

# MISSIONS SECRETARY'S REPORT SVD—CONGO

## 1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Until 2002, the office of the Missions Secretary of the SVD Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo was handled by father Willy TRIEBEL. Fr. Godéfroid MANUNGA took his place from 2003 to 2008. I am therefore the third Missions Secretary and having been named only recently, my report will consist of sharing with you what my predecessors, especially Fr. Godé MANUNGA, have been able to achieve and what they have left for me to continue.

## 2. WHAT HAS BEEN DONE DURING THE LAST SIX YEARS (2002-2008)

Truth be told, according to what Fr. G. MANUNGA shared with me, when he was taking the place of Fr. TRIEBEL, the major preoccupation of his predecessor was the on-going formation of confreres in the pastoral field and the introduction of new missionaries to the Congolese culture. The meetings of missionaries with less than five (5) years experience in the province were actually organized by the Superior Delegate who asked the Missions Secretary to animate one or the other conference.

Since 2004, the main lines of the work of the Secretary of missions were highlighted, at first theoretically, then gradually on a more practical level by Fr. Godéfroid MANUNGA on the demand of the then provincial Fr. Xene SANCHEZ. It consisted, theoretically, in revisiting the SVD Handbook for Superiors which demands of Provincial Mission Secretaries:

- To create the awareness among confreres and Christians in our parishes and missions on how to live the universal mission of the Church in our local churches, through the liturgical and spiritual formation sessions.
- To awaken the conscience of everyone on the sense of solidarity with the other churches and Christian communities through the prayers and offerings but also by contacts with benefactors and benefactresses.
- To find ways of generating funds locally for the missionary/pastoral work of SVD missionaries in Congo but also and moreover, to contribute to the distribution of funds from the Generalate.
- It is logical, in the missionary context of the Democratic Republic of Congo, for the Missions Secretary to be the coordinator of the missionary animation of the whole province. This requires of him to visit, at least once a year all the missions, not only to give sessions and conferences on mission, but also to arouse devotion to our two saints: Arnold JANSSEN and Joseph FREINADEMETZ.

Generally speaking, the out-gone Missions Secretary has tried to accomplish his work by touching all four aforementioned elements. He has animated many spiritual and missionary formation sessions in our parishes in Kinshasa and in the interior of the country,

creating the awareness on the necessity to give a hand to the SVD in realizing the universal mission of the Church, not only among the Christians but also among the other religious and missionary (males and females) congregations.

In response to the circular letter of the Superior General Fr. Antonio PERNIA, inviting the provincial, regional and mission superiors together with their Missions Secretaries to reflect on self sufficiency, Fr. Godéfroid MANUNGA bought an agricultural farm not far from the city of Kinshasa [a plot of thirty-five (35) hectares, enlarged later to forty-five (45) hectares] with the hope of having in the future, sources of revenue for fishponds, maize and cassava plantations, livestock farming etc. This farm, named “MIVEDI”—Missionnaires du Verbe Divin) Congo, is operational and it is Fr. Xene SANCHEZ here present, who assures its smooth running, assisted by a brother confrere named by the province for the work.

During the past Tsunami in Indonesia, the Mission Secretary organized a special collection (offering) as aid for the victims of the Tsunami. Our Christians participated feebly in this invitation to live our missionary solidarity.

The centenary of the death of our two saints A. JANSSEN and J. FREINADEMETZ was an occasion to educate the Christians of Kinshasa and those of the interior (missions held and/or founded by the SVD and handed over to the diocese) on the SVD spirituality. After these sessions, the out-gone Missions Secretary has been able to inaugurate the group “Lay Associates of the SVD” as recommended by the SVD Generalate.

During this same centenary celebration, a bulletin for spiritual and missionary animation was also published monthly in French, on a specific theme about the lives of our two saints and that of our religious and Missionary Arnoldus Family. Some copies are available; those who want could have a look at them.

According to Fr. Godéfroid MANUNGA, the ‘search for funds’ on the local level was not very successful. Here and there, Christians are able to give generously in a spontaneous manner, but in general, they need to be educated on giving because the mentality on financial and material aid to missionary activity is not very encouraging where SVDs are working. This is a big challenge for the inculturation of mission awareness in Congo.

The Missions Secretary also opened an office at the Common Formation Center where one can find an archive and a myriad of equipments for spiritual and missionary animation. It is here that, with the consent of the rector, we coordinate our missionary animation activities. Fr. Godé MANUNGA appreciates the contribution of some of our theology students (Congolese and non-Congolese) with regards to our missionary animation activities during his term of office.

### **3. PERSPECTIVES FOR THE FUTURE**

We are engaging ourselves to continue (in our own way) the work initiated by our predecessor through the coordination of our missionary animation service in our parishes and missions.

We will continue to dialogue with our partners in the different local churches/dioceses where many of our confreres work: Archdiocese of Kinshasa, Dioceses of Kikwit, Kenge and Kole.

We shall collaborate with the newly established provincial council for development projects on how to raise funds for our missions.

The Archdiocese of Kinshasa by the kind courtesy of the director of OPM (Oeuvres Pontificales Missionnaires)—Pontifical Missionary Society—has asked us to continue, like Fr. Godé MANUNGA, being a member of the missionary animation team. This constitutes a great contribution of the SVD in Kinshasa toward mission awareness in the local church.

What remains to be done, among others, is to elaborate a directive and a Statute for our new group “Lay Associates of the SVD,” based on the experience of some other provinces in our Afram Zone and our international community.

In a few words, we have presented to you the work the Congo Mission Secretaries have been able to accomplish in the past and the work yet to be done by your humble servant here present.

Thank you all for your attention.

Fr. Franek WOJDYLA SVD  
(MISSION SECRETRAY SVD-CONGO 2009-2011)