

PARAGUAY PROVINCE

Official Language: **Spanish and Guarani**

Vision Statement

Inspired by the Trinitarian spirituality, we are grateful for the grace of God, who called us to live a consecrated missionary life and invited us to spread the Reign of God.

Mission Statement

As our spirituality is rooted in the Divine Word, we participate in the prophetic dialogue and solidarity with:

- *Indigenous communities fighting for their homeland to survive and fight for their survival and protection of the environment.*
- *The migrants living in urban areas, as they search for their dignity of life and better economic livelihood.*
- *The youth present in our parishes and schools who are making a great effort to grow in Christian faith and moral values.*

1. Social Setting

In reference to the population, there is a steady growth. These past few years, the social phenomenon of large and rapid growth of cities, attributed to the abandonment of the rural settlements in favor of urban areas, has led to a change of geographical situation and in such a way different so-



cial concerns have emerged. The country is situated in the heart of South America, so the people continue to mix with the Mestizo population and with those arriving from other parts of the world.

The Guarani language is the hallmark of those who are born and remain here; 93% speak this language, thus preserving their identity and character. At present Paraguay has 17 recognized ethnic groups with their own land and culture. It continues to be a great challenge to accompany them for the conservation of their way of living

and thinking, as globalization and the new way of life has impacted them dramatically. At the same time, the situation of the peasant farmers in their fight for the preservation of the land and for self-sustenance is losing its strength since new generations have new forms and ways of living.

2. Ecclesial Setting

In general, we can affirm that the Paraguayan people continue to identify themselves with the Church. Although the number of other religious denominations is growing, the Catholic Church enjoys some credibility that the others still do not enjoy as such. As a whole, Christians consider themselves religious people, with great participation in the important events of faith, pilgrimages, and other events. They do not find difficulty in witnessing their faith and religiosity. It is worth noting that Paraguay has 17 dioceses, but a number of parishes are vacant due to the lack of priests. Although vocations to the priesthood and religious life are good at the beginning of the formation, it is a great challenge to persevere till the end.

3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Parish	30	43.5	47.5	48.6
Education	12	17.4	8.5	12.2
Schools	7	-		
Universities	5	-		

Formation/ SVD Vocation	3	4.3	3.7	7.4
Administration/ Support	10	14.4	7.4	8.1
Other Apostolates	6	8.7	5.0	10.8
JPIC	2	-		
Bible	1	-		
Communication	1	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	1	-		

Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	1	1.4	6.1	4.7
Retired/Sick	5	7.2	9.5	1.4
Others	2	2.9	12.3	6.8

Principal Apostolates

Parishes: As a missionary congregation, we provide services to the local Church through pastoral care to urban and rural parishes. The parishes are the platforms that help us to reach those marginalized and displaced for various reasons. Through some projects we try to help in their material progress, often the approved projects from the government do not reach them because

of corrupt practices. We do our best to train lay people as pastoral agents and companions for our mission.

We take into consideration the challenge given at the 2012 General Chapter, where the provinces were asked to take steps towards the difficult mission, that which challenges us to bring the Good News to those who are excluded by others. The province has taken up a mission in the Paraguayan Chaco. We have spent two years in the implementation of a mission there with young confreres who have accepted this endeavor.

Schools: We work a lot in the education area; we have five regular schools and two agricultural schools. Through this apostolate, we try to maintain good contact with the students, families and teachers. In the last few years, we have elaborated a pastoral plan for children, young people, parents and teachers. Although it is at the initial stage, we notice that some progress in this aspect has been made, thus leaving a great impact in the education and formation of new generations which are part of our missionary charism.

Characteristic Dimensions

Biblical Apostolate: The province has appointed a full-time confrere for the biblical apostolate. Biblical courses are given in the SVD and non-SVD parishes. We also have a Center for the spreading of the Gospel, where we promote

the reading of the Bible and its sale at a national level (Episcopal Conference and Conference of the Religious of Paraguay). The Center is part of the Divine Word Publishing Group Editorial Verbo Divino, Estella. With animators of the province, it offers courses for the formation of different groups in each parish. Students from the schools and others also participate in the formation programs. Along with it, they help them to reflect and pray with the Word of God.

Mission Animation: Our mission secretary is also the director of the PMO in Paraguay. His office facilitates the promotion of missionary animation materials to the confreres. It also encourages and supports the missionary formation of lay people in our parishes. After promoting an intense work in each parish, he has encouraged the laity to participate in an annual Congress, where the main goal is to create a space to share from our spirituality and to discuss the role and missionary service which is appropriate to our time. Our main collaborators in the mission, parishes and schools are the laity, who give their time wholeheartedly in social commitments such as assistance to the sick, canteens, training the laity and young people, etc.

JPIC: Our apostolate of justice, peace and integrity of creation offers training to create civil awareness at grassroots level. We emphasize the protection of the environment. The province has not yet been able to dedicate a full-time member for this activity. Our mission also pays attention to the welfare of the Afro-Americans.

Communication: Till now, the province has not been able to appoint a full-time confrere. But it has appointed a communication coordinator, who is also a parish priest. He is in charge of the management of the new commercial FM and AM radio, as well as three parish broadcasting stations and a district radio. Our province has the honor of having AM and FM stations with the corresponding licenses as well as numerous FM stations in different parishes. The website was recently renewed to improve communication and networking. Having such a wonderful platform, it has motivated our confreres to think in the annual meeting to carry out communications based on ethical, moral and religious values from the missionary perspective. Keeping in mind this social aspect is associated in a very particular way with JPIC, motivating the people for the integral development of the person.

Priorities among Congregational Directions

First and New Evangelization: Evangelization is the primary reason for the existence of our Congregation. The purpose of our primary and new evangelization is the transformation of the whole humanity, both personally and collectively through the power of the Gospel.

Family and Youth: Our Constitution invites us to dedicate our time to accompany the family and youth. Throughout the world we are witnessing the transformations of the family structure due to migration and major cultural changes. As missionaries of the Divine Word, we want to ad-

here to the pastoral programs of the Paraguayan Church which sees a sudden change and a degraded mentality concerning the matrimonial and family institution.

An annual meeting is organized for the young leaders from our schools and parishes. Here SVD spirituality and youth reality, with the dynamism of faith, come up with new proposals and activities. We hope that these initiatives may take the young people to practical commitments within the local Church.

Education and Research: The PAR province has long experience with indigenous peoples, other ethnic minorities and multicultural parishes, so we hope to have research and implementation programs in the following areas: pastoral response, cultural identity, right to have land, health care, bilingual education, human rights, and criteria to counteract any type of racism, exclusion or marginalization.

Collaboration with SSpS and the Local Church

Some of our activities are carried out with the Sisters Servants of the Holy Spirit, specifically in the indigenous pastoral activities. After years of accompanying one another, we experience a living and effective maturity in the evangelization and the fruits can be perceived from this intense sharing.

At the same time with the Paraguayan Episcopal Conference, there is a permanent understanding

and dialogue about the ways of integrating our mission with the local Church. It is worth mentioning that in every diocese where we are working there is a cordial and open approach on the part of the bishop and the locality.

4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra*

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishops	0	0	1
Priests	62	71	66
Brothers (final vows)	5	9	7
Scholastics	3	14	9
Novices	4	0	0
Total	74	94	83

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	51.8	52.2	50.8
Nationalities	2	26	20

Community and Spirituality: The desire for community gatherings and reflections has strengthened our community life. In our five districts, the Bible sharing is maintained, and issues about the life and the mission involvements of the place are dealt with. There are also the mini district assemblies where all the members meet with the provincial council, and where the Provincial Pastoral Plan is discussed and evaluated. The local bishop is invited as an expression of communion with the local Church.

Leadership: Leadership workshops are organized at the local and provincial levels. At the same time, young confreres are being prepared for the specific services of the province.

Finances: The good practice and achievements of the Paraguayan province teaches us the need of the hour, that is, to have responsibility and financial solidarity in relation to transparency, belongingness and co-responsibility. There is a plan to train personnel in financial management.

Initial Formation: The mission animation continues to be an attractive aspect to the local Church. With the help of vocational promotion, there is an effort to involve the young people and to encourage them to live their faith and to empower their commitment as baptized persons. This will help them to enter into the more concrete search and discernment for the commitment to the consecrated life. We have some postulants for vocational discernment, we accompany them so that they know us and we know them, and they can deepen their decision to enter into the congregation. The PANAM Common Novitiate has been operating already for some years. Through this we hope that the novices learn to appreciate the open missionary spirit with the other provinces, as they come from diverse Latin cultures.

Ongoing Formation: The confreres are encouraged and animated to be constantly updated, and to assume commitments of personal formation, so that there is a constant reflection and

growth. In the accompaniment of the new missionaries, inculturation is a challenge. For that reason it is determined that there is a time for

integral accompaniment, so that this time is fruitful in learning the language, the culture and the way of doing mission in the province.