

# CHILE PROVINCE

Official Language: **Spanish**

## Vision Statement

*Today, more than ever, we are challenged to unity and to cultivate our identity as Divine Word Missionaries, living in intercultural communities. Therefore, we commit ourselves:*

- *To make the Word of God the backbone of our community life and of our evangelizing service;*
- *To cultivate intercultural communication among us, cultivating openness and sincerity in dialogue;*
- *To strengthen our community life, sharing our plans and actions agreed in our provincial project.*

## Mission Statement

*In the conflict of a tormented society in which we live, we want to be bridges, facilitating dialogue and communion for people. Therefore, we commit to:*

- *Immerse in the local culture where we live and work, in an attitude of prophetic dialogue, rooted in the richness of our intercultural communities;*
- *Work decisively in favor of human dignity wherever it is trampled;*
- *Promote the formation of the laity so that they guide us towards a shared mission with them.*



## 1. Societal Setting

In recent years, the awakening of the demands of indigenous peoples has been felt more strongly (11.1% of the population, of which 84% belong to the Mapuche ethnic group). After years of being oppressed, especially the Mapuche people, today they are struggling - some groups through violence - for dignified treatment and for the recovery of lands that were usurped by the Chilean State and handed over to European immigrants in the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries.

The struggle for equal opportunities, which has focused on education, has also been important in recent years. In the last decades the educa-

tional opportunities multiplied and now almost all children have access to education. This has been done with the contribution of private institutions, many of which have also obtained significant economic gains. However, the quality of many schools where the poorest students study is still remarkably deficient. Progress has been brought largely by social movements that have changed the educational structure, trying to make it more equitable, more inclusive and non-profit; however, the issue of quality remains highly questionable for many.

Due to the economic growth of Chile until 2012, and also due to crises in other nations (Haiti, Venezuela), many immigrants have arrived. A great challenge for the country is to absorb and integrate this growing number of foreigners. Many others come from Peru and Bolivia, and with them integration is not easy because they still feel the wounds caused by the war of 1879, especially in Bolivia, which lost the war in its pursuit to have access to the sea.

## 2. Ecclesial Setting

In Chile, the number of those who declare themselves Catholic (57%) dropped a lot, and only by adding them to other Christian denominations does it exceed 70%; of the other 30% the great majority declares itself agnostic / without religion. Of the Catholics, using the traditional Catholic lifestyle, less than 10% attend Sunday Mass. Chile has traditionally had few priestly and religious vocations, but nowadays even fewer. There are some 2,400 priests

in Chile, half are religious, and many of them are foreigners (there is only one priest for every 5,000+ Catholics in the country). During the last four decades about 1,000 married men have received the diaconate, and the pastoral care in the most humble populations of the big cities is handled by them. This has changed the face of the Church. In Chile there are some 4,300 religious sisters.

There are many Church movements, from very conservative groups to those very committed to intercultural dialogue and social struggles. The country is increasingly secularized; there is talk of invasive secularism, with direct attacks on Christian values. The Church has many educational establishments in Chile, from kindergartens to universities, which is a hopeful sign, since many families opt for their children to study in Catholic schools. There are some 600,000 students in schools run by the Catholic Church (17% of all students in Chile).

## 3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

### Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
<b>Parish</b>	30	38.4	31.4	34.3
<b>Education</b>	14	17.9	22.9	20.2
Schools	14	-		
Universities	0	-		

<b>Formation/ SVD Vocation</b>	3	3.8	2.9	1.5
<b>Administration/ Support</b>	2	2.5	4.3	10.4
<b>Other Apostolates</b>	8	9.9	21.4	18.7
JPIC	1	-		
Bible	1	-		
Communication	1	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	4	-		

### Those in Final Vows

<b>NOT IN MINISTRY</b>	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	0	0	0	0
Retired/Sick	10	12.8	11.4	7.5
Others	11	14.1	5.7	7.5

The two great apostolates in CHI are the parishes and the schools. There are confreres working in the Characteristic Dimensions, some full-time, others part-time.

### Main Ministries

**Mapuche Ministry:** The Mapuche pastoral plan was drawn up 30 years ago, and it is still valid. It requires, however, adaptation to the new social reality, because at that time the Mapuche people

still did not raise their voice as they do now. Also the ecclesial reality is different, with bishops less open to the intercultural issue, and the SVD with fewer confreres prepared for a challenging mission. For this reason, we left the exemplary parish of Puerto Domínguez at the beginning of 2014. The parish facilities had been stoned, and a school burned. We continue with the parish of Quepe, in the Araucanía, and the Mapuche pastoral work at Santiago.

**School Ministry:** SVDs in Chile have been working in schools since 1902, although we have left some of the establishments that we managed well for a while. Currently we have four schools that charge tuition: Colegio Verbo Divino in Las Condes, Santiago, only boys, 2,050 students, since 1950; Colegio Verbo Divino in Chicureo, Santiago, (former German Lyceum) co-ed., 800 students, since 1910, but in this location since 2005; Liceo Alemán del Verbo Divino, in Los Angeles, co-ed., 1,270 students, since 1937; Colegio Germania, in Puerto Varas, co-ed., 1,000 students, since 1930 under the SVD, but it was established in 1916. We have two schools that are tuition-free, which work with State support, namely: Liceo Espíritu Santo, in San Joaquín, Santiago, mixed, 900 students; and San José School, in Huaqui, Los Angeles, 230 students, mixed, since 1965.

The SVD schools in Chile are in quite different situations; each school has between one and three confreres, very few of them teaching, mostly involved in administration. The time will come when the principals of our schools will no

longer be religious. The great challenge is to prepare ourselves for this situation, which is already common in other countries, and with other religious institutes within Chile. One of the points related to this challenge is networking. Until now the schools have been administered independently.

### Characteristic Dimensions

**Biblical Apostolate:** There is a confrere dedicated exclusively to biblical pastoral ministry, and many others include the Bible in their apostolate in parishes and schools. The most remarkable

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aspect has been the work of a confrere with the biblical groups at the parish level, reaching out some 1,500 people in a single parish where they participate in the biblical groups every week. We tried to imitate this in other parishes, but did not have the same success.

**Mission Animation:** There is a confrere dedicated full time to mission animation. One of the most important actions is the missionary week in schools, where four or five SVD confreres and one or two SSpS come to speak in the courses on the mission of Christians, telling their own experience of mission.

**JPIC:** In Chile, JPIC has had two aspects in the last four decades: the work among the indi-

genous and the homes for minors. One of our parishes is in indigenous territory (Quepe), and three confreres work there. In addition, some involve themselves part-time with the indigenous pastoral work in Santiago. A confrere is dedicated full time to the Children's Homes, and receives the support of those who work in schools. In the last 20 years, the "*El Carmen*" Foundation has grown in importance, an institute for job training and trades for people in need, which serves approximately 5,000 people each year. Lately the ecological conscience in Chile has grown a lot, and in some of our schools the care of the environment is given a lot of significance. One school has already achieved the environmental certification granted by the government and another is working on it.

**Communication:** At the provincial level, it is carried out by a confrere on a part-time basis, without the help of lay people. But some SVD schools have journalists and designers hired full time to communicate what happens in each school community.

### Priorities among Congregational Directions

Among the ten priorities that were presented, the SVD Chile almost unanimously chose **Family and Youth**. Work has been done at the local level on these issues, but a pastoral plan has not yet been drafted. In schools, one normally works in this pastoral field, and also in the parishes.

**Family:** In Chile, the family institution is in a process of change. The women have left their homes

to work outside. Many young people do not want to get married, or postpone it until they are older. Many marriages end in divorce. They have few children. The law that allows abortion in some cases has already been approved. There are many elders, who are usually very lonely. Minors demand equal treatment with adults. The Synod on the family and the encyclical *Amoris laetitia* have been good stimuli regarding the pastoral approach.

An important aspect in the pastoral work of the Chilean Church is that the preparation for the first communion since the 60s is done with the parents, who must meet weekly with a catechist and those who transmit the faith to their children. The SVDs have integrated into this system from the beginning, which has the advantage of attracting adults back to the Church.

There are confreres who are very committed to the Marriage Encounter Movement, with leadership positions at the national and continental levels.

**Youth:** The biggest challenge is to present the message of Jesus Christ to young people in an attractive way. During this period, they are absorbed not only by studies, but also by many entertainments and distractions offered by the mass media. The Church does not have a significant voice in the mass media, especially after many scandals and inconsistencies. The young are very lonely. Our parishes and schools offer at least healthy meeting spaces for personal and community development.

## Collaboration with SSpS, SSpSAP and Lay Partners

In the past SVDs worked closely with the SSpS, who arrived in Chile in the 1940s. Today the sisters have few members and have been concentrated in five places, with only one of them close to a parish administered by the SVD. One of our confreres - a Bishop emeritus - is a chaplain in their central house.

A convent of the SSpSAP was opened in Chile a few years ago, but far from all the works of the SVD. We only substitute when the chaplains are not around.

The work with laity is going steadily. Rather than having officially associated groups, we take advantage of the proximity of many parents and alumni of our schools; also the parishes are enriched with the support of several ecclesial movements, guided precisely by lay people.

## 4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishops	3	3	1
Clerics	70	70	63
Brothers (final vows)	2	4	3
Scholastics	12	5	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>72</b>

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	54.4	56.4	55.0
Nationalities	25	17	15

**Community:** The province emphasizes the need for teamwork, especially at the district level. This is reflected in the elaboration of the Missionary Projects at district levels. Regular meetings and assemblies also facilitate sharing and reflection. There are annual assemblies, an annual retreat, intercultural workshops, strengthening of the role of the district superior, meetings in the communities, etc.

**Finance:** The province is self-reliant. To ensure the continuity of our self-reliance, we invest in building maintenance, external loans, etc. Loans are evaluated regularly. Both internal and external loans help us to start some projects that are evaluated and refinanced according to the needs. There is a permanent external economic advisory group and regular auditing.

**Formation:** We have a very few confreres in initial formation, and they are at one of the PANAM juniorates. We have two confreres in perpetual vows who are dedicated to formation ministry, and one of them is also the vocational promoter. There is a confrere who accompanies part-time those who are on OTP in Chile, as well as the new missionaries.

In the area of ongoing formation, special sessions are organized at district levels with specific topics advised by experts. A confrere has been appointed full-time to direct and supervise ongoing formation in the province. There were reflections and actions related to Spirituality, Community, Leadership, Finance and Formation in districts and communities, also they are reinforced by a protocol of the General Visitor as well as by a personal visit of the Superior General. We make efforts to improve in many aspects, especially in the initial formation of our seminarians and in the ongoing formation of the professed members of the province.