

# ARGENTINA - EASTERN PROVINCE

Official Language: **Spanish**

## Vision Statement

*As Missionaries of the Divine Word we evangelize giving testimony of Christian life and building a more just, supportive and missionary society. We do it by the biblical apostolate, missionary animation, parish ministry and other frontier work in constant prophetic dialogue with the people, in order to achieve universal oneness in the Kingdom of God.*

## Mission Statement

*In ARE, from the reflections of the last assemblies and chapters, we maintain as priorities the following: The community life, the provincial self-reliance, achieving a true SVD identity for our parish ministry as a concrete contribution to the local church, and committing ourselves to the specific apostolates that are part of our missionary life. In all areas we want to strengthen the Characteristic Dimensions of the Society with a priority in formation.*

*We see as prophetic our work with the poorest groups of our urban and rural parishes, with our laity who need to strengthen their faith, and with the different sectors of our society that cry out for our missionary witness and our solidarity.*



## 1. Societal Setting

Argentina has 43.5 million inhabitants, of which 12.8 million reside in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires (32% of the total population). This factor denotes a geo-population imbalance and is the source of the main social problems. Argentina is a federal country with 24 states / provinces. The country in its different regions has a variety of climates, geographies, and well-defined cultural groups that give it the particularity of a very diverse, pluralistic and multicultural country.

Today, there is a very marked paradox in the social reality throughout the Northeast. Although the urban centers have grown notably in the technological advances, in the labor services, education and entertainment there is a good

part of the population that still lives in extreme poverty, unemployed and sustained by the temporary social plans of the government. The work of the communities is hindered by the lack of vocations, especially the lack of committed and adequately trained lay people, because those are already overloaded in their daily tasks.

## 2. Ecclesial Setting

The religious province of Argentina East includes the geographical provinces of Misiones and Chaco. They are the lands of aborigines, but also of settlers and immigrants. This area was first evangelized by the members of the Society of Jesus, centuries ago. Since the arrival of the first SVD missionaries in 1953, the missionary work began with pastoral care centers that later were organized and became parish communities. These parishes required greater planning, organization and vision concerning future tasks. In the beginning, when the diocese of Posadas was created, Bishop Kemerer, a member of the Society, was its first bishop. With the birth of this new diocese he closely accompanied all the missionary work of parishes, schools and the formation of missionary communities.

Later on, by the initiative of Bishop Kemerer, the diocese of Iguazú was erected in 1986. In 2009, this third diocese was established in the province of Misiones, based in the city of Oberá. In addition, the Society works in two parishes of the diocese of Resistencia, which belongs to the geographical province of Chaco. As for religious expression, there is no explicit atheism, but rather the genera-

lized religious interest that is reduced to the individual's particular interest, that is, to reduce stress, problems or concerns. In the local Church, the missionary identity in the sense of *Ad Gentes* is not very strong, but rather the present missionary task includes the ordinary pastoral care in the parishes and institutions. Regarding the finances there is certain autonomy of the parish communities, especially in relation to the support of the maintenance of the church and the priest; but for the other expenses it must be procured through commercial activities or those that generate income.

## 3. Intercultural Mission - *Ad Extra*

### Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
<b>Parish</b>	29	50.0	71.9	62.9
<b>Education</b>	8	13.8	6.0	6.9
Schools	8	-		
Universities	0	-		
<b>Formation/ SVD Vocation</b>	1	1.7	3.3	1.7
<b>Administration/ Support</b>	1	1.7	3.3	4.3
<b>Other Apostolates</b>	7	12.1	5.4	15.5
JPIC	1	-		
Bible	1	-		
Communication	1	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	3	-		

### Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	4	6.9	0	0
Retired/Sick	6	10.3	10.1	8.6
Others	2	3.4	0	0

### Main Ministries

**Parish Ministry:** Actually, the main task of the SVD is centered on the pastoral care of some 24 parishes in the four dioceses. Here 71% of the confreres develop their missionary ministry. Three of the parishes are in urban areas, while the others are distributed in sectors of medium-sized cities, towns and rural areas. After years of missionary presence, we have returned back to the dioceses some parishes in a way that supports our community life.

**School Ministry:** In the area of education, we have Roque González Institute, the only educational establishment owned by the SVD in ARE. It is well known and appreciated by the population that recognizes the educational presence of the establishment during one hundred years of service in the capital city of Misiones-Posadas. Along its journey, the Institute has offered several training and educational activities, missionary spirituality, and missionary promotion activities among the students, with multiple activities of solidarity animation programs. The SVD has also promoted the Agricultural Family Schools, through

which the children of the peasants are trained in the different rural areas of the province. The legal responsibility does not belong to the Society, but it developed and promoted these schools through which the neglected population of rural areas receives training and formation in accordance with their particular circumstances and possibilities.

**Indigenous People Ministry:** The province of Misiones preserves the presence of the original inhabitants. Their customs and life style were overwhelmed by the colonization that surrounded them and pushed them to live in small sections of the bush. The SVD presence was identified with the aboriginal ministry and there is a confrere dedicated to it. He has worked for the development and protection of the customs and culture of *Mbya Guaraní*.

### Characteristic Dimensions

On a general level, confreres of the province work in the four dimensions, both in the parishes and in the schools. Although not all areas have an appointed coordinator because of lack of personnel, our missionary tasks regarding the four dimensions are present.

**Biblical Apostolate:** The Word of God is the center of our liturgical celebrations, family catechesis and biblical missions. Biblical Workshops are offered regularly and supported by the distribution of biblical materials.

**Mission Animation:** Mission Animation in the province is expressed in many ways. To

name a few examples, the confreres are involved in summer camps, mission groups, catechesis and movements such as *Cursillo de Cristiandad*, Posta, Marriage Encounters, etc. As SVDs, we have kept the missionary spirit, thanks to working together with the different movements.

**JPIC:** Many of the JPIC activities are carried out in our parishes and schools. Basically we are focused on charitable works, channeled through institutions such as *Cáritas*. We are also involved in feeding programs, as well as homes for children, elderly and the disabled. We also participate in the defense and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples.

**Communication:** This characteristic dimension is presented through our parish bulletins, radio and television programs, magazines and other publications.

### Priorities among Congregational Directions

**Poor and Marginalized:** Our priorities are for the forgotten

Men and women workers, who belong to a group that works hard with unjust wages in order to survive.

Settlers and rural workers who are increasingly impoverished, marginalized and deceived by both politicians and other leaders of various social and religious bodies, and who do humiliating service.

Poor and unemployed people coming from the slums of the cities.

Indigenous people who are the original inhabitants of these lands.

**Young people and children:** The young people are the ones who challenge us most in the evangelization of the Church today. Many of the young people and children suffer marginalization and lack of perspectives, correct religious orientation, and adequate education that opens the doors to decent work. As a consequence they are exposed to violence, drug consumption, and alcoholism and are lured to crime and exploitation by the powerful.

**The young people are the ones who challenge us most in the evangelization.**

**Those who are far from faith:** We have a high percentage of baptized non-practitioners. It is estimated that religious practice barely reaches 6% of those baptized today, and in many places it is even lower. At the same time, there is a great religious ignorance which is capitalized on by the Protestant sects and other aggressively proselytizing religious movements.

**Migrants:** Immigration to large urban centers such as Buenos Aires, Rosario, Cordoba, etc., in search of greater opportunities for life, is another of the realities of our provinces of Misiones and Chaco, especially in these years of economic crisis. There is also a large number of migrants coming from Paraguay.

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

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Clerics	52	58	57
Brothers (final vows)	6	2	1
Scholastics	0	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>59</b>

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	53.0	55.9	57.0
Nationalities	17	18	16

**Spirituality:** In general there is a beautiful atmosphere of prayer in our meetings, assemblies and retreats. There is a good participation of confreres in all spiritual moments, both at the district and provincial level. The strength of the missionary task of the province is based on the prayer life of many confreres.

**Community:** Although there is a good community spirit at the general level, some confreres must live alone for pastoral reasons. However,

the community spirit is perceived in assemblies, district and provincial meetings, etc.

**Formation:** The province does not have any formation house. A good job of vocational promotion is done and we still have vocations in the rural parishes of the province. Although the entry of new vocations has decreased, there are new ways of working in vocational promotion with other congregations that also suffer this global reality. The task of formators has become more demanding as a more comprehensive and sensitive approach is needed for the particular realities that families and society as a whole face today.

**Finance:** The province of ARE is taking steps towards self-reliance with the optimization of resources and with investments in projects that could generate income to support missionary pastoral activity. Most of the income currently comes from Roque González Institute, the San José Bookshop, and from the rent of various premises and plantations. The vast majority of the confreres are self-supporting thanks to the contribution of the parish communities wherever they serve.