

Dear Confreres, Sisters,
Lay Mission Partners, Friends,
Benefactors and Relatives,

The dedication and generosity of the confreres in giving themselves to people, in sharing with them the joys and challenges of life, in faithfully and creatively providing witness to the Word of God, in their perseverance to be with people going through difficult situations due to political, economic, or environmental reasons, have earned overflowing gratitude from the people. This has been evident during the general visitations and my visits to our different missions worldwide. Indeed, by the grace of God, and the support of the Sisters and lay partners from the Arnoldus Family, and of many other people, the humble beginnings in Steyl, with Arnold Janssen and a handful of companions, have been a blessing for millions of people on the five continents in these 148 years.

During my visit to Cuba in August this year, a comment made by one of the bishops I met was encouraging. He said: "I have been working with your members for almost 20 years. In these years, there have been a lot of changes in the members. They came and went. They are from different countries. And yet, what remains unchanged is the charism of your Congregation, expressed in the lives and mission of your members." It is encouraging to hear statements like this. Yet, it is also challenging knowing that living out our charism is a lifetime commitment as faithful and creative disciples of the Lord. The celebration of the Foundation Day of our Congregation compels us to recall and, at the same time, renew our commitment to embody the charism God has given to our Congregation, that is, as missionaries to proclaim the Word of God in this wounded world. I want to mention three aspects to help us grow in this commitment.

The First is the sense of belongingness. As members we belong to the Congregation. We live in a local yet belonging to a global context. The sense of belongingness is expressed in the love and responsibility we take for our Society's mission that is present in our local communities. As members of the same family, we are responsible for one another, living in solidarity with one another, and together we are united with the people and putting the last first. The mission entrusted to the Society becomes the heartbeat of each of us; it unites us, and we belong in this endeavor. Fostering such a sense of belongingness helps us overcome the tendencies of individualism, ethnocentrism, and careerism.

The Second is collaboration. The mission is God's mission. As a missionary congregation, we are compelled to participate in its realization through collaboration. It is a shared mission. Since the beginning, this has been our way with our SSpS and SSpS Adoration Sisters, our lay partners, and others. Genuine collaboration is based on respect, trust, and humility. Respect

Message of the Superior General on the occasion of the 148th founding anniversary of the Society of the Divine Word



refers to acknowledging the dignity, talents, and gifts of others. Trust means consistency in confidence put in others. Humility reminds us that nobody has everything, and nobody has nothing. We are always called to renew this vital characteristic of our way of doing mission to bring out creative ideas and practices and to avoid the dangers of mediocrity, selfishness, and division brought by envy, skepticism, and arrogance. In the spirit of collaboration, we become part of healing our wounded world.

The Third is perseverance. Living out our common charism and doing a collaborative mission takes work; it is challenging and sometimes discouraging. Social and political situations since the time of Saint Arnold have not always favored our missionary presence in every country. The same is true today. After the pandemic, wars threaten us, especially the one in Ukraine. Political instability is also affecting some countries badly. We are experiencing more and more of the consequences of climate change. Not to mention the challenges in living and working in our intercultural communities. In these realities of our wounded world, we are called to persevere, to be faithful, and to continue being creative in our mission to proclaim the Word of God through our fervent prayers and mutual support and encouragement.

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Lay Mission Partners, Friends, Benefactors and Relatives,

As we celebrate our Foundation Day, I am moved by the resonance between our journey as a Congregation and the Nativity of Mary, Mother of the Divine Word. Just as her birth marked a significant beginning, our small start in Steyl has grown into a blessing of countless missions worldwide over 148 years. Just as Mary played a crucial role in bringing Christ to the world, we, too, as creative disciples, have a profound impact on our wounded world. Let us embrace belongingness, collaboration, and perseverance, echoing her spirit as we continue to bring hope and healing to the communities we serve.

I wish us all a blessed celebration of the Nativity of our Mother Mary, and a meaningful and joyful foundation day of the Foundation Day of our congregation.

Fr. Paulus Budi Kleden, CVD
Superior General

