

ARGENTINA - SOUTHERN PROVINCE

Official Language: **Spanish**

Vision Statement

We, Missionaries of the Divine Word of the Argentine South Province, want to live our passion for Jesus Christ, committing ourselves in his mission as a community of disciples, rooted in the Word of God. We live an intercultural witness that encourages the Church with its missionary vocation and the spirit of openness, to go out, meet and dialogue with those who are in the peripheries.

Mission Statement

Our contribution to the church is, primarily to keep alive the missionary awareness of all the baptized, and as an intercultural community, be a sign of openness to the universality of the kingdom of God in the midst of the people.

We value this contribution also as testimony in the midst of divisions, brokenness and crisis that we live socially and ecclesiastically.

The priorities of the poor, of youth and families characterize our journey. Together with the laity with whom we share the mission, we seek to develop and en flesh evangelical values in those contexts where we are inserted.



1. Social Context

There are 43.5 million people in Argentina of whom 12.8 million reside in the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires. This factor denotes disequilibrium of the geographical aspect of the population and is the source of the main social problems. Argentina is a federation with 24 states/provinces. The country, with its different regions, has a variety of climates, geographies, as well as defined cultural groups that give uniqueness as a country that is very diverse and multicultural.

There exists an underlying climate of social conflict at the root of current political positions.

This is translated into economic aspects as an open or closed market, with the consequences in the labor market, and with the subsidizing or not of public services. All of this contributes to a population with statewide economical unem-

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ployment along with other negative factors. There is a high percentage of unstable employment, at the same time many of the workers do not participate in the social security system and cannot count on social welfare programs. It is calculated that a third of the Argentine population is poor. In the midst of this situation, the greatest impact is on the population of children who live in urban agglomerates. The children are the most affected by the unequal distribution of income.

Insecurity, a slow justice system, and corruption of public functionaries are among the volatile problems of the people. Indicators for insecurity have shown a steady increase. Criminality is experienced mainly in urban centers. Some new phenomena also have appeared – new forms of violence to which the population is not accustomed – illegally organized markets, ‘vendetta’, female infanticide, gender violence, etc.

Addictions, drug dealers and drug trafficking have had an increasing social impact in the Argentine context. The free and public health services, the quality of the hospitals and schools generate migration of those seeking help for

health reasons from some bordering countries. Nevertheless the system has serious deficiencies especially in unequal access, lack of automation of the system and deficient administration.

In the midst of all these social problems, there are great challenges and opportunities for growth and development as a country with a rich patrimony in natural, scientific, cultural and human resources.

2. Ecclesial Context

The church in Argentina has passed through different stages in history. Today with the election of Pope Francis it seems to be simpler, closer to socially problematic realities, with an episcopate whose profile is turning more towards pastoral and social needs. While it is true that the majority of the population identifies as Catholic, religious practice is minimal and there is a strong secularist tendency.

The works directed by the church, above all in the area of education, have a recognized presence in society. Also, the Church has achieved a high incidence of credibility for its social assistance, above all Caritas and other similar organizations, which are called upon in situations of crisis or catastrophe. The social pastoral outreach of the Church plays an important role in dialogue with political parties, businesses, unions, etc. There is also its contribution to those areas most vulnerable, in the area of addictions, treatment of persons, migrants, etc.

The Argentine Church has a great challenge not to lose its role among the new generations, the poor and workers. The falling off of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life require of the Church a reformulation of its ministries, of its evangelizing practices, and of an authentic participation and promotion among the laity.

3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

In Argentina the SVD is made up of two Provinces: ARE and ARS. Our province, ARS, is about 10 years old following the union of the older provinces ARN and ARS in 2008. Our province consists of 5 districts, dispersed in various regions of the country; so there are considerable distances between the districts. Our mission consists basically in parishes (18) and high schools (6). There are confreres committed to the “Editorial Guadalupe” and bookstores; others are in retreat houses, chaplaincies, working in the areas of Characteristic Dimensions, the home for elderly confreres, etc.

Interculturality characterizes us as half of the members of the province come from other countries; almost all of the confreres under the age of 40 are foreigners. The challenge is to open new fields of mission, beyond the traditional ones and to offer our charism in new ecclesial areas in the light of our Characteristic Dimensions and prophetic dialogue.

Those in Final Vows

| IN ACTIVE MINISTRY | Personnel | 2018 (%) | 2012 (%) | 2005 (%) |
|------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Parish | 45 | 50.0 | 45.6 | 42.1 |
| Education | 12 | 13.3 | 12.4 | 4.0 |
| Schools | 12 | - | | |
| Universities | 0 | - | | |
| Formation/ SVD Vocation | 3 | 3.3 | 6.7 | 0 |
| Administration/ Support | 3 | 3.3 | 4.2 | 6.6 |
| Other Apostolates | 13 | 14.4 | 6.7 | 11.8 |
| JPIC | 1 | - | | |
| Bible | 1 | - | | |
| Communication | 1 | - | | |
| Mission Animation | 1 | - | | |
| Others | 9 | - | | |

Those in Final Vows

| NOT IN MINISTRY | Personnel | 2018 (%) | 2012 (%) | 2005 (%) |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Studies/ Orientation | 1 | 1.1 | 4.2 | 0 |
| Retired/Sick | 13 | 14.4 | 12.6 | 32.9 |
| Others | 0 | 0 | 7.6 | 2.6 |

Characteristic Dimensions

Biblical Apostolate: We are offering courses, workshops and retreats in various provinces of the country. We collaborate with biblical courses on line (by the Internet) with a pastoral orientation. We also facilitate biblical animation in various dioceses and religious congregations. We participate actively in ecumenical meetings. The “Editorial Guadalupe” publishes pamphlets with biblical themes. Recently there was a campaign about the new Bible edition: “Libro del Pueblo de Dios”.

Mission Animation: Attention is given to youth groups, especially for the formation of leaders as missionaries in the summer and winter camps. The formation of the groups is called “Infancia Misionera”. Mission animation also consists of visits to benefactors and different mission campaigns. Various courses are offered to SVD communities as well as to diocesan parishes.

JPIC: For the triennium 2017-2019, a team has been formed to animate this dimension. We provide our parishes with different social services in conjunction with “Caritas”. In some of the parishes dining facilities are organized for people who are in need. They offer not only food but also workshops for sewing, cooking, pastry making, and workshops for children and youths. The province is involved in the formation of various social services such as: “La Escuela de Oficios Adolfo Kolping” (school for professional occupations) and Mother Teresa of Calcutta home for youths and children (Quilmes).

Other social initiatives are supported and promoted in different parishes and places. We have VIVAT Argentina, offering materials (organization, website, materials for the VIVAT week, etc.) and this is encouraged in different places for collaboration with other organizations, seminars and national and international meetings.

Communication: We have a coordinator. There is a DVD that contains two presentations: the 4 dimensions and conferences about Divine Word identity. The communication department also has released a CD with Divine Word songs and videos with a missionary message for World Mission Sunday which are distributed by the social networks. In some of our parishes there are radio programs and printed materials.

Priorities among Congregational Orientations

After the General Chapter of 2012 the province has opted for three priorities: the family, the poor and youths.

Family: We look for openings in our communities to create closeness and dialogue and mutual collaboration, educating in a manner that is healthy and Christian for the children. We take advantage of the places, settings and structure involving families beyond the sacramental aspects. We are aware and witnesses of the realities of broken homes and of poor living conditions. We are aware of families that have abandoned Gospel values due to the pressure of a society of consumerism that creates absurd needs.

The Poor: The materialized society brings about new forms of marginalization and social exclusion that impact many families. Confronted with the lack of social economic and educational benefits that many families suffer in our parishes, we are able to observe the strength of organizational solidarity. We work towards encouraging the participation, accompaniment and promotion of human dignity.

Youth: It is not easy being a youth today, and even more difficult still being a Christian youth. Many of the values and practices of the distinct youth cultures are in conflict with Christian values. We try to create opportunities for critical thinking and leadership, we share our missionary experiences. We organize leadership workshops along with parish meetings to listen and know their realities.

In order to achieve our works in unison as the Southern Province of Argentina, we have formed the Provincial Team for Parish Animation (EPAP). It consists of a team of laity and SVDs that work actively in our parishes. The objective of EPAP is to generate an area for sharing together, for the formation and interchange of our parish missionary service in light of the priorities that have been assumed (families, the poor and youth), in the framework of a common project of the province.

At the high schools, there is a team set up for school coordination, where representatives of the six high schools meet to draw up criteria and share experiences, to strengthen a sense of

forming one body and the idea of “Educación Verbita” (SVD Education).

4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

| MEMBERSHIP | 2018 | 2012 | 2005 |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Clerics | 78 | 88 | 67 |
| Brothers (final vows) | 10 | 12 | 9 |
| Brothers (temporal vows) | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Scholastics | 9 | 14 | 2 |
| Novices | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 120 | 120 |

| AGE AND COUNTRY | 2018 | 2012 | 2005 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|
| Average age | 57.4 | 57.7 | 62.8 |
| Nationalities | 19 | 15 | 11 |

Spirituality: Each community has a plan that calls for times of organized prayer and reflection in so far as each confrere is able. Our life is centered on the Word that gives witness to our common discipleship and nurtures our evangelizing mission. The province has an annual week for the spiritual exercises. Furthermore each year there is the possibility to participate in the retreat of the ARE or in one of the retreats organized in the dioceses.

Community: We continue with planning and evaluating our life and mission, we grow more

each day in fraternity among ourselves and with the laity. We strengthen the growth of the community with interculturality. We insist on the practice of previous years whereby no confrere lives alone.

Leadership: We continue the meetings of the provincial team with the districts. There has been a broader leadership team which was formed. This is made up of the provincial council, the district superiors, the coordinators of the Characteristic Dimensions and other areas and the provincial treasurer. At the beginning of each year this leadership team evaluates, plans and establishes common actions for the rest of the year: spiritual retreat, provincial assembly, reflections for the local communities, meetings, various workshops, a common agenda, and information about the Sub Zone, the Zone and the Generalate.

Finances: More and more we are conscientious about our responsibility for our finances. There are many efforts being made to achieve self-sufficiency in relation to the income from

our high schools, the “Editorial Guadalupe”, the book store, and rented properties. Awareness of financial self-sufficiency is encouraged in the local communities and ways of diversifying the income are sought along with sources of income from investments.

Formation: In terms of initial formation, due to the lack of students, it has been opted in 2015 to unite the three houses of formation in Cordoba into one and in conjunction with other provinces of the continent, to form a common PANAM juniorate. Vocation awareness is also being reorganized. Given the vast geographic distances and the diverse realities of our province, we are forming a vocation awareness team with three young confreres, later on they will participate in a preparatory course.

As for on-going formation, we have distinct courses, workshops, study weeks and each month the provincial sends out the “Articulo del Mes” to each confrere. There are special courses for new missionaries and others with specific themes.