

BRAZIL – SOUTHERN PROVINCE

Official Language: **Portuguese**

Vision Statement

We give witness of our internationality and spirituality through prophetic dialogue as an expression of unity and diversity, aware of the need to have more young missionaries from Brazil.

Mission Statement

The best and deepest formula for understanding the particular call to mission is expressed in the concept of prophetic dialogue. Dialogue is not a separate activity but rather an attitude of solidarity, respect and love that penetrates all our activities.

We commit ourselves to the missionary service in the parish activities and in other apostolates forming communities of life and mission, based on a creative fidelity to our charism and based on our current reflection on each concrete situation.

1. Societal Setting

Brazil is a country located in the subcontinent of South America, its territory has continental dimensions being the fifth largest country in the world and with most of its coastal territory bathed by the Atlantic Ocean. Brazil has a population of about 208 million inhabitants. The process of



concentration of the population in urban areas has increased year after year; currently it is 84.7%. The current situation of political-economic crisis in the country is causing great concern to the entire population that depends on their own work to guarantee their livelihood. Everyone is worried about the direction of this unstable economy, which went from a probable growth to inflation and is now pointing to certain stagnation.

The Brazilian population comes ethnically from Indigenous People, Portuguese, Africans, European immigrants (Italians, Polish, Germans, Spaniards, etc.) and from Asia (Lebanese, Japanese, etc.). At present, the population is composed of Afro-descendants that are divided into brown and blacks (53.6%), whites (44.5%), indigenous (0.4%) and Asians and others (1.5%).

There are also blocks of indigenous presence in the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and in Mato Grosso do Sul. Only in 1988, in the last Federal Constitution, did the Indigenous People obtain the right to remain Indigenous People forever. Before the indigenous lands were areas provisionally assigned to them, until they were "assimilated" into the national society. Even with the Constitution, which assures indigenous communities rights over the lands they occupy as well as the use of rivers and lakes that are in them, the conflict, mainly with the large estates, continues. The indigenous mobilization teaches Brazil new paths of resistance and respect for the constitutional and human rights of all minorities.

2. Ecclesial Setting

The urban world today presents itself as a great challenge for public policies and many institutions, particularly the Churches. 85% of the Brazilian population lives in cities, large or small, but especially in large urban centers, where many social problems are concentrated, currently aggravated by the high rate of unemployment and precarious working conditions. The Church must face this challenge. In addition, the Church has as its own challenge, to overcome the reduction of religion to the private and individual sphere, and to assume its responsibility for the common good, guided by an authentically Christian spirituality, opposed to the spirit of consumerism, accumulation and ostentation. All of this happens in a country where millions of people live with unemployment, in

precarious working conditions, extreme poverty and exclusion.

The Church has contributed significantly with its inculturated pastoral care in our urban reality in a special way, through social pastoral, basic ecclesial communities, hospitals, schools and other groups. Many new movements have emerged and assumed such realities as a place of mission, especially in the realities of poverty, exploited and socially excluded sectors. In general, the Church and the ecclesial movements combined their efforts with other social groups, ecumenical sectors that act in these realities, in the construction of an alternative social, political and economic model.

3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

The pastoral work of the BRS province is located in the southern region of the country, in the states of Paraná, Santa Catarina and in Mato Grosso do Sul. Here we find a small Church that is alive, participatory and committed to reality. We also find conflicting situations where Catholics are concerned only with the sacraments and nothing else. And there is a group of Catholics who do not participate in the activities of the Church, even if they say they are Catholics. Moreover, there is an increase in evangelical churches and people who say they have no religion. There is also a group of people who want to return to the Church. The pastoral work still continues with the parochial face, but it changes with each passing day, with the new challenges.

Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Parish	38	55.1	30.8	33.3
Education	2	2.9	0	0
Schools	0	-		
Universities	2	-		
Formation/ SVD Vocation	3	4.3	10.3	2.8
Administration/ Support	7	10.1	22.2	23.6
Other Apostolates	5	7.2	13.7	16.7
JPIC	1	-		
Bible	2	-		
Communication	1	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	0	-		

Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	4	5.8	4.0	0
Retired/Sick	3	4.3	16.0	16.2
Others	7	10.1	6.6	5.4

Main Ministries

Parish Ministry: Many confreres in the province work in parish ministry; there is an effort to make these parishes as “SVD parishes”. That is to say, they have an SVD face in pastoral work and other activities. Many SVDs do a good job; they invest in the role of the laity as committed people in our parishes, men and women who develop a pastoral ministry of communion and participation. Some parishes are found in large cities but most of them are in small cities, with an average population of 20,000.

Characteristic Dimensions

Biblical Apostolate: We find a large space for this work in the province and beyond; the people thirst for the Word of God. There are many groups that gather to read, to study and to pray the Word of God. The parishes are the places where many biblical courses and retreats are organized. We want to bring many people to have a familiarity with the Word of God, to be able to read, to pray, either in their homes or in their groups. We have assigned a confrere for the biblical apostolate dimension.

Mission Animation: It is concerned with the dissemination of the SVD missionary work, raising awareness that all Christians should participate in the missionary work of the Church and we help them grow in this responsibility. Mission Animation marks a presence in the parishes where we act through the animation of the

groups of lay people that emerge and the other missionary work that happens in the communities. There is a confrere assigned for the mission animation dimension.

Communication: Many of our parishes use the means of communication to evangelize. We find many parish newspapers, brochures and bulletins that are produced in these parishes. The proper use of communication helps the parish priest, the leaders and the people to be able to understand and speed up the evangelizing activities. The ministry of communication is situated as a partner of all those who want to create a more unified, just and fraternal society.

JPIC: There are many activities in the fields of justice and peace such as work against hunger, pastoral care for children, health ministry, Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and social ministry.

Priorities among Congregational Directions

The confreres have been striving to put into practice the priorities assumed by the province and derived from the last General Chapter. As the Brazil South Province we chose three priorities ad extra, that is: 1) Family and Youth; 2) First Evangelization and New Evangelization; and 3) Promoting of the Culture of Life.

Family and Youth: We have given importance to family and family ministry in the province, in the places where we work. We face different realities; on the one hand, the family wants to

follow the Church, and on the other hand, the Church has difficulties to understand the different realities that a family goes through today. The family is fractured due to excessive activism, migrations, problems with drugs, separations and divorces, poverty, unemployment and other factors.

First Evangelization and New Evangelization:

The simple practice of some pious devotions does not automatically transform us into missionary disciples. True discipleship is the result of a true experience of the "mystery of God." The true experience of mystery marks life forever. Otherwise, it is only "straw fire". As Divine Word Missionaries we want that in this evangelization there is communion of consciences, free cohesion of the people, there is dialogue, a deep and evangelical fraternity, that builds communion in the Church, and that the evangelized feel the presence of the Incarnate Word.

There is an effort to make the parishes as "SVD parishes".

Promoting the Culture of Life: As Divine Word missionaries and in our places of work we try to promote the sacredness of human life from its origin to the natural term. We affirm the right to live, because our God is the God of life. Today, post-truth, post-religion preaches more erotic affectivity, intense and shared pleasure, the harmonious conjunction of useful and pleasant, discarding the weak and thus despising life. We want to follow the ethics of the kingdom of God, which is the taste and joy of living and being together.

Collaboration with SSpS and Laity

In the area of spirituality we work together with the SSpS and collaborate mutually in our works.

Work with our laity continues to be implemented in many districts. Since the beginning of the mission in the province, the laity had a special and important mission in helping the first missionaries to spread the faith. Even today the presence of the laity with our confreres is remarkable and admirable, and they are great partners of the mission. We have small groups under formation of the SVD spirituality.

4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishops	1	1	2
Clerics	63	65	67
Brothers (final vows)	2	3	5
Scholastics	3	4	4
Total	69	73	78

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	52.6	55.5	56.0
Nationalities	13	13	11

Spirituality and Community: The confreres meet twice a year as a province and, sometimes, in the small cells to be together, sharing life and

spirituality. They have always given importance to the formation of the confreres through annual retreats, the study of appropriate topics to religious life, pastoral experience and personal formation.

Provincial retreats are a spiritual source, along with other retreats that some confreres join to strengthen their spiritual life. The *lectio divina* in district meetings continues to be put into practice in order to have a greater closeness to the Word of God. The frequent meetings in the districts are an opportunity for the confreres to meet, pray and share their intercultural and missionary life.

Finance: There is a transparency in the financial and administrative field of the province. Financial transparency on the part of the provincial administration favors the sense of co-responsibility, encouraging the confreres to contribute better and also to give opinions on investments. There is dialogue between the confreres and a sense of belonging to the province and to the Society.

Formation: These are important works of the province. We feel the lack of vocations already at the base, in the initial stages of formation. There is the stage of propaedeutic study, a good number of graduates who enter the SVD do not have these studies and also lack philosophy studies. Three full time formators work in this field. The great challenge is the field of vacation promotion; the year 2017 was declared the "vocational year" in the entire PANAM area.