

ECUADOR PROVINCE

Official Language: **Spanish**

Vision

Guided by the light of the Gospel, we commit ourselves to a missionary approach

- *that responds to the concrete situations of the people we serve,*
- *that is characterized by the See-Judge-Act method,*
- *that seeks a change of structures that trample on human dignity.*

Mission

We work as a team and live our religious and missionary vocation in giving witness to the Word made flesh.

1. Social Setting

Ecuador is one of the most distinct countries of Latin America; moreover it has two great population and commercial centers: the port city of Guayaquil, and the capital city of Quito in the Andian Altiplano. Both metropolitan cities compete for control of wealth and national power. For the Ecuadorians, ethnic identity is a fluid and self-chosen matter. There are those of indigenous descent who identify as mestizos by adapting to a modern and western life-style. On the other hand there are those who only speak Spanish but value being “Amerindians”.



From the beginning of the 21st century, Asians (mainly Chinese) began migrating little by little to Ecuador. Since the year 2000, thousands of Peruvians also have arrived looking for better pay when Ecuador adopted the USA dollar as its national currency. There are numerous farmers from Colombia who have been displaced from their homeland due to fumigation that destroyed their crops or who have escaped the fiery battle between the military forces and the guerrillas. In recent years the presence of Venezuelans, Cubans and Haitians in the country

has been a phenomenon that worries the social and labor establishment of the country.

It is even more sad to note that this migratory flow within and outside the country includes the hidden trafficking of people. Within the country women and children from frontier zones and the central highlands come to work as prostitutes, servants in homes, vendors and beggars and do illegal activities such as drug trafficking and stealing. As the US dollar is the official currency, money laundering, the presence of drug trafficking cells, and the use of “mules” for the transportation of drugs to other countries have not become public to a great extent. Corruption on a large scale is present in areas of the government and is an evil that has not been overcome, rather it is increasing more and more.

2. Ecclesial Setting

Approximately 90% of Ecuadorians profess to be Catholic but only a maximum of 20% practice regularly. In any case, the local Church continues to play an important role in educational institutions and in charitable works among the poor and suffering. In the light of this, priests and religious enjoy great respect, and the ethical declarations of the hierarchy have influence in the public forum. Traditional institutions and the practices of popular religiosity (i.e., processions, pilgrimages and patronal feasts) are more visible than the other forms of social commitment to live the faith.

The Ecclesial Base Communities that formed a popular movement in the decades after the second Vatican Council have been reduced in number and energy. Today it seems that the Church is not seen as credible and prophetic, nor does it promote ecumenical dialogue in a society that is rapidly falling into progressive secularism and indifference towards the Church.

3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Parish	21	55.2	46.5	48.8
Education	0		0	0
Schools	0			
Universities	0			
Formation/ SVD Vocation	2	5.3	6.9	4.6
Administration/ Support	5	13.2	9.3	10.5
Other Apostolates	4	10.5	16.2	20.9
JPIC	1	-		
Bible	1	-		
Communication	1	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	0	-		

Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	2	5.3	6.9	4.6
Retired/Sick	4	10.5	4.6	3.5
Others	2	5.3	9.6	7.0

We have a religious missionary presence for 55 years in Ecuador, assuming a preferential option for the poor and accompanying other similar important works in our missionary efforts.

Principle Apostolates

Parish pastoral work: We, the SVD missionaries in Ecuador, are strongly committed to the local Churches in which we approach the parish pastoral ministry with an accent on the SVD Characteristic Dimensions. We serve 13 parishes in the following jurisdictions: Quito, Cuenca, Esmeraldas, Guayaquil, Los Rios and Machala. The parishes are one of the fundamental ways to develop prophetic dialogue. We reach out to many who benefit, such as children and parents in the family catechesis, the formation of youth, the formation of catechists and animators of communities, those who attend to the sick, the elderly and the migrants in the country, those who pay attention to human rights (above all in the country side), those who attend to medical dispensaries and the prevention of drug addiction, etc. The pastoral challenge for us is to make our parishes as missionary places by all and for all.

Pastoral work among the indigenous and

Afro-Americans: We have two parishes whose population is mainly indigenous and another two with a majority that is Afro-American. Our presence in these communities has been valued and admired. We need a specialized preparation in order to serve these communities according to the present times.

Pastoral work among the migrants: Through some parishes, the province gives support to families of migrants, especially to children in their personal formation. They receive psychological and spiritual help so they are able to survive the sorrow and separation from their parents and family. There is much more to be done. We also are helping people hurt by “coyoterismo”.

Characteristic Dimensions

In recent years, the work as a team among those responsible for the Characteristic Dimensions in our province has been strengthened and has produced materials that have been distributed to our districts. In this way we come to know our missionary charism and we give life to our Christian commitment.

Biblical Apostolate: The biblical center in the province organizes courses focused on the Bible for catechists and educators. Other biblical resources are produced for popular distribution. Exhibitions about salvation history have been offered to various parishes and the materials have been shared with other Spanish speaking provinces.

Mission Animation: There are many lay people who are passionate towards our SVD missionary charism and who wish to participate in our evangelization projects. Thanks to the mission secretary of the province, one of the principle fruits of missionary awareness has been an increase of lay partners and promotion of two lay missionary movements with our congregation: the MILVED (Lay Missionaries of the Divine Word) and the JOMVER (“Jovenes Misioneros Verbitas”). These groups dedicate themselves to ministries and apostolates to assist in the animation of the Christian life in their own parishes.

JPIC: There is evidence of this Characteristic Dimension in all of our ministries and apostolates. We actively support the initiatives of the Justice and Peace Commission of the Ecuadorian Conference of Religious. In Guayaquil *El Proyecto Arnoldo Janssen, orientando familias* helps to promote the unity and harmony among families that struggle for the eradication of drugs and domestic violence in their homes. *El Proyecto Arnoldo Janssen educacional* offers help to families with limited means for the education of their children. *El colectivo Anudando* seeks to offer opportunities for reflection and conscientization for the struggle for the rights of women. *El grupo espiritualidad no violencia* (ENV) promotes conscientization against the maltreatment and murder of women. Actually there has been an increase of murders of women by their spouses in Ecuador. The coastal region has the greater incidence. We also promote incentives for the defense of life and human dignity.

The earthquake of April 16, 2016 that shook the Ecuadorian coast was an occasion to live in solidarity. As a province and with the help of benefactors, we were able to alleviate the suffering and anguish of many brothers and sisters who lost everything. Our confreres worked hard and continue accompanying these brothers and sisters on the Ecuadorian coast.

Communication: The missiological magazine *Spiritus*, Hispano-American edition, has been published in Quito since 1996, under the juridical responsibility of the SVD. It has contributed to the missionary conscientization of *ad gentes e inter gentes*; it is recognized by institutes of formation and missionary congregations in the Spanish speaking world.

Priorities among Congregational Directions

Family and Youth: Teams have been formed for pastoral care of families and youth in the different parishes. Youth Encounters are held at the district and province level.

Opportunities are provided for the formation of youth leaders. *El Proyecto Arnoldo* is effective, and we want to expand it to other districts to accompany families and youth in vulnerable situations.

With a team of specialists and psychologists there is an accompaniment of families and young people who are victims of violence in all forms. With various activities of the JPIC

The biblical apostolate offers animation and guidance to specific groups

dimension, the province supports families and young people in the process of human development. The challenges in this area are enormous and require specialized studies in order to help families and the young in an efficient manner.

Collaboration with the Local Church and Laity

The province collaborates in 14 parishes with 23 confreres in 6 dioceses. Our interculturality and style of missionary life is a significant witness to the local Church. Our presence in the geographic and existential margins of society demonstrates our clear option and solidarity with the most needy.

Wherever we are present we work in communion with the local Church in carrying out pastoral plans and specific apostolates, e.g., responsibility for the pastoral care of the indigenous, the youth, biblical awareness, the formation of youth for the priesthood and religious life in some dioceses.

The biblical apostolate, with which we are greatly identified in Ecuador, offers animation and guidance to specific groups of particular Churches as well as to the Episcopal Conference and the Conference of Religious.

Empowering the laity in their missionary co-responsibility with the work of evangelization of the local Church is one of the works we do on all fronts of our missionary pastoral action.

The province is blessed with the collaboration of many committed laity in the works of evangelization. The mission secretary seeks to create groups of lay SVD missionaries in places where we are present. To encourage our collaborators in the places of mission, missionary co-responsibility requires the openness and humility of the confreres who are not always ready to open themselves to working with the laity as companions or co-partners in the mission. Therefore we see the need to foster work with the laity and we hope to consolidate the project of the Lay Missionaries in our province. As noted earlier in the report, there are two lay groups in our province. They have been working for many years and they seek to constitute themselves as lay associates of the Divine Word.

4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Clergy	40	43	40
Brothers (final vows)	1	1	1
Scholastics	2	4	4
Novices	0	2	0
Total	43	50	46

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	47.1	46.7	48.8
Nationalities	17	14	17

Spirituality: We commit ourselves to live our spiritually, rediscovering some of the elements of our spiritual heritage to strengthen our pastoral work and follow more profoundly our intimate and personal relationship with Christ. We have the need and the great challenge to live and make known the Arnoldus spirituality to the communities where we work and serve. In this way we can be enriched by the dialogue between popular religiosity in Ecuador and the intercultural spirituality in our province.

Community: Internationality and interculturality are the distinctive features of our common life. A fraternal atmosphere and mutual dialogue are found among the members of the province. Nevertheless we need to improve our mission by dialogue, sharing among ourselves disagreements and criticism with fraternal frankness, and opening ourselves to the cultural diversity of the country. To work as a team is also important to achieve our pastoral initiatives.

Finances: Thanks to the investments that have been made over the last 32 years, the province is

able to maintain financial stability and seems to be more and more self-sufficient. The diversification of our investments has helped to maintain our financial resources. A professional person has helped us in the administration. The province is able to subsidize our principle apostolates and their social and parish projects as well as the higher studies of confreres.

Formation: We count on the full time dedicated formators on the level of initial formation. Vocation promotion constitutes a challenge for the province in recent years. The province commits itself to maintain the interprovincial novitiate that is a regional contribution beginning with an intercultural initiative on the initial formation level. The young members of the province have participated in the PFT (Program of Transcultural Formation) in different parts of the world with the objective of identifying themselves with mission *ad gentes*. We also receive warmly the young SVDs who wish to have their PFT experience in our province. Once a year we also organize a formation encounter to consider the matters of the present state of the Church on a national level.