



8 September 2021
SVD Foundation Day

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Friends, Benefactors, Mission partners and Relatives,

In August, I was in Papua New Guinea to participate in the celebration of the 125 years of the SVD presence in the country. Now I am in Switzerland, joining our confreres in the centennial celebration of our life and mission among the Swiss people. Celebration of this sort is organized elsewhere in our PRMs to commemorate our constructive missionary presence in those places.

Such occasions draw us to an awe-inspiring admiration and gratitude for the courage, commitment, risk and sacrifice that went into the foundation of a mission. With a sense of achievement, these introspective exercises teach us lessons that help us learn what more we need to do as transforming missionary disciples.

In PNG, a symposium was organized to mark the celebration. The guiding question for all the presentations of the symposium was: 'Did we bring light to PNG during these 125 years?' Experts from different backgrounds gave testimony to the illuminating missionary presence of the SVDs among the people of PNG. While highlighting how the light of the Divine Word ventured to dispel the darker realities of life, these testimonies also underlined the enlightenment we have received through the people of PNG. Their joyful expression of faith amidst all the difficulties they faced, is a beacon of light for us.

We are celebrating the 146th anniversary of our Society. We know the courage, commitment and sacrifice of our Founder, Saint Arnold Arnold, for the foundation of our Congregation. With gratitude, we can say that the Society is fortified in its mission carried out by its members, institutions, collaborators, friends, Benefactors, and lay partners. We have been instrumental in bringing God's light into the lives of many people. Our efficacious presence and characteristic missionary initiatives have made a difference in several spheres. At the same time, the Society has been richly blessed by the Lord through many people of goodwill and commitment. Our faith has been deepened, our hearts filled, our eyes opened, and our minds widened because of the testimony of the people. We give ourselves for evangelization, and we are open and humble to be evangelized by the people.

The observance of the 146th foundation day coincides with the initial preparation of the General Chapter. Initiating the preparations, we have asked the PRMs to share three concerns and propose one theme for the 19th General Chapter. We also arrive at the midterm of the general administration. At the beginning of the present administration, we decided to focus on three points: First, deepening our spirituality; second, formation; and third, collaboration.

Our spirituality consists in our being rooted in the incarnate Word of God. Therefore, the Word of God should be the center of our life and mission. We are people living in close relationship with the Word of God. Genuine closeness to the Word will bring us

closer to the people. With open hearts and minds, we share the joys, pains and concerns of the people, especially the last ones, namely, the poor, the marginalized, and the refugees.

Formation is a lifelong process. It aims at growing into unity with the Incarnate Word and into the missionary community comprising of members coming from different national and cultural backgrounds. We need the eagerness to grow, humility to learn, and the courage to change. Our formation helps us learn and mature as human persons, deepen our spirituality, acquire necessary knowledge, and develop essential skills for our life and mission.

Our collaboration starts from within, among the confreres. Is our commitment guided by the spirit of teamwork and respect for the initiatives of our fellow confreres? Working with the Sisters – SSpS and SSpSAP, lay mission partners, local church, other congregations, governments, and non-governmental organizations can only become real when there is a true spirit of collaboration.

On the same occasion last year, I addressed you amidst the pandemic. Unfortunately, we are still in the same boat. We mourn for our 44 confreres who succumbed to the pandemic. Some of them were young, and others were holding significant and essential responsibilities. We share the pain of some provinces because of the unexpected deaths of a considerable number of members. To the confreres, Sisters, relatives, collaborators, and friends, who have been affected because of this virus, some of them are in critical condition, and to those who mourn the loss of their loved ones, may the light of hope continue to strengthen you all.

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Friends, Benefactors, Mission partners and Relatives,
Happy Foundation Day and God's blessings to us all.

Fraternally in the Divine Word


Paulus Budi Kleden, SVD
Superior General
and the Leadership Team