

MISSION

SVD PARTNERS in

Volume I, Issue 1

SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD, CHICAGO PROVINCE

SUMMER 2012



The 17th General Chapter of the Society of the Divine Word

Sharing Intercultural Life and Mission

Welcome, Partners!

Dear Partners in Mission,

The members of the Chicago Province of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) are delighted to have you as our partner! Over the years, many people have shown an interest in who we are and what we do as Divine Word Missionaries – family members of SVDs, alumni of our schools, people connected to a local SVD house or parish, benefactors. We hope that the *SVD Partners in Mission* will better connect you to our life as religious missionaries, our spirituality as sons of our founder St. Arnold Janssen, and our missionary activities. We rely on the interest, support, and prayer of all our friends. Through our connection with you as our *Partners*, we hope that we will be more united with you in the common mission of the Divine Word.

This summer, the entire worldwide Society has sent representatives to Rome for a General Chapter. These chapters take place every six years, and refine our life and work as SVDs. This year's chapter is especially exciting for us in North America, as it focuses on the theme of "intercultural life and mission." We certainly know that our context here in North America is multicultural. Many of our parishes have also experienced a transition from their roots in a particular immigrant or ethnic group to one of being composed of several cultural and language groups. It is a challenge for us all!

Our hope in the chapter is to explore how this multicultural reality shapes our SVD life and mission. A central component of our SVD spirituality is that we celebrate our multicultural community life as being a sign of the Reign of God – a sign that all peoples are

called to the banquet of God's Kingdom. The prologue to our SVD constitutions state that "As a community of brothers from different nations and languages, we become a living symbol of the unity and diversity of the church." Thus, in both our SVD community life and in our mission among diverse peoples, our hope is to move from the simple *fact* of *being multicultural* to forming a truly *intercultural community* – in which people from all cultures present interact, learn from one another, respect and celebrate their diversity, and form one community. Whew! That is a mighty big goal!

Perhaps this idea of intercultural life and mission can challenge all of us to reflect on how we interact with those of cultural backgrounds other than our own. Do I reach out to a neighbor and try to learn about and understand a behavior I find puzzling? Do I ever participate in Mass in a language other than my own? Can I help bring understanding and harmony between peoples who are experiencing a clash

based on cultural values?

Our SVD General Chapter has used the biblical image of the end of time found in the book of Revelation to inspire our call to intercultural life and mission, when we will see "...people of every nation, race, tribe and language ... standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands" (Rev 7:9). May that vision inspire us all as we witness to the love of the Divine Word!

Mark Weber, SVD
Mission Secretary, Chicago Province



SVD Partners in Mission newsletter is published quarterly by the Society of the Divine Word, Chicago Province Mission Animation Committee

Editor: Fr. Mark Weber, SVD – Chicago Province Mission Secretary

Visit the *Partners* page on our website: www.divineword.org

Contact us at: missionsvd@gmail.com

SVD Mission: St. Patrick's Parish, Fort Wayne IN

Exemplifying the challenge of forming one parish community from a multi-language and multi-cultural parish population, St. Patrick's in Fort Wayne represents the SVD commitment to truly intercultural mission. The parish is about 80% Hispanic, 10% white, and 10% Vietnamese. The SVD team staffing the parish includes tri-lingual Andrew Thu Pham as pastor, assisted by Jess Briones and Sam Cunningham who reach out to the Spanish and English speaking groups in the parish. Sam is also using his professional counseling in outreach to parishioners and the wider community.

Originally an Irish immigrant parish, a merger in 2003 brought many Hispanics to St. Pat's, along with the corresponding immigration difficulties. Other challenges faced by parishioners and the neighborhood include poverty, unemployment, gangs, issues in education, lack of access to health care, suspicion of immigrants, and lack of good paying stable jobs. The parish attempts to address these concerns, coordinated by its Social Outreach Committee, through a food bank, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the *Madre de Dios* Clinic, an A.A. program in both English and Spanish, ESL classes, and other collaboration with neighborhood organizations.



Parish Bible Sharing at St. Pat's

Easter, St. Patrick's Day, and Thanksgiving, the parish celebrates as one in tri-lingual Masses. An effort is made to invite parishioners to cross over language and cultural boundaries by partaking in the cultural celebrations of one another's group. The staff consistently speaks of being one parish, and strives to get more cooperation among the cultural groups.

The witness of the SVD team, comprised of a Vietnamese-American, a Filipino, and an Anglo-American, offers the best challenge to the people that it is indeed possible to form community across language and cultural boundaries. St. Patrick's parish, reflected in the SVD team and in the parish's life, is truly a sign of the inclusiveness of God's Reign where all are welcome!

Did You Know...?

Arnold Janssen, Founder of the SVD, was canonized as a saint on October 5, 2003 in Rome, along with Joseph Freinademetz, our first SVD missionary to China. "One Heart, Many Faces" was the theme of the canonization. This theme draws upon both the image of the diversity and inclusiveness of all people called to the Banquet of God's Reign, as well as the cultural diversity of the religious family of St. Arnold - the SVD, SSpS Sisters, and SSpS Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. The image of "one heart, many faces" has captured an essential element of our SVD life, and has been used at many events since the canonization.



St. Patrick Parish's Finance Council

Moving towards becoming a genuine intercultural parish community, the parish council has representation of the three language groups. The Hispanic and Vietnamese groups each has their own council as well, affirming their distinctive cultural values and inclusive of those who may not function well in English. For feasts such as

The Catholic University: A Missionary Enterprise

Robert Riemer SVD

Courtesy of Divine Word Mission Center, Techny

Nanzan University in Nagoya is the window for the Church in central Japan. As the leading private university in the area, over 15,000 students a year seek admission, although only 2,200 can be accepted. Nanzan is well known for its Catholic spirit, academic excellence, and character formation. It is an effective means to spread the message of Jesus and to supplement the direct teaching of the Gospel given at Catholic mission schools and parishes.

I arrived in Japan in 1961 with an appointment to teach at Nanzan, one of twenty-one Catholic universities in the country. The tasks of a missionary-educator are manifold. Besides being a classroom teacher and a professional scholar, the missionary-educator is asked to be student counselor, spiritual director, and leader in volunteer activities. Likewise, he is often burdened with the care and anxieties of university administration.



Presently, Nanzan University has more than 10,000 students in seven departments, a business administration school, and a law school. A glance at the activities in which Divine Word Missionary educators have been engaged gives a good understanding of the various works of the missionary-educator. Father John Seland SVD, English professor and author, has led Nanzan students into various paths of volunteer work in Japan and abroad. Father John Schubert SVD, dynamic university chaplain, has introduced countless students to shrines, churches, and holy sites on yearly pilgrimages and tours to Europe. Father John Hirschmeier SVD, former president of Nanzan University, was a popular presenter of public lectures on Japanese business and Christian ethics. On the other hand, Father Karl Hamaguchi SVD, professor of moral theology, has become nationally known for his lectures on medical ethics. Father David Mayer SVD, kingpin for the

graduate school, was a familiar figure at scholarly English academic meetings where he pointed out the abiding influence of Christianity on English and American Literature. The founder of Nanzan University, Father Alois Pache SVD, will be forever remembered for giving the university its motto: *Hominus Dignitati* (For Human Dignity). Under this title, non-Christian students learn of Jesus' law of love of God and man, the Old Testament teaching that the human being is made in the image of God, and the moral precept that all life is sacred.



Catholic universities are not the only instrument to promote the evangelization of peoples and the uplifting of human culture, but they are an approved and respected method, especially in Asia where education is highly esteemed. It is the way which Divine Providence has entrusted to us. We are determined to use it well.

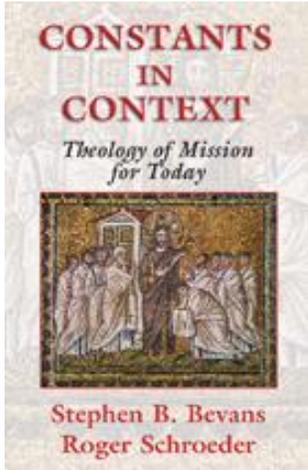


Robert Riemer SVD is originally from Chicago. He professed first vows in 1952 and was ordained a priest in 1960. Father Riemer has served in education ministry in a variety of posts in Japan, including president of Nanzan University. Fr. Riemer holds a doctoral degree in sociology from Notre Dame University.

Mission Theology Today: *Components of the Church's Mission*

What does “mission work” actually mean for the church in this day and age? We know that our mission as followers of the Divine Word means that we give witness to God’s love, and in a special way as *SVD Partners* we give witness to the inclusiveness of the Reign of God proclaimed by Jesus. But how do we give this witness in our contemporary context?

Divine Word Missionaries Roger Schroeder and Steve Bevans are both professors at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, where our SVD seminarians do their theological studies. In 2004, they published an important work entitled *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. A comprehensive introduction to mission



theology, the book has been translated in several languages and is used as a text book in theology schools around the world. We are proud of their accomplishment! In the book, they delineate six interrelated components of mission which can help us understand what missionary activity is all about:

Witness and Proclamation: This might seem obvious, as we consider missionary work to consist of witnessing to God’s Word and proclaiming the Good News. We all give witness in our daily life at home, in our neighborhood, at work, or wherever we interact with others. The church at the parish level witnesses to the Gospel through its programs of outreach to the poor and needy as well as through evangelization efforts. Proclamation or evangelization is done with a respect for the other and their own worldview and beliefs. We proclaim our faith in Jesus and his Kingdom, but do so with the awareness that we are but “earthen vessels” who can only proclaim God’s love in our own inadequate ways.

Liturgy, Prayer, Contemplation: We gather together in liturgy, we spend time in personal



prayer – what would that have to do with mission? A lot! We bring the concerns of the world into our prayer and liturgy. We listen to the Word in our prayer, including discerning the movement of the Spirit in the world and what we are called to do in response. Our Holy Spirit Sisters of Perpetual Adoration embody the importance of prayer as missionary activity, as they pray night and day for the mission of the church. And let’s keep in mind that when we gather as church in liturgy, we do so in order to be sent: “Go forth, the Mass is ended” or “Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord”. Our prayer, our liturgy, prepares us to go forth in mission!



Justice, Peace, & the Integrity of Creation: Caring for the poor and neglected has always been part of the church’s mission. In addition to direct service of the poor, the church has come to see that our mission also calls us to challenge unjust social and economic

situations that engender poverty and oppression. The gospel call to bring good news to the poor and freedom to those oppressed demands that we seek to make an impact on the structures – social, economic, political – which keep people in poverty. This concern extends to care of all of creation as well, making concern for the health of God’s good earth part of our mission as well.



Interreligious Dialogue: Ever since Vatican II, the church has explicitly stated its belief that God’s grace and love is present in all peoples and cultures, and that “rays of truth” are found in other religions. Hence, in proclaiming our faith in Christ, we approach those of other faiths – or those of no religious faith – with respect and openness. We boldly proclaim our faith, while humbly recognizing that they too have their own experience of God. Such dialogue occurs not only when we meet or pray with people of other faiths, but also when we join together to address common concerns in making the world a better and more peaceful place.

Inculturation: While we come to know the faith as it has been passed on to us in our particular culture, it is essential that we realize that there is no single “Christian” culture. Each culture that receives the Word embodies it in its own language, symbols, and structures. Of course, every culture includes elements that may be contrary to the Gospel, and these need to be critiqued. What is essential in our missionary work, however, is that we do not expect Christianity in other cultures to look or feel just like my own cultural incarnation of the Gospel.

Reconciliation: The contemporary context of the many divisions in our world today calls for a mission of reconciliation. While certainly related to efforts for justice and peace, the need for reconciliation among those divided by hurts and violence is especially acute in our global reality today. This mission of reconciliation starts on a personal level, wherever healing is needed between spouses, within families, or among neighbors. It expands to include reconciliation between cultures, political powers, and nations torn apart by misunderstanding, historical injustices, and violence.

These elements of mission are not unrelated activities, but each component informs and shapes the others. Proclamation without an openness to dialogue, liturgy without a sense of being sent, seeking justice without seeking true reconciliation will all fall short. These components of mission can help each of us to reflect on our missionary task – whether that be in our own home parish or across the seas.

Prayer for the 2012 SVD General Chapter

All provident Father, source of Life and Love,
 you sent your Son to reconcile humanity with yourself
 and to unite in peace all people divided by walls of
 indifference and hatred, arrogance and intolerance.
 Through the guiding light of the Holy Spirit,
 you have called us from among peoples
 of diverse nations and languages
 to share in your universal mission of gathering
 humankind into your Trinitarian communion.
 Nourish us and our mission partners
 in our commitment to proclaim
 the challenge and solace of the Divine Word to all
 –especially to the poor and marginalized,
 to the migrants in search of refuge,
 and to the young in search of meaning.
 Mary, our Mother, intercede for us, that we may
 remain faithful and creative disciples of your Son.
 Saints Arnold and Joseph, together with our Blessed
 martyrs and with Blessed Maria Helena and Josefa,
 intercede for our Society so that our 17th General
 Chapter may bear fruit in better sharing of
 intercultural life among us and intercultural bridge-
 building among peoples of our time. Amen!