in the LIGHT of the WORD

no. 1
September
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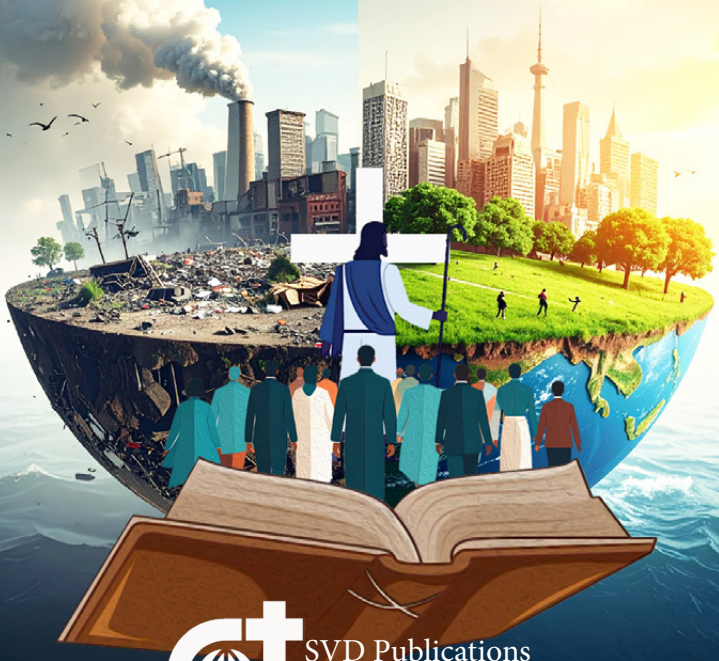
MISSIONARIES OF HOPE



SVD Publications
Generalate, Rome, 2025

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Introduction

Hope is the power to believe in new beginnings, second chances, or even miracles. Synonyms like *expect* and *look* capture similar sentiments, yet *hope* implies confident anticipation, despite uncertainty. Though often unspoken, hope plays a vital role in human well-being, especially in times of struggle, offering a sense that recovery is possible.

In the 1960s, educator Paulo Freire developed a transformative approach to teaching called the *Pedagogy of Hope*. It fosters mutual learning between teacher and student, aiming to empower the oppressed and awaken the conscience of the oppressors. This method underscores hope as a relational and active force for change.

To be builders of hope Pope Francis said the Church must recognize that Jesus Christ, the "divine Missionary of hope," wants to speak to the heart of every man and woman and offer them salvation through his followers. Further he said that "Christian communities can be harbingers of a new humanity in a world that, in the most 'developed' areas, shows serious symptoms of human crisis; in the most technologically advanced nations, 'proximity' is disappearing: We are all interconnected but not related."

In Scripture, hope is not mere wishful thinking or vague optimism. Biblical hope is a confident expectation in the promises of God, rooted in His unchanging character and faithfulness. Hebrews 10:23 urges believers to "hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." This divine hope is inseparable from trust in God's Word, as it assures us of a future based on His integrity (Titus 1:2).

Biblical hope sustains believers through suffering—not because they know the outcome, but because they trust the One who does. As Paul writes in Romans 5:3–5, suffering produces perseverance, character, and ultimately a hope that does not disappoint, "because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit." Hebrews 6:19 further describes hope as "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure." This active, enduring hope empowers believers to persevere and trust that God will fulfil His promises.

Today, we Divine Word Missionaries, face numerous challenges yet biblical hope remains a source of strength. It compels us to share the Word of God to those who have not heard it or who live in hopelessness. To be a Missionary of Hope is to rekindle dignity, orientation, and self-worth in those who have lost them. It is a calling to live among those in existential peripheries—just as Christ did in the Incarnation.

The mystery of Incarnation was not only a historical event but a profound act of hope—God dwelling among us to bring peace, love, liberation, forgiveness, and justice. As missionaries, we carry forward this legacy, spreading the hope rooted in Scripture through mission work, communication, and the promotion of justice, peace, and the integrity of creation (JPIC).

These four Characteristic Dimensions (CDs)—Mission, Scripture (Bible), JPIC, and Communications—are more than strategic pillars; they are the core expressions of our vocation. In various General Chapters, we have revisited these dimensions to reflect on how they enable us to bring hope to those at the margins of society.

The concept of "Characteristic Dimensions" is innovative in the SVD lexicon, and we are called to exhibit these in our SVD life and mission. Therefore, the first issue of the annual Generalate publication, *In the Light of the Word,* is dedicated to the four CDs. The articles written in this publication are

based on the insights of our coordinators and secretaries at the Generalate, on hope from the perspective of the Characteristic Dimensions.

In this publication titled *Missionaries of Hope*, Fr. Wojciech Szypula SVD, Biblical Coordinator, explores hope as a biblical concept and proposes a framework for being missionaries of hope in the post-modern world. Drawing on Hebrew terms and the testimony of both Testaments, he highlights hope's personal, transformative, and eschatological dimensions—reimagining missionary work as embodying hope in a wounded world.

Fr. Kasmir Nema SVD, Communications Coordinator, reflects on the Jubilee 2025 theme *"Pilgrims of Hope."* He sees it not as a historical marker but as a *kairos* moment—a sacred time to realign with the Gospel and rekindle our identity as faithful and creative disciples. Communicating hope in today's digital age is a vital ministry rooted in Scripture and responsive to modern needs.

Fr. Richard Quadros SVD, JPIC Coordinator, discusses how Jesus' ministry addressed social injustices and systemic inequalities. Jesus defended the dignity of the poor and marginalized, calling for love, mercy, and justice. The Church, as the Mystical Body of Christ, continues this mission. He also warns that our planet, as echoed in Church teachings, is crying out from ecological degradation—highlighting the urgency of hope-filled action.

Fr. Marcelo Cattaneo SVD, Mission Secretary, reflects on the imagery of the anchor: *"The Light of Christ is our Anchor of Hope in Life's Storms."* Central to the 2025 Jubilee logo, this symbol urges us to root our hope in Christ rather than in our own illusions of security. He invites us to reflect on our shared vocation to bring healing and renewal in a world thirsting for faith.

Mrs. Susan Noronha, a SVD Lay Partner from India, contributes further to this common missionary reflection and commitment by highlighting the fundamental role of every baptized person in world transformation. She emphasizes the diversity of ministries our SVD Lay Partners are already involved in our mission worldwide, and the opportunities still lying ahead.

All five articles converge on the theme of hope—its endurance, biblical foundation, and urgent relevance. They call us to be wounded healers, bringing the Good News through Mission, Scripture, JPIC, and Communication. Promoting these four CDs is a sacred vocation deeply embedded in our identity as *Missionaries of Hope*.

Fr. Anselmo Ricardo Ribeiro, SVD
Superior General

A. Missionaries of Hope: A Biblical Paradigm

Introduction

This contribution endeavors to analyze the biblical concept of hope with the purpose of suggesting a basic framework for reflection on what it means to be missionaries of hope in the post-modern realities of the present time. It follows a two-part structure: first examining the scriptural foundations of hope through its personal, yearning-driven, transformative, and pan-eschatological dimensions; then applying these insights to reimagine missionary work as custodians, doors, and anchors of hope in today's wounded world. Drawing on etymological analysis of key Hebrew terms and examining hope's manifestation across both Testaments, we discover how this theological virtue creates tension between divine promises of the past and eschatological fulfillment of the future. This exploration ultimately leads to a culminating metaphor that envisions missionaries stretching the "cord of hope" that binds past, present, and future, enabling believers to navigate with confidence toward creation's definitive restoration in God's promised future.

a. The Scriptural Foundations of Hope: Essential Dimensions

The First Testament (FT)[1] employs three distinct words translated as "hope," reflecting the depth and prevalence of this

[1] Due to the ongoing shift in biblical scholarship away from the traditional "Old Testament–New Testament" terminology—and to avoid the supersessionist implications it inevitably carries, I will rely on the "First Testament–New Testament" designations throughout this work. This vocabulary more accurately reflects the continuity of God's salvific work as outlined in the entire biblical narrative. In fact, it would be most appropriate to use the "First Covenant–New Covenant" terminology, which I will also employ.

concept in the lived historical experience of the Israelites and, later, the Jewish people.[2] Even without delving into exegetical details, this linguistic richness underscores the centrality of hope in their faith and history.

The New Testament (NT) primarily uses a single word group to denote "hope" in its strict sense.[3] However, notions of expectation and anticipation conveyed by words suitable to diverse contexts where they appear are closely intertwined with this idea—concepts that convey a profound sense of urgent longing and forward momentum, pointing toward the fulfillment of God's redemptive work.

Within this expansive semantic field, and amid the even richer historical experiences of the biblical people—spanning more than a thousand years of human history—at least four fundamental dimensions of hope can be discerned.

1. Personal and Relational

The essence of biblical hope lies in its deeply personal and relational nature. In Scripture, hope is never merely an abstract concept, an elusive dream of the future, or simply an encouraging word. Rather, it is always rooted in relationship—both with the divine, as faith reaches out to God, and with the human experience, as individuals and communities navigate the vicissitudes of life. In the FT, the Israelites did not merely look to God as the giver of hope; they understood God as Hope itself, and their hope was irrevocably anchored in God's person. Therefore, hope was always objective, with God as its focus—the One to whom people oriented their lives and to whom they remained firmly attached. For the people of

[2] The three main Hebrew words translated as "hope" interchangeably with the words such as "to wait", "to watch for", "to expect", "to keep,» «to guard,» or «to observe" are: לחי (*yachal*), רמשׁ (*shamar*), הוק (qavah). See BDB for relevant entries.

[3] ἐλπίς (elpis), ἐλπίζω (elpizō) with the semantic range of «to hope,» «to expect,» or «to trust», and the corresponding substantive forms. See BDAG for the relevant entries.

the first covenant, hope was inherently theocentric—rooted entirely in God.

As an example, we might cite Jeremiah, the prophet who witnessed the dramatic final days of the kingdom of Judah. In his plea, he utters these poignant words: *"Lord, you are the hope of Israel; all who forsake you will be put to shame"*[4] (Jer 17:13). This identification of God with hope resounds throughout the FT (see Ruth 1:12; Job 4:6; Psalm 71:5; Jer 50:7). For the people of the first covenant, this theocentric hope was not an abstract ideal but was deeply personal. It was conveyed through metaphors of relationship, with God described as Father, Mother, Husband, Shepherd, and King, among many others—each emphasizing God's intimate and sustaining role in the lives of His people and their ultimate hope.

The New Testament (NT) not only preserves but also further intensifies hope's personal and relational nature. As in the Old Testament (OT), hope remains firmly rooted in God. However, in the NT, the theocentric dimension of hope takes on a more implicit character. Instead, Jesus Christ emerges as the explicit and supreme manifestation of God's presence and purpose, for through his ministry, death, and resurrection, God fully reveals the divine intent, design, and power. There is no better illustration of this connection than the statement of the author of 1 Peter, who asserts that *"by his great mercy he [God] has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* (1 Pet 1:3). It is no overstatement to assert that Jesus' resurrection entirely defines Christian hope. This supreme act of God validates his salvific plan and reorients the believer's life toward eschatological hope—the anticipation of ultimate fulfillment in God's future kingdom. Consequently, hope in the NT is decisively Christological, centered on the person and work of Jesus Christ.

[4] All biblical citation in this study come from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) translation, unless otherwise noted.

The Gospels present hope as inseparable from Jesus' mission. His proclamation, *"The kingdom of God is near"* (Mark 1:15), which is closely tied to His ministry of healing and restoration, shows that hope for healing and restoration is intrinsically linked to his person, words, and healing touch. The evangelist Matthew expresses this vividly, highlighting the universal scope of Jesus as the source of hope with the words, *"In His name the Gentiles will hope"* (Matt 12:21).

The central role of Jesus as a "living hope" is evident among the first Christians, whose views are reflected in the NT letters. Thus, Colossians names Christ as *"our hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27), echoed in the opening lines of 1 Timothy, which states, *"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus, our hope."* (1 Tim 1:1). The author of Hebrews employs a striking metaphor of hope as *"a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul"* (Heb 6:19), which is anchored in and paralleled with Jesus entering the heavenly sanctuary. Immersed in the hope emanating from Jesus, believers walk hand in hand with Him into the heavenly sanctuary and God's presence.

In conclusion, hope is a dynamic and relational concept in both the First and New Testaments, intrinsically involving a personal connection between the divine persons (God and Jesus) and the people. The shift from a theocentric hope in the First Testament to a Christocentric hope in the New Testament highlights the remarkable consistency of God's engagement with the world, which remains steadfast throughout history, both in the pre- and post-resurrection eras. Our hope's ultimate object and focus is God and God's incarnation in the person of Jesus Christ.

2. Yearning-driven

Turning to the hoping subject—that is, the human being—the central dynamic conveyed by the term "hope" is one of waiting, infused with deep longing and fervent expectation.

For the people of the first covenant, this waiting and expectation emerged from their historical experience of existential threats and the looming possibility of annihilation. In moments when all other rescue avenues had failed, they turned to God as their ultimate source of deliverance. This foundation of hope is vividly illustrated in the words of the Chronicler: *"We are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you"* (2 Chr 20:12). Fixing their eyes upon God was an expression of both yearning and awaiting divine intervention in the form of protection, preservation, deliverance, and restoration of the people and the nation.

These expressions of waiting and longing for God's intervention permeate the biblical text, particularly in the Psalms, where the phrase "wait for God" appears more than forty times. Perhaps the most striking example of this intensity is found in Psalm 130, where all three Hebrew words conveying the sense of waiting appear no less than six times together in just two verses, *"I wait* (qavah) *for the LORD, my soul waits* (qavah)*, and in his word I hope* (yachal); *my soul waits* (shamar) *for the Lord more than those who watch* (shamar*) for the morning, more than those who watch* (shamar) *for the morning"* (Ps 130:5-6). The repetition and interplay of these three terms create an atmosphere of profound expectation, eagerness, and vigilance. The Psalmist seemed intent on capturing the full spectrum of what waiting and yearning for God means and presenting it in its most intense form. In the subsequent analysis, we will return to this verse to explore the dynamics of hope more fully.

The FT concept of waiting and expectation carries forward into the NT, albeit with a different emphasis. Christian hope is characterized by a fervent longing for the fulfillment of God's salvific purpose, which, as demonstrated in the previous section, is irrevocably linked to Jesus Christ. Hope is not merely an abstract idea but a deeply rooted conviction that what God has promised in Christ will be accomplished—culminating in

the anticipated arrival of *"the day of the Lord Jesus*" (2 Cor 1:14).

Arguably, the best example of this intense expectation in connection with hope appears in Paul's letter to the Romans (8:19–26), where the apostle masterfully intertwines the language of longing and hope. The Greek verb στενάζω (stenazō), and its cognates, traditionally rendered as "groan," appears three times, applied respectively to creation, believers, and the Holy Spirit. However, upon closer examination, Paul does not use this term to denote mere groaning in pain, but rather to express an urgent sighing—not a cry of despair but an intense yearning that arises from the wounded and fallen reality of creation and humanity. Paul writes, *"we ourselves, who have the Spirit as the first fruits, sigh among us, because we await adoption, the redemption of our bodies. Indeed, for this hope we were saved; now, hope which can be seen is not hope, because what one sees, who hopes for that? Then, if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience"* (Rom 8:23–25, author's translation[5]).

In these words, Paul captures the very essence of Christian hope. Though already living in the Spirit, believers remain fully exposed to the realities of a fallen world. In this condition, they sigh with urgent longing and deep yearning for the completion of God's redemptive plan—the final restoration of their bodies in the resurrection. This eschatological fulfillment is their hope, the object of their longing and expectation. Remarkably, Paul extends this expression of longing to the Holy Spirit, who joins creation and believers in this deep yearning, interceding *"with sighs too deep for words"* (Rom 8:26). Through the Holy Spirit, God joins believers, participating in their desire for salvation.

The apostle himself was deeply immersed in the same dynamic. He writes, *"I am hard-pressed between the two: my desire*

[5] For the full argument and justification of this literal translation, see W. Szypula, *The Holy Spirit in the Eschatological Tension of Christian Life*, (Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, Rome, 2007), 282-309.

is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you" (Phil 1:23–24). This striking statement unveils the apostle's inner world, defined by his longing for eternal union with Christ. This intense hope and desire was a defining feature of his faith and perhaps a driving force behind his apostolic ministry.

Echoes of fervent expectations are evident throughout the NT epistolary literature, demonstrating the life of the first Christians was permeated by the eschatological hope (see Rom 13:11–12; 1 Cor 1:7–8; Phil 3:20–21; 1 Thess 1:9–10; 1 Thess 4:16–17; 5:2–6; Titus 2:13; Heb 9:28; James 5:7–8; 1 Pet 1:13; 2 Pet 3:10–12; 1 John 3:2–3). Beyond a doubt, the Christ-event ignited a profound hope for salvation among believers and sparked an intense yearning for its completion at Christ's parousia.

In conclusion, at its core, biblical hope features an ardent expectation of God's salvific and restorative action. While the nature of this deliverance may have been understood differently by the people of the First Covenant and those of the New Covenant, they shared a common sentiment - a profound sense of yearning and urgency as they awaited its fulfillment. Scripture attests that this yearning permeated their religious experience and was an enduring dimension of their faith and life.

3. Transformative

Our study of hope's characteristics thus far has revealed its decisive future orientation. The vision and expectation of a future that dramatically differs from the fallen present drives and attracts believers, orienting their lives toward what is to come. However, hope cannot be reduced to a merely future expectation, for this future-oriented drive has profound implications for the present. In this section, we analyze biblical principles that demonstrate how future hope shapes present reality.

For the people of the First Covenant, their historical circumstances determined how confidence and trust in God defined their present experience. This dynamic allowed hope to function as a transformative force that enabled Israel to renew their strength and maintain faith in the face of adversity. Hope served as an antidote to despair when circumstances seemed hopeless, and it defined their course of action as they contemplated what direction the nation should take when the familiar present was no more (see Isa 40:28-31; Jer 29:11-14; Psalm 42:5-6; Lam 3:21-26; Job 13:15-16; Hab 3:17-19).

If we were to select a single passage illustrating the transformative power of hope, we might well consider these words from the book of Lamentations, which demonstrate hope's predominant mode of operation: recalling the past to provide endurance in a disastrous present while anticipating renewal:

> But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.' The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD (Lam 3:21-26).

Here, we observe how changing one's perspective on a fallen present enables endurance under circumstances that cannot immediately be changed. For the people of the First Covenant who sojourned throughout their precarious history, hope's primary role appears to be providing strength, courage, and the ability to persevere and maintain faith during devastating destruction, life-threatening adversity, and faith-shattering uncertainty.

For the people of the New Covenant—the first Christians—eschatological hope for a glorious future with Christ was undoubtedly a significant dimension of hope. However, the

followers of Christ also accorded hope a major role and considerable transformative power in the present.

As was the case for the people of the First Covenant, hope fostered endurance and perseverance, as is evident, for example, in Paul's letter to the Romans where he writes, *"we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us"* (Rom 5:3-5). The apostle proposes here a striking combination of suffering, endurance, character, and hope. Hope stands at the end of this sequence of cause and consequence, serving as "a guardian" of the whole process. Hope ensures its completion by forming a direct link between the earthly life of the faithful and the divine reality of God's love mediated through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

However, in the post-resurrection reality of the Christian life, hope's primary role lies in its transformative power, actively shaping Christian existence. This dynamic understanding reframes hope from passive waiting into an active, life-defining principle that continuously molds Christian faith and praxis. As revealed in the New Testament, hope has a multifaceted impact on life: it shapes believers' spiritual perceptions and practices (Rom 12:12), infuses daily conduct with holiness (1 Pet 1:13-15; Titus 2:11-14), emboldens evangelizing efforts (2 Cor 3:12), and provides existential stability amid uncertainty (Heb 6:19-20). Finally, hope serves as an essential component of believers' spiritual "armor" ("a helmet of hope for salvation" [1 Thess 5:8]), equipping them to confront life's challenges in a hostile environment while also reinforcing their communal Christian identity.

A particularly significant text that situates hope as an essential and fundamental dimension of the Christian existence is found in the letter to the Colossians. The author addresses

this theologically and spiritually advanced community, writing: "For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven" (Col 1:4-5). This text positions hope alongside faith and love, forming a triad of fundamental and permanent Christian virtues. In Paul's words, these three "abide"; they are permanent and eternal (1 Cor 13:13). Though hope is mentioned last and clearly in the eschatological sense, this "hope laid up for you in heaven" is, in fact, the foundation for the other two virtues. This heavenly hope, anchored in Christ's resurrection, generates tangible expressions of faith and love in the community. Thus, hope sets up an eschatological horizon that orients believers and supplies the dynamic power that animates their faith and fuels their love in the present. Without hope, faith and love would not be possible! This interconnection showcases how the three virtues function as an integrated whole—with hope providing the forward momentum that sustains faith's confidence and empowers love's concrete expressions in community life.

This very short presentation demonstrates that hope is a dynamic force that transcends mere future expectation. For both covenant communities, hope transforms present reality by enabling endurance through adversity while orienting believers toward divine promises. Most profoundly, hope forms the essential foundation for the Christian virtues of faith and love, creating an integrated spiritual environment where each virtue reinforces the others. As the anchor that stabilizes believers in uncertainty and the catalyst that energizes their spiritual journey, hope doesn't merely anticipate transformation—it initiates it.

4. Pan-eschatological

In our foregoing analysis, we have established that hope tethers present reality to an anticipated and desired future. By virtue of its future orientation, hope is ultimately directed toward the *telos*—the purpose, fulfillment, and final state of

creation as intended by God. This section explores how biblical hope extends across all dimensions of existence, transcending individual or national salvation to encompass the entire created order—hence the title "pan-eschatological." The pan-eschatological nature of biblical hope reveals a comprehensive vision where nothing in existence lies outside God's redemptive purposes. This vision appears consistently in both testaments, presenting hope as the catalyst for a universal eschatology that embraces all reality.

The hope of Israel conveyed by the FT texts can be characterized as profoundly eschatological, though in a sense that might be termed "this-world eschatology." The people of the first covenant centered their future hope on the promise of national restoration, rooted in the anticipation of divine intervention based on historical precedents—particularly God's covenant with Abraham with its promise of a "great nation" (Gen 12:1-3) and Israel's deliverance from Egypt. This national hope envisioned liberation from foreign domination, restoration of sovereignty, peace, general well-being (i.e., blessing), and an enduring era of prosperity.

These aspirations for national restoration intensified, particularly during the experience of exile and its aftermath, as evidenced in numerous texts from the Babylonian and post-exilic periods (Isa 40:31; Jer 29:11; 31:17; Ezek 36:33-36; Amos 9:13-15; Hos 2:15; Ps 130:7; Job 14:7-9; Lam 3:21-26; Hab 3:17-19; Dan 12:2-3).

A paradigmatic example of this dynamic hope appears in the post-exilic book of Zechariah,

> As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double... On that day the LORD their God will save them for they are the flock of his people; for like the jewels of a crown they shall shine on his land. (Zech 9:11-12, 16)

This majestic passage encompasses the fundamental elements of Israel's this-world eschatology: God's covenant faithfulness, liberation of captives, repatriation of exiles, restoration of land and nation (designated in classic OT language as "the flock"), and ultimately the sovereign rule of God's people, strikingly conveyed using the metaphor of "shining." In ancient Israelite cosmology, to "shine" was a common reference to the stars, which were understood as heavenly beings. Thus, this vision portrays not merely an earthly kingdom's restoration but intimates the supernatural character of God's restored people, placed on par with the heavenly beings.

While undoubtedly focused on national restoration, Israel's hope transcended national boundaries to encompass all creation. From its inception, Hebrew thought affirmed the cosmos as God's handiwork, good, purposeful, and enduring. Though national concerns predominated, prophetic visions anticipating the distant future recognized that divine purpose extends to all creation. They envisioned that national restoration and the establishment of harmony within the human community would precipitate cosmic restoration of a creation afflicted by corruption, decay, mortality, and impermanence. This universal vision characterizes prophetic literature, with key statements found in Isaiah 11:6-9; 65:17-25; 25:6-9; Hosea 2:18-23; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Psalm 96:10-13; and Micah 4:1-4.

Particularly significant is Hosea's text describing the reconciliation between humanity and creation, *"I will make for you a covenant on that day with the wild animals, the birds of the air, and the creeping things of the ground; and I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land; and I will make you lie down in safety"* (Hos 2:20). Remarkably, the prophet employs covenant terminology typically employed in the contest of God-nation relationship. The prophet envisions a covenant leading to the healing of creation and, more deeply, the end of the enmity between humanity and the natural world, first introduced in Genesis 3:15-18.

These prophetic texts anticipate a transformed world where harmony supplants natural enmity and predatory relationships, establishing peaceful coexistence among all creatures. Liberation from corruption enables creation to flourish in perpetual abundance. Divine healing restores vitality and wholeness, ensuring perfect equilibrium with perennial growth replacing scarcity. This vision of a renewed creation, cosmic in scope, affirms that the first covenant people already imagined and desired a new world order, and the restoration of primordial harmony established at creation and subsequently lost.

Moving to the new covenant realities, we have already signaled that Christian hope is inherently eschatological, anticipating bodily resurrection and the transformative restoration of humanity, with an emphasis on the corporeal resurrection. This hope was and is grounded in Jesus' resurrection and anticipates his parousia—Christ's return as the restorer of humanity to its divinely intended immortality. Numerous passages explicitly identify hope with resurrection and post-resurrection transformation: Colossians 1:4-5; 1 Peter 1:3-4; Romans 8:23-25; 1 Corinthians 15:19-20; and Titus 2:13.

One exemplary passage appears in 1 Peter, a late composition in the New Testament canon:

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Pet 1:3-5).

This text encapsulates Christian eschatology's essential elements: God's covenantal faithfulness (mercy) as foundation, "living hope" (life everlasting) as the effect of Jesus' resurrection, union with God (heavenly inheritance) characterized by permanence and incorruptibility in the transcendent realm,

and anticipation of the parousia ("Christ epiphany in the last time"). Early Christians shaped their daily lives and communal practices according to this eschatological hope, seeing their present existence as already participating in the promised future.

An even more remarkable development occurs in the Christian perspective on creation in light of eschatological expectations. While the Gospels remain largely silent on this matter, Paul and the author responsible for the book of Revelation see humanity's eschatological future as inextricably connected with all creation's destiny. The definitive text linking creation's fate with humanity appears in the letter to the Romans:

> Indeed, creation with ardent desire eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For creation was subjected to futility not willingly but by the one who subjected it, in hope that even the creation itself will be liberated from the bondage to perishability into the freedom of the glory of the children of God, for we know that the entire creation sighs and suffers together until now. (Rom 8:19-22, author's translation).

Paul envisions a profound interconnection between human and creation destinies. Drawing on the Fall narrative (Gen 3), where human action disrupted the natural order, Paul concludes that humanity's restoration will necessarily lead to creation's renewal. He attributes to creation the same yearning (stenadzo) for restoration that characterizes both humanity and the Holy Spirit. The apostle's vision is thus thoroughly holistic, encompassing creation, humanity, and divinity embodied in the Trinity's third person. No more integrated, comprehensive, or hopeful portrait could be conceived for cosmic destiny, where divine, human, and natural realms achieve perfect harmony. This vision evokes Genesis 2, where God and human beings walk together and converse in the midst of a lush garden—a profound image of renewed creation in which harmony prevails between the divine, humanity, and the natural world.

The culmination of this reflection on the cosmic dimension must necessarily turn to the conclusion of the biblical canon in Revelation 21-22. This transcendent vision portrays restored reality purged of corruption, where suffering, sin, and death are vanquished. Perhaps the most fitting concluding image for this eschatological and cosmic hope emerges in the final chapter of scripture: "the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations" (Rev 22:1-2). From God the Creator and Christ the Redeemer flows the water that nourishes the trees of life, whose leaves heal the nations—the ultimate realization of creation's renewal and humanity's restoration.

In conclusion, biblical hope is profoundly eschatological. It is characterized by an ever-expanding scope of desire and expectation—from Israel's this-world national restoration to Christianity's transcendent vision of resurrection. This progression culminates in a comprehensive cosmic renewal where all creation is liberated from corruption, a vision shared by both testaments. Scripture's final eschatological portrait envisions divine-human communion within a restored creation, where God's redemptive purposes achieve perfect fulfillment—a harmonious reality healed, transformed, and eternally sustained by divine presence.

Concluding the first part of this reflection, we affirm that hope stands as a central theological motif throughout Scripture, operating with consistency yet evolving across both Testaments. From the linguistic richness of the Hebrew tradition to the Christocentric focus of early Christian communities, biblical hope reveals itself as profoundly personal, yearning-driven, transformative, and eschatological.

These dimensions show hope not merely as abstract optimism but as a dynamic relational reality that shapes human expe-

rience, sustains communities through adversity, and anticipates cosmic restoration within God's redemptive purpose. The personal and relational foundation of hope, its character as intense yearning, its transformative power in present circumstances, and its cosmic eschatological vision collectively constitute its theological significance. While shifting from a theocentric to Christocentric orientation through biblical history, hope maintains its essence—anchoring believers to God's redemptive purposes, enabling perseverance through suffering, and orienting all creation toward ultimate fulfillment. In Part II of this reflection, we will explore the implications of these fundamental characteristics of biblical hope for missionary engagement with today's wounded, post-modern world.

b. Reimagining Missionary Work through Hope

In this part of our discussion, we will propose three principles that might help guide a reflection on being a missionary of hope in the contemporary world. Each of these reflections will be guided by "a biblical text" and relate to the four pillars of hope discussed in Part I of this paper. First, through the prophet Zechariah's imagery, we examine how missionaries serve as "custodians of hope", which relates to the personal character of the biblical hope and its historically rooted nature. In a second moment, drawing on texts from Hosea and the First Letter of Peter, we explore the transformative nature of biblical hope and how missionaries function as "doors of hope" in a wounded reality. The final stage engages the Epistle to the Hebrews to illuminate the eschatological and cosmic dimensions essential for reimagining missionary work, demonstrating how missionaries serve as "anchors of hope" in a world focused on immediate experience. The inherent tension embedded in hope, which in Part I we identified as its "yearning driven" dimension implicitly features throughout this analysis.

1. Missionary: A Custodian of Hope

> *"As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double"* (Zech 9:9-12).

Biblical hope is invariably grounded in historical experience, endowing it with a distinctly concrete, temporal dimension that distinguishes it from mere fantasy or naive wishful thinking. For the people of both Testaments, hope's reliability was firmly anchored in God's historical interventions, which manifested the dependability of divine promises. For Israel, the foundational experience was the Exodus, while the promise was that given to Abraham. For Christians, the paradigmatic experience became Christ's resurrection and his promise of the same resurrection for his followers.

The passage from the prophet Zechariah provides both inspiration and theological framework for this reflection. The prophet's name itself—meaning "one whom God remembers"—signifies the theological locus of his work. Zechariah's prophecies emerged during a particularly precarious period for the people of Judah (circa 520-518 BC). Having returned from exile and attempted to rebuild Jerusalem some twenty years earlier, they had largely failed in their endeavors. Instead of experiencing the grandiose promises of restoration and glory, they existed in abject poverty, dwelling among the ruins of their once-glorious city, contemplating the ashes of their burned temple, with seemingly no prospect for the future. Living at the mercy of hostile neighbors, they frequently endured oppression and even enslavement.

In this disheartening reality, the prophet first offers an oracle with the promise of a leader who will deliver them from their enemies (Zech 9:9-10). Then, he assures the people of their imminent deliverance. He begins by calling the Israelites "prisoners," though a more precise rendering of the Hebrew

would be "bondsmen." The people are confined to a "waterless pit," a metaphor for a place of slow agony and despair. They are prisoners due to their enslavement to sin, resignation, religious indifference, adverse circumstances, and political oppression.

The prophet then brilliantly reverses the imagery, naming the people "prisoners of hope" even while they remain captives in "the pit." This paradoxical designation reveals a profound theological truth: because of "the blood of my covenant," the Israelites are simultaneously bound to their present suffering and to God's promised deliverance rooted in the unbreakable covenant initiated and upheld by God. The divine covenant functions as an unbreakable cord, drawing them forward even as their circumstances pull them down. By remembering God's faithfulness in past deliverance, they become captive not only to their present tribulations but also to the certainty of divine intervention, unable to escape either their current distress or the hope that defines their identity as God's covenant people. They are indeed "prisoners of hope."

Applying Zechariah's prophetic paradigm to contemporary mission reveals profound implications. Today's missionaries operate within postmodern contexts characterized by historical discontinuity, institutional mistrust, skepticism toward traditional wisdom, and suspicion of inherited narratives. This context particularly affects faith communities, as rejection of authoritative revelation and tradition leaves many spiritually adrift—effectively prisoners of their own "waterless pits," disconnected from both historical and transcendent reality.

In this fractured landscape, the missionary functions as a witness to covenant memory or resurrection faith principles that connects humanity to divine life and promise. Their vocation is to articulate and embody theological foundations that serve as stable reference points for a generation adrift in rel-

ativism. The missionary task is to guard and transmit sound historical, scriptural, theological, and ethical frameworks of meaning that would render Christian worldview and life convincing and compelling.

This custodial role requires missionaries themselves to be "prisoners of hope"—individuals whose lives are bound to the faith realities they proclaim. Their formation and spirituality must authentically connect transcendent dimensions of ecclesial life with immanent human experience. Without this integration, their witness risks appearing as mere religious propaganda rather than transformative truth. The missionary's effectiveness depends not on institutional authority but on existential authenticity—their evident captivity to the hope they proclaim. By such witness, they invite others into that paradoxical condition of being simultaneously bound to present reality and transcendent promise—making them fellow "custodians of hope."

2. Missionary: A Door of Hope

> *"From there I will give her back her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she shall respond as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt."* (Hos. 2:15)

The first text originates from the book of the prophet Hosea. The terms "Valley of Achor" and "door of hope" allude to a specific historical episode recorded in the book of Joshua. During Israel's conquest of Canaan, an Israelite warrior named Achan committed a grave transgression. Driven by greed, he misappropriated precious objects from Jericho that God had declared sacred. Subsequently, divine judgment fell upon Israel, and their conquest efforts faltered. Their advance resumed only after Joshua uncovered this sin and the transgressor was executed. Scripture records that Achan's grave was marked with a pile of stones, and the location was named the Valley of Achor, meaning "trouble" (Josh 7:19-26).

Achan's sin fundamentally consisted in coveting and seizing riches that belonged exclusively to God. By analogy, the Israel of Hosea's time pursued the "gifts" of her metaphorical lovers—foreign gods. Drawn by the allure of the dominant pagan culture, they adopted its hedonistic lifestyle, moral permissiveness, and idolatrous practices. In their idolatrous allegiance, they effectively sold themselves to foreign deities, misappropriating what belonged exclusively to God: the covenantal community. In this context, the prophet employs the Achor metaphor to emphasize that God's grace and fidelity persist even amidst betrayal driven by opportunism and hedonistic indulgence. The Valley of Achor, rather than remaining a symbol of judgment, becomes the locus of restoration. The prophet envisions divine transformative grace converting the very site of transgression, corruption, and failure into a "door of hope".

Within this framework applied to the current circumstances, the missionary's vocation emerges as one who facilitates healing in a wounded reality. Sin, corruption, greed, betrayal, pervasive mistrust, opportunism, and hedonistic indulgence remain undeniable and ever-more insidious features of our contemporary landscape. The missionary, functioning as a "door of hope," mediates transformation, where fallen reality is not dismissed but transfigured into renewed possibility. This hope is not escapist but incarnational—not abandoning this world but working toward its genuine transformation.

> *"But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence."* (1 Pet 3:14-16).

The First Letter of Peter, written in the final decade of the first century, reflects the experience of the early Christian community after the apostolic age. The author addresses the universal human challenge of suffering—its causes, mean-

ing, and appropriate responses. This suffering was primarily social rather than physical, involving marginalization stemming from societal misunderstanding, communal exclusion, and slander rooted in distortions of Christian belief and ethical practice.

In this passage, the author urges believers to maintain steadfast fidelity while offering an apologia—a reasoned defense—for the hope that shapes their existence. This defense involves clarification against false accusations and malevolent distortions, presented not confrontationally but with conviction that explains rather than imposes their distinctive way of life.

In our contemporary context, characterized by relativism regarding truth, constantly shifting ideological currents, and the erosion of moral frameworks, the missionary serves precisely as a witness to the coherence of Christian existence, belief, ethics, and being. The missionary functions as an interpretive key to a reality grounded in divine revelation and the lived tradition of Christian communities. This witness manifests through authentic lived example and necessarily through articulate expression that addresses misconceptions, distortions, and prejudices inevitably arising from the distinctive Christian way of life that stands in contrast to prevailing cultural norms.

Functioning as a "door of hope," the missionary fulfills Peter's instruction to "always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you." This accounting transcends mere apologetics—it represents a holistic witness that integrates thoughtful explanation with authentic living. In contexts where certainty appears elusive and transcendent values contested, the missionary's capacity to articulate faith's coherence with both intellectual integrity and personal conviction becomes an open door for others. By offering this gentle yet reverent defense, missionaries do not impose belief but rather invite engagement with the substance of Christian hope. Their explanation of faith

helps others see both the reasonableness and life-giving power of the gospel, opening a doorway to hope itself.

3. Missionary: An Anchor of Hope

> *"...through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us. We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain..."* (Heb. 6:18-19a)

The Epistle to the Hebrews addresses a Jewish-Christian community situated within the Greco-Roman world and significantly influenced by Hellenistic thought. In this complex cultural environment, the author undertakes the demanding task of interpreting the Christ-event in a manner faithful to its Jewish foundations while remaining intelligible to minds formed by Greek philosophy, culture, and worldview.

The guiding passage for this reflection centers on hope as a "steadfast anchor for the soul." The author begins his argument by referencing "two unchangeable things," which the context identifies as God's word and God's promise—both absolutely reliable and immutable. Thus, hope rests on the firmest possible foundation, grounded in God's character, God's revelation in Scripture, and God's historical actions. The author then declares that this hope is to be "seized," suggesting an active, deliberate pursuit. He further defines this hope as one that enters "the inner shrine behind the curtain"—an allusion to Christ's entrance into the heavenly sanctuary where he presented the definitive sacrifice reconciling humanity with God. This imagery represents the author's chosen symbolic framework for Jesus' sacrificial death, resurrection, and ascension.

This sanctuary, accessible through hope, signifies nothing less than communion with the risen Lord and with God in

transcendent reality—"heaven." While Christ has already entered this sanctuary, believers journey toward the same destination, living out their faith and Christ-like existence in this world. This active orientation toward ultimate reality constitutes the "seizing" of eschatological hope. Hope serves simultaneously as an irresistible magnet drawing believers toward divine fulfillment and as the key unlocking the threshold to God's eternity.

In this theological framework, the missionary emerges as the vivid embodiment of an anchor of hope—not an anchor fixed in past traditions or secured to present realities, but one fastened to the future, extending the "anchor chain" of hope toward their eschatological destiny. In contemporary contexts that deny transcendent reality and focus exclusively on immediate experience, often reduced to pleasure, consumption, or mere survival, missionaries are called to expand horizons toward transcendent hope, essential for both spiritual wholeness and psychological well-being. Contemporary culture struggles to provide individuals with a coherent narrative through which they can comprehend their purpose within creation and their existential significance. Without such a framework, people are profoundly limited in their capacity to live healthily and joyfully, particularly when confronting adversity or life's finitude. Thus, as anchors of hope projecting human existence forward its infinite future, missionaries offer a remedy for the epidemic of purposelessness and meaninglessness afflicting many, with its damaging psychological, spiritual, and social consequences.

A significant corollary to this discussion emerges from what we have identified as an essential element of biblical hope: its cosmic dimension. An antidote to our current ecological crisis lies in challenging humanity's conception of itself as separate from or superior to the created order, thus entitled to exploit it indiscriminately. Even contemporary arguments for environmental protection often proceed from self-interest—if we destroy nature, we ultimately destroy ourselves. Scripture,

however, presents a more profound understanding of creation, revealing it not as distinct from humanity but as partner with it. It portrays creation as an organic system where humanity and the natural world coexist interdependently, their destinies are fundamentally interconnected. Therefore, addressing the ecological crisis demands perceiving creation as a part of the cosmic family—a sibling to be supported and nurtured, not because it serves our interests, but because it constitutes part of our extended being. For missionaries to function as anchors of hope means also to promote this vision of creation, recognizing it as partner rather than exploitable resource or irrelevant backdrop to human affairs.

Conclusion: Stretching the Cord of Hope

As a conclusion to this reflection, I would like to propose a final metaphor that illuminates the role of biblical hope in the endeavors of missionaries in the first decades of the 21st century, as missionaries of hope in a wounded, postmodern world. This metaphor emerges from an etymological analysis of two Hebrew words. The first is the verb קוה (qavah), highlighted in Part I with reference to Psalm 130:5-6, while the second is the substantive תִּקְוָה (tikvah), appearing in Zechariah 9:12, both translated as "hope." These words share a common root meaning "cord" or "rope." Indeed, "tikvah" is explicitly translated and used as a cord in Joshua 2:18, 21.

Conceptualizing hope in connection with the image of a cord beautifully captures its inherent dynamics. A cord functions optimally when stretched between fixed points—it binds, pulls, and links objects. Analogously, hope performs its role when anchored to something fixed and stable on one end, while experiencing tension from being pulled at the other. "Stretching the cord of hope" serves as an apt metaphor for describing the theological and missiological dynamic explored in this essay. On one end, hope is securely fastened to divine promises, experiences of God's salvific interventions in the past, and God's revelation enshrined in the Scripture.

On the other end, hope is decisively oriented to and anchored in the eschatological future. Between these liminal points exists a tension, an ardent yearning created by the realities of life in the present world.

This dynamic reveals a web of interrelationships involved in Christian mission endeavors, which, at their core, amount to stretching and maintaining that tension between past, present, and future: keeping hope vibrant and alive. To be authentic missionaries of hope, the agents and partners in mission must stretch this sacred cord which, anchored in God's eternal promises, energizes and directs the people of God. Remembering the past while navigating and transforming the present, believers animated by the missionaries of hope hasten toward creation's definitive and final restoration, the *telos* of all hope. Thanks to that stretched cord of hope, the people of God, pilgrims of hope, walk with absolute confidence that the object of their hope is within reach and will result in all creation attaining its divinely ordained perfection. In this journey, those called to missionary service draw their co-sojourners to walk together along this redemptive pathway towards the boundless horizon of God's promised future.

B. Faithful and Creative Disciples in a Wounded World

Introduction

The Society of the Divine Word (SVD), as part of the wider Church, has journeyed the Jubilee Year 2025 with a profound sense of responsibility and spiritual anticipation. This ecclesial context—marked by the Jubilee journey, places us under the banner "Pilgrims of Hope,"[6] at a historical crossroads where faithfulness to the Gospel must be accompanied by imaginative, courageous engagement with the challenges of the contemporary world. The Jubilee Year, rooted in Levitical tradition (Leviticus Chapter 25) and reinvigorated by the Second Vatican Council, offers not just a time of celebration but a transformative call to renewal.

The rapidly changing global context demands that we reimagine our missionary identity. The wounds of the world—visible in war, inequality, ecological devastation, forced displacement, and spiritual disorientation—cry out for compassionate, Gospel-centered responses. We do not act in isolation. Our vocation, rooted in the charism of St. Arnold Janssen, connects us to the universal Church's mission to be a sign and instrument of unity and hope in a fragmented world.

As missionaries, we live out our calling in solidarity with the global Church, embracing the complexities and contradictions of modern life while remaining anchored in the Word. During the 19th General Chapter, we reaffirmed our commit-

[6] Francis. *Spes Non Confundit: Bull of Induction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the Year 2025*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2024.

ment to this vocation, discerning pathways to shine Christ's light in places of darkness. In our own woundedness and limitations, we discover grace to minister as wounded healers and resonant with Christ crucified and risen (cf. *1 Peter 2:24*).

As the Church celebrates the Jubilee 2025: Pilgrims of Hope and the Call to Radical Witness, the invitation to become "Pilgrims of Hope" resounds as both a spiritual summons and a missionary call. *Spes Non Confundit* presents the pilgrimage as both a symbol and praxis of hope that "walks with others toward a common horizon" (cf. *SNC*, nn. 6–7). This Jubilee is not merely a historical milestone, but a *kairos* moment—a sacred opportunity to realign with the Gospel and embrace anew our identity as faithful and creative disciples in a world marked by wounds, uncertainty, and deep yearning. In a time of global upheaval—marked by ecological crisis, spiritual disaffection, and the silent suffering of countless marginalized peoples—the Church is summoned to bear witness, not through nostalgia for past glories, but rather with boldness, humility, and joyful fidelity to Christ (*Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 24; *Fratelli Tutti*, nn. 55–56).

The Jubilee offers a singular moment of grace, awakening the People of God to the prophetic call of baptism (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10; *Christus Vivit*, n. 254): to walk alongside the crucified and proclaim the resurrection not solely in words, but more profoundly through lives given in service and solidarity. It is a time to rediscover the Gospel—not merely as a message of personal salvation, but as a transformative vision for the healing of creation and society (cf. *Laudato Si'*, n. 64, 231).

By invoking the image of pilgrims, the Church invites all the baptized to embark on this renewed journey—with attentiveness to the Spirit and in deep communion with one another and with the wounded world. (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1; *Synod Synthesis Report, 2023*, n. A.1).

Pope Francis urges us to move beyond superficial spirituality or comfortable religiosity. Instead, we are called to rediscover the theological foundations of hope and mission—rooted in Scripture, nourished in sacrament, and enacted in radical love (SNC, n. 2). The Jubilee of 2025 is not merely something to celebrate; it is something to become. It is a call to reimagine what discipleship looks like in this wounded yet grace-filled world.

a. Foundational Themes of Missionary Renewal

The image of pilgrimage, central to the Jubilee theme, conveys profound spiritual significance. It is not simply about physical movement or travel to a sacred site but represents a *journey of interior and communal transformation*. It embodies a lifelong path of conversion—a sacred passage from self-enclosure to openness, from apathy to love, and from fragmentation to communion. Every believer is invited to set out anew, allowing the Holy Spirit to lead them beyond what is familiar into a place of deeper trust, listening, and transformation. This inner journey is a process of shedding illusions and idols and making room for grace[7].

Moreover, pilgrimage is not a solitary endeavor. The Church, as a pilgrim people, moves together in faith, dialogue, and discernment. In this communal journey, we support one another, carry one another's burdens, and rejoice together in signs of resurrection. The synodal path that Pope Francis envisions is precisely this shared pilgrimage: one marked by mutual listening, shared responsibility, and a commitment to walk side by side with the excluded and voiceless.[8] Through this, the Church rediscovers itself as a dynamic, Spirit-led community—not defined by institutional rigidity, but by openness to renewal.

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[7] Pope Francis, *Spes Non Confundit,* n. 5

[8] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nn. 111–114.

Pilgrimage also requires courage, as it draws us into unfamiliar terrain—personally, culturally, and spiritually. It calls for deep trust in God's providence and a readiness to embrace discomfort. As pilgrims, we are summoned to be learners and seekers, open to encountering Christ in the stranger, the wounded, and even the inconvenient. The Jubilee invites us to recognize that authentic transformation is seldom born of static comfort; rather, it emerges through the journey itself—in the sacred rhythm of movement, vulnerability, and grace.

Another vital dimension of the Jubilee is hope. But this is not a superficial feeling or passive optimism that things will somehow improve. In the context of Jubilee, hope is a theological virtue—a resilient response to the harshness of reality, grounded in faith. *Hope -a prophetic and creative force*[9] as embodied by the early Christians- is the bold proclamation that Christ is risen and that death does not have the final word. In a world often marked by cynicism and despair, this kind of hope becomes a sign of contradiction. It refuses to conform to systems of injustice or to be immobilized by fear. Instead, it dares to envision a new future—one shaped by mercy, solidarity, and the promise of new creation.

This kind of hope is anchored in the very character of God, who remains faithful even when we are not. As Saint Paul writes in Romans, "Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit." Such divine love establishes our hope not upon political triumphs or cultural ascendancy, but upon the quiet and transformative work of grace. Hope thus emerges as a form of resistance—against despair, apathy, and resignation—and as a generative force, giving rise to new forms of ministry, fresh collaborations for justice, and renewed expressions of love in places marked by brokenness.

To be "pilgrims of hope" means choosing to embody this virtue wherever fear and fragmentation prevail. It means planting

[9] Francis, *Spes Non Confundit*, n. 7

seeds of compassion in hard soil, building bridges in divided societies, and choosing joy even when darkness surrounds us. In this sense, hope is not only personal but deeply communal. It is the courage to continue walking when the road is long, trusting that Christ walks with us and that God's Kingdom is already breaking in—even if only in small, quiet ways.

The Jubilee year invites us not to retreat from the world in spiritual escapism, but to draw deeply from the well of contemplation to re-engage the world with renewed vision and courage. This is *mysticism that fuels mission*—not a withdrawal into interior experience, but a profound encounter with God that propels us outward toward the suffering neighbor, the aching world, and the margins of society.[10] The Eucharist, prayer, and silence become sources of inner transformation that free us from self-centeredness and equip us for mission.

The witness of the saints affirms the profound integration of mysticism and mission. Figures such as St. Teresa of Calcutta and St. Oscar Romero were deeply anchored in contemplation, yet fully engaged in the struggles of the poor and the oppressed. Their intimate union with God did not shield them from suffering; rather, it intensified their solidarity with those who suffer. Through prayer, they came to perceive the world through the eyes of God, and were thus empowered to act with both tenderness and moral courage. Their example reminds us that the life of prayer is not in contradiction to committed action; it is, in fact, its very foundation.

In a world hungry for authenticity and spiritual depth, this integration is vital. The Jubilee challenges us to cultivate spaces for silence, adoration, and discernment—not to escape the world, but to return to it with clearer vision and compassionate hearts. Contemplation renews our capacity to listen, to weep, to persevere, and to dream. Without mysticism, mission becomes activism; without mission, mysticism becomes

[10] Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate,* nn. 25–33.

escapism. The Church must be both—a contemplative presence in a noisy world and an active witness to God's healing love.

The Jubilee stands as *a kairos moment for the Church*—a sacred time of grace, urgency, and decision. In the biblical tradition, kairos is not merely chronological time, but God's appointed time for transformation.[11] The Church today is being summoned to such a moment: to step beyond the inertia of routine and engage fully with the demands of the Gospel in our present context. This means confronting complacency, listening afresh to the cries of the earth and the poor, and allowing ourselves to be disrupted by grace.

This kairos moment is also a time to reimagine discipleship—not as maintenance of religious customs, but as bold and creative witness in a fractured world. The Church is not being called to triumph, but to humility. Not to defend privilege, but to embrace vulnerability. In the Jubilee spirit, faithful disciples are those who step out of the center and take their place at the edges—where Christ is most present. It is at the margins that the Church rediscovers its soul and its mission.

As pilgrims, witnesses, and hope-bearers, we walk not with certainty, but with faith. We do not possess all the answers, but we carry the light of Christ into the darkness, however small or flickering it may seem. The world today does not need a powerful Church, but a *credible* one—rooted in love, resilient in hope, and radiant with joy. The Jubilee invites us to become that Church—faithful and creative disciples, walking together through a wounded world toward the promise of new life.[12]

b. Responding to the Signs of the Times

The rapidly shifting landscape of the modern world compels the Church, and particularly the Society of the Divine Word

[11] Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4

[12] Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, n. 10.

(SVD), to engage courageously with pressing social, cultural, economic, and spiritual challenges. These signs of the times are not merely obstacles to mission but opportunities for witness, innovation, and transformation. Each challenge is an invitation to renewed faithfulness and creativity in living out our missionary identity.

The crisis of faith and rise of secularism, especially prevalent in the Global North, presents a complex scenario for missionary activity. Churches that once teemed with the faithful are now sparsely attended. Religious vocations are in decline, and the credibility of religious institutions is often questioned. However, beneath the surface, there remains an unquenched thirst for meaning, transcendence, and authentic community.

Our response must be grounded in a deep understanding of the cultural shifts shaping contemporary expressions of faith. Rather than lamenting perceived decline, we are called to embrace a pastoral disposition characterized by attentive listening, empathy, and meaningful engagement. Catechesis should emphasize relational evangelization—extending an invitation to encounter the joy of the Gospel within spaces marked by welcome and hospitality. This entails cultivating communities of authentic encounter, where those who are unchurched and those in spiritual search may engage with the mystery of God in ways that are both resonant and transformative.

Media, art, and digital platforms offer new frontiers for evangelization. Missionaries must be equipped with media literacy and storytelling skills to effectively communicate the kerygma. Importantly, we must witness through our lives—demonstrating that belief in God transforms not only individuals but communities.

Globalization has brought unprecedented wealth to some, while deepening *economic injustice and global inequality* for others. Missionary presence in impoverished areas is

not just a matter of charity, but of justice. The Gospel calls us to stand with the marginalized, challenging the systems and ideologies that perpetuate inequality.

The SVD is uniquely positioned to advocate for economic justice through its global network of schools, parishes, and social initiatives. We are called to form conscience, inspire activism, and offer alternatives. Programs in microfinance, cooperative economics, vocational training, and education can empower the poor to become agents of their own development.

Our religious life must reflect the Gospel's call to simplicity and sharing. Community living, responsible consumption, and solidarity with the poor are not optional but essential aspects of our witness. As missionaries, our lives must testify that another way of living is possible—one grounded in justice, mercy, and love.

Cultural and religious pluralism is an undeniable reality of our globalized age. We live among people of diverse faiths, cultures, and worldviews. For some, this diversity is a source of fear and conflict. But for missionaries of hope, it is fertile ground for dialogue and mutual enrichment.

The SVD's charism includes a commitment to interreligious and intercultural dialogue. This is not merely a strategy but a spirituality—a way of being present in the world. Dialogue does not mean dilution of faith but a deepening of it. In conversation with the other, we discover new dimensions of God's mystery and of our shared humanity.

Training in cultural intelligence and interfaith relations is crucial for contemporary mission. Our missionaries must be bridge-builders, capable of navigating complex social landscapes with humility and grace. Through shared service projects, theological exchange, and friendship, we can sow seeds of peace and cooperation.

The cry of the Earth is inseparable from the cry of the poor. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and environmental degradation are moral and spiritual crises that demand an urgent response. As Laudato Si' has catalyzed a renewed ecological consciousness within the Church in the midst of an ecological crisis wherein our common home is in peril. For the SVD, this means integrating care for creation into every aspect of our mission.

Our communities must become eco-conscious sanctuaries, committed to sustainability, education, and advocacy. From reducing carbon footprints to planting trees and protecting local ecosystems, our daily practices must reflect our ecological commitments. But beyond action, we must cultivate an eco-spirituality that sees God active in all creation.

Eco-mission means linking environmental justice with social justice—recognizing how environmental harm disproportionately affects the vulnerable. Through collaboration with other faiths and civic groups, we can amplify our impact and witness to the sacredness of all life.

Mass migration is one of the defining signs of our time. This sign reminds us that whether caused by war, persecution, economic instability, or environmental disaster, millions are on the move—often at great risk and with little hope. The experience of displacement mirrors biblical journeys and calls us to be companions on the road.

Missionaries must offer more than charity; we must walk alongside migrants as they rebuild their lives. This involves advocacy for just policies, pastoral care, psychological support, and legal assistance. Migrants are not problems to be solved but persons to be welcomed and empowered.

In many contexts, our parishes and institutions serve as sanctuaries—places where migrants can find not only material help but community, dignity, and hope. Our witness must

challenge xenophobia and nationalist ideologies, offering instead the inclusive love of Christ.

c. Embodying Faithfulness and Creativity Today

Being Faithful and Creative Disciples Today means recognizing that faithfulness and creativity are not opposing forces in the life of a missionary disciple; rather, they are two dimensions of the same call. To be faithful is to be anchored in the life of Christ, the teachings of the Church, and the enduring truth of the Gospel. To be creative is to respond boldly and imaginatively to the ever-evolving realities of the world in which that Gospel must be lived and proclaimed. In a time marked by rapid social, cultural, and technological shifts, we are called to hold both together—to honor tradition while boldly stepping into new terrain. This dual calling is not optional; it is essential if we are to speak meaningfully into the hearts of today's people, especially those on the margins of faith and society.

Discipleship, then, must be lived with fidelity to our roots and openness to the Spirit's unfolding. Pope Francis speaks of a missionary Church that goes forth, not clinging to outdated customs but trusting the Spirit who makes "all things new." Creativity in mission is not novelty for its own sake—it is the Spirit's gift that enables us to make the Gospel visible, audible, and tangible to those for whom traditional expressions no longer resonate. To be creative disciples is to be courageous enough to reimagine our ministries, languages, and structures so that they serve not the preservation of the past but the proclamation of the Kingdom here and now.

This section explores four interconnected ways we can live this out: accompanying those who are suffering, proclaiming the Word creatively, fostering dialogue, and promoting integral human development. Each of these is both ancient and new—rooted in Christ's mission, yet urgently needed in the unique context of our contemporary world.

At the heart of authentic mission is compassionate presence. The first way of being a creative disciple is *accompanying those who are suffering.* Jesus did not remain distant from human pain—He entered into it. He walked among the poor, sat with the grieving, healed the sick, and welcomed the excluded. His love was not abstract but embodied, tangible, and deeply personal. As missionaries, we are called to mirror this same tender closeness—to walk not ahead of people as leaders or behind them as observers, but with them, as companions on the road.

True accompaniment demands more than physical presence; it calls for emotional maturity, spiritual depth, and the humility to listen without judgment. It is not about solving people's problems or offering easy answers, but about holding space for their pain, standing with them in their questions, and affirming their dignity even in the darkest moments. Whether we serve in hospitals, conflict zones, refugee camps, schools, or parishes, our very presence must be a message: *"You are not forgotten. God is with you, and so am I."*

To do this well, formation for mission must go deeper. Training in trauma-informed care, pastoral counseling, and spiritual accompaniment must be part of every missionary's journey. But just as important is the cultivation of our inner life—through prayer, community support, personal reflection, and spiritual direction. Without this, we risk burnout, bitterness, or emotional disconnection. To accompany others in their suffering, we must allow Christ to accompany us in our own.

The second way of being a creative disciple is by *proclaiming the Word with creativity*. The Gospel must be proclaimed—not only in pulpits and catechism classes, but in every space where people search for truth, meaning, and belonging. In our digital, visual, and fast-moving world, creativity in proclamation is not an option; it is a necessity. Proclaiming the Word with creativity means using language, media, and methods

that engage both the heart and mind. It also involves reading the "signs of the times" and responding with cultural intelligence and pastoral sensitivity.

Digital media—podcasts, short videos, storytelling reels, interactive catechesis, and even gaming environments—have become new missionary frontiers. But these tools require more than technical know-how; they demand spiritual discernment, clarity of message, and ethical responsibility. Training missionaries in digital storytelling, visual literacy, and public theology can help us enter these new forums not as entertainers but as evangelizers. At the same time, traditional forms of creativity—poetry, drama, music, painting—remain powerful languages of the soul, especially in intercultural settings.

Yet creativity must be anchored in fidelity. Innovation without grounding in Scripture, Tradition, and the teachings of the Church risks losing the heart of the Gospel. But fidelity without creativity risks turning the Gospel into a museum artifact, rather than a living word that speaks today. The true challenge is to *remain rooted while reaching out*—to be both guardians of truth and artisans of hope.

The third way of being creative disciples is *by fostering dialogue and building bridges*. Mission today is unavoidably dialogical. In an age of polarization, ideological divisions, and growing mistrust of institutions, the Church is called to be a place of encounter—a space where people from different cultures, generations, and experiences can speak, be heard, and discover shared dignity. Fostering dialogue and building bridges does not weaken our identity; it strengthens it, as we engage others not with fear but with love. In doing so, we echo the style of Jesus, who encountered each person uniquely and personally.

Dialogue is not limited to formal interreligious conversations. It must include everyday encounters: with the poor, the young,

the seekers, the disillusioned, and even those who reject or misunderstand the Church. It is about building trust, which grows through humility, listening, and mutual respect. Programs that foster storytelling, cultural exchange, and collaborative ministry projects can become powerful tools for reconciliation and bridge-building in a fragmented world.

At the same time, dialogue must not become silent in the face of injustice. True dialogue includes prophetic courage—naming oppression, advocating for the voiceless, and challenging systems that dehumanize. It is not conflict avoidance but Gospel engagement: engaging others with clarity, honesty, and above all, love. A dialogical Church is one that listens deeply, speaks truthfully, and walks with others in search of a better world.

To be faithful and creative disciples today is to engage in mission that is holistic—caring for the whole person and the whole community. *Promoting integral human development,* inspired by Catholic Social Teaching, means recognizing that evangelization cannot be separated from education, healthcare, ecological justice, and economic equity. Jesus healed bodies as well as spirits, and so must we. Proclaiming the Kingdom of God includes proclaiming human dignity, stewardship of creation, and justice for the poor.

Ministries rooted in Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) must be central—not secondary—to our missionary identity. Whether we are involved in conflict mediation, anti-trafficking efforts, food security, education for girls, or climate advocacy, our mission must respond to the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor. Formation for mission must include a foundation in Catholic social doctrine and training in social analysis, so that our actions are both compassionate and strategic.

Integral development also means empowering rather than dominating. The communities we serve are not passive re-

cipients of aid but partners in transformation. Missionaries must practice deep cultural sensitivity, promote participatory approaches, and commit to long-term impact. At its core, integral development is about honoring the divine image in every person and working together for a world that reflects God's justice, mercy, and peace.

d. Internal Renewal and Future Mission

Before we can authentically serve a wounded world, we must confront our own internal woundedness with humility and truth. *The internal challenges we face—healing our own woundedness—must take priority if our mission is to be credible and transformative.* As a missionary congregation, our credibility in the world hinges not only on our message but on the integrity of our communal life. We are not immune to the fragilities that afflict the world—emotional burnout, disillusionment, interpersonal wounds, leadership crises, and painful cases of abuse. These realities can fester in silence unless they are brought into the light. Acknowledging these wounds is not a sign of weakness; it is the beginning of authentic healing and conversion.

To move toward wholeness, we must foster a culture marked by transparency, accountability, and genuine pastoral care. This includes establishing spaces for open dialogue, where confreres can speak honestly about their experiences without fear of judgment or exclusion. Structures for reconciliation and conflict resolution must be strengthened, and both initial and ongoing formation must intentionally include areas often overlooked—such as emotional maturity, intercultural sensitivity, and leadership grounded in service rather than control. We must move beyond functionalism in our structures to foster *relational health and trust,* at every level of community life.

Spiritual accompaniment also plays a vital role in this healing journey. Superiors and formators are not merely admin-

istrators—they are shepherds entrusted with guiding others in their spiritual and emotional journeys. They need formation too: in listening, discernment, trauma-informed care, and safeguarding practices. A renewed culture of accompaniment, rooted in compassion and honesty, can help our communities become not just places of ministry, but *spaces of healing*. We are also called to reconcile with one another—across cultures, generations, and personalities. Without such internal reconciliation, we risk becoming fragmented messengers in a world that desperately needs unity and peace.

The path forward is a collaborative, prophetic mission—not one of individual brilliance or institutional self-preservation. It is a journey of co-responsibility and communal discernment. Mission today is synodal—walking together, listening to one another, and discerning the Spirit's movement in shared service. This includes deepening our partnerships with lay collaborators, especially women, whose leadership, spirituality, and lived experience are essential to the integrity of our mission. Shared formation programs can nurture this mutual relationship, fostering leadership models that are inclusive, dialogical, and rooted in Gospel values.

To be prophetic today means more than preaching; it means living the Gospel with courage, even when it challenges power, privilege, or comfort. A prophetic congregation is not defined by slogans but by its concrete choices: standing with migrants, accompanying those on the peripheries, resisting ecological destruction, and naming injustice even when it is unpopular. This prophetic stance is not rooted in ideology, but in prayer—sustained by the Eucharist, the heart of our communion and source of our strength. From the altar we are sent out to the margins, carrying Christ not just in words, but in the pattern of our lives.

Moreover, the Spirit is calling us into new forms of mission that transcend traditional boundaries. Digital spaces are emerging as mission fields where presence, dialogue, and

proclamation take new forms. Ecological advocacy is no longer optional; it is a core dimension of our fidelity to the Creator and to the poor. Intercultural communities are becoming signs of the Kingdom, witnessing reconciliation amid global division. These shifts require not fear but *discernment and boldness*—a willingness to experiment, to risk, and to follow where the Spirit leads. We do not step into this future alone; we go as companions, as community, and as creative disciples shaped by both the cross and the resurrection.

Conclusion: Walking Together as Pilgrims of Hope

As confreres of the Society of the Divine Word in this Jubilee Year, we find ourselves at a defining moment in our missionary journey. The theme "Pilgrims of Hope" invites us not only to commemorate the Church's past but to recommit ourselves to a renewed way of witnessing the Gospel—anchored in our charism, responsive to the signs of the times, and open to the Spirit's creative leading. This Jubilee is a sacred call to personal and communal conversion. It urges us to journey together—from comfort to compassion, from routine to renewal—sustained by contemplation and expressed in bold missionary presence among the wounded of our world.

Our call today, more than ever, is to integrate our profound spiritual foundations with tangible, prophetic action. As Divine Word Missionaries, we are called to respond not merely to global crises; rather, we are to recognize within them a profound invitation to reimagine the manner in which we embody our vows, carry out our ministries, and bear witness through our intercultural presence. Whether we are confronting the realities of secularism, ecological collapse, or human displacement, we are reminded that our mission must be both deeply incarnational and creatively expressive of the Gospel. Dialogue, solidarity, and intercultural communion are not only strategies—they are dimensions of our spirituality and our shared prophetic identity.

At the same time, we are called to attend to our own woundedness, both personally and as a congregation. Healing, transparency, and mutual accompaniment must become marks of our life together. We cannot serve a broken world with integrity if we do not allow Christ to heal us first. This Jubilee is not a destination, but a sacred threshold—a kairos moment inviting us to walk together in hope. Let us be a community of faith-filled and creative disciples, daring to follow the Spirit into new frontiers with humility, courage, and joy, and yes, hope!

C. Justice and Peace in the Wounded Body of Christ: A Creative Mission

Introduction

Biblical literature—especially the New Testament—offers profound insight into the themes of suffering, woundedness and injustice as they relate to the Church, understood as the Mystical Body of Christ. This concept portrays believers as being intimately united with Christ and with one another, forming a spiritual organism in which the experiences of one member affect the whole. Within this framework, the trials faced by the Church—whether through persecution, hardship, or the persistent struggle against sin and evil—are not seen as isolated incidents, but as a shared participation in the redemptive suffering of Christ.

The New Testament repeatedly affirms that just as Christ suffered for the sake of humanity, so too will His followers encounter tribulation in their pursuit of righteousness. This is not merely a reflection of the fallen world but a theological reality: believers, as members of Christ's body, are called to share in His sufferings so that they may also share in His glory (cf. Romans 8:17; Philippians 3:10). The suffering of the Church, then, is both a continuation of Christ's own passion and a manifestation of the ongoing spiritual conflict between good and evil.

Moreover, this collective suffering serves to strengthen the bonds of spiritual solidarity among believers. In bearing one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2), the Church reflects the self-giving love of Christ and bears witness to the transformative power of grace in the midst of adversity. Through such

suffering, the Mystical Body not only endures but is purified, edified, and drawn ever closer to its Head, who is Christ.

a. In His Wounds: Sharing the Suffering of Christ[13]

The theme of suffering or woundedness as a reflection of Christ's own passion is a central motif in the New Testament and finds its theological roots in the broader narrative of Scripture, including the Old Testament. The New Testament presents Jesus Christ not only as the Redeemer through His suffering, death, and resurrection, but also as the ultimate model for believers in how to endure trials with faith, hope, and love.

Jesus' own life was marked by suffering from the very beginning. He was born into poverty (Luke 2:7), fled political persecution as an infant (Matthew 2:13–15), and lived a life acquainted with sorrow, culminating in His Passion and crucifixion. The prophet Isaiah foreshadowed this reality in his depiction of the "Suffering Servant": "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering" (Isaiah 53:3). This prophetic image is fulfilled in Jesus, who willingly embraced suffering for the sake of others (Isaiah 53:5, Matthew 8:17), establishing a divine pattern of redemptive suffering.

In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul explicitly teaches that believers are called to participate in the sufferings of Christ. In Romans 8:17, he writes: "Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." This participation is not merely metaphorical but is understood as a mystical union with Christ, whereby the believer, through trials and tribulations, is conformed more fully to the image of the Son (Romans 8:29).

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[13] Carole Lynne Haines, *By His Wounds: Reflections on the Sufferings of Christ* (Kindle ed., published February 23, 2023). https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0BW29TTN2.

Likewise, in Philippians 3:10, Paul expresses a deep desire: "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death." Here, suffering is not viewed as a sign of divine absence or failure, but as a privileged means of deep communion with Christ. Jesus Himself prepared His followers for this reality. In John 15:18–20, He says: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first… If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also." This sobering truth affirms that suffering for righteousness' sake is to be expected and embraced, not avoided.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers a beatitude for those who suffer: "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:10). Thus, suffering becomes a paradoxical source of blessing, when endured for the sake of truth and justice.

The epistles also reinforce this theme. 1 Peter 2:21 declares: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." Here, Peter not only affirms the redemptive nature of Christ's suffering but also frames it as a template for Christian discipleship. Believers are not passive victims of suffering, but active participants in a divine mission.

Even the Old Testament reflects a theology of suffering that anticipates this New Testament fulfilment. The Psalms are filled with cries of anguish and expressions of trust in God amidst suffering. Psalm 22, which Jesus quoted on the cross ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" - Matthew 27:46), encapsulates both deep lament and abiding faith. Likewise, Job's unwavering faith in the midst of inexplicable suffering (Job 1:21; 13:15) exemplifies righteous endurance. Therefore, Christian suffering is not random or meaningless—it is a profound mystery intimately connected to the life of Christ. Believers are called to walk in His footsteps, bearing their own crosses (Luke 9:23) and trusting that, just

as Christ's suffering led to resurrection, so too will their trials yield a share in His eternal glory.[14] This perspective gives suffering a redemptive and even creative dimension, as it becomes a means through which the believer is sanctified, the Church is edified, and the love of God is made manifest in a broken world.

So, the early Church's experience of persecution—vividly portrayed in Acts and the epistles—was not an obstacle to faith but a foundational element of its identity. These trials deepened the Church's reliance on Christ, clarified its mission, and inspired a bold, Spirit-filled witness that transformed the ancient world. The New Testament invites every generation of believers to see suffering not as defeat, but as a holy participation in the redemptive life of Jesus Christ.

b. Injustice and Social Issues in the Ministry of Jesus and the Role of the Mystical Body[15]

Jesus' earthly ministry was profoundly centered on addressing the deep social injustices and systemic inequalities of his time. His mission was not merely spiritual in nature but was also deeply engaged with the human condition—especially the suffering, oppression, and marginalization experienced by the poor, the outcast, and the forgotten. In word and deed, Jesus consistently championed the dignity of every person, often standing in direct opposition to the entrenched social, religious, and political structures that perpetuated exclusion and inequality.

Throughout the Gospels, we see Jesus reaching out to those considered unworthy or untouchable by the standards of the dominant culture—lepers, tax collectors, women, Gentiles, and the impoverished. By doing so, he disrupted the prevail-

[14] www. https://truthstodiefor.com /most of the points are adopted from the website of trthstodiefor.com home page.

[15] Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar, *Practicing Gender Justice as a Faith Mandate in India*, published in *Studies in World Christianity*, April 2007.

ing norms and confronted the self-righteousness and hypocrisy of the elite. His call to love one's neighbor, show mercy, and act justly was a radical demand for a reordering of societal values. He urged his followers to care for "the least of these" (Matthew 25:40), emphasizing that service to the vulnerable was service to God Himself.

This mission of justice, mercy, and inclusion did not end with Jesus' earthly life; rather, it continues through the Church, which is described in Catholic theology as the Mystical Body of Christ.

This term emphasizes the unity between Christ and the members of his Church, who are collectively called to be his living presence in the world. As such, the Mystical Body shares in Christ's mission to confront injustice, defend the dignity of every human person, and advocate for those who are voiceless.

To live as the Mystical Body of Christ means to be actively involved in transforming society in accordance with the Gospel's demands for justice and compassion.

The Church is not meant to be a passive observer of suffering but a dynamic force for good—healing wounds, challenging unjust systems, and working to build a more equitable world. Upholding the rights of the poor and marginalized is not merely an act of charity but a core expression of Christian discipleship.

Therefore, the call to address injustice and social issues is not peripheral to the Christian faith—it is central. The example set by Jesus and the ongoing mission of his Mystical Body demand a continual engagement with the real needs of the world, reflecting God's love and justice in every action.

c. Responding to Injustice in a Broken World: A Catholic Perspective Rooted in Jesus' Ministry and Catholic Social Teaching[16]

In reflecting on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ—particularly his solidarity with the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed—it becomes clear that his mission was not only spiritual but profoundly social and ethical. Jesus consistently challenged the unjust systems and power structures of his time. He confronted the religious and political elites who prioritized self-interest, wealth, and control over justice, mercy, and the dignity of every human person. His life and teachings call us, as members of his Mystical Body, to continue this mission in our contemporary world, which remains fractured by systemic injustice, inequality, and indifference.

Today, we live in a world marred by widespread woundedness—emotional, physical, spiritual, and societal. From economic disparity, racial injustice, and environmental degradation to the exploitation of vulnerable populations by the powerful, the brokenness of our age is undeniable. The suffering of the poor, the displacement of refugees, the marginalization of ethnic and religious minorities, and the abuse of power by political, corporate, and even ecclesiastical leaders are all symptoms of a global moral crisis.

To view this suffering through the lens of Jesus' ministry is to recognize the face of Christ in the broken, the excluded, and the vulnerable. In Matthew 25:40, Jesus teaches, *"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."* This is not poetic sentiment—it is a radical theological truth. To ignore the suffering of others is to ignore Christ himself. To be indifferent to injustice is to betray the Gospel.
This vision is at the heart of Catholic Social Teaching (CST), which offers a moral framework for addressing the challeng-

[16] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. (2004). *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

es of our time. CST insists that every human person is created in the image of God and therefore possesses inviolable dignity. It also proclaims the principles of solidarity, the preferential option for the poor, the common good, subsidiarity, and the dignity of work and the rights of workers. These principles are not abstract ideals but concrete calls to action.[17]

In the face of injustice—whether it comes from oppressive regimes, corrupt political leaders, exploitative economic systems, or even compromised Church leadership—the response of the faithful cannot be one of silence or passive tolerance. As followers of Christ, we are called to respond prophetically, with truth, love, and unwavering courage.

i. Confront Injustice with Truth and Love: Like Jesus, we must speak truth to power, not with hatred or vengeance, but with love rooted in justice. We must denounce the exploitation of the poor, the manipulation of truth for political gain, and the misuse of power within the Church and society. Our response must be firm but redemptive, seeking not only to condemn evil but to call all—especially the oppressor—to conversion.[18]

ii. Stand with the Oppressed: The Church must stand as a voice for the voiceless. This means active solidarity with the poor, the displaced, victims of abuse, and all who suffer under unjust systems. Solidarity demands more than charity; it calls for justice. It demands that we not only serve soup in the food line but also ask why people are hungry in the first place—and work to change the structures that perpetuate that hunger.

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[17] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). *Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*. Washington, D.C.: USCCB. 2005.

[18] Thaddeus J. Williams, *Confronting Injustice without Compromising Truth: 12 Questions Christians Should Ask About Social Justice*, Zondervan Academic, 2020.

iii. Hold Leaders Accountable: Whether political leaders who exploit the masses, the wealthy who hoard resources while others starve, or Church officials who betray the Gospel for personal gain and abuse the power—accountability is essential. The faithful must insist on transparency, integrity, and justice from all who wield influence. This includes prophetic criticism of the Church herself when she fails to embody the love and justice of Christ.[19]

iv. Live the Gospel in Action: Each Christian is called not just to lament injustice but to actively resist it by living out the Gospel in daily life. This includes ethical choices in how we consume, vote, speak, and relate to others. It also means cultivating compassion in our communities, advocating for systemic change, and fostering a culture of encounter where the dignity of every person is honored.[20]

Finally, we must recognize that we ourselves are not perfect. We, too, are part of a wounded humanity. But it is precisely in our woundedness—if we allow grace to work through us—that we become healers. Like Christ, who bore the wounds of crucifixion yet rose to bring new life, we are called to bring hope and healing to a world that so desperately needs it.

The Mystical Body of Christ must not retreat into comfort or complacency. It must walk the path of Christ—who was crucified for confronting injustice and yet rose in triumph. Our task is to be his hands and feet in the world, not only preaching justice and compassion but embodying it through concrete action, sacrificial love, and unyielding hope.

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[19] Plantak, Zorislav. *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1998.

[20] Pope Francis. (2013). *Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World*. Vatican Publishing House. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html

d. The Ongoing Struggle with Sin and Evil: A New Testament Perspective

The New Testament offers a deeply realistic and spiritually profound understanding of the ongoing struggle with sin and evil—a struggle that exists both within the individual human heart and in the wider world. Rather than presenting the world as a place of purely external moral conflict, the Scriptures affirm that sin and evil are not only societal forces but also internal realities that each person must confront. This recognition of the human condition provides a foundation for understanding suffering, injustice, and the need for redemption.

The Presence of Sin and Evil in the World and the Human Heart is a fact.
From the beginning of the New Testament narrative, the reality of sin—understood as a separation from God and a distortion of the human vocation to love—is evident. Evil is not merely an abstract concept; it manifests in personal choices, cultural systems, and global structures. It is both individual and collective. Biblical Example: The Temptation of Jesus (Matthew 4:1–11).

Jesus himself faced temptation, a clear indication that the struggle with evil is a central part of the human experience—even for the Son of God. In the desert, Satan tempted Jesus with power, pride, and pleasure, symbolizing the very temptations that continue to plague humanity. Jesus resisted by grounding himself in Scripture and faith, showing that spiritual strength and truth are necessary weapons in this battle. St. Paul, in his letters, particularly in *Romans 7:15-25*, speaks candidly of the internal conflict each person experiences: *"I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do."*

This powerful confession highlights that sin is not merely about external behavior, but about the inner division of the

human heart. It reflects the complex nature of human freedom and the need for divine grace in the struggle against sin.

The New Testament connects sin and evil with the presence of suffering, broken relationships, oppression, and injustice in the world. These are not merely unfortunate conditions—they are often the fruits of humanity's failure to live according to God's will.

Sin is not limited to individual acts. The Church teaches, in harmony with the New Testament, the reality of "social" or "structural sin"—injustices embedded in socio-economic systems, political structures, and cultural norms. Examples include:

- Exploitation of laborers: When economic systems prioritize profit over people, workers are dehumanized.
- Racial injustice: Systems that perpetuate discrimination and inequality based on caste, ethnicity or race reflect collective sin.
- Neglect of the poor: When societies ignore the needs of the vulnerable, sin becomes institutionalized.

The Gospel of Luke, in particular, emphasizes Jesus' concern for the poor and his critique of the rich and powerful who neglect their responsibility to care for others (see Luke 16:19–31, the story of the rich man and Lazarus).

We feel the call to resist in faith and love as our spiritual weapons.

Despite the pervasiveness of sin and evil, the New Testament does not leave believers in despair. Instead, it calls them to resist—not through violence or vengeance, but through faith, love, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

i. Faith as Resistance

Faith is not passive belief, but active trust in God, even in the midst of evil. It is a spiritual posture of hope that God's goodness will ultimately prevail. Hebrews 11 provides a litany of figures who, despite persecution, suffering, and trials, held fast to their faith, trusting that God was at work through them.

ii. Love as a Transformative Force

The central command of Jesus—to love God and neighbor—stands as the primary way to resist evil. Love, in the New Testament, is not mere sentimentality, but a courageous, self-sacrificing force that disrupts the cycle of hatred and sin. Example: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37).

In this parable, Jesus shows that love transcends boundaries of race, religion, and societal division. The Samaritan resists the evil of indifference by acting with mercy and compassion. This is what faithful resistance to evil looks like in practical terms: seeing and responding to the suffering of others.

iii. Spiritual Warfare (Ephesians 6:10–18)

St. Paul describes the Christian life as a kind of spiritual battle, urging believers to "put on the whole armor of God." The weapons in this battle are truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation, the Word of God, and prayer. These virtues and practices fortify believers against the influence of evil in all its forms.

iv. Hope in the Midst of Struggle: Christ's Victory Over Sin and Evil

Ultimately, the New Testament is a message of hope. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has conquered sin and evil. While the struggle continues in our world and within each of us, we fight not as those who are defeated, but as

those who participate in Christ's victory. Romans 8:37–39 proclaims: *"In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us."*

This means that no matter how dark the world becomes, evil does not have the final word. Through Christ, love and justice will triumph. As part of our ongoing mission and modern-day disciples, we are called to:

- Examine our own hearts for the presence of sin and seek conversion.
- Work against systems of injustice that reflect collective evil.
- Respond to evil not with hatred or indifference, but with faith, love, and the truth of the Gospel.
- Trust in the ultimate victory of Christ, knowing that our efforts—no matter how small—participate in God's redemptive plan.

To live this way is to follow Jesus—not just in word, but in courageous, transformative action.

e. Hope and Healing Through Missionary Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation

The Church is not merely an institution or a historical community—it is, fundamentally, the mystical Body of Christ. This body, however, is not immune to suffering. In the brokenness of the world, we encounter the wounded Body of Christ in the oppressed, the displaced, the violated, and the silenced. Justice and peace are not peripheral concerns of the Church; they lie at the very heart of its mission, for they are the signs of the Kingdom of God that Christ inaugurated. "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission

for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."[21]

When we speak of justice and peace in the context of a wounded Body, we recognize that Christ continues to suffer in His people. Every act of injustice, every cry unheard, every right denied, is a new wound inflicted on that Body. Thus, the Church's mission is not simply to alleviate suffering, but to creatively transform the structures that perpetuate this suffering.[22] This mission is creative, not in the sense of novelty for its own sake, but because it springs from the heart of a living, dynamic faith that dares to imagine and work for a world redeemed by love, justice, and peace.

As missionaries, we are called to be prophets of a new world, builders of bridges, and companions of the marginalized. Our missionary vocation is deeply rooted in the Incarnate Word—Jesus Christ—who became flesh to reconcile all creation with the Father. This reconciliation is not abstract or merely spiritual; it includes all dimensions of life: social, political, cultural, and ecological. We are sent to places where the Body of Christ is most visibly torn—among the poor, the indigenous, the refugees, the exploited.

Here, Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC) are not optional dimensions of our mission; they are essential expressions of the Gospel we proclaim. In defending human rights, promoting peace, and protecting our common home, we mirror Christ's own mission of love and liberation.

To the shepherds of the Church, the call is urgent and clear: be leaders of conscience, courage, and compassion. In a world scarred by conflict, division, and ecological devastation, the

[21] Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World* (Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972) 34.

[22] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace. (2004). *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Vatican Publishing House. Retrieved from https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html.

Church must become a sanctuary of hope and a voice for the voiceless. The faithful look to their leaders not just for doctrine, but for witness—the kind of witness that stands with the suffering, challenges the powerful, and leads by example.

Church leaders are invited to:

- Promote the rights and dignity of women, recognizing their vital role in the Church and society.
- Safeguard the welfare of children, who are the future of both Church and humanity.
- Be proactive in defending the most vulnerable: the poor, the migrants, the abused, and the marginalized.
- Embrace eco-spirituality, integrating care for creation into catechesis, liturgy, and community life.

By doing so, Church leaders will not only teach the Gospel—they will embody it, guiding the Church to be a living sign of the Kingdom where peace, joy, and justice reign. The mission of JPIC calls us to:

- Advocate for systemic change, challenging structures of oppression and inequality.
- Empower communities, particularly women, children, and the vulnerable, to claim their God-given dignity.
- Foster dialogue among cultures, religions, and social groups to build bridges of understanding and cooperation.
- Promote safety and security of the migrants and refugees.
- Prevent human trafficking and promote human dignity.
- Promote sustainable living and ecological justice, recognizing that creation is a sacred trust, a gift to be preserved and shared.

Many religious leaders and thinkers around the world are beginning to make new connections between spiritual journey

and Mother Earth, as Pope Francis has done. Many books, teachings, retreats, and prayers now point to a whole range of new spiritual awareness and consciousness, that our journey with God of peace and one another happens here on earth and cannot be separated from earth.[23] Our missionary commitment, then, is not merely about presence, but about transformative presence—being with, walking with, and working for change with those who have been denied their voice and place in the world.

The world is indeed wounded—by violence, greed, indifference, and ecological degradation. But it is into this wounded world that the risen Christ sends us, as disciples not of fear, but of hope. Our discipleship must be creative, not constrained by old paradigms or comfortable routines, but open to the newness of the Spirit who makes all things new. Creative discipleship means:

- Imagining new models of community and mission.
- Listening deeply to the cries of both the earth and the poor.
- Using art, culture, dialogue, and technology as means of evangelization.
- Collaborating ecumenically and interreligiously to build a more just and peaceful world.

In this way, the Church becomes not a fortress, but a field hospital, not a museum, but a living workshop of the Spirit, where the wounds of the world are not hidden but held in compassion, where justice rolls like a river and peace blooms like spring in scorched lands.

Today's forced migrations—whether due to war, political instability, social unrest or economic collapse—represent one of the most visible wounds of the global body. The mission of

[23] John Dear, *They Will Inherit the Earth: Peace and Nonviolence in a Time of Climate Change* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020), 104.

peace, in this context, becomes deeply intertwined with the act of welcoming the stranger, defending the dignity of the refugee, and promoting reconciliation. For this we need:

- Nonviolent conflict resolution and dialogue across faiths and cultures.
- Shelter and hospitality, especially through Church networks and faith communities.
- Advocacy against arms trade, and for diplomacy over militarization.

Peace-making is not passive. It is a courageous, prophetic witness to the dignity of human life, even in the face of geopolitical forces that devalue it.

The Earth itself groans under the weight of exploitation, echoing the words of Romans 8:22: *"We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now."* The depletion of glaciers, rising seas, frequent floods, wildfires, and catastrophic earthquakes are not random occurrences—they are symptomatic of a deeper spiritual and ecological rupture.

The creative mission of JPIC thus extends to:

- Ecological conversion—a shift in mindset from dominion to stewardship, as urged by *Laudato Si'*.
- Sustainable development that balances human needs with the rhythms of nature.
- Solidarity with indigenous peoples, who often bear the brunt of ecological degradation while preserving ancestral wisdom about the balance of ecosystems.

In caring for creation, we are not just protecting resources—we are healing the wounded hands and feet of Christ in the world.

This mission finds fruition not in grand gestures but in daily, embodied acts of love and justice—what Pope Francis calls a

"revolution of tenderness." It is in promoting eco-spirituality and eco-consciousness to reduce carbon footprint, refugee children learning in makeshift classrooms, protection of migrants, interfaith prayer circles in war zones, promotion of gender equality, protection and promotion of human rights; rule of law and good governance and caring for the last, least and lost etc. Each act of healing, each seed of reconciliation, becomes a resurrection moment—a glimpse of the new creation emerging through the cracks of the old. The Wounded Body of Christ is not only a symbol of suffering, but of hope—hope that even in the darkest corners of poverty, conflict, and environmental collapse, the Spirit still broods over the chaos, calling forth life.

Conclusion

To reflect on *Justice and Peace in the Wounded Body of Christ: A Creative Mission* is to recognize the ongoing suffering of Christ in the brokenness of our world. His wounded Body is not a relic of the past but a living presence in the cries of the marginalized, the oppressed, and the forgotten. In their pain, Christ still bleeds; through their voices, justice still calls.

Justice and peace are not distant ideals but incarnate realities—deeply embedded in the Church's mission. To join this mission is to respond creatively and compassionately to today's wounds, standing in solidarity with the suffering, resisting injustice, and nurturing communities where every person's dignity is honored.

This work is not achieved through force, but through the enduring power of love. True justice flows from mercy; lasting peace arises from truth, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It calls us to reimagine our role as co-creators with God in healing the world.

Such a mission of bringing hope and healing demands creativity. It invites prophets, artists, builders of peace, and

dreamers of justice to envision hope where others see despair. It is a spirituality of engagement, where contemplation fuels action, and action becomes a living prayer.

To embrace justice and peace in Christ's wounded Body is to accept a transformative vocation—one that compels us to love more boldly, act more justly, and live more faithfully. It is to embody the Gospel in every space we inhabit, bearing witness to the crucified and risen Christ who dwells among the broken—and whose wounds are our hope and healing.

D. Missionary Perspectives

a. Metaphors Accompanying our Journey

As we have been presenting the reflection, situating ourselves as a missionary religious Congregation in the current context of our Church and of all humanity, we are witnessing significant events that have and will have their impact in the decades to come. Just to mention the most representative in their two manifest extremes, we find: the collapse of the great ideological narratives converted into political-economic systems (poverty vs. promise), the crisis of leadership at all levels (ambition vs. leadership), the profound questioning of totalizing narratives (data vs. story), the growing distrust in institutions (opportunity vs. normativity), the dominance of the digital era (disorientation vs. communication), and the breakdown of ethical-religious models (emptiness vs. authenticity). Each of these phenomena marks us humanly and appears camouflaged in our daily lives, conditioning our perception of reality, our community journey and our transformative missionary commitment. It is essentially *"a profound anthropological crisis: the denial of the primacy of the human being!" (Evangelii Gaudium, n. 55)*.

This is where it is urgent to anchor ourselves in the hope that animates us, to recover the sacredness of shared time and space, and to open ourselves without doubts to the challenges of our time. All this in the full awareness of being pilgrims, walkers, protagonists of history. That is, to opt again for the freedom of walking without the garments that fog our gaze and discourage our spirit, with the hidden pretension of feeling that we have already achieved everything. It is to recover the sense of the 'historical present' where the hope that animates us comes to life.

In order to point out some missionary implications that add to our journey, allow me to take up two images that appear in the two initial blocks, and include a third that tries to reinforce the need to cling to the epochal missionary commitment with a broader and more inclusive perspective. Every image is polysemic, whose greatest richness lies in the fact that no one can exhaust the meaning. This helps us to fix our gaze on the horizon of meaning, which is always beyond, rather than tying ourselves to our concepts, which are always limited.

1. Anchor

"The Light of Christ is our anchor of hope in the turbulent moments of life's changing scenarios" (Faithful to the Word 6, 2024, n. 21).

This image is one of the key elements of the ecclesial jubilee 2025' logo. It is a call to anchor ourselves in the promise of Jesus Christ so as not to dilute our forces by rowing adrift with the illusion of our own securities and certainties. The witness of our saints and martyrs teaches us that the more we lean on ourselves, the more difficult the process of openness and conversion becomes.[24]

On the discipleship journey, fidelity is experienced as a growing process of immersion in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ, a path of service and self-giving. Everything else contributes to or hinders this growth. Deepening our vocation as baptized in this process of 'Christification' (cf. Rom 8:9), anchored in Jesus, entails embracing the cross in all its manifestations as an inherent dimension of our process of maturity. The key is not to negotiate or minimize the effects of the cross, but to learn from the Master to empty ourselves of per-

[24] *"In religious life it is first and foremost a question of perfecting the inner man. This is achieved with unconditional surrender to God and with the promotion of the interior life. The more the soul advances in perfection, the more the light increases in it. The soul has to make the light penetrate it completely"* (St. Arnold Janssen).

sonal ambitions, to take up our mission and to follow in His footsteps (cf. Mk 8:34). "When the interior life is closed in on one's own interests, there is no longer room for others, the poor no longer enter, the voice of God is no longer heard, the sweet joy of his love is no longer enjoyed, the enthusiasm for doing good no longer pulsates." *(Evangelii Gaudium, n. 2)*

Anchored, rooted in the Gospel of Jesus, we nurture the mystical vitality that permeates everything with ever new meaning and significance. From this spring the essential attitudes of the disciple: attentive listening to the Master, docility to the Spirit, discernment of God's will, contemplative reading of the signs of the times, the need to grow with others. Our whole person is involved in this spiritual process of conversion and incarnation.[25] "The image of the anchor is suggestive of understanding the stability and security that we possess if we entrust ourselves to the Lord Jesus, even in the midst of the troubled waters of life. Storms can never prevail, because we are anchored in the hope of grace, which makes us capable of living in Christ overcoming sin, fear and death" (*Spes non Confundit, n. 25*).

A third consideration is that of being anchored in our identity as Missionaries of the Divine Word, which is a community experience in permanent growth. The more our fraternal life is strengthened, the more solid our platform of missionary religious life becomes. Without this Divine Word rootedness, we can fall into the risk of going out to meet others as 'adventurers' and not as witnesses of a good proclamation, surer of our personal resources than of the congregational charism. *"The missionary is not the light, but the one who reveals the Light: Christ"* (St. Arnold Janssen). The only reality that conveys this rootedness is fraternal life.

[25] John Paul II: *"The temptation of a hidden and individualistic spirituality, which has little to do with the demands of charity and with the logic of the Incarnation, must be rejected." (Novo Millenio Ineunte, n. 52)*

2. Sanctuary

Numerous cultures and religious traditions have preserved physical sites in their history as true memorials of divine epiphany. In these places, the community memory of some significant and/or paradigmatic event in the history of the town was celebrated. There, the identity of this human group was renewed and strengthened. Various rituals and ceremonies helped to order the fundamental elements of such an epiphany and to experience them as events of renewed communion with divinity.

As missionary followers of Jesus, we understand that since the creation of the world and, in a full way, since the incarnation of the Son of God, our entire history is a history of salvation, every space and time we live in is inhabited by the divine mystery. We identify places where we can celebrate this eternal presence of God in community, with full awareness of knowing that we come from him (cf. Gen 1:26), that in him we move and exist (cf. Acts 17:28), that he has pitched his tent among us (cf. Jn 1:14), and that consequently there is no corner of the earth that is 'profane', for God dwells in his creation and fills it with his presence (Ps 23; cf. *Lumen Gentium*, nn. 16-17; *Ad Gentes*, nn. 9-11).

It is therefore vital for us to help us transform our common time and space into an environment of life and celebration, into a 'jubilee' atmosphere,[26] and to know that we are 'pilgrims' to and from this community shrine. "We feel the challenge of discovering and transmitting the mystique of living together, of mingling, of meeting, of holding each other's arms, of supporting each other, of participating in that somewhat chaotic tide that can become a true experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a holy pilgrimage" *(Evangelii Gaudium, n. 87).* The geographical or institutional setting (parish, school, hospital, office, etc.) ceases to be the referential key of our

[26] *At the present historical moment, Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations (Evangelii Gaudium, n. 84).*

life and mission, to give rise to instances of greater encounter, mutual knowledge and communion. Pope Francis helps us to understand the profound meaning of our institutions as 'presences': "The parish is an ecclesial presence in the territory, a place for listening to the Word, for the growth of Christian life, for dialogue, for proclamation, for generous charity, for adoration and celebration." *(Evangelii Gaudium, n. 28).* That is the atmosphere conducive to rekindling and strengthening our Christian hope.

These shrines of fraternal life, true *'oases of spirituality and spaces of rest' (Spes non Confundit, n. 5),* strengthen our common spirit of going out to meet others. 'Feeling at home' means being at ease in the community and implies, in turn, vehemently seeking out those who do not enjoy that well-being so that they can also be participants in the community experience. This has nothing to do with status and comfort; nor does it depend on what is 'religiously correct'. For it sometimes happens that what seems inherent in religious life (schemes, customs, traditions, norms) loses sight of the primacy of mission, the urgency of going beyond certain schemes and dynamics so that we ourselves and many others may be participants in life in *an extended* and inclusive tent (cf. Is 54:2).

In this way, it is possible for these 'shrines' to be opened and shared with those who accompany us in mission and with those who come to meet us. Although it sounds obvious, it is good to remember that it is the people who choose the sanctuary, not the other way around. Reality shows us that many people have long since stopped choosing 'our sanctuaries'; however, they have not ceased to seek spaces of encounter (with themselves, with transcendence, with the world), signs of 'presences' (dialogue and spiritual guidance are in more demand today than confession).

There are three very clear signs of truly inhabiting a 'sanctuary': the space and time dedicated to discernment, the communal experience of reconciliation and healing, and the abil-

ity to celebrate life. Contemplating history with the eyes and heart of God and living it with the same passion as Jesus is the path of discernment. The centrality of God's Word and the lives of our people demand this.[27] "The Church, which is a missionary disciple, needs to grow in her interpretation of the revealed Word and in her understanding of the truth." *(Evangelii Gaudium, n. 40)* The very tenderness and compassion of this community discernment has its corollary in the renewal and restoration of relationships within and outside the community. Therefore, "we walk with those we serve, committing ourselves to reconciliation and the restoration of dignity where and when necessary."[28] Finally, every joyful event on the community journey deserves its festive space, it needs to be part of the memory of the community that does not let the visible signs of God's presence escape without stopping to give thanks and celebrate.

Stoking the fire of the community, expanding the space of the tent, welcoming other realities, growing in community discernment, strengthening fraternity from reconciliation and forgiveness, and treasuring each community 'kairos', are true impulses of the Spirit to put out into the deep.

3. Open Sea

This image also appears indirectly in the logo of the ecclesial jubilee 2025. The missionary experience that we are treasuring as a Church and in these 150 years of congregational foundation, denotes constant steps of daring and courage in the attempt to project ourselves into an open, sensitive and respectful journey of new horizons. They have been giant leaps with respect to what still characterizes certain ecclesial expressions that largely remain self-limited to their own gaze. In fact, certain mentalities, attitudes and structures proper

[27] *I encourage all communities to an "ever-vigilant capacity to study the signs of the times." (Evangelii Gaudium, n. 51)*

[28] Circular letter from Fr. Anselmo Ribeiro SVD on the occasion of the SVD Jubilee of foundation (February 28, 2025).

to the 'mare nostrum', still present in specific levels of our Church, are providentially contrasted with the missionary understanding of the 'open and unknown sea', which enables the passage to other seas.[29]

The ecclesial community was born with the impulse to go out to meet all nations (cf. Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15; Acts 1:8). This missionary sending *ad gentes* is in our congregational DNA. We will always find in our communities both the tendency to strengthen a presence and the tendency to go out to meet other realities. Both are good and necessary, for the first reminds us of the importance of living the process of incarnation and inculturation in the midst of and with the people of God; while the second keeps alive the spark of the mission that takes us out of any possible stagnation. "Missionary going out is the paradigm of every work of the Church" *(Evangelii Gaudium, n. 15).*

Here it is worth asking about the *hope* that animates both inclinations. Sometimes it is only necessary to change perspective, to make it possible to look from another place, to encourage us to identify the situations that challenge us. It is what Pope Francis calls 'going out to the existential peripheries', and navigating these waters of poverty, marginalization, exploitation, the 'unknown'. "They are seas that do not appear in conventional cartography, but that are not outside the radius of God's mercy."[30] Hope urges us to leave the pre-established jurisdictions, the well-known pastoral strategies, the cyclical group dynamics, with the purpose of meeting those who have been sailing other seas for a long time.[31]

[29] Cf. Synod on Synodality, Final Document, 2024, n. 14

[30] "The Good News of Jesus Christ has a universal destination. His mandate of charity embraces all the dimensions of existence, all persons, all environments of coexistence and all peoples. Nothing human can be foreign to him" *(Evangelii Gaudium, n. 147).*

[31] *More than the fear of making mistakes, I hope that we are moved by the fear of closing ourselves in the structures that give us false containment, in the norms that make us implacable judges, in the customs where we feel calm (Evangelii Gaudium, n. 49)*

It is opportune to remind ourselves that we are not called to become 'sailors' (to jump from port to port), but that we have been called to be true 'living stones' in the midst of the People of God, in which we insert ourselves as 'strangers', that is, citizens of a reality that is always beyond any historical concreteness (cf. 1 Pt 1:1; 2:5). "The mission is a constant stimulus not to remain mediocrity and to continue growing." *(Evangelii Gaudium, n. 121)* The Jubilee is a propitious time to re-edit our choices, review our practices, and resize our missionary spaces and services. Our Divine Word charism challenges us to go beyond an 'established Church', to revive our gaze on the broad horizon of evangelization (SVD Constitutions, 102). Pope Francis put it this way: "From the heart of the Gospel we recognize the intimate connection that exists between evangelization and human promotion" *(Evangelii Gaudium, n. 178).* We are sailing towards this horizon of full humanity. What we are experiencing momentarily and deeply is just one more stage in the long journey.

Conclusion

Our hope is based on the faithfulness of God, who always trusts in us and encourages us to trust in him, for "God can act in every circumstance" *(Evangelii Gaudium, n. 279).* To respond to His fidelity in this blessed Jubilee season, we intend to revive the essence of our missionary religious vocation.

First, we must take care of the mysticism that animates our lives. It is a matter of contemplating the Word in order to discern God's journey in this historical present and to celebrate it in community. Providing a space for communion and celebration is the second essential aspect. May our community spaces become true sanctuaries of discipleship and mission. The third element is to broaden our missionary perspective, so that it is always incarnate, prophetic, inclusive and liberating. "Standing before the light of Christ, we see many signs of hope, such as our willingness to put the Word of God at the center of our missionary activities and to actively participate

in the synodal process of listening to the marginalized and sharing life with those on the margins of society." (Faithful to the Word 6, 2024, n. 34).

b. SVD Lay Partners in an Evolving Church

Embracing the Jubilee Year, we reflect on our vocation as Missionaries of Hope in a world seeking faith, healing, and renewal. Lay partners of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) are vital in sharing the Gospel and embodying Christ's love amidst today's complex realities.

The Role of SVD Lay Partners in the Mission

The Society of the Divine Word (SVD) has long championed the role of laypeople in mission. For St. Arnold Janssen, the mission of Christ was a collaborative effort with active participation of all the People of God. He positioned himself as a catalyst and an unworthy animator. Since its foundation at Steyl in 1875, lay collaborators have played a crucial role in sustaining the SVD's mission work—providing financial support, assisting in administration, and spreading awareness of the missionary cause. Today, SVD Lay Mission Partners continue this legacy, actively engaging in education, healthcare, social justice, and disaster relief efforts alongside SVD priests and brothers.

Lay People as Co-Missionaries in Evangelization

The SVD emphasizes that laypeople are not mere supporters of the mission but co-missionaries, sharing responsibility for evangelization. Paulus Budi Kleden, SVD, asserts, that the mission of the Church is incomplete without the laity. Their witness in the world brings the Gospel to places where religious and clergy cannot always reach. This perspective reinforces the importance of the lay vocation as an integral part of the Church's missionary identity.

The 19th General Chapter (2024) of the SVD explicitly affirmed the importance of lay partnerships, by recognizing the indispensable role of lay people in the mission of the Church. "We commit ourselves… To consider lay individuals not merely participants but co-responsible partners" (SVD 19th General Chapter Document, n. 81b). This document calls for a deeper integration of lay people into the SVD's mission structures, emphasizing their unique gifts and contributions.

In places of suffering, exclusion, and moral ambiguity, lay partners become the visible hands and compassionate heart of Christ. Their presence in hospitals, schools, refugee camps, and impoverished communities is not just about service—it is a profound act of witnessing. By standing with the vulnerable and advocating for justice, they demonstrate that the Gospel is not an abstract doctrine but a living and transformative force in the world.

In the spirit of synodality, the Church's mission is not confined to clergy and religious; it is the shared responsibility of all the baptized. Lay people bring Christ's presence into the heart of society, engaging with the world in ways that clergy alone cannot. Their mission is not secondary to that of religious clergy but is a vital expression of the Church's call to be a beacon of hope, healing, and reconciliation in a wounded world.

One such initiative is the Feed the Hungry project in Mumbai, India. This initiative, led by SVD Lay Partners - Disciples of the Divine Word (DDW), provides nutritious meals to the homeless, daily wage laborers, and impoverished families living on the streets. Volunteers cook and distribute food, offering not only sustenance but also dignity to those struggling to survive. This act of service reflects Christ's command to feed the hungry and care for the least among us. Through this mission, lay partners bring the Gospel to life, demonstrating that faith is deeply intertwined with action and social justice.

The Growing Role of the Laity as Missionaries of Hope

Traditionally, the clergy and the religious are widely considered the primary agents of the mission of the Church. However, today's reality demands a renewed focus on lay participation. Lay missionaries bring Christ's message into schools, workplaces, homes, and social movements. They lead prayer groups, advocate for justice, serve marginalized communities, and provide spiritual support in local parishes. In a world marked by division, suffering, and despair, the laity is called to be witnesses of God's love, bringing healing and hope through their service and presence.

The Second Vatican Council's document *Lumen Gentium* underscores the essential role of the laity, stating, "The laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will" (*Lumen Gentium*, n. 31). Furthermore, it emphasizes that the laity "are called by God to work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven" and "by their witness and action, manifest Christ to others" (*Lumen Gentium*, nn. 31-33). This affirmation highlights the co-responsibility of the laity in the Church's mission, calling them not only to support clergy but to actively shape the world in the spirit of the Gospel through their professions, family life, and civic responsibilities.

The Structure of SVD Lay Partners

SVD Lay Mission Partners operate within a structured framework that facilitates organized collaboration with the SVD religious community. In various regions, lay partners form associations that work alongside SVD Provinces, focusing on evangelization, social outreach, and education. These structures provide lay missionaries with training, spiritual formation, and mission opportunities.

Local and international gatherings, workshops, and retreats strengthen their commitment to the mission and provide a platform for sharing experiences. The structured approach ensures that lay partners receive the necessary support to effectively participate in the Church's mission. Additionally, formalized mission agreements between lay partners and SVD Provinces enhance collaboration, ensuring that lay involvement remains a dynamic and growing force in the Church's mission.

The need for structured lay partnerships among religious and lay SVD, urges us to fostering a culture of co-responsibility with lay partners, ensuring that they are equipped, empowered, and integrated into our missionary endeavors. It is highlighted the importance of providing lay missionaries with formation programs, leadership opportunities, and a sense of belonging within the SVD family.[32]

Living the Mission: Overcoming Division to Foster Unity and Compassion

The world today is marked by divisions - political, social, and economic. Conflicts within communities, workplaces, and even families create barriers to evangelization. Lay missionaries are challenged to be instruments of peace and dialogue, fostering unity where discord prevails. Inspired by Jesus, who reached out to the marginalized and broken, we can create opportunities for meaningful encounters. By listening with empathy, respecting diverse perspectives, and promoting justice and solidarity, we become living signs of the Gospel's call to reconciliation.

SVD Lay Partners - *Misioneros Auxiliares del Verbo Divino* (MAVD) in Mexico have demonstrated a profound commitment to fostering unity and compassion through missionary

[32] "Faithful to the Word 6", 19th General Chapter's Final Document, Resol. 1.1.3, Part II.

endeavours. In 2024, MAVD embarked on a mission to the Otomí communities in Santiago de Anaya, Hidalgo, during Holy Week. This initiative aimed to renew faith and strengthen communal bonds by sharing in the spiritual and daily lives of the local people. Participants engaged in various activities, including religious celebrations and personal interactions, which illuminated the path of love and mercy that Jesus exemplifies. This mission revitalized the Otomí communities' faith and reinforced the missionaries' dedication to overcoming divisions and building a compassionate society.

Maintaining Missionary Commitment Amid Daily Struggles

Balancing missionary work with personal responsibilities can be a significant challenge. Many lay partners juggle careers, family life, and community service, often facing fatigue and discouragement. Limited resources and shifting societal priorities can also make it difficult to sustain missionary zeal. Yet, as Missionaries of Hope, we are reminded that mission is not sustained by our efforts alone but by God's grace. Strengthened by prayer, faith formation, and the support of our communities, we can persevere in our call to serve, trusting that every small act of love contributes to God's kingdom. Mike and Mary Geraldine Paderon, coordinators of the SVD-PHN Mission Partners in the Philippine Northern Province, exemplify how faith and dedication can sustain this balance. Despite the demands of their personal and professional lives, they have played a key role in organizing initiatives that strengthen lay missionary engagement. One notable example is the 1st SVD-PHN Mission Partners – Youth Sector Virtual Workshop in 2020, which empowered young leaders to take an active role in mission work. Their unwavering commitment demonstrates that, with faith, prayer, and community support, lay missionaries can persevere in their calling, ensuring that their service remains a vibrant expression of God's love.

Financial Sustainability of Lay Missionary Efforts

Unlike priests and religious who receive institutional support, many lay missionaries work with limited financial resources. Sustaining mission efforts requires strategic partnerships, fundraising, and social enterprise initiatives. Parishes and dioceses can play a vital role in offering financial assistance, training, and networking opportunities to strengthen lay-led evangelization and service programs.

Challenges to Face in Testifying Christian Faith

In a secularized world, lay missionaries often face opposition when expressing their faith. Whether in the workplace, educational institutions, or social circles, standing up for Christian values can invite criticism, misunderstanding, or even discrimination.

In India, lay missionaries face unique challenges in practicing and sharing their faith. Religious intolerance and social prejudices sometimes result in restrictions on Christian gatherings and public expressions of faith. In some areas, Christians encounter opposition when they try to hold prayer meetings or engage in evangelization efforts. Lay missionaries in interfaith environments must carefully navigate cultural and religious sensitivities while remaining firm in their faith.

For example, a Catholic teacher in a secular school may struggle to share Christian values openly while maintaining respect for religious diversity. A business professional might face ethical dilemmas when upholding Christian principles in industries that prioritize profit over integrity. In rural India, Christian social workers who serve marginalized communities sometimes experience resistance from dominant social structures that oppose their work.

A Missionary Church Moving Forward

Despite these challenges, the Catholic Church's missionary spirit remains strong, and laypeople are at the heart of its future. By embracing new methods, fostering resilience, and deepening their faith, lay missionaries can continue to transform lives and bring the Gospel to all corners of the world. The path forward requires courage, adaptability, and trust in God's providence.

As the Church navigates its missionary journey, the call to evangelization remains as urgent as ever. Every baptized Christian—whether a teacher, nurse, entrepreneur, student, or parent—is called to be a missionary in their own way. By living their faith boldly and creatively, lay missionaries can ensure that the message of Christ reaches every person, in every nation, and in every way possible.

Evangelization in the Digital Age and the Rise of AI

With society becoming increasingly digital, lay missionaries have an unprecedented opportunity to spread the Gospel online. Social media, podcasts, virtual retreats, and online catechesis provide new ways to reach people who may never step into a church. However, balancing virtual engagement with authentic personal connections remains a challenge. Additionally, the rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents both opportunities and challenges for evangelization. AI tools can aid in creating faith-based content and enhancing outreach, but ethical concerns, such as misinformation and dehumanization, must be addressed. Training lay missionaries in media literacy, digital apologetics, and AI ethics will equip them to defend the faith and communicate the Gospel effectively in the digital age.

A powerful example of the laity's role as missionaries of hope is the Prayer Bridge initiative by the SVD Lay Partners in Germany, SVD-Partner. Conceptualized to unite people through

prayer, especially on World Day of the Poor, it fosters global solidarity by encouraging collective prayer for the poor and marginalized. This initiative highlights how the SVD Lay Partners use digital tools to transcend borders and build a worldwide community of faith. Through the Prayer Bridge, they not only commit to the Church's mission but also serve as beacons of hope, emphasizing the growing responsibility of laypeople in the broader SVD mission.

Addressing Social Issues as Missionaries of Hope

Lay missionaries are often at the forefront of addressing social challenges such as poverty, injustice, migration, and climate change. As professionals, volunteers, and community leaders, they bring the Gospel into real-world issues, advocating for those in need and promoting human dignity. Their mission is not just about preaching but also about being Christ's hands and feet in the world. As faithful and creative disciples, lay missionaries respond to human suffering with innovation and compassion, seeking new ways to restore dignity and bring about justice.

Interfaith and Cultural Dialogue in Mission

Interfaith and cultural dialogue are essential dimensions of missionary work in a pluralistic society. In India, where multiple religious traditions coexist, fostering respectful dialogue is crucial for peaceful cohabitation and mutual enrichment. Lay missionaries interact with people from Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, and other faith backgrounds, building bridges across faith communities and promoting understanding and cooperation.

Interfaith dialogue in contemporary mission is not about conversion but about mutual transformation through the encounter with the other. This perspective encourages lay missionaries to approach interreligious engagement with hu-

mility and openness, recognizing that true dialogue deepens faith and fosters solidarity.

SVD Lay Partners: A Call for the Jubilee Year

Heinz Kulüke, SVD, former Superior General of the SVD, has been a strong advocate for lay participation in the mission. Under his leadership, SVD provinces strengthened collaboration with lay partners, recognizing their indispensable role. He believes that the laity are not just helping hands in mission; they are co-workers in God's vineyard, bringing unique perspectives and skills that enrich the Church's evangelizing mission.

The Jubilee Year is an invitation for all lay missionaries to deepen their faith, expand their missionary efforts, and embrace their role as co-workers in God's mission. Through collaboration with SVD priests and brothers, SVD Lay Mission Partners continue to be the hands and voices of Christ, ensuring that the mission of the Church remains vibrant and relevant in today's ever-changing world. As faithful and creative disciples in a wounded world, they witness Christ's love, bringing light into the darkness and hope into the hearts of many.

Renewing Our Commitment as SVD Lay Mission Partners

The Jubilee Year calls us to renew our commitment as faithful and creative disciples in a wounded world. As SVD Lay Mission Partners, we embrace our missionary vocation with dedication, knowing that our witness—whether through words, actions, or presence—ensures the Gospel reaches "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8) and inspires and transforms lives. With renewed zeal and unwavering faith, let us amplify Christ's hope, be a light in dark places, and bring His hope to all we encounter. Together, let us live our faith as true Missionaries of Hope.

c. Impulses for Community Sharing

We live in the final stretch of the Jubilee year of the Church as we walk and weave through the implementation stage of the 19th General Chapter and the Synod on Synodality. This has motivated us to propose some impulses, guidelines, and motivations for our interpersonal sharing. We are convinced that we need to strengthen our fraternal experience. The weakening of community bonds leads to a lack of personal motivation in missionary life and often generates a sequence of mistreatment, wounds, and divisions. Each of the impulses aims to revive the levels of our 'being' Missionaries of the Divine Word: the discipleship, the community and the missionary.

A Compassionate Outlook

A first impulse consists of purifying our gaze. 'Changing perspective' is already an old proposal and helps to take an objective distance from reality, thereby gaining depth and understanding of it. We do not cloak ourselves as judges to discern where the truth lies and what the degree of guilt or innocence is. We embrace the situation in which we find ourselves, broaden our view so that no one is left out, and draw on the example of Jesus, who 'humbled himself' (cf. Phil 2:7) to see each person from the perspective of the marginalized."

That is the gaze that Jesus has of each one of us. By allowing ourselves to be seen by Him, we discover that nothing about us remains hidden, nothing is outside the merciful embrace of God. Jesus helps us to abandon the condemning view of our own human weakness to elevate it to a liberating gaze, one that rests in the heart of God and is not governed by our limited criteria. Being able to free ourselves from both justification and victimization is already a great liberating step.

The practice of this change of perspective helps us heal wounds from the past and the present. We grow in the awareness that much of the pain we feel has been caused by our-

selves, and it is a liberating experience to know that the possibility of healing many wounds is in our hands. Total healing will come later with reconciliation, forgiveness, and, in possible cases, restitution.

By exploring even deeper into this gaze from God, we reach a level of contemplation of reality that allows us to glimpse what lies beyond what is manifest. We notice that God continues to walk through history, that the service and dedication for a better world are not in vain, and that the promise of Jesus remains more alive than ever on the horizon of meaning (or horizon of purpose).

Community sharing:

> - Distinguish the features in our gazes that prevent us from discerning the signs of hope (ex., self-referentiality, the future weighing more than the present, valuing what benefits me more).
> - Encourage a regular contemplative distance that sustains our hope in the God of history.

An Attitude of Dialogue

A second impulse touches our relational being, our communal vein. We know that dialogue involves many things and few words. It is an attitude, a disposition of the whole person that makes him/her approachable, accessible, amiable, and magnanimous. More than just a good intention, dialogue springs forth as a desire, a fruit of the change of perspective mentioned earlier. Such a personal disposition entails a certain quality of postures, gestures, and gazes that speak without uttering a single word. We could say that dialogue as an attitude is merely the 'entrance door' to a reality that ceases to be 'mine' and becomes 'ours'.[33] Neither party has control of what

[33] An experience typical of many cultures where the personal-individual does not exist without the personal-community. This phrase can illustrate this: "I am because we are."

will happen and it is the ability to open up to the mystery of 'we' that makes wonder, respect, and understanding possible.[34]

As a personal disposition for encounter, dialogue is born of the common search for truth; very different from the debate or discussion that always starts from what I consider 'my truth'. It is always necessary to bring to the consciousness the deepest motivations that animate our journey and to discern those 'non-negotiable' aspects in each person, so to predispose ourselves to the encounter with the other. When that 'other' is a congregational space, we will realize that openness and change will be driven by the same motivation that led each of us to consecrate our lives.

Community Sharing:

- Encourage community expressions, spaces and times that favor encounter and dialogue to strengthen the primary motivation of our missionary journey.
- Deepen our motivation for missionary religious life from the Christian hope that animates us: for the sake of Jesus Christ, we are protagonists of the new.

An Empathetic Approach

A third impulse connects us more empathetically with the reality that surrounds us and in which we live. There is a lot of emotional charge that lives in us and in our people (nervousness, running around, various levels of aggressiveness). What is the point of adding more reproaches and tensions? Without

[34] Dialogue illustrated as a 'door' strengthens our awareness of belonging to a constellation of relationships, of differentiations, of possibilities for growth. What each one brings from their childhood expands and multiplies, reaching unimaginable dimensions. All this inexhaustible human and cosmic richness is embraced and expressed in a limited and concrete way in our spirituality and congregational charism.

falling into hypocritical or justifying positions, we need to affirm and encourage each other. Fraternal correction, carried out in a space of dialogue, is also a gesture of affirmation of the other. Even if I feel like speaking aloud my truth, I must first consider whether 'that' truth is going to contribute to the fraternal climate or will only add decibels of aggressiveness and discomfort. It is more opportune to filter my desire than to try to regain openness and trust from others.

Our message must insist on the reason for our Christian hope, beyond the anti-testimonial experiences that may arise along the way. We must take charge of this lack of witness (whether personal or ecclesial), without turning it into a negative oratory. If what I want to convey is not constructive, it is better to opt for silence and let the gospel speak It is appropriate to remind ourselves from time to time that the audience does not belong to us, as each listener brings a baggage of motivations, needs, and sorrows that situate them primarily in a particular orbit in which we do not always belong. The message must connect with that reality to orbit that path and from there enable common action. Such common action does not mean remaining concentrically orbiting but rather emerges as a response to a trigger that challenges and motivates listeners to leave the encapsulation to empathetically encounter the reality that provoked the reaction.

Community Sharing:

- Consider for a moment the degree of effective and affective closeness that I live with those with whom I share the space of mission or apostolate.
- What dialogues are necessary to facilitate with them for a more empathetic and transformative action of the environment?

Conclusion

As we stand at the threshold of a new era marked by unprecedented global challenges, the call to be "Missionaries of Hope" resonates with profound urgency and sacred purpose. The hope we proclaim as Divine Word Missionaries is not naive optimism or wishful thinking. It is the biblical hope described as "an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Heb 10:23)—a hope grounded in the unchanging character of God and manifested most fully in the Incarnation. When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, God entered into the fullness of human experience, including its suffering, marginalization, and apparent hopelessness. This divine solidarity with humanity's wounds becomes the foundation for our missionary identity and the source of our credibility as agents of hope.

The wounded world we inhabit bears the scars of systemic injustice, rampant abuse, ecological devastation, spiritual emptiness, and deepening divisions. Communities are torn apart by polarization, inequality, and the erosion of social cohesion. Nations grapple with conflicts rooted in historical grievances and resource scarcity. Meanwhile, creation itself groans under the weight of climate change and environmental destruction. In this context, hope is not a luxury or an abstract theological concept—it is a necessity for survival and a catalyst for transformation.

The Jubilee 2025 theme of "Pilgrims of Hope" reminds us that we are all on a journey toward the full realization of God's kingdom. As Divine Word missionaries, we walk this path as simultaneously recipients and agents of hope.

The four characteristic dimensions of Mission, Scripture, JPIC, and Communications which define our presence and

ministry reveal not merely strategic frameworks for our ministry, but touch upon the very essence of our Christian and religious vocation in a world crying out for healing, meaning, peace, and transformation. These four SVD characteristic dimensions, when lived authentically and integrated holistically, become instruments through which divine hope can penetrate into the deepest and terrifying wounds of our contemporary world.

Through Mission, we carry the light of Christ to the geographical, social, and cultural peripheries where the wounds are most apparent, hurtful, and threatening. This mission is not about intrusive imposition but accompaniment—walking alongside those who have been forgotten, abandoned, or marginalized. Our presence becomes a tangible sign that no one is beyond the reach of God's love and that every human being possesses inherent dignity worthy of respect and care.

Scripture serves as both the wellspring and the compass for this hope-filled mission. The biblical witness reveals a God who consistently chooses to work through the weak, the broken, and the marginalized to accomplish divine purposes. From the call of Abraham to leave everything behind in hope of a promised land, to the resurrection of Jesus from the depths of death and abandonment, Scripture testifies to a hope that emerges precisely from situations that appear hopeless. As missionaries of hope, we immerse ourselves in this biblical vision not as an intellectual or academic exercise but as spiritual formation and existential foundation that shapes our vision and empowers our witness.

JPIC represents the prophetic dimension of hope—the refusal to accept present realities as fixed and final and the commitment to work for the transformation of unjust and oppressive structures. This is hope made visible through concrete action. When we advocate for the rights of the poor, tend to the victims of abuse, defend the dignity of the marginalized, work for reconciliation between enemies, and care for creation, we

embody the hope of God's kingdom breaking into present reality. Our JPIC commitments demonstrate that hope we carry is not passive waiting or naive optimism but active participation in God's ongoing work of healing, liberation, and restoration.

Communication completes this fourfold witness by ensuring that the hope we embody is also articulated, shared, and made accessible to others through the best available means. In our digital age, the ministry of communication takes on particular urgency as misinformation, hate speech, and purposeful manipulation reach unprecedented levels. As missionaries of hope, we must become skilled communicators who can speak truth with love, bridge divides with understanding, and offer narratives of possibility and transformation rather than manipulation. Our communication ministry becomes a form of digital evangelization that counters the proliferation of hopelessness and maliciousness with authentic testimonies of God's presence and power.

As we embrace this fourfold calling expressed through our characteristic dimensions, we are "stretching the cord of hope"—extending that divine horizon across every divide, reaching into every darkness, bridging every chasm and tending to every wound. Like the anchor that secures a ship in the storm, this cord of hope remains deeply rooted in the unchanging promises of God and flexible enough to reach the farthest shores of human contemporary experience. We stretch this cord through our mission to the peripheries, through our faithful engagement with Scripture, through our commitment to justice and creation's integrity, and through our creative communication of the Gospel. In stretching the cord of hope, we become living extensions of God's own reach into the world, ensuring that no person, no community, no corner of creation remains beyond the transformative touch of divine life and love. This is our mandate, our privilege, and our joy; may we as missionaries of hope courageously stretch the cord of hope until it encompasses the whole wounded world,

anchoring all things and beings in their source and binding their destiny to the God of infinite hope form everywhere to everyone.

Society of the **Divine Word**

faithful and **creative** disciples in a wounded world