

**ST. VINCENT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
Adamson University**



**EXPANDING THE SVST VISION:  
GRADUATE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION FROM THE MARGINS OF ASIA**

**STRATEGIC PLAN 2013-2023**

**I. DOING THEOLOGY FROM THE MARGINS**

In our effort to capture the spirit of the vision-mission, we formulated the motto: "doing theology from the margins". This direction is not far from the vision of Vincent de Paul, SVST's patron saint. We uphold the belief that theology does not come from the centers of power but from the experiences in the margins. And as theologians-in-process, students are trained to be sensitive to these voices from the rough grounds – voices most often excluded, muffled or suppressed. Theological education in SVST, therefore, is founded on critical thinking and starts with an informed analysis of society, a sympathetic sensibility on the experiences of the poor as starting point of theology (SEE). It also critically investigates on the development of the Christian tradition from its classical to contemporary developments, its prophetic role and its need to continual rethinking in order to respond to contemporary questions (JUDGE/DISCERN). It also leads students to find new ways and means to creatively respond to the needs of our times, especially towards the liberation of the peoples (ACT).

**II. WHAT WE HAVE DONE SO FAR: ASSESSMENT OF THE LAST TEN YEARS (2003-2013)**

After ten years of its implementation, what achievements we have gained so far?

**1. Established Linkage with Adamson University**

From the 1990s when the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) granted the permission for Graduate courses in theology, Adamson University has acted as the academic degree

granting institution of our Masters in Theology program. From 1989-2003, SVST has graduated 249 students in the Curriculum for the Ordained Ministry most of whom had Masters in Pastoral Ministry (non-thesis program) and Masters of Arts in Theology (thesis program). Other than this academic link, there has been no clear relationship between SVST and the University. They were considered separate institutions in terms of its programs, organization structures, employment processes and finances.

Since 2003, we have clarified and stabilized the relationship with Adamson University (in its academic, organizational, financial structures). We have realized that a theological school is not viable in itself since its clientele is quite limited. In this context, a strong linkage with Adamson University is salutary. This is a joint decision of the Congregation of the Mission and the officials of Adamson University. Adamson University agrees to subsidize SVST in all its operational expenses and the Congregation of the Mission shall assist it in terms of infrastructure needs and a minimal annual grant for its library budget.

Therefore, SVST is accountable to both institutions (Adamson University and the Congregation of the Mission) as it also maintains its limited autonomy from both. As an academic institution granting graduate civil degrees, SVST serves as the Graduate School of Theology and Philosophy of Adamson University. It aligns its programs, plans, structures to the University. As an ecclesiastical institution recognized by the CBCP, we are working directly under the Provincial Visitor of the Congregation of the Mission. We maintain close links with the Local Ordinary for our programs of formation.

## **2. Inclusive Curricular Programs with Expanded Clientele**

Before 2003, SVST's program was mainly geared towards the theological training of seminarians alone. In 1985, SVST started as a theological consortium among the Vincentians (CM), Recollects (OAR) and Conventuals (OFM Conventuals) for their respective candidates. In the passing of the years, these other religious congregations left SVST to start their own theological institute but some others also came to join. Diocesan

seminarians also enrolled in SVST and do their priestly formation with the Vincentian seminarians in De Paul House. The diocesan seminarians come from small dioceses with no major seminaries. On the whole, these early years saw SVST as mainly an institute for theological education of candidates for the priesthood.

In pursuit of inclusive theological education, we have expanded our programs to different clientele in the last ten years (2003-2013). We do not only offer theological education to seminarians but also to other religious sisters and brothers, lay men and women, young and adult alike. Many of those pursuing graduate theological education (MA and Ph.D. in Theology) at present are not only seminarians but lay people as well. The programs were also developed for people wanting to take academic degrees but also for those who are interested with theological-pastoral formation for personal reasons or for their ministry in the parishes (organizing BECs, giving formation or recollection, leading in liturgical ministries, charismatic movements, etc.). Consequently, the classes are also delivered both in weekdays (for full-time students) and weekends (for working lay people and religious).

These developments have repercussion on how theology is being taught in SVST – more pastoral than academic, more lay-oriented than a specialized training for a priestly class, more in touch with questions from the ground than coming from theological treatises of the masters. The inclusive classroom setting which we strive so much to achieve (a healthy blend of men and women, seminarians, religious and lay people in one classroom) fosters a healthy exchange of issues and concerns from different perspectives especially those coming from lay people and their experiences. This set-up also deconstructs the exclusive training of seminarians which can easily lead to a clerical mindset detrimental to priestly ministry in the future.

The following list covers the wide curricular offering which SVST developed gradually in the last ten years:

- a. Doctor of Philosophy in Theology (Ph.D. in Theology): 2  
Areas of Concentration - Systematic Theology and  
Theological Ethics [3-4 years]
- b. Masters in Theology (MA in Theology - Thesis Programs): 5  
Areas of Concentration - Biblical Studies, Systematic  
Studies, Moral Studies, Liturgical Studies and Vincentian  
Studies [3 years]
- c. Masters in Pastoral Ministry (MPM) [2 years]
- d. Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy (AB Philosophy) [4 years]
- e. Philosophy for Theological Studies [2 years]
- f. *Hapág-Layko* (Christian Formation of the Laity) [2 years –  
Saturday Program]
- g. Introductory Theological Formation (ITF) [1 year]

### **3. Accredited Programs**

Together with the developments at Adamson University, SVST also underwent academic accreditation process with the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA). In January 2013, we passed Level 1 and the process continues every year thereafter. We are the first accredited graduate theology program in the Philippines. Though these accreditation processes do not exercise a significant impact in our enrolment (or in the theological field in general), it helps us improve our curriculum and services in the areas of documentation, curriculum development, library and institutional facilities.

#### **a. Strengthened Faculty Line-Up**

We have made a conscious effort to recruit faculty members based on the following criteria: their line of specialization (philosophical and theological expertise); capacity to deliver their lessons adjusted to the level of their students; resonance with the SVST vision, etc. In the level of specialization, we have the following data: 27 professors with Ph.D./STD degrees and 9 professors with MA degrees. Those without PhDs are in the process of acquiring them.

Beyond degree and specialization, we also make sure that faculty members teach courses in their own lines of specialization. Each semester, the students also evaluate their professors on the content of the course, methodology and other aspects. These evaluation instruments are summarized, forwarded and discussed among the professor every semester. Another crucial criterion in the choice of professor is his resonance with the SVST vision. We make sure that all disciplines foster the fulfillment of the school's vision, that is, to form professional theologians and pastoral agents with minds and hearts with and for the people at the margins.

## **b. Research and Publications**

Since 2003, a research and publication program was set in place. There are three levels of research initiatives in SVST.

### *1. Hapág: An Interdisciplinary Theological Journal*

Hapag Journal is a bi-annual refereed journal of SVST and Adamson University. Its maiden issue was 2004. It has been going on for 9 years now (9 volumes). It has been indexed by *Ephemerides Theologicae Louvaniensis* and other classificatory bodies. It is classified by Leuven Index of Theology and Religious Studies (LITaRS) under “International Journals -2” together with other prestigious journals like *Concilium*, *Gregorianum*, *Heythrop*, *Thomist*, *Jurist*, *Horizons*, *Harvard Theological Review*, etc.

(cf. <http://theo.kuleuven.be/en/research/classif-journals>). DAKATEO (or the Catholic Theological Society of the Philippines) has published its papers in this journal. It can also be accessed online.

### *2. Institutional Research Program*

Institutional researches are projects backed up by SVST Administration and funded by different bodies upon the application of members of SVST faculty. There are 6 ongoing projects as of 2013:

- Sexual Violence Against Women (SVAW):  
Interdisciplinary Conversations

- Walking Through the Development of the Local Churches after the Spanish Regime: A Historical Reflection with the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP)
- Socio-Political Change and Christian Praxis
- The Return of the Shamans: Bio-ethical Reflections on Healing in the Visayas
- Second Plenary Council of the Philippines: Twenty Years After
- Catholic Social Teachings: Modules and Documentaries for the Grassroots

### *3. Individual Researches (Faculty and Students)*

Individual professors also do researches as part of their own professional groups. Graduate students also pursue research mainly in the masteral and doctoral projects. Since these researches are done under the direction of our faculty, we also acknowledge these projects as part of the SVST research program.

#### **c. Offering of Theological-Pastoral Services to the Local Churches and Social Movements**

Beyond the confines of the SVST campus, we have also offered our theological and pastoral resources to other institutes and movements.

##### *1. Summer Program with NDCFC*

Since 2007, we hold summer Masteral classes in Notre Dame Center for Catechesis (NDCFC) in Cotabato City. In collaboration with the Oblates of Notre Dame (OND), these classes started as theological updating sessions for religious education teachers working in different schools in the area. Later, this program developed into masteral classes. By 2012, we have graduated the first batch of students (12 of them). In the summer of 2013, we start with the new batch (15 students).

##### *2. Resource Center for Social Concerns*

The Resource Center for Social Concerns is an institute in SVST that aims to forge solidarity links and sustained partnership with

social movements and other agents of change in church and society through cooperative research, joint formation programs, exposure-immersion processes and other forms of shared undertaking in the service of the poor and marginalized. It has five main programs at the moment:

- Social Forum (bi-annual forum on relevant social issues at the intersection of church and society)
- Carlos Abesamis Professorial Lectures (bi-annual research/forum on social-ecclesial concerns under the auspices and fund of the Abesamis family)
- Catholic Social Teachings: Modules and Documentaries for Grassroots Communities (7-modules in 3 languages - English, Tagalog and Cebuano) on the popularization of CST) funded by Missio-Munchen and DKA-Austria
- Linkage with Grassroots Communities (BEC areas where our students do their immersion)
- Linkage with NGOs and Social Movements (Kariton Foundation, IPDI, PEPE, Kaalagad, SPI, Urban Missionaries, Church Forum, TFUC, etc.)

#### **d. Working Organizational Structures and Systems**

Until 2003, SVST offered only one course (Curriculum for the Ordained Ministry). Some CM students were taking the Masters in Theology but others have no access to the program. The administrative organizational structure was quite simple. With the coming of the new courses and programs, we needed to organize more.

In recent years, there is an Administrative Council that meets monthly (Rector, Dean, Vice Dean, 4 Directors, Treasurer). The Dean coordinates with both Adamson University and the CM Provincial Council.

There are regular meetings and evaluation/planning workshops on different levels: Administrative Council Meetings (monthly), Staff Meeting (monthly), Student Council Meeting (monthly or as

the need arises), Faculty Meetings, Formators-Administrators Meetings.

### **e. Improved Library Services**

The SVST library (named the St. Justin Theological Library) was in a very bad shape ten years ago. After the CM committed a regular annual subsidy for the library, book and journal subscriptions became regular. At the moment, we have the following in our collection:

- Set of 116 journals from different scientific fields (theology, philosophy, social sciences) – both international and local, subscribed and exchange. We are collaborating with a Dutch company (*Mundiservice*) to handle our subscriptions.
- Book collection is 24,901 volumes (theology, philosophy and others)
- Digital resources from Adamson University.

We have also collaborated with different institutions who deliver to us free books: Theological Book Network (Grand Rapids Michigan); St. John University (New York), etc. Our extra books and double copies go to Notre Dame Center for Catechesis (NDCFC - Cotabato).

### **f. Scholarships and Grants**

At the moment, there are existing scholarship programs enjoyed by the students: (1) Vincentian Scholarship Program (for Vincentian seminarians and pastoral workers working in Vincentian apostolates); PhD Scholarship; Graduate Scholarship for lay people and local religious; Hapag-Layko scholarship; and special scholarships for individuals.

## **4. WHAT STILL NEEDS TO BE DONE: EXPANDING THE SVST VISION (2013-2023)**

### **4.1 General Objectives**

In the next ten years, we aim to make SVST:

- a. to be the center of alternative theological education pursuing academic excellence from the perspective of and at the



service of the margins in the Philippine and Asia-Pacific contexts;

- b. to reflexively do theology from an interdisciplinary perspective, i.e., both learning from other sciences and also contributing a specific theological dimension to their discourses;
- c. to make theology serve the needs of grassroots communities, marginalized sectors, social movements and the local churches.

## **4.2 Strategic Targets**

In the next ten years, we aim to achieve this 10-point agenda:

### **a. Strengthening and Expanding our Clientele**

- 1. To establish our market beyond our present clientele (Masters to Ph.D.)
- 2. To create and finance an effective promotions program all over Asia
- 3. To search for available scholarships for our expanded clientele
- 4. To prepare available student residence on campus
- 5. To invite the Vincentian Provinces in the Asia-Pacific countries to send their best students to SVST for their theological formation

### **b. Striving for Excellence in Academic Programs (Accreditation)**

- 1. To pursue the accreditation process to the highest level (Level 4).
- 2. To produce a good number of substantial and well written thesis and dissertations
- 3. To revisit the curriculum once every five years
- 4. To institute other relevant diploma programs that can help ministers and pastoral workers in their work among the grassroots
- 5. To institute a viable tracer studies in order to assess the impact of our students in their field of work

**c. Ensuring Quality Services (ISO 9001)**

To professionalize and make effective our services through the ISO Program

**d. Intensifying our Research Agenda and Publications**

1. To stabilize the publication and circulation of the *Hapag* Journal; to have it accredited, indexed and abstracted by international accreditation bodies
2. To produce at least one (1) published book every year through the SVST Interdisciplinary Series in Theology.
3. To make research fellowships available for the faculty
4. To recognize and remunerate faculty who are doing research

**e. Stabilizing our Faculty/Staff Capabilities**

1. To increase permanent staff to 5 full-time administrators/professors
2. To program continuing seminars for our faculty
3. To institute a viable program for the personal and professional growth of the co-academic employees
4. To endorse to the CM Provincial Council capable people for further studies in order to prepare them to become future professors and administrators of SVST

**f. Strengthening our Library Collection**

1. To digitalize library resources both in its collection and processes (e.g., access to online books and articles, library ID, borrowing procedures, etc.)
2. To systematize subscription of books and journals
3. To train the library staff towards more efficiency and professionalism

**g. Offering our Resources and Services to the Local Churches and Movements**

1. To establish MOA with partner communities/NGOS and finalize a program of immersion with our students
2. To intensify promotions among the poor dioceses and invite them to send their seminarians to SVST

3. To expand the Cotabato Summer program to other schools in the area
4. To train SVST graduates in the field in the delivery of Hapag-Layko program in far-flung dioceses
5. To explore other programs beyond the existing social fora (RCSC)

#### **h. Improving/Expanding our Physical and Digital Infrastructures**

1. To request/search funds for a new classroom/library building and offices
2. To repair/rehabilitate the old buildings
3. To establish and strengthen our digital infrastructure

#### **i. Affiliation/Networking with Theological/Research Institutions**

1. To establish academic collaborative links with the following institutions: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (pontifical degrees – STB, STL and STD); De Paul University - Chicago (collaborative research/student exchange); Vietnam Vincentian School of Philosophy and Theology
2. To clarify the MOAs of the existing collaborative institutions

#### **j. Ensuring Financial Sustainability**

1. To stabilize our financial status towards self-sufficiency through creating a Foundation for SVST
2. To solicit the assistance of the CM Provincial Council and Adamson University
2. To source out financial resources through funding agencies, benefactors and other means for financial sustainability

**St. Vincent School of Theology  
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