

BRAZIL – CENTRAL PROVINCE

Official Language: **Portuguese**

Vision Statement

Our fundamental character is our internationality and the intercultural presence in the social and human context that is plural and diverse. In this situation, our way of being and acting becomes a precious gift of evangelization in which we are called to share with our people, especially with the marginalized.

Mission Statement

We are missionaries from many peoples and cultures, gathered in São Paulo and Rondonia, to serve the people of God and the Church in their mission to proclaim and build the Kingdom of God.

Wherever we are based, we consciously live as brothers engaged in a missionary project inspired by prophetic dialogue and marked by our four Characteristic Dimensions.

1. Social Setting

Traditionally the BRC was located only in the State of São Paulo, but from the end of the last century it was extended to the Diocese of Ji-Paraná, in the State of Rondonia, and in 2015, to the Diocese of Humaitá, in the State of Amazonas. In this way, the BRC extends to different areas,



in diverse socio-economic as well as in cultural terms. Basically the confreres work in four areas in the State of São Paulo and in the peripheries of Greater São Paulo – problems of violence, drug trafficking, precarious transport system and hospitals. In these situations the economic situation of the country right now is clearly felt. During the years 2014-2016, it was felt that many Brazilians were left at a point of absolute misery and the economic situation suddenly worsened, with the unemployment rate reaching 15%.

On the South Paulista coast, in one of the parishes, the SVD presence is celebrating 90 years. It is a rural environment, where the vast majority of people live on agriculture or fishing. There is often a presence of quilombolas (Afro

descendants) and indigenous people, mainly of the Guaraní ethnic group. In Rondonia, the situation is also rural, but economically a bit better, formed by migrants, formerly European, who settled in the south of the country.

Fifty years ago there were thick deep forests, but today in the same place there are huge farms with soya, corn and extensive cattle breeding. In the dry season, forests are destroyed by wild fires. In Humaitá too a lot of poverty exists.

2. Ecclesial Setting

In the 80s and 90s, Brazil was known as the Church of the Basic Christian Communities. But, today this situation has changed. The trend of the Church is of a charismatic and Pentecostal orientation. In the past, more than 80% of the population declared themselves Catholics. Today, in some of the cities of the BRC province, evangelicals add up to or even surpass Catholics. Given these facts, a greater collaboration in the field of ecumenism is necessary. At the national level, the Campanha da Fraternidade de 2016 (Fraternity Campaign of 2016), which takes place during Lent, contributed not only a spiritual deepening, but a more concrete social commitment too. The Fraternity Campaign was carried out in collaboration with five Evangelical and Orthodox Churches.

In general, the ecumenical dialogue in the province continues to be timid. There are specific collaborations between Churches, mainly in the social area. It is carried out more in an intellectual and festive level. The Church faces many

challenges: bureaucratic parish structure, centralist and clerical, there are different ecclesial and ecclesiastical movements, urban and rural pastoral situations, Pentecostalism, etc. With this situation, we face difficulties of inserting ourselves into the programs of the parish, which is something very typical for the Divine Word. Also, the diocesan vocations grow, and the vocations for the religious life decrease. Foreign bishops obtain more easily financial resources from abroad, unlike local bishops.

3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

The BRC province has missionaries from different countries and cultures. By living our life and mission in communities, we want to bear witness to the values of the Kingdom of God. This community and intercultural experience mark our charism and our way of being SVDs in the Church and in society. The ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversities are visible signs of our charism and they lead us towards a permanent dialogue with our mission partners and in the inculturation of our missionary activity.

Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Parish	32	47.8	46.3	39.9
Education	3	4.3	8.6	8.8
Schools	0	-		
Universities	3	-		

Formation/ SVD Vocation	5	7.2	8.3	5.4
Administration/ Support	4	5.7	5.5	6.1
Other Apostolates	10	14.1	14.5	13.5
JPIC	1	-		
Bible	2	-		
Communication	4	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	2	-		

Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	5	7.2	4.3	3.4
Retired/Sick	6	8.6	7.2	12.2
Others	5	7.2	5.3	10.8

Main Apostolates

Migration: For the 2014 province assembly, we had an "expert" who talked about the reality of migration in Brazil and in the world. It was very positive, and the confreres felt that it was necessary to start something, be it in our parishes where there are many migrants, or through collaboration with other congregations who work in this reality. The JPIC formed a team with se-

veral confreres, and also several lay people, to coordinate this mission. It is one of the well-organized works that JPIC has in the province.

Youth: With regard to youth, since 2010 a lot of work has been done at the level of the SVD parishes, in the districts, as well as at the province level. There were regular meetings in faith formation and education for youth, and also on the SVD charism and spirituality. There are biannual meetings of the young people of the parishes, and every two years a large pilgrimage (about 1,000 young people) is organized to the Bom Jesus de Iguape Sanctuary, which is administered by the SVD missionaries. Before the pilgrimage, a mission is always carried out with the different groups of youth in the parishes, be it in the riverside communities, rural, indigenous, quilombolas, urban communities, etc.

Characteristic Dimensions

Bible Apostolate: The Verbo Bible Center in São Paulo serves as the main animator of the biblical pastoral mission of the province. It offers biblical courses and seminars for religious and lay people in Brazil and other parts of Latin America.

JPIC: The promotion of JPIC activities is carried out by several confreres dedicated to the defense of the environment, the pastoral work with Afro-Brazilians in the Vale do Ribeira, the pastoral care of the land, the pastoral or street mission (attention to the people who live on the street), etc. With the indigenous and ethnic communi-

ties, especially in the Vale do Ribeira, diocese of Registry, the late Brother Ivo worked with some NGOs, whose concern is to work with the Ribeirias, indigenous and quilombola communities (Afro descendants). One of our young confreres is studying to be a lawyer in order to help these communities to defend themselves.

Communication: The *Verbo Filmes* works mainly in the production of videos related to pastoral, catechesis and Biblical themes, including the annual campaign during Lent for the Fraternity organized by the Bishops Conference. The *Verbo Filmes* produced a documentary denouncing the ecological degradation of the River Rondonia, which passes through the cities where our missionaries work, especially in the Diocese of Paraná, in Rondonia. In this video *Verbo Filmes* criticized, among others, the hydroelectric power plants on this river.

Priorities among Congregational Directions

We work on the following priorities of the Congregational Directions: The Indigenous and Ethnic Communities, Reconciliation and Commitment with Peace, the Integrity of Creation, Promotion of the Culture of Life, and Social Justice and elimination of Poverty.

Indigenous and Ethnic Communities: We are committed to the indigenous and ethnic communities, especially in the Vale do Ribeira, diocese of Registro. Emphasis has been given to awareness building of their rights in the struggle for justice. In recent years the struggle of these

communities is against the State which tries to expropriate their land for the construction of hydroelectric plants. There is a close collaboration with VIVAT to denounce the abuse of the "ethnic minorities" by the government with through economic exploitation. This work began a few years ago and it was prioritized in the last triennium.

Reconciliation and Commitment to Peace:

This mission causes many conflicts. That is why reconciliation and peace workshops were prepared in order to help us be leaders of reconciliation in the same situations or places of conflicts. The workshops have been organized not only *ad extra*, but *ad intra*, for the confreres, in order to have a personal experience, and then work with other groups.

Integrity of Creation: Several issues related to integrity of creation have been focal points for several years: Hydroelectric, educational campaigns that sensitize the people in the preservation of the environment, protests through JPIC against the mining problem in the States of São Paulo (Diocese of Registro) and Amazonas (Humaitá), etc. Awareness work is being done in state schools.

Promotion of the Culture of Life: It is a concern and an objective of all the works of the SVDs to promote human dignity and creation and the defense of life. For the next year, looking at the proposal of the CNBB (National Bishops Conference of Brazil), we continue to work and raise awareness to promote the culture of life,

which aims to reflect on the relationship of the Church with society through the promotion of a culture of life and justice.

Social Justice and Eradication of Poverty:

Through the philanthropic entity called Soverdi Social, economic assistance was given to several NGOs and to people working with social justice and elimination of poverty.

Collaboration with the Local Church and Other Congregations

We have collaborated with the CNBB that periodically gives us a work proposal on the integrity of creation, especially in some areas where SVDs work. For many years, the Sao Paulo Institute for Theological Higher Studies (ITESP, its initials in Portuguese) has given the responsibility to the SVDs, along with the Scalabrinians and Redemptorists, to offer theological formation for religious congregations as well as the dioceses.

4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishops	1	1	1
Priests	68	69	64
Brothers (final vows)	4	7	9
Brothers (temporal vows)	2	2	0
Scholastics	13	15	20
Novices	3	2	5
Total	91	96	99

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	52.8	51.8	48.1
Nationalities	17	17	15

Spirituality: This important matter is treated in the retreat as well as in the ongoing formation. Likewise, in each district and community of the province we sought to promote our congregational and personal spirituality in our meetings, either through readings or sharing the spiritual experiences of each one of the confreres.

Community: The districts offer warm and fraternal bonds of mutual acceptance and support for our personal development. There are annual retreats and assemblies where the confreres meet and share experiences. The assemblies and meetings of the district are opportunities to meet and share experiences.

Leadership: There was a leadership workshop for all the provincial councilors. In the January 2015 retreat, the province worked on the perspective of community leadership. And in the month of June 2015, again, the intercultural leadership workshop was held. This same theme continued to be studied throughout 2015 in the districts and in the SVD communities.

Ongoing Formation and Initial Formation: All the students, from the initial stage of formation, participate of the preparation of the income and the expenditure of their respec-

Emphasis has been given to awareness building of indigenous and ethnic communities' rights in the struggle for justice.

tive communities and a monthly report is made by one of them. After it is approved by all and by the superior of the community it is forwarded to the provincial procure. This is one of the ways to be attentive to an austere

life and in accordance with our culture of self-sufficiency and solidarity.

Finances: It is a practice in all our provincial assemblies, for many years now, to study and discuss the annual financial report. Also each "community" makes its report and this is made available to the confreres. Also for many years now we periodically "audit" our accounts with independent and professional auditors.