

Jürgen Ommerborn, SVD

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# SPIRITUALITY AND SVD LAY PARTNERS

*Loved by the Holy Triune God,  
in Love with the Holy Triune God*

SVD Generalate - Rome  
2020



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**SVD Generalate - Rome**

**2020**

**Society of the Divine Word**

Layout: Sandy Ashadi

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## PRESENTATION

Dear Confreres and SVD lay partners,

Spirituality has become a kind of buzzword in today's culture, especially for the millennial generation. Some would say, spirituality exists within a unique, unbreakable relationship between the heart and the mind. It is an internal harmony that allows one to endure the most difficult situations. Some others would say, spirituality is the overriding term that describes establishing relationship with the transcendental being, therefore relation with the Power above. It has to do with one's connection with and commitment to ways of engaging transcendence. Thus, there is a sense of intimacy that drives a person towards piety, virtues and values.

Spirituality is our way of being in the world in the light of the God, thus being connected with the Holy Spirit or discerning the Spirit for our connectivity with ourselves, with the world and with the Divine. The way of being is directed by the Holy Spirit and this is a challenge to be open, to accept and to receive the power of the Spirit for our living. St. Arnold Janssen had grown in this direction discerning what the Holy Spirit prompted him to do. Thus he made efforts to listen and to act accordingly. Slowly, this has become a way of life discernment and action in the world. In the religious congregation context, this is important to discern and to involve ourselves in missionary activities for the glory of God.

This booklet is prepared in this direction of understanding the Arnoldus Spirituality, how Sr. Arnold developed a spirituality

in his daily life and also imparted to others. In today' context, this is important for the Arnoldus family members. This booklet is envisaged for the SVD lay partners so that they can deepen their spirituality in the light of St. Arnold's, spirituality, life and thoughts.

We thank Fr. Jürgen Ommerborn for writing wonderfully about the spirituality of the lay partners which was inherited from our Founding Generation. We are grateful to Fr. Pedro de Dios Martin, the translator of this booklet from English into Spanish, who worked wholeheartedly for this project and we also show our appreciation to all others who helped in this publication.

May the love of Christ impel us and to be rooted in the Word and committed to His mission!

Fraternally in the Divine Word,

Fr. Paulus Budi Kleden, SVD and Leadership Team

## INTRODUCTION

This booklet wants to contribute towards developing a spirituality for the SVD Lay Partners. This spirituality naturally is to be based on the SVD spirituality which has its roots in our founder, St. Arnold Janssen. His spirituality could be summarized in this one sentence: *loved by the Holy Triune God - in love with the Holy Triune God*. This summary gives the structure of the article, which has two major parts: The Triune God's love for Fr. Arnold / us and Fr. Arnold's / our love for the Holy Triune God. Fr. Arnold knew himself loved by the Triune God and said: "The Triune God tells us: Before the foundation of the world I have already chosen you and loved you with never ending love." The climax of the Triune God's love is the Divine Word that has become flesh, Jesus of Nazareth; Fr. Arnold said that the Christ child is the gift of the Blessed Trinity.

Fr. Arnold responded to this love with his love for the Trinity through his love for the Divine Word. The SVD constitutions make us respond to this love through our love for the Divine Word having become flesh in Jesus and in us, saying: Jesus, your mission is also mine. From his childhood on, the prologue of St. John's gospel played an important role in Arnold's life. Therefore the starting point for this article is this prologue.

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# PART ONE

## **The Foundation of our Spirituality: Jesus the Divine Word Becoming a Human Being The Triune God's Gift to Us**

### **1. Jesus of Nazareth**

Our name is “Society of the Divine Word”. This name tells us that our spirituality has to be based on *the Divine Word having become a human being Jesus of Nazareth who*, in the words of Arnold Janssen, *is the Triune God's gift of love to us.*

Therefore, let us begin by reflecting deeper on Jesus, the Divine Word having become flesh, the Triune God's gift of love for us. Who is he? Let us enter a dialogue with him and ask him, “Jesus who are you?”

#### **1.1. Jesus - Who are You?**

In asking this question we do something similar to what Jesus' first disciples did when they first met Jesus. Originally they had been disciples of John the Baptist. Upon hearing John say, “Look, here is the Lamb of God!” they followed Jesus. Jesus asked them: “Why are you following me? What are you looking for?” And then they said, “Where are you staying?” (and we now say something similar) which means: Where is your home? Where are you at home? Where are your roots? Who are you? And Jesus said: “Come and see!” (Jn 1:35-39). Jesus tells us today as well “Come and see.”

## 1.2. Where Can We See Him?

Different from the first disciples who could walk with Jesus to his house, we see him in the prologue of St. John's gospel. The reason that this prologue was written was to show us who that Jesus about whom we read in the gospel really is. John believes that the true human being Jesus of Nazareth did not only have a history beginning with his conception in his mother's womb and with his birth, but a pre-history. He sees the origin of the man Jesus of Nazareth in God's eternity and he refers to him simply as the Word. In the prologue he does not call him Word of God, but simply *The Word*.

In Jn 1:1-2 we read: *In the beginning was the Word*. "In the beginning" - in the beginning of what? In the beginning of creation. The Word does not have the same beginning as creation. When God began to create the world and human beings, *the Word already was*. It existed before anything began to exist. As v. 14 tells us, at one point in the history of the world and humanity this Word became a human being whom we know as Jesus of Nazareth and about whom the gospel will tell us in its main part.

Let us repeat: Jesus is the Word that existed from all eternity. *Where did he live in that eternity? Did he have a place to live?* John answers that question by saying very shortly, *the Word was with God*. That means, *the Word lived in union with God* and that union was so intimate that John says, *the Word was God*. The evangelist speaks about the *Word* as if he was speaking about an independent person: there is God – and there is the *Word*. This *Word* is not simply a human word, but it is divine like God is divine. God is divine and the *Word* is divine. God and the *Word* share the same divinity.

Jesus - who are you? Through the prologue Jesus answers: *The Word*, a divine person living from all eternity in personal intimate communion with God. Jesus about whom the gospel speaks is more than the eye sees.

## 2. Society of the Divine Word: Partners

### 2.1. Meaning of the Name

Our founder called our society “*Society of the Divine Word.*” That means, we are to be – using the Latin word which is the root for the word “society” *socii* of the Divine Word, a community of companions of the Divine Word who live in close union with the Divine Word having become flesh, that is, the incarnate Divine Word. In Fr. Arnold’s understanding *socii verbi divini* means more than being, for instance, devotees of the Divine Word as a Roman Cardinal wanted us to be called. Yet Fr. Arnold fought for keeping our name “Society of the Divine Word,” and he won the battle.

### 2.2. Deepening the Understanding of the Name

We know now whose *socii* or *sociae*, that is, whose companions we are as individuals and as a community. Being companions of the Divine Word can therefore never mean that Jesus is our good buddy. Yes, he is our companion and friend and a good brother and he is much more. He is much more than the eye sees: Jesus of Nazareth is the Word which has become flesh, and that Word has been in existence before creation came into existence. It is the Divine Word which has been existing from all eternity with God.

Jesus of Nazareth was aware of his origin in God’s eternity and therefore he said, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” As the human being Jesus of Nazareth he surely did have a beginning, but insofar as he is the Divine Word (which has become a human being), he is from eternity, and therefore in comparing himself with Abraham he can only say: Before Abraham was, I AM. And his companions, his *socii* or *sociae*, we are!!

### 2.3. Deeper Understanding our Being *Socii* / *Sociae* of the Divine Word Having Become Flesh

#### *Our ultimate commitment*

At one point in human history, the Divine Word left God's eternity and entered our human history. The prologue expressed this with the words: "And the word became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1:14). St. Paul described the Divine Word's entering human history in his letter to the Philippians with these words: "Jesus Christ, though he was in the form of God... emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on the cross" (Phil 2:6-8). Committing ourselves to live as companions of the Divine Word, we not only commit ourselves to an excellent human being the morally best man ever to have lived. We commit ourselves ultimately to the Word that is Divine, that is God; we ultimately commit ourselves to God.

#### *Being companions and disciples not just by our choice, but in response to a call*

As *socii* or *sociae*, companions of the Divine Word, having become a human being in Jesus of Nazareth, we are like the first disciples who did not choose Jesus as their Rabbi /teacher, but whom Jesus called and invited to follow him (as his disciples) and share his life and perhaps even his violent death, but certainly his resurrection. In response to this call, the disciples accepted the invitation.

Similar to the disciples, it is not us who choose to become partners of the SVD, but the Divine Word chose and called us to follow him and share his life, perhaps his violent death, but certainly his resurrection. And we do this not only as individuals, but in the first place in communion with our fellow (lay) partners and with all other *socii verbi divini* who have taken the three vows and

who therefore according to canon or church law are considered religious, belonging to a religious congregation. As SVD lay partners it is important that we live in communion with one another and that we form a community like our brothers in vows whose partners we are. For such a community, we do not have to live together, but we are bound together by sharing the same charism.

### 3. The Divine Word One of the Trinity

#### 3.1. The Divine Word in Relation to the Father

The term *Word* expresses a relationship. It is always spoken by somebody. The Divine Word is also spoken from all eternity by someone, God. While living on earth the Word, having become a human being in Jesus, calls this God *Father* or in Aramaic *Abba*. With the word *Abba*, Jesus of Nazareth expressed his most intimate union with God in a clearly understandable way. At the time that Jesus lived on earth his fellow Jews would not address God as *Abba*; for them it was not respectful enough for addressing the great Yahweh, the creator of heaven and earth, as *Abba*. In their thinking, the word *Abba* belonged to human beings alone to show the close and loving relationship between father and child. So, when Jesus addressed God as *Abba*, he did something unique, that was fitting for him, the Divine Word having become a human being, to address God as *Abba* in order to express his intimate relationship with him in a humanly understandable way.

#### 3.2. The Divine Word in Relation to the Spirit

The term *Word* expresses yet another relationship, it is always spoken to someone else. The first time we read in the bible about the “Word being spoken to” is in Gen 1, It was directed to the “earth” which was “a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2).

Let us reflect on the last part of this verse: “a wind from God swept over the waters.” In Hebrew the word “*ruach*” means *wind*. *Ruach* can mean “wind” or “storm” and it can also mean “breath”. In order for the word to become “Word” that can be understood and effective, the *ruach*, the breath comes into play. The word can be heard and understood with our ears with the help of the breath. Applying this thought to the Word of God we say: The Word of God which brings creation into being is spoken with the help of the breath of God which makes the word audible and effective.

The word *breath* now can also be expressed with the Latin word “*spiritus*” or in English, *Spirit*. Thanks to the breath or spirit the word is audible and effective. And what effect does the Word have?

For instance, in Gen 1:3 we read: God said, “Let there be light and there was light.” The *Word* is effective, it does what it says. In Is 55:10-11 we read: “For as the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” God creates the light and everything else through the Word in the power of his spirit. And now we have arrived at our Christian understanding of God - Father, Word and Spirit.

About this Spirit, the Divine Word (which became flesh in the man Jesus of Nazareth) said: “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason, I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (Jn 16:12-15).

## 4. Father, Word and Spirit The Blessed Trinity

Perhaps having these words of Jesus in mind Fr. Arnold said: “Through devotion to the Holy Spirit mankind will be led to love and honor the Father and the Son. If someone has a special devotion to the Holy Spirit, he must automatically honor the entire Trinity since the Holy Spirit proceeds from the love of the Father and of the Son, and it is through Him that the Father and the Son bestow their graces upon mankind”<sup>1</sup>.

Fr. Arnold’s words show that he understood perfectly well the intimate relationship between the three persons. What Fr. Arnold expressed in his way the church expressed after almost three hundred years of often heated theological reflection with the word *trinity* which means, Father, Son/Word, Holy Spirit.

### 4.1. The Trinity The Loving Communion of Father, Son/ Word and Spirit

Father, Word and Spirit are the three divine persons, and yet not three gods but the One God. The Triune God, united in love, is the Trinity. The three divine persons form a union, a communion of love and so we must correctly say: the Trinity is the loving communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The first letter of John 4:16 simply says: (the triune) *God is love*.

### 4.2. Fr. Arnold’s Trinitarian Explanation of our Name

Fr. Arnold now was a great devotee to the Blessed Trinity and he declared our name “Divine Word” in its Trinitarian relations:

The Word of the Father: that is the Son having become a human being;

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Arnold Janssen said this in the paper on 22 January 1897 cited after Peter McHugh, *The Spirituality of our Society. A Theological Appreciation* (Manila: SVD Province), 1975), 146.

The Word of the Son: that is the gospel of Jesus;

The Word of the Holy Spirit, that is Holy Scripture in its entirety, the Word of the prophets, apostles and priests, inasmuch as they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

### 4.3. The Gift of the Blessed Trinity

The starting point for our reflections had been the question of the two disciples which we had made our own: Jesus, where do you stay? Where do you have your roots? Who are you? Jesus told us: Come and see! We looked at the prologue of St. John's gospel which told us who this Jesus really is: He is the Word that has become flesh and so entered our human history. But being the Word, he has his beginnings in the Triune God's eternity. He is the Word, sent by the Father in the Spirit. And in Trinitarian language the Word is the Son, the second person of the Trinity. The man Jesus to whom we say as SVD partners: Jesus, your mission is our mission, your wishes are our wishes. He is more than our human eyes can see: in him God is present, for the eternal Word is God. He is more than the eyes see. The prologue tells us this, theology built upon this and said: the Word is the Son, the second person in the Trinity.

Fr. Arnold marveled at the fact that one of the Trinity, the Word, had become flesh and he expressed his admiration in a way which Fr. Peter McHugh, SVD summarized in these words:

The wonderful effect of Christ's Nativity is that we become His brothers: 'the Eternal Word has entered upon our course to lead us to glory to make us His brothers. Yes, the Son of God had become our brother... Fr. Janssen marveled at the poverty lived by the Incarnate Word. Since He became poor for me,

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<sup>2</sup> The September 1885 Rule: The Fundamentals of the Society [In:] *Fontes Historici Societatis Verbi Divini*, Vol. I: *Constitutiones Societatis Verbi Divini 1875-1891*, Romae 1964, 95-96.

thought the Founder, I will be poor for His sake. Arnold was greatly admired by his confreres for his apostolic poverty and simplicity.

He was astonished at Christ's great humility. Full of awe he said: 'Although he was the King of glory, surrounded by countless heavenly subjects. He came down upon this our earth!' 'Unless we are little,' Arnold used to say, 'we cannot please God. That is the lesson of Christmas.' 'What abundance of grace and light and joy attends the birth of our divine Savior at Bethlehem! Would that we could realize the treasures of grace, of salvation and beatitude that we have in our divine Savior, so that we would cling to Him with all the love of our hearts and all the strength of our souls, inseparably united forever. Let us be grateful to him and help to transmit these blessings to others.'<sup>3</sup>

#### **4.4. The Divine Word Having Become Flesh as the Triune God's Gift of Love for Humanity**

We may ask Jesus, the incarnate Word, "why did you come out of God's eternity into our history, why did you become one of us?" To this Jesus answers: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

The dogmatic constitution of Vatican II on Divine Revelation expresses this very thought beautifully:

It pleased God, in his goodness and wisdom, to reveal himself and to make known the mystery of his will (cf. Eph 1:9). His will was that men should have access to the Father, through Christ, the Word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit, and thus become sharers in the divine nature (cf. Eph 2:18; 2 Pet. 1:4). By this revelation,

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<sup>3</sup> P. McHugh, *The Spirituality of our Society*, 46-47.

then, the invisible God (cf. Col 1:15; 1 Tim 1:17), from the fullness of his love, addresses men as friends (cf. Ex 33:11; Jn 15:14-15), and moves among them (cf. Bar 3:38), in order to invite and receive them into his own company (DV 2).

The invisible God did concretely address people in this way: Out of love for humankind one of the Trinity, the Son/the Word, was born a human being, a male Jew, grew up and worked as such and went through death on the cross to return to the communion with the Father in union with the Holy Spirit. It was love and nothing but the love of the Triune God for humanity that he became a Jewish man. Fr. Arnold said that the Christ child is the Triune God's gift [of love] for us. Or we may also say: In order to give humankind, the most precious gift the Triune God could give to it, the Divine Word became flesh by being born as a baby in Bethlehem. In carrying out the Father's mission given to him Jesus just wanted to be obedient to the Father. And he said: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work" (Jn 4:34).

The will of the Father was to complete the work for which he had sent him into the world the work of bringing God's love to humanity. About the work which the Father wanted him to do we read in John chapter 2-19. In completing the work of the Father Jesus had a faithful companion, his mother.

## **5. The Mother of Jesus: His Companion in Doing the Will of the Father**

### **5.1. The Beginning of Jesus Doing the Work of the Father**

The first event in his life as the one sent or missioned by the Father was at the wedding in Cana, the changing of water into wine, Jn 2:1-12. The change of water into wine was to show that now a new time was beginning, a time which the Jewish people had been longing for, the time of the Messiah. It is a time which the

prophet Joel described as a time that “the mountains would drip sweet wine” (Joel 3:18). Jesus describes this time in Mt 11:5: “the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.”

This new time had its beginning when Mary told Jesus: “They have no wine.” However, Jesus was well aware that no human being, not even his mother, could tell him when to begin to carry out the mission for which the Father had sent him into the world, and so he told his mother: “My hour has not yet come.” Yet the hour was not far away, for he soon made sure that there would be sufficient wine. And not only that, the new wine was much better than the old; the time of the Messiah, the time of the one sent by the Father, would be much better than any “good old time” before.

This miracle is the first and foundational gift the Divine Word having become flesh was to give to humanity, a completely new time, the Messianic time of healing and therefore of joy in abundance. In the presence of his mother, Jesus began travelling the road which one day would end. And Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also present when Jesus arrived at the goal or the completion of the road the Father wanted him to travel.

## 5.2. Arriving at the Goal, the Completion of the Father’s Work

When did Jesus complete the Father’s work? The answer we find in Jn 19:28, “After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished...”. “All” means, all that the Father wanted him to do and bring to completion has now found its completion. And the last part which was still missing for completing his, that is the Father’s work, was to give his mother Mary into the care of the beloved disciple and to entrust the beloved disciple with the care of his mother: “When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved, standing beside her, said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother,’

and from that hour the disciple took her into his own home” (Jn 19:26-27).

Jesus completes the Father’s work by making sure that his work of being a gift of love to humanity, a time of salvation, is continued until he returns. He ensures that by entrusting Mary and the beloved disciple to each other: To the beloved disciple Jesus has revealed himself most deeply, he understood Jesus in an intimate way. Therefore he is most suitable to continue Jesus’ work until he comes again; Mary represents all those who are looking to Jesus, the Divine Word which has become flesh, for the salvation as it is described in Mt 11:5.

The beloved disciple is the one who keeps Jesus, the Divine Word having become flesh, alive through the gospel as he is considered the author of under the name of John. Therefore he ends the gospel with the words: “Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (Jn 20:30-31).

The exegetes agree that John 2:1-11 and Jn 19:28 belong together. They are a kind of frame within which we read about all the works which the Father wanted Jesus to do. At the beginning and at the end we find the mother of Jesus, Mary. So Mary has a very special role to play in Jesus carrying out the Father’s mission, from the beginning to the end.

## PART TWO

### In Love with the Holy Triune God

Divine Word spirituality in the understanding of our founder Arnold Janssen is a Trinitarian spirituality. This Trinitarian spirituality he inherited from his family in Goch. His family members were lay people, so this spirituality is originally a lay spirituality. So let us look at how his parents and family showed their love for the Holy Triune God, hoping this will be an inspiration for us as lay men and women.

#### 1. The Love for the Trinity in the Janssen Family in Goch: The Janssens' Trinitarian Spirituality in Action

##### 1.1. Prayer

Both parents, Gerhard and Anna Katharina Janssen, loved to pray. Arnold Janssen remembers particularly his mother Anna Katharina as a woman of prayer and said about her: "She was a great lover of prayer." Both parents saw to it that the whole family was a praying family: Arnold's brother Br. Juniperus Janssen OFMCap recalls:

After supper, from Rosary Sunday in October until the end of April, we recited the rosary, the litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the beginning of St. John's Gospel 'In the beginning was the Word.' These were followed by evening prayers and the examination of conscience. Father himself usually was the prayer leader.... Father could discourse with great eloquence on the beginning of John's Gospel. He said it was the most ef-

ficacious of all prayers and had great power with God. Whenever there was a severe storm, a candle would be lighted and then the father would kneel and pray the beginning of John's Gospel aloud. When one of the cattle fell sick, father and mother would pray the prologue for it together.<sup>4</sup>

The Janssen family as a praying family is confirmed by Fr. Peter Bill, one of Fr. Arnolds first co-workers in Steyl, who, however, left him after half a year. He made an unannounced visit to the Janssen family in Goch: "When I entered at the front door [of the house] I heard such a humming and buzzing in the house I doubted whether I should proceed or not. But as I came closer, I realized that as they worked they were alternating in the recitation of the rosary in loud but reverent voices."<sup>5</sup> They were actually butchering a pig.

Fr. Arnolds father Gerhard had his special way of showing his love for the Blessed Trinity. He offered the most solemnly celebrated Mass of the Sunday Masses in his parish, the so called 'High Mass' in honour of the Blessed Trinity.

There is a famous legend about St. Augustine. When writing his book on the Trinity a boy taught him that it was impossible to express in words the mystery of the Trinity. Gerhard Janssen often spoke to his family about this legend in order to explain the mystery of the Trinity. Fr. Arnold wrote to his brother John on July 10, 1884: "How often did he speak about St. Augustine and the child who tried to pour the whole ocean into a hole in the sand!"<sup>6</sup>

Mother Anna Katharina showed her love for Jesus, the Divine Word having become flesh, by loving to pray the Stations of the

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<sup>4</sup> Fritz Bornemann, *Remembering Arnold Janssen. A Book of Reminiscences*, trans. J. Vogelgesang, Analecta SVD-42, Romae 1978, 18.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> J. Alt, *Journey in Faith. The Missionary Life of Arnold Janssen*, Analecta SVD-85, Romae 2002, 715.

Cross. Father Gerard is remembered by his children for his love of the Holy Spirit. He also had the custom of going to Mass every Monday to implore the blessing of the Holy Spirit for the week ahead, Fr. Arnold remembered. And Bro. Juniperus tells us:

The veneration of the Holy Spirit – father spoke about it with great enthusiasm. How He blesses the fields, how He is the peace of the souls who preserves the peace of the family and the souls when one loves and serves the Holy Spirit... The priest wears the red vestment at the altar because the Holy Spirit is the fire which ignites man and pushes him to do good. We children then looked amazed at father when he taught us in that way and encouraged us to venerate the Holy Spirit.<sup>7</sup>

## 1.2. Professional Honesty

Gerhard Janssen began all his work with the words: “All in the name of the Lord.” No wonder, then, that his love for the Trinity kept him completely honest in his professional work as an import / export businessman. In bringing goods from Goch to the Dutch town of Nijmegen and from Nijmegen back to Goch he had to cross the border with his goods. He never ever attempted to smuggle. Br. Juniperus remembered:

He always paid the customs duties conscientiously. That amounted to eighteen pfennigs for each pound of coffee – a good deal of money. If we had a large amount of coffee to load it would happen that he had to pay as much as 100 Taler duty. He did so quite matter-of-factly. Since there was no postal service at the time, he often hauled boxes full of money for the business firms. Nothing untoward ever happened to him. As he rode along he prayed for God’s protection and blessing.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Hermann Fischer SVD, transl. Paul Laforge SVD, *You are the Temple of the Holy Spirit*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> F. Bornemann, *Remembering Arnold Janssen*, 19-20.

## 2. Fr. Arnold's Love for the Holy Triune God

### 2.1. Love for the Whole of the Trinity

Fr. Arnold showed this love for the Blessed Trinity, for instance, through the resolution:

- Holy Mass on Sundays shall always be offered up to praise the Most Blessed Trinity for creation, redemption and the call to a consecrated life (resolution before his diaconate ordination).



His own love for the Trinity he sought to instill into the SVD and so he said:

- Since God is three the glory of the Blessed Trinity is *our first and last end* and our Society wishes to pay devotion to all three Persons according to the statement of St. Augustine: “All that lives must be directed to recalling the Blessed Trinity and to seeing and loving Him in order that He may be remembered, be contemplated and loved.”

Our confreres are recommended often to say each day the prayer ‘Gloria Patri’ in honor of the Blessed Trinity, and to begin each work with “In the name of the Father....”<sup>9</sup> When we send letters to one another, Fr. Arnold recommended, let us place at the head the words: *Vivat Deus Unus et Trinus in Cordibus Nostris*, May the Holy Triune God live in our hearts.<sup>10</sup> Our hearts are a throne of the Triune God, and therefore Fr. Arnold wants us to remember the Holy Trinity living in our hearts throughout the day: “When we begin and when we end the day, and when we lie awake on our

<sup>9</sup> McHugh, *The Spirituality of our Society*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

bed... (a) Upon retiring be mindful of the sweet presence of the entire Blessed Trinity in your heart; (b) When we lie awake on our beds let us remember that the Blessed Trinity has its throne in our hearts and let us adore it there. Our Guardian Angels will take our places in adoring the triune God within us while we are asleep.”<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2. Fr. Arnolds Love for the Divine Word as Handed on to the SVD

### *Love for the Divine Word*

This love is reflected in the name of our Society and in Fr. Arnold’s words in the first rule, the Statutes of St. Michael’s mission house in Steyl from 1876. The name of our Society is SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD. The first Statutes of the Mission House St. Michael, which Fr. Arnold had written together with John Baptist Anzer stated:

The name of our house is St. Michael’s mission house in Steyl,...The society, however, calls itself until it may appear useful to take a very short name: ‘Society of the Divine Word in the ministry of the King and Queen of Angels’... - or shorter: ‘Society of the Divine Word’ – “Societas divini Verbi”.

The purpose of our society is the spread of the word of God on earth, particularly through evangelistic activity amongst those non-Catholic peoples amongst whom that activity seems to be most promising, and here we have in mind in the first place the pagan peoples, particularly those of the Far East.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Peter McHugh, *The Spirituality of our Society*, 26.

<sup>12</sup> *Fontes Historici Societatis Verbi Divini, Vol. I: Constitutiones Societatis Verbi Divini 1875-1891*, Romae 1964, p. 25.

### *Connected with Arnolds love for the Divine Word: The Sacred Heart*

Fr. Arnold saw a close connection between his love for the Divine Word and the Sacred Heart. Actually, his love for the Sacred Heart flowed from his love for the Trinity and the Divine Word. He said that the seat of the Blessed Trinity (and that means also of the Divine Word / the Son) is the Sacred Heart. Fr. Arnold calls the Sacred Heart the tabernacle of the Divine Word. All this shows us that love for the Divine Word and the Sacred Heart belonged to his spirituality. He showed his love for the Sacred Heart and the Divine Word in two prayers of commitment to the mission work of the new mission house in Steyl.

#### *Two Prayers of commitment*

Arnold and two of his first fellow workers committed themselves to the Sacred Heart / Divine Word in this way: June 16, 1875, was the 200th anniversary of the apparition of the Sacred Heart to St. Margareth Maria Alacoque. Furthermore, on this day the purchase contract for the new mission house was signed. Fr. Arnold and two of his first co-workers dedicated themselves to the Sacred Heart and the mission work with words similar to the following ones:

- With regard to the fervent wishes of Your Most Sacred Heart, which in such special way are directed towards the spread of Your holy Kingdom upon earth, I,
- Prostrate before You, my creator, redeemer and sustainer,
- Make my poor person available to Your divine Heart with regard to the mission work of your holy Church, insofar participation in it is being striven for in this house.

The consecration concluded with the words:

- May the light of the divine Word shine into the darkness of sin and the night of paganism, and may the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of people.

A year later, June 16, 1876, Fr. Arnold and John Baptist Anzer made their commitment to the mission work of the mission house on the newly written statutes of 1876. They expressed their commitment with the following prayer:

*The wishes of your most holy son shall be mine and I will work insofar it is possible so that your holy gospel will be spread upon earth –*

*Your holy gospel*

*Which saves, illumines and vivifies the souls,*

*Which destroys the kingdom of your enemy, the devil,*

*particularly amongst those pagan peoples who do not yet know you as the redeemer of all who loves them so much,*

*and who shed Your most precious blood for all....*

*I want to be a servant of the Divine Word in the service of the king and queen of angels.*

*And since you want that people are being led to you through people,*

*And since –*

*Because of the arrogance of fallen man -*

*You instituted obedience towards the superiors as the most reliable interpreter of your will and as the way to full salvation,*

*So with a joyful spirit I promise for ever obedience....*

*Everything I do is to serve the Divine Word for the spread of his word;*

*my tongue is to serve Your divine Word,*

*and through my small service – with the help of all the angels and saints–*

*may the heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people. Amen.'*

Then the following words were added:

*And in order that we consecrate ourselves to you still more perfectly  
And that we don't retain anything of us,  
We promise you also the following.  
I give you all my prayers, my works and my pains,  
that means their intercessory power  
for the fulfillment of the wishes of the most sacred Heart of Jesus  
particularly in the countries of the pagans, in union with all who  
are united with one another in the Apostleship of Prayer.<sup>13</sup>  
May the heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people – vivat cor  
jesu in cordibus hominum*

In August 1875, Fr. Arnold had written in his mission magazine “Der Kleine Herz Jesu Bote,” the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart, about the dedication from June 16, 1875 as the origin of the new mission house’s mission work:

The mission house will never forget about this its origin. According to its purpose the mission house is directed towards working for the fulfillment of the graceful intentions of the divine Sacred Heart of Jesus. Therefore this origin admonishes it to express this still more clearly with the explicit mentioning of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. In order to prove that the mission house will work for the fulfillment of the intentions of the Sacred Heart it chooses as its motto the following beautiful words: *Vivat cor Jesu in Cordibus Hominum* – May the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people.

The heart is a symbol of love. The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus is the symbol of Jesus’ love for the Father and for us. “Therefore we hold this Most Sacred Heart in the highest honor and love. And since our heart must be formed according to the exemplar of the first Shepherd of souls, then in a special but not exclusive

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<sup>13</sup> Archivio del Fondatore, Rome: No. 3720-3721.

way let us make devout prayers and efforts that our hearts be like the Heart of Jesus humble and meek, merciful, patient, wise and strong according to the admonition of the Apostle, 'Have the same mind as Christ Jesus' (Phil 2:5)."<sup>14</sup>

Venerating the Sacred Heart, the symbol of love, we also must practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. The Lord has specially recommended them to us, Fr. Arnold said and he continued: "People are images of God, brothers and sisters of Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit. Just as God cares for them out of the fullness of his love, endures their defects, and seeks to reform them, so we, too, will love them actively. This will be our golden rule."<sup>15</sup>

### 2.3. Fr. Arnold's Love for the Holy Spirit as Handed on to the SVD

From his family Fr. Arnold inherited also a great love for the **Holy Spirit**. In his own life a culmination of his love for the Holy Spirit was his own dedication to the Holy Spirit in the Vincentian church in Vienna / Austria on October 3, 1887. He wrote: "I have given myself completely to Him in body and soul as an offering, and I have asked Him for the grace to know the greatness of His love, to live and die for Him alone. May He assist me to live in this world free from sin and to act according to the will of God in all perfection."<sup>16</sup>

In 1888 Fr. Arnold consecrated the whole Society to the Holy Spirit. But already from the first day of St. Michael's Mission house the prayer "Veni Creator Spiritus" (Come, Creator Spirit) was part of its morning prayer. Officially the whole society dedi-

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<sup>14</sup> P. McHugh, *The Spirituality of our Society*, 80.

<sup>15</sup> Arnold Janssen, *The Spirit and Task of our Society*, in Peter McHugh, ed., *Analecta SVD -63/III*, 304.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 141f.

cated itself to a special veneration of the Holy Spirit during the first SVD general chapter in 1885.

The Society of the Divine Word decided to have a very special devotion to the adorable person of the Holy Spirit who was sent from the Father and the Son who is working in all of us.

However, since the person of the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the persons of the Father and the Son and the dignity of the three persons as well as their love for us human beings is one and the same, it [the Society of the Divine Word] decides to venerate the Holy Spirit in such a way, that the Society connects with it the special veneration of the other two divine persons and in particular the veneration of the divine Word which has become a human being for us, as it has been customary so far in the Society.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore the General chapter decided to honor the Holy Spirit as the Father and true founder of the Society since he gave us the guiding thoughts as it is the work of the founder. The Society will venerate him zealously and promote his honor.

The General Chapter gave to the Society its first Rule and in it the following prayer was recommended: *God Holy Spirit come into our heart and soul. Illumine us and strengthen us with your grace that we may faithfully follow your inspirations. Through Christ our Lord.*

### **Fr. Arnold's Last Wish**

How much the veneration of the Holy Spirit was in Fr. Arnold's heart we see from one of the last letters he had dictated before his death. In a letter to Fr. Degenhardt in Chile we read:

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<sup>17</sup> Cited in Fritz Bornemann, "Ferdinand Medits and Magdalene Leitner in der Geschichte des Steyler Missionswerkes," [Ferdinand Medits and Magdalene Leitner in the History of the Steyl Mission Organization] *Verbum Supplementum* 4 (1968):71-72 (author's translation).

“Fostering special devotion to the Holy Spirit is the aim of our Society. Let this always remain our aim and let no one deviate from it. My wish in the matter, if I may call attention to it once again, is this: Let no member of our Society be found who fails to have this for his aim. Such a person could prove a great handicap for our Society.”<sup>18</sup>

### 3. The Primary SVD Feasts

#### 3.1. The Feast of the Blessed Trinity

In conclusion we have to emphasize that even though we have considered the three persons individually, we must not forget that the three belong together. Fr. Arnold did not get tired of emphasizing this and he said:

Since the vows of regular life were introduced in the 1<sup>st</sup> General Chapter of 1885 the Society is especially dedicated to the Holy Spirit. But our name comes from the Divine Word. And to show that we wish to worship the Holy Spirit not exclusively but in union with the other two holy Persons of the Divine Trinity, the heavenly Father and especially His Son our Redeemer and His most loveable Heart, for this reason the Feast of the most Holy Trinity is chosen as the primary feast of the Society.<sup>19</sup>

#### 3.2. Veneration of Mary

Earlier we saw how in the gospel according to John, Mary is connected to the mission of the Divine Word having become flesh. She who appears as his mother at the beginning of his carrying out the mission for which the Father had sent him into the world stands also at the end; giving her to John and John

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<sup>18</sup> Cited in P. McHugh, *The Spirituality of our Society*, 147.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

to her, he had completed the mission the Father had given him and could die.

No wonder, that the veneration of Mary had a place in Fr. Arnold's Trinitarian missionary spirituality and what we have been saying about Arnold's Trinitarian spirituality we also have to say about his love for Mary: he inherited it from his family. Veneration of Mary had been part of Fr. Arnold's life from childhood on, through the May devotion in their home and the pilgrimage to nearby Keve-laer, where Mary was venerated as consoler of the afflicted.

Fr. Arnold's deep veneration of Mary shows itself also in the name of the mission house. The full and long name of the mission house was: Society of the Divine Word in the Service of the King and Queen of the Angels.

Once he started his theological reflections about Mary he saw her in very close connection to the Blessed Trinity. He wrote: "To the persons of the Blessed Trinity, Mary is daughter, mother, spouse. The heavenly Father chose her among all the daughters of men to be His most beloved child. The eternal Son singled her out to be His Mother from whom He would assume his body. The Holy Spirit loved her as His spouse and made her the chosen vessel of His divine grace. Thus Mary became in very truth the darling of the Blessed Trinity."<sup>20</sup> Being mother of the Divine Word, Mary is in a very special way the mother of the Society of the Divine Word.<sup>21</sup> Fr. Arnold loved to call Mary by two titles: "Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit" and "Immaculate Heart of Mary."

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 197.

### *The Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit*

Since the 1885 Rule, so Fr. McHugh writes, we have been urged to invoke Mary under this title. The month of May is dedicated “to Virgin Mother of God and Immaculate Spouse of the Holy Spirit.” Mary as the immaculate spouse of the Holy Spirit is presented as the model of chastity and one whose help we should invoke for this virtue.<sup>22</sup>

It is the Holy Spirit who made Mary his immaculate spouse, “full of grace and radiant with the splendor of every virtue.” (The title “Immaculate spouse of the Holy Spirit” was used by Fr. Medits, Frau Leitner and the Confraternity of the Holy Spirit which he/they had founded in Vienna and may have been taken over from there).

### *The Immaculate Heart of Mary*

Fr. Arnold expressed his love for the Immaculate Heart of Mary by saying: She was “the spotless mirror of the Heart of Jesus”. “The good God,” he said, “has given His Mother the key to His Divine Heart, so that she can draw from it all the graces it contains. How beautiful is the title of honor recently approved by the Church: ‘Our Lady of the Most Sacred Heart!’ It bears reference to Mary’s unique intimacy with the Heart of Jesus.”

Fr. Grendel, the third successor of Fr. Arnold as Superior General SVD, writes: “We revere the real heart of the Blessed Mother, not merely in the narrow sense of the word referring to the purely physical heart but in the extended meaning in which it expresses the entire psychic-organic holy being of the Mother of God as the source and bearer of all her virtues, especially her love for God and for us, and in general her entire inner life.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 198.

### 3.3. Veneration of the Angels

Fr. Arnold manifested his veneration of the angels in the most visible way by dedicating the church in Steyl to the angels. The angels are part and parcel of Fr. Arnold's Trinitarian spirituality.

The 1876 Statutes had been written by Fr. Arnold and then seminarian John Baptist Anzer (but with Fr. Arnold as principal writer) state:

The veneration of the Divine Word is followed by the veneration of the holy angels. They are the adorers of the Divine Word in the holy sacrament [two angels standing at the tabernacle door in the upper church in Steyl!].

They were the special servants of Christ in his apostolic endeavors and they are still the heavenly helpers of the successors in those endeavors. Furthermore they have been placed at the side of men and women just because men and women are meant to possess grace and glory. Through their presence people can recognize the greatness of the sanctifying grace.

At the same time the foundation of this veneration is the following: Our dear Lord loves...to give his grace through mediators. Therefore it can be assumed that he gives to a person very many graces for the illumination and the movement of the will through their guardian angel.

Since the missionary, living in the middle of difficulties which surround him, needs such graces very much, in order to receive these graces more easily, we will venerate the angels and motivate others also to it.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Fontes Historici Societatis Verbi Divini, Vol. I: Constitutiones Societatis Verbi Divini 1875-1891, Romae 1964, § 7.

## PART THREE

### Special Features of Fr. Arnold and the Founding Generation's Love for the Holy Triune God

#### 1 Fr. Arnold's Love for the Holy Triune God

We will look at Fr. Arnold being in love with the Holy Triune God. At the time of his death he left his spiritual sons and daughters his love for the Holy Triune God as a precious legacy.

##### 1.1 Special Mottos

Fr. Arnold expressed his love through some mottos:

- May the Holy Triune God live in our Hearts (later addition: and in the hearts of all people).
- May the darkness of sin and the night of paganism vanish before the light of the Word and the Spirit of grace, and may the Heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all. Amen

##### 1.2 Many Faces of Love for the Blessed Trinity

###### *Prayer*

Coming from a praying family, it does not come as a surprise that Fr. Arnold developed into a man of prayer who wanted his spiritual sons and daughters also to be men and women of prayer and who therefore gave them, for instance, the Quarter Hour Prayer which reads in today's form:

*God eternal Truth, we believe in you.*

*God, our strength and salvation, we hope in you.*

*God, infinite goodness, we love you without whole heart.*

*You have sent your Word as Savior of the world, let us all be one in him.*

*Send us the Spirit of your Son, that we may glorify your name.*

*Amen.*

Fr. Anthony Hilger, one of his private secretaries, gives the following testimony:

Fr. Arnold lived uninterruptedly in the presence of God. His vast labors, of course, allowed him little time for special prayer; on the other hand, his whole life and labor were prayer. He was habitually in an attitude of prayer. This statement is no mere cliché, but a deep, lasting, ineradicable impression, gained during my long association with him.

As he was dictating letters, his thoughts would sometimes stop flowing. I would see him silently move his lips in prayer for help to find the right words. Often he asked me to kneel down with him and pray the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*, since he was seeking divine aid to determine the proper tone of the letter. After doing so, I noticed that his dictation proceeded smoothly, in contrast to the laborious way in which he had been formulating his sentences before. 'You see,' he would then remark at the end, 'the Holy Spirit did grant his assistance.'

Of all the different forms of prayer, Fr. Arnold liked very much, if not most, the intercessory prayer. It pained him, so he wrote, that 'almost all the prayers in prayer books, Ways of the Cross and people's devotions are concerned only with one's poor self. To be sure we must all realize that we are poor and greatly in need of prayer. But when we offer up most of our prayer for others and only think of ourselves last, not out of pride but out of love for God and

neighbour, our good God will hear our prayers for ourselves just as well as if we had prayed twice or three times as much for our own wishes.’

### Doing the will of God

Loving God means doing the will of God. This was true for Jesus, the Divine Word having become a human being, and this was true for Fr. Arnold the *Socius Verbi Divini* and it has to be true for all *Socii* or *Sociae Verbi Divini*. Yet, how can the will of God be discovered? Here are some of the criteria which helped him to find out the will of God:

- a. At times God lets us immediately see through his inspiration what he wants us to do: “If we have the desire to do God’s will and we ask him to enlighten us, he will give us a strong impulse to act in conformity with it,” Fr. Arnold said.
- b. It is a sign of true prudence to ask for advice from others. God helps us through others to recognize what he wants us to do. To one of his priests he wrote: “I can assure you that I do everything possible in order not to make a mistake. Therefore I do a great deal of thinking, collecting material, and consulting others. It is in this way that I try to discern God’s will.”
- c. The ordinary or the usual way of finding the will of God lies in the evaluation of the circumstances and conditions, that is the situation. He wrote: “The will of God can be recognized generally speaking from the circumstances, for instance, if people are available who can do the work.” On another occasion, “What we cannot do, is not God’s will.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Jacob Reuter SVD, *Proclaiming the Word in the power of the Spirit* (Arnold Janssen), trans. *Vom Geist erfasst und gesandt*, Sr. Mechtraud, M. Dick, SSPS, Arnold Janssen Secretariat (Steyl: Steyl Press B.B., 1994), 23.

Once Fr. Arnold was certain that something was the will of God, his opinion could not be changed. His secretary Fr. Hilger writes:

He undertook nothing unless he was convinced that it meant fulfilling God's will. This habitual attitude of his explains the extraordinary tenacity and self-assurance with which he stuck to a decision once it was made. His decisions, therefore, grew to maturity in silent converse with God. Often, however, when they went into execution and thus became known to others, his intimates shook their heads in disbelief and sometimes were filled with consternation. But this had no effect at all; discussion was futile. It was only in rare cases that the objections were cogent enough to change his decision. As he repeatedly pointed out, he had determined upon his course of action in prayer and to him this was the decisive fact. Moreover, if an idea entered his mind precisely after he had said his morning Mass, that circumstance lent a special firmness to his conviction that the matter was God's will. Again and again he assured me that later developments had always proved these decisions to have been wise.... So firmly did he adhere to them that even general disapproval only increased his firmness. Frequently he remarked to me, 'In just those cases where I proceed with a plan against universal opposition I discovered later that it was the right plan to follow.'<sup>26</sup>

### *Trust in God*

Fr. Arnold was able to always try to discern and then do God's will because he had an unshakable trust in God. He was convinced of the truth of St. Paul's words to the Romans: "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God" (Rom 8:28). He expressed his trust in the Triune God's love in this little poem:

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<sup>26</sup>Anthony Hilger, *A Private Secretary's Impressions of our Founder*, in P. McHugh, *Arnold Janssen Yesterday and Today*, 54-55.

Trust the Lord in every situation, whether it is day or dark night,  
whether storm clouds fly overhead or the sun smiles down gently.

Leave everything in his hands.

Oh, he means so well with you.

When the time comes he will calm the storms.

You are safe in his care.

In 1876, Fr. Arnold began with his first building. At the time he had only a fraction of the money he needed but he started nevertheless. When the building was completed in 1877, the bills were paid. Sure he had no money, but his capital was **absolute trust in God**. “**Our real capital is trust in God**” he wrote in the Little Messenger. “Trust in God is the virtue from which a missionary must draw strength and help. Yes, a missionary must be a hero of trust in God. Therefore it is good, that our mission house from the beginning to the end was founded on that virtue.”<sup>27</sup> However, trust must not go too far as he wrote in the Little Messenger of the Sacred Heart in 1891: “Trust in God is a virtue. However, like every other virtue it has to go hand in hand with prudence, otherwise virtue seldom becomes foolishness.”

### *Charity towards our fellow human beings*

Fr. Arnold knew himself loved by God, he wanted to love God and he also knew his love for God had to include love for his fellow human beings. However, the latter was difficult for him, as his personal secretary Fr. Hilger knew from personal experience. He writes:

May I add a few words about Father Janssen’s charity? It is not surprising that his deep, strong love of God led him to an immense fraternal charity, for the one presupposes the other. But it was a fraternal charity acquired only after a hard struggle

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<sup>27</sup> J. Alt, *Journey in Faith*, 160.

in which he bravely conquered his native harshness and lack of consideration, a struggle witnessed only by his close associates. His cordial kindness and delicate consideration, shown... even to those who had deeply offended him, far from natural gifts, were sublime virtues, acquired in life's hard fought battle.<sup>28</sup>

In another talk Fr. Hilger said:

My memory of Arnold Janssen is as a self-made man in the best sense. He worked on bettering himself until old age. He used God's chisel on himself and in a special way he showed both endurance and untiring effort....

It was not something light and easy to change himself, this fellow who seemed to his fellow students to be a stubborn eccentric. He once said to his landlady who wanted to raise the rent: 'I will not pay more rent and I'll not move out either!' When the same landlady wanted to rearrange the garden paths, he simply forbade her to do so because he wouldn't be comfortable anymore when saying his breviary walking along these new paths....

He could be so unfeeling and sharp in his judgment that one would rather see the back of him than his face. I can really say that it was not easy for Arnold to change from being such a man to a different person, mild, forbearing, helpful and humble, who did not lose his calm at even the sharpest contradictions; who treated all in the same way, even the youngest; who was so attractive through his paternal goodness, and who made requests of others with such humility and modesty, even though he could have issued a simple command. He also accepted the refusal of others, even from those who were es-

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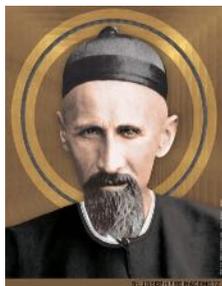
<sup>28</sup>Anthony Hilger, *A Private Secretary's Impressions of our Founder*, in P. McHugh, *Arnold Janssen Yesterday and Today*, 59.

pecially obliged to him. In short he changed himself into a person of heroic virtue....<sup>29</sup>

Fr. Arnold was fully aware of his shortcomings and harshness in relation to the confreres. He wanted to change and so at a celebration of his name's day he told the community:

I beg the Sacred Heart and the eternal love of the Holy Spirit to share this love with me. And if you wish to do me a special favor, then help me to pray for something of the fullness of divine love for my cold heart. And what I have in mind here in the first place is not love for God but love for all of you. How grateful I would be to the Lord God and how grateful to you if you would pray for me to have such a love.<sup>30</sup>

## 2. Fr. Josef Freinademetz' Love for the Holy Triune God



Fr. Joseph expressed his love for the Holy Triune God also in the following way:

### *Prayer*

Like Fr. Arnold, Fr. Josef Freinademetz came from a praying family. No wonder, he left us some beautiful words which sustained his prayer life:

- Our prayer life can be summarized in the words: think like Jesus, judge like Jesus, love like Jesus, act like Jesus.
- The spirit of prayer transforms our daily work, eating, sleeping, playing and breathing into the service of God.
- For prayer we do not need more time than for not praying.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony Hilger, The 100th birthday of Arnold Janssen (1937) in P. McHugh, *Arnold Janssen Yesterday and Today*, 65.

<sup>30</sup> P. McHugh, *Alive in the Spirit*, 145.

Why? To breathe in honor of God is prayer; living a good, honorable life is prayer; work which is sanctified through the good intention is prayer; eating, drinking, sleeping, to enjoy oneself in a decent way is prayer. To pray is nothing else but lifting up one's spirit to the Lord.

- Without good prayers we are like soldiers without weapons, a body without a soul, birds without wings, a tree without roots, a ship without a compass.

### *Love*

Fr. Freinademetz is known as a missionary filled with a heart full of love. From this heart full of love come the following words:

- Love is the language everybody understands.<sup>31</sup>
- Our motto: listen to it and write it into your memory, into your hearts and into your hands in order to never forget it and never lose sight of it, our motto is love.
- The first is love; the second is love; the third is love. 70x7 times love. And seven million times seven also love.
- How much love? Let us love one another as Jesus has loved us. Then we find the right measure.
- Even if I cannot give much to another person, I take any opportunity to do something for him which makes him happy.

Love should also sit with us at table. This kind of love Fr. Freinademetz describes like this:

- We will do our best so that during our meals love and consideration, modesty and good manners also sit at table.

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<sup>31</sup> This is the short version of the Fr. Blick's remembrance of Fr. Freinademetz, "Pagans will be converted only through the grace of God and let us add, through our love. The language of love is the only foreign language which pagans understand." in *Erinnerungen*, P. Josef Freinademetz, Steyler Verlag, St. Augustin 1971 (authors translations).

A person whose heart is full of love reminds himself time and again of the following advice of Fr. Freinademetz:

- What is the use of knowing all the mistakes of others but not your own?

### **Joy**

Since we are loved by the Holy Triune God, one way of responding to that love is our joy.

He said:

- Serve the Lord with joy!
- A society without joy is a sick society, he told his fellow missionaries in China.
- Joy is the spice of all our actions, like salt is the spice of food.

To new missionaries, Fr. Freinademetz gave this advice:

Take with you to the missions all the zeal and joy in your work that you brought with you from home. Add to it a full measure of patience which never grows weary, a courageous spirit of sacrifice which does not shrink back in the face of difficulties, a generous dose of good humor which never deserts you, not even when crosses and other disappointments, which are our common lot in this world anyway, confront you. Finally, add a rich measure of true and solid piety which keeps you unharmed amid all the trials our noble vocation entails and enables you to fight the battles of the Lord.

Not only young, but missionaries of any age can get courage and consolation from the following words of Fr. Freinademetz, which are certainly based on his own experience:

We missionaries receive rougher treatment than the rest of humanity. And it is right that we do. Do not let it get you

down and do not lose your sense of humor. When things get all messed up in the world, and neither to your left nor to your right; neither above nor below you find a little understanding, then that is nothing new as well; it will be like that long after a lot of grass has grown over our graves. We have to be weatherproof and put up with the problems of the moment... In everyone's life there are moments when everything seems dark. Still one must be of good cheer always.



## PART FOUR

### **SVD Spirituality in our Times**

Having completed our look at St. Arnold's and St. Joseph Freinademetz's love for the Holy Triune God, we look at how the SVD and the SVD lay partners can translate Fr. Arnold's love for the Trinity into our times.

During the founding generation's time, the SVD and SSps were predominantly German congregations even though they had members of other nationalities and the first elected SSps Superior General Mother Theresa Messner was Austrian by birth. However, her and Fr. Joseph Freinademetz's home area of South Tyrol became Italian after the first world war by birth she was Austrian and then turned Italian. Fr. Freinademetz had already died by that time.

Today the Arnoldus family membership is multinational, multicultural and has to live in the spirit of dialogue and interculturality as most international organizations do as well, be they religious or secular. That is one of the signs of the times. And now we are really fortunate to have our founder's legacy of a Trinitarian spirituality. We cannot thank him enough for it. For Trinitarian spirituality is for Christians the foundation of a life in dialogue and interculturality. What looks today to be simply a necessity of life, for us is also a necessity because of Fr. Arnold's legacy to us: the Trinitarian spirituality. With that, Fr. Arnold made us fit for living and carrying out the Triune God's mission in the twenty-first century the century of dialogue and interculturality.

## 1. Our Trinitarian Spirituality: Foundation of Dialogue and Intercultural Living

### 1.1. The God of Unity in Diversity

We believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; however, even though they are different, they are not three gods. They are one God, because they are the loving communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They are “in eternal correlation, interpenetration, love and communion, which make them one sole God. The fact that God is triune means unity in diversity.”<sup>32</sup>

Speaking of God for us Christians “must always mean the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the presence of one another, in total reciprocity, in immediacy of loving relationship, being one for another, by another, in another and with another.”<sup>33</sup> Or we can also say, the three divine persons are in *mutual dialogue* with each other,<sup>34</sup> that is in a dialogue of love: “The one Christian God is *Communio*, he realizes his being in the dialogue of love of three persons.”<sup>35</sup>

### 1.2. The Triune God A Communion of Three Persons

Our Christian God is the communion of three persons. The number “three” has a special meaning. The number “three” is opposed to the number “one”. “One” means loneliness, being closed in oneself.

The number “three” is also opposed to the number “two”. The number “two” means either separation/exclusion (I am not you!) or narcissism (you are for me). The number “three” overcomes

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<sup>32</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Trinity and Society* (London: Burns & Oates, 1988, reprint 1992), 3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 138,

<sup>35</sup> Gisbert Greshake, *Der Dreieine Gott* [The triune God], (Freiburg: Herder, 1997), 182.

loneliness and being closed in oneself as well as separation/exclusion and any form of narcissism, by binding the two together into communion. In that way unity and diversity make up the unity of the *communio*. Such a *communio* is God. That means also, there is no divine person who could be independent of the other two. Each divine person is in eternal relationship with the other two.<sup>36</sup> That is also what Leonardo Boff and Arnold Janssen say.

Furthermore, these three persons are different from each other; each of them is unique and not inter-changeable: “the Father is neither the Son, nor the Holy Spirit, and so on for each Person.” Their names show that they are at the same time different from one another and in relationship with one another. So, the Father is Father in relation to the Son; the Son is always the Father’s Son; the Holy Spirit is breathed out by the Father in his Word (Son), since Word (Son) and breath (Spirit) are inseparable. Difference does not mean opposition (one *not* being the other) or separation. It is their diversity that enables their communion.<sup>37</sup> “They are different from one another so that they can enter into communion with one another and share their particular riches with one another... The three divine persons are so closely bound to each other and penetrate one another in love in such a radical and all-encompassing way, that they form ONE God.”<sup>38</sup>

So the correct way of speaking of God is to say: we believe in the communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

### *The Trinity a communion of overflowing love*

This loving communion of the Trinity is not closed in itself, but opens itself to the outside. Boff writes: “... the three divine Per-

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 183

<sup>37</sup> L. Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 140, (Boff is of the author)

<sup>38</sup> L. Boff, *Kleine Trinitätslehre*, [Short doctrine of the Trinity], (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1990), 86.

sons spill over outwards, creating other different things and beings (the cosmos and humankind) for them to be receptacles of the transfusion of communicative love and the boundless ocean of trinitarian life.”<sup>39</sup>

***The Trinity Revealed by the Divine Word having become a human being***

Our belief in the Triune God is not the result of theological speculation, but the Trinity is the result of Revelation. In the life and mission of the Divine Word having become a human being - that is in Jesus of Nazareth - people encountered the Father, the Son/Word and the Spirit.

Cardinal Tauran, the late former president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, writes: “Dialogue belongs to the essence of our Christian faith. Jesus has revealed that God Himself is dialogue (it is the very substance of the Holy Trinity) and every Christian has to imitate this dialogue of the communion of love between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.”<sup>40</sup>

**2. The Birth of the Word “Dialogue” in the Catholic Church’s Use**

***Pope Paul VI***

When Pope John XXIII opened the Second Vatican Council in 1963, he said: The Church “is at a turning point in the history of the Church.” Since the whole human family was on the threshold of a new era, the church had to adapt herself to the fundamentally changed world. And a year later, Pope John had died and Paul VI was the new pope; this new pope wrote the encyclical *Ecclesiam*

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<sup>39</sup> L. Boff, *Trinity and Society*, 147.

<sup>40</sup> Jean-Louis Tauran, “Christians and Muslims in Europe: A Common Journey,” *Pro Dialogo*, 1, 130 (2009): 50.

*Suam* (ES), (His Church). In it, he took up Pope John's idea of adapting the church to the new era in history by introducing the word "Dialogue" as the motto/principle of the church's ministry.

Paul VI writes: "The Church must enter into dialogue with the world in which it lives. It has something to say, a message to give, a communication to make" (ES 65).

"In fact no other course is open to Us in view of Our conviction that it is this kind of dialogue that will characterize Our apostolic ministry" (ES 67).

"Dialogue is a recognized method of the apostolate. It is a way of making spiritual contact" (ES 81)

"Our dialogue must be accompanied by that meekness which Christ bade us learn from himself: 'Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart.' It would indeed be a disgrace if our dialogue were marked by arrogance... or offensive bitterness." (ES 81,2)

"...Hence dialogue promotes intimacy and friendship on both sides. It unites them in a mutual adherence to the Good, and thus excludes all self-seeking" (ES 81,3).

"... Before speaking, we must take great care to listen not only to what men say, but more especially to what they have in their hearts to say. Only then will we understand them and respect them, and even, as far as possible, agree with them... Dialogue thrives on friendship, and most especially on service" (ES 87)

Following the example of Pope Paul VI, the Second Vatican Council then also used the word "Dialogue" in its documents. Some members of other religions reject this kind of dialogue; they fear that it was only a trick to make converts to Christianity. However, dialogue is not a Christian trick, but follows necessarily from the God we believe in: the dialogue communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

***“Secretariat for Non-Christians” and “The Attitude of the Church Towards Followers of Other Religions”***

In 1964, Pope Paul founded the “Secretariat for Non-Christians.” Pope John Paul II renamed it the “Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue.” And this Council published in 1984 the document: “The Attitude of the Church Towards Followers of Other Religions.” This document described dialogue in a fourfold way: Dialogue of Life, Dialogue of deeds / actions, Dialogue of specialists, Dialogue of religious experience.

About the dialogue of life this document said:

Before all else, dialogue is a manner of acting, an attitude and a spirit which guides one’s conduct. It implies concern, respect, and hospitality towards the other. It leaves room for the other person’s identity, his modes of expression, and his values. Dialogue is thus the norm and necessary manner of every form of Christian mission, as well as of every aspect of it, whether one speaks of simple presence and witness, service, or direct proclamation... Any sense of mission not permeated by such a dialogical spirit would go against the demands of true humanity and against the teachings of the Gospel (no. 29).

Every follower of Christ, by reason of his human and Christian vocation, is called to live dialogue in his daily life, whether he finds himself in a majority situation or in that of a minority. He ought to bring the spirit of the Gospel into any environment in which he lives and works, that of family, social, educational, artistic, economic, or political life. Dialogue thus finds its place in the great dynamism of the church’s mission (no. 30).

***Dialogue in Twentieth Century Philosophy***

When, in the second half of the twentieth century, Pope Paul VI introduced the word “dialogue” into the Church’s ministry, he ac-

tually did not do something entirely new. For the word “dialogue” and the ideas behind it had already been present from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards. Cardinal Walter Kasper, the former president of the Pontifical Council for promoting Christian unity, writes: “Dialogue is one of the most fundamental concepts of the twentieth century philosophy... The starting point and fundamental principle of dialogical philosophy is the certitude: ‘I am not without you’; ‘We do not exist for ourselves’... The other is not only my limitation, the other rather is part and enrichment of my own existence.” Dialogue resists and criticizes an individualistic way of life and ultimately its content is that people live with one another and in solidarity for one another.<sup>41</sup>

### 3. Missionaries of the Divine Word as Persons of Dialogue

Regardless of any church documents, Divine Word Missionaries are obliged to carry out mission in the spirit of dialogue by virtue of their name, “Divine Word”.

#### *The human word*

The theologian Rene Latourelle makes the following important remarks about the human word. Each spoken word is an “interpersonal encounter”. Whenever we speak we address another person and hope for an answer. Our words establish by themselves “a circle of address and response, to become conversation dialogue.”

Words can be used simply to give information or a message. But, the type of word we now are interested in is the expression or revelation of a person to another person.

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<sup>41</sup> Walter Kasper, *Wege der Einheit, Perspektiven für die Ökumene* [Ways of unity, perspectives for ecumenism], particularly pp.52-54, transl. J. Ommerborn (Freiburg: Herder, 2004). In this paragraph the German edition is used which is a translation of the original publication *That they may all be one, The call to unity* (New York / London: The Continuum Intercultural Publishing Group).

The authentic word is that of the person as such, in his individuality, expressing himself to another person, seeing him as a person too. As expression of personal mystery, this word is addressed to the personal mystery of the other man. The word accomplishes its mission of conversation all the better when a person (in the image of God who speaks of Himself in His Word) puts himself into his word, to communicate the profound meaning of his person. For communication and dialogue to become a reciprocal exchange, a revelation, each party must have a respect for the other in his personal mystery, a complete readiness to accept and give, mutual trust, a friendship existing or at least beginning.

This type of word which establishes dialogue is a sign of friendship and love. It is a “form of giving from one person to the other, offering him hospitality in everything that is best within himself. Each gives and gives himself in a communion of love.”<sup>42</sup> Simply by speaking, by having a conversation, Divine Word Missionaries as well as SVD partners are to be men and women of dialogue.

We are not missionaries of the Word only, but of the Divine Word. Therefore let us first reflect on what Latourelle has to say about the Divine Word.

### *The Divine Word*

But then we are missionaries of the Divine Word having become a human being. The Divine Word is the Triune God revealing himself to us.<sup>43</sup> The Divine Word is by its nature a word of love; and that was Jesus, the Divine Word having become a human being: he spoke God’s word of love to us. He was God’s love in person. The Divine Word also wants to establish bonds of friendship between God and us, and so Jesus said in John 15:14-15: “You are my

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<sup>42</sup> Reneé Latourelle, S.J., *Theology of Revelation* (The Mercier Press, Cork.), 316-317.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.”

Jesus proved his words of love by his death on the cross – the greatest sign of his love for us: “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” Jesus’ death on the cross is the completion of the mystery of the word as self-gift. The *articulated, the spoken* word becomes the *immolated, the sacrificed* word. Christ on the cross *tells* (Jn 1:18) the charity of the Father up to the last inarticulate cry in which everything is said and witnessed to. The word of God is exhausted to the point of silence. ‘The time of death and silence becomes the supreme expression of the love offered to humanity’. Everything which was incommunicable in the divine communication is expressed in the outstretched arms and the body drained of its blood, and in the heart pierced with the centurion’s lance (Jn 19:34). The Word of Love delivered Himself entirely to men. Revelation through the word is consummated and sealed by revelation – action.<sup>44</sup>

In Jn 19: 30 we read about Jesus’ death: “When Jesus had received the wine, he said, ‘it is finished (consummated). Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit” (he handed over his spirit).

Being missionaries of the Divine Word we have to let this love speak into our world today. Fr. Arnold was aware of this mission, and so he said during his dedication to the missionary work on June 16, 1876: “My tongue shall serve your divine Word.” Being missionaries of the Divine Word in the footsteps of Fr. Arnold we must say the same: My tongue shall serve your divine Word. Doing mission by letting our tongue serve the Divine Word takes the form of dialogue, to

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 319-320.

speak in the language of Vatican II and the General Chapter of the year 2000 which actually spoke of prophetic dialogue.

In order “to express the aspect of mission that challenges unjust and sinful situations” the word “prophetic” was added to the word dialogue.<sup>45</sup> In a summary way, Robert Kisala described “prophetic dialogue” as wanting to express “the full range of activities that SVDs are engaged in throughout the world, and to offer a new way of looking at these activities – a sharing of faith and conviction done in an attitude of solidarity, respect and love – as a way of renewing our commitment to mission and answering the specific needs of the day”<sup>46</sup>

#### 4. Divine Word Missionaries and Prophetic Dialogue

In order for the SVD to be able to answer the specific needs of today, the General Chapter of 2000 identified four areas of prophetic dialogue:

- Dialogue with People who have no faith community and with faith seekers
- Dialogue with People who are poor and marginalized
- Dialogue with People of different cultures
- Dialogue with People of different religious traditions and secular ideologies

#### *Characteristic Dimensions*

The SVD missionary service in the spirit of prophetic dialogue will have some “characteristic dimensions”: “We use the term ‘characteristic dimensions’ to speak of those elements in our call that

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<sup>45</sup> Robert Kisala SVD, “Prophetic Dialogue as Life and Mission,” *Verbum SVD* 47:4 (2006), 328

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

can be likened to family traits.”<sup>47</sup> We single out four characteristic dimensions: Bible Apostolate; Mission Animation; Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC); and Communication.

“Our characteristic dimensions invite us to deepen our experience of the Divine Word in multiple ways. We get to know the Biblical Word whose story is told in Scriptures. We proclaim the Animating Word who calls everyone to share in mission. We commit ourselves to the Prophetic Word who announces peace, justice and the transformation of all creation. We share the Communicating Word who seeks only to be poured out in self-giving love.”<sup>48</sup>

These characteristic dimensions are not only important for our missionary service to the world, but also for our community life – for our communities of SVD partners. What is valid for the SVD religious communities is also valid for the usually multi-roof communities of the SVD partners. We seek to share the Bible together, to animate one another, to be just and at peace with one another, and to communicate with one another brotherly/sisterly love. Living as SVD partners in multi-roof communities, we must be inventive to enable such living of the characteristic dimensions.

## 5. Divine Word Missionaries and Interculturality

Since the General Chapter of 2000 the SVD has grown in the number of nationalities of its members. How are these members belonging to about 70 different nationalities to live together? And there will probably as many different groups of SVD partners!

Multiculturally: That would mean that the diverse cultures would co-exist as national groups, side by side – but in isolation from one

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<sup>47</sup> *In Dialogue with the Word*, No. 1, September 2000, Documents of the XV General Chapter SVD 2000, #72.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, #74.

another “although there could often be a superficial celebration of food and festivals without deep learning.”<sup>49</sup>

The 2012 General Chapter, however, speaks of *interculturality*. Like dialogue, interculturality has its origin in the Trinity, being a communion of different persons. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in eternal correlation, interpenetration, love and communion, which make them one sole God. The fact that God is triune means unity in diversity. “Intercultural refers to the sustained interaction of people raised in different cultural backgrounds... It denotes mutual exchange between cultures that can lead to transformation and enrichment of all involved... Interculturality stands for movement from toleration of differences to appreciation and celebration of differences of cultures.”<sup>50</sup>

## 6. My Tongue is to Serve the Divine Word

On June 16, 1876 Fr. Arnold prayed:

*The wishes of your most holy son are mine and I will work insofar it is possible so that your holy gospel will be spread upon earth – I want to be a servant of the Divine Word in the service of the king and queen of angels.*

*Everything I do is to serve the Divine Word for the spread of his word;*

*my tongue is to serve Your divine Word,*

*and through my small service – with the help of all the angels and saints –*

*may the heart of Jesus live in the hearts of all people. Amen.’*

These words with which Fr. Arnold and John Baptist Anzer consecrated themselves to missionary service, could also be used by us.

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<sup>49</sup> Lazar T. Stanislaus SVD, Martin Ueffing SVD, ed., *Intercultural Living*, vol. 1, St. Augustin, New Delhi 2015, xxiii.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, xxiv.

This prayer does a twofold thing: Praying this prayer perhaps every day, we renew our missionary spirit again and again. Furthermore, this prayer shows the goal of our missionary work in the service of the Divine Word: that the heart of Jesus may live in the hearts of all people. This means: the love of Jesus may fill the hearts of all people and may flow out from them into our world.

Being in the service of the Divine Word we are in the service of love. But before we can fill the hearts of other people with love, our own heart has to be filled with that love so that it can flow from us. Before we can do any missionary work, we must be missionaries in our hearts, we must have a missionary heart. We become missionaries at heart, as Fr. Arnold wrote in the preamble of the 1905 constitutions, through our missionary zeal and through prayer. Like Jesus we must be men and women of prayer, united to the Divine Word.

### *Entering the sanctuary of the Divine Word's Heart*

“In the contemplation of Jesus’ life the confreres should try to enter the sanctuary of his heart”, Fr. Arnold wrote in the same document. Entering the sanctuary of his heart, we discover that it is a heart full of love for God and for all of God’s people and creation. The symbol of that love is the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And hopefully our heart will become like the heart of the Divine Word whose companions, *socii* or *sociae*, we want to be. Once our heart becomes like his heart filled with love for God and for people/creation, we will be missionaries at heart and that is the condition for us to be missionaries amongst people.

### *The Divine Word and the Trinity*

Even though we honor in a special way the Divine Word, yet, so Fr. Arnold says, it is always the most Blessed Trinity itself whom we will honor with heart, word, and deed: with our heart, by our love and surrender; with our word, by our heartfelt prayers and preaching; in deeds through all our activities.

***The SVD/SVD partners mission in the image of the mission of the Divine Word having become a human being.***

The Trinity is a communion of love: Father, Son and Holy Spirit are united in love and one of the Trinity, the Divine Word having become a human being is the Triune God's gift of love to humanity. That was the Divine Word's mission as a human being: to give to people the Triune God's love in his words and deeds. And this mission of the Divine Word is also our mission who are his companions who promise to share his life and mission. Today the Divine Word wants to be God's gift of love to people through his companions the SVD and SVD partners.

**The proper understanding of being God's gift of love to people**

If our hearts are modeled after the heart of Jesus, we will be able to turn in a dialogue of love to the people the 2000 General Chapter singled out as: people who have no faith community and with faith seekers; people who are poor and marginalized; people of different cultures; and people of different religious traditions and secular ideologies

We must not consider these groups of people as the objects of our love or the recipients of our love. Rather they are people to whom the Divine Word with his human birth has united himself with, even if they are unaware of it, as Pope John Paul II wrote in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*. Therefore the companions of the Divine Word who has become a human being must also be united with them in a special bond of love. Our tongue being in the service of the Divine Word will speak to and about the people he / she is sent to, words of love regardless that they may be strangers to us and we strangers to them because of language, color of skin, culture. Taking into consideration that they belong to a religion different from Christianity, Divine Word Missionaries should call them "brothers and sisters in other religions," as Pope John Paul II did.

## CONCLUSION

The starting point for all our reflections in this article with the title: “Loved by the Holy Triune God – In Love with the Holy Triune God” has been the prologue of St. John’s gospel. It tells us who Jesus of Nazareth really is, the Word which is God as the Father is God the Divine Word. Therefore God shines through Jesus, through his words and deeds, and Jesus can say that whoever sees me sees also the Father. The events of his missionary life as described in the gospel of John and the other three gospels reveal the heavenly Father in Jesus’ words and deeds. From that, SVD partners must conclude, their missionary life being modeled on the missionary life of the Divine Word has also to be of such a kind that the Father shines through their words and deeds. That will be the case as long as they are rooted in love and that is the love which the Holy Spirit pours into their hearts as he did with regard to Jesus.

SVD partners, men and woman who are missionaries at heart, may pray like the French lay missionary Madeleine Delbrel did who lived in a big city:

*Lord, I give you my eyes, my hands, my mouth. They are yours. Shine through them.*

*There is that so terribly sad looking woman opposite to me: here is my mouth so that you smile at her.*

*There is this so pale looking child: here are my eyes that you look at it.*

*There is that man who is so tired, so tired: here is my whole body; take it and give him my seat (in the bus) and here is my voice so that you tell him: Please, sit down.<sup>51</sup>*

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<sup>51</sup>Katja Boehme, *Madeleine Delbrel, Die andere Heilige* [Madeleine Delbrel, The other saint], (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 40 (author’s translation).

My concluding words are a touching little story of a woman through whom God's love radiated into the life of a little boy. On a cold day in December some years ago, a little boy of about 10 years was standing in front of the window of a shoe shop. He was barefoot and trembled because of the cold. A woman asked him why he was so intensely staring at the window, and the boy answered: I just asked God to give me a pair of shoes. The woman took the boy by the hand, went into the shop and asked the shop assistant to give the boy half a dozen of socks. Then she asked for a dish with water and a towel. She took the little boy into the back part of the store, washed his feet and dried them with the towel. Just then the shop assistant came with the socks. The woman put one pair on the boy's feet and bought him a pair of shoes. She gave him also the other socks and said to the boy, now you will feel better. When she turned around to leave the store, the boy grabbed her hands, looked into her face, and with tears in his eyes he asked her: "Are you the wife of God?"

