



# SVD 18<sup>th</sup> GENERAL CHAPTER

THE LOVE OF CHRIST IMPELS US - 2COR 5:14  
rooted in the Word, committed in His mission  
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## CLOSING OF THE 18TH GENERAL CHAPTER “IN HIS NAME – DIRECTIONS FOR DISCIPLESHIP (THE BEATITUDES)”

**F**r. Nicolas Sengsong, SVD in his opening prayer invited the capitulars to prepare ourselves to feel the presence of the God to a reflective question, Simon Peter do you love me? It was accompanied by a song “I thank you, Lord. After the prayer, there was a short video presentation regarding the process of the General Chapter prepared by Fr. Modeste Munimi, SVD.

Fr. Kuluke make a motion to approve the all the minutes and seconded by Fr. Peter Dusicka, SVD. The motion was approved by the acclamation through a big round applause by the capitulars.

Before thanking everybody, Fr. Hienz Kuluke, SVD, the outgoing Superior General, wished the confreres to accept the assignment to be given by the new Leadership Team. He then thanked Sr. Miriam Altenhoefer, SSps and Tim Norton, SVD for the job well-done being the moderators during the Chapter, the General Chapter Secretaries: Frs. John Szukalski and Stanis Lobo, the liturgist: Frs. Nick Sengsong and Joseph Nguyen, Proposal Committee members, Drafting Committee members, Secretariat Coordinator: Frs. Budi Kleden and Mario Rasonabe, Zonal Coordinators, Kitchen Personnel, SVD Lay Partners, SSps Sisters, Centro Ad Gentes Community members, Communication Services, Translators and everybody who participated in the 18th General Chapter.

Fr. Budi Kleden, SVD the incoming Superior General thanked all the capitulars, the SSps sisters, SVD Mission Partners for the unending support for the success of the 18th General Chapter. He was wishing a goodbye and thank you to Fr. Hienz Kuluke, SVD for the guidance, giving the direction for the society and other council members: Frs. Robert Kisala, Gregorio Pinto and Arlindo Dias. I thank you very much for your service, dedication and sacrifices extended to the Society. Before ending, he humbly requested all the capitulars to pray and collaborate with the new leadership team in order to achieve vision and mission of the SVD entrusted to them. >>>



<<< Fr. Heinz Kuluke, SVD, being the president of the Chapter, officially declared that the 18th General Chapter CLOSED. Big round applause from the capitulars was given.

The ceremony ended with a mass presided by the outgoing Superior General, Fr. Hienz Kuluke, SVD and concelebrated by the New and Outgoing General Councilors. Starting his homily thanking God and everybody “As we come together at the end of our XVIII General Chapter to thank God, in the name of the Society of the Divine Word, I would also like to thank all of you here present, as well as our confreres, sisters, mission partners, benefactors and all people we journey with around the world, for all that you have shared so generously to make His mission possible. Without you the Society of the Divine Word would not be what it is today and would not be capable of doing what it does in so many countries worldwide, serving people from all walks of life, particularly the poor. The present Chapter’s invitation is and will remain a re-orientation, to find “directions for discipleship” meditating on the life and mission of the Divine Word himself. We will have to continue to pray for His guidance.”



His homily, nevertheless, was centered on “Directions for Discipleship (The Beatitudes).” The Beatitudes, as he emphasized, present a sort of veiled interior biography of Jesus, a kind of portrait of his figure. “They are directions for discipleship ...” Pope Benedict says [Jesus of Nazareth (74)]. And more recently Pope Francis adds: “The Beatitudes are like a Christian’s identity card” and he concludes “We have to do, each in our own way, what Jesus told us in the Sermon on the Mount” [Gaudete et Exsultate (EG), 63] Renewal and change require going back to the life and example of Jesus himself. From here “a spirituality of change” can take its direction.

The Beatitudes – Matthew 5:1-11 [New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (NRSVCE)] 1-2 “When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak and taught them.” 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit ...,” Jesus says. 4 “Blessed are those who mourn ...” 5 “Blessed are the meek (who do not use any violence), for they will inherit the earth.” 6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ...” 7 “Blessed are the merciful ...” 8 “Blessed are the pure in heart ...” 9 “Blessed are the peacemakers ...” 10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” 11 “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for, in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

“On my account, in my name” ... Only at the end, Jesus puts himself into the center. Being busy with so many things in life, we at times forget that it is His and not merely our mission. As Mother Teresa said about the work of her sisters, “We are not doing it for something, but for somebody.” And this “somebody” asks us during the Society’s XVIII General Chapter in Nemi to put Him back into the center. Like in the life of our Fr. Janssen, only simplicity of life and deep faith in Him will bring the needed renewal and enable us to persevere. >>>





<<< Renewal means nothing else than putting Jesus back into the center. This is what Pope Francis does with his threefold agenda as we know already: “Putting Jesus/the Gospel back into the center and this is to be followed by a conversion, a turning around, seeing the Lord, remembering that it is He who has called us and is calling us once more; to go out again, doing mission in His name.”

In ending: Pope Francis says: “... whenever we take a step towards Jesus, we come to realize that He is already there, waiting for us with open arms. Now is the time to say to Jesus: ‘Lord, I have let myself be deceived; in a thousand ways I have shunned your love, yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with you. I need you...’” (EG 3). And in a later Exhortation the pope writes [in quoting Saint John Paul II]: “If we truly start out anew from the contemplation of Christ, we must learn to see him especially in the faces of those with whom he himself wished to be identified” [GE 96]; the poor and those at the margins. “Clinging to him [the Lord], we are inspired to put all our charisms at the service of others. May we always feel compelled by his love (2 Cor 5:14)” [GE 130] Our Founder St. Arnold then encourages us: “Go forward with full trust in God and resolve again to build up your life in holy humility, and thus God the Lord will be with you.”

The was very much inculturative and joyfully celebrated. All the capitulars were sent off during the mass after the final blessing. Added to this, the new Leadership Team was too sent off by the outgoing General councilors. Grazie mille. Thank you very much to you all and maraming Salamat po sa inyong lahat.





On the 6th of July, the participants of the Chapter assembled in the Plenary Hall to start off an important activity of the day which was the election of the Vice Superior General. Sr. Altenhofen gave an overview of the activities of the day. Afterwards, the Liturgist led the assembly to prayer. Continuing the atmosphere of prayer, the participants left the Plenary Hall singing *Veni Creator Spiritus* and proceeded to their Basic Groups for the Bible sharing.

After the short break, the participants gathered once again in the Plenary Hall for the resumption of the sessions. Sr. Altenhofen exhorted the participants to observe the confidentiality of the election proceedings. Then she handed over the election proper to the President of the Chapter who requested the Secretary of the Chapter to read the election procedures underscoring that everybody was bound to secrecy. The President then asked the scrutineers to facilitate the election. 117 ballots were collected. Fr. Kulüke, after receiving the acceptance of the candidate, officially declared Fr. Jose Antunes da Silva, who garnered a total of 97 votes, Vice Superior General of the Society of the Divine Word at 10:56 AM.

The next session, which involved the testimonies of the four SVD lay partners, resumed at 11:17. Before their sharing, a powerpoint presentation on the summary of the discussions concerning the SVD lay partners by the Basic Groups was projected on the screen. Afterwards, Mr. Rono imparted his testimony on his experiences about the Chapter. He thanked the Society for the opportunity given him to attend and participate in the 18th General Chapter. Ms. Wego mentioned that she had many friendly encounters in the Chapter. The Chapter made Ms. Noronha realize that “I am a part of this big family”. “I wasn’t sure what to expect but I experienced such a warm welcome,” was the response of Mr. Uhal when asked about his experiences in the Chapter. He also disclosed that he was not bored at all in the proceedings and in the Chapter discussions. Then the facilitator asked whether there was something that surprised them. Mr. Rono was surprised at how the elections were conducted and even suggested that “if governments around the world would learn from what happened in the elections here, maybe the world would be better now”. Mr. Uhal remarked that he was not aware of the existence of different lay partners of the Society in different countries. He also appreciated the report on what the Society was doing with regard to sexual abuse. Ms. Noronha put forward a recommendation to come up with one name for all the different SVD lay partners while Mr. Rono conveyed that all the results of the discussions and decisions in the Chapter should be realized in the grassroots level. Ms. Wego hoped that the nice words of the Chapter would not remain as such but would be put into practice in real life situations. Ms. Noronha suggested that all PRMs should have SVD lay partners. Fr. Lazar also pointed out that there are SVD lay missionaries, besides our SVD lay partners, who are sent to other countries for mission experience. After the testimonies of the SVD lay partners, Fr. Kulüke on behalf of the capitulars of the 18th General Chapter articulated his gratitude for their participation in these words, “You have touched our hearts”. The morning sessions came to a close with the prayer *Our Father*. >>>

<<< Presided over by the newly elected Vice Superior General, the Holy Mass of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord was celebrated in the St. John the Baptist Church at 12 noon. In the opening liturgy, the paschal candle was imposed on the newly elected Vice Superior General after which the congregation imposed their hands on him. In his homily, he mentioned two of his unforgettable experiences, one in Ghana and the other one in Portugal. These two experiences made a deep impact on his outlook in life.

Fr. Norton called the afternoon session to order at 4:00 PM. After which the Secretary of the Chapter read the minutes of the previous sessions. The minutes were accepted by acclamation. Fr. Norton introduced the topics of the afternoon sessions which dealt with the affairs of the Treasurer General and the Procurator General. The results of the conversations regarding the two offices which were consolidated from the Basic Groups were shown on the screen. Fr. Gerdes and Fr. Dikos responded to the queries of the participants.

At 5:45 PM the session which dealt with the Working Paper of the Chapter took place. The summary of the results of the discussions on the Working Paper in the Basic Groups was shown on the screen. Then the participants proceeded to their Basic Groups to share their thoughts on the Working Paper. After dinner, some went to the town proper to eat gelato while the others stayed behind to watch the football match between Brazil and Belgium.



## JULY 7 - SATURDAY

**O**n a clear sunny Saturday morning of the third week of the Chapter, the participants were assembled to begin the day with the morning prayer before they proceeded to their Basic Groups for the Bible Sharing. The theme of the Bible Sharing was Treasures in Clay Jars. Returning from their Basic Groups, the participants eagerly awaited the commencement of the nominations for the councilors through straw balloting. Before the straw balloting took place, the facilitator announced that there would be no sessions in the afternoon. The participants received the news with an overwhelming applause. Then Fr. Szukalski read the minutes of the previous sessions which were accepted by the assembly by acclamation. Afterwards, the President requested him to read the procedures for the straw balloting. The capitulars were reminded to treat the proceedings with strict confidentiality. Subsequently, the President asked the scrutineers to distribute the ballots. 117 ballots were distributed and 116 ballots were collected.

After the straw balloting, the participants proceeded to either the English Mass or the Spanish Mass. The Mass in English was presided over by Fr. George Clement Angmor while the main celebrant for the Spanish Mass was Fr. Jose Fernando Reis.

No sessions in the afternoon.



To start the day, Fr. Nick Singson, SVD led the members with a morning prayer. Then the capitulars were asked to go to the different basic groups for the bible sharing. At 10.15 am the capitulars gathered again in the Plenum to elect the councilor 1 and 2. However, before starting the election the moderator Sr. Altenhofen Mirriam, SSpS requested the capitulars to listen to a song entitled “Holy Ground.”

Fr. Kuluke, being the Chairman requested the Fr. John Szukalski, SVD the Chapter secretary to read the requirements and procedures of the elections. The election went smoothly and in fact, it took one round only for Br. Guy Mazola Mido, SVD to be elected as first General Councilor. He has been in the General Council since 2012 and today he is reelected as a representative of the SVD Brothers in the congregation. Br. Mazola hails from Republic of Congo. He was a missionary to the Philippine Central Province (PHC) as assistant Novice Master and office in-charge of SVD friends. Then he returned to Congo and



## JULY 9 - MONDAY

appointed as the Chairman of the Formation Board. In 2005, he was the Superior Delegate of the province, then in 2007 he was appointed as the Area Coordinator for Formation of AFRAM zone. In 2012 he was elected as a Counsel Member of Congo province. During the General Chapter in 2012, he was elected as General Councilor.



The election of the second councilor was rather slow and it took the capitulars for three rounds before getting the absolute majority. Fr. Jude Raymund Festin, SVD was elected as our second general councilor. Festin is from Romblon, Philippines. After his ordination, Fr. Festin was assigned as a missionary to Angola province. He, then, was given the chance for further studies in Leuven, Belgium. After studies, he returned to Angola and became the associate pastor and professor. In 2012, he returned to the Philippine Central Province and became the assistant formator and philosophy professor. In 2014, he became the Rector of Christ the King Missin Seminary and at the same time he was the council member of PHC. In 2017, he was elected as Superior Provincial of PHC.

Sr. Miriam, the co-facilitator of the chapter, called to order the session, then Fr. Norton requested Frs. Tim Lehane and Mark Weber as the proposal committee to present the prepared resolutions and recommendations to the plenum for further discussion and eventually leading to approve or reject it. After thorough discussions in the plenum, some resolutions and recommendations were approved and some were disapproved.

The session ended with a mass presided by the former Superior General Fr. Antonio Pernia. In his homily he emphasized that as Divine Word Missionaries, we are called not just to announce the good news, but also to transform the many bad news in our world into good news. We can do so only if, like Mary, we reach the moment of exclaiming: “I am the servant of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your Word”.



## JULY 10 - TUESDAY

Fr. Nick Sengson, SVD set the mood of the capitulars through a very creative prayer with the song entitled “change our heart this time” as a sign to resume the session of the day. Then, the we went to our respective basic groups for the bible sharing where we were reflecting deeply and joyfully sharing the Word of God before electing the council members.

At 10:15 am, we gathered again in the plenum for the election. Fr. Kuluke, our President of the chapter, called the session to order to start the election. The members were oriented to elect the 3rd General Councilor. It went smoothly and took two rounds to elect Fr. Erick Koppa, SVD who is from Strzelce, Opol, Poland. Fr. Koppa, after his ordination, was assigned as a missionary to Mexico. After several years in the mission, he was sent to take his Licentiate in moral theology. After his studies he returned to Poland and became the formator as well as the prefect in the seminary from 1998-2007. Aside from being the formator, he was elected as Provincial Councilor from 2003-2007. After his term, Fr. Koppa was tasked as a secretary to the Provincial from 2007-2013. Afterwards, he was elected as a Provincial Superior the province from 2013 up to present.



The 4th General Councilor goes to Fr. Ribeiro Anselmo Ricardo, SVD who hails from Brazil North. He is not a member of the chapter, however, he was nominated by the capitulars from PANAM zone as a candidate. His performances in the province brought him to the generalate level. Born in 1974 qualified him to be the youngest member of the general council. Fr. Ribeiro was the former Provincial of Brazil North (BRN) for two terms. Currently he works in St. Michael's retreat house.

Fr. Xavier Thirukudumbam, SVD, currently the Provincial Superior of India Central (INC) was voted on by the capitulars as the 5th General Councilor. He is an Indian and has been trusted by his superior to work in various mission assignments. His qualification, commitment, dedication and love to the congregation proved his capability to be in the general council. Besides, being the general council member, he was also elected as the Admonitor.

After short break, the capitulars returned to the session hall at 4:00pm to start discussing the future direction of the society. The discussion started with the sub-zones, then proceed to the zonal level. Today's affairs was concluded with a mass with the theme “Mass for Promoting Harmony” presided by FR. Josef Maciolek for the English speaking and Fr. Joao Batista de Olivera for the Spanish speaking.

Lord, thank you very much for your guidance and enlightenment, we finally have completed the new set of leadership team of the society. St. Arnold Janssen and Josef Freinademetz, thank you very much and Pray for us.

## THE NEW GENERAL COUNCILORS



Brother Guy Mazola Mido  
General Councilor



Father Jude Raymund Festin  
General Councilor



Father Eryk Koppa  
General Councilor



Father Anselmo Ricardo Ribeiro  
General Councilor



Father Xavier Thirukudumbam  
General Councilor/Admonitor

**R**ecognizing the presence of the Lord, Fr. Nguyen Joseph, SVD led us the opening prayer with a song “Our hearts burn within us.” He continued with a prayer called “quedate con nosostros and another prayer of St. Benedict as a remembrance and celebration of his feast day.

Fr. Norton, the facilitator of the chapter, gave some instructions for the capitulars regarding the activities to be done for the whole day. The capitulars were informed to go to the respective basic groups for the life sharing with the different themes to be discussed with two guide questions were given to the basic groups: the following themes are: formation for formators, interculturality, finances-aged care, integrity of creation, digital era and lastly, professional standards.

After the break at 10.15 am, the capitulars returned to the session hall to discuss prepared resolution and recommendation such as: Evaluation of the Zonal Structure and Home Leave. The friendly and responsive discussion pushed us up 11:55 am.

The morning session was completed with a mass sponsored by the Europe zone which was presided by Fr. Franz Helm, SVD. His homily was centered on renewal and transformation. Fr. Helm reiterated that our Chapter is about renewal and transformation. “We have given up everything and followed you”, Peter said to Jesus in today’s Gospel reading. And he added the question: “What will there be for us?” For us, there will be renewal and transformation, if we really give up everything and follow HIM. To follow HIM, our Lord and Savior, is not a single experience limited only to one decisive moment of our life. It is a daily challenge to be disciples of Jesus and missionaries for the people, living inter gentes and putting the last first. Every single day we need to get rooted in the WORD and commit anew to His mission.

The afternoon session started and called to order by Sr. Mirriam at 4.00pm. Fr. John was requested by the facilitator to read the previous minutes and it was approved by the capitulars without correction. Afterwards, Sr. Mirriam called Frs. Carlos Macatangga and Andrews Obeng being the Drafting Committee to report on the Working documents of the 18thGeneral Chapter.

## JULY 11 - WEDNESDAY

Before going to the details, Fr. Macatangga presented the Chapter Objectives and Chapter Statements. Fr. Macatangga explained that the Working Document has three parts: Chapter I: Introduction: The Love of God Impels us. Chapter II: Discernment: Spiritual Renewal. Chapter III: Committed to His Mission: Witnessing to Renewal and Transformation. This Working Document ended with the Conclusion which emphasized on dialogue that take us into the process of discernment in order to understand where the Holy Spirit in our experiences is leading us and Appendix focused on the method used for engaging in a process of renewal. Here are the two methods that can be used or adapted to the particular context of every community and PRM like: method 1: see, judge, act, evaluate and celebrate. Method 2: contextual reality, experience, discernment, commitment, renewal, transformation.

After hearing the drafting committee report, the capitulars were encouraged to go back to the basic groups to share and discuss the findings and suggestions of the capitulars regarding the Working Document of the 18thGeneral Chapter.





**JULY 12 - THURSDAY**

Fr. Tim Norton called on Fr. Nguyen Joseph to resume the morning session with a prayer. The prayer started by listening to a song entitled “Open my eyes/Abre mis Ojos.” Then we proceed with a reading taken from Romans: 12:9-16. “Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good;.....”

After the prayer, Fr. Norton informed the body to have a life sharing in the basic groups where we can share, comment and evaluate the process of the Chapter. There were guide questions provided such as: 1. This Chapter was intended to be a spiritual experience. In what way is this true for me? 2. What were the most significant experience and the most challenging experience for me during this Chapter? 3. For me, my PRM, and the SVD, can I identify ways that the love of Christ is impelling us/calling us forward? 4. In planning for the next General Chapter, what elements of this Chapter could be maintained, and what could be changed?

At 10:15am, the session resumed, Fr. Norton, the Chapter facilitator, requested Fr. John to read the minutes of the previous session. After reading it, Fr. Norton called on Frs. Lehane and Weber, the Proposal Committee, to present the prepared Recommendation on Home Leave to the capitulars for further comments, discussions and deliberations and eventually leading to voting.

The morning session ended with the mass in the basic groups. The liturgy was taken care of by the respective groups. In one of the basic groups Fr. Jon Kirby was the main celebrant. During the homily, Fr. Kirby called on the members to leave behind our former lives and go forth. He said “As he does with the Apostles in today’s Gospel, Jesus also calls us. He continually calls us to leave behind our former lives, our former selves to be something new. We are called not simply to “go forth” but also to accept many changes always trusting that God has something in store for us ahead. If I had not accepted His call; if I had not gone out; if I held on to bits of my old life, my own life’s transitions would be far more difficult; perhaps impossible. Bottom line: It was by letting go that I received.”

Sr. Miriam started the afternoon session by asking Fr. John to read the minutes of the previous meeting. The minutes were accepted by the capitulars by acclamation. Sr. Miriam requested Frs. Macatangga Carlos and Obeng Andrews, the Drafting committee to discuss the Working Paper (Chapter document) based on the recommendations, comments and suggestions from the plenary as well as from basic groups. Sr. Mirriam thanked the Drafting Committee members with a big applause from the floor.

The facilitator, Fr. Norton, requested Frs. Lehane and Weber, the Proposal Committee, to deliberate the proposal on Establishing a Finance Committee in each PRM that was tabled in the previous discussion. Other proposal that was passed without further discussion is the Date of Assumption of Office for the New General Administration. Included in the recommendation was that SVD Bishops at General Chapter and Weekly Bible Guide. Fr. Norton thanked the Proposal Committee members for the job well-done with the applause from the capitulars.

Sr. Mirriam requested the Zonal coordinators to come forward to sharing their joys and discuss the action planning in the zone. Thank you very much for the good job, Sr. Miriam said. Before ending the session Fr. Kuluke, Superior General make an appeal to the capitulars to continue implementing the congregational direction in the next six years. His appeal was approved by the capitulars.

The session adjourned at 6:40pm by singing “Salve Regina.”

## JULY 13 - FRIDAY

Centered on the gospel of John 12: 24-26, Paradox of a grain.... “unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit...” Fr. Sengson used these passages to unite us with Christ accompanied by a video presentation called “The Light/La Luz.” This served as our opening prayer of the day.

The same gospel was used by the basic group as we started our bible sharing at 8:45am. Right after the bible sharing, the capitulars returned to the plenum to listen from the SSpS sisters’ sharing regarding their observation during the Chapter. Sr. Shalani Chakkummootil, SSpS expressed her gratitude to both the administrations - the SVD and the SSpS for the privilege given me to be part of the 18th SVD General Chapter. Moreover, she reiterated that shortly before coming here, she was eager to read the Chapter materials that were sent. What stood out for her was the strong Spiritual and Missionary thrust that was given to this Chapter along with your desire for renewal - of oneself, community life and mission. Meanwhile, Sr. Ortega Juanna SSpS thanked the SVD Leadership team for inviting her to be part of the 18th General Chapter. She hoped that what was the SVD-SSpS contemplates more on the collaboration that we have established to achieve the Congregational Direction.

Fr. Carlos Macatangga was requested by Sr. Miriam to present the final Chapter Document after the corrections, comments, suggestions raised during the previous discussions. The Chapter Document was finally accepted by the capitulars as our Chapter Document as 18th General Chapter Statement. Fr. Macatangga also thanked all the drafting committee members for the collaboration and hard work.

The words of thanks from the facilitators as they were about to end their works as facilitators of the Chapter. Fr. Norton said that he was grateful to be a part of this big event of society, also said that our name is our mission was an action of Spirit working with us. On the part of Sr. Miriam Altenhoven, SSpS lamented the trust and confidence given to her especially some new method was introduced during the chapter. The capitulars gave them a big applause for the job well-done as facilitators of the 18th General Chapter.

The session ended with a mass at 12.00 in their respective zones. Grazie mille.





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