

## PORTUGAL PROVINCE

Official Language: **Portuguese**

### Vision Statement

*Rooted in a renewed consecrated life of community and mission we live our religious, missionary vocation in international communities, inserted into local churches and guided by a genuine experience of God. We seek to promote vocations by awakening and accompanying those whom the Lord calls, so that their commitment to mission may be solid and lasting.*

### Mission Statement

*Our mission in Portugal is addressed to: the marginalized – among whom are the poorest of the poor, the elderly, and the migrants coming from other cultural and religious backgrounds; non-believers and faith-seekers – especially among the youth and university students; the local Church – that it may awaken to its missionary calling in solidarity with the Universal Church.*

### 1. Societal Setting

Since its foundation, in the 12th century, Portugal has maintained a territorial, linguistic and cultural unity. There are no ethnic or linguistic minorities in the country. The differences in traditions - songs, celebrations, costumes and some phonetic accent in the language that occur in the different geographic regions - consti-



tute an element of enrichment within the unit, and with modern means of communication are practically diluted. Only a small group of the Roma population, around 50,000 people, can be mentioned as maintaining their own specific identity. However, since 1980, a growing number of people migrated from former Portuguese-speaking colonies such as Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Angola, São Tomé, Mozambique, as well as Brazil and Timor Leste. It reached its peak at the beginning of the millennium, when with immigrants from Eastern Europe - mainly Ukrainians and Moldovans - the figures surpassed 500,000, corresponding to 10% of the active population. The connection through a common

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language and, to a certain extent, also a common history in some aspects, made their coming "natural" and, despite moments of tension, their integration has continued and a great number of them have obtained Portuguese nationality. Some of them, faced with the economic crisis, have looked for better economic conditions in other countries of the European Union. Also many Portuguese in the last years have left the country because of the same crisis. Portugal has become again a country of emigrants.

## 2. Ecclesial Setting

The majority of the Portuguese people continue to declare themselves Catholics, although many of them also declare to be non-practicing and even to be detached from any ecclesiastical institution. The 1981 census showed that 81.1% of the people declared themselves to be Catholics. A new study of the Catholic University, carried out in 2011, reveals that the number has dropped to 79.5%. But one point is obvious: although the majority of the people identify with the Catholic faith, participation in the celebrations of the faith has diminished, and children no longer identify with the attitude and faith of their parents. Those who claim no religion rose from 8.2% in 1999 to 14.2% in 2011. This leads us to the conclusion that we are in a different time and world. The diocesan clergy has decreased drastically, as well as candidates for priestly and consecrated life. This is a huge pastoral challenge for our Church. Our approach to mission has to be different. Our work, using the expression of Pope Francis, "is similar to a field hospital".

## 3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

### Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
<b>Parish</b>	18	34.6	40.8	22.9
<b>Education</b>	1	1.8	0	10.4
Schools	0	-		
Universities	1	-		
<b>Formation/ SVD Vocation</b>	1	1.8	9.3	6.2
<b>Administration/ Support</b>	10	19.2	28.1	25.0
<b>Other Apostolates</b>	6	11.4	21.8	31.2
JPIC	0	-		
Bible	0	-		
Communication	0	-		
Mission Animation	3	-		
Others	3	-		

### Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	0	0	0	0
Retired/Sick	3	5.7	0	0
Others	4	7.6	0	4.2

## Characteristic Dimensions

**Biblical Apostolate:** Some confreres, with some specific preparation for this task, carry forward the Biblical pastoral animation. They offer Biblical courses and promote *Lectio Divina* in parishes and/or in groups.

**Mission Animation:** Our Mission Secretariat in Fatima organizes an annual campaign and, through other promotions, seeks to raise funds for our worldwide missions, while making people aware of and sensitive to this cause. The SVD is a member of *IMAG* (Association of Missionary Institutes in Portugal), responsible for organizing weeks of missionary animation.

**JPIC:** Through our connection with diverse countries and continents, we have the opportunity to make the people with whom we work aware of and sensitive to problems related to justice, peace and the integrity of creation. This sensitivity is part of our identity. The same applies to problems that surround us locally with regard to poverty and exclusion.

**Communication:** We publish and make available various materials for information and promotion of missionary awareness: *Contacto SVD*, a bi-monthly newspaper; *Agenda Jovem*, addressed to young people; and wall and pocket calendars for the general public. Several books about our SVD saints have been published in the last three years as a resource for personal and community prayer, as well as some publications about the history of the SVD in Portugal. We

also published *The Pact of the Catacombs*. We continue with the website.

## Priorities among Congregational Directions

**Primary and New Evangelization:** As agents of mission, lived in an intercultural context, we have as our priority to announce the Good News where it has not yet been announced. But also in territories of old Christianity, which have lost a vital link to the professed faith, we recognize that, following the Roscommon Consensus, it is necessary to evangelize again, presenting the living Good News in updated language, perceptible to those to whom it is addressed. For decades in Portugal our congregation has concentrated its personnel and financial resources in minor seminaries in Tortosendo, Guimarães, and Fátima, preparing new *ad gentes* missionaries. Our collaboration with the local Church was limited to occasional pastoral ministries, many times from a personal initiative. With the closure of minor seminaries, a new stage began, coinciding with the return to the country of several confreres who had been working in the mission *ad gentes* and also with the arrival of young confreres from other countries and continents. At the same time, the local Church was struggling with an increasing shortage of clergy.

From the 1990s on, the profile of our work as SVD missionaries began to change. Thus, in 1993, we took over the pastoral care of Almo-

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dôvar, a dechristianized region in the south of the country with an aged population, which brought us closer to a pastoral situation of primary evangelization. In 1999, the Prior Velho parish was created in Lisbon and was handed over to the SVD in view of the work carried out over the last ten years with an immigrant population coming from Portuguese-speaking African countries: Cape Verde, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Mozambique. Later on, we took over the parishes of Tortosendo, Cortes do Meio, and Unhais da Serra, all around our first house in Portugal in the diocese of Guarda. Next we took up the parishes of the pastoral zone of S. Torcato, near our house in Guimarães, in the archdiocese of Braga. In 2010, at the insistence of the local bishop, we took responsibility for the pastoral zone of Nisa, in the interior of the country. And in 2014 we were asked to assume the pastoral care of two parishes: Minde and Serra de Santo António, close to Fatima. In the same year we were given parishes around S. João de Loure in the diocese of Aveiro. At this point of time, we can say that our work is basically parish ministry.

It is not easy to find balance and harmony in the midst of the changing circumstances of a changing world. Models of the past are no longer suitable. New ones are not yet proved or consolidated. However, the priorities we have chosen put us on the way. In our ministries and especially in the parish ministry we try primarily not to maintain the status quo but to work in order to discover the newness of the Gospel: it is the New Evangelization.

***Promotion of the Culture of Life, Social Justice and Poverty Eradication, Family and Youth:*** All SVD guidelines point out that our work should not be a mere maintenance of what already exists, but rather to make parishes a platform to urge on missionary communities with the Characteristic Dimensions of the SVD. In addition to pastoral action, conducted in a community and intercultural framework, we seek to promote life in all its dimensions: uncompromising defense of the dignity of the human person at all stages of life, its fundamental equality and respect for its dignity. This is concretized in a context of social justice and poverty eradication. This priority embraces our commitment to where we live as well as our global commitment to something that is natural to us as members of an international missionary congregation. Looking ahead, we are aware that it is especially important to give attention to youth, starting from attention to the family and to the context in which it grows. We recognize that we need to pay more attention to this aspect. That is why, in restructuring our ministries, at the beginning of the new triennium, two recently ordained confreres were appointed to promote the youth apostolate and vocation ministry.

The choice for a culture of life puts us on the path of defending and enforcing rights which are linked to the dignity of the human person. This option leads us to assume justice and the eradication of poverty as an expression of the demands of the gospel, which focuses attention on the drama of hunger, wars, aggression to nature, and leads to the way of peace which

is based on justice and incompatible with poverty, which we seek to eradicate.

In view of the enormous challenges caused by changes in culture and morals since the middle of the last century, we see that we have a great need to accompany the new generations, trying to understand them and proclaim the Good News to them in the most appropriate way.

**Ministry to the Migrants:** In 2009, as a landmark of the first century of Arnold and Joseph Freinademetz’s death, POR province decided to promote an Asian Chaplaincy taking into account the work already done with the Phillipinos by the confreres who were in Lisbon preparing themselves to work in the Portuguese speaking countries. This is additional to the existing Chaplaincy done by the province for the people from Africa, Ukraine, etc.

Although such a broad project did not go forward, later we intensified Phillipino Chaplaincy under the care of our confrere Jovito Osalvo. Now, they are well organized for the celebration of Eucharist every Sunday, religious celebrations and gatherings in especial national days and for addressing various issues of the community.

### Collaboration with SSpS

As members of the Arnold Janssen family our collaboration with SSpS has been the normal one of brothers and sisters carrying out the same mission, which is the mission of Jesus. We work together mainly in the area of missionary and youth animation.

We also share important moments such as the annual retreat together with the province of Spain, the Christmas meeting, and other important moments in the life of our communities, such as profession of vows, jubilees, ordinations and celebrations of the founding generation.

### SVD Lay Partners

We have three lay organizations as mission partners related to the SVD: *AMIVD* (Friends of the Divine Word); *AAVD* (Association of SVD Alumni), who are in tune with us regarding mission and take on some missionary projects; and the *DIALOGOS* group, which promotes missionary work and volunteer projects both in Portugal and in other countries. We sponsor a yearly event relevant for missionary awareness: the *National Encounter of Friends of the Divine Word*. It takes place in Fatima, which continues to be a central point, not only geographically, but also in the religious sense, especially during the recent celebrations of the first centenary of the events that gave rise to it.

### 4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Clerics	42	36	23
Brothers (final vows)	1	1	1
Scholastics	8	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>34</b>

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	53.8	53.6	45.9
Nationalities	12	7	8

**Community Life:** In the reception of the XVII General Chapter of 2012, we gave priority to mission carried out in a context of interculturality. Under this aspect the situation lived in the Portuguese province is identical to that lived in other European countries. New native members are becoming a rarity. But intercultural communities have always been part of our history, so too, at this moment the presence of confreres from other territories and continents gives life to our homes and activities.

**Finance:** The changes of the last decades have left us a challenge in relation to the big structures and their use. Since the nineties we no longer have minor seminaries. The big seminary of Fatima has been transformed into a welcoming house, now serving as the community house and

a two-star hotel. Also the four-star Steyler Fatima Hotel belongs to the province, constituting a source of financial income. The seminary of Guimarães was partially leased to an association for the operation of a professional school. We have not yet found a reasonable solution for the seminary of Tortosendo, where the community lives as well as some African students attending the nearby University of Covilhã.

**Formation:** For decades, and especially after the building of the new house in 1997 near the Catholic University, the SVD community of Lisbon has been the home for a considerable number of young confreres who stayed there for OTP or for studying Theology. For the first time in 2017, we don't have young portuguese students, which is a challenge for us to face the new situation.

We deeply feel the lack of vocations. That is why we have strengthened this ministry with the appointment of two young confreres who are starting their journey in youth and vocational ministry.