

## USA – CHICAGO PROVINCE

USA, Canada, West Indies, and Jamaica

Official Language: **English**

### Vision Statement

*We give witness to the Kingdom of God through our community life, working with and caring for one another across cultural and age boundaries. We animate the people of God to engage in mission in our parishes and with our benefactors and collaborators.*

### Mission Statement

*We, Divine Word Missionaries of the Chicago Province, serve the Kingdom by:*

- *Proclaiming the Word of God*
- *Inviting collaboration in Mission*
- *Journeying with our Dialog Partners*
- *Caring for one another*
- *Calling and training new members*

### 1. Societal Setting

The United States is perhaps the country that has the widest range of racial, cultural and religious diversity in the world. This diversity has resulted from massive and sustained global immigration since the 1830s. The American national identity



has been enriched by this multicultural influx of people in search of economic opportunities and political liberties greater than what they had or could have in their respective countries of origin.

At the dawn of the 21st century the United States has achieved a high level of material progress and prosperity, though residual poverty persists. Thus, on the one hand, American society today struggles with social problems resulting from affluence – such as drug abuse, soaring cost of living, air pollution, high divorce rates, AIDS, and excessive litigation. On the other hand, many Americans perceive social unrest as resulting from the failure of their polity to make the “American Dream”

(of equal opportunity for all people) truly within the reach of every striving citizen. Thus, much of civil concern and advocacy revolves around the privation of human rights such as inequities or inadequacies in housing, health care, education, and employment.

## 2. Ecclesial Setting

The religious landscape of the USA is a vast spiritual super-market where very diverse belief systems are competing for adherents. As a result, religious affiliation has become extremely fluid. About 24% of American adults have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion – or no religion at all.

Nearly 70% of the population is Christians. The Protestants amount to nearly 50% (Evangelical Protestant Churches 25%, mainline Protestant Churches 18%, and historically Black Protestant Churches 7%). Catholics are nearly 20% of the population, other religions are 6%. A number of them change their religious affiliation due to various reasons. This phenomenon is affecting the families and the society.

Against this background of the immigrants’ situation and political rumblings, one may understand internal factors at play in the Catholic Church as it unfolds its mission today in North America.

The clergy sexual abuse crisis continues to have its effects on the life of the Church in the United States, and to a lesser extent in Canada. While the

number of claims has slowed in recent years, cases of clergy sexual abuse are still coming to light. The betrayal of the public trust has done significant damage to the morale of laity and clergy alike.

The rapidly growing number of Hispanic Catholics and the sizeable presence of African-American and Asian-Pacific Catholics present wide opportunities for re-creating parishes of intercultural character.

The effect of immigration on the Catholic Church is particularly strong in the United States where, in contrast to the Canadian reality, the majority of new immigrants come from predominantly Catholic countries. Our own SVD parishes have become increasingly multicultural, with the presence of diverse ethnic and racial communities in so many areas of North America. A challenge for us is perhaps to go a step further by helping our parishes become more intercultural.

## 3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

### Those in Perpetual Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
<b>Parish</b>	56	22.8	25.7	26.7
<b>Education</b>	15	6.1	4.7	2.1
Schools	11	-		
Universities	4	-		
<b>Formation/ SVD Vocation</b>	13	5.3	6.5	9.7

<b>Administration/ Support</b>	19	7.7	12.1	16.8
<b>Other Apostolates</b>	22	8.9	14.0	10.6
JPIC	1	-		
Bible	0	-		
Communication	1	-		
Mission Animation	0	-		
Others	20	-		

**Those in Final Vows**

<b>NOT IN MINISTRY</b>	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	12	4.9	3.3	2.3
Retired/Sick	66	26.8	31.8	29.0
Others	3	1.2	1.9	2.8

**Principal Apostolates**

**Faith seekers:** Our ministry in approximately fifty parishes in the Chicago Province is the anchor of our mission in prophetic dialogue. This parish involvement keeps us connected to the grassroots of the missionary Church where we find many lay partners who also want to reach out to faith-seekers. Every parish has an active outreach to the unchurched, to those who have lost interest in religion, and to immigrants who are baptized but have never received an education in the faith. Our outreach to faith-seekers is

also evident in our retreat and spirituality ministries at Granby, Miramar and Techny.

**The Poor of Many Cultures:** The Caribbean communities we serve in Jamaica and the West Indies are marked by poverty and weak family structures. The Appalachian district serves the rural poor of the depressed coal-mining region of the United States. Parishes in the Midwest, Southern, and New Jersey districts continue the Society’s historical dialogue with the U.S. African American population, serving in communities of urban economic depression and reaching out to those impacted by racism and poverty. Our ministry among African-Americans has entered a critical stage, as we have been unable to find confreres willing to sustain a creative presence in African-American parishes and among African-Americans in multicultural parishes. The Canada district opens out to a growing number of ethnic groups. But, throughout the entire province, our ministry is marked by care for immigrants who are seeking to make a home in North America. Currently, we serve people in twelve languages. Increasingly, we work in multicultural and multilingual contexts, where we try to encourage the growth of intercultural communities of faith.

**Ecumenical and Interreligious Outreach:** In most of the places we work, the Catholic population is a minority; ecumenical dialogue and collaboration with other Christian denominations is critical in addressing the social issues of the people. In some places, interreligious dialogue with other faith traditions comes to the fore: for example, with Jewish people in Chicago and

New Jersey, with Islam in the African American community, with Buddhists in Asian communities, or with Rastafarians in Jamaica.

### Characteristic Dimensions

**Mission Animation:** Some parishes call for creativity and wider community involvement, beyond the pastoral care of the Catholic parishioners, to address the issues of poverty: gangs, drugs, unemployment, lack of housing, etc. The Mission Center for the three North American provinces located at Techny, is engaged in fund-raising for the worldwide Society, as well as programs for mission animation. The Divine Word Alumni Association is being reorganized across our Tri-Province subzone to give more encouragement and support to lay people who were educated in our seminaries and who continue to reach out in missionary service as parents, spouses, educators, business people, and friends. The Vocation Office and the Alumni Association sponsor short-term missionary service projects in the province.

**Biblical Apostolate:** The biblical apostolate is essential to our parish-based ministries and at the biblical center in Granby. Bible sharing has been introduced in our parishes, along with biblical courses and study. Bible-based retreats, revivals, and workshops are done both in our parishes and by the Bowman-Francis team. Multi-cultural Bible festivals have been held.

**Communication:** Efforts at evangelization are made through the website and via You-Tube,

Facebook, and other social media. Vocation promotion uses all these communications technologies. Parishes communicate the Word through preaching, liturgy, and print and electronic media. A confrere operates a Catholic radio station in Antigua, including programs that promote biblical awareness, JPIC, and mission animation.

**JPIC:** The promotion of JPIC is done on local and province levels. The province puts special focus on addressing issues of racism and immigration. Educational efforts and collaboration with various organizations strive to bring structural change in the political and economic policies of the USA. The internet and storytelling projects of Race-Bridges, as well as collaborative efforts at Catholic Theological Union, also promote interfaith empathy and dialogue.

The coordinators of each of these "missionary" dimensions meet regularly with their committee members to develop and evaluate projects. The four coordinators often meet together with the provincial to work out common projects. In 2017 they prepared a prayer for vocations promotion, a banner to portray the integration of the four dimensions in Christ's mission, and organized four "Parish Prophetic Dialogue" workshops, stressing the dimensions as the steps in missionary outreach.

### Priorities among Congregational Directions

The long-standing missionary commitments in the context of USC province lead us to give special attention to the Congregational Directions

regarding **primary and new evangelization, care for ethnic communities, and work with immigrants.** The increasing polarization of politics in the USA has made our work among immigrants and ethnic communities more important than ever. We continue to stand against racism and fear of outsiders while offering a warm welcome to new-comers.

**SVD Lay Partners**

One of the 2015 resolutions was on collaboration with the laity. Our province mission statement includes the phrase “inviting collaboration in Mission.” This resolution spoke directly to that element of our mission. Collaboration with laity is a constant in our missionary life and activities.

**4. Intercultural Life – *Ad Intra***

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishops	1	3	2
Clerics	177	176	179
Brothers (final vows)	26	33	36
Brothers (temporal vows)	3	2	3
Scholastics	26	25	48
Novices	4	7	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>274</b>

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	62.5	62.8	57.8
Nationalities	28	29	33

**Community and Spirituality:** More and more, local communities are engaging in Bible sharing. Generally speaking, house members are very faithful for daily prayers and worship to pray for the Society, the mission and vocations. Because of distances, some districts wish they could gather together more often but they can only meet a few times a year. Some districts have also changed the format of their gatherings to promote more interaction with each other and to include Bible sharing. Our province and the SSpS province co-sponsored two retreats by AJSC team members in July 2017 and also come together for different celebrations and events. Houses and districts also celebrate SVD feasts.

**Care for Retired Members:** The Chicago province is blessed with the presence of 66 members who are fully retired from active ministry, approximately 27% of the confreres in perpetual vows. They come from all three North American provinces, and from many other provinces around the world. The largest community of elders is found at Techny. There, around the dinner table, novices of diverse origins are able to hear first-hand the stories of past missionary successes and failures, and to share their youthful hopes for the future of mission. We have been blessed with an excellent 24/7 care facility for our retired, sick members at Techny. The retired but able members can choose to retire at one of our retirement communities throughout the three North America provinces.

**Finance:** We continue to move toward mutual accountability and transparency in the area of

finances. We challenge ourselves to be faithful to our vow of evangelical poverty while living in a consumerist culture. We continue to learn how some financial aspects, such as family expectations, are shaped by one's cultural background. This year the financial market has been good to us. We are happy to continue to support the Society's mission worldwide and non-SVD projects around the world. We are very conscientious in investing ethically and responsibly.

**Formation:** We have our common formation programs, including pre-novitiate (Divine Word College, Epworth, IA), novitiate (Techy, IL) and post-novitiate (Theologate, Chicago, IL) and Associate Program. Our formation system, including Brother Formation Program, has been very consistent and effective, for example: philosophy studies/requirements during pre-novitiate program, then novitiate, then theology (including Clinical Pastoral Education, Cross-cultural Training Program) before perpetual vows pro-

fessions. Our formation houses are lived experiences of intercultural life. The thirty members of the theologate community are from nine different countries of origin. Divine Word College has students from more than fifteen nations; forty-five of them are SVD seminarians.

**Vocations:** The PANAM Zone is promoting a Year for SVD Vocations. We are doing our best to continue to emphasize the care of all vocations: good and holy husbands and wives; devoted parents and children; Sisters and Brothers, priests and deacons, missionaries and lay ministers. We try to involve all confreres in vocation promotion, especially those working in parishes. There are four confreres and a layman (former SVD seminarian) who form the core of our vocation team. They are guiding one of the most successful vocations ministries in North America. Vocation recruitment is one of our most important ministries. The three USA provinces have worked together to support this ministry.