

# INTRODUCTION

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This book project emerged from my role as coordinator of the Mission, Education, and Research (MER) initiative for the Society of the Divine Word (SVD) in the Australia Province. While MER also serves as a broader collaborative platform across the SVD provinces in the Asia-Pacific (ASPAC) Zone, its specific focus in Australia is to foster deeper reflection and scholarly engagement with the Society's missionary charism through activities such as webinars, conferences, and publications.

The celebration of the 150th Jubilee of the Society (1875–2025) offered a timely and meaningful opportunity to advance this goal through two major initiatives, jointly organized by MER and the Province's Jubilee Committee. The first initiative was a series of five online public lectures exploring the Jubilee theme, "*Witnessing to the Light: From Everywhere for Everyone*," through the lens of the four Characteristic Dimensions of SVD mission: Biblical Apostolate, Mission Animation, Communication, and Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC). The fifth lecture examined the Jubilee theme from a synodal perspective and was delivered by Archbishop Mark Benedict Coleridge of the Archdiocese of Brisbane—offering a valuable external viewpoint from outside the SVD.

These lectures brought together confreres and lay partners from across the province and beyond, creating a shared space to reflect on and reimagine the Society's core missionary commitments in today's complex and often wounded world. Several of the contributions in this volume are drawn directly from these public lectures.

The second initiative is the volume you now hold in your hands. *SVD Mission in Contexts: Creative Responses in a Wounded World* gathers a diverse range of contributions that reflect on the Characteristic Dimensions from multiple perspectives—academic, pastoral, theological, and personal. The richness of its content mirrors the varied contexts in which Divine Word Missionaries and their partners live and work today.

The book is organized into two parts. Part One presents essays and reflections directly inspired by the Jubilee theme, “*Witnessing to the Light: From Everywhere for Everyone*.” These writings engage deeply with the theological and missiological implications of the theme, drawing on biblical insight, ecclesial tradition, intercultural experience, and prophetic imagination. They explore how we, as missionaries and partners in the Arnoldus Family, can be credible witnesses to Christ, the Light, in an age marked by complexity and brokenness.

Part Two offers a wide-ranging collection of essays that, while not all directly linked to the Jubilee theme, address pressing issues and contexts central to MER’s mission concerns and to the broader SVD apostolate. These include topics such as ecology, spiritual accompaniment, interreligious dialogue, indigenous pastoral outreach, intercultural living, and theological formation—each pointing to new ways in which the Word continues to become flesh in our world.

A distinctive strength of this volume is its inclusive and intergenerational scope. While most contributors are SVD members, we are honored to include a reflection by Sr. Herlina Hadia, SSpS—a welcome reminder of the shared mission of the Arnoldus Family. The authors represent a wide spectrum of experience and expertise. Among them are distinguished theologians and missiologists such as Stephen Bevans and Roger Schroeder, whose works have shaped global discussions on mission and culture. The volume also features contributions from two former Superiors General—Antonio M. Pernia and Paulus Budi Kleden, the latter now Archbishop of Ende in Indonesia—as well as Tim Norton, currently Bishop of Broome, Australia.

Additional contributions come from those with experience at the Generalate level, including Lazar T. Stanislaus, Wojciech Szypuła, and Kasmir Nema, whose insights help illuminate the Society’s global vision and evolving priorities. At the same time, emerging voices such as Michael Nguyen, Albano Da Costa, and Clement Baffoe embody the energy of a new generation of missionaries integrating academic formation with pastoral engagement.

Crucially, this volume also gives space to confreres working in concrete missionary contexts—accompanying Indigenous communities, leading parish ministries, nurturing vocations, and developing innovative approaches to ecological and digital mission. Their voices remind us that theology and mission must remain grounded in lived experience and human encounter.

As editor, it is my hope that this book will serve not only as a fitting commemoration of the Society’s 150-year journey, but also as a living testimony to its ongoing commitment to be *from everywhere for everyone*. In a world

increasingly fractured by division, wounded by injustice, and searching for meaning, may these reflections offer light, insight, and inspiration.

May this Jubilee volume strengthen our shared commitment to bearing witness—creatively, faithfully, and contextually—to the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ, in our communities and in our common home.