

SVD 18th GENERAL CHAPTER

THE LOVE OF CHRIST IMPELS US - 2COR 5:14
rooted in the Word, committed in His mission
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12TH SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD

On July 4, 2018, the capitulars of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) gathered at the Centro Ad Gentes in Nemi, Italy, for the 18th General Chapter, elected Fr. PAULUS BUDI KLEDEN, SVD as the 12th Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word.

Fr. Budi Kleden was born in Indonesia in 1965. He joined the Society of the Divine Word in 1985. He made his first profession of vows in 1987, then the perpetual vows in 1992. He was ordained a priest in 1993. He studied theology in San Gabriel (Austria). He was first assigned to Switzerland (1993 – 1996), then in the formation house in Ledalero (Indonesia). He was member of the Provincial Council in the ENDE Province (Indonesia), from 2005 – 2008. In 2012, he was elected as General Councillor. He continues in that capacity until he assumes the office of the Superior General in few months.



VICE-SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE SOCIETY OF THE DIVINE WORD

On July 6, 2018, the capitulars of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) gathered at the Centro Ad Gentes in Nemi, Italy, for the 18th General Chapter, today elected Fr. JOSE ANTUNES DA SILVA, SVD as the Vice Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word.

Fr. José Antunes was born in Sarzedas, Castelo Branco (Portugal) in 1957. He made his first profession of vows in the Society of Divine Word in 1976 and then perpetual vows in 1983. He was ordained priest in 1984. He received his first mission assignment for Ghana, where he worked as missionary from 1986 to 1989. From 1990 to 1992, he studied Religious Studies in Washington, D.C. Back to Portugal, he was involved in campus ministry in Guimarães (1992 – 2003), in accompanying lay missionaries and as SVD magazine director. He was elected Portugal Superior Provincial (2007 – 2012). In 2012, he was elected as General Councillor. He continues in that capacity until he assumes the office of the Vice Superior General in few months.





JUNE 30 - SATURDAY

This Saturday we started the session in the main hall after the prayer where we gave thanks to the Lord for the many gifts and charisms that we are given as his community.

Then we have taken short time for an evaluation of the lived weeks where we have listened to various reports and where we have been able to capture different movements and impulses that have been acting among us.



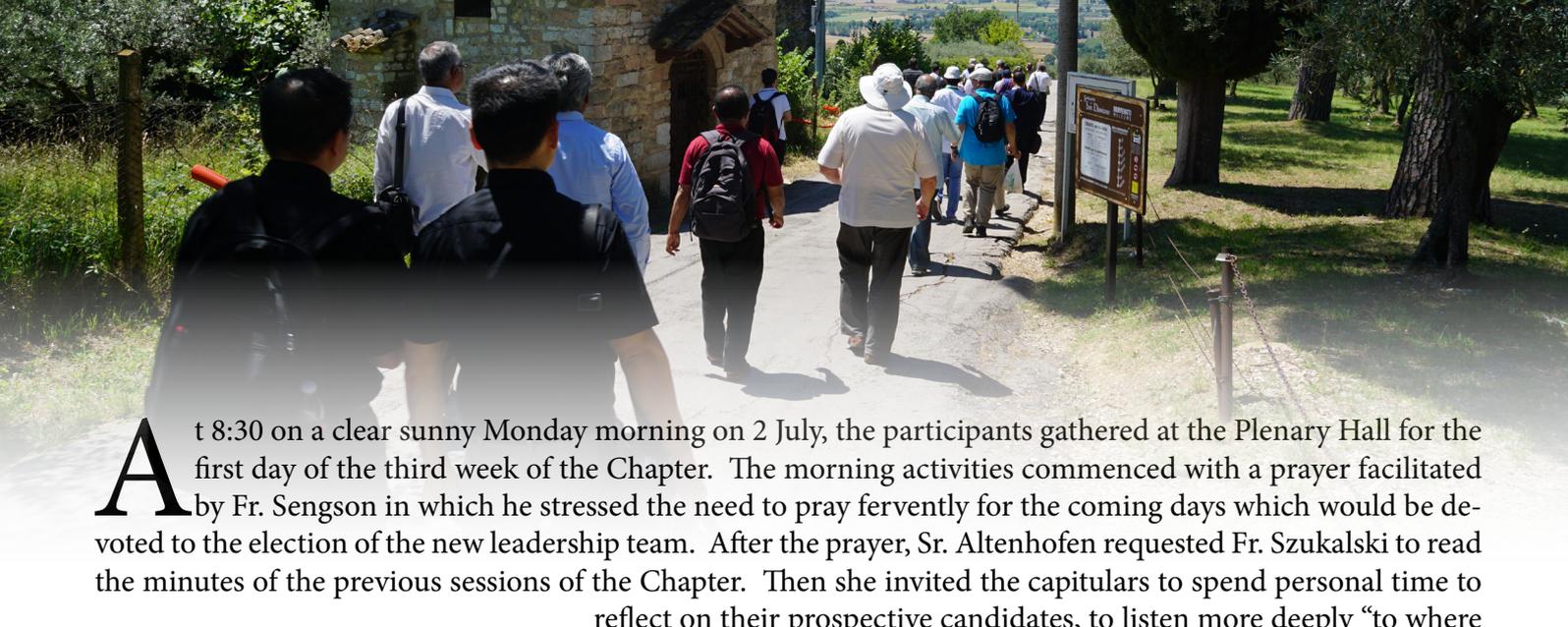
We could perceive the moments of consolation; see the fruits of joy, peace and at times tendencies towards restlessness or pessimism. Thus we were invited to recognize during these days the most useful, the most challenging, which requires more discernment and to share the suggestions for the coming weeks. After a rich and interesting exchange we made a short break.

On returning from the break, we continued the second part of the morning with the synthesis of the work done in the groups, on the reports of the coordinators of JUPIC, Communications, Bible and the Mission Secretary.

In between we have also reviewed the reflections on the AJSC with the results that came out from the 12 basic groups. In this way we were able to expand and enrich proposals and suggestions in the plenary both for the spiritual animation of our PRM as well as for the future of the CEAJ. As a fruit we emphasize that we must pay primary attention to spiritual renewal in all our communities and continue to work together with our sister congregations to adapt our resources and structures for this purpose.

At noon we were divided in two groups for the celebration of the Eucharist in English and Spanish. Also it was decided to leave the afternoon of this Saturday free for various personal activities since tomorrow early in the morning we set off on a pilgrimage to Assisi.





At 8:30 on a clear sunny Monday morning on 2 July, the participants gathered at the Plenary Hall for the first day of the third week of the Chapter. The morning activities commenced with a prayer facilitated by Fr. Sengson in which he stressed the need to pray fervently for the coming days which would be devoted to the election of the new leadership team. After the prayer, Sr. Altenhofen requested Fr. Szukalski to read the minutes of the previous sessions of the Chapter. Then she invited the capitulars to spend personal time to reflect on their prospective candidates, to listen more deeply “to where the spirit will lead us and who will lead us there”. She also pointed out that only the capitulars could nominate and elect the new superiors, presented the guidelines for the election process, and reminded the capitulars of the confidentiality of the results of the election. The qualities of a good leader which were consolidated from the Basic Groups were shown in a video presentation.

JULY 2 - MONDAY

After spending some time for personal reflection and prayer, the participants once again gathered at the Plenary Hall for the presentation of the report of the implementation of the resolutions and recommendations of the 17th General Chapter. Before the presentation, Fr. Norton clarified the question concerning the requirement on the number of years in perpetual vows for the office of the Superior General and the members of the Council. Then Fr. Dias took over and presented the resolutions and recommendations. He mentioned that the 17th General Chapter in 2012 approved the Congregational directions, re-confirmed or revised a number of resolutions and recommendations of the 16th General Chapter in 2006, and approved a number of new resolutions and recommendations.

One of the resolutions was connected with the Arnold Janssen Spirituality Center (ASJC). Inasmuch as the activities of the ASJC in Steyl were suspended, a new resolution was proposed – “to develop and send to the PRMs within the next three years a reflection guide to be used in the local communities to promote the appreciation of and mutual enrichment of the members of the Arnoldus Family.” The aforementioned resolution was confirmed by acclamation.

Another resolution had to do with interculturality in which the SVD General Council was tasked “to oversee the continuation of efforts towards fuller interculturality in terms of spirituality and other areas, by providing 1) the necessary structures, 2) appropriate training, 3) responsible networking, and 4) a platform for the availability and ongoing development of these materials. These efforts should be done in collaboration with the SSpS.” The proposal was confirmed by acclamation. >>>





<<< Fr. Dias presented other resolutions such as issues on human trafficking - “that the 17th General Chapter empower the Generalate Coordinator for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC), along with VIVAT International, to devise ways and means to educate our members about human trafficking and seek ways to collaborate with others to rid the world of this terrible scourge.” The aforementioned resolution was reconfirmed by acclamation. Another resolution which was reconfirmed by the assembly was on the Brothers – “that all offices in the Society be open to all confreres in perpetual vows, and therefore, that the General Council, through the Procurator General, continue its efforts in this regard and collaborate with religious communities in urging the Vatican Congregations to grant this request”.

Another resolution that concerns the financial self-reliance of the Provinces and Regions of the Society was slightly reformulated – “that financial self-reliance of provinces and regions of the Society continue to be a priority concern of the Generalate and the entire Society”. The resolution was reconfirmed by acclamation by the participants. The resolution, which was also reconfirmed by acclamation, was about the official recognition of the Lay Associate Groups as part of the Arnoldus Family.



After presenting the resolutions, Fr. Dias also presented the recommendations relating to the Migrant and Refugee Apostolate, lay participation in the assemblies and chapters on the provincial, zonal or general levels, in the initial and ongoing formation and in the administration of the Society. A recommendation was also put forward concerning interzonal cooperation on Formation. This recommendation was further formulated to encourage formators to have some exposure to other formation houses of our Society so they would come to know the best practices of other Provinces.



Fr. Dias touched on the recommendation concerning the regular evaluation of the Post-Novitiate Programs of formation. An intervention was raised concerning the reformulation of the recommendation to explicitly state the inclusion of those who are involved in all levels of formation in the formulation and design of the instruments for evaluation and in the whole evaluation process. The capitulars cast their vote on the proposed inclusion of the suggestion. The majority voted for the retention of the original formulation of the recommendation without revision.

After the presentation of the resolutions and recommendations, the participants went to their respective language groups for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist at 12 noon. Fr. Quang Duc Dinh was the presider for the Mass in English while Fr. Marcelo Cattaneo presided over the Mass in Spanish.

In the afternoon, the members of the different Basic Groups met to present their proposed candidates for the office of the Superior General and the members of the Council. A new procedure in the process before the elections, which was approved by the Capitulars, was introduced in which each member of the Basic Group mentioned the name of his candidate accompanied by the reasons why he proposed the name. Those who garnered at least four votes were included on the list of prospective candidates. After the meeting of the Basic Groups, the capitulars were divided into zones where they added possible candidates who were not on the first list. The final list of prospective candidates was posted on the bulletin board. In the meantime, the other participants watched the football match between Mexico and Brazil.



Before the convocation of the plenum on 3 July, the members of the Planning Committee met at 8 in the morning to discuss the letters of confreres who were listed as candidates and who decided to withdraw their names from the list. At 8:30 the participants gathered at the Plenary Hall, and Fr. Norton gave an overview of the activities for the morning sessions which involved the discussions relating to the working paper for the Chapter by the members of the different Basic Groups. Each Basic Group was given a topic which was the basis for reflection and sharing. After the orientation, Fr. Nguyen led the morning prayers. Afterwards the Basic Groups went to their respective places for the sharing.

At 10:15 the participants once again assembled at the Plenary Hall, and Sr. Altenhofen asked Fr. Szukalski to read the minutes of the previous sessions. There were no corrections and amendments relating to the report. Then Fr. Kulūke took over and reminded the assembly that everything involving the elections should be treated with strict confidentiality and asked the assurance of the participants by acclamation. Then the names of prospective candidates that surfaced from the Basic Groups and the Zones were projected on the screen including those who withdrew their names. Nominations by straw balloting was conducted, the straw ballots were gathered and the names written on the ballots were read by the scrutineers. The names of candidates were projected on the screen.

JULY 3 - TUESDAY

At 12 noon the participants gathered at the St. John the Baptist Church for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Since it was the feast of St. Thomas, the Apostle, the Indians prepared the liturgy which was presided over by Fr. Joseph Antony. The homilist was Fr. Richard Charles Mathias.

At 2 in the afternoon, the candidates had a meeting with Sr. Altenhofen while the facilitators of the Basic Groups convened at 3:30. Sr. Altenhofen gave the facilitators the instructions concerning the activity of the Basic Group the following day. At 4 in the afternoon, the participants assembled at the Plenary Hall for the presentation of the final candidates for the office of Superior General. The candidates were invited to take their seats in front of the assembly, and the facilitator asked them questions. A short break interrupted the “getting to know the candidates” session. After the break, the facilitator instructed the participants to group themselves into four to discuss what other questions to ask the candidates. The question and answer activity of the afternoon sessions came to a close at 6:50 PM.





JULY 4 - WEDNESDAY

Filled with feelings of excitement and anticipation of one of the most important activities of the General Chapter, the participants gathered on the third day of the third week to elect the Superior General, who together with his prospective team, will steer the direction of the Society for the next six years. Before the election proper, the Liturgist of the Chapter opened the day with the morning prayer. He invited the congregation to pray for healing and purification. Afterwards the participants proceeded to their respective Basic Groups for the Bible sharing on the scriptural text taken from First Corinthians 12:12-31, 13:1-8.

At 10:15 the election of the Superior General commenced which was facilitated by Sr. Altenhofen. Fr. Superior General officially opened the election and gave explicit directives to treat the proceedings with strict confidentiality. Then Fr. Szukalski read the procedures of the voting process. Four scrutineers – N’Ghaba Beguem, Peter Claver Kwame Narh, Andrews Obeng Aboagye, and Walter Federico Rios – distributed the ballot sheets, and they alternately read the names. There were 118 capitulars who cast their votes. At 10:57 AM Fr. Kulüke officially declared Fr. Paulus Budi Kleden, who garnered 82 votes, the 12th Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word.

In the afternoon, five representatives of the Steyler Ethik Bank, which was founded by Fr. Adam Nottebaum in 1964, talked about what the bank is and how it conducts its affairs. With 54 years of successful fair banking, the Steyler Ethik Bank operates under ethical principles and sustainable practices. One of the representatives compared the bank with “bees that collect honey from flowers without destroying them.” The bank supports the missionary engagements of the SVD and SSpS missionaries all over the world.

After the presentation of the Steyler Ethik Bank, the participants took a short break before the celebration of the Holy Eucharist which was presided over by Fr. Kleden, the newly-elected Superior General. The introductory liturgy started off with the burning of the incense sticks and as soon as the white smoke became visible, he announced “habemus Superiorem Generalem”. Then a confrere tolled the bell. Two confreres placed the Word of God on the head of the new Superior General, then a stole which was especially made for the occasion was put on him and his hands were anointed with holy oil.



In his homily, he expressed, “The most difficult hours for me were yesterday morning, during and after the straw ballot. I was aware that my name was mentioned in my basic group, but I was hoping that I was still safe because many other names were being considered.” He further mentioned that “during these troubling moments of uncertainty and even fear, I talked with some confreres expressing my feelings. I was encouraged by many confreres saying: trust, trust in the guidance of the Lord who knows what is best for the Society; trust in the confreres who are discerning during these days ... Trust made me feel calm. So I must say to you that I came in this morning to the plenary hall for the election with a calm heart and was open to accepting whatever the capitulars decide.” He also underlined the crucial role of formation in these words, “Preparing people, preparing our young confreres for the mission is a critical task for the whole Congregation. As I mentioned during my sharing yesterday, formation, both initial and on-going, for our intercultural life and mission is crucial for us.” He also underscored the commitment for renewal and a “heart that feels the pain of the people, especially the poor and the oppressed.” He mentioned in his homily that two confreres approached him before the election who encouraged him with these words, ***“when you will be elected, please do not forget the Bible and the poor. I think this summarizes what I just shared with you. We should not forget the Word of God and the poor and always find the inspiration and strength in the Word of God in our work for and with the poor, seeing in the face of the poor the face of the Lord Himself.”***

To highlight and celebrate the election of the new superior general, the participants gathered outside the building for the socials after dinner.



The soft rays of the morning sun gently displayed varying hues as the fourth day of the third week of the Chapter began to unfold in the quaint little town of Nemi. Once again, the participants of the Chapter gathered at 8:30 for the usual morning prayer to start off the activities of the day. After the morning prayer, the members of the Basic Groups came together to decide on at least four names for the office of the Vice Superior General.

At 10:15 Sr. Altenhofen projected on the screen the candidates for Vice Superior General who surfaced from the Basic Groups. Then Fr. Superior General called the plenum to order and once again reminded the assembly about the strict confidentiality of the election proceedings. Fr. Szukalski was asked to read the minutes of the previous sessions which were approved by acclamation followed by the reading of the procedures of the election. Afterwards straw balloting for the Vice Superior General ensued.

Two members of the Proposals Committee, Fr. Timothy Lehane and Mark Weber, facilitated the presentation of the resolutions and recommendations for the assembly to decide whether or not to accept them for plenum discussions. Prior to the report of the Proposals Committee on the resolutions and recommendations before the capitulars, the members of the PC met several times to discuss the resolutions and recommendations which were submitted to the 18th General Chapter. The PC recommended some for acceptance while others were deferred for further discussion. The following resolutions were accepted by the assembly for plenum discussion: Resolution 1: Synchronization of the PRM Elections, Resolution 3: Generalate Coordinator for the Promotion of the Brotherhood, Resolution 4: Establishing a Finance Committee in each PRM, Resolution 5: Internal Controls on Financial Administration, Resolution 6: Financial Advisory Group, and Resolution 7: Establishing a Structure for Mission Animation and Fundraising. The following recommendations were accepted for discussion in the plenum: Recommendation 1: SVD day/weekend/week annually to celebrate our worldwide mission, Recommendation 2: Generalate Raising Funds for PRMs Needs, Recommendation 3: Daily Prayers for SVD Leadership, and Recommendation 4: XIX General Chapter Outside of Europe. Other resolutions were not accepted for plenum discussion.

At 12 noon, the participants proceeded either to the English Mass or Spanish Mass. Fr. Gregory Pinto presided over the English Mass at St. John the Baptist Church while Fr. Giancarlo Girardi was the main celebrant for the Spanish Mass in the crypt.

Fr. Norton and Sr. Altenhofen facilitated the afternoon session which was devoted for the discussions on the resolutions and recommendations which were accepted for plenum discussion during the morning session. Before the discussions took place, Fr. Norton requested Fr. Szukalski to read the minutes of the previous sessions. Then the session on the conversations relating to the resolutions set off. After the exchange of opinions, clarifications and questions, the following resolutions were approved by the capitulars: Resolution 1, Resolution 5, and Resolution 6. Some resolutions were tabled. The afternoon session was adjourned at 6:42 PM.

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