to look for confreres to be their spiritual animators.
- ii) that each PRM organizes annual meetings or assemblies of lay associates/partners, and that Subzones and Zones hold similar events once in three years.

- iii) that PRM superiors take responsibility for assessing the collaboration between the Society and SVD lay associates/partners over the next three years.

### **2.2.10. SVD Lay Missionaries**

The General Chapter recommends that each PRM makes provision for sending and/or accepting lay missionaries within two years and communicates this to the Zonal Coordinator who disseminates this information to others.

If a PRM is positive to send and/or accept the lay missionaries, the mission secretary together with the province/regional superior establishes norms for sending or hosting lay missionaries in their province/region, and where necessary, he establishes the norms with the local church administrators. The mission secretaries are entrusted with the task of preparing and promoting the lay missionaries.

### **2.2.11. Zonal Structure**

After deliberating on the outcome of the survey on the Zonal Structure mandated by the 18<sup>th</sup> General Chapter, the 19<sup>th</sup> General Chapter recommends that the present Zonal Structure be retained, and greater emphasis be given to the functioning of the Subzones wherever possible and necessary. The General Council, in consultation with the Zonal Executive Committee, will establish some mechanisms to strengthen the functioning of the Subzones.

### **3. RESOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 18<sup>TH</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER 2018**

#### **3.1. Reconfirmed or Revised Resolutions**

1. Human Trafficking (see above 1.1.1)
2. Financial Self-Reliance as a Society Priority (1.1.2)
3. Official Recognition of Lay Associate Groups (see above 1.1.3)
4. Establishing a Finance Committee in Each PRM (see above 1.1.4)
5. Establishing a Structure for Mission Animation and Fund Raising (see above 1.1.5)

#### **3.2. Abrogated Resolutions**

1. Brothers
2. Congregational Directions of GC 2012 #29: Spirituality Reflection Guide and Programs
3. Congregational Directions of GC 2012 #31: Efforts toward Fuller Interculturality
4. Date of Assumption of Office for the New General Administration
5. Recommitment to the Congregational Directions
6. Synchronization of the PRM Elections
7. Internal Controls on Financial Administration
8. Financial Advisory Group
9. Evaluation of the Zonal Structure

#### **3.3. Reconfirmed or Revised Recommendations**

1. Migrant and Refugee Apostolate (see above 2.1.1)
2. Lay Participation (2.1.2)
3. Formation / Inter-Zonal Cooperation (2.1.3)
4. SVD Day/Weekend/Week (see above 2.1.4)
5. Raising Funds for PRM Needs (see above 2.1.5)
6. Daily Prayers for SVD Leadership (see above 2.1.6)

#### **3.4. Abrogated Recommendations**

1. Sexennial Evaluation of Formation Programs
2. Monthly Bible Guide







**APPENDICES**



Faithful to the Word





## **1. ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD**

Clementine Hall  
Friday, 28 June 2024

*Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!*

A special greeting to the Superior General, who has just been appointed Archbishop of Ende in Indonesia.

You have chosen a significant theme for your General Chapter: *“Your Light Must Shine Before Others (Mt 5:16): Faithful and Creative Disciples in a Wounded World.”* A Chapter is a pause for reflection on a Congregation’s charism and mission. Since you are the Society of the Divine Word, in these days you are returning to the source of your identity: the Lord Jesus, the Word of salvation.

God’s Word generates, gives life, inspires, and motivates; it is the focal point of your mission. That Word, which took flesh in Jesus, revealed the face of the Father and his merciful love. In this way, the Word incarnate became the light of the world, who then commanded his disciples, “Let your light shine before others” (Mt 5:16). How does this happen? By being with him and going forth, abiding in his love and bearing witness to him. Evangelization is only possible through this way, and “demands

familiarity with God's word" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 175). This, brothers and sisters, is the source from which you are always born and reborn as *faithful disciples and creative missionaries*. Let us pause for a moment to reflect on these two aspects.

*Faithful disciples.* All of the baptized are called to be missionary disciples, and fidelity to this vocation, always by the grace of God, is our commitment. Faithful disciples are recognized by the joy of the Gospel that lights up their face, from the way they live their life and thus transmit to others the love that they first received and continue to receive anew each day. Experiencing the love of the Trinity and keeping alive the flame of the Spirit is vital to our growth as missionary disciples and religious. That flame daily renews us; it purifies and transforms us as we make our pilgrim way, ever conscious of our sins, amid the blandishments of this world. Yet, you have to be courageous and confident in the mercy of God, who always forgives. We, too, must always forgive and never deny absolution.

*Creative missionaries.* What is the source of your creativity? Good and healthy creativity, not one that is always superficial, self-referential, and worldly. Instead, sound missionary work comes from the Word and the Spirit, that is, from Christ living within you, who makes you sharers. It is he, not we, who attracts hearts to himself! The Spirit is the "protagonist", while our role consists in working with all our might, employing all our talents in the certainty that the Creator Spirit is always at work, whereas we are called to be his docile instruments, "channels" that transparently reflect his presence. You serve in seventy-nine different countries: you are there to proclaim the Gospel and "make present in the world the kingdom of God" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 176). This, as you well know, is done more by spreading joy than by imposing obligations. Creative missionary activities are born of love for the Word of God; and creativity is born of contemplation and discernment. While our personal initiatives are good, creative activity on the part of the community is better for the unity and strength of the Church.

Dear brothers, I thank you because your Chapter's "guidelines" allow me to highlight some pressing current issues.

First: the need to be *peacemakers*. Our world is scarred by conflicts, wars, destruction of the environment, violent acts against human life and dignity, fundamentalist ideologies, and many other wounds. Peace is the cry rising from the world's peoples. Let us listen to this plea and become peacemakers! The risen Jesus repeatedly said to the apostles: "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:19, 21, 26). He wants them to be sowers of peace, saying "Peace be with you". To which he added, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (v. 21). Let us bring the peace of Christ to all, especially to the poor, migrants who suffer much, women who face discrimination, children, and the marginalized. God heard the cry of an enslaved people (cf. Ex 3:9); may we not close our ears to the cry of those who are oppressed in our own day, and prove creative in fostering peace.

The second urgent need: *to be the hope for every culture*. You must be the hope for every culture. On the eve of the Jubilee Year, in this wounded world, our communities must become signs of hope. This is prophetic. It means that, before *giving* hope, we need to *be* hope, exercising the character that derives from our baptism. In your case, consecration in accordance with your original charism confirms and strengthens those baptismal gifts and impels you to become committed witnesses in the various social and cultural settings where you find yourselves, "being prophetic hope *for every culture*." This is a great challenge! Only the Church can respond to it, because from the beginning she has been enlivened by the Spirit of Pentecost. I like to read in the Acts of the Apostles about what the Holy Spirit does. There is confusion, everyone is talking, but they all understand each other! So many times in confusing situations, the Spirit takes the Church forward. Do not be afraid of conflicts! Do not create conflicts, but don't be afraid of conflicts either. Do not be afraid of the confusion of today's culture. The Spirit can enter there. "Be the hope for every culture". You are experts in *inculturation*, one of the fruits of your charism. In the course of the years, you have learned to live your missionary vocation by showing respect for all cultures and peoples. Yet discernment is needed. Today, the internet and social media, approached uncritically, are influencing people's lifestyles and values. Saint John Paul II, on the other hand, called us to shape "a new culture of love and of hope inspired by the truth that frees us in Christ Jesus. This is the goal of inculturation." [1] It takes discernment, so ask the Holy Spirit for this grace of discernment.

Now, a third aspect: to be *missionaries of synodality*. A Church that “goes forth” is open to others. It is a welcoming and embracing community where the Lord lives and the Spirit is active. The Church that goes out is extroverted, while a partisan Church is introverted. Always be open, put your heart into it! Today the Church must grow in a synodal approach, listening to everyone, dialoguing with everyone, and discerning in the Holy Spirit what is her mission. Synodality is not a question of being in fashion. “Synodality is essentially missionary and, vice versa, mission is always synodal” (*Message for World Mission Day*, 20 October 2024). For this reason, I encourage you to promote synodality in every aspect of your life. May every community grow and enjoy a synodal “style” whereby each member feels listened to and accepted. Finally, do as the Spirit tells you, but be sure to be sensitive to the way the Spirit moves: gently, among the simple and in the most distant places.

Dear brothers and sisters, in 2025 you will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Society of the Divine Word. Your hearts are filled with gratitude to God for his immense love, which has moved you to go to every part of the world to preach the Word and to spread the love of God, forming communities, serving the poor, working for social justice, offering education and empowerment, and caring for the environment. In this spirit of gratitude, you are now reflecting on how to share creatively the joy of Jesus’ resurrection. Saint Arnold Janssen knew how to discern God’s will and to guide the Society in the way of the Spirit. This is the charism of a founder! Today, may you follow this charism, and may his example and intercession guide your communal discernment and help you to take courageous steps forward, in humility and in trusting abandonment to God. I thank you for who you are and for all that you do. I offer you my heartfelt blessing, and I ask you, please, not to forget to pray for me. Thank you.

[1] Address to Participants in the Plenary Session of the Pontifical Council for Culture, 10 January, 1992.





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## **2. STATEMENT OF THE SVD LAY PARTNERS' WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS**

18 February to 2 March 2024  
Centro Ad Gentes, Nemi, Italy

### **1. Dream of SVD Lay Partners**

We, the SVD lay partners, guided by the Holy Spirit, want to remain rooted in the Word and to grow in Arnoldus spirituality. We stay committed to carrying out God's mission in serving people on the periphery and the marginalized. We desire to be more open to the Holy Spirit and to welcome all peoples and work together with the SVD Congregation and other lay partners.

We dream of participating in God's mission:

- So that our members become more Christ-centered, rooted in Catholic teaching, united with the word of God; to pursue the Catholic Faith and possess a discerning spirit to accomplish God's mission.

- So that we become a growing global community, in collaboration with the SVD, by embracing all cultures, particularly those on the periphery of society.

We dream of journeying in commitment to mission:

- So that we involve ourselves in the four characteristic dimensions – Bible, Mission Animation, JPIC, and Communication to bring into reality the love of God. More particularly, we desire: to see a world that breathes justice and peace, to make Mother Earth our home; to accompany the less fortunate and oppressed; and to reach out to those on the margins.
- So that we strengthen our own families, bringing all of them to build a community in which we can share our joys and sorrows and live Arnoldus spirituality.

We dream of being partners with the Society of the Divine Word:

- So that we work collaboratively with the Society to show the face of God to people.
- So that we meet with the SVD regularly to strengthen the bond and to learn from each other

We dream of growing both in our vocational journey and in numbers:

- So that we can be accompanied by a Spiritual Animator/Director who can guide us to understand the Arnoldus Spirituality, to assist us in deepening our understanding of the Bible and scriptures, and to help us discern our vocation as lay partners.
- So that we endeavor to establish more lay partner groups and become lay associates who are closer to the Society as well as to other lay associate groups.
- So that every group has Statutes that guide our vision and mission and action plans to demonstrate our identity as SVD lay partners/associates.
- So that we engage and re-energize younger people in our journey so that there is vibrancy, creativity, innovation, and resources.



## 2. Steps in Realizing the Dreams

As a group, we worked on various ideas on how to realize the dreams stated above. Starting with a clear vision of both a sound structured plan that would help to organize the SVD lay partner groups and also the following steps that would assist us in our provinces/regions/missions.

As SVD lay partners, we participate in the mission of God through activities that demonstrate our commitment to the Word of God and mission, by spreading the Divine Word starting within our communities. We strive ***to participate in God's mission*** taking the following steps as individuals and as lay partners:

- Develop a prayerful discernment; commit to grow in our Catholic faith, by enthusiastically participating in spiritual activities such as workshops, retreats, and Bible studies.
- Welcome all of God's people to participate in SVD missionary activities.
- Formulate guidelines for the SVD partners to meet the priorities of the Lay Mission locally and globally in order to better serve people.
- Collaborate with SVDs and establish Statutes for approval.

We strive to live our SVD journey faithfully and devotedly by actively participating in faith formation, education, and service to others. To strengthen ***our commitment to mission***, we take the following steps:

- Work for JPIC as a significant priority along with the other dimensions.
- Find ways to help our communities with environmental and ecological concerns.
- Schedule regular workshops and training with clear agendas and objectives based on short and long-term mission goals.
- Attend retreats to deepen our spirituality and commitment to the SVD Lay Partner/Lay Associate vocation for both current and new members.
- Commit to working with youth, families, and the marginalized.

As partners in our mission, we commit *to collaborate with the Society of the Divine Word*. Therefore, we would like to take these steps with the power of the Holy Spirit to meet the needs of our communities:

- Promote the SVD mission using networking platforms throughout the organization globally and internationally.
- Network with other SVD communities and SVD partner groups to foster strong prophetic dialogue across the ecumenical community.
- Work in collaboration with SVD and SVD lay partners to strengthen the SVD mission by contributing financially as well as giving our personal and professional resources as much as we can.
- Work in collaboration with SVD communities and SVD lay partners to strengthen the SVD lay associations and *promote more members* to strengthen the various groups. We will do the following to promote more lay partner groups:
- Seek the assistance of SVDs to prepare the Formation Manual to form ourselves more effectively, which, in turn, could strengthen our vocation;
- Invest more time in promoting and emphasizing the importance of starting Lay Partner groups in every SVD Parish;
- Commit to establishing SVD youth groups in our countries;
- Find and strengthen common mission with SVD partner;
- Network with other faiths by including all Lay Missionaries in all four zones, sub-zones, and internationally as a whole.

### 3. Formation of the Lay Partners

**Initial formation:** It was strongly reiterated that initial formation and ongoing education of lay partners are critical to the growth and development of every SVD lay partner/associate. We plea to have a Spiritual Animator in each Province/Region/Mission to accompany and assist us with this formation. We need to create a formal, friendly invitation and introduction to lay partner ministry. For lay partners to be formed effectively, SVDs could combine theology and practical instruction, and provide a clear understanding of the vision, mission, charism, and four dimensions of the SVD; provide encouragement and

personalized follow-up; and offer a solid, well-structured training for the lay partners so we are better prepared for fruitful and committed service in the SVD community.

**Ongoing formation:** Let us continue this ongoing formation with a well-structured, thorough, and comprehensive training for SVD lay collaborators. For lay partners to be formed effectively, SVDs could combine contemporary theology, spirituality, biblical education and Society documents; this would need to be combined with identifying needs, developing a diversified training plan, promoting participation, evaluating results over time, and applying what has been learned. A renewal of commitment and establishing a *spiritually binding covenant* for every member is recommended.

#### 4. Some Activities for the Future

- **Logo** – The creation of a common Logo for all SVD Lay Partners and Associations is an urgent task. The process has begun and should be completed within four months.
- **Structure:** Each Zone will organize a zonal meeting of lay partners to elect five office bearers for the Zone. This will be done within three years. The next step would be for all the zone leaders to come together within five years, by Zoom or other means, to elect the international leaders.
- **Newsletter** – It is most significant to strengthen the SVD Lay Partners' Newsletter by making the newsletter accessible and ensuring all partners receive the newsletter by email. The mailing list can be updated at [svdlaicos@gmail.com](mailto:svdlaicos@gmail.com). The Newsletter is also available online at <https://www.svdcuria.org/public/mission/newsbul/svdlp/lp2308en.pdf>
- **App/Website/Portal** – A core group from the four zones has been formed to discuss the design and development of such applications. Many elements are to be considered such as cost, administrator(s), and content. This is an ongoing project that will take time to develop considering all pertinent information.

In conclusion, we aim to remain faithful to our formation by aligning ourselves with the spirituality of our Founder to achieve a more mean-

ingful and enriching community. Realizing these dreams and fulfilling all these steps will not be possible without the support of the mission secretary, the spiritual animator and other SVD confreres. We seek their assistance in realizing these dreams.

*May the darkness of sin and the night of unbelief vanish before the Light of the Word and the Spirit of grace and may the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all.*



### **3. PRAYER**

#### **150<sup>TH</sup> SVD ANNIVERSARY**

Holy Triune God, source of life and communion,  
We thank you for inspiring Saint Arnold Janssen  
to found the Society of the Divine Word.  
We extend our gratitude to those who preceded us,  
and to all collaborators in mission.

United to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word,  
we are his missionary disciples who proclaim  
the Good News of life and joy,  
alongside works of friendship and compassion for a wounded world.

With your Holy Spirit, renew us, Lord,  
strengthen our journey as pilgrims of hope,  
and in the face of new challenges, may we generate responses  
with creativity, fidelity, and synodality.

Holy Mary, Mother of the Divine Word, guide our mission  
with signs that build communion and promote participation.  
May the Light of your Son, which overcomes darkness,  
illuminate our hearts, and all of humanity and creation.  
Amen.

