



WORD

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Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, Indore - 2007



SVD





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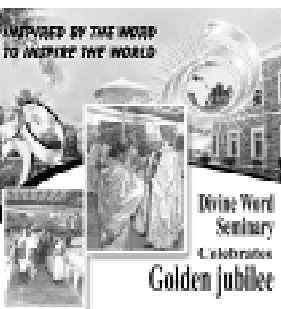
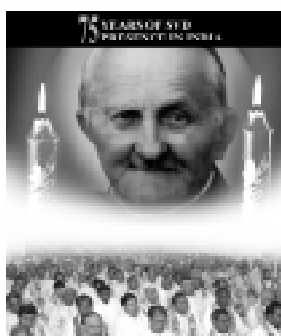
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Fighting violence



Even a casual observation of the contemporary society would clearly reveal that there is a culture of death and violence that is slowly, but steadily emerging in the world. We are living in a more violent world than ever before. Much of the violence in our society and in our personal lives stems from the passive violence that we commit against each other. The violent desire to possess more and more makes us ruthless and insensitive to the other.

The values of non-violence and tolerance are at its lowest ebb even in India – the land of Mahatma Gandhi who was a vehement proponent of *ahimsa* and non-violent resistance to evil. Even religions that preach love and brotherhood as the supreme norm of life have paradoxically become a source of conflict, tension and riots.

Christians have been the target of persecution and violence down the centuries, from its very beginning. The latest in the series of attacks against Christians and Christian missionaries in India were reported from the Kandhamal district in the archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar in Orissa, on the eve of Christmas. What ought to be the response of the Christian community to this and similar massive misappropriation of justice and use of violence? There is always the danger of fighting back in the same measure and with the same coin.

Archbishop Raphael Cheenath of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar in his pastoral letter reminds the Christian community that these are times when the gospel values of love, understanding, forgiveness, kindness, patience, and honesty ought to guide them and shine out as distinctive and characteristic marks of their lives. Let us recall to mind the words of Mahatma Gandhi, that non-violence is the greatest force at the disposal of humankind and that it is mightier than the mightiest weapon of destruction devised by the ingenuity of humanity.

On 29th January, 2008, the sons and daughters of Saint Arnold Janssen are celebrating the death centenary of another great apostle of love and tolerance, Saint Joseph Freinademetz, the zealous missionary to China. The period beginning on this great feast and extending to January 15, 2009, the death centenary of our founder Saint Arnold Janssen, has been earmarked as the centenary year with the theme, '*precious is the life given for Mission*'.

This platinum jubilee issue of *Word India* commemorates both the platinum jubilee of our presence in India and the golden jubilee of Divine Word Seminary, Pune. Let these celebrations and the centenary year be an year of blessings to all.

Babu Kakkaniyil SVD



*Excerpts from the homily given by Rev. Fr. Antonio Pernia
during the Platinum Jubilee Thanksgiving mass
on 7th November, 2007*

Today we gather to celebrate 75 years of SVD presence in India. Today our thoughts go back to 1932 when the first SVD missionaries arrived in Indore, or even a few years before that when the superiors of the Society considered the request of the Propaganda Fide to take up a mission in Central India. They must have sat down to calculate the cost of the mission in terms of the Society's financial and personnel resources. But beyond considering the calculable, they must also have reflected on what is fundamentally incalculable – faith in God's grace and guidance and confidence

in the generosity of the people's response. They critically examined the present, but also courageously looked into the future.

Today we see in India four SVD provinces and one region with a variety of apostolates and ministries – parishes, schools, research institutes, retreat centers, communication outlets, formation houses, ministry with dalits and indigenous peoples, orphans and street children, the poor and people with HIV-AIDS, outreach to people of other cultures and religions. Today we count some 850 Indian Divine Word missionaries - the second largest national



group in the whole Society of the Divine Word. More than 200 of these work as missionaries in other lands, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with people of other nations, cultures, and languages.

The beginning was small – first two, then four more, and then seven more. The beginning was difficult – learning the language, adapting to the culture, primitive conditions, a huge area, long distances, limited resources. In a certain sense, it was a repeat of September 8, 1875 in Steyl when the Society of the Divine Word was born. St. Arnold Janssen, the founder, had only four men with him in a yet untransformed inn. The guests who gathered for the inaugural mass were skeptical of the project that was being started. They sat on improvised furnitures and used borrowed utensils for the feast afterwards. The founder was not unmindful of all this. In his homily at the mass, he said: “The simplicity of this beginning should not discourage us We

The beginning was small – first two, then four more, and then seven more. The beginning was difficult – learning the language, adapting to the culture, primitive conditions, a huge area, long distances, limited resources. In a certain sense, it was a repeat of September 8, 1875 in Steyl when the Society of the Divine Word was born

know that with our present resources we cannot accomplish our task; but we hope that the good Lord will provide everything we need. May he do with us as He wishes. If this seminary succeeds, we will thank the grace of God. If nothing comes of it, we will humbly strike our breast and confess that we were not worthy of the grace.”

The pioneers of the Indian mission had learned well from the founder. They had little resources. But they had great faith – a profound trust in God’s grace and an abiding confidence in the generosity of the people. Like in Steyl, something has come of that small and difficult beginning. A great tower and a formidable army. But all, the result of God’s grace and the peoples’ generosity. Today, then, we celebrate not so much human achievement as God’s grace, not so much missionary success as the people’s generous response. Thus, our celebration today of the Platinum Jubilee of the SVD in India can only be a celebration of thanksgiving. We come together today to thank God for the grace, and the people for their generosity.

But as we do so, we also pay tribute to the pioneers of the Indian mission, and the generation of SVD missionaries, from abroad and from India, who came after them. We pay tribute to their vision, their courage, their dedication. But above all, we pay tribute to their unflagging commitment to the following of Jesus, the Divine Word. Indeed, the words of today’s gospel apply to them. “If any one comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple”. Not so much a rejection of family, but putting Christ above all else and above everything else. Making Christ their only treasure, their only love, their only master. That is, in fact, the meaning of the evangelical counsels – poverty, chastity, obedience.

“The simplicity of this beginning should not discourage us We know that with our present resources we cannot accomplish our task; but we hope that the good Lord will provide everything we need. May he do with us as He wishes. If this seminary succeeds, we will thank the grace of God. If nothing comes of it, we will humbly strike our breast and confess that we were not worthy of the grace.”

The last general chapter reminds us that our call to mission entails a “call to the cross”. The cross in the sense of suffering and hardships, renunciation and deprivation. But above all, the cross in the sense of gratuitous love. For Christ on the cross is the ultimate sacrament of God’s self-giving love. The cross is a powerful statement of who God is – *Deus Caritas Est*, God is love. And it is because of this that God reaches out to the world in dialogue. It is because of this that there is mission. We, who are called to mission, are called to the same gratuitous love. If our participation in mission is a participation in *Missio Dei*, God’s mission, then it must be an act of gratuitous love, a giving of ourselves to others, an act of self-emptying, a process of dying to oneself. In this way our mission is a sharing in the cross of Jesus and a participation in the reality of God who is love. Mission is an act of love, or it is not mission at all.

Love, by its nature, is gratuitous. It is given without expecting anything in

return. It is given without conditions, without measure, without counting the cost. It is the only debt that we can truly have. All other debts can be repaid. But the debt of love remains. And it is this debt that impels us to mission. *Caritas Christi urget nos*.

Dear confreres and friends, about six years ago, during the Synod of Bishops of 2001, the Holy Father, then Pope John Paul II, had the practice of inviting everyday a small group of Synod participants to lunch. One day, it was the turn of the Superiors General to have lunch with the Pope. I presented myself by saying: “Holy Father, greetings from the SVD (*missionari Verbiti*)”. When the Holy Father heard the word “SVD”, he showed a sign of recognition and said: “Ah, the SVD! A great family”. The Italian was “*una grande famiglia*”, which means either or both “a big family or a great family”. Since I was the only SVD then, the words of the Holy Father at that time did not have any special ring. But now, surrounded by so many confreres and friends, the words of the Holy Father come alive today. Indeed, we are a great family.

Today, this great family, the whole Society of the Divine Word, rejoices with you as we mark the Platinum Jubilee of SVD presence in India. In the name of the general council in Rome, and indeed, of the whole SVD, I congratulate you all on this happy occasion – you, dear confreres and sisters, and all our friends, benefactors and partners in mission. As we thank God for all his graces over the last 75 years, we also ask him for his continued guidance and presence among us. And may the holy men and women of our Arnoldus Family look kindly upon us today. May Sts. Arnold and Joseph, Blessed Maria Helena and Mother Josepha, and our blessed Martyrs, pray for us.





STEADFAST AT SEVENTY-FIVE

An Enduring Voyage of the Heart



The Significance of the Occasion

“Platinum,” declared King Louis XV of France, “is the only metal fit for a king.” A heavy, malleable, grey-white transition metal, possessing high wear- and tarnish-resistance characteristics, platinum is ideal for making fine jewellery. Some of the qualities listed in the above description may have prompted the French monarch’s exuberant if somewhat exaggerated assertion. These same qualities, I believe, lie behind the popular

Thomas Malipurathu SVD

practice of applying the sobriquet “Platinum Jubilee” to the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of an occasion such as the founding of an organization, the establishment of an institution, the launching of a programme, etc. Implicit in it is a statement that the organization or the institution in question through its achievements has rendered itself remarkable just like platinum, which



The Story So Far

The growth of the SVD in India has been phenomenal. This is evidenced as much by the indisputable numerical increase as by the strikingly wide range of ministries through which its members exercise their missionary mandate. There is now among its members an across-the-board acceptance of the understanding of mission as the continuation of the unfinished mission of Jesus. The resulting conviction is that every situation of human need mediates to the disciples of Jesus an irresistible call to mission. Accordingly they find the work of educating illiterate children in the far-flung areas of rural India as well as organizing unemployed youth in its sprawling cities to be missionary tasks cut out for them. Spreading awareness about social problems such as alcoholism, the ill-treatment of women and child labour is mission for them. Attending to the victims of HIV/AIDS and providing shelter for street children is bringing good news to the poor for them. Accompanying the unfortunate victims of natural disasters with material and psychological/spiritual assistance is for them a noble way of being channels of God's love. Being active promoters of inter-religious collaboration, providing formation for young religious and seminarians, teaching at state universities or institutes of theology and philosophy, research in areas such as missiology, anthropology and culture, engaging in social communications work, publishing

The key subtext to such an event should be a shared desire in all concerned to look critically at the paths traversed and to prepare a reliable roadmap for the journey that lies ahead.

For the SVD in India which reaches this landmark at what is universally acclaimed as a challenging time, the occasion calls for celebrations that go beyond public functions and speech-making. The search should be for a type of commemoration that leaves behind tangible effects long after the cameras are put away and the flowers have wilted

through its special qualities, distinguishes itself among the different metals that we deal with. It can as well be the expression of a wish that in the future it may retain the brilliance achieved just like a piece of jewellery made of platinum remains shining and corrosion-free over a long period of time.

Having reached the shores of India in 1932, the Society of the Divine Word completes 75 years of its presence and service in India in 2007. Jubilee is a defining moment. The key subtext to such an event should be a shared desire in all concerned to look critically at the paths traversed and to prepare a reliable roadmap for the journey that lies ahead. For the SVD in India which reaches this landmark at what is universally acclaimed as a challenging time, the occasion calls for celebrations that go beyond public functions and speech-making. The search should be for a type of commemoration that leaves behind tangible effects long after the cameras are put away and the flowers have wilted.



wholesome reading material, being promoters of God's word, reaching out through music and dance, etc., are in their scheme of things all part of a missionary's work. All this in addition to the traditional activities that a missionary engages in such as parish work and the pastoral care of believers, faith formation of children and youngsters or working for spiritual renewal through retreats and psychological counselling.

That is indeed a formidable range of activities, and committed men are engaged full-time in promoting many an impressive initiative. They and the organizational set-up that has stimulated and sustained the motivating vision in them deserve a pat on the back. But lest that leads us too easily to rest on our laurels, a few sobering considerations must be added. The spirit of hospitality and welcome in our communities is often raved about. But where do we stand when it comes to a distinguishable spirituality? Do we tend to substitute commitment to true religiosity with social activism? By common acclaim we have a well-organized and functioning system of formation. But is this system robust enough to challenge formandi to rise above the culture of mediocrity? Is something in it responsible for disseminating the notion that religious life is just another career option?

Towards Broader Horizons

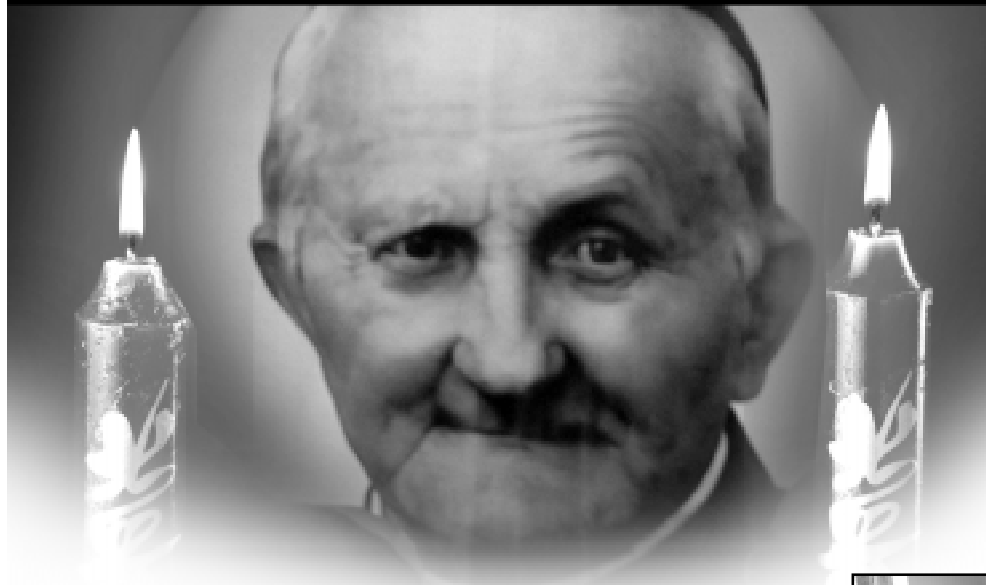
That the concept of mission is in a process of evolution is a commonplace today. By the standards of the now mercifully abandoned "conquest" mode, India was the mission land par excellence. Arguably, but perhaps for different reasons, this country still retains that distinction. Destined to live as a "little flock" in the midst of a vast sea of humanity composed of the followers of other religions—and forced to confront the real issues of mission on a day-to-day basis—practioners and thinkers of

Christian mission in India have been consistently proposing many innovative ideas about the whole enterprise. The Indian segment of the Society of the Divine Word, I submit, has played a modest yet distinctive role in this process.

Perhaps the challenge for the immediate future is to intensify our efforts in this direction. The Society's espousal of dialogue as "the deepest and best understanding" of mission and its relentless promotion of it over the last several years in every form and aspect of our missionary outreach places us at a vantage point in this pursuit. Taking a cue from the teachings of Second Vatican Council, the SVD has been affirming that dialogue indicates a mode of continuing the mission of Jesus, a mode permeated through and through by an attitude of "solidarity, respect and love" for the "other" whom we consider as our partner. The tenacious conviction that we, along with the rest of humanity—indeed the rest of creation—are participants in the mission of God provides the ideological underpinning of this refreshing vision. There is a growing consensus among those involved in the work of evangelization that having appropriated such a vision we are headed in the right direction. Walking down this road through an effort of collective discernment carried out with commitment and in bold humility, the Christian community will one day come to a more universally acceptable understanding of the task of continuing the mission of Jesus. A more refined understanding of that mission will make a missionary's work truly responsive to the major challenges of our times and more consonant with the pressing concerns of our world. In the meantime we are summoned to partake in the noble task of being midwives assisting in the birthing of this deeply desired progeny!



75 YEARS OF SVD PRESENCE IN INDIA



T Vision of St. Arnold Janssen

The 19th century was the European century in the sense that its political power, new ideas and emerging ideologies were imposed on the world. The Christian missionary expansion and influence were at its heyday during the same period. Number of missionary and religious congregations founded by charismatic personalities, mostly in Europe and America, for the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ to all people reached its peak during the great missionary century. The founding of the Society of the Divine

Augustine Kanjamala SVD



Word (SVD) by St. Arnold Janssen, (1837 – 1909) a German diocesan priest, in Steyl, Holland, away from the anti-Catholic Kulturkampf of Germany, in 1875 for foreign missions was part of the same missionary wave. Opening the first mission seminary in Steyl in 1875 our founder announced: “For this house has no other purpose than to help to spread the Gospel among those who not yet



know God or do not know him properly". This Society was a late comer (1932) to India in the backdrop of 500 years of missionary journey into the subcontinent. Still SVD finds its rightful place in the wider context of this world scenario.

Arrival of the First SVDs

Having failed to realize the first offer of Patna mission to the Society in 1913 because of the outbreak of World War, the second renewed offer of Propaganda Fide was materialized with the arrival of 13 SVD missionaries, 11 Priests and 2 Brothers, in Indore, Central India, under the care of the French Capuchin missionaries, during November – December 1932 and January 1933. The pastoral - mission responsibilities of the Society extended over an area, covering the present five dioceses of Indore, Bhopal, Khandwa, Ujjain and Jhabua, with a Catholic population of around 13,600. Again, while struggling to put their roots in the Indian soil, after a decade of their arrival, the Second World War became another blow to SVD mission. Since all the first missionaries were from the German speaking countries of Europe, 30 out of 40 missionaries in Central India were interned for two years during the war. The industrious missionaries used the time to study Hindi and Sanskrit which would enable them to produce outstanding Hindi Literature, including the translation of the Bible, in the following decades.

Training Indian SVD Missionaries

Alarmed by the growing animosity against the foreign missionaries and forbidding new arrivals in the post - Independence period, indigenous vocation promotion and training of Indian missionaries was an unexpected challenge not only to the SVDs but to the whole Indian church. For the young

Congregation it was matter survival. Recruitment of vocations and seminary formation therefore was a accorded top priority. The first batch of 5 SVD priests ordained in 1959 were ready to join the existing 102 priests and 31 brothers already working in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra. The initial imbalance of membership from the old churches of Kerala, and Mangalore was gradually rectified with the recruitment of more vocations from the young churches, both in South and North India. The steady growth of membership during the past 55 years has reached the mark of 638 Priests and 50 Brothers in 2007. Over 200 major seminarians and novices are preparing themselves to go into the vineyard of the Lord, anywhere in the world. The Indian SVDs at present constitute the second largest national group in the whole Congregation after Indonesia, in contrast to the fast dwindling membership in the West.

Diversities of Apostolate

Reading the "Signs of time" the members of the Society, over the past 75 years, have undertaken various activities. Pastoral-missionary work; education; human development; Bible apostolate; communication; Radio (Veritas) and Television, press, charismatic retreat ministry; mission animation; research and publication in the field anthropology and culture, University education; inculturation of liturgy and proclamation through Indian music, dance and other art forms; catholic enquiry centres; training of indigenous clergy; slum and rural development; care of HIV/AIDs patients, street children, migrant domestic workers, work in the slums etc. are clear proof that the confreres are creatively responding to the needs and challenges of people today. Such diversification of ministries would not have been possible

Probably no missionary congregation has made as much systematic and sustained efforts for the mission animation of the Indian church in the post-Vatican era as the Society of the Divine Word, under the dynamic leadership of Englebert Zeitler

earlier with traditional narrow concept of mission. These missionaries in the field, not theologians, and their diverse ministries, responding to the urgent needs of people, are also redefining traditional mission as evangelization. (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 1975)

Impressive growth and expansions of Divine Word Missionaries in the course of the past 75 years can be gauged from the following indicators. Today there are 4 SVD provinces and one region in India. Two archdioceses of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar and Bhopal; four dioceses of Indore, Jhabua, Rourkela and Sambalpur are under the pastoral care of seven SVD Bishops.

To Foreign Missions

International mission, the primary characteristic of Divine Word Society, is preserved and promoted meticulously. By the middle of 2007 that 187 Indian SVDs were commissioned to 43 countries, in all the continents, manifest the missionary vitality and dynamism of the young Congregation. Currently another 25 are

preparing themselves for foreign assignment through Overseas Training Programme (OTP). The process initiated in a small scale 40 years ago has attracted over 30% Indian membership. The new phenomenon at the end of the 20th century is characterized and justified as “Reverse Mission”.

Powershift

As the Society in India grew in numbers the baton was slowly passed on to the Indian Members. At the national level a few SVD confreres were offered the opportunity to serve the CBCI (Catholic Bishop Conference of India), CRI (Conference of Religious of India), CHAI (Catholic Hospital Association of India) and so forth in different capacities. In the 1972 General Chapter, Rome, the Indian capitulars numbered five. A steady increase in the following Chapters marked its climax in 2006, where the total number of Indian capitulars was above 20%. The presence of Indian confreres in the General administration and formation houses in Rome, along with other Asian confreres, is on steady growth. This new phenomenon is part of the process named “The Coming of the Third Church”, as predicted by W. Bhulmann in the 1970s. Naturally some people in the West seem to feel uncomfortable with the challenges of emerging power shift.

Some Eminent Pioneers.

The diverse and complex context of India challenged the pioneers to search for new methods of mission work. Even long before the theme of inculturation entered the theological vocabulary of mission, Guru George Proksch broke new paths in the field of inculturation of liturgy and proclamation of the Gospels through Indian method of music, dance and drama. Research and publications in the field of anthropology, ethnology and culture, a





distinguishing mark of the Society from its genesis, was successfully continued in the Indian subcontinent by our pioneers like Stephen Fuchs, Wilhelm Kooppers and L. Jungblut and others.

Probably no missionary congregation has made as much systematic and sustained efforts for the mission animation of the Indian church in the post-Vatican era as the Society of the Divine Word, under the dynamic leadership of Englebert Zeitler. A few of them grew up to the status of national leaders of the Indian church and mission by definitively influencing the thinking, decision making process and reorganization of the Indian church. Stanislaus Wald was the first Catholic Missionary to translate the Old Testament into Hindi language in 1965. Bishop H. Westermann, J. Mocha and a few others were pioneers in translating the liturgical texts in Hindi

Reading the signs of the times, these path finders, in spite of objections from powerful quarters, and uncertainties of walking alone, at times along uncharted routes, ventured into new missionary frontiers dear to our Society, without being unfaithful to the essential dimensions of the Society's missionary charism.

much before the Vatican Council II. Responding to fresh challenges contributions of the SVDs in the fields Biblical Apostolate, Dialogue ministry, Christian yoga and spirituality, Communication/Mass Media, Human development etc. are, undoubtedly very impressive. Some of our men are well known because of their compassionate services in answering the cry of the poor and oppressed; they are recipients of regional and national awards; Marianus Zelazek had the distinction of being twice nominated for Noble Peace Prize for his humanitarian services among lepers of Puri for three decades.

Reading the signs of the times, these path finders, in spite of objections from powerful quarters, and uncertainties of walking alone, at times along uncharted routes, ventured into new missionary frontiers dear to our Society, without being unfaithful to the essential dimensions of the Society's missionary charism. The necessary institutions built for the preservation and promotion of their charisms are recognized even beyond national boundaries. Through their failures and success, in their follies and triumphs, in their agony and ecstasy, they teach us how to live our missionary commitment in the ever changing and challenging context of India.

Reaffirming the SVD Identity and Image

It is a unique occasion both to sing TE DEUM and reaffirm the identity and image of the Divine Word Missionaries. Telling our stories, writing our history, remembering our founding generation, praising our heroes, reliving our collective memories and examining the past critically are unquestionably required for revitalizing the membership at this historic juncture. Our identity is ultimately reinvented by returning

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to the root in the missionary-religious vision and charism of Arnold Janssen, retold, reinterpreted and lived in unimaginably diverse contexts of nearly 70 nations. Further the SVD identity in India is intimately linked with lives, works, struggles, sacrifices failures and success of hundreds of confreres, especially those belonging to the founding generation, who showed us how to live the vision of the founder, in the Indian context that was so diverse as well as very baffling.

The affirmation and celebration of SVD identity in India is both legitimate and salutary for rejuvenating the missionary charism and re-launching it afresh.

Emerging Paradigm Shift in the Mission



A paradigm shift in the mission is being first lived, then articulated and gradually being accepted, at times reluctantly. The shift from the traditional and narrow concept of mission (Mt. 28: 18-20) to a broad concept of mission (Jo, 3:16) is slowly but surely emerging. Jesus was the first missionary sent by the Father to proclaim God's Kingdom of love, life, justice and peace. His life, his words and his deeds together manifested God's mission (Missio Dei). Mission cannot be summarized in any one single formula as it was unfortunately done during the colonial mission era. The new mission model, therefore, will emulate and manifest every aspect of his life, his teaching, his deeds and services, particularly to the poor and marginalized (Lk, 4: 18). Passion for Christ as well as passion for the wounded humanity is the defining stamp of this mission.

We are entering an age of mutual mission because Gods Spirit is already present and active, at times obscured by human weakness and sinfulness, in every culture and religion even before the arrival of a missionary in a place (AG.4). We are only humble servants of the primary agent of mission, that is, The Holy Spirit in whom the whole cosmos is bound together (RM.29). All are invited to cooperate with all men/women of good will to create a new humanity, a new cosmos out of chaos (Rev. 20:1-5). In the face of current alarming consumerist culture, secularization and decline of faith, the challenge is to grow into credible witnesses in a counter cultural community. "True missionary is a universal brother/sister" (RM.89), "passing over" from narrow selfish, domestic, regional and national boundaries.



While Celebrating the Jubilee...



*In the context of the
 Platinum Jubilee
 celebrations of the SVD
 presence in India, the
 Superior General of the
 Society of the Divine
 Word Fr. Antonio Pernia
 enumerates the meaning
 & relevance of this
 celebration and the
 challenges it raises for
 the Society in an
 interview with
 Babu Kakkaniyil SVD*

(1) On the occasion of the Platinum Jubilee of SVD presence in India, what message do you have for the Indian confreres?

My message, I guess, is the same as the message of the event itself. I think the message of the Platinum Jubilee is that God has abundantly blessed the efforts of the pioneer SVD missionaries in India. And this is because they believed that what they were doing here

was God's mission, not their mission. They knew they came to India to do something that was not their own. Their coming here was a response to a call from the Lord to carry out God's mission in this part of the world.

I believe we need to maintain this spirit of seeing whatever we do here in India as God's mission and not our mission, or even the Society's mission. This is important if we are to hope that God continue to bless our efforts here. And there seems to be a danger of losing this perspective – for three reasons:

(a) The Society in India has grown tremendously. From the two (or thirteen) pioneers in 1932 to the 650 present members of the Society in India (with some 200 more Indian SVD confreres working outside India). The SVD in India has become a full-fledged religious missionary congregation with several institutions and a variety of ministries and apostolates. So, there is the danger that, seen from the perspective, we begin to say: "this is our mission", "this is our work", this is our institution".

(b) In the context of globalization and its consumer mentality, a certain individualism can easily creep into the thinking and behavior of our confreres. Especially in the light of the "economic boom" that is taking place in India today, this is a real threat. So, there is also the temptation for the individual confrere to look at the work he does as his mission and say: "this is my work", "this is my project", "this is my school", "this is my parish".

(c) Of the 650 SVD members in India today only two are expatriate SVD confreres. On the one hand, this is certainly something to be happy about. But, on the other hand, this can lead to the loss of a sense of "being sent". Since we are all from India, we do not feel "sent to India". So, since we are no longer

"foreigners" in India, we tend to feel that we "own" our institutions, schools, social centers, parishes, etc. We tend to feel that SVD mission in India is our own. Of course, India is big and diverse enough that the sense of being sent may continue to be felt by those working in states other than their own. But never as strongly as when there were expatriate missionaries, whose presence was a reminder of this dimension of "being sent".

75 years ago, when Frs. Peter Janser and Leo Krzeminski arrived in Indore, they were aware that they had been sent to do God's mission in India. And God blessed their work. The fruit of that is the four SVD provinces and one region in India. If we are to continue in the spirit



On the other hand, I don't think the ideal is to make the Society Asian. That would be nothing else but the reverse side of the Society being European. I think what we should aim at is making the Society truly international and intercultural in such a way that every culture finds a place in the Society, or in such a way that the Society becomes truly a home of every candidate who wants to be an SVD, no matter what his ethnic or cultural origin may be.



of our pioneers, we need to continue to think that what we do here in India is never my work, or the work of the Society, but God's mission.

(2) The Society is fast becoming very much Asian. You are the first Asian superior general. What does this imply for the whole Society?

It is true that the Society is becoming Asian in terms of the origin of its membership. 55% of its overall membership originates from Asia. In addition, 76% of all members in formation are from Asia. This is true also in terms of the location of its membership. 49% of all SVDs are living or working in the Asia-Pacific zone.

However, in terms of the Society's overall congregational culture (e.g., its approach to living the religious life and doing mission work) or structures of government (e.g., its style of leadership and administrative procedures), it is far from being Asian. In this regard, the Society is still to a large extent European. As the first Asian superior general, I have tried to introduce an Asian perspective to government and leadership. But it simply is difficult to do so. The structures of the past are so deeply entrenched that it is difficult to transform them without creating a major dislocation in the Society.

On the other hand, I don't think the ideal is to make the Society Asian. That would be nothing else but the reverse side of the Society being European. I think what we should aim at is making the Society truly international and intercultural in such a way that every culture finds a place in the Society, or in such a way that the Society becomes truly a home of every candidate who wants to be an SVD, no matter what his ethnic or cultural origin may be. For this reason, I have tried to promote internationality in the Society (e.g.,

common formation programs in Africa and elsewhere; multicultural mission teams; internationalization of provinces and regions through first assignments). Also for this reason, I have tried to strengthen the zonal structure. The zonal structure, I believe, is a way of ensuring unity and diversity in the Society. Through the zonal structure, a province or region can say: "I can be an SVD province/region without having to become European. I can be an SVD province/region and remain Asian or African or Latin American."

So, more than making the Society Asian, the so-called "Asianization" of the Society should lead to genuine internationality, allowing for unity in diversity or the harmony of differences. This, after all, is also a very Asian characteristic.

(3) What do you think is the typical contribution that the Indians can and need to make to the Society?

Three things in particular, I believe.

(a) First, the experience of doing mission as a minority religion. As we know, the Catholic Church in India is a

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— Mission can no longer be done from a position of superiority and power, where the gospel is imposed from outside. Mission will have to be done from a position of powerlessness and humility, where the gospel is made to enter into dialogue with the cultural and religious traditions of the people. This requires a shift from the “conquest” mode of mission to the “dialogue” mode.

very tiny minority. This situation requires another way of doing mission, different from the past when western missionaries mostly originated from countries where Christianity was the majority religion. Mission can no longer be done from a position of superiority and power, where the gospel is imposed from outside. Mission will have to be done from a position of powerlessness and humility, where the gospel is made to enter into dialogue with the cultural and religious traditions of the people. This requires a shift from the “conquest” mode of mission to the “dialogue” mode. While we already know this theory, we need to know the concrete and practical ways of carrying this out. I think Indian SVDs could show the way in this regard. Of course, it is also my expectation that Indian SVD missionaries working abroad will be able to carry out mission in this way, and thus share this approach to mission with our other provinces in Africa, the Americas and Europe.

(b) Secondly, the contemplative approach to mission. India, as we know, is the home of many of the world religions. The so-called contemplative spirit of Asia finds expression particularly in India. I believe this is another contribution Indian SVDs can make to the Society, i.e., show the way in developing the contemplative dimension of mission. Now that we emphasize the fact that mission is God’s mission first and foremost, we need to underline as well the contemplative dimension of mission. If our call to mission is a call to participate in God’s mission, then we need to constantly attune ourselves to God’s will and plan for the world. But we will never be able to do this unless we approach mission in contemplation. Indeed, this contribution is already being felt in the provinces and regions where Indian SVDs work as missionaries. People invariably see that Indian confreres bring along a contemplative and prayerful spirit to mission.

(c) Thirdly, as mentioned earlier, India is the home of many of the world religions. While in the recent past, we have witnessed some instances of religious intolerance, conflicts, and violence, at its deepest level, I think India possesses a thrust towards religious harmony and the peaceful co-existence of people of various religious persuasions. To some extent, India is “forced” to learn interreligious understanding and peaceful co-existence precisely because of so much diversity within itself. This can also be another contribution of Indian SVDs to the Society. As SVDs we profess to be “a community of brothers from various nations and languages”, thereby becoming a “living witness of the unity and diversity of the church” and the kingdom of God. The experience of India, I think, can show us concrete ways of how to live and work as an international and multicultural Society. Paradoxically,



the SVD in India is somehow prevented from being fully international. But India is big enough and diverse enough to experience within itself a profound multiculturalism.

(4) What do you think are the major challenges facing the Society today? And how do we respond to them?

The challenges facing the Society today are many, and it is difficult to single out a few without giving the impression that the others not mentioned are not as important. We can have an idea of the challenges facing the Society today in the documents of the last two general chapters. The 2000 general chapter focused on challenges to our mission, i.e., prophetic dialogue with faith-seekers, with the poor and marginalized, with people of other cultures, and with people of different religious traditions. The 2006 general chapter accentuated the challenges to our religious-missionary living, centered around the five areas of spirituality, community, leadership, finances and formation.

In the context of the challenges laid out by the last two general chapters, and even at the risk of being too selective, I wish to underline the following four elements:

(a) Islam is becoming a major player in international relations. Our relationship with Islam and its followers has been minimal until now – some contact in parts of some African countries like Ghana, Mozambique, Chad, and in places like Indonesia, India, Philippines. Perhaps we should pay more attention to dialogue with Islam and its followers. Perhaps we could think of opening ourselves up to having a presence in some countries in the middle East. For this, we need to have some confreres trained in Islamic studies and the Arabic language.

(b) The HIV-AIDS pandemic

continues to be a major threat today. There are some confreres who are already engaged in ministry to people with AIDS. In some of our mission stations, apparently it is not possible not to be involved in this ministry. But perhaps we need to have a greater involvement in this area. As we know our SSsP sisters have chosen this ministry as one of their priorities. This could be an area where we can collaborate with our sisters. Again we would need confreres specialized in this kind of ministry.

(c) The internationality of our Society is a value that is appreciated not only by confreres but also by the people we work with. This particular element of our charism is becoming more and more significant in a world often torn by cultural, ethnic and racial conflicts and violence. But while we have all accepted internationality as a value to promote and foster, we have not yet really developed the day-to-day skills necessary for concretely living in international communities and working in multi-cultural teams.

(d) Many of the challenges facing the Society today are challenges that require radical commitment and specialized training. This is true for Islam, AIDS, and the other challenges mentioned in the documents of the last two general chapters (e.g., refugees, migrants, indigenous peoples, street children). Thus, a very important challenge today is ongoing spiritual renewal and ongoing formation. On the one hand, we need to recapture the radicality of our commitment to our religious-missionary vocation. On the other hand, we need to constantly keep abreast with developments in theology and the sciences – in some cases, opening ourselves up to specialized studies and training.





The Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit are celebrating the Platinum Jubilee of their Missionary presence in India. The inauguration of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations took place at Indore in March, 2007 in the gracious presence of the Congregational Leader Sr. Agada Brand. The concluding celebrations are arranged locally in the communities. In the context of this Jubilee Sr. Mariam takes a look at the origin & spread of the Congregation in India.

Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit

75 Years of Missionary Service in India

It was on the 6th of February 1933 that our four pioneering Sisters from Germany- Srs. Frederica, Fridburgis, Fridolina and Sixtina arrived at Mumbai by an Italian ship Called "Victoria." They arrived at Indore on the 7th of February, a red letter day for our Congregation in India. The ground had already been prepared by the pioneering SVDs who had already taken over the Indore Mission in 1932.

Sr. Marion Chemmanoor SSps



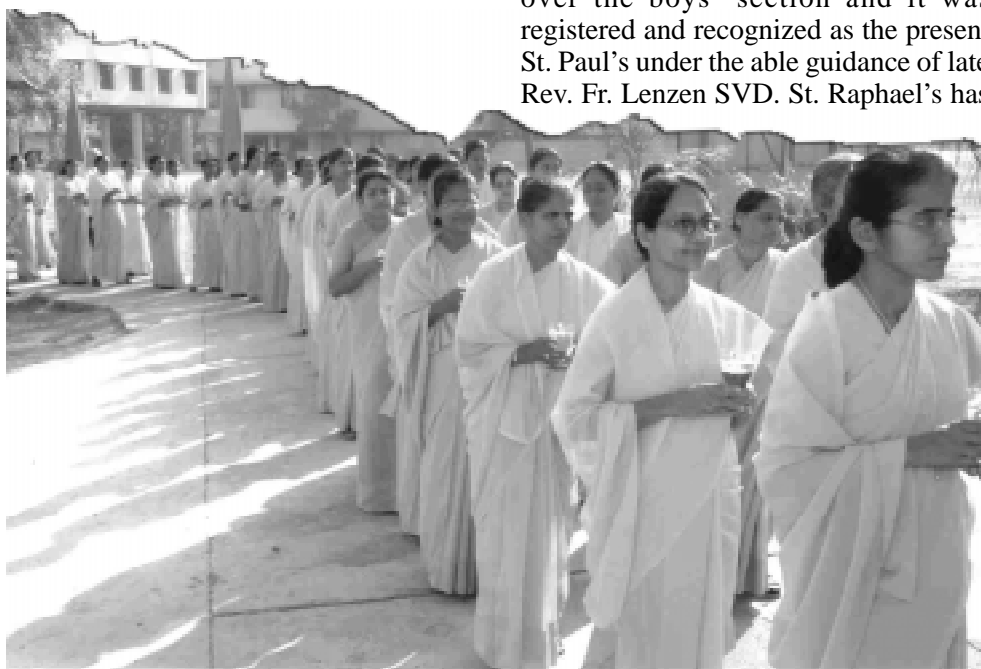
Our Sisters got an entry point first in Kalyanmal Nursing Home (St. Vincent's Home), as some of the Sisters were nurses. The nursing Home was mainly for the patients of royal families such as the Kings of Holkar, Jhabua, Barwani, Rajgad etc. who were then ruling certain areas of India and for the mill owners' families. Although the Sisters were engaged in Administration, nursing care, dietary etc. management was carried out by a team appointed by the Government in consultation with the Royal families who lived in Indore. In the following years as some more Sisters- our Sisters began their work in education as well and started a Hindi medium school in 1934, known as St. Paul's School, with 30-40 students, besides working in St. Raphael's School.

Later on they began to live in another rented bungalow which was called St. Paul's Convent near St. Paul's school. It was much closer to St. Raphael's School. The sisters who taught in St. Raphael's could also stay there and go to St. Raphael's on foot. The school and

boarding were discontinued eventually due to lack of funds. Now there stands in its place Navabharath printing Press. Our Sisters continued their ministry in the Nursing Home and in St. Raphael's school which had been started in 1928 with very few students, by Rev. Fr. D'Silva, a Diocesan priest, in fulfillment of the desire of Fr. Rafael, the former parish priest (a Capuchin priest), and hence its name St. Raphael's. From 1932 to 1948 the SVDs took over, having Rev. Fr. Proksch SVD as its Principal. Some of the Holy Spirit Sisters continued to work there as teachers. The number of students increased to 101, from K.G to IV th standard. Year by year one class was added and then from 1948 onwards it was given over to Holy Spirit Sisters, when Sr.Theodemara became its first Principal.

At first it was a co-ed. school having classes only up to Junior Cambridge, and then it was raised into +2 according to the need of the time.

From 1962 onwards, the SVDs took over the boys' section and it was registered and recognized as the present St. Paul's under the able guidance of late Rev. Fr. Lenzen SVD. St. Raphael's has



indeed developed ever since with the number of students growing higher and higher, year by year with very good results.

The school has grown enormously, and the strength of the school has gone up to over 3000 ! The students are also encouraged to do some social work in the villages around as part of their curriculum.

In April 1937, our SSps mission was raised to the status of a Region and became 'The Region of the Spirit of Divine love', with Sr. Frederica, a German Sister trained in America, as its first Regional Superior.

We had also got involved in Socio-pastoral activities in Indore. With the arrival of Sr. Baptista, a Dutch Sister, a new building for training girls in Home Science came up which was furnished well for the purpose so that our students may be good house wives. A part of the building was also used for tailoring, envelope making etc. so that some poor people could learn some useful occupations and also get self employment. Visiting the families of students as well as Christian families living in and outside the city was also taken up by the Sisters.

Then in 1965, Sr. Baptista, together with Sr. Josepha from Australia, started a new Congregation known as "St. Joseph's Sevikayem" in Nandanagar, under the patronage of Rt. Rev. Bishop Simons, the then Bishop of Indore, for Hindi speaking girls to work among the lepers and the marginalized of the society. When the Congregation was well established, Srs. Baptista and Josepha went back to their own Home Provinces.

Quite recently, our Sisters also have started in the campus of St. Raphael's, a new venture for HIV/AIDS patients, which is known as Vishwas, a center for

counselling, and to give awareness programmes to the patients and to their relatives and friends. The tiny seed planted there has and is continuing to bear abundant fruit.

Our mission did not remain limited to Indore. As the Sisters were eager to reach out to other people living in villages, on the 1st of April 1940, they began their mission in St. Mary's Convent, Khandwa, where we started an orphanage and a boarding for the children of the villages around, without which they would have never got any education. We were able to get some sponsors then for the children as they were from very poor families in the villages of Nimad. The orphanage had to be closed after some years due to unavoidable circumstances. Those who had been with us, were well taken care of, educated and settled reasonably well. To improve the condition of the people we had started also a dispensary and a card making center. Work among the leper patients was also (Cheerakadan) started with treatment as well as awareness and preventive methods.

In 1950, we started similar apostolates in Sirpur and in 1963 in Aulia, all in Khandwa Diocese.

In 1984, we took over a full-fledged Girls school in Rajkot, Gujarat, from the Sisters of Christ the King. The school has continued to grow in strength. In 1992, we started a convent in Udaipur, Rajasthan collaborating with the SVDs in Bible apostolate, education and socio-pastoral work. Our Sisters had been working with the SVDs in this apostolate also in Masih Vidya Bhavan in Indore, since 1986.

Later on a convent was started in Kunthanpur near Ranapur in Jhabhua District, among the potters, which was later shifted to Alirajpur in 1993, where we work along with Don Bosco Fathers





(SDB) in the fields of education and socio-pastoral apostolate.

Growth of the Region

On 27th June 1953, the first postulants from India, were accepted into our Congregation as Aspirants, thus beginning a new era in the history of the Indian SSps in India. They were required to finish 2 years of College as most had passed only SSLC. Among the first four who entered the novitiate on the 6th of January 1956, there were two from Kerala, one from Mangalore and one from Mhow, near Indore. Thus we had from the very beginning a group that was inter-cultural and as a whole international, as we had with us Sisters from Germany, Holland, Austria, England and USA. Some of them had been Missionaries in China and the Philippines before coming to India. The beginning was not so easy on both sides, due to differences in language, types of food, culture etc. After two years of Novitiate, the first two Sisters from India - one from Mhow (Sr. Emilian Sebastian) and another from Kerala (Sr. Marion Chemmanoor) made their first commitment on the 6th of January 1958, in St. Raphael's Convent, Indore. Vocations began to come from various parts of India and the number of Sisters slowly yet steadily increased.

Venturing beyond Madhya Pradesh

Thus far, our Sisters had confined their apostolates within the diocese of Indore. Taking into account the strategic importance of Mumbai about 10 acres of land was bought in 1961, in Andheri East, not far from the SVDs, along Mahakali Road. On 7th of December 1963, the solemn ceremony of laying of the Foundation for the Hospital was held. The hospital was to have facilities for admitting 150 in-patients. Finally on 14 the January 1967, the hospital was

solemnly inaugurated by Cardinal Gracias, the then Archbishop of Bombay.

Sr. Michael, the new Regional Superior continued the search for a place for the New Regional House and Novitiate. Bangalore was later chosen and a plot of land was bought in 1969 and construction was begun. In 1970, the Regional House as well as Novitiate was shifted from Indore to Bangalore.

Our Region began to expand still further. In 1973, a new Convent was started in Bondamunda, near Rourkela in the State of Orissa. The Sisters there began pastoral work, K.G, as well as a dispensary and later on a tailoring course for local girls. The SVDs had been working in Orissa already since 1948, having taken over the Sambalpur mission. The Catholic population there mainly consisted of tribals who are very simple and hard working, with strong faith. This mission became a rich source for vocations. There too we paid attention to educating girls by opening several convents with boarding and hostel for their education.

As the years rolled by, the Region began to spread to different parts of India. In 1980, Sr. Aliciann became the first Indian Regional Superior, in Bangalore. On 23rd November 1981, we made our presence felt in Velvarthy in Andhra Pradesh, and later on several communities were opened also in that State for the benefit of the poor.

In 1983, the Indian Region was raised to the status of a Province and Sr. Aliciann became the first Provincial Superior in India. In 1992, the Generalate proposed the division of the existing Province of Divine love into a Province and two Regions: The Southern Province of Divine Love with Bangalore as its Provincial House, Central Region of

Divine Providence with its Regional House at Indore and Eastern Region of Divine Word with its Regional House at Jharsuguda. In March 1995, the Central and Eastern Regions were raised to the status of Provinces, independent from the Southern Province. After division, the Provinces began to grow more rapidly. In 1995, our Sisters ventured into North East, considered as a frontier mission and the communities started there, were administered by the Eastern Region. Eventually, a new Region known as the Region of the Divine Spirit was carved out there in 2004.

The three Provinces began to spread further steadily with God's grace and the cooperation of everyone, into various states in India, thus expanding their apostolates among more people. Today there are 324 Sisters rendering their services through 52 communities in the length and breadth of the Country.

As we belong to an International Congregation, we were proud to send two of our Indian Sisters-Srs Sheela and Yvonne- to Ghana in Africa, as Missionaries from India for the first time. That was only the beginning and it is being continued year after year by sending our Indian Sisters also to other countries such as New Guinea, Botswana, Ethiopia, Japan, Taiwan, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Chile, U.K, Holland, Russia, Romania, Italy, Togo, Zambia, S. Africa, Korea, Philippines, Indonesia, Cuba, Mexico, USA, Mozambique, Australia etc. There are 58

Sisters working Overseas from India.

As the Province was divided, the various stages of formation, though still common, were shared by the different provinces. Pre-novitiate was shifted to St. Mary's Convent, Khandwa. The pre-novices entered novitiate in Bangalore and Indore in alternate years. The Candidacy was shifted from Bangalore to Pernal (Mangalore) for one group and to Bondamunda for another group. The Tertiate (preparation for final profession) was shifted from Bangalore to Rajkot first and then to Jharsuguda in Orissa. Aspirancy remained in Holy Spirit Hospital in Mumbai, for work experience. So far all the stages of formation were held in common, keeping in mind inter-culturality and inter-nationality of our Congregation.

While continuing to work still in traditional apostolates such as formation, education (formal and non-formal), boardings, healthcare centres, socio-pastoral work etc., we have also moved into new ventures such as educating the physically and mentally challenged children, caring for the Aged, Women's empowerment, awareness and counselling for HIV/AIDS patients, caring and educating street children, hostels for college going students and sisters, MCH programme, Balavikasa, etc. according to the needs of the time, place and people. Specialized training is also given to sisters in various fields accordingly.

As pilgrims on a journey, we move on, at times even in uncertainty, with faith, hope and love, negotiating, searching, discovering and discerning, often on new and unfamiliar grounds, gazing at the star as Magi did, recognizing God's ways and accepting and making them as our own. May Holy Spirit, whose Servants we are, enlighten, guide and support us in this herculian yet humble task of spreading His compassionate love and presence through our ministries wherever we are and whatever we do. In the words of Fr. Augustine Kanjamala : "The generation gone by has been torchbearers. They have passed on the flame to us. It is now our turn to be the torchbearers of our time. Mission today is our responsibility. We are responsible for handing on the flame to the future generation. What we make of it is vital".





Glow with hope ...

*B*reathe the boundless breath of hope
gleefully into your lungs' gloomy low.
Stretch your doleful mind and heart
to the full reach of a rainbow's arc.
Slow down, snow or shine or rain,
listen to the senses and be aware.

*Live full-bodied, walk on the earth,
awaken the dreams from the depths,
keep aloft the glow of hope within.*

*Claim silence and its golden gifts,
musical sounds and mystical sights.
Keep life's balance and its bounce,
delight and laugh, all follies own.
Drink to the toast of life brim-fully,
to the simple ordinary in your story,
to the mystery unfolding each day.
Life's chaotic wounds find a balm,
in the balmy bowl of hope to heal.*

*Into those dim views blood infuse,
being creative and tastefully wise.
Wonder with God's stance, be- still,
passionate, compassionate, merciful.
Wander with creation's bounties, long
to be here- now, be- you and belong.
Smile to a different other, be-friend,
be grateful, pray and do the good,
forgive and bless, glowing with hope!*



Joe Francis SVD



Our Identity, the Cross of Jesus Christ



1. The Story

For the people of Kandhamal District in the Archdiocese of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar, the solemn feast of Christmas, a celebration of joy and peace turned to be a tragedy of great magnitude. It plunged the entire district, nay the whole Christian community in India and the world into deep sorrow,

Raphael Cheenath, SVD
Archbishop of Cuttack-Bhubaneswar

Excerpts from the pastoral letter of Archbishop Raphael Cheenath of Cuttack - Bhubaneswar addressed to the Priests, religious and faithful of the Archdiocese in the event of attacks on the Christians in the Kandhamal District, Orissa.





confusion and consternation. Yet this tragedy has become for us a time of grace, an occasion to deepen our faith in God, and to grow into the fullness of Christ by sharing his suffering.

The trouble began on 24th December when a crowd of communalistic fanatics began to attack Christians and their homes, churches and institutions in Bamunigam parish. The frenzied crowd was so large and the attack was so intense that within four days 8 churches, 50 village churches, 5 convents, 5 priest's residence, 4 hostels, a few other training institutions and 400 to 500 houses were destroyed/burned forcing thousands of people flee into the forest.

The Government declared that relief, will be given only by the Government and no NGOs, no religious institution will be allowed to distribute relief. So, we could not come to assist our people. The situation continues to be tense and explosive. We met the Chief Minister, Prime Minister, Union Home Minister, President of India and a host of high officials of the State and the Central Government. However, no effective help or sympathetic response was forthcoming their part except few promises.

2. Cross is a distinctive sign of Christianity.

“In Cruce Salus” Salvation is in the cross. The fact that Christ chose the cross, which was an ignominious sign of shame and punishment, as an instrument of salvation by dying on it; it has become a sign of salvation for us. “For to this you have been called, because Christ also

suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps” (Pet. 2:21).

The young Church of Christ survived the bloody persecution, which lasted for three and a half centuries. In those days they had no one to protect them, no civil authorities stood between the Christians and the persecutors. They lived in hiding, fear and anxiety. In spite of all these, they stayed together, prayed together and gave witness to Christ as a community and as individuals. The Christians drew their strength from the Spirit and from the holy Eucharist.

We have been accused of being foreigners, anti-nationals and a threat to law and order (Freedom of Religion Act). Occasions like these again are invitations for us to define clearly our identity as Christians. Our life, attitudes, relationships should clearly manifest that we are true disciples of Christ and that we are led by the gospel values which we want to proclaim. This is the challenge of our times that we manifest our clear identity and live before the world in an unambiguous manner.

These are the times when the Gospel values of love, understating, forgiveness, kindness, patience, honesty, sincerity etc. should guide us and shine as distinctive marks in our lives. These values, alive in our life and activity, will truly proclaim God's presence in our midst and prove to our fellowmen that we are no strangers to this country and no threat to any one.

We are advised to promote dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions. The Vatican Council recommends that, while living our faith, we ought to acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral good found among these men. I am afraid that a deeper study of some of these happenings may reveal a certain degree of ignorance of these guidelines or their violations.

3. Our Preparedness

The concrete life-situation demands that we be realistic and prepare ourselves for facing similar situations. Jesus knew that there would be dangers. So he warned them: "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt. 10:16)

The present crisis in Kandhamal probably puts our faith to the acid test. We are challenged to focus on our entire life in the light of faith. Here we can certainly draw inspiration from St. Paul who had persecuted the followers of Christ, who was himself persecuted later on and who standing as a leader in the

midst of a persecuted Church, wrote to the Christians in Rome: "Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. Live in harmony with one another, do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly, and never be conceited. Repay no evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends upon you, live peacefully with all.... says the Lord" (Rom. 12:14-21)

4. Foster Unity

One of the urgent needs of our times is grater unity among us. Unless we express this unity in our families, parishes, diocese, etc. we shall appear weak and become an easy target to external forces. One of the realities that we cannot ignore today is the fact that our Christian community is consisting of different groups of people who come from different social, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds. Therefore, unless we make positive efforts our unity can be in great danger.

It is important that we organize our people in villages and Parishes in order to remain united, to support one another at the time of external pressures and threats. Today there is great danger of external agents infiltrating into our rank and file, trying to divide us or instigate one group against other. We should be constantly on the watch to detect and warn our people so that we do not unwittingly play into their hands.

Our concern for unity should be confined not only to the Christian community but it should be extended also to all



other communities among and with whom we live. Guided by the Spirit of God we must bring all our natural feelings and reactions in unison with the dignity of our life with God. The Gospel values of love, forgiveness, patience, etc. should enlighten and guide us.

5. Respect for other Religion

This healthy relationship necessarily includes that we respect other people, especially people of other faiths. Our people should receive the correct catechesis and clear instructions on this matter so that they are able to maintain friendly relationship with others.

The Decree on non-Christian Religions has given us clear guidelines, which should be explained to our people so that misunderstandings can be avoided. The Church does not reject anything that is true and holy in these religions. She advises us to respect their life and methods of worship and not to condemn them or hold them in disrespect. We are advised to promote dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions. The Vatican Council recommends that, while living our faith, we ought to acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral good found among these men.. I am afraid that a deeper study of some of these happenings may reveal a certain degree of ignorance of these guidelines or their violations.

Concluding the Decree on Non-Christians, the Council says: "This sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to maintain good fellowship among the nations (1Pet. 2:12) and if

possible, so far as in them lies, to keep peace with all men (Rom. 12:18) so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven (Mt. 5:45)"

6. Lay Leadership

It is also important that we have a couple of committed persons picked up from the community itself who are given or requested to exercise a certain type of vigilance and leadership so that undesirable elements do not make inroads into our communities with dangerous consequences.

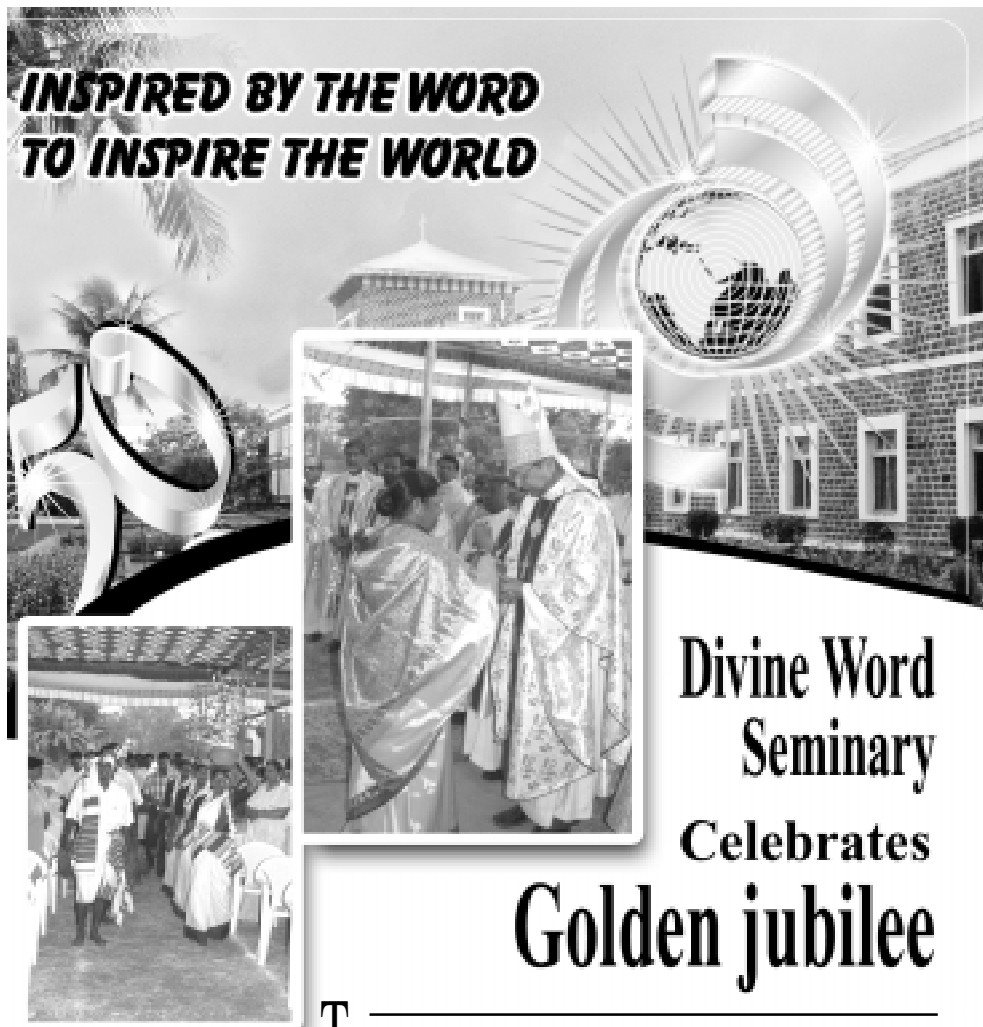
It is also extremely important to instruct our people to gather correct and reliable information on such happenings. Lack of information can easily generate misunderstandings and confusion endangering our unity. Events that may lead to explosive situations should be treated with caution and due seriousness.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the atrocities against Christians in Kandhamal District are a great challenge thrown at us. Therefore, there is an urgency to gather all our spiritual strength, in order to make a deeper commitment in faith. Our commitment demands from us sincere efforts to strive after greater perfection. "You, therefore, must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt. 5:48). It means that we love and respect our brothers and sisters and that we maintain a healthy attitude towards all. Let us not forget the words of St. Paul, "We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose." (Rom. 8:23).



**INSPIRED BY THE WORD
TO INSPIRE THE WORLD**



Divine Word Seminary Celebrates Golden jubilee

The Golden jubilee celebrations of the Divine Word Seminary came to an end at a meaningful eucharistic celebration presided over by Rt. Rev. Valerian D'Souza, the bishop of Pune on 13th January, 2008. Rt. Rev. Chacko Thottumarickal SVD, bishop of Jhabua and the provincial superiors of the various Indian provinces and the regional superior was present at the concluding ceremony along with nearly 100 SVD missionaries from both India and abroad. Referring to the motto of the jubilee year – “inspired by the Word, to inspire the World”, bishop Valerian D'souza praised the great missionary dynamism of the Society of the Divine Word. However he reminded all of the present days' challenge



of 'being highly influenced by the world'. Many priests and sisters from the JDV campus and friends and well-wishers from around the seminary attended the golden jubilee celebration along with the staff and students of this seminary.

This ceremony marks the end of a year-long celebration which began on 29th January, 2007. DWS completes 50 golden years of Missionary service in the formation of SVD seminarians on 2nd February, 2008. A Golden Jubilee souvenir and a book entitled, 'Led by the Spirit' was published during the concluding celebration.

"A jubilee celebration is an occasion to savor the past memories and thank the Lord for his goodness", said Archbishop Leo Corneleo of Bhopal during the inaugural mass of the Golden jubilee celebrations on Saturday, 12th January, 2008 at Divine Word Seminary. Rt. Rev. Abraham Viruthukulangara, archbishop of Nagpur diocese was also present at this occasion.

The theme of the Golden jubilee celebrations has been "inspired by the WORD, to inspire the WORLD". It is a proud moment for the Seminary and all who have toiled hard for the growth of this institution during the course of last fifty years as almost all of the SVD priests, numbering nearly 700, have passed through the sacred portals of this great *alma mater*. What began as a small seed has grown into a full blown tree, sending out nearly 200 of its mis-

sionaries to 41 countries across the globe. What the seminary has achieved during the past fifty years has been remarkable.

A Seminar and a panel discussion were held as part of the Golden jubilee celebrations. The seminar on 'Creative Ministries: Challenging and Fulfilling' was organised to make everyone aware of the great and pioneering work that some of the confreres are engaged in and to inspire and stimulate young seminarians to opt for challenging ministries. Seventeen missionaries from all over country and abroad, rendering their pioneering services in the field of JPIC, tribal empowerment, rural development, inter religious dialogue, proclamation of the faith through retreat centres, shared their varied and challenging experiences.

The panel discussion on Formation for Mission involved the sharing of three confreres, Frs. Ignatius Thottappally, G. Christopher, and Cyprian Pinto and Sr. Shanti Fernandes RSCJ on topics like, SVD Formation in India, Formation for Mission, Feminist Perspectives on Formation and Flashes from the Mission. This was a great eye opener to both the confreres and the seminarians about the many challenges and problems in the ministry of formation.

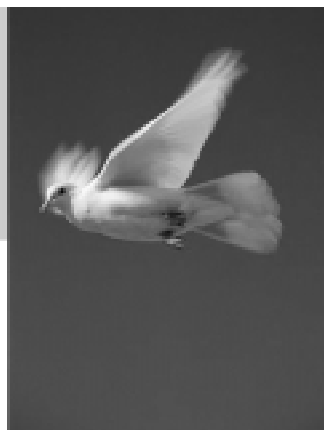
A ballet called 'MUKTHI DHARA' by Sangeet Abhinay Academy directed by Fr. Charles Vas SVD added hue and colour to the entire celebrations.



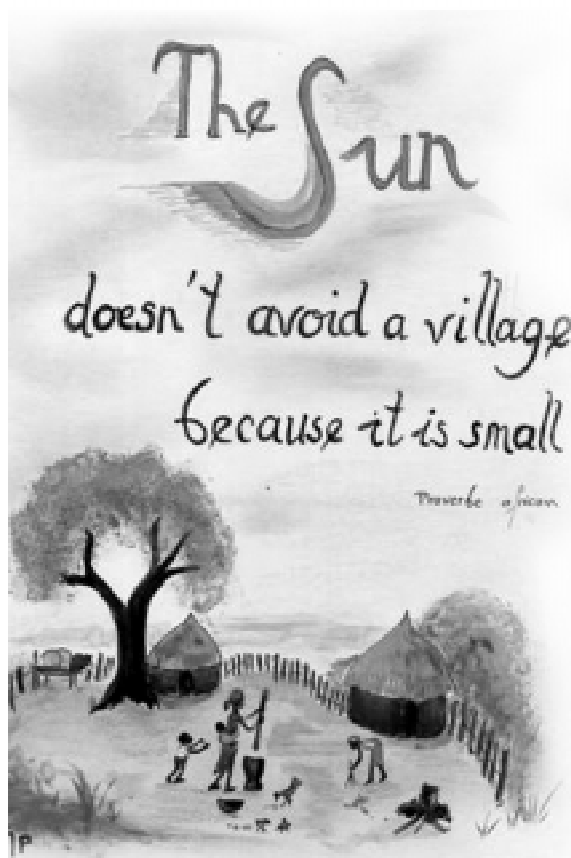
Looking for the seeds of the Word

In what follows an attempt is made to unearth biblical wisdom in the proverbs that people use in many parts of Africa.

**THE SUN DOES NOT
FORGET A VILLAGE
BECAUSE IT IS SMALL**



Joseph Kallanchira, SVD
Lomé, Togo



In sub-Saharan Africa, next to time, what we have in plenty is the sunlight. The sun shines brightly every single day of the year. Even on a rainy and misty day, the sun will come out to show its rays of hope and light. And if we are dark and perspiring all the time, the sun is out there for something, you bet! The cities and the countryside alike bathe in the warmth of a hot sun. The size of a village has nothing to do with the sun and it's coming to light every day. Even the small hamlets get their share of heat for the day.

There are several proverbs that sustain people in their search for identity and self-affirmation. One may be poor in economic terms, one may not anymore be physically handsome or fit, and yet each human person is a treasure in God's eyes. Consider these other

proverbs: A small tiger is also called a tiger! “I have nothing”, said the frog, “but I know to jump”! A deformed hand is still a hand. Fish is at home but in water. Don’t ask salt to be sugar.

Wisdom takes good care of her children. No one is lost forever, nobody is left unwanted for in society, there is a place for everyone, there is a place one can call home; and in my father’s home, I am always welcome. It is a common sight in our villages to see the handicapped and the crippled, the fool and the mad, the lazy and the crazy ones, all living side by side with those in good health of mind and body. Where there is love, it never gets dark! The warmth of affection and wantedness, of fraternity and solidarity, keeps the light still burning. Everyone belongs together.

Before singing the glories of love and charity, St Paul in his first letter to the Christian community in Corinth, in chapter 12, dedicated a lot of space, to speak of the unity of those who believe in Christ Jesus, despite their diversity. He

speaks at length of the image of the human body and its parts. In spite of the members being several and different, they all but make one single body. Like that of Christ and the Church. How can the eye say to the hand, ‘hey look, I have no need of you’! How true it is, come to think of it!

In today’s violent world, this body of Christ is indeed disfigured. There is so much suffering all over the world, created largely by human beings, who find it difficult to accept and tolerate others. ‘Hell is the other’, how easily does one believe in such ideologies and what wouldn’t one give to get rid of the other! It is difficult even for Africans to believe that such human tragedies occurred in Rwanda more than ten years ago – on this African soil, where the sun doesn’t forget any small village, because of its sheer size.

The proverb calls to mind Jesus’ own prayer: ‘That they all be one, Father, as you are in me and I am in you’ (John 17: 21-22).



The Story of two wolves

One evening an old man told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, “my son, the battle is between two ‘wolves’ inside us all.

One is evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, superiority and ego.

The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather. “Which wolf wins?” The old man simply replied, “The one you feed”.



Preserve Secularism in India



Babu Joseph, SVD
On the 6th of December the nation gratefully remembered Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, the principal architect of our Constitution.

He was known for his erudition and foresight that he gave India a Constitution that would respect and promote its plurality of cultures and religions. Secularism was the unique concept that was introduced in the Constitution in order to maintain the diversity of the religious traditions of India.

Secularism as it is understood in the West is synonymous with anti-religion; it is a modern ideology that claims that the world is a self-sufficient entity and therefore it requires no extraneous powers such as the divine power to regulate and direct it. And so belief in God and religion is dispensable in human life that is guided

by its own logic of existence. Any attempt to enforce religion on a community therefore is fraught with extreme resistance; it is at best left to individuals to make their own choices.

Secularism in India, however, is not equivalent to what it means in the western world; if it means anti-religion in the west, in India it is giving equal respect to all religions. India has been and still continues to be a cradle of all major religions in the world, and religiosity comes natural to any Indian, and therefore to develop a national ethos based on anti-religiosity is next to impossible. The Indian brand of secularism is not a negation of religions and their rich heritage but protecting and preserving them in so far as they contribute positively to the integral growth of society.

The Indian Constitution has unequivocally defined India as a secular state. It means that the state has no official reli-

gion, but is bound to respect and protect the rights of all religions communities to preach and propagate their religious beliefs and practices. This fundamental freedom of religion that is contained in the Indian Constitution is also reflected the United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights which among other things strongly appeals to all member states to ensure it.

The ground reality in India, however, does not always correspond to the constitutional mandate. For there is an increasing trend in violating the human rights of ordinary citizens in general and that of the minority communities in particular with near total immunity. This is borne out by the manner in which lawless elements go berserk under the guise of protesting against religious conversion - an allegation more often than not baseless to the core.

The latest in this series of attacks against Christians took place in Kandhamal District in the Archdiocese of cuttack-Bhuabaneswar, Orissa. As usual this attack too was well orchestrated by some religious fanatics. Many churches and church run institutions and convents were burned and destroyed during this Christmas season.

The gruesome event that took place in the state of Madhya Pradesh a few months ago cannot go unnoticed by the civilized people of the country. A small group of Christian religious women were leading a prayer service in the house of a fellow Christian but some goons owing allegiance to an organization rudely disrupted it by physically assaulting them. Some of the religious women suffered serious injuries; others were traumatized and yet case was registered against the hapless victims rather than against the perpetrators of terror and bigotry.

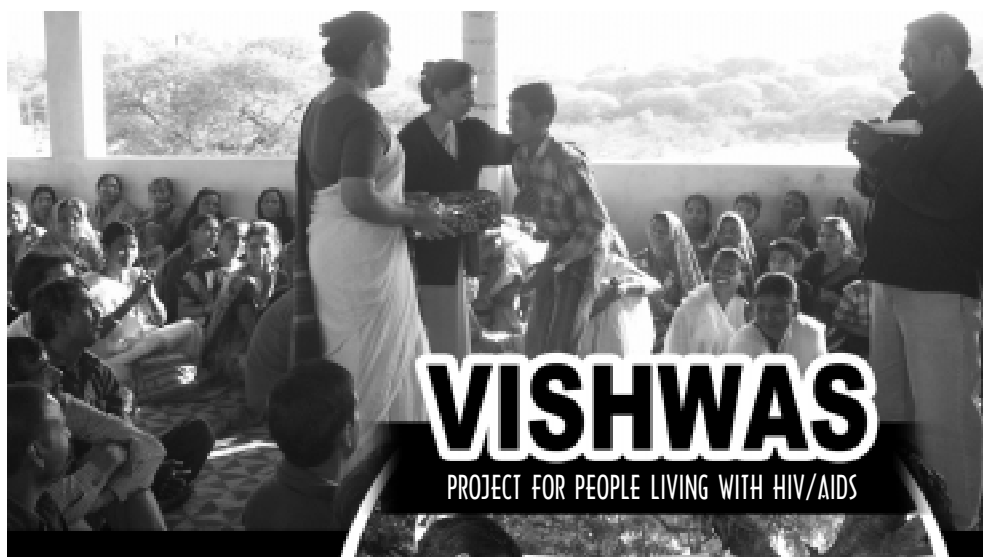
It is true that India produced some of the finest minds that gave values of non-violence, tolerance and celebration of plu-

It is true that India produced some of the finest minds that gave values of non-violence, tolerance and celebration of plurality, but it is also a fact that India has a past that is dotted with violence and bloodshed in the name of religion, caste, race, language, culture and a host of other reasons.

rality, but it is also a fact that India has a past that is dotted with violence and bloodshed in the name of religion, caste, race, language, culture and a host of other reasons. One earnestly hoped that after gaining independence India would drop the baggage of the colonial past ridden with divisive tactics and communal polarization. Such divided and polarized India suited the colonial masters' objective of retaining political power, but it hardly helps us to move forward as a progressive nation. The sad fact, however, is that our current polity is guided mostly by myopic men and women who are quick to grab the seat of power and the goodies that come along with it rather than taking hard decisions for the integral growth of the nation.

It is most distressing to note that politicians of all hues resort to exploitation of religious, caste and racial sentiments of people at the time of elections. And there is hardly any mention of development that is so close to the heart of people. The country has enough and more religious men and women to attend to the religious matters of people, the political class need not meddle with them; they should rather focus their attention on economic and social development.





I Introduction

It is a matter of pride and joy that VISHWAS has completed four years of its humanitarian service to People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), in Indore. The results of the past years efforts have been very heartening and it gave way to many new developments within the Project. Formation of a state level network namely Madhya Pradesh Network of People Living With HIV/AIDS (MPNP+), opening a branch in Khandwa to attend to the PLWHA in Khandwa and Bhurhanpur districts are the most important land marks of the year. Besides the regular activities of care and support of PLWHA, studying, understanding and implementing the methodology of Result Based Management (RBM) and Participatory Planning was an-



Sr. Jaisa Antony SSps

other major endeavor of the project personnel during the year.

1. Formation of MPNP+

The project has been making continuous efforts since its inception to link the PLWHA of the project and the PLWHA of the state of Madhya Pradesh with the national organization of PLWHA. The formation of Mutual Support Groups was our first step towards achieving this objective. The efforts to facilitate formation of a State level network continued, which bore fruit in May 2006 when we persuaded Indian Network of People Living with HIV / AIDS (INP+), which is the national organization of PLWHA, to conduct a 3-day workshop in Indore to make the PLWHA of Indore aware about the existence and purposes of

such a Networks. At the end of the workshop, on 13th May, 2006 the network under the name of Madhya Pradesh Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (MPNP+) was officially inaugurated.

2. Expansion of the Project

Vishvas has expanded to Khandwa to address the needs of PLWHA of Burhanpur and Khandwa districts. Initial preparations for beginning a center in Khandwa for a comprehensive home-based care and support of People Living with HIV/AIDS from the districts of Burhanpur and Khandwa began in the month of May 2006 when Mr. K. K Kishore was appointed to Vishwas office in Indore and Sr. Sherin James SSsP in June for a short time for experience. They got training on basic skills and practices in counseling from Secunderabad and Bangalore organized by Catholic Health Association of India before they actually began the work in Khandwa. After the preliminary assessment, it was felt conducive to start and the team, Sr. Sherin and Mr K. K Kishore began functioning from October 4 2006. Following the same vision, mission and objectives of Vishwas Indore, activities were planned and initiated.

Primary need was to build rapport with the health departments, health professionals and civil administration of these two districts and to make the new project known. It was achieved through the cooperation of many willing and generous persons. Based on the experiences and the information received from reliable sources it was found that cases of HIV/AIDS were prevalent in both districts in large number especially in Burhanpur. Due to the absence of a ICTC (Integrated Counselling & Testing Centre) in Khandwa, the number of identified cases was few. The Project was inaugurated on 13 December 2006 in the presence of the district collector Mr. Nikunj Srivastav,

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CMO Dr. Mahesh Patni, Bishop Dr. Leo Cornelio of Khandwa Diocese, Sr. Preethi Thomas, Provincial Leader, India Central Province and Sr. Jaisa Antony, Director of Vishwas Indore. It was an occasion to motivate the public to battle against HIV/AIDS.

Vishvas has started another project for the domestic workers of Indore city, in collaboration with the National Domestic Workers Movement. This project was inaugurated in January 2007. Sr. Rosily SSsP heads the project

ACTIVITIES

1. Self Employment

During the last year the project has extended support to 15 persons for small income generation activities and the following immediate results are experienced:

1. PLWHA have returned to normal routine life, which has contributed to visible improvement in their general wellbeing.

2. Regular flow of income has started with which the PLWHA are able to meet their petty expenses.

3. The mental suffering of the PLWHA and the supporting family members has reduced.

4. PLWHA have started paying back old debts, which has helped the PLWHA to regain their dignity in the family and in society. Some of the PLWHA have expanded their business.

5. Sense of responsibility in the PLWHA has increased.

2. Mutual Support Groups

Extending support to the Mutual Support Groups of PLWHA in smoothly conducting group meetings and managing group activities is a major activity of the project. During the last year, the functioning of the Mutual Support Groups has strengthened due to various inputs provided by the project.

3. Education

In view of the unpredictability of the future of the PLWHA, one of their main concerns is the future of their children. Through the education program of the project, the PLWHA are assured of a better future of their children. During this year, the project has supported 135 children for their various needs of their education. While the results of final examinations will be available in May/June the interim results of the support children are encouraging with 85% children passing in these examinations. The following overall short-term results are observed from the education program during the year:

1. The PLWHA are ready to send

their children to school and they are eager to avail the facilities provided by the project.

2. The children of PLWHA get the chance to attend reasonably good schools.

3. In addition to conventional education, the children attending schools gain moral values.

4. Medical & Nutritional Support

HIV infection being not evident until it causes physical signs of illness, which takes a long time after initial infection; most of the newly discovered infections are in the quite advanced stage. The medical help being provided by project for treatment of opportunistic infections of PLWHA is availed by most of the PLWHA registered with the project. There are nearly 600 PLWHAs who have registered their names at Indore and 100 members at the Khandwa unit. It has been our experience that within a short period, there is vast improvement in the health of the PLWHA and most of the PLWHA are able and willing to resume their routine activities of livelihood or pursue an alternate option within a period of 6 months. The initial 6 months are, therefore, very crucial and if proper care is given to such persons, their chances of regaining normal physical health is very high.

The project has been able to secure sponsorship for its PLWHA from a private pharmaceutical company manufacturing organic health tonic and has been regularly providing the same to 150 PLWHA throughout the year. There have been 100% positive results from the people who have been using the tonic with no long-term negative effects reported. All the PLWHA have reported increased general wellbeing and weight gain.





*It doesn't matter...
 Where you are from
 We are children of the same world.
 And when and how we meet
 I believe it was God's will...*

*It doesn't matter ...
 Whether you are man or woman
 You are my brother and sister.
 Whether you are homo, hetero or bi-sexual
 You are unique in this world...*

*It doesn't matter
 Whether you have a ten or hundred thousand in your pocket
 Much more important is your health,
 Even if for a moment you forget the great gift of life
 And want to kill yourself.*

Sr. Elenora Cichon SSsP



*Know that...
For me you are always precious
And I thank you that you are you...*

*Believe that ...
When you will fall down without strength
You might loose the last bit of hope
And fears might fill your being till the end
There will always be someone to pick you up saying
You can do it!... you can...*

*Believe that ...
Even though there be people
Even members of your family and circle of friends
Who don't want to know you because of your illness
Your name and person is written deeply in other hearts
Who will accompany you till your last beat of heart...*

*I wish that ...
These words today I share with you
Are not only dry words written on paper
But words of life
Passing from my heart to your heart...*

Congratulations



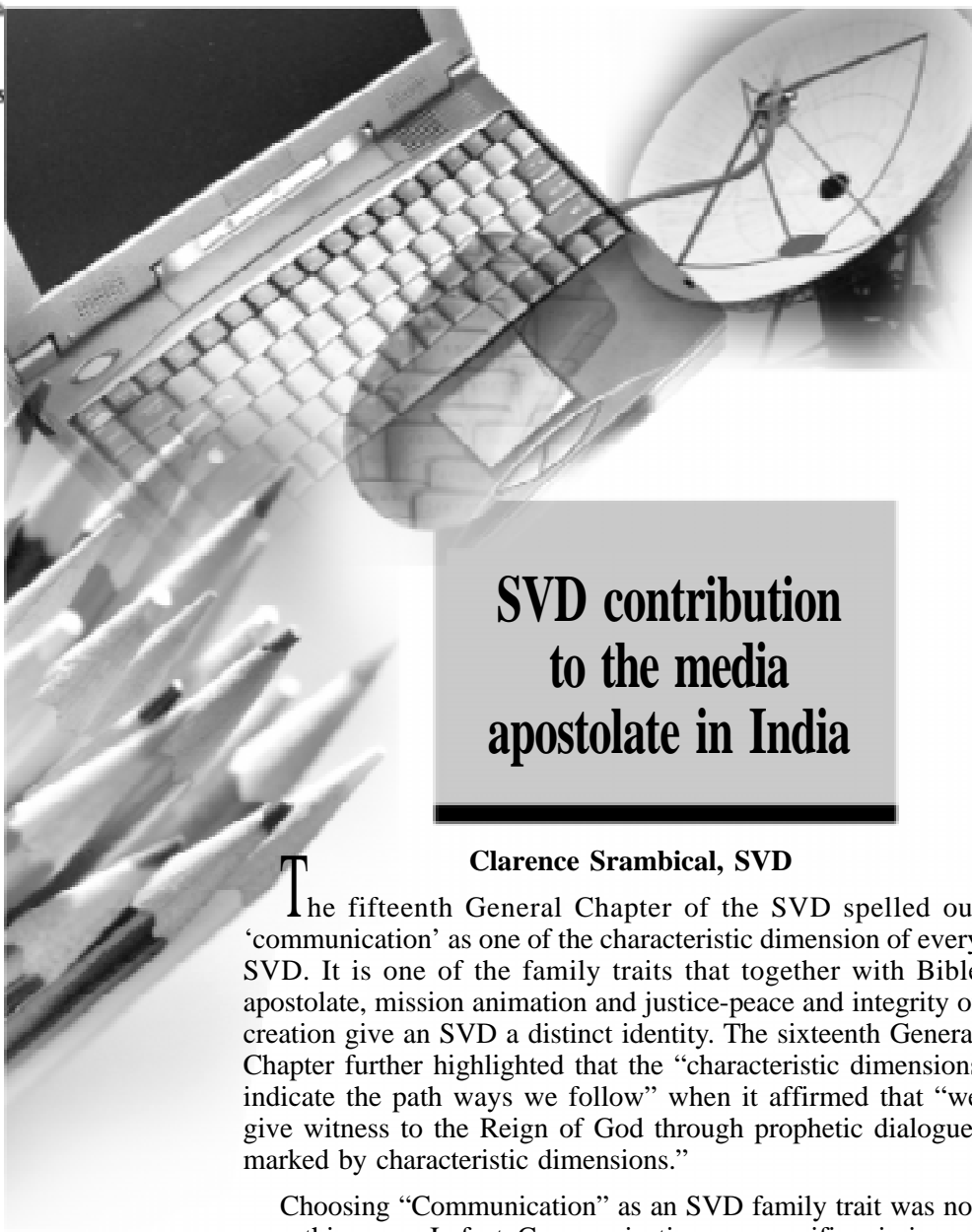
Fr. Felix J. SVD

is transferred to the Chicago Province and is appointed to be in the Executive Team of Vivat International in New York.



Fr. Stanislaus SVD

is elected president of International Association of Catholic Missiologists.



SVD contribution to the media apostolate in India

Clarence Srambical, SVD

The fifteenth General Chapter of the SVD spelled out ‘communication’ as one of the characteristic dimension of every SVD. It is one of the family traits that together with Bible apostolate, mission animation and justice-peace and integrity of creation give an SVD a distinct identity. The sixteenth General Chapter further highlighted that the “characteristic dimensions indicate the path ways we follow” when it affirmed that “we give witness to the Reign of God through prophetic dialogue, marked by characteristic dimensions.”

Choosing “Communication” as an SVD family trait was not something new. In fact, Communication as a specific missionary activity goes back to the founder Saint Arnold Janssen. As a school teacher in Bocholt, Germany he kept himself busy with publishing of books, booklets and prayer-cards. He began editing and publishing “The Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart” to promote prayer for the foreign missions even before he founded the Society of the Divine Word in 1875. From then onwards, involvement and use of the social communications media for the mission became one of the primary concerns of the Divine Word Missionaries.

As a matter of course, SVD since its arrival at Indore in 1932 began to use all variety of media both traditional and modern, to dialogue with the peoples of this vast continent. Therefore, Platinum jubilee is opportune time to take stock and focus on the SVD contribution to the media apostolate of the Church in India

Print Media

Print was the big mass media in the mid thirties to sixties of the 20th century. After learning Hindi quickly they began to print and publish small books and booklets for faith formation of Catholics. S.N. Wald SVD published the bi-lingual book of Rituals and Blessings. Joachim Mocha SVD brought out Hindi catholic Catechism. Herman Westermann SVD published Sunday Readings for liturgy and later “Nav Jeevan” a book on sacraments and moral teachings. Later Fr. Gerry Hofstee authored “A catechism book for grown ups and growing ups” in English and Hindi. Fr. George Proksch authored Kristayan in line with Ramayan and wrote several story books and one act plays for children.

Already in 1947 SVD Indore region established Sat Prachar Press. In those days printing presses were also the publishing houses. The printing presses at Patna, Ranchi both owned by the Jesuits and Sat Prachar Press owned by the SVD at Indore served the entire Hindi speaking area by providing much needed literature for Christian and human formation.

Fr. S.N. Wald, SVD, holds the place of honour for providing the first time catholic translation of the Old Testament into Hindi and publishing the same together with the New Testament by Fr. Shah SJ in 1965.

Publications to Understand and Promote Culture

Drawing inspiration from William Schmidt SVD, father of Vienna School

of Anthropological Studies, Frs Stephen Fuchs and Leon Jungblut studied Balahis, Korkus and Bhile communities. Children of Hari by Fuchs are considered a monumental contribution regarding the cultural history of Balahis. He also published books on Korkus and several other tribes of India. Jungblut brought out Bhili grammar and his book on the Bhils: The bowmen of India. Later, Indian Cultural Institute founded by Fr. Fuchs continued to promote research and publish regularly books on the culture of various peoples in India. Other individuals who have contributed to the study culture and history of the peoples include Frs. Clement Godwin, S. Lourdasamy, S. Maria Michael, Augustine Kanjamala and Thomas Vellappally.

Ishvani, Pune and Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, Indore

Activities in print media especially in regular publishing got a boost with the founding of Ishvani Kendra, Pune in 1975 by Fr. Zeitler and Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra, Indore by Fr. Clarence Srambical in 1980. Both these institutions continue to publish books on Missiology, Biblical literature and modern classical spirituality. In the last 27 years more than 200 new titles have been published from Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra in Hindi and English on a variety of topics including children’s literature, books on women’s development and beside the publication of Hindi Bible, New Testament and Biblical literature.

Music, Dance and Traditional Media

Where ever the SVD went, they made full use of the folk and traditional media to proclaim the message of Jesus Christ. India was not an exception. Missionaries in the rural belt of Indore mission regularly organized in the villages Bhajan Mandalis (musical recitals together with explanations) on Biblical themes. They





also integrated many traditional folk dances into the liturgy and para-liturgical services.

Right from the beginning Fr. George Proksch with the help of Pandits pioneered the use of India music and dance to communicate different gospel themes to the people of Hindi belt. Gradually, he established Gyan Ashram at Andheri Mumbai for promoting music and dance. Fr. George Proksch won international renown when he took his dance drama troupe to Europe and performed on special themes during the Marian Year 1954, Munich Eucharistic Congress and the Bombay Eucharistic Congress in 1964. Pope Paul VI was the chief guest on the occasion of the Bombay Eucharistic Congress.

Fr. Charles Vaz continued to promote music and dance through Sangeet Abhinav Academy Mumbai. Several other confreres have published music audiocassettes and CDs to promote good and value based songs and hymns in Hindi.

Radio

Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra took up the responsibility of providing Satya Swar, the Hindi Service of the Radio Veritas Asia from July 3, 1988. Since then every day Satprakashan's Satya Swar programmes are on the air at short wave 16 and 19 meter bands. The programmes are especially prepared to enter into dialogue with the listeners of Hindi belt on social, cultural, religious and spiritual themes to build up the person, family, community and the entire Cosmos; and the response has been overwhelming.

Audio-Visual Media, Film and Television

Since the thirties SVD missionaries made use of audio-visual means for

awakening the minds of people on their social, economic, cultural and religious rights. For this, they made use of magic lanterns, sound slides, short documentaries and feature films. From the nineties when the television expanded in the country, SVD men also began to provide programmes through the cable and TV channels.

Leadership and Public Relations

SVD personnel were in the fore front of media leadership in the country for the last two decades. Satprakashan Sanchar Kendra and Arnold Vikas Sanchar Kendra, Jharsuguda are functioning as regional centres. Fr. Clarence Srambical, SVD was the national Secretary/Treasurer of Unda/OCIC India and Signis India for seven long years. In this capacity, he has been representing the country on the Asian and world levels regularly. Presently, he is one of the members of the screening committee along with John Paul SVD that screens Church media projects for funding through Propagation of Faith. Fr. Dominic Emmanuel, SVD is presently the president of Signis India and one of the delegates from Asia for the Signis World. Fr. Varghese Nediakalayil, SVD based in Delhi has been functioning as the national executive secretary for the Information and centres.

Fr. Babu Karakombil SVD and Fr. Dominic Emmanuel SVD have been functioning as the Spokespersons for the CBCI and Archdiocese of Delhi respectively. Similarly on the regional level, several SVDs relate and proact with media in order to present the Catholic view on current issues as well as when attacks are made on missionary personnel.





**From the
Publisher's Desk...**



TOWARDS THE FUTURE

L. STANISLAUS SVD

In India, the Christian population consists of 2.3 per cent of the total Indian population of 1.02 billion people. The Catholics consist of just 1.8 percent. The Church personnel are as follows: 13,067 diocesan priests, 13,692 religious priests, 90,049 sisters, and 5,442 brothers. The Catholic Church has the following educational institutions: 359 colleges, 1,465 higher secondary schools, 3,372 high schools, 3,198 upper primary schools, 5,872 lower primary schools, 513 training schools, 900 technical schools, and 263 professional institutions. To facilitate the children to study the Church runs 1,278 orphanages and 2,979 hostels. When we look at the healing ministry, the Catholic Church has 787 hospitals, 2807 dispensaries and health centres, 111 leprosaria, 102 rehabilitation centres, and 3 medical colleges. Hence, one can understand the tremendous strength of the personnel and the infrastructure of the Church today.

The Church is to serve people, all the

people without any discrimination. It is to carry out the *command of love* to all the states, cultures, ethnic groups, religions, language groups, etc. But in the context of the ever-growing fundamentalism, communalism, consumerism and globalization, there seems to be a clear plan of action from the fundamentalists to divide the people for achieving *power*, marking a rise in both religious and state fascism. The recent violence in Gujarat and Orissa against Christian communities foretells what would be the future of the Church and what we can do in this ever growing intolerant as well as well-planned strategy of the fundamentalists in our country. Constant thinking, discussion and interaction among ourselves and with other human right organizations need to go on in finding out the meaning of our own existence as well as the growth of our country. Here, I would like to give few points which will help our thinking and for further discussion

A. Countering institutionalized violence

Institutionalized violence in India is a monster today. The structure and the sys-

tem are corrupt and evil and people think that this violence is a way of life. Institutionalized violence often goes unnoticed whereas resistance to violence of the poor is condemned. The challenge of the Church is to be proactive and interactive to counter the institutionalized violence in society. In this regard, the task of the Church is to be firm in its commitment to justice and mobilize all the resources available to counter institutionalized violence. The silence and the neutral position of the Church in personal and structural violence is a betrayal of Jesus.

B. Commitment to prophetic dialogue

The life of the Church and her role has to be prophetic. In fact, prophetic dialogue is a challenge that every Christian has to face and commit him/herself to show true faith in Jesus. Prophetic dialogue with the poor, religions and cultures and faith seekers gives a firm thrust of the direction in which the Church has to journey through in the modern world. In committing ourselves to prophetic dialogue we come to a deeper understanding that our struggle is against the sinfulness of the human heart and evils in society. Partha S. Ghosh says, "The future of India does not lie either in BJP's Hindutva or Indian constitution's guarantee of secularism. It lies in the people of India and their coexistential traditions notwithstanding their miseries, conflicts and tribulations. India is neither a 'melting pot' nor a 'mainstream.' It is a 'salad bowl' of cultures in which the constituents retain their distinctiveness yet each transcends its particularities through the presence of others." Are we committed to these elements of prophetic dialogue? As prophetic voice, our dialogue will always include the

three aspects of liberative process: to announce, to denounce, and to summon.

C. Equality with intensity and no 'Other'

Hindutvawadis know that the Constitution is the product of a minority influenced by Christian values. They want to break this connection. They want to build a Hindu Rashtra only on its own ancient traditions. But one wonders whether they want to build on feudalistic, exploitative, obscurantist, fascist or hierarchical basis. The response is not to attack the *Other*, but working with other for equality and integrity of persons. The challenge is to live and work for ***equality with intensity*** and there is no *Other* in our country.

D. Spirituality of liberation

The challenge is to affirm our faith in Jesus, our Master and our Lord. Spirituality of our life is to work for lasting positive reforms by challenging beliefs, values, traditions and customs: by enabling people to see light. Let us develop a spirituality of liberation that would motivate people to bring justice, equality and freedom.

E. Ready to sacrifice the life

We have to learn to die, only then can we think of bearing fruit. The history of the Church is a witness to the fact that wherever and whenever we were not ready to die we remained stunted and barren. A faith which does not grow from seed to sapling, or which doesn't pass through the risks and pains of growing up is likely to remain static and sterile. A Christian response is to challenge the ideologies/organizations/peoples that dehumanize the society and being ready to sacrifice our life in this continuous struggle.





Sons & Daughters of St. Arnold Janssen

St. Arnold Janssen founded three Missionary Congregations



Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration (SSpSAP)

A religious congregation for women of contemplative life.



Society of the Divine Word (SVD)

A religious missionary congregation of
both priests and brothers.



Missionary Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit (SSpS)

A religious congregation for women of active apostolate.

The Central Mission Secretary, Ishvani Kendra, Pune-14

The Provincial Superior, Holy Spirit Convent, P.B. No. 530, Indore - 452001

The Superior, Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters, Aradhana Kunj, Bangalore - 560 035.