



MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING OF THE
JUBILEE YEAR OF THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE SVD
September 8, 2024-2025

Dear brothers and sisters, lay associates, friends, benefactors and collaborators. May Peace be with each one of you!

We have reached the threshold of the jubilee of the founding of our beloved Society of the Divine Word. It has been one hundred and fifty years of life and mission, bringing together men from all parts of the world and sending them to all people. The Holy Spirit has been supporting this work that was entrusted to Saint Arnold Janssen, and also to those who preceded us in the mission, and to us, in the present moment.

A jubilee is a milestone to evaluate, celebrate and make a commitment for the future. In biblical terms, we can speak of three essential aspects of this year that guarantee a just and balanced society: forgiveness, restoration and the restitution of dignity. In other words, the year of jubilee must recreate relationships that have become unjust and unequal.

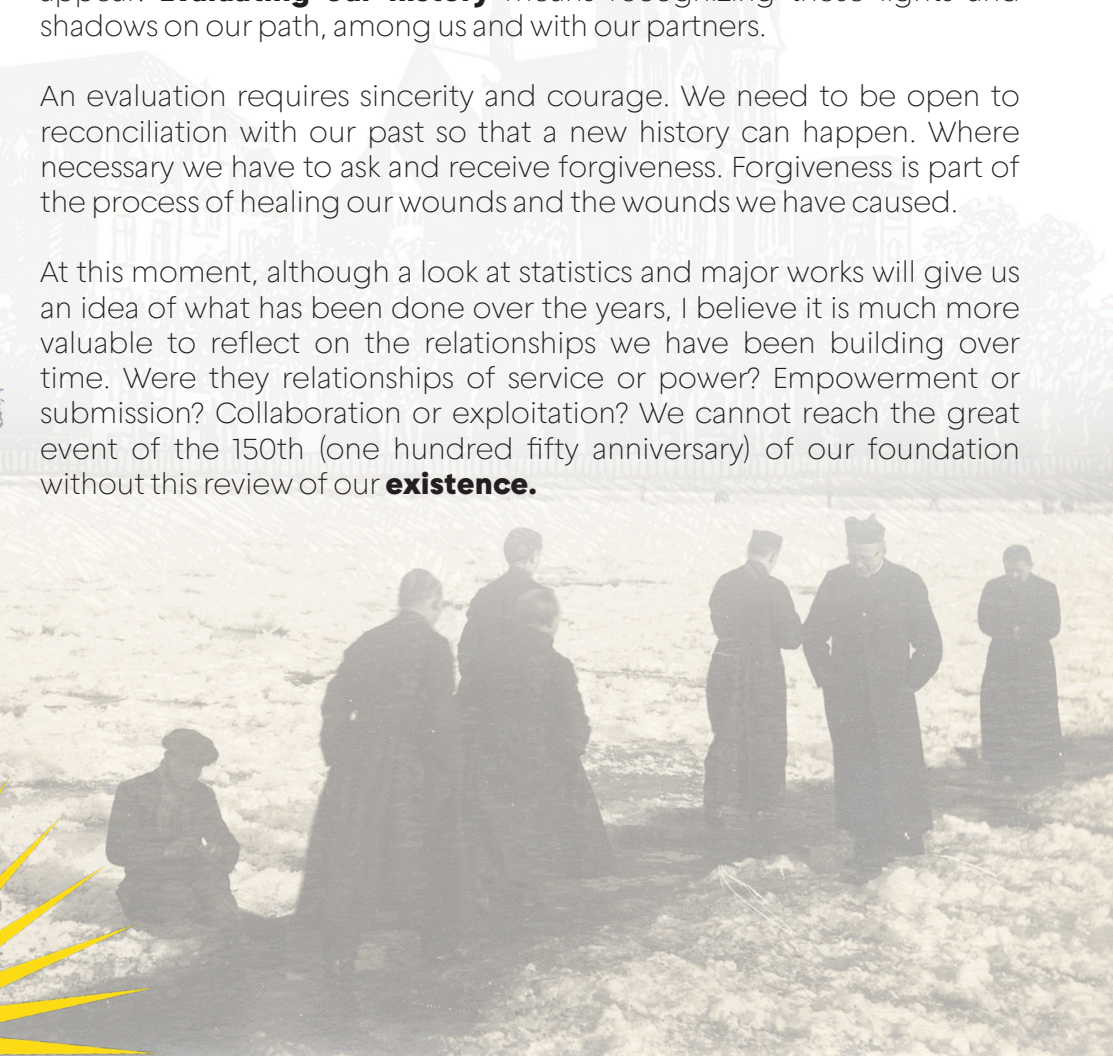
EVALUATE: We do not walk alone. From the beginning, Saint Arnold counted on the collaboration of men and women who believed in this work and also of those who I call here first-time companions, young men and women willing to give their lives for the mission. Lay people and benefactors provided the necessary support for the start of the missionary house in Steyl. We are aware that where the light shines, shadows also appear. **Evaluating our history** means recognizing these lights and shadows on our path, among us and with our partners.

An evaluation requires sincerity and courage. We need to be open to reconciliation with our past so that a new history can happen. Where necessary we have to ask and receive forgiveness. Forgiveness is part of the process of healing our wounds and the wounds we have caused.

At this moment, although a look at statistics and major works will give us an idea of what has been done over the years, I believe it is much more valuable to reflect on the relationships we have been building over time. Were they relationships of service or power? Empowerment or submission? Collaboration or exploitation? We cannot reach the great event of the 150th (one hundred fifty anniversary) of our foundation without this review of our **existence**.

WITNESSING
TO THE
LIGHT

FROM
EVERYWHERE
FOR
EVERYONE



CELEBRATE: With the opening of the Jubilee Year, in Steyl, this September 8th which will culminate in 2025 (twenty and twenty five) here in Rome, we mark (at the congregational level), a great event that should inspire us all. But the **jubilee celebration** is not limited to activities promoted by the Generalate. Each community, district, province-region-mission must make this moment significant in the lives of each SVD and our partners in the mission.

We celebrate the joy of being who we are: men consecrated to the mission, gathered in intercultural communities. We announce the Divine Word and assume His life and mission as ours. We pitch our tent in places where the Gospel has not been known or is not yet lived. We seek to dialogue with everyone, becoming one with people and putting the vulnerable, poor and those who suffer first. There must be room for everyone at this party, we cannot make distinctions and no one should be left out.

COMMITMENT: The third element of our Jubilee celebration must be our **commitment**. Here we must not think in a chronological order, where first we celebrate forgiveness, then we celebrate our "birthday" and finally we commit. It's not like that! Every step and every small gesture during this jubilee year asks us for a renewed commitment.

I propose that the first commitment is the search for God's will. Pope Francis told chapter members last June that "so often in confusing situations, the Spirit carries the Church forward." The Holy Spirit unsettles us and takes us to unexpected places. In the changing era in which we live, we are challenged to be creative and maintain our fidelity.

The Holy Spirit who worked in Arnold Janssen and filled the hearts of his companions and collaborators must be the protagonist of this jubilee year. He is the "Father of our Society", as Saint Arnold himself stated. It is up to us to open ourselves to discernment and ask ourselves: Lord, what do you want from us? Where are you leading us at this moment in history?

Brothers and sisters, following the inspiration of the last General Chapter, we take the image of the Light and want to make it shine with our testimony. He, the Christ, is the light of the nations. Wherever we are sent, we should reflect this light so that the (shadow and darkness)darkness of indifference, intolerance and sin disappears. Let us make this Jubilee Year a true time of grace and opportunities. What we will be tomorrow, the Holy Spirit is already preparing today. Let us be docile to this movement that involves us and leads us into deeper waters. I wish each of you a happy feast day and a profound celebration of this Jubilee Year. Thank you very much.



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