

# BRAZIL - AMAZON REGION

## Brazil and French Guiana

**Official Language:** Portuguese

### Vision Statement

*We, Missionaries of the Divine Word in the Amazon, are summoned by the Triune God to bear witness to the values of the Kingdom among the peoples we work with, promoting fraternity, the common good and the integrity of creation.*

### Mission Statement

*We, Missionaries of the Divine Word in Amazon, assume a preferential commitment with the poor and marginalized young people of contemporary Brazilian society, accompanying them in fraternal solidarity in their struggles for an integral liberation, human dignity, cultural identity, a common good for all and a good domain over creation.*

## 1. Social Setting

The population of Brazil is nearly 208 million in 2018. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in the 2010 census, 47.1% of the population (close to 90.6 million) declared themselves as white, 43.42% (about 82, 8 million) as multiracial, 7.52% (around 14.4 million) as blacks; 1.1% (about 2.1 million) as yellows and 0.43% (about 821



thousand) as indigenous, while 0.02% (about 36.1 thousand) did not declare their race. The majority of Brazilians descend from indigenous communities of the country, Portuguese settlers, European immigrants and African slaves.

As forty years before, the Amazon region is still considered the "colony", although it covers more than half of the national territory. For the metropolis - Brasilia, the southeast and the south of the country - Amazonia is just a «province», the first timber and mining pro-

vince, after the last agricultural frontier with the purpose of expanding the agro-business to all parts of this delicate and complex ecosystem, unique on the entire planet. In recent years, the Amazon was declared the "energy" province of the country; since a few years ago, the «province» received this label, which is without any doubt the most disastrous one, since it will lead to the programmed destruction and in it there are a number of proposed hydroelectric projects for the coming years. Under the cover of generating clean energy, the truth is hidden that more forests succumb, more areas, including urban areas, will be flooded, thousands of families will be expelled from their ancestral lands, more indigenous villages will be directly affected, more artificial lakes, rotten and dead, will produce lethal gases and will become a suitable place for all type of plagues and generators of endemic diseases.

The history of the Amazon region reveals that it was always a minority that benefited at the expense of the poverty of the majority and the unscrupulous depredation of the natural resources of the region, which is a divine gift for the people who have lived here for millennia and to the migrants who arrived throughout the past centuries.

## 2. Ecclesial Setting

According to IBGE, Catholics continue to be the majority, although there is a greater religious diversity among the Brazilian population. The

data shows that 64.6% of the population professes the Catholic faith, with 72.2% believers in the Northeast, 70.1% in the South and 60.6% in the North of the country. The proportion of Catholics was greater among people over 40 years old, reaching 75.2% in the group of 80 years or more. This analysis shows that another 22.2% of the population is made up of evangelicals, 8% by people who declare themselves without religion, 3% by other creeds and 2% by spiritists.

In the light of the General Guidelines of the Action for the Evangelization in Brazil, the Church in Amazonia assumes among others, the following orientations:

The evangelizing action at the service of life in its fullness, from the conception to its natural death, in the defense of the human rights and the environment, eliminating the structures of death, in the countryside and in the city;

The effective participation of lay Christians in the ministries, services and ecclesial organisms and their performance in political and social life, in the light of the orientations of the Church, by their protagonism and leadership.

The Basic Ecclesial or Christian Communities are signs of the vitality of the Church that is People of God, Body of Christ; they should have the necessary freedom to host pastoral, movements and groups which promote communion.

### 3. Intercultural Mission- *Ad Extra*

#### Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
<b>Parish</b>	33	76.7	54.0	64.3
<b>Education</b>	1	2.3	5.0	0
Schools	0	-		
Universities	1	-		
<b>Formation/ SVD Vocation</b>	1	2.3	5.0	2.9
<b>Administration/ Support</b>	2	4.6	5.3	5.7
<b>Other Apostolates</b>	4	9.3	17.5	15.7
JPIC	1	-		
Bible	3			
Communication	1	-		
Mission Animation	0	-		
Others	0	-		

#### Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	2	4.6	0	5.7
Retired/Sick	1	2.3	7.9	0
Others	0	0	5.3	5.7

### Main Apostolates

The Society of the Divine Word in its more than 35 years of presence in the Amazonic region wants to make a presence of service, recognizing that there are many ways to live the faith, while preserving the centrality of the Gospel. Respect for others and the way they express their religious sentiment is fundamental to bring about an authentic evangelization.

**Evangelization:** We understand that the essential point to continue the evangelization is through the following steps: the formation of our leaders, the authentic faith experience in an ecclesial community, building an all ministerial Church, the love for the Word of God which is prayed, studied, loved and practiced and an Eucharist that confirms to all in the unity and love of Christ.

**Indigenous Ministry:** We assume the indigenous mission as a cause of the whole Church in the Amazon. The solidarity and unconditional support to the struggle for their rights have been and are fundamental so that today most of the indigenous people of the region have their lands demarcated. It's of great importance to generate an awareness of respect, appreciation and value to the people, their cultures and their "Happy Living" project.

**Urban Ministry:** We also encounter the urban pastoral phenomenon, with large suburbs in the big cities, sexual exploitation, trafficking of people and drugs, and violence. Instead of in-

vestments in public policies of basic sanitation, health, education and security, the state gives priority to compensatory policies, supports and encourages big capital, makes investments in the pharaonic constructions.

### Characteristic Dimensions

The Characteristic Dimensions are mainly put into practice in the parishes and in the various diocesan organizations in which we are integrated. In our action plan we have elaborated concrete action plans of evangelization for each of these dimensions and then, they are implemented in the parishes and dioceses. We also have some confreres directly involved in certain organizations of the local Church where these dimensions are brought forth.

**Biblical Apostolate:** This dimension is present in each and every formation in the parish, since one of our priorities is the ongoing formation of lay people. In the light of the Word of God, by maintaining our faith, we want to make present in our lives and in society the values of the Kingdom of God. That is the objective for this dimension. We encourage the prayerful reading of the Bible in our communities. We promote popular Bible courses in the parishes where we work. We encourage the deepening of the biblical knowledge among the laity of our communities, and animate our lay leaders in the biblical apostolate.

**Missionary and Vocation Animation:** We give importance to the feasts of the Congregation, to celebrate them we have created a group

called “Friends of the Word” in Amazonia, the lay associates, in order to work more efficiently in the mission animation. We promote some big gatherings or congress with the laity to make our congregation known and work for the missionary awareness of the Church and the integration of the laity in our missionary activity. We also promote their meetings and also the vocational awareness programs.

**JPIC:** We live in a region with undisputable problems in the field of human rights, justice, peace and the integrity of nature. The Amazon, so beautiful and rich in biodiversity, is being destroyed by the greed of capital: agroindustry, monoculture, mining, exploitation of wood, hydroelectric power plants. Local people and other ethnic groups are expelled from their territories which bring consequent cultural destruction; these problems form part of a reality that challenges us on a daily basis.

On the other hand, the local Church is often not so much enthusiastic about taking a role to struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Many times, we are also apathetic to this challenging reality. This dimension is present in all the parishes, especially through our collaboration with Commission for Pastoral Land (CPT) and Pastoral Commission of Fishermen (CPP), through which several confreres fight in favor of the local people to defend their territories.

**Communication:** This dimension is well developed in the parishes; we have some SVD members linked to community radios and newspa-

pers of the parish and to local television. Some brothers are integrated in PASCOM (Pastoral Communication of the dioceses) and for the specific formation in this area. The purpose of the dimension is to strengthen the communion between the members of the SVD and our partners in the prophetic dialogue and to promote ongoing formation in communication.

### Priorities among Congregational Directions

**Indigenous and Ethnic Communities:** In response to this priority of indigenous peoples and ethnic groups, we reaffirm our commitment to the indigenous region of Oiapoque, in the far north of Brazil, where the local

**We assume the indigenous mission as a cause of the whole Church in the Amazon.**

Church does not get anyone to send. We are in a phase of expanding our work in collaboration with the CNBB project “Frontier Mission” and also initiating a collaboration with French Guiana, just across the river. We have opened a new mission in Altamira with the indigenous peoples of Xingu, in collaboration with the diocese of Altamira and with CIMI (Indigenous Missionary Council).

**Family and Youth:** In this priority, we have created lay associates and held meetings of mission animation in which we work with families and young people. In our parish work, we try to promote the mission with the family and especially with the young people.

**Integrity of the Creation:** We collaborate in the fight and the defense of the indigenous communities together with other brothers of this area along with the CIMI by integrating other indigenous communities. In addition, our daily struggle for the integrity of creation is part of our mission in the parishes, as well as the ongoing formation we undertake in the local Church in the area of justice, peace, reconciliation and the environment.

### Collaboration with the Local Church and the SSPS

All our work is done together with the local Church, where we have the lay people committed and involved in the process of evangelization. The same can be said of our joint work with other institutes and the local clergy. We work as a team in the pastoral work according to the guidelines of the dioceses. As for the Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, we work together in the Parish of Our Lady of Aparecida in Plaques.

### Collaboration with the Laity

The group AVA – Friends of the Word in the Amazon region was created in the year 2017. AVA is a movement of Christian lay people who want to engage in the mission of the Divine Word through the spirituality and missionary charism given by our Founder Arnaldo Janssen. AVA aims to support the activities of the SVD in Amazonas, especially those related to justice, peace and the integrity of creation, communication, the Word of God, mission animation

and vocation promotion. The founding group is made up of 25 people, but grassroots groups are being created in all the parishes where we work. The goal is to have at least 7 base groups in 2018.

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

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Clergy	36	32	33
Brothers ( final vows)	6	5	2
Scholastics	1	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>36</b>

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	43.3	43.8	44.5
Nationalities	14	13	13

**Spirituality and Community:** We are 14 different nationalities, different cultures and that creates a challenge of integration and coexistence. Some communities have some difficulties in living their faith *ad intra*, especially in the community prayer and meditation on the Word. Other communities have overcome this challenge.

**Leadership:** In this aspect we have a problem in the Region since the middle age generation left almost the entire Region. Those who would be the leaders of today in the parishes and in the Region went to other provinces or have left the Society. Thank God that some brothers are taking on leadership tasks and the new leaders are emerging.

**Finances:** The solidarity of the brothers who work in parishes towards the BRA Region has been very good. Also the contracts with the dioceses have favored the Region. However, there is still a long way to be self-sufficient.

**Formation:** Our initial formation is together with Brazil North and Brazil Central. We have 7 philosophy students and theologians from the Region in the formation.

**Ongoing Formation:** Each year in one of our Regional assembly we have ongoing formation for three days and one week of annual formation designed by the dioceses where we work. The new missionaries have 3 days of special formation after our assemblies and a possibility of training and refreshment course for 15 days in Belém promoted by the Bishops' conference of North Brazil about the mission in the Amazon.