



Divine Word Missionaries (SVD)



Newsletter of Arnold Janssen Spirituality Animation Team of Hong Kong and Macau District 1

Editorial

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AND
THE WORD
WAS WITH GOD,
AND
THE WORD
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GOD

Living by the Word of God

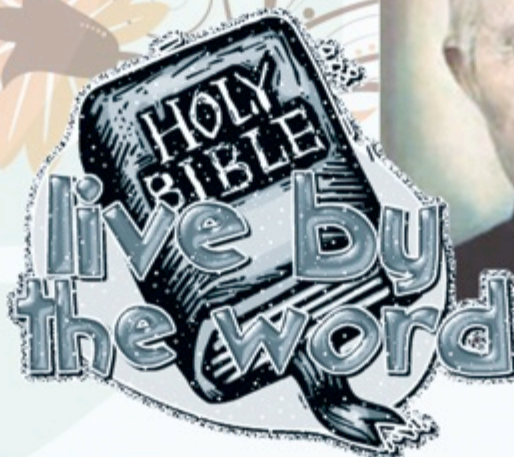
People depend on God for survival. For instance, we need air; God gives it to us. We need water, and God provides that as well. But, we know these things are all things of the flesh, and we do need them. Just imagine, what would happen if we try to live without air for a few minutes or without water for a few days. We would soon come to realize that we absolutely need the things God supplies. However, there is something else we need, which is even more important to our survival than air, water, and food. And that something is the word of God because God, the One who created everything, tells us that a human being does not live by food alone, but needs every word that God speaks to live. This even implies that the word of God is more important than bread.

The question for each reader to contemplate is how do we live by the word of God? Honestly speaking, living by the word of God is never a simple task. Here are two suggestions. First of all, we should be aware that to know how to live the word of God we need to know the way of God; and to know the way of God we need to read the Bible because it is not merely a wonderful book but the word of God that teaches us the way how to live.

Secondly, we should know more about the spiritual life of the Saints of the Church and learn more about how they lived by the word of God through their lifetime. St Arnold Janssen, the founder of Society of the Divine Word, fully filled his heart with the word of God, speaking with the word of God, praying with the word of God, and living by the word of God. For St. Arnold, the word of God was his power and there was nothing more powerful than the word of God. He believed that "the word of God is the uncreated Wisdom and Light that dwells among us, gives himself to us, resides in our hearts, enlivens our souls, and enlightens every person who comes into the world." This might be why St. Arnold named his first foundation as Society of the Divine Word because he wanted not only to venerate the word of God in a special way, but also intended to convey its main task, namely proclamation of the word of God.

Dear readers, in your hands now is a special Newsletter of Arnold Janssen Spirituality Animation Team of Hong Kong and Macau District and simple messages or reflections that will bless your life. Enjoy the word of God.

Rev. John Zhang





Divine Word First In The Heart Of The Founder

Rev. Alfredo Rollon

The Divine Word is first in the heart of the founder. It was said that he venerated the Divine Word first and then the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This devotion was inherited from his home where the prologue of St. John was prayed. "In the beginning was the Word" (Jn 1:1). His father spoke with strong conviction of the Word of God. And naming Society that St. Arnold founded was an expression of this devotion to the Word of God that was incarnated in the person of Jesus.



Here is an excerpt from the book of Fr. Jacob Reuter, SVD entitled "Proclaiming the Word in the power of the Spirit". He wrote, in the statutes of May-June 1876 which Fr. Janssen worked out with Fr. Anzer, he decided that the name of the society should be "Society of the Divine Word in honor of the King and Queen of the Angels" or shorter "Society of the Divine Word." The later constitutions of 1885, 1891, 1898 explained the meaning in the following manner: The Divine Word is a) The Word of the Father, which is the Son. b) The Word of the Incarnate Son, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. c) The Word of the Holy Spirit, which is the entire Scripture and the words of the prophets, apostles, and priests, in so far as they speak under the impulse of the Holy Spirit." Later those explanations were dropped so that it became clear that the titular of the Society is the person of the Incarnate Divine Word (p. 90).

Another interesting excerpt from the book mentioned above is a part of the constitutions of 1891 that say the following: We want to adore, love and imitate Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word of God as our highest ideal, for he is the way, the truth and the life. In honor of the Incarnate Word our confreres as often as the words are pronounced, 'The word became flesh' should bend their knee and they should bear concealed on their chest these words with the image of the of the Sacred Heart and the Holy Spirit hovering over Him. These last words had reference to the medal which the confreres received when they pronounced their first vows and which they wore upon their chest (p. 90).

From this short excerpt, one can reflect on his/her view and relationship with the Incarnate Word. How much time do we spend knowing the Word of God? What kind of disposition do we have every time the Word is read in our midst? For St. Arnold, the Divine Word goes beyond the written or spoken words of God. The "Word" is a presence of God in our midst. Its proclamation should be accompanied by respect and reverence. Let us be reminded every time we share the Word of God with one another, we are sharing, meditating and praying God.





SVD Missionaries

Fr. Henry Bala is an SVD missionary from Indonesia has been working in Benin, Africa for six years.

The simplicity and the challenge of the mission area is not a problem but a joy.

It is in this simplicity that people receive the Good News with a simple heart and complete trust in God.



Fr. Henry praying over a sick faithful.

Fr. Henry was teaching the Bible to those who long for The Divine Word

Fr. Henry was presiding an adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Fr. Henry was presiding the Holy Eucharist

Let us pray that the heart of all people long only for God and his Divine Love. The strength and the joy that maintain Fr. Henry passion for mission is The Holy Eucharist and The Bible. As Jesus shares his life so that we are saved, Fr. Henry believes that it is the Holy Eucharist that strengthens his zeal for mission and it is the Word of God that nourishes his faith and joy of bringing the Kingdom of God to all people



Feast Day of St. Joseph Freinademetz, Founder of SVD

Offering Mass, on 29 January 2012, at St. Joseph's Chapel, Yim Tin Tsai





READ AND RELIVE THE WORD OF GOD

Rev. Johnson Dhos

The Holy Scripture is an inspiration to all Christians. The word of God, evident in the Scriptures, is the foundation for our belief and faith. It is for this reason that the church insists that we consider the scriptures as food for our souls, which is reflected in the following statements such as, "Your words were found and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and delight of my heart" (Jer15:16), and "I ate the scroll, and in my mouth it was as sweet as honey" (Ez 3:1-3). Therefore, it is essential that we recognize the words of Jesus and ask ourselves, as the two apostles did "were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" (Lk 24:32).



Our founder St. Arnold Janssen had an immense devotion to the Divine Word. This devotion, in fact, started in his early childhood. His father derived special happiness in often reciting John's prologue, which was recited especially during storms seeking protection. Furthermore, he dedicated Wednesday of each week in the honor of the Divine Word. In the spiritual testament of St. Arnold



Janssen it is stated "How pregnant with meaning are the words of sacred scripture! Therefore may the members of the Society value them highly... the priests of the Society of the Divine Word must especially be venerated of sacred scripture and propagators of its teaching." Therefore, the main aim of our society is to spread of the word of God in the world. Today, more than 6,000 SVD missionaries from 73 countries are fulfilling St. Arnold Janssen's dream of spreading the Word of God in the world.

Our founder was open to the word of God and hence he is an example to all of us who long to receive the word of God and who want to make a personal response to it. Most often, we get to listen or read, and in some instances even experience the word of God. But the problem with all of us we are overwhelmed with the world and all its attractions, distractions and noises. Hence we either do not have time or do not consider it important, to listen to the word of God. In other words we hate "the sound of sheer silence" (Ps 19:3-5). Therefore, it is important that we open our minds and ears to listen attentively to the word of God, which is the beginning of our quest for truth and holiness.



Today's world is full of noise. If we need to achieve something worthy we need patience, silence, and reflection. It is stated "As collaborators with the Divine Word, we look for ever new inspirations from the word of God. By daily reading the Holy Scriptures, we open our hearts to promptings of the Holy Spirit. He will help us to understand God's word in depth and to assimilate it and to announce it to the world" (Const. 407). For this to become a reality we have to reflect on our shortcomings so as to facilitate the assimilation of the word of God in our lives, which would necessitate silence within ourselves, and in our surroundings. This is possible only if we read the scriptures with an open mind, and follow it in our daily lives.



As we spend more time with the word of God, understand its meaning, and implement it in our lives we can be assured to experience the joy of eternal life. It is only by reading, and understanding the scriptures that we can get closer to God and know more about the Holy Trinity that we all believe in. This is evident in our present constitutions: "Since we are called to oneness with the Divine Word and his mission of salvation, we regard the service of the word as our foremost obligation. By listening to this word and living by it, we become its members...the actual proclamation of the word of God should rank first among our apostolic obligations" (Const. 108).

Those who respond to God's word are his true children. If we are to become the mother, brother or sister of Jesus we need to know the scriptures. For it is the only way that you and I can become true followers of our Lord Jesus Christ. The opportunity to become one in his body and blood is a privilege not given to many. Therefore, we have to be quick in realizing this and accept it to become one with God through his Son who is the beginning and the end. It is here that we should ask the Holy Spirit and the intercession of our mother Mary to help us stand firm in our Catholic faith to walk in the footsteps of our savior, Jesus Christ.



Lectio Divina: A Way of Praying With the Word of God

Rev. Henry Cabral

From the outset praying with the Word of God had a profound significance in St. Arnold Janssen's life. He grew up with parents whose great love of prayer and devotion to the Word of God were deeply imprinted profoundly in his life. His family prayed with the Word of God and the Word of God was their prayer. According to his memoir, in those days without radio and television the prologue of St. John's gospel was read with the light of a petroleum lamp. Arnold's father would recite it with passion and considered it the most efficacious of all prayers. It was also prayed when a severe storm arose and when one of the cattle fell sick. This gospel, telling the Word becoming human became important and decisive for St. Arnold. It was literally "prayed into his soul" from his earliest childhood. As teacher, priest and founder his basic attitude was that of a man of constant prayer and praying with the Word of God was something that molded his whole life. It enabled him to be strong in the face of setbacks and misunderstanding. It empowered him to give up securities and to take up new challenges. As a result to his devotion and love for the Word of God he called his new foundation, the Society of the Divine Word.

In the words of Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI, this prayerful approach to the Word of God is called *Lectio Divina*. In his latest Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* he recommended this prayerful approach to the word of God as a fundamental element in the spiritual life of every believer (*Verbum Domini*, p.140). He said that *Lectio Divina*, is truly "capable of opening up to the faithful the treasures of God's word, but also of bringing about an encounter with Christ, the living Word of God" (*Verbum Domini*, p.141). In other words, our prayerful reading of scripture becomes a dialogue between God and ourselves. Through the power and the guidance of the Holy Spirit this dialogue between God and ourselves would bring healing and transformation in our lives.

The document *Verbum Domini* provides us the basic steps of *Lectio Divina* such as *Lectio* (Reading); *Meditatio* (Meditation); *Oratio* (Prayer); *Contemplatio* (Contemplation); and *Actio* (Action).



Lectio – Reading of a text

Reading of the text or a passage will lead us to understand its true content: What does the biblical text say in itself? (*VD*, p.145). Read it slowly and stay with the text. The monks and rabbis would often read by following along with their finger which gave them a sense of touching the Word. This also slowed them in their reading and helping them to discern the literal meaning of the text. Perhaps it may be help to consult a commentary but focus on the text itself.



Meditatio – Meditation

After reading the text several times, we now reflect at length and reflect with attention. We, as it were, chew the values of the text and make them our own. We stand in front of the Word and put ourselves into the text and identify with the characters contained in the text – their personalities and their attitudes. Here we can use our imagination and we can ask ourselves: What does the biblical text say to us? How does it challenge me? How do I have to change? Am I living by what the text tells me? What is the Lord saying to me? Here, each person, individually but also as a member of the community must let himself or herself be moved and challenged (VD, p.145).



Oratio - Prayer

We may be led to pray in the words of the text we have read. Here, we can ask ourselves: What do we say to the Lord in response to his word? Prayer, as petition, intercession, thanksgiving and praise, is the primary way by which the word transforms us (VD, p.145). In this step we can also use the text as our prayer. If you are struggling and want to express it to God, the lament Psalm 22:1-31 can provide an inspiration. You can use the text as a starting point and change its details to fit your circumstances. Sharing our feelings, needs and concerns with God enables us to avoid unhealthy repression and see our situation and ourselves more clearly and let the grace of God be our strength and deliverance.



Contemplatio – Contemplation

Another step of Lectio Divina is contemplation in which we take up as gift from God his own way of seeing and judging reality and ask ourselves, What conversion of mind, heart and life is the Lord asking of us? In the letter to the Romans, Saint Paul tells us: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (12:2). Contemplation aims at creating within us a truly wise and discerning vision of reality, as God sees it, and at forming within us "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor 2:16) (VD, p.145).



Actio – Action

We also have to remember that the process of Lectio Divina is not concluded until it arrives at action. The action stage is where we manifest the fruit of our reflections and prayerful dialogue with God. It constituted by the choices we make and the actions we undertake in response to the messages received during and following Lectio Divina. "Action stage moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity" (VD, p.146).

Lectio Divina as a way of praying with the Word of God must be done with humility and receptivity. Humility and receptivity entail recognition of our dependence of God's providence and Mercy. We must be humble and receptive in doing Lectio Divina. Otherwise we would be spending time worrying if we are doing it right rather than simply doing our best to be present and responsive and let the Holy Spirit guide us. Such right attitudes in praying with the Word of God would bring renewal towards individuals and in the words of Pope Benedict XVI it would bring to the church a "new spiritual springtime."



Diaconate Ordination of John The Baptist Le Van Ba, SVD &

James Ho Ngo Lu Vien, SVD

On Tuesday, 1 May 2012 at 11:00a.m.

At Our Lady of Fatima Church, Macau

The Sacrament of Holy Orders conferred by
His Excellency D. Jose Lai, Bishop of Macau

